

BETWEEN TWO EMPIRES: Apolinario Mabini Under Three Flags

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Apolinario Mabini, patriot and political philosopher, intellectual superman of the Revolution, [was] a personality dominated by the absolutism of the purest reason, ...a practical seer...He was a leader for peace times, legislating for the Revolution in the course of the triumph toward civil responsibility and constitutional freedom.

- Fernando Maramag,
"Dissenting on the Hall of
Fame." (1927)

Mabini was undoubtedly the most profound thinker and political philosopher that the Filipino race ever produced. Some day, when his works are fully published, but not until then, Mabini will come into his own, A great name awaits him, not only in the Philippines, for he is already appreciated there, but in every land where the cause of liberty and human freedom is revered.

- Philippine Press Bureau,
Washington DC, 1922

Leading Filipino historian Ambeth Ocampo once declared that Apolinario Mabini is the most neglected or ignored figure in the pantheon of heroes of the revolution against Spain and the United States. In fact, he alone—neither Rizal, Bonifacio, Del Pilar, Jacinto, etc.—singlehandedly confronted U.S. imperial violence in words and deeds. Acknowledged as “*utak ng himagsikan*,” Mabini is not one of Resil Mojares’ “brains of the nation.” Among two of the elite heads were Mabini’s detractors, Pedro Paterno and Trinidad Pardo de Tavera, prominent accomplices of American pacification. Likewise, Mabini is either excised or marginalized in the two volumes celebrating the centennial of the 1898 revolution (edited by Elmer Ordonez). Indeed, he suffered his second deportation since his exile to Guam in 1901-1903, and continues to be maligned and dismissed, an unknown hero still waiting for judicious appraisal (San Juan, 2005).

One of Mojares’ brains, Pedro Paterno, together with his *ilustrado* cohorts in the Malolos Congress, succeeded in persuading General Emilio Aguinaldo to expel Mabini from the cabinet. From then on, the Republic disintegrated with internecine class antagonisms. Mabini resigned on May 7, 1899. He was adviser to Aguinaldo since June 18, 1898 when he wrote the decree that established the dictatorial government that evolved into the first Philippine Republic on January 21 1899. Mabini served as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Republic, handling negotiations with the American invaders starting on March 6, 1899. He was the chief organic and public intellectual articulating the principles of the national-popular revolution against two imperial leviathans, Spain and the United States (Campomanes, 2007).

To be sure, Mabini was intransigent. Among his acts was his exchange with General Franklin Bell, the scourge of Batangas and Laguna. Although a political prisoner since his capture by the Americans in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija, on December 10, 1899, he continued militant opposition with published statements and polemics against the occupiers. Both General Otis and William Howard Taft stigmatized Mabini as a stubborn “irreconcilable.” General Arthur MacArthur finally decided to suppress the Republic’s tribune by deporting him to Guam, together with other recalcitrant rebels. MacArthur explained to the U.S. Congress his reason for punishing Mabini: he was “a most active agitator, persistently and defiantly refusing amnesty, and

maintaining correspondence with insurgents in the field while living in Manila, Luzon" (Mabini, 1965). Despite this, Nick Joaquin censures Mabini as a crafty lawyer, compared to other hispanicized exemplars like Rizal and Aguinaldo. His bias in favor of hispanicized ilustrados is quite egregious, despite their treachery and opportunism (Constantino, 1978; Storey & Lichauco, 2024). But history has vindicated Mabini with the resurgence of nationwide anti-imperialist mobilization in the 1970s up to the present conjuncture of the Gaza genocide and the U.S.-Iran stalemate..

Meanwhile, let us take a wider perspective and proceed from background to foreground, discovering mediations between opposites and tendencies to synthesizing contradictions toward a higher level of totality—a reborn, radicalized national-popular republic. What is at stake here? It's the consequence of this Event, the Filipino-American War (1899-1913) subsuming a genealogy of conquest and neocolonial hegemony (Storey & Lichauco, 2024, pp. 49-84; Francisco, 1987; Miller, 1982). Over a million Filipinos succumbed to what Gabriel Kolko called "an orgy of racist slaughter" (Kolko, 1984, p. 287) a conflict distinguished by water-torture (recently called "waterboarding"), hamletting or "reconcentration" of village inhabitants, and ruthless genocidal "pacification" by the Yankee invaders. Mark Twain, who led the Anti-Imperialist League together with the philosopher William James, characterized the bloody conquest in his comment on the massacre of six hundred Moros (including women and children) on Mt. Dajo, March 9, 1906: "This is incomparably the greatest victory that was ever achieved by the Christian soldiers of the United States" (172). So much for "Benevolent Assimilation" and the Christianization of savages in that tropical archipelago.

