



ESSAY

Towards Community in a Doomed World: Rediscovering Rizal's Prophetic Vision in the Age of Peak Oil and Global Warming¹

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Perhaps the best tribute to Jose Rizal has been said by Apolinario Mabini. In his lonely exile, compelled to live in Guam for refusing to submit to the conquering Americans and a militant nationalist to the core, Mabini pondered on the failure of the Revolution and remembered Rizal:

In contrast to (Jose) Burgos who wept because he died guiltless, Rizal went to the execution ground calm and even cheerful, to show that he was happy to sacrifice his life, which he had dedicated to the good of all Filipinos, confident that in love and gratitude they would always remember him and follow his example and teaching. *In truth the merit of Rizal's sacrifice consists precisely in that it was voluntary and conscious. ...* From the day Rizal understood the misfortunes of his native land and decided to work to redress them, his vivid imagination never ceased to picture to him at every moment of his life the terrors of the death that awaited him; thus he learned not to fear it, and had no fear when it came to take him away; the life of Rizal, from the time he dedicated it to the service of his native land, was therefore a continuing death, bravely endured until the end for love of his countrymen. *God grant*

that they will know how to render to him the only tribute worthy of his memory: the imitation of his virtues (Mabini, *The Philippine Revolution*, trans by Leon Ma. Guerrero 1969, 45; emphasis mine).

Indeed we have a lot to learn from Rizal's example, and on this bright Sunday morning I wish to share with you some relatively unexplored facets in Rizal's life that I think can help us navigate our way through our present predicament, both globally and locally. These are: 1) his 1890 essay, *Filipinas Dentro de Cien Años*, 2) his concept of the nation, 3) his Dapitan years, and 4) his hitherto unnoticed minor study on Oceania. I will try to relate all three to the impending global catastrophes that the Philippines and the world will be facing in the next 30 years—global warming and peak oil. The media has finally taken notice of global warming, although scientists have been sounding the alarm for decades. But peak oil is hardly mentioned in the media. I recently asked a highly educated and most articulate young congressman if peak oil is being discussed at all in Congress and his reply was, "What is peak oil?" It is the codename for the inevitable decline of petroleum upon reaching peak production and it forebodes the end of industrial civilization. We are facing that crisis within 30 years. Some 90% of us will still be around when that happens. And definitely for our children and their children, our grandchildren, that is the world that they will inherit.

One virtue of Rizal that is most cogent for our time is his courage to see behind the veil of comfortable illusions and confront the future. This he demonstrated in his groundbreaking essay *Filipinas Dentro de Cien Años*, arguably the most important essay of the *Solidaridad*. Indeed, it stands alone in Filipino nationalist literature. I know of no other work by a Filipino scholar that envisions the Philippines in one hundred years. If you have not read anything on Rizal, and you have time for only one essay, I urge you to read *Filipinas Dentro de Cien Años*. This essay antedates an emerging academic discipline that we now call futuristics or futures studies that is being offered for the first time in my school, the Asian Center

at the University of the Philippines in Diliman.³ On the strength of his essay, Rizal ought to be called the father of Philippine futuristics.

On the basis of a careful analysis of the historical forces—both local and global—impinging on the Philippines towards the 1890s and through a series of logical steps or arguments involving disjunctive syllogisms, Rizal came up with the most likely scenario for the Philippines within one hundred years. Let me summarize his lengthy essay by focusing on his three basic arguments or theses. His first point recapitulates his Morga thesis (the argument in his annotations to Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*):

Soon after being incorporated in the crown of Spain, [Filipinas] had to support with her blood and the vigor of her sons the wars and imperialistic ambitions of the Spanish nation. In these struggles, in these terrible crisis of peoples when they change government, laws, usages, customs, religion, and beliefs, the Philippines was depopulated, impoverished, and retarded, astounded by her metamorphosis, with no more confidence in her past, still without faith in her future. ...

Then began a new era for the Filipinos; little by little they lost their old traditions, the mementos of their past; they gave up their writing, their songs, their poems, their laws in order to learn by rote other doctrines which they did not understand, another morality, another aesthetics different from those inspired by their climate and their manner of thinking. Then they declined, degrading themselves in their own eyes; they became ashamed of what was their own; they began to admire and praise whatever was foreign and incomprehensible; their spirit was dismayed and it surrendered (*Political and Historical Writings of Jose Rizal*, National Historical Institute, year, 130-31).

Then Rizal struck a hopeful note and brought up his second point. Surveying the present trend, Rizal declared:

Today there is a factor which did not exist before. The national spirit has awakened, and a common misfortune and a common abasement have

united all the inhabitants of the Islands. It counts on a large enlightened class within and without the Archipelago, a class created and augmented more and more...thanks to the official provocations and the system of persecution. This class whose number is increasingly progressive is in constant communication with the rest of the Islands, and if today it constitutes the brains of the country, within a few years it will constitute its entire nervous system and demonstrate its existence in all its acts. (*Political and Historical Writings*?henceforth, PHW?140)

It is mainly for this reason, Rizal argued, that the road to progress could no longer be blocked, that is to say, the Philippines could no longer remain a colony: it “either will remain under Spain but with more rights and freedom [i.e., assimilated], or will declare herself independent after staining herself and the Mother Country with her own blood.” Either way, “the advancement and moral progress of the Philippines is inevitable; it is fated” (PHW, 143).

