

Natural Law and Anticolonial Revolt: Apolinario Mabini's *La Revolución Filipina* and Isabelo de los Reyes' *La Sensacional Memoria*

Ramon Guillermo

Abstract

Tatangkain sa papel na ito ang isang preliminaryong kumparatibong analisis ng dalawang pangkasaysayang salaysay nina Mabini, *La revolución filipina* (sinulat 1901-1902), at Isabelo de los Reyes, *La sensacional memoria de Isabelo de los Reyes sobre la revolución Filipina de 1896-97* (1899). Sisikapang palitawin sa ganitong paraan ang maaaring magkakaibang konsepto nila hinggil sa kasaysayan ng Rebolusyong Pilipino.

Apolinario Mabini (1864-1903) and Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938) (also known as Don Belong) were born on the same year. These two individuals had very different, contrasting personalities, and both of them only reluctantly became involved with the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution of 1896.

De los Reyes and Mabini wrote two important texts on their views and experiences of the revolution. De los Reyes' account was published with the full title, *La sensacional memoria de Isabelo de los Reyes sobre La Revolución Filipina de 1896-97 por la cual fué deportado el autor al Castillo de Montjuich* [*The emotional memoir of Isabelo de los Reyes on the Philippine Revolution of 1896-97 for which the author was deported to the Castle of Montjuich*] (De los Reyes, 1899, 2001). This essay will draw mainly upon the first, original section of De los Reyes' *memoria* written in Bilibid prison and signed by him on the 25th of April 1887 to be presented to Governor

and Captain General Don Fernando Primo de Rivera as a collective plea of innocence to the charge of rebellion. (The second part of the complete *memorias* published in 1899 in Madrid consists of various compiled texts.) De los Reyes' *memoria* will be compared with Mabini's *La Revolución Filipina* (Mabini, 1900, 1931, 2001), this latter work was originally written in the years 1901-1902 in Guam where he had been exiled by the American authorities. Both texts were therefore written under conditions of colonial repression, in prison and in exile.

Don Belong's text deals with a shorter period of time than Mabini's which proceeds beyond the Pact of Biak-na-Bato up to the final years of the Philippine revolution.

Mabini Listens, Isabelo Cries Out

Mabini claimed in his "Introductory Manifesto" that he was not one given to participating in uprisings. He wrote, "In reality, I never had the courage to disturb my countrymen while they preferred to live in peace" ["*Nunca tuve, en verdad, valor bastante para perturbar á mis paisanos, mientras preferían vivir tranquilos*"] (1931, p. 272). However, it was inescapable for him to feel the genuine "desires of the people" ["*los deseos del pueblo*"] and "the popular will" [*la voluntad popular*]. He could not bring himself to ignore the expressions of "the genuine needs of the Filipinos" ["*las verdaderas necesidades de los filipinos*"] which was now felt by "the majority of citizens" ["*sentida por la generalidad de los ciudadanos*"]. The time had therefore come for revolution since, in his words, "[a] political revolution is generally initiated by a people for which the desire of the majority to better its condition has turned into an *irresistible necessity*" ["*la revolución política es generalmente intentada por un pueblo, para el cual el deseo de mejorar de condición se ha convertido en una necesidad irresistible*"]. Mabini then took up "the cause of the people" ["*la causa del pueblo*"], explaining that he had, "joined the fight in the belief that he was following the *voice of the people*" ["*fui a la lucha creyendo seguir la voz del pueblo*"].

This *historia* was meant to give an accounting of his actions to his countrymen at the moment that he considered these services to have come to an end ["*dar cuenta de mi gestión a mis compatriotas, ahora que considero oportuno darla por terminada*"] (1931, p. 267). Saying that he had endeavored to be critical and impartial so that the historical lessons could more easily be made visible, Mabini is apologetic for having included himself in the narrative,

If I have referred to myself many times in my narration,
it was not with the desire to emphasize my own role at

the expense of others, but rather to indicate my personal intervention, sometimes as a simple spectator and at other times as an actor in the great drama of the revolution, and in this way to determine the credibility of my words.

