



Quest to Rescue Our Future

Glenn Sankatsing (2016). *Quest to Rescue Our Future*.
Amsterdam, Rescue Our Future Foundation, 555 p.

When reviewing a work that has had a profound effect on one's view of the world, and—in effect—one's actions, such a review can never be your typical review. Such a review will be highly personal, exposing the influences of the various aspects of the work being reviewed. Such is the case with Glenn Sankatsing's *Quest to Rescue Our Future* (published by The Rescue Our Future Foundation in Amsterdam, 2016) now on the surgery table with the surgeon being me.

The work itself is the embodiment of contemplations on a viable alternative path to development by the author (alone or

in discussions) that have taken place on different continents of the course of more than four decades. With all the so-called progress, why isn't the world getting a better place? What is the root cause of our agonies? What is the solution? This book provides a profound look at the questions and presents well-thought out, meticulously crafted and wonderfully executed analyses and syntheses, and offers a solid foundation and direction with respect to turn around the ravaging oil tanker that is Western modernization. In this accomplishment, the author is able to provide earth shattering and pa-

radigm shifting exhibits of new definitions and constructs which will enhance, enlarge and enrich the reader's frame of reference.

To make a swift analogy what type of effect *Quest to Rescue Our Future* (QtROF) has had on me, one can look at the introduction of polygons in video games in order to create an immersive three-dimensional playing field. Although some of the best memories are forever linked with two-dimensional video games (like for instance *Super Mario Brothers 3* or the *Legend of Zelda*), there are barely any moments in video gaming history that take your breath away when you suddenly realize that you can move your character in all three dimensions (and not just from left to right, and from up to down) and you start moving towards or away from the viewer (like *Super Mario 64* and the *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*). Of course, this extra dimension created a shock wave through the industry and enabled all sorts of new avenues for developers and players alike to expand on enjoying video games.

The same could be said from QtROF; hailing from Europe and working for multinationals, I was first confronted with elements

from QtROF during a class on *Development Paradigms* by the book's author at the Institute for Graduate Studies and Research of the University of Suriname (where by an odd turn of events I became director a little over a year ago). The class which lasted a little longer than one week, turned everything upside down, destroyed particular beliefs, and expanded my view on things, since it became apparent that I (and many others like me) had been blindsided for a very long time by the opposite of development, viz. envelopment (more on this later). It was like admiring a painting, when suddenly someone tells you that you've been looking at the painting upside down all the time and that the painting is actually just a small portion of a much larger painting.

Still attempting to digest the avalanche I got during this class, I started to have discussions about particular topics with various persons in my vicinity. It was therefore more than natural that I'd attend the Brownsberg sessions (the International Amazon Forest Encounter orchestrated by Dr. Sankatsing, which were held on top of the Brownsberg mountain in the interior of Suriname once per year for

more than one decade) where he provided an international audience to help him to finely hone and meticulously sharpen and shape the ideas and theories which combined would later become this paramount piece of work, *Quest to Rescue Our Future*. These events made me play with the concepts put forward in *QtROF* and grow a greater appreciation of the effort that was put in getting the book together; a journey that has taken literally decades to achieve the fruition.

When taking bits and pieces of the book, it appears to be at first glance a collection of seemingly unrelated topics, from subjectivity in science, environmental peril, and academic disciplines, to development paradigms, colonial conquest and global ethics. However, this book demands a full and thorough reading, from beginning to end, and this is where the utter brilliance of this masterpiece starts to shine through. Dr. Sankatsing doesn't leave stones unturned, doesn't take anything for granted, goes to great lengths to cast away anthropomorphic veils, and makes a serious attempt to approach matter in a logical manner.

Herein lays the reason why a full expose is provided on facts,

truths, theories and science. Having laid the foundation with the determination of the approach of scrutiny, he dissects decades of colonial oppression. This feat alone places Dr. Sankatsing among great thinkers (of the Caribbean); where other would simply stop at the dissection and let the reader indulge in the findings, Dr. Sankatsing goes to great lengths, not only unravels the false discourse on development, but even to devise the powerful development-envelopment dynamics. Taking the reader along the journey, the author utilizes this dynamics as a tool to dispel various development paradigms, the power to define, hundreds years worth of colonial oppression, and the inherent failure of Western modernization. He is able to achieve the unimaginable: to provide a noteworthy additional dimension to the defining sentence in Eduardo Galeano's seminal *Open Veins of Latin America*: "Latin American underdevelopment is not a stage on the path to development, but the counter effect of development elsewhere".