By the way, in Rizal’s discourse, assimilation does not mean Hispanization; it simply refers to a non-violent, legal, gradual process that would lead eventually to independence. In his letter to Ferdinand Blumentritt, Rizal wrote that it was Spain which must choose between parliamentary representation and violent separation. Indeed it would be to Spain’s interest to grant Philippine autonomy. Because then the separation would be peaceful, gradual, and fruitful for both Spain and the Philippines: both could maintain friendly relations, and engage in trade and cultural exchange, even after the Philippines became independent. What was to prevent this from happening when goodwill between the two peoples had been preserved? This was in fact what happened between Spain and her erstwhile colonies in Latin America, when Spain signed a treaty of diplomatic recognition of Mexico in 1836, Ecuador in 1840, Chile in 1844, Venezuela in 1845, Bolivia in 1847, and Honduras in 1895 (Timothy E. Anna, *Spain and the Loss of America*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press 1983, 294). But “whom Jupiter would destroy he first makes mad.” Spain did not see the wisdom in the assimilationist

project, which for Rizal, was a peaceful transition to independence. And she was mad in resorting to greater repression—in the last vestiges of Empire in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines—which, ironically for Spain, hastened the revolution, as Rizal had anticipated.

Rizal's third point in *Filipinas Dentro de Cien Años* is equally important: Spain was not the only factor to be considered. In fact, because she was already on the decline, she was no longer the most crucial factor in the Philippines' future. The younger generation of Filipinos, who would shoulder the task of building a new nation and preparing the country for the 20th century, would have to contend with the rising superpower in the Asia-Pacific region: the United States of America.

The scholar and travel writer Fedor Jagor raised this scenario in his 1873 work, *Travels in the Philippines*, which Rizal had read as a young student. Among the *ilustrados*, Rizal was the first to demonstrate, through a process of historical deduction, the empirical probability of Jagor's speculation, and having done that, to go beyond the predicted coming of American imperialism and speculate on the implications of such an event for the fledgling Filipino nation. Jagor in fact welcomed the extension of American power over the Philippines as a boost to her progress. Rizal thought otherwise.

Rizal's historical deduction proceeded thus (PHW, 159-61):

"[Once liberated] the islands will adopt probably a federal republic.... If the Philippines obtains her independence at the end of heroic and tenacious struggles [against Spain], she can be sure that neither England nor France, and less Holland, will dare to pick up what Spain has not been able to keep."

Rizal's premise for this was that the Europeans' attention would be completely absorbed by Africa, because of "the immense territory that the Black Continent offers—virgin, unexploited, and scarcely defended." England had enough possessions in the East—Singapore, Hongkong, Shanghai. Moreover, she had her Indian Empire. If she thought that having

the Philippines was profitable, “she would not have returned to Manila in 1763.” England would even favor Philippine independence “for an independent Philippines will open her ports to her and grant her more commercial privileges. Moreover, in the United Kingdom there is a prevailing opinion that she has already too many colonies which are detrimental to and weakens much the Metropolis” (PHW, 159-60).

Rizal proceeded to sum up the reasons why Germany, France, Holland, China, and Japan would not have designs on the Philippines.

Only one possibility remained: the United States of America. “Perhaps the great American republic with interests in the Pacific and without a share in the partition of Africa may one day think of acquiring possessions beyond the seas” (PHW, 161). Rizal, however, is aware of factors that might militate against this development: the Panama Canal is not open; the U.S. is not over-populated; European powers may feel threatened and thus discourage her; it is against her [democratic] traditions.

But America’s venture into the Pacific “is not impossible, for example is contagious, greed and ambition being the vices of the strong, and Harrison expressed himself in this sense over the question of Samoa...” (161).

Such breadth of knowledge! Rizal’s grasp of world politics impinging on the Philippines was stunning! Rizal was right on every count, except for two things. First, the Philippines did not become a federal republic, thanks to the American intervention. I don’t know if it will become a federal republic soon, thanks to today’s Philippine Congress. There is a second issue in which Rizal failed in his prediction, and I will come to that now. It is a painful read, given what happened to the country after Rizal.

Should the United States seek to possess the Islands—and Rizal was practically sure that this would happen—Rizal presented this scenario:

Very probably the Philippines will defend with indescribable ardor the liberty she has bought at the cost of so much blood and sacrifice. **With the new men that will spring from her bosom and the remembrance of the past, she will perhaps enter openly the wide**

road of progress and all will work jointly to strengthen the mother country at home as well as abroad with the same enthusiasm with which a young man returns to cultivate his father's farmland so long devastated and abandoned due to the negligence of those who had alienated it. And free once more, like the bird that leaves his cage, like the flower that returns to the open air, they will discover their good old qualities which they are losing little by little and again become lovers of peace, gay, lively, smiling, hospitable, and fearless (PHW, 161-2; emphasis mine).

You can understand how this exuberant wish sounds all too painful for us today.

Executed around 7am on this very day, 111 years ago. Rizal died a happy man. Consider Rizal's actions during his final days and up to the moment of his execution: Upon being informed of his death sentence, he immediately wrote letters to all that he loved, including his best friend Blumentritt—telling them how much he loves them, entreating them to love one another, and asking for their forgiveness. In his last hours, in the quiet stillness of life, he meditated on his life, put the final polishing touches to his farewell poem—arguably his best—which he probably had been composing in his mind over the past few days of his life. In a gesture of affection, he gave some personal belonging to his loved ones that he wished to be remembered by: to his family his sketch of the Agony of the Garden, to Josephine Bracken, Kempis's *La Imitacion del Cristo*. And on the final hour, when he was taken out of his prison cell, he declined the ritual of being brought to Luneta on a carriage and requested that he be allowed to walk all the way to the execution site. By then throngs of people had gathered to see the condemned unfortunate man, who, like his fellow Filipino Burgos, had to die at 35, with so many unfulfilled dreams. But Rizal had no regrets, no hatred, no bitterness in his heart. He walked happily, affectionately greeting familiar faces. Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera, who was then living in Intramuros recalled having witnessed Rizal's march to the execution site. Tavera and his son were watching by their window

and as Rizal passed, recounted Tavera, Rizal looked up to greet them and bid them farewell (interview with Pardo de Tavera's granddaughter Mita, 1991; cited in Ruby Paredes, "Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera". In *The Anarchy of Families*. Ed. by Alfred W. McCoy. Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 399). Finally, at his execution, as the order to fire was given, Rizal cried out aloud Jesus' last words, *consumatum est!* He had been positioned by the commanding officer so that his back was turned to the firing squad, but as the eight Remingtons cracked, he turned around to face the firing squad and thus fell with his face to the sky.