[Si en mi narración me he referido muchas veces a mi propia persona, no ha sido por el deseo de señalarme en detrimento de otros, sino para denotar únicamente mi personal intervención, unas veces como simple espectador y otras como actor en el gran drama de la Revolución, y determinar de este modo el grado de crédito que puede darse a mis palabras.]

For his part, Isabelo de los Reyes' *memoria* (1899) takes on a very different tone, since it had been written as an appeal to General Primo de Rivera on behalf of the innocent victims of friar persecution during the outbreak of the revolution. He asserted that he represents the following,

I assume on the present occasion the *genuine representation* of all the living and influential forces of the entire Philippine archipelago.

[asumo en la ocasión presente la genuina representación de todas las fuerzas vivas é influyentes del Archipiélago entero de Filipinas.]

I would like to *represent* the rivers of blood that the frailocracy has made flow and continues to flow in this unfortunate country.

[deseo representar los ríos de sangre que el frailismo ha hecho y está haciendo correr por este desventurado país.]

I *represent* the tears and misery of thousands and thousands of Spanish and Filipino families destroyed and ruined by the machiavellism of the friars.

[represento las lágrimas y desdichas de miles y miles de familias españolas y filipinas desoladas y arruinadas por el maquiavelismo frailes.]

Don Belong (1899) claims to be the “voice” [“voz”] of this groaning multitude which demands to be heard,

I raise the voice of the most distinguished personages in all the provinces of the archipelago.

Table 1: Word Counts of Ethnicities/Nationalities/Races in De los Reyes and Mabini.

De Los Reyes		Mabini	
24	filipinos	111	filipino/a/as/os
21	español/a/es/as	63	español/a/as/es
7	tagala/as/os	34	americano/a/as/os
5	ilocano/a/as/os	10	naturales
5	peninsulares	3	indios
1	madrileño	2	japone/a/ses
1	mahometanos	2	china/os
1	visaya	1	igorrotos
1	vicol	1	moros
1	cubano	1	peninsulares
1	indigena		

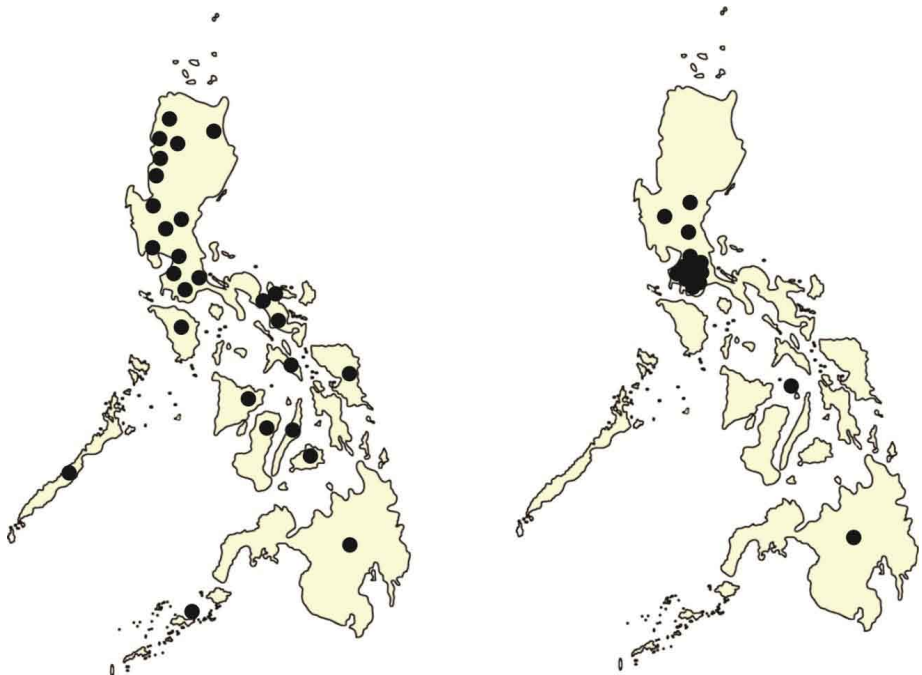


Figure 1: Geographic distribution of Philippine toponyms mentioned by De los Reyes (L) and Mabini (R).