Development-envelopment dynamics are one of the tantalizing fruits from the author's mind, and its presentation alone would make this book compulsory for

everyone to read. Rooted in firm concepts, the book presents numerous of examples which enables readers from all walks of life to instantly grasp the full meaning of the dynamics and be able to apply it. This is highly reminiscent of the work *7 Habits of highly effective people* by Stephen Covey. In his seminal work, Covey highlights a number of habits which seem totally logical and which the reader knew deep down his/herself, but which were never explicitly spelled out by someone. This is one of the reasons why many people could relate to that work, and the same applies to Dr. Sankatsing's development-envelopment dynamics, a brilliant construct which we all know and understand deep down, but which was never made explicit in order for the reader to apply it in daily life in everything he/she encounters.

However, QtROF goes –rather unbelievably– to much greater lengths, since the author utilizes the new dynamics to follow the root cause of the main agonies that mankind is bringing upon itself. The narrative of each of the agonies is fully fleshed out, as is the logical reasoning in the determination of their common root cause. Personally, in the entirety of Dr. Sankatsing's

work this common root cause –even after the exposure for years now– still gives me that feeling of unease in my gut. Is that indeed the root cause? Is the explanation not a tad more difficult and intricate? However, I am too blinded by my many veils, so that might be the cause of my questioning, but then again Dr. Sankatsing effectively encourages the questioning, notwithstanding the fact that his reasoning behind pinpointing the root cause is rock-solid.

Real courage comes in the third act, after having laid out the rules of the game and examining the agonies plaguing the world, which is the author's effort to construct a point and direction of departure in order to find the right clues, balance and tone to counter these agonies and to achieve global harmony. Again, Dr. Sankatsing performs a remarkable feat by tip-toeing a fine line by providing clues and hints to address the agonies without falling in traps that have spelled disaster in past human history, most notably the envelopment trap.

Such heavy topics all crammed in one book would require careful sentencing, and it shows; each sentence is (apparently)

well-thought out and contains necessary information. Dr. Sankatsing is also well-gifted to provide timely-placed bits of unraveling false discourses and highly quotable –sometimes ironic and / or provoking–sentences, which keep up the momentum. Nevertheless, the nature of the topics discussed, and the bottom up approach that is utilized (to prevent bias) automatically implies that it's impossible to just run through the book. Going through the book requires a significant investment in time, and really grasping all content and being able to toy with concepts and constructs will most definitely require multiple reads, not in the least since the contents will bring about a serious paradigm shift for the reader. This work will easily keep you busy for months, and its conclusions will affect you in the years ahead.

Faced with the fact that human agency is creating an unbearable world for themselves and others which is expected to culminate in irreversible disasters on a global scale (which are already looming over the horizon), the story that Dr. Sankatsing wants to tell doesn't end on the final page of the book. As a matter of fact, the final section is a call for action,

to utilize the hints and clues that point to the direction in which the solution to our global agonies and the answer to the search for a viable alternative for development can be found. Therefore, the book reveals itself to be an open invitation to everyone, irrespective of race, religion, etc., to embark on the quest to rescue our future (the Rescue the Our Future Foundation is tasked with spreading the book's message and carrying forth the proposed transition).

I have literally hundreds of books, spanning science fiction, energy and environmental sciences, personal leadership, development, comics, engineering, etc. The books that have had a most profound impact on my life, my career, and on my way of thinking reside just adjacent to my bed: *Bad Samaritans* by Ha-Joon Chang, *Soft Energy Paths* by Amory Lovins, and my all-time favorites *Appleseed* and *Ghost in the Shell* by Masamune Shirow. It is a rarity among the rare that a book passes along that I can place on that very same pile. Now, I have a more than noteworthy addition to that list of books, a book that in many ways far surpasses the others and completes my top 3 with Shirow's works.

The book is more than just a book; it is a literary and scientific landmark achievement –a masterpiece– which is able to cast away veils that have globally clouded judgment for centuries, while simultaneously providing a sense of direction and calling for action while leading the path forward. I know of no other work that has achieved such a feat. Bold words for sure, and in a hype-ridden, shot-attention span

world, words like “masterpiece”, “paradigm shift”, and the like are thrown around more than ever. However, this review can go only to particular lengths to highlight the brilliance of this seminal work from a great Caribbean thinker; ultimately, the real proof of the pudding is in the tasting.

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