Rizal died with a smile in his lips, comforted by the thought that the Filipinos would finally be free, happy, and prosperous within one hundred years; that is to say, on or before 1990 (his essay being written in 1890). But there's the rub—as we enter 2008, are we free and prosperous and happy?

Today, the Philippines is in deep trouble. Notwithstanding then President Fidel Ramos's hype about Philippines 2000, the economy of the Philippines is—even if we grant the current regime's propaganda about a surging economic growth—at the bottom rung of East Asia.

In fact, the zeal and eagerness of the present regime to sing the gospel of economic growth and free trade and to jump into the bandwagon of Australia, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, and thus embark on a wanton spree of environmental abuse of their region forbodes a dangerous future for the coming generations. As Robin Broad and John Cavanagh not too long ago documented (*Plundering Paradise*, 1993)—and the situation is much worse today—the irreversible and unmitigated destruction that has been wrought on the country's environment is shocking. In less than half a century, since 1946, 1/3 of the Philippines' largest rivers are biologically dead; 2/3 of existing forest cover had been lost (and in a few years there would be nothing left as the rate of deforestation is at 150,000 hectares/year, and the rate of soil erosion is at 100,000 hectare-meters of land/year); and 70% of the coral reefs had been destroyed in only the last 15 years!

But what did we gain from such environmental abuse, on the justification of economic growth? Has economic growth trickled down to the poor? What have we got to show in terms of public health and education and basic social services?

Compare the Philippines to a very poor country such as Cuba, whose economic growth is practically nil. Cuba has suffered from the U.S economic and trade embargo since the 1960s. On top of this, her benefactor, the USSR, disbanded in 1990. Not only did Cuba lose billions of dollars in foreign aid, she also lost her supply of petroleum, which is crucial to economic growth. So, Cuba went into recession and became a very poor country, driving many desperate Cubans to scamper to Florida which is virtually just a swim away. Yet, despite all these setbacks and limitations, in comparison to the Philippines and all the rest of the world, Cuba shines in sustainable agriculture, education and public health. Indeed, crisis does not necessarily mean catastrophe because, as the Chinese word for crisis indicates, crisis presents not only danger but also opportunity. The Cubans turned their petroleum crisis into an opportunity to radically transform their petroleum-based agricultural system—into one that dispenses with petroleum altogether.

Out of necessity, Cuba converted to sustainable farming techniques—replacing costly petroleum-based fertilizer with ecological alternatives (organic compost, shit), rotating crops to keep the soil rich, and using teams of oxen instead of tractors. Over time, Cuban diet became sufficient and much healthier. Ecologists hailed the Cubans' achievement in creating the world's largest working model of largely sustainable agriculture, independent of oil (Bryan Appleyard, "Waiting for the Lights to Go Out", *The Sunday Times Magazine*, UK, Oct 16, 2005). Cuba is the only country in the world that enjoys sustainable development, according to the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) *The Living Planet Report 2006*.

With little or no TV to watch, Cuban children became smarter, in fact, the smartest in Latin America. A 1998 UNESCO report ranked Cuba as Number.1 in the region in literacy and numeracy. The UNESCO

study consisted of a comparative evaluation of achievement in mathematics and language in 13 Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela. The tests were conducted with students in the 3rd and 4th grades. Overall, Cuban students showed the highest level of achievement, well above the students from other Latin American countries. Cuban students scored 350 points (around 90% correct answers), 100 points above the regional average. Argentina, Chile and Brazil followed with scores close to 250 points. According to the UNESCO report, the “test achievement of the lower half of students in Cuba is significantly better than the test achievement of the upper half of students in the countries that fall immediately behind Cuba. (UNESCO report, p. 21).

What about the Philippines? In numeracy and literacy among grade schoolers, we are way behind our Southeast Asian neighbors. The Trends in International Math and Science Survey (TIMSS) conducted in 2003 ranked the Philippines no. 41 among 45 countries that took part in the TIMSS. The 5 January 2008 Editorial of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* greeted its readers with one of the saddest news of the new year—a lot of things are wrong with our educational system:

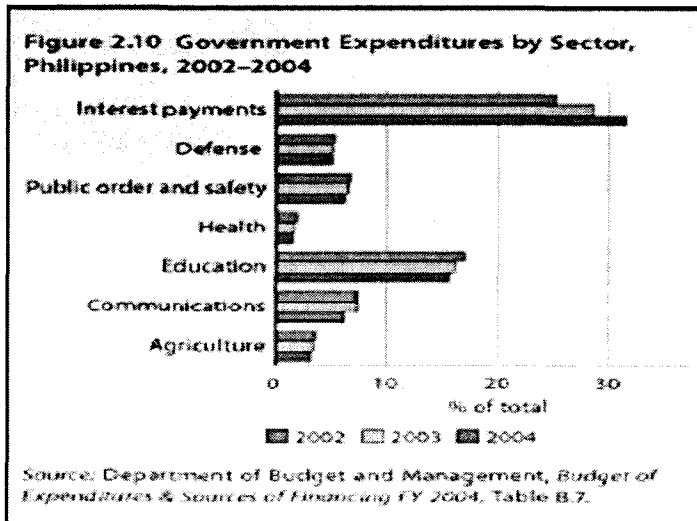
The results of the National Achievement Test given in 2004 say it all. In that test, covering English, Math and Science, only 2.1 percent of all high school seniors scored 75 percent or higher. In the Math test, 12.9 percent passed with a grade of at least 75 percent. In English, only 6.8 percent made the grade. And in Science, less than 1 percent (0.7 percent) got a grade of 75 percent or better.

The performance of high school freshmen was even worse. In the 2004 High School Readiness Test, covering the same three subjects, less than 1 percent (0.52 percent) scored 75 percent or better in all three subjects. If the passing mark was lowered to 50 percent, only 7.4 percent of the students would have passed the test.