Retrospective Orientation

Even before Aguinaldo appointed Mabini as his adviser, Mabini witnessed the class antagonisms within the anti-colonial, plebeian camp led by ilustrados, the educated fraction of the colonized indigenes. How to reconstruct the balance of political force in favor of the peasant-worker alliance, is the major challenge. Can defeat nurture a prospective breakthrough? While in exile, Mabini fashioned an analysis-synthesis of the collective experience in his memoirs, *La revolucion filipina/The Philippine*

Revolution. Summing up the achievement of the generation who took part in the 1896-1899 revolution, Mabini appraised the organic basis of the Filipino nation as a popular-democratic project. All sovereignty belongs to the masses of workers-peasants, the victims of Spanish and U.S. colonialism. He articulated the historical consciousness of the oppressed and exploited as the foundation of the first Philippine Republic. Functioning as the first prime minister of the revolutionary government, and later as deported insurrecto, Mabini crafted the juridical-moral basis of the resistance against U.S. aggression. He distinguished himself as the first public intellectual who exposed the hypocritical racist ideology of U.S. imperialism. In doing so, he forged the conscience of the Malayan race founded on a socialist-oriented ethical self-consciousness.

In his memoir, Mabini mapped the trajectory of the Filipino struggle for self-determination from the time of the secularizing propagandistas, the Katipunan, and the urban cultural activists that inspired later independence movements. Analyzing key discourses, we hope to elucidate the process of how Mabini sought to indigenize and merge Enlightenment principles with the communal ethos of the natives struggling to overthrow the legacy of the frailocracia's feudal brutality (Del Pilar, 1979) and the violence of U.S. barbarism. From this dialectic of contradictory forces, Mabini discovered the revolutionary subject, the agent of a national-popular insurgency sustained by martyrdom and visionary ideals. Mabini may have invented this subversive agent by defining him in the "El Verdadero Decalogo" and historicizing him in his memoir *La revolucion filipina*. Although Mabini's life and deeds are still obscured, his ideas remain sedimented and cogent in the light of the profound crisis gripping the neocolony.

Historical surveys of Mabini's decisive role in Aguinaldo's revolutionary govt. have downplayed the radical implications of Mabini's role. Cesar Majul's pioneering work on Mabini is an example. Majul explored manifold aspects of Mabini's political thought, but he ignored Mabini's critique of the racist ideology of U.S. imperialist domination of the country. He also discounted the popular-democratic vision of national transformation because it lacked an economic foundation. We need to appraise Mabini's historical-materialist ideas from the vantage point of the current neocolonial predicament that is symptomatic of the unfinished tasks of the 1896 revolution

and the ongoing resistance to predatory U.S. global hegemony. Mabini and his group represented the material base for a politics which theorized what is needed to confront the then emergent globalized phenomenon of racialist imperialism whose technological violence exceeded the feudal savagery of Spain in decline. Just as Lenin sketched the narrative of the advent of global finance-capitalism (Jameson, 2010, P. 300-301), Mabini speculated on the rise of masculinist white supremacy. As McKinley and others propagandized it, the war to annex the Philippines exemplified the West's civilizing mission under the banner of "Benevolent Assimilation," with finance-capital underwriting the neocolony's "free market" (Constantino, 1978, pp. 25-92; Labor Research Association, 1958; Morison, 1965, pp. 806-807).

Deracination Reversed

Because of an ingrained habit of focusing on personality, most portrayals of Mabini succumb to wrongheaded nitpicking. We need to foreground the exceptional role of Mabini's work as foundational: he created the historical consciousness of the emerging nation. In the aftermath of the *Liga's* dissolution, Mabini collaborated with Emilio Jacinto and Andres Bonifacio in creating the founding documents of the Katipunan (Alzona, 1982). His genesis as revolutionary partisan dates back to the publication of the *Solidaridad* and Rizal's political intervention. His charisma inhered in his thought, not his paralyzed body which symbolized the miserable condition of the subjugated Indios in the grip of superstition, taboos, ritualized dogmas.

Eventually, Mabini was able to meet Rizal's brother in Los Banos and link up with the Aguinaldo camp in Kawit, Cavite, in the middle of the war. Earlier, he had already produced widely circulated pamphlets and polemics against Spanish authoritarianism. In *Panukala*, among other works, Mabini crafted the framework for Aguinaldo's revolutionary government before the convening of the Malolos Congress (Mabini, 2003a, Volumes 1-2). Aside from his political role in the Malolos Republic, Mabini confronted American officials during the bloody pacification of the islands in 1899-1902. He argued for the universal duty of the oppressed to struggle for their inalienable rights and their freedom to actualize their honor and dignity.