[llevo la voz de las personas más distinguidas de todas las provincias del Archipiélago.]

We groan from these military prisons as the principal promoters of the revolution, thanks to the cynicism and great perversions of the machiavellian machinations of our defamers.

[gemimos en estas prisiones militares como principales promovedores de ella [revolución], gracias al cinismo y gran perversión de los maquiavelistas impulsores de nuestros calumniadores.]

[I, De los Reyes] have the honor of raising his weak voice to your excellency from the depths of this sad prison.

[tiene la honra de elevar á V. E. su débil voz desde el fondo de esta triste prisión.]

I have nothing more than my misfortune to believe that I have the right to be heard [*escuchado*] with benevolence.

[no tengo más títulos que mi desgracia para mi desgracia para creerme con derecho á ser escuchado con benevolencia.]

However, this self introduction as the “representative” and collective voice of the suffering ends with an unexpected warning, “if the cries of pain [*quejas*] are violently drowned in the throats of the oppressed, the irritated popular spirit will later have to speak through the mouth of its cannons” [*“si violentamente ahogaron entonces las quejas en las gargantas de los oprimidos, más tarde el espíritu popular irritado, tuvo que hablar por boca de sus cañones”*] (1899).

While Mabini apologizes for inserting himself in the text, for Don Belong, the opposite must be the case because he claims that it is he who represents all who are suffering unjustly.

The two texts therefore represent contrasting positions. On the one hand, Mabini takes the position of someone who has heard the “voice of the people,” a voice which he has followed faithfully from the beginning to the end of the failed revolution. On the other hand, De los Reyes, taking on a role as the authoritative voice of the persecuted innocents from all parts and strata of the archipelago (but particularly those belonging to the wealthy and influential strata) demands, almost imperiously, to be heard by the Spanish authorities. Mabini assumes the attitude of a detached and objective listener, one who observes the “logic of events” [*la lógica de los*

hechos”], while De los Reyes is immersed in a clamour of voices crying out in pain from the depths of a prison. Mabini, with his drive to abstraction, tended to reduce or even ignore ethnic and regional divisions by implicitly assuming a Tagalog-centric attitude, while Don Belong mentions a variety of Tagalogs, Ilokanos, Visayans and Bikolanos (Table 1; Cf. Anderson, 2008). Perhaps Mabini was the real precursor of “Constantino-style” Luzon-centric historiography, cf. Fig. 1.

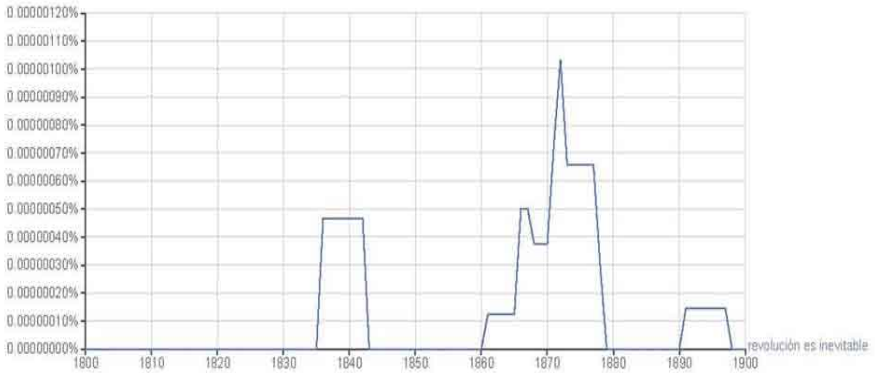


Figure 2: Usages of the phrase “revolución es inevitable” in Spanish language books from 1800-1900 (Google Ngram Viewer).