What about public health? Cuba is rated as the second best in the Americas, second to topnotcher Canada and better than third placer U.S.A. In the State of the World's Children report (2005) of the UNICEF, Canada's mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) is 5. Cuba comes in very close at 5.8, followed by the USA's 7. Consider how the other giants of the region fare—Mexico scored 23 and Brazil 33.

The comparison between Cuba and the Philippines is depressing. The infant mortality rate in the Philippines is 23.51. In life expectancy, another public health indicator, Cuba scores 77.23, while the Philippines has 69.91. To those who are 65 in the audience, your end is near! That's a joke, of course. By the way, my source for these statistics is the CIA world factbook, which you can access on its website <http://www.cia.gov>.

Now let's compare Cuba to the U.K and the U.S.A. in terms of another public health indicator, the public's access to health services. Cuba offers a comprehensive free healthcare program with the access ratio of 1 doctor per 170 Cubans. In the U.S.A's high-cost privatized healthcare, the ratio is 1 doctor per 188; in the U.K, it is 1 doctor per 250. My source is not Cuban authorities but U.K's *The Independent* (Tom Fawthrop, 18 Dec. 2005).



Last year, Philippine dailies screamed these headlines: “More doctors leaving RP as nurses: No future here”, “Exodus leaves health system in state of near collapse”. This is alarming but hardly surprising. The World Health Organization sets a minimum standard of 5% of the national budget allocated to public health. The Philippine allocation for health in 2005 was 1.1%. Compare this to our Southeast Asian neighbors—Vietnam spent 4.5% on health in 2002, Thailand spent 7.6 % on health in 2004. (Source: *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 22 Nov 2005).

I better stop this painful exercise. My point in citing all these embarrassing comparative statistics is simply to reiterate a truism expressed by the much-maligned (by the U.S, that is) Cuban hero Fidel Castro: so much can be done with so little “when all of society’s human and material resources are placed at the service of the people.”

But, to be “fair,” in other matters, the Philippines is perceived as the no. 1 in the region. The Philippines is known as the foremost Southeast Asian exporter of human capital—especially cheap labor and sex—in the richer capitals of the world. In 1996, we were rated, on the basis of an Asia-wide survey by the Hongkong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd., as “the most unsafe country in Asia.” In 2007, we were judged by several independent monitoring agencies as “the most corrupt country in Asia in 2007.” Nearly \$2 billion, or roughly 13% of the Philippines’ annual budget, is lost to corruption in the country each year, according to the United Nations Development Programme. Imagine if that went to the building of schools and the training of teachers and to raising their salaries to enable them to teach better. Imagine if that went to providing more and better textbooks and other learning resources to our public school students.

And what have we really taught our kids? Again this is enough to make anyone cry. In early January of 1998, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines sounded the alarm over the Filipinos’ precarious sense of identity. They called attention to Maria Luisa Doronila’s latest study of Filipino schoolchildren which showed the latter’s

order of preferences with respect to country and nationality. For role models, first preference went to the American cowboy, followed by the Japanese *samurai*, and then the Chinese *kung fu* master, with, alas, the Filipino heroes coming in fourth. As to the countries they admired and wanted to live in: first choice was the United States, followed by Japan. The Philippines was the third choice. The study also found that as the school kids grew older, their preference for other countries and for things foreign, far from diminishing, even intensified.

With his characteristic prescience, and in a fit of despair, Rizal once wrote to Mariano Ponce (18 April 1889) these anguished lines:

What for should we dedicate ourselves to labor for a people without a soul, without sentiments? Suppose we liberate them now from the tyranny of the friars, good; tomorrow they will fall into the tyranny of the government bureaucrats.

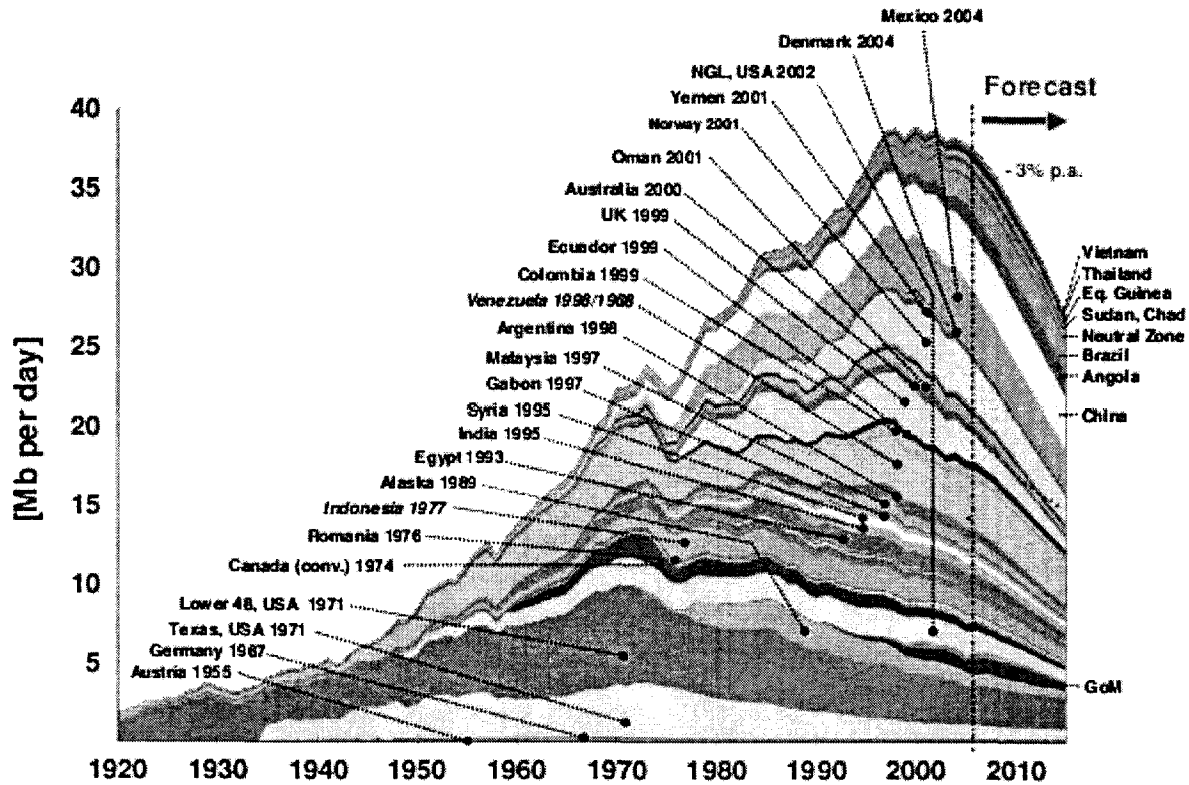
(And, if I may add, the politicians).