Thus the Mabini who confronted the American generals (Generals Otis, Bell, Wheeler, MacArthur) after his capture in December 1899 already embodied the Republic's conscience, its *raison d'être*. He had incorporated the Event (the Katipunan uprising) as the demarcating line between victim and victimizer, between oppressor and oppressed. His magisterial *La revolucion filipina* expressed the developing normative ethics and politics of the struggle, from its irruption in the Cavite mutiny and execution of Burgos, Gomez and Zamora up to the killing of Luna and capture of Aguinaldo. It articulated the self-consciousness of workers and peasants rooted in the traditional ethos of honor, equality and justice. His proposals for an "internal revolution," dialectically fused with the "external revolution" initiated by Rizal, Del Pilar, and Bonifacio, constituted a visionary pedagogy of nationalist-popular democracy embodied in "El Verdadero Decalogo" ("Decalogo," in short) and *Panukala*. In them, as well as in *La Revolucion Filipina*, Mabini synthesized the classic concept of natural law with the Enlightenment principle of individual liberty and the primacy of communal needs. His united-front radicalism aimed to establish a counter-hegemony to the theocratic state, the frailocracy and its monarchic behemoth.

Allegorizing the Process of Becoming-Filipino

Mabini's strategy of combining the war of position and war of maneuver—to use Gramsci's terms—was a mode of asymmetric defensive strategy. The native army was weak in logistics, weapons, and resources. It was bedeviled by rivaling officials. Let us examine how Mabini tried to resolve those inadequacies by reconstituting the agent of change. It might be useful to approach this problem of organization by first parsing the programmatic logic of the famous "Decalogo" (published as a pamphlet on June 24, 1898, first included in *Panukala*) to indicate the significant axioms of Mabini's reconstructive scheme.

The blueprint of a democratic nation-state was being drafted in this process of identifying the central political agency. Note that underlying his initial proposal for organizing the republic in *Panukala* is the "Decalogo" laid out as a preamble to the schematic outline of a constitution. Mabini's *Panukala* and other works written before the Event of the founding of the Katipunan, the political party that initiated the mass uprising, needs to be assayed in

depth. Replacing the reformist *Liga* (of which Mabini was the last secretary), the Katipunan's mode of subversion reorganized the political field as instrument and expression of the nation-in-emergence. They forecast the reconstitution of civil society, the state in formation, the rights and obligations of citizens. Mabini's pre-Malolos discourses functioned as the foundation for the new society, hence their paramount significance.

Let us decipher the "Decalogo" as Mabini's initial mode of inventing the agent of transformation. In doing so, we can discover that it also outlines the solution to the problematic of representation and the legitimacy of the national-popular forces as the sole authority. One might conceive of the "Decalogo" as the germ of a disciplined party operating in a time of war in which politics becomes immanent in the ethics of mobilizing mass resistance. (I quote the original, and then, the modified translation by Philippine Press Bureau):

Una, ibigin mo ang Diyos at ang iyong puri [karangalan] nang lalo sa lahat ng bagay; ang Diyos ay siyang batis ng buong katotohanan, ng lahat ng katarungan at gawain; ang ipaghahangad ng puri ang siya lamang makaakit sa iyo na huwag magbulaan, kundi laging matuto sa katuwiran at magtaglay ng katapatan at kasipagan.

(First, Love God and your honor over all other things; God is the fountain of all truth, of all power. Your desire for honor is the only thing that will make you avoid lying. Instead, you need to learn to be just and industrious).

Notice in this first avowal the emphasis on honor, its equation with God which, for Mabini as mason and rationalist, appears as the deistic force behind the world as machine. We are in the epoch of the Renaissance and scientific thinking. But honor evokes the feudal ideal of pride and virtue in the warrior-knight, an aristocratic quality that sanctifies individual agency and responsibility, coupled with fidelity to truth, justice and diligence.. In effect, for Mabini, the citizen is constituted by personal honor as the power enabling the individual to to be truthful, just, and practical agent. This honor approximates the famous Renaissance *virtu* mediating the unpredictable trajectory of Fortuna. We are in the interregnum between the feudal-

aristocratic code and the Renaissance principle of creative individuality. Mabini's notion of honor evolves into the positive sense of virtue engaged in countering Fortuna's contingency in Machiavelli's communal republic.

Ikalawa. Sambahin mo ang Diyos sa paraang minamatuwid at minamarapat ng iyong budhi at sariling kalooban, na kung tawagi'y konsensiya, sapagkat sa iyong konsensiya na humahatol sa gawa mong masama at pumupuri sa magaling ay doon nangungusap ang iyong Diyos.