The Causes of the Revolution

Mabini writes in his *historia* of the “natural and unchangeable order of things” [*orden natural e inmutable de las cosas*] and of the “law or order which He has placed in the world *ab aeterno*” [*la ley u orden que El mismo pusiera ab aeterno en el mundo*]. In accordance with this “natural law,” Mabini believes that “each citizen possesses all these [human] rights by nature and prior to all human law” [*todos los derechos que por naturaleza y con anterioridad a toda ley humana posee cualquier ciudadano*]. Moreover, according to him, “all authority over the people resides in the people themselves by natural law” [*toda autoridad sobre el pueblo reside en el pueblo mismo por ley natural*]. A people therefore has the right, against an oppressive regime, to “reconquer their natural liberties” [*la reconquista de sus naturales libertades*] or “natural rights” [*derechos naturales*] by armed force if necessary. To act against or contrary to this natural law is therefore “antinatural” [*antinatural*] and contrary to logic and must not be countenanced.

Mabini, appealing to science as his authority, reminds the reader and perhaps the *yanqui* as well that, “The Declaration of Independence and the Rights of Man . . . is an exposition of the principles of natural right

implanted by scientific revolutions in the field of politics” [*Declaraciones de independencia y de los derechos del hombre, que son una exposición de los principios del derecho natural implantados por las revoluciones de la ciencia en el campo de la política*]. There are however some factors in Mabini’s exposition which mediate (or qualify) the manifestation or actualization of these natural laws in the historical world. These can be reduced to three:

- 1) The people must come to feel a need for these natural rights and liberties. This is a historical and cultural process without which no “popular movement” [*movimiento popular*] could aspire for these rights as if for an “irresistible need” [*necesidad irresistible*]. As Mabini put it, these are “the needs created by the constantly developing culture of the people in the colonies and its always improving and intensifying communication with civilized peoples” [*las necesidades creadas por la cultura siempre creciente de los colonos y sus comunicaciones cada vez más fáciles y estrechas con los pueblos civilizados*].
- 2) The practice of of governance must always adjust to both the “natural and immutable order of things” and to the “particular needs” of the locality [*la práctica ajustada al orden natural e inmutable de las cosas y a las necesidades especiales de la localidad*].
- 3) That a people can accept their “antinatural” subjection to another power if further fighting will compromise its own existence or survival which is the “supreme necessity or law of nature” [*suprema necesidad o ley de la naturaleza*]. However, such a setback is only temporary, since in such a situation, a future revolution would still be inevitable [*la revolución es inevitable*]. (Fig. 2 shows how the phrase on the inevitability of revolution increased in frequency in published books in Spanish during the revolutionary conjunctures of 1848, 1871, 1890s.)

De los Reyes’ argument in his *sensacional memoria* is very different from Mabini’s. On the one hand, he accepts and defends the legitimacy of the aims of the Katipunan-led revolution which he characterizes initially as being exclusively anti-friar and not separatist in aim. On the other hand, he accuses the friar orders of having taken advantage of the opportunity presented by the revolt to wrongly persecute countless innocents among the wealthier and privileged classes of society by faking numerous conspiracies throughout the archipelago [*simulacros de conspiración*]. He writes of arrests, shootings, deportations, torture, imprisonment and persecution of countless people innocent of any crime of rebellion. The words *inocencia*, *inocentemente*, and *inocentes* occurs in the *memoria* at least 19 times while in Mabini *inocente* only appears thrice. *Torturas*,

torturados, torturaban, occurs a total of 21 times in De los Reyes while these appear only 5 times in Mabini. A long section recounts brutal acts of torture which he characterizes as *inquisitorial* [*torturas inquisitoriales*], the most cruel tortures imaginable [*las más crueles torturas imaginables*], savage tortures [*salvajes torturas*], inhuman [*inhumano*] (sometimes with the use of *“maquinas eléctricas”*) among others until De los Reyes find himself exclaiming at one point, *“oh caníbales!”* “How can it be that the innocent are suffering?” Don Belong seems to ask.