What Rizal had not thought of, and indeed it might have been unthinkable for his generation, was that, a hundred years hence, 95% of Filipino schoolchildren would rather be American than Filipino.

Given the situation we are in today, and considering our prevailing habits and mindset, are we ready to face the impending global crises of climate change and peak oil?⁴

The prospects are frightening: economic meltdowns, famines, pandemics and the end of industrial civilization. Rizal did not see—indeed *no one could have seen it during his time*—this apocalyptic scenario on the twenty first century (which, after all, was already beyond his hundred-year vision). But is there something in Rizal's prophetic vision that could help guide us through our predicament?

For a start, we can remind ourselves of the Chinese word for crisis—which contains two characters, the first for danger and the second for opportunity. We can also remind ourselves of Fidel Castro's exhortation

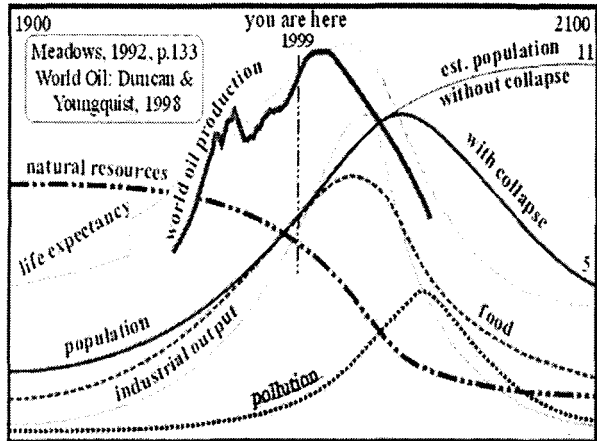


Ludwig-Bölkow-Systemtechnik GmbH, 2007

Source: IHS 2006; PEMEX, petrobras; NPD, DTI, ENS(Dk), NEB, RRC, US-EIA, January 2007

Forecast: LBST estimate, 25 January 2007

that so much can be done with so little, even with zero economic growth, if our energies, especially those of our leaders, are placed at the service of the people. Finally, and all that I've been saying comes down to this point: we can learn from Rizal's prophetic vision of



community and what he called *el sentimiento nacional* to rise above our greed and selfish-interests, and create communities of care and affection—care of the earth, care of the self, and care of others—and usher in a world of abundance and sharing.

Nation as moral community

It is very important to understand Rizal's concept of the nation. It will give us an insight into what is missing in our civic culture. Rizal's December 12 memorandum, which he submitted during his trial, is crucial in understanding his concept of the Filipino nation and his nationalist project. The crucial passage is this—

Ahora bien muchos han tomado mi frase *tener libertades por tener independencia*, dos cosas diferentes. Un pueblo puede ser libre sin ser independiente, y un pueblo puede ser independiente sin ser libre.

Now then, many have taken my phrase "to have liberties" for "to have independence", two entirely different things. A people can be free without being independent, and a people can be independent without being free.

Rizal's meaning in this English translation is better understood if we contrast the words "independencia" and "kalayaan"—which will direct our attention to the way "kalayaan" is used in the writings of Bonifacio and Jacinto, and therefore the close ideological link between Rizal and Bonifacio. The meaning becomes apparent if we relate Rizal's December 12 text to an important line in *El Filibusterismo*—Fr. Florentino's interjection to the dying Simoun: "Why independence if the slaves of today will be the tyrants of tomorrow?"

Independence is meaningful only if the new rulers have also become the new men and women—able to govern wisely and justly, for the benefit of the people, and if the people have become united and enlightened towards promoting the common good. Then, in Rizal's perspective, the people have become truly free. In Rizal's usage, the nation is a moral concept (taken from the post-Enlightenment German philosopher Herder) and is not equivalent to the nation-state, a term which refers to the political structure that encompasses a people living in a given territory and subject to the laws imposed on them by the state. In this political order, the state has a monopoly of coercive power and has the capability of forcing people to abide by its impositions—such as paying taxes, and serving in war. In return the state is expected to protect the people and safeguard the people's rights and interests. The term nation, as used by Rizal, refers to a moral community in which the members are bound together by a sacred covenant—1) to resist evil and injustice; and 2) to promote the common good.

In Rizal's perspective, the nation-as-community is the moral foundation upon which the nation-state should be built. Without this moral community, the nation-state would have no moral direction. The fundamental principles underlying this moral community is justice and the common good—a very Catholic notion. Remember St. Augustine's injunction: "Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but bands of criminals on a large scale?" (cited in David Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots and the Liberal State, 1492-1867*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 7). Note the uncanny similarity with

Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka's denunciation of Africa's corrupt and repressive nation-states, "A nation is a collective enterprise; outside of that, it is mostly a gambling space for the opportunism and adventurism of power" (Soyinka, *The Open Sore of a Continent* Oxford University Press, 1966: 121).

