

Being Down to Earth

RAINIERA. IBANA

ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

When asked to prove the ownership of their properties in the Cordilleras, Macli-ing Dulag, the tribal leader from Tinglayan, Kalinga who was assassinated in 1980 for defending their ancestral lands against the construction of the Chico Dam, replied:

Titles? Documents? Proof of Ownership? Such arrogance to speak of owning the land when we are instead owned by it. How can you own that which outlive you?¹

These words of wisdom remind us that we are mere late-comers in the Earth's evolution. If we condense the history of the Earth's formation within a span of twenty-four hours, geologists estimate that humans emerged merely during the last two minutes of the Earth's formation.² Other things

¹ Cited by Ma. Ceres Doyo in *Macli-ing Dulag, Kalinga Chief: Defender of the Cordilleras* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1015), p. 5.

² See: <https://flowingdata.com/2012/10/09/history-of-earth-in-24-hour-clock/> (accessed on December 12, 2018)

being equal, the Earth will continue to exist even beyond the contemporary epoch of the anthropocene.

The first article in this issue, Aurelio Agcaoili's "*Nakaparsuaan, Kadagaan, and Pinaglunit ti Daga: Climate Justice and Environmental Ethics in Ilocano Life*," reiterates the ancient wisdom of our forefathers. It probes the meaning of caring for the universe "when people go back to the Earth after a brief peregrine existence." The author employs a lexicographic analysis of Ilocano terminologies and explains the meaning of these terms in accordance with the practices of daily life. He concludes that Ilocanos have a holistic understanding of the world that bestows on humans the role of healers and restorers of a devastated Earth instead of merely extracting her resources for the global market.

The second article, Kathleen Nadeau and Jojo Fung's "Indigenous Liberation Theology and Spirituality: Looking to the Past for Answers in the Present," offers a reverential attitude toward the world by showing the intimate interconnectedness of life. Taking the perspectives of the Papal Encyclical, *Laudato si: On the Care of our Common Home*, they illustrate the Pope's insights about the Earth as our shared dwelling place. They cite Philippine "earth houses," the nipa hut and *bahay na bato*, as indigenous examples that "may hold a key to rebuilding happier, healthier, and more equitable communities of resilience for many of the world's poor"

The third article, Joseph Sta. Maria's "Sustaining Temporal Peace: A Worldview for Sustainable Living Inspired by St. Augustine's Philosophy," makes a case for St. Augustine's philosophical resources to show how his metaphysical framework can enable humans to preserve and protect the order and integrity of the created world instead of doing damage to it. For Sta. Maria, St. Augustine "sees human beings as an integrated part of the universe instead of being isolated from it." He contends that past thinkers, like St. Augustine, can provide answers to contemporary questions such as sustainable development.

Capping off these articles with a book review, Pamela Joy Mariano highlights the priority of people over things and profits in her review of the case studies collected by Benjamin Abadiano (2018) in *Investing in the Unseen: Cases on Biodiversity Conservation (A Source Book in Development Management: Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2018)*. This collection of studies about several protected areas in the Philippines is recommended as a pedagogical tool for ethicists, development managers, and other disciplines that deal with the environment.

These essays demonstrate how the Earth serves as the ground and foundation of our material existence. It is incumbent upon humans to balance the demands of social systems that extract resources from the environment, on the one hand, and the sustainability and integrity of the Earth as

our life-giving resource, on the other hand. Human lives are at stake in this balancing act. If compelled to make a choice between these two alternatives, the balance must clearly be tilted in favor of the latter for the sake of the sustainability of human life itself.



“Mayò” (Nothing) by **Rainier Ibana**
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