

THE NATURE OF NURTURE

A decade ago it was the most effortless thing to forge aspirations. At seven I held the impression that my little self somehow wielded a laconic power to change the world – to become an astronaut, a nun, and Princess Leah of *Star Wars* all at once; to have my mother kiss a wound and watch it recuperate upon contact. Becoming the next President was as guileless a matter as requesting for seconds of fried chicken for my next day's *baon*. (Another jocular dream of mine as a child, if I might add, was to read every single book in existence. Add about ten years to the picture and I can't even bring myself to begin reading *Ulysses*. But that's beside the point.)

Then, well, I grew up – and in the cruelest way, too, away from the perfervid capacities for tenderness and crude phantasm that is becoming on children.

I grew up watching important people (*adults*, really) – these unsurprisingly being either diplomats or western statesmen – designate themselves among equally important jobs. I've watched Al Gore give everyone a formidable scare with a 'Truth' he calls 'Inconvenient', bore the practically expected failure of the Copenhagen talks on climate change, and pretty much witnessed the usual passerby denigrate the world further with each forsaken piece of rubbish thrown into the gutters of Metro Manila, eventually forgotten and left to fatten up some dumpsite in Quezon City or the other.

I grew up being made to believe that the most innocent propositions of change were mere children's buffoonery; that this world demands bigwig, mass action, and diplomatic solutions for the direst of its problems. Yet an entire spectrum of carbon

quota sales, tree planting projects, wildlife protection awareness programs, and counterproductive environmental policies later – what kind of environment have we managed to protect? Or, as would be more befitting to ask, *have* we even protected much of it at all?

We've always been instructed to approach problems with a broader, more mature perspective; to rely on our respective governments or NGOs to perform those nasty major overhauls we think are beyond us, having little faith in ourselves to own our causes and approach them manageably; to forego the delicate fervor by which children are wont to dream of transcending the boundaries they never dared to question; to simply waltz with feverish possibilities without the fear of failure. There's always been that pressure to grow up quickly and sensibly, that we may be 'of use'.

Well, with this mentality, it's hardly any wonder why our world falls prey to the vagaries of stagnation. Let me tell you that our environment suffers not because we are incapable of nurturing it, but because we have forced ourselves to forget how to do so.

It is an age-old adage that we must go out into the world and start changing it. Now, while this idea may account for some mean lip service, I hazard the doubt that anyone truly knows where to begin. Thankfully, though, we are bound to at least know what we are capable of individually. Consider what good we could make if we'd begin working within ourselves instead to protect the very *disposition* that will offshoot that change – something oft overlooked in favor of endless awareness campaigns and batches of Topshop's overpriced 'I <3 Earth' canvas bags that we must admit are, while cute, moribund with respect to tangible results.

Take for instance this year's Earth Hour. I spent mine with my family in Bonifacio High Street over a candle-lit dinner of burgers and live local bands. We went home that night feeling, well, like we'd merely gone on any other night out. There were neither epiphanies, nor brandishing feelings of self-actualization to be had. And yet thousands flock to the place year upon year, happy to be contributing 'to a cause', as if a night procuring autographs from endorsers and other personalities would be of any corporeal bearing.

Well, we must depart from this conviction, because it only begets passiveness and a barren sense of fulfillment. Only when we learn keep our goal simple, clear-cut, and viable; only when we remember to steer our intentions in the direction of what will benefit our surroundings, can we bring to fruition our responsibilities *for* the earth, and not only for self-service or hollow gratification.

Because beyond signing petitions that will probably fall on deaf ears, beyond wearing environmental slogan shirts that are more emissaries of popular culture and capitalist intentions than of devoted advocacy, that which really needs protection is our individual temperament to commit ourselves to changing our ways. We need to revive our nature of nurture before it is too badly callused by short time horizons and an obsession with the indomitable course of growing up.

Albert Goldbarth once wrote, in his particularly striking essay-poem *Delft*, that man is set apart by his ability to make the world bigger by making it smaller – like a reverse-Galileo of sorts – by learning how to zoom into matters miniscule enough to be overlooked or mistaken for mere intricacies. Perhaps the solution is an adaptation of

this: we must begin familiarizing ourselves with the idea that thinking forward need not always be reminiscent of complicated protocols, programs, and laws.

By saying this I intend not to demean wide-scale, top-down efforts, for certainly many sincere intentions and efforts have been devoted by scrupulous states and individuals working in concert towards a better world. By this I mean, instead, that we are capable of much more than waiting for the world to change. I am, for one, young enough to shift my own mindset. I see now that before I may hope to protect our surroundings and its discernible elements, I'd have first to protect the very nature of my affinity for it, which I now find disperses so fitfully given the damning ebb of time and its many divergences.

But it doesn't end there. Beyond re-learning and protecting an already ingrained consciousness, we need to *sincerely* believe once more in the artless genius of a child's plans. A child's mindset is useful precisely because we are forced to think simply, without the negative incentive of arduousness, unscrupulous red tape, the frightful possibility of getting soil in the webs of their toes, or having to save humpback whales.

The logic is simple, really - if we believe that we can dream of big things and have them happen as they would've several years ago, then we have no excuse to turn our backs on the cause.

Such is the nature of nurture: it questions why we don't simply choose to strip life of its complications and revert to our inbred, irremovable nature of nurturing and putting order to all that is around us - because we can. We can keep solutions simple

and attainable if we want to. Only then can we conceive of making promises, and start keeping them, too.

To get going we need to be reminded that the heart was made not of stone, but of a human component, for a reason. Oh, and I'd like to have my dreams back – the ones that have been so shamelessly beleaguered by countless imposed reality checks and a disbelief in the potency of one's proclivity to foster God's green earth – childish though they may be.

Let me tell you something else about the nature of nurture: it worships lavishness and artless surrender. I'd like to think our earth needs more than an hour without lights or electricity consumption to recuperate. I don't see how we can afford to skimp on our efforts for something that fosters so impressionable a part of our wellbeing.

I'd like to believe that this world, more than it needs dreamers, deserves stewardship. We need not only to take our actions further, but the *farthest* we can manage, than and from protection: we must *sustain* this internal change, and do so with reckless abandon.

Now let me tell you something, too, about learning and its circular form: of how a human proclivity can skid fluidly throughout time without once being forsaken or distorted. If I should someday desire to rear children of my own, I shall remember to embrace the sweetness of their juvenile fervor – without even the slightest discrimination to their cardboard dreams – and impart to them the bounties one may get from keeping things simple, confident that I have taught them well.