(Second, worship God in the way that your own conscience, your goodness and inwardness, dictates as reasonable and just. Your conscience dissuades you from evil acts and honors your good deeds—that is where God speaks).

Here, we enter the stage of Filipino reformation, long before Aglipay's break with the Catholic Church. We glimpse the countenance of the deistic thinker who reveals his commitment to individual conscience as the source of God's authority. Individual conscience articulates the validity of justice, truth, and productive work. We are edging toward a protestant bourgeois autonomy where humans empowered by reason and self-reflection go through a pedagogical routine. With the deity naturalized, the secular world of self-conscious individuals is ready for human intervention.

Ikatlo, sanayin mo at dagdagan ang katutubong alam at talas ng isip na ipinagkaloob ng Diyos sa iyo sa pamamagitan ng pag-aaral at pagkasakit mo sa buong makakaya ang gawang kinahihiligan ng iyong loob, na huwag lang sisinsay kailanman sa daan ng magaling at katuwiran, nang mapasaiyo ang lahat ng bagay na dapat mong kailanganin at sa paraang ito'y makatulong ka sa ikasusulong ng kalahatan; kung gayo'i magaganap mo ang ipinatutungkol sa iyo ng Diyos sa buhay na ito, at kung ito'y maganap mo ay magkakapunan ka at kung may puri ka na'y ipatatanghal mo ang kaluwalhatian ng iyong Diyos,

(Third, cultivate and enrich your natural wisdom and sharpness of mind gifted to you by God through your studies and sacrifices to your utmost capacity so that you can fulfill whatever your inner self is inclined to doing. Be sure not to block at any time the path of

righteousness and reason. Thus you will obtain whatever you need. In this way, you can help others and advance the progress of the whole community. In doing so, you will accomplish what God has assigned you to do in this life. When you accomplish this, your life will gain self-fulfillment and honor, thereby honoring your God).

I argue that this third maxim identifies individual worth or honor with the welfare of the community. The need for cooperation becomes primary. While Mabini continues to invoke God, the rubric (relic of medieval pedagogy and medieval *habitus* (Bourdieu), the deity is synonymous at first with honor, sentiment of sacrifice, then with learning, unselfish devotion to others via mutual aid, and the material progress of the community. Mabini's "God" is identified with the progress, solidarity, justice, and honor of humanity.

By inference, Mabini's scientific humanism synthesizes the teachings of Enlightenment rationalism and the classic principle of natural rights. Its universalism coalesces with emancipatory socialist goals enunciated in the teachings of rationalist thinkers such as Kant and Grotius, up to Saint Simon, Marx, Engels, Rizal, Isabelo de los Reyes, and others. The socialized human being is slowly being processed via persuasion and arousing of sentiments, the affects of joy intermingled with pain, together with the incessant desire for freedom and communal rejoicing (Spinoza, 2000).

Passage to A Communal Horizon

We shall see in the next seven proposals, beginning with the fourth rule, the keystone of popular democracy maneuvered into a rationale for the movement for national liberation. It is a counter-hegemonic move against the dominant theocratic order, against the absolute control of frailocracy (see Del Pilar. Mabini envisioned an egalitarian, socialistic framework for the decolonizing country (Majul, 1960; Reyno, 1964, pp. 32-40). The indexical sign "country" gradually evolves into the symbolic designation of "nation" in early stages of development. The concept of "republican" government condenses all the other motifs of honor, conscience, rationality, and justice elaborated in my comments above. In the next four proposals, Mabini focuses on the invention of the transformative collective agency by reminding the native that his honor, his egoistic happiness, and his future flourishing depend

on his working with his neighbors, his expanded community — the country ,
“the only Paradise,” emerging from the collective endeavor of his neighbors.
Past, present and future welfare of the individual native coalesce in the
eroticizing of concrete place/time.

*Ikaapat. Ibigin mo ang iyong bayang sunod sa Diyos at sa iyong karangalan
at mahigit sa iyong sarili, sapagkat ang bayan mo’y siyang tanging
Paraisong kaloob ng Diyos sa iyo sa buhay na ito, ang tanging lupang
tinubuan ng iyong lahi, ang tanging pamana ng iyong mga ninuno, at
ang tanging pag-asa ng iyong kinabukasan; dahil sa bayan mo, ikaw ay
may buhay, pag-ibig, kapakanan, ligaya, karangalan, at Diyos (this version
is from Panganiban & Panganiban, 1954, p. 147).*

(Fourth. Thou shalt love thy country after God and thy honor and
more than thyself: for she is the only Paradise which God has given
thee in this life, the only patrimony of thy race, the only inheritance
of thy ancestors and the only hope of thy posterity; because of her,
thou has life, love and interests, happiness, honor and God).