The meaning of nation as moral community is crucial to understanding Rizal's life-work and what he was happy to die for. What Rizal wanted to resolve or transcend was the ubiquitous presence of greed in social and political life. Greed creates scarcity; and scarcity foments greed. Thus, greed and scarcity go together—a point underscored in chapter 10 of Rizal's *El Filibusterismo*, entitled "Wealth and Want" in the Derbyshire translation or "Wealth and Misery" in Soledad Lacson-Locsin's. Under the prevailing neo-liberal discourse, greed and scarcity are normal. In Rizal's moral vision, this was not acceptable: greed and scarcity are at the root of injustice, violence and human suffering. The alternative to greed and scarcity is community.

Community is the compound word made up of the Latin words *cum* and *munere* or *munus*. *Cum* means among each other. *Munere* means to give, *munus* means gift

Thus, community means to give among each other. To take care of each other. To relate to each other with care and affection. This notion of community is epitomized in a caring family. When the members look after each other with care and affection, the result is the growth and happiness of each member. This is Rizal's ideal of justice.

But how can this irenic ideal be realized among a fragmented and divided people? Marx came to see the divisions within the "people" as "relations of production," that is, in terms of conflicting class interests. Hence, the Marxist notion of class struggle.

Rizal saw the divisions in terms of the ethics of both the Enlightenment and the older Judeo-Christian tradition—as arising from the "eternal struggle" with "passions" and with "errors," where intelligence is the best weapon, and a good heart the best force.

Thus, in his 20 December 1893 letter to his young nephew, Alfredo, Rizal counseled:

To live is to be among men and to be among men is to struggle. But this struggle is not a brutal and material struggle with men alone; it is a struggle with them, with one's self, with their passions and one's own, with errors and preoccupations. It is an eternal struggle with a smile on the lips and tears in the heart. On this battlefield man has no better weapon than his intelligence, no other force but his heart (*Letters Between Rizal and Family Members, Vol. Two. Book One. 1876-1896*. National Historical Institute, 1961, 375).

However this does not preclude resorting to revolutionary struggle, if necessary—as his 27 June 1888 letter to Mariano Ponce attested:

The principal thing that should be demanded from a Filipino of our generation is...to be a good man, a good citizen, who would help his country to progress with his head, his heart, and if need be, with his arms. With the head and the heart we ought to work always; with the arms when the time comes (*Rizal's Correspondence with Fellow Reformists [1882-1896]*. National Historical Institute, 1961, 173).

Judging from the sorry state of the Philippines, one wonders if Rizal's notion of community is possible at all. Rizal lived by what he had preached. Rizal's Dapitan years demonstrated that community was possible.

The Dapitan years

When Rizal arrived in Dapitan in 1892, there were only two colonial institutions in that district: the police, headed by the Spanish commandant; and the church, administered by a Jesuit priest. There was neither a medical doctor for the whole town, nor even a primary schoolhouse. There was no park, no street lights, no irrigation system. The farming and fishing townfolk were left to their ancient devices, without assistance from the colonial regime, although they were required to pay taxes, go to confession, attend Sunday mass, and give their weekly offerings to the church.

Rizal was to change all these upon his arrival. He built a one-doctor hospital, where he provided low-cost, as well as free, medical care and surgical care. Patients paid whatever they could afford, in cash or in kind. He stimulated business activity by forming a cooperative engaging in farming and the export of copra, hemp, and other agricultural products to Manila. The income from these products was more than enough to support the Rizal household in Dapitan, which varied in size depending on which relative from Calamba or Manila was visiting. In addition he built a schoolhouse where he gave free education to the community's brightest boys and young men in exchange for their services in his projects. With his pupils he was able to build Dapitan's first dam and irrigation system, a project he carried out like a recreational and educational class activity. He also taught the village folk how to improve their farming and fishing techniques, and introduced the European method of brickmaking. He developed Dapitan's first park, complete with street lamps and a garden/flower relief map of the whole island of Mindanao.

In short, Rizal was a one-man, self-funded N.G.O. (non government organization) for a massive community development effort. At the same time he was doing botanical and biological research, collaborating by mail with scientists in Europe, and pursuing his anthropological and linguistic studies. During his four years in Dapitan he set the example and demonstrated what could be accomplished by community effort. The changes were evident not only in material improvements but also, and more importantly, in education and public health. Education was perhaps Rizal's most important legacy in Dapitan. A less tangible result of his exile was the people's growing awareness that they could take the initiative in improving community life.

Some of Rizal's biographers, notably Austin Coates, assumed that Rizal's Dapitan years were his loneliest, for he was deprived of the stimulating company of his learned friends. I take a contrary view—not only was he able to put into practice all his ideas about community in Dapitan, it was also there that he met the one love of his life—his *dulce*

extranjera, Josephine Bracken. Rizal's letters to his mother and sisters Trining and Maria spoke of a most capable and caring woman, and thus, contradicted Austin Coates' cruel view of Josephine as useless and idle. Three examples would suffice:

Rizal to sister Trinidad (25 September 1895)

Miss B...cooks, washes, sews, and takes care of the chickens and the house. Not having *miki* to make *pancit* she has contrived to produce some sort of noodles out of flour and eggs, which serve the purpose. I would be grateful if you could send me a little colouring matter for *bagoóng*—she makes that too! She can also make *chili miso* but it seems to me that we have enough of that to last us ten years!" (Leon Ma. Guerrero, *The First Filipino*, 365; *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal*, National Historical Institute, 444)

Rizal to his mother (12 March 1896)

Miss B thanks you very much [for your gifts] and does not know how to reciprocate. She cannot go there just now because there is nobody here to look after the nephews. She bathes them, and washes and mends their clothes, so that, poor girl, she is never at rest, but she does it willingly for she has a great love for the boys, and they love her more than they love me! ... I am very afraid she has had a miscarriage; she was very ill the day before yesterday." (Guerrero, 366; *OHL*, 493)

Rizal to his sister Maria, regarding her son, Moris, and two other nephews (12 March 1896)

[Moris] is bright and beats [his cousins] Osio and Tan in memorizing, but Tan beats him in arithmetic and English. In slow reckoning Osio beats them all. Miss J. made him a long *cañamo* [sturdy textile made of hemp] shirt because he tears his clothes fast. ... Miss J. takes good care of the three. She loves them and it is she they always call. They call her *Auntie*. (*Letters between Rizal and family members*, National Historical Institute. 424)

Rizal obviously cared for his nephews and was proud of Josephine for looking after them. When Rizal left Dapitan to go to Cuba, he wrote a parting advice to each nephew (cited in Palma, 1949: 356):

To Teodosio [Osio]: Continue to be a good boy, studious, hardworking and obedient.