Walter Benjamin’s (1977) distinction between the historian [*Geschichtsschreiber*] and chronicler [*Chronist*] seems to be relevant in understanding the differences between Mabini and Don Belong,

The historian is bound to explain in one way or another the happenings with which he deals; under no circumstances can he content himself with displaying them as models of the course of the world. But this is precisely what the chronicler does, especially in his classical representatives, the chroniclers of the Middle Ages, the precursors of modern historians. By basing their historical tales on a divine plan of salvation—one that is immune to investigation—they have from the very start lifted the burden of demonstrable explanation from their own shoulders. Its place is taken by interpretation, which is not concerned with an accurate concatenation of definite events, but with the way these are embedded in the great course of the world which is immune to investigation. (Benjamin, 1968, p. 96) (translation modified—RG.)

[*Der Historiker ist gehalten, die Vorfälle, mit denen er es zu tun hat, auf die eine oder andere Art zu erklären; er kann sich unter keinen Umständen damit begnügen, sie als Musterstücke des Weidaufs herzuzeigen. Genau das aber tut der Chronist, und besonders nachdrücklich tut er das in seinen klassischen Repräsentanten, den Chronisten des Mittelalters, die die Vorläufer der neueren Geschichtsschreiber waren. Indem jene ihrer Geschichtserzählung den göttlichen Heilsplan zugrunde legen, der ein unerforschlicher ist, haben sie die Last beweisbarer Erklärung von vornherein von sich abgewälzt. An ihre Stelle tritt die Auslegung, die es nicht mit einer genauen Verkettung von bestimmten Ereignissen, sondern mit der Art ihrer Einbettung in den großen unerforschlichen Weltlauf zu tun hat.*] (pp. 115-116)

Mabini, with his broad and systematic effort to arrive at a rational historical explanation writes history, while Don Belong, crying out for justice, tells tales, stories and chronicles.

However, in the very different, more journalistic and sober, second part of the *memoria*, under the section “Causas de la Revolución” De los Reyes does give a general explanation of the cause of revolutions in history. According to him, “It is the same thing which has engendered all revolutions in the Universal History of Humanity: the oppressed people shake off the yoke of its tyrants” [“*Son las mismas que han engendrado todas las revoluciones que se registran en la Historia universal de la Humanidad: el pueblo oprimido sacudiendo el yugo de sus tiranos.*”] Given this “transhistorical” rather than modernist definition of “revolution,” De los Reyes evidently has no use for the concepts of “natural law,” “natural liberties,” or “natural rights” which are more central in Mabini’s work. In Mabini, “natural law” [*ley natural*] and “law of nature” [*ley de la naturaleza*] occur 6 times, “natural rights” [*derechos naturales*] are referred to twice, “natural liberties” [*libertades naturales*] twice.

De los Reyes however makes ample use of the term “political rights” [*derechos políticos*] (1899, p. 40; p. 43; p. 44). For example, he wrote, “What is unquestionable is that the Philippines has awoken with unexpected *brio* from its four hundred year slumber, and later or sooner, for good or ill, will attain its inalienable political rights” [“*Lo incuestionable es que Filipinas ha despertado con inesperados bríos de su letargo de cuatro siglos largos, y tarde ó temprano, bien ó mal, conquistará sus inalienables derechos políticos*”] (p. 53). De los Reyes also refers twice to the people’s act of reclaiming of reconquering with arms their political rights [“*reclamar con las armas sus derechos políticos*”] (p. 32); [“*conquistar con las armas sus derechos políticos*”] (p. 47).

