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Editor's Preface

Rizal and the Ateneo

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER

In spite of a few dissenting voices, no Filipino patriot has stood higher in the estimation of his countrymen, even before his death, than Jose Rizal. His alma mater, the university which has grown out of that Ateneo Municipal from which he graduated as *bachiller en artes* one hundred years ago, has undertaken to celebrate that centenary this year in several ways, among them this issue of the University quarterly. The historian familiar with Rizal's writings and faithful to the presentation of the whole of his thought, would not attempt to use this centenary to imply that it was the Ateneo alone which made Jose Rizal what he has become in the minds and hearts of the Filipino people. Both the facts of Rizal's life and his own words make clear that it was not so.

It is true that he wrote in his youthful diary some two years after his graduation that his last two years at the Ateneo had been "the happiest in my life," and went on to describe in glowing terms what he had received from his alma mater:

I had entered the college still a boy, possessing only a limited knowledge of the Spanish language, my intelligence only moderately developed, and my emotions scarcely cultivated. By dint of study, of self-analysis, of aspiring to ever greater heights, and of countless corrections, I began to be transformed little by little, thanks to the beneficent influence of a zealous professor.¹

Not only had his intellectual and emotional faculties been developed by his schooling. In his last year this had been accompanied by "a

1. "Memorias de un estudiante de Manila," in *Escritos de José Rizal*, vol. 1: *Diarios y memorias* (Manila: Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal, 1961), p. 17. The translation here, as elsewhere in the article, is mine. The professor in question was Father Francisco de Paula Sánchez, S.J.

great development of my patriotic feelings, as well as of an acute sensitivity of perception.”² Two and a half years later, as he was about