To Tanis [Estanislao]: Do not try to have the best thing for yourself. Try to do the best for others.

To Moris [Mauricio]: Be always good and obedient.

A letter from Estanislao Herbosa, the son of Rizal's sister Lucia, and the one referred to as Tan in Rizal's letter to Maria (above) supported Rizal's grateful regard for his *dulce extranjera*. Herbosa was 8 years old when sent to Dapitan to study under Rizal. When interviewed by his nephew, Angel Hidalgo (grandson of Rizal's sister Saturnina), the "still strong and robust" 83-year old Tan fondly recalled an interesting daily regimen for Rizal's 12 fledglings: waking up at six in the morning, going to the sea for a swim, and then, after breakfast, working on problems that Rizal had left for them to solve. Hidalgo relates his uncle's story: "You see, in the mornings Dr. Rizal would usually go to town to visit his patients. Josephine Bracken was left in charge of them and she would see to it that they finished their homework" (Hidalgo, 1971: 32). Indeed, Rizal's accomplishments in Dapitan were Josephine's too.

We now confront two questions: Was Dapitan too good to be true? Why did Rizal try not to escape? The two questions, in a way, miss Rizal's point. What he tried successfully to prove, by his refusal to escape, was a moral imperative that Filipinos must have the courage to do what was good for the community even in the face of colonial domination. More important, if his example could be universalized, that is, if every community in the Philippines followed the Dapitan example, in which *ilustrados* and the masses worked together to promote the well-being of the community, a national trend towards social transformation would have ensued, leading to the formation of a national community with a progressive and democratic civic culture.

Rizal's study on Oceania and voyaging

I come now to my last point—something in our past that would be most crucial in our future. Something that Rizal saw but, sadly, our Department of Education-endorsed textbook writers haven't noticed. Oceania has never figured prominently in our national or even popular imagination. This was not the case in the late 19th century among our nationalist *ilustrados*. Rizal in particular connected Oceania to the Philippines, and raised the issue of the role of voyaging and navigation in the peopling of Oceania.

Because of Rizal's reflections on the origins of Oceania, he started doubting Blumentritt's waves of migration theory, and corrected his earlier view, expressed in his Annotations to Morga's *Sucesos de las Islans Filipinas*, that Filipinos came from Sumatra. I suspect that H. Otley Beyer, who remains to this day enshrined in our DepEd-approved textbooks, got his notion of waves of migration from Blumentritt. But why the DepEd chose Beyer over Rizal on the question of our origins remains a mystery to me.

In his unfinished "Notes on Melanesia, Malaysia and Polynesia" (undated, possibly written in Dapitan, see *Political and Historical Writings of Jose Rizal*), Rizal wrote that the origin of the inhabitants of Polynesia—"whose furthest territories are the Marianas Islands, and the Sandwich Islands [Hawaiian Islands] is Island Southeast Asia, based on the linguistic studies of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Buschmann, and the comparative studies of the flora and fauna of Island SEA and Polynesia by Beness."

Rizal then asked the important question, "if the countries of the Malays are considered the most probable homeland of the Polynesians", then when did this emigration occur? Rizal answered that the clue lay in the presence or absence of Sanskrit words (*PHW*, 381). Rizal wrote:

Buschman has found a capital difference between the Malay and the Polynesian languages in the complete lack of Sanskrit terms in the latter, while such terms are evident even in the language of the Tagalogs and the Madagascans [inhabitants of Madagascar]... Presupposing the correctness of this fact, from it is deduced the conclusion that the

Polynesian branch separated from the common trunk at a time when Sanskrit did not yet have any influence on it, that is to say...before the beginning of the Christian era." (PHW, 382).

But how was it possible to sail against the prevailing tradewinds, over vast distances, on wooden canoes? Regarding this apparent puzzle, Rizal made a passing remark that was fully studied only recently in the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology. Rizal noted that the evidence compelled one to advance the hypothesis "that already in very remote antiquity navigation among these peoples [i.e., Austronesians from Island SEA] had reached considerable development." He added,

The expeditions and emigrations from the Indian archipelago [i.e., Island SEA] until Polynesia in no way presented insuperable obstacles to peoples accustomed to navigation. (380-81).

Unfortunately, Rizal never had the opportunity to determine how this was conducted: How was eastward expansion against the westerlies (tradewinds blowing from east to west) at all possible? Over a century later, an experimental archaeology and cultural rediscovery project—known as the Hokulèa project—settled once and for all this question. The Hokulèa project was initiated in the early 1970s by the Polynesian Voyaging Society, which was founded by University of Hawaii anthropologist Ben Finney [my anthropology mentor], a Hawaiian artist Herb Kane, and Hawaii Maritime Museum director Tommy Holmes. A voyaging canoe, named Hokulèa (Hawaiian name of the star Arcturus which hovers above Hawaii), was constructed and then launched to cross the 2,500 nautical miles between Hawaii and Tahiti, under the direction of Micronesian master navigator, Mau Piailug. The voyage, made without the use of navigational charts and instruments (such as the compass and sextant), was a success and, thus, definitively settled the scientific question of how eastward voyaging—against wind and current—was possible. The cultural aspect of the project was no less significant, for it enabled the native Hawaiians to revitalize their heritage—through their rediscovery of long-distance voyaging, including the Hawaiian traditions and practices associated with voyaging.