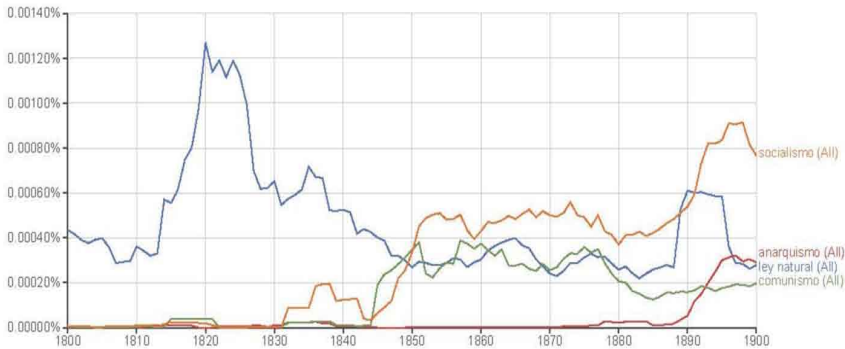


Figure 3: Usages of the terms “socialismo,” “anarquismo,” “comunismo” and “ley natural” in Spanish language books from 1800-1900 (Google Ngram Viewer).

Contemporary terms associated with radicalism such as *socialismo*, *comunismo* and *anarquismo* do not figure as such in Mabini's analytical history of the revolution. He does mention *anarquía* at one point but only in the sense of lack of rule of law. In striking contrast to Mabini, the second part of De los Reyes' *memoria* controversially characterizes the Katipunan as having "*tendencias socialistas*" (1899, p. 17) and as being *comunista* in orientation with the aim of establishing a *republica comunista*. Don Belong also alludes twice, in this part of his *memoria*, to the *anarquistas* who helped him during his incarceration in Montjuich in Barcelona. On an international plane, Isabelo de los Reyes was apparently more informed than Mabini of the contemporaneous revolutions in the Antilles. He has several references to the events in the Antilles (p. 51; p. 56; p. 57; p. 59; p. 60; p. 74) and mentions both Cuba (p. 45; p. 51; p. 56; p. 114) and Puerto Rico (p. 45; p. 53; p. 56) several times. According to De los Reyes, the aim of the Katipunan was intrinsically connected with the revolutions in the Antilles, "The political objective is separatism, if the Spanish government does not expel the friars who are the executioners of the people and does not grant the Philippine all of its political rights, such as those it has granted in the Antilles" ["*El objeto político es el separatismo, si el Gobierno español no expulsa á los frailes que son los verdugos del país y no concede á Filipinas todos sus derechos políticos, como los ha concedido á las Antillas*"] (p. 74).

Nature and Anticolonialism in José Martí and Mabini

Given the rather long passage of time (on a political scale) since the American and French Revolutions, might it not be that Mabini's use of natural law as a central anti-colonial ideological concept would have seemed quaintly anachronistic to other nationalist revolutionaries of the same period? (Majul, 1996, does not mention this issue at all. See also Guillermo, 2009, for an account of Rizal's problems in his 1887 effort to translate the European natural law idiom into Tagalog.)

Such an appeal to natural law might have been more intelligible in the era of the Haitian revolt in the early nineteenth century and the succeeding Bolivarian independence movements which were much closer chronologically to both the French and American revolutions. It is quite well known that the notion of natural law did not pass through the socialist, communist and anarchist radicalisms of the middle to the late nineteenth century unscathed or unaltered. The fate of natural law as a component in anticolonial revolutionary ideologies has not been well studied but it certainly did not survive into the twentieth century idioms of Fanon or Mao Zedong. Fig. 3 shows the peak of *ley natural* discourse in books published in Spanish in the 1820s, during the Bolivar-led Spanish American wars of

independence, with a smaller peak in the 1890s. However, the same graph shows the steady rise up to the end of the nineteenth century of the terms *anarquismo*, *comunismo*, and *socialismo*, with *ley natural* seeming to decline in proportion to the rise of *anarquismo*.