*Ikalima. Pagsakitan mo ang kaginhawahan ng iyong bayan nang higit sa
iyong sarili at pagpilitan mong siya’y pagharian ng kabaitan, ng katuwiran
at ng kasipagan, sapagkat kung maginhawa siya’y pilit ding giginhawa
ikaw at ang iyong kasambahay at kamag-anakan.*

*Ikaanim. Pagpilitan mo ang kasarinlan ng iyong bayan, sapagkat ikaw
lamang ang tunay na makapagmamalasakit sa kanyang ika-darakila at
ikatatanghal, palibhasa’y ang kanyang kasarinlan ang siya mong sariling
kaluwagan at kalayaan, ang kanyang pagkadakila ang magdadala sa iyo ng
lahat mong kailangan at ang kanyang pagkatanghal ang siya mong
kabantugan at kabuhayang walang hanggan.*

[Fifth, Thou shalt strive for the happiness of thy country before thy
own, making of her the kingdom of reason, of justice, and of labor;
for if she be happy, thou, together with thy family, shalt likewise be
happy.]

[Sixth. Thou shalt strive for the independence of thy country: for only thou canst have any real interest in her advancement and exaltation, because her independence constitutes thy own liberty; her advancement, thy perfection; and her exaltation, thy own glory and immortality.]

Ikapito. Sa iyong baya'y huwag kang kumilala sa kapangyarihan ng ninumang tao na hindi palagay ninyong magkababayan, sapagkat ang buong kapangyariha'y sa Diyos nagmumula at ang Diyos ay ang konsiyensiya ng bawat taong nangungusap, kaya't ang sinumang ituro at ihalal ng mga konsiyensiya ng lahat ng mamamayan ang siya lamang makapagtataglay ng wagas na kapangyarihan.

(Seventh: Thou shalt not recognize in thy country the authority of any person who has not been elected by thee and thy countrymen; for authority emanates from God, and as God speaks in the conscience of every man, the person designated and proclaimed by the conscience of a whole people is the only one who can use true authority).

Toward a Universalizing Pedagogy

The transition from the fourth to the fifth commandment marks the crucial turn to the socialized protagonist of change. It signals the shift from individual pursuit of self-interest to a deeper, comprehensive participation in humanizing nature. In the fifth and sixth injunctions, Mabini conceived of individual liberty and organic well-being as subsumed, or enabled, by the country's independence. He thus urged action to acquire genuine, full sovereignty. Country, family, and kinship at the heart of the serf-peasant mentality, are envisioned to coalesce in the defense of the territory, the source of material and affective nurturance.

In the seventh proposal, Mabini returned to the theme of God speaking through one's conscience. With each native conscience multiplied and fused together, the people's authority emerges as the foundation of the nation. Blood relationship, family, and kinship ties dissolve into the womb of the *patria*, the communal assembly. The eighth imperative names the nation a

“Republic,” a political order gravitating around reason, liberty, and the equalizing force of shared labor. Mabini’s concept of “labor” here is more properly defined as praxis, the process of knowledge actualized in metabolic engagement with nature and its potency. Notice again Mabini’s juxtaposing liberty and progress with collective industry, a conceptualization of praxis, the welding of theory and practice, that Marx envisioned in *The German Ideology* and the “Theses on Feuerbach” (Goldmann, 1968, pp. 63-98).

Ikawalo. Ihanap mo ang iyong bayan ng Republika, yaong bagang lahat na nagpupuno ay palagay ng mga mamamayan, at huwag mong payagan kailan mang Monarkiya, ang pagkakaroon ng hari, sapagkat walang binibigyan ang hari ng kamahalan kundi ang isa o ilan lamang sa mag-anak upang maitanghal ang sarili niyang kamag-anakan na siyang panggagalingan ng lahat ng maghahari, hindi ganito ang Republika na nagbibigay ng kamahalan at karapatan sa lahat ayon sa bait nang bawat isa, ng pagkadakila, alang-alang sa kaluwagan at kalayaan at ng kasaganaan at kadilagang tinataglay ng kasipagan.