All these exciting developments were unnoticed in the Philippines—both in the mass media and the academe. Indeed the cultural impact of the Hokulèa project—tremendous and profound throughout Oceania—was missed in the Philippines. What treasures have we missed as a result of this lacunae in our national consciousness? Let me just leave you with one item—wayfinding. Without the science and art of wayfinding, the expansion of Austronesian peoples from island Southeast Asia to Oceania (Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia) would not have been possible.

Wayfinding is navigation by “reading” the stars, sun, ocean swells, wave patterns, cloud formations, wind directions, color of the sea, flight of sea birds—and integrating all these information with the aid of a mental compass—to determine and maintain a sailing course towards an unseen or unknown (imagined) land target. Distance, speed, and position are calculated mentally, without the aid of paper and pencil, and clock. Intelligence, memory, and sustained concentration are crucial—if the navigator forgets or gets distracted, the voyage may fail, and lives lost. The voyage (in a traditional outrigger, or double-hulled canoe about 60 feet long) could take more than 30 days over thousands of nautical miles. It requires not only knowledge and skill, and planning and preparation, but also discipline and teamwork, and physical fitness, strength and endurance. It is demanding mental and physical work for the whole crew—culminating in either landfall or total disaster. It takes a few years to learn the basics, but at least 20 years to become a master navigator [a master can navigate even with his eyes closed over an extended period].

Wayfinding in Oceania is not just about navigation and voyaging. The whole community is involved—in the making of the canoe, the education and training of navigators and crew, and the preparation for, and the launching of, the voyage. Wayfinding is a whole way of life, a tradition with its own rituals, such as chanting and dancing, and spiritual dimensions—involving people’s relationship with the sea and the land, and to each other, as expressed in the Hawaiian concept of *aloha àina* and *ohana*. Pacific islanders who are recovering their wayfinding traditions

are realizing that all peoples of the Pacific are inextricably linked in bonds of mutual obligation, caring and reciprocity—like the voyagers in a canoe who live or die together in the open seas. This *weltanschauung* can be discerned in the way they view the vast Pacific ocean—as “our sea of islands”—and in the Hawaiian salutation—*Aloha!*—which means more than our *Mabuhay!* for it also means love and caring for each other. Another important concept is *aloha ʻāina*, which means love of the land.

But here's the rub! Pacific wayfinding has its origins in island Southeast Asia, that is, Indonesia and the Philippines. Wayfinding is still practiced in Indonesia, particularly among the Bugis of South Sulawesi. Unfortunately, it seems to have disappeared without a trace in the Philippines.

The situation is different in Oceania. Wayfinding never disappeared in the isolated tiny atolls of Micronesia—notably Satawal, Puluwat, and Lamotrek. Thus, the master navigator from Satawal (a tiny coral atoll in the Carolines Islands), Mau Piailug, was brought to Hawaii to teach the native Hawaiians. It was picked up first by Mau's brightest disciple, Nainoa Thompson, who, in turn, helped fellow Hawaiians learn the difficult craft. Now, there are four certified wayfinders in Hawaii. One of them, Chad Babayan, is part-Filipino. [I was a University of Hawaii graduate student in anthropology in the second decade of this Hawaiian revival].

Hokulēa stimulated a wayfinding revival in New Zealand, French Polynesia, and the Cook Islands, then in Taumako in the Solomon Islands, then back in Guam in the Marianas. Almost full circle, but not quite.

It will have come full circle once it is revived in the Philippines and re-learned by Filipinos. We could then create or renew ties with our Austronesian cousins—starting perhaps with the Bugis of Indonesia, then with the rest of Oceania—and thereby revitalize our cultural identity. Then perhaps we can recover our chants too, as well as our voyaging songs and dances, and make these vital parts of our living culture—things that we celebrate in our everyday lives, in our homes and communities just like in many islands of Oceania, such as rural Hawaii where a family would rather sing and dance the hula and catch fish in the ocean rather than

hang around in malls or watch DVD movies or play video games. When that happens, we will stop asking what it means to be a Filipino. Instead of endlessly trying to prove to ourselves and foreigners that we have a distinct Filipino identity that we can be proud of, we will simply be celebrating our community life. For we would have come to see ourselves in a different light, and appreciate our connection to the land and the sea and each other as something sacred.

Rizal must have caught a glimpse of the Pacific rainbow during his lonely peregrinations in Dapitan. Tragically for Rizal and the Filipinos, the call of martyrdom—a sacrifice that, judging by where the Philippines is at today, seems to have been utterly unnecessary—took priority over the more fruitful task of reconnecting ourselves to Oceania and, thus, recovering our Pacific sense of community. Recovering and revitalizing that sense of community—as embodied in the metaphor of the voyaging canoe, our *barangay*—is our greatest challenge today. We owe it to our children to heed this challenge.

Notes

- 1 Updated from author's Annual Rizal Day Lecture on 30 December 2007, 8am, at Fort Santiago, Intramuros Manila. Sponsored by the National Historical Institute.
- 2 This essay is dedicated it to my 10-year old daughter Ligaya and her generation. They will be inheriting the mess that their elders have created. On their shoulders rest the impossible job of atoning for the sins of their fathers and mothers.
- 3 Futures studies or futuristics was first instituted in 1975 as the M.S Program in Studies of the Future at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, and in 1976 as the M.A Program in Public Policy in Alternative Futures at the Political Science Department of the University of Hawaii at Manoa. One of the founding fathers of Futures Studies is Johann Galtung. Having been exposed to this discipline as a political science doctoral student of the U.H, I proposed the course to the Asian Center, as part of a newly opened Development Studies Program. The program was approved by the university council of U.P in the first semester of school year 2007-08.
- 4 A powerpoint presentation on the convergent crises of peak oil and climate change and their ecological, social and political impact on the Philippines and the world was made by the author during his 30 Dec 07 Rizal Day lecture at Fort Santiago.