A comparative look at the almost contemporaneous writings of the famous Antillean-Cuban revolutionary Jose Martí (1853-1895), eleven years Mabini's senior, might shed some light on this question. In all the three volumes of his collected political works from 1869-1894, Martí mentions natural law [*ley natural*] just once (1991a; 1991b; 1991c). More pertinent to Martí's discourse was *derecho* [right], used alone or in such phrases as *derecho natural*, *derecho humano*, *derecho de vivir*, *derecho moral*, *derechos populares* and others. Nevertheless, the notion of nature was arguably just as much a cornerstone of Martí's anti-colonial revolutionary ideology as it was for Mabini but in a very different sense. To understand this, one need not go further than Martí's famous essay "Nuestra America" (Our America) (Martí 1992) which was published in New York in the same year, 1891, as Rizal's *El Filibusterismo* was published in Gent (Cf. Anderson 2006).

Martí wrote,

[T]he imported book has been defeated in America by the natural man (*el hombre natural*). The natural men have defeated those who have been artificially educated. The indigenous mestizo has defeated the exotic creole. There is no battle between civilization and barbarism, rather between false erudition and nature.

[El libro importado ha sido vencido en América por el hombre natural. Los hombres naturales han vencido a los letrados artificiales. El mestizo autóctono ha vencido al criollo exótico. No hay batalla entre la civilización y la barbarie, sino entre la falsa erudición y la naturaleza.]

In addition,

Here comes the natural man, indignant and strong, and overturns the justice accumulated in books, because these do not govern in accordance with the patent needs of the nation. To know is to resolve. Know the country and govern it in conformity with this knowledge is the only way to liberate it from tyrants. The European university must concede to the American. The history of America, from the

Incas onwards, will be taught by heart, although the rulers of Greece will not be taught. Our Greece is preferable to the Greece which is not our own. We need it much more. National politicians must replace foreign politicians.

[Viene el hombre natural, indignado y fuerte, y derriba la justicia acumulada de los libros, porque no se administra en acuerdos con las necesidades patentes del país. Conocer es resolver. Conocer el país, y gobernarlo conforme al conocimiento es el único modo de librarlo de tiranías. La universidad europea ha de ceder a la universidad americana. La historia de América, de los incas acá, ha de enseñarse al dedillo, aunque no se enseñe la de los arcontes de Grecia. Nuestra Grecia es preferible a la Grecia que no es nuestra. Nos es más necesaria. Los políticos nacionales han de reemplazar a los políticos exóticos.]

The anti-colonial struggle must therefore bring forth these “natural men” who have shorn off all the artificiality and false erudition induced by the centuries of colonial experience. The struggle will therefore “bring forth natural statesmen studying directly from nature. Reading to apply but not to copy” [*Surgen los estadistas naturales del estudio directo de la Naturaleza. Leen para aplicar, pero no para copiar*]. Martí reminds the decolonizing intellectual that, “It is understood that the forms of government of a nation must be accommodated to its natural elements; that absolute ideas, so as not to fall because of an error in form, have to take relative forms” [*Se entiende que las formas de gobierno de un país han de acomodarse a sus elementos naturales; que las ideas absolutas, para no caer por un yerro de forma, han de ponerse en formas relativas*]. In contrast to the almost pristine purity of natural law and its abstractions in Mabini, Martí’s prose relentlessly strives for a kind of earthy concreteness in imagery and metaphor.

In Mabini, it was only unjust power which could temporarily prevent the full realization of natural law to the point that Martí’s fundamentally important “natural elements” are seemingly reduced in his essay to what he calls the “particular needs of the locality.”

It could be surmised from all this that Martí had a more philosophically sophisticated and complex grasp of the dialectic of the universal and particular than Mabini. However, one could also argue that Mabini took hold of the only theoretical tool available to him to lend form to the great revolutionary drama unfolding before his eyes as a process of actualization and frustrated realization of natural law. It was, as he says, *mi religión*. Mabini’s usage of natural law was not just tactically designed to remind

the people of the United States in particular, personified by a lurking tiger in Martí's text, about the moral basis of their own nation in natural law. The minimal effect this had on his interlocutors is well known. It was also the weapon that kept him firm in his beliefs to the end and earned him the label, "the most prominent irreconcilable." As Mabini wrote, "If truth is the harmony between reason and experience, one finds virtue in the harmony between theory and practice" ["*Si en la armonía entre la razón y la experiencia está la verdad, en la armonía entre la teoría y la práctica se encuentra la virtud*"]. He had to make his practice conform to his anti-colonial theory of natural law as long as he could.