Ikasiyam. Ibigin mo ang iyong kapwa tao paris nang pag-ibig mo sa iyong sarili, pagkat binigyan siya ng Diyos at gayon din naman ikaw ng katungkulanang tulungan ka at huwag gawin sa iyo ang di niya ibig na gawin mo sa kanya; ngunit kung ang iyong kapwa ay nagkukulang dito sa kamahalmahalang katungkulan at nagtatangka ng masama sa iyong buhay at kalayaan at pag-aari, ay dapat mong ibuwal at lipulin siya pagkat ang mananaig ngayo’y ang kauna-unahang utos ng Diyos na mag-ingat ka at iniingatan kita.

(Eight. Thou shalt strive for a Republic and never for a monarchy in thy country: for the latter exalts one or several families and founds a dynasty; the former makes a people noble and worthy through reason, great through liberty, and prosperous and brilliant through labor).

(Ninth. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: for God has imposed upon him, as well as upon thee, the obligation to help thee and not to do unto thee what he would not have thee do unto him; but if thy

neighbor, failing in this sacred duty, attempt against thy life, the liberty and thy interests, then thou shalt destroy and annihilate him for the supreme law of self-preservation prevails).

Aborting Postcolonial Deconstruction

We can now read Mabini's rejection of possessive, acquisitive individualism before its full actualization. The Enlightenment urge to end tutelage has been accomplished. Action to change the world is the demand. But utilitarian individualism can only flourish in a cooperative realm of mutual aid. In the ninth injunction, Mabini invokes Spinoza's *conatus* as the principle of survival and self-enhancement by cooperation with others, not just personal but collective perseverance and persistence. For without mutual social relations, the Hobbesian realm of wolves devouring each other would reign. Surely, Mabini does not envisage a life that would be fearsome, brutish and short; in fact, recapitulating the "Golden Rule" invokes natural law and echoes Kant's categorical imperative. Anyone who violates the rule falls into the domain of savagery, where violence prevails.

Organized mobilization of the people against tyranny required unity and discipline. It required solidarity subsuming self-centered pursuits. Mabini formulates a sense of obligation based on solidarity, on the care and compassion for others in the same situation, that of victim of murderous, oppressive forces. Power inheres in each individual fighting for integrity, honor, and survival of the community, where the being-in-himself confronts others and thus acquires potent self-consciousness. In this transition, Mabini's materialist dialectics opens the space for the imbrication of the particular in the universal, the concept which gives personal experience its symbolic meaning, empirical grounding, and intelligibility.

Ikasampu. Laging itatangi mo sa iyong kapwa ang iyong kababayan at lagi namang aariin mo siyang tunay na kaibigan at kapatid at kundi ma'y kasama, palibhasa'y iisa ang inyong kapalaran, iisa rin naman ang inyong kasayahan at kadalamhatian, at gayon ding nagkakaayon ang inyong mga hinahangad at pag-aari.

Kaya't habang tumutulay ang mga patuto ng mga bayan na ibinangon at inaalagaan ng pagkakanya-kanya ng mga lahi at angkan, ay sa kanya lamang dapat kang makisama at tunay na makipag-isa sa hinahangad at pag-aari, upang magkalakas ka sa pakikibaka sa kaaway ninyong dalawa at sa paghanap nang lahat ng kinakailangan sa kabuhayan ng tao.

(Tenth. Thou shalt consider thy countryman more than thy neighbor; thou shalt see him thy friend, thy brother or at least thy comrade, with whom thou art bound by one's fate. by the same joys and sorrows and by common aspirations and interests.

Therefore, as long as national frontiers subsist, raised and maintained by the selfishness of race and of family, with thy countryman alone shalt thou unite in a perfect solidarity of purpose and interest, in order to have force, not only to resist the common enemy but also to attain all the aims of human life).

In this concluding exhortation, Mabini reiterates the imperative of prioritizing one's countrymen who share the same fate in history. Evolving rootedness in a concrete territory or location, affirmed as the historicized habitat of the community, determines the coordinates of one's affections, dreams, hopes for the future. Living with the Others defines our identity and personal growth. We recall here Otto Bauer's famous notion that nationalism is rooted in one's consciousness of sharing the same fate as others (Davis, 1967, p. 150). However, that fate is not an abstraction but a complex manifold of experiences, events, and decisions. Mabini's idea is historically defined, that is, as long as societies are divided by racial and ethnic categories and selfish interests, the most intelligent obligation and duty of each citizen would be to promote the interests and purpose of one's community. In his August 31, 1900 letter to General Bell, Mabini affirmed the "principles of morality and justice" legitimizing the revolution, an affirmation which testifies to the people's "consciousness of national solidarity" (*Letters*, 1965, p. 261).

For his part, Napoleon Mabaquiao analyzed this solidarity as the basis of the "moral universalism" that informs the "Decalogue," although he erroneously claims that it was a "moral imperative with a divine justification" (2018, p. 28). We already explained the deistic and secularizing rationale of

the use of “God” by Mabini. Suffice it to endorse here Cesar Majul’s explanation that Mabini, in his “Decalogue” and the “Ordenanzas de la Revolution” (Mabini, 2003b Volumes 1-2, pp. 142-173), sought to fuse the external and internal revolution in a concept of nationalism that unified two contradictory trends, the partiality of indigenous folkways and the universalizing impulse of Enlightenment rationalism.

We have expounded that concept of nationalism earlier, a notion crystallizing in the transitions from the first three proposals to the last seven of the “Decalogue.” Its effect is catalyzing and integrative, suturing selves/ persons to the energies of the communal project. Anthony Giddens hypothesized that nationalism (chiefly the European kind) meant “shared feelings of attachment to symbols which identify the members of a given population as belonging to the same overall community”. Such symbols refer to language, catastrophic events, folkways, etc. But in the Philippine crisis that Mabini diagnosed, it was the symbolic process of awakening and group rebellion against the colonizers that defined the core of Filipino nationalism, a process shared with Chinese, Indians, Malays, Cubans, and others trapped in the same predicament.

Internationalist nationalism, for Mabini (as well as for Rizal), manifests itself by including neighbors. Filipino revolutionaries identified themselves as part of the Malay race victimized by Western colonial powers. This is Mabini’s totalizing scheme fulfilled by dialectical mediation, by a negation (rebellion) of the negativity of colonial servitude, an extrapolation from the Hegelian paradigm of the conflict between the lord and bondsman in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Again the universalizing thematic of colonialism is condensed in the particular experience of the Filipino armed resistance to Spanish and American subjugation. By inference, this decolonial perspective would be articulated by Lenin, Mao, Fanon, Ho Chi Minh, Amilcar Cabral, and others as the axiom of national-liberation struggles in the epoch of finance-capitalism, imperialism in its current stage of global rentier-financialized hegemony (Hudson, 2022, pp. 153-232).

For a Popular-Democratic Transformation

From a third-world angle, the Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel has articulated this victimized sociohistorical subject of the capitalist world-system as a “mode of reality of each concrete human being who is also the absolute prerequisite and ultimate demand of all forms of liberation” (Bowle, 1947, p. xv). This accords with the scientific humanism of Spinoza (Bowle, 1947) and echoes the Enlightenment principles enunciated by the staff of *La Solidaridad*. His insight applies to the Filipino victim’s predicament undergoing agency formation.

This agency contrasts with the idealist paradigm offered by Benedict Anderson who romanticizes personalities (such as Isabelo de Los Reyes and Mariano Ponce). Anarchism may have influenced the two patriots (Anderson, 2005), but the thrust of the *Liga*, Katipunan and the Aguinaldo campaign was collectivist: the shaping of national identity. In a time of war, Anderson’s fetish for acephalous, horizontal actions—propaganda by personal deeds—can only benefit the despotic hierarchy of Spain and the United States. Rizal’s vindictive Simoun (in *El Filibusterismo*) was the allegory for the chaos-loving anarchist. What was needed at that time was organized mobilization of disciplined combatants whose dynamics Mabini adapted from scholastic pedagogy, Masonic fraternal rituals, and the vicissitudes of survival as an impoverished student from the province of Batangas.

Contradictory tendencies in his life shaped Mabini’s austere, self-sacrificing character. His diary in Guam recorded his refusal to separate from his co-prisoners and live in the city of Agaña (Mabini, 2003b). He inferred valuable lessons from the internecine conflicts in the evolutionary movement, as well as in the long record of decapitated subaltern peasant revolts in our colonial history. Anarchist exhibitionism was futile, self-serving, defeatist. His prophetic “Decalogo” as well as his manifestoes and memoir have prefigured the normative ethics of the anti-colonial movements of the twentieth century. It also intimated the advent of the emancipatory ideals of the program of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines today. To paraphrase Marx, the weapons of criticism are now challenged by the criticism of weapons, in which ideas need to be translated into action by the masses, into protracted mass struggles in diverse forms. As the aphorism goes, theory

will become a “material force as soon as it seizes the masses” (Marx quoted in McLellan 22, 1971).