Concluding Observations

Mabini and De los Reyes' perspectives on Rizal offer a final interesting contrast.

Opposing the view of the Spanish authorities that without Rizal's writings and novels, the people would not have taken to politics, Mabini wrote dispassionately,

This opinion is completely mistaken because the political movement in the Philippines antedates Rizal, because Rizal was *merely a personality created by the needs of this movement*: if Rizal had not existed, another would have played his role.

[*Esta opinión es completamente errónea, porque el movimiento político de Filipinas es anterior a Rizal, porque Rizal era meramente una personalidad creada por las necesidades de este movimiento: si Rizal no hubiese existido, otro cualquiera hubiera desempeñado su papel.*]

Such an estimation of Rizal is quite the total opposite of what De los Reyes wrote in his *memoria*. According to Don Belong,

In effect, one cannot write the life of Rizal, one must sing it, as LaMartíne would say. For this one would need to be another Rizal, his own inspired muse, but for my purposes, let us be content with what my coarse pen gives.

[*En efecto, no se escribe la vida de Rizal; hay que cantarla, como diría LaMartíne. Para ello se necesita ser otro Rizal, su propia inspirada musa, pero para mi objeto, contentémos con lo que dé mi tosca pluma.*] (p. 63)

For De los Reyes, there can be no other Rizal because he was a unique and irreducible individual. In contrast, for Mabini, history would have provided “another Rizal” to fulfill his (political) role had he not existed. Not to vulgarize Mabini, he did not mean that someone would have written the same poetry and novels as Rizal had, he only meant that Rizal’s relatively restricted political role as one who helped clarify the colonial question would have been taken up by another individual sooner or later. However, this does not minimize the seeming scandal of Mabini’s seeming lack of veneration for the hero.

Mabini’s text is written *sub specie aeternitatis*, while Don Belong’s text—the first and original part of the *sensacional memoria*—is a kind of phenomenology of pain at the very moment of suffering. Mabini’s position as narrator is situated outside of the narrative, gazing at the large “supraindividual” forces in play, while Don Belong is situated, immersed and even drowning within it. Mabini condemns colonialism and positively existing legal arrangements on the basis of a transcendent natural law while De los Reyes cries out for justice for the innocent victims of friar cruelty within the juridical parameters of the existing colonial regime. Nevertheless, it should be noted that De los Reyes’ demands for reforms of the colonial system “similar to those granted the Antilles” appeals to a framework which obviously exceeded the boundaries of Spanish colonial arrangements in the Philippines. Moreover, Don Belong seems to be more up to date on global events and more in tune with the fashionable radical idioms of the time. Akin to Martí’s idiom, De Los Reyes would publish an editorial which labeled Filipinos who collaborated with the American invaders, “monstrosities of nature” (Scott, 1982, p. 3). Mabini seems to be anachronistic in his commanding use of the natural law idiom as the central component of his revolutionary anticolonial outlook. Could this have been an effect of the relatively greater degree of intellectual and cultural isolation of *Las Islas Filipinas* with respect to other remaining Spanish colonies? Could this be due to Mabini’s own restricted milieu, “provincial” education and lack of opportunity to travel outside the Philippines? A comparative study of the role of “nature” in nineteenth and twentieth century anticolonial revolutions would situate Mabini’s thinking within a larger and more complex historical canvas.

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RAMON GUILLERMO is a teacher-activist and scholar on Philippine studies. He obtained his PhD Southeast Asian Studies from the University of Hamburg in Germany. He is the author of several books and articles on indigenization theory, translation studies and digital philology.