Indigenized Ethics: From Knowledge to Action

We have arrived at the rationalist and libertarian persona of Mabini incarnated in the worker-soldier of the revolutionary phase of the Republic. He belongs to the party of subversive plebeians, educated children of *anak-pawis* (the indigenous proletariat). He is the enemy of imperial power subjugating indigenous peoples, upholding individual rights and dignity. It is the collective desire embodied by Mabini’s *conatus*, the endeavor to “persevere in its being” (Spinoza, 2000, p. 172; Parkinson, pp. 37-40), embodied in his deeds and writing (including all those decrees and manifestoes attributed to Aguinaldo). However, Mabini transcended the bourgeois limits of propertied rationality with his insistence on the people’s will, its collective praxis, as the justification for claiming sovereignty. Responsibility for fulfilling the needs of others, particularly those who historically shared the same fate as victims of imperial domination, serves to guarantee the legitimacy of the struggle to free the homeland from the violent racism and predatory assimilationism of the U.S. empire. From this perspective, Mabini may justly be acclaimed as the uncompromising tribune of the Filipino masses as world-historical protagonists in a continuing war of liberation for all the oppressed and exploited

Almost an unknown hero, Mabini’s life and its complex indices can be assayed from various perspectives to foreground his dialectics of specific and universal (San Juan, 2005). He was the only organic intellectual of his generation able to grasp and comprehend the racist ideology of US imperialism, evinced in his “In Response to General Bell” and in *Letters to Generals Otis, Wheeler, MacArthur*, as well as to the Schurman Commission (Mabini, 1965, pp. 172-74; pp. 233-336; pp. 241-242; pp. 246-247).

Above all, Mabini also provided the first totalizing, analytic-synthesizing discourse on the itinerary of the 1896 revolution. Jovino Miroy perspicaciously underscored Mabini’s distinctive radicalism immanent in his memoirs composed during the Guam exile. But history did not stop there.

During Mabini's deracinated fate in Guam, the assassination of President McKinley by an anarchist occurred on September 6, 1901. Upon learning of what happened, Mabini and his compatriots sent to the governor of Guam "their heartfelt sympathy on account of the sad incidents that has befallen President McKinley." They knew that the war did not depend on one man, that the brutal pacification would continue, and that their suffering would not cease. In the following September, Mabini described a destructive earthquake that destroyed almost all of Agana, the only city in Guam. Mabini's diary entry for September 23, 1902, contains a palimpsest of auguries: "Big holes were formed in front of the Protestant church and in various areas. A long crack in the ground, starting from the sea, cuts through the different parts of the town. Water gushed forth from some of these holes, inundating a street" (Mabini, 2003a, Volumes 1-2, p. 322; p. 340).

The exile returned on February 26, 1902, confessing that he was "utterly confused,...almost annihilated by ailment and sufferings." Nonetheless, he was determined to "be still of some usefulness, unless I have just returned to the Islands with the sole purpose of dying" (Mabini, Letters 306). He died of cholera on May 13, 1903, two months and seven days after he signed an Oath of Allegiance to the conqueror, having ascertained that circumstances in the Islands justified his "taking it or not." Mabini was not evasive or hedging his bets; he assessed the situation, recognizing that the struggle would take new innovative paths, protracted and tortuous, as he foreshadowed in the epilogue of *La Revolucion Filipina*, in his letters to friends, and in various public statements.

In his "A Filipino Appeal to the People of the United States" (issued on July 21, 1899, but published in the U.S. in January 1900), Mabini already predicted defeat of the Republic but its eventual victory assured in the future: "...if the American people will not grant [Filipinos] justice, there is a Providence which punishes the crime of nations as well as of individuals" (Mabini, 1900, p. 60) This Providence of course, like the god of Mabini's "Decalogo," holds court and dispenses justice via the conscience of the insurrectos. My forthcoming book on Mabini (San Juan, *Apolinario Mabini*)

analyzes the themes and visionary insights of Mabini's magisterial *La revolucion filipina*, as well as those of various manifestoes, letters, etc.

Finally, it may be superfluous to observe that the Mabini narrative, like the Desire called Mabini, can be construed and interpreted in diverse modalities. Certain episodes and facts of Mabini's life, particularly the dialectics between paralyzed body and dynamic mind, are rehearsed several times, diagnosed and appraised from various contexts and viewpoints. What my critical commentary reveals—partly recapitulated in this essay—is a versatile, lucid, socially conscious intelligence mindful of the urgent predicament of the masses, and a sensibility with prophetic insights into the future of the country caught between two empires, under three flags (Spanish, Filipino, American) with particular relevance to today's struggle against U.S. "imperial evangelism" which has converted the country to a staging-ground for war against China (Hudson, 2022). We are faced with the choice of either barbarism or democratic-popular right of survivals of all working peoples. Our nationalism is founded on this internationalist axiom of conscientized collaboration with all victims of imperialist domination. In this light, Mabini is a hero for the Philippines as well as for Asians and all peoples struggling for freedom and independence then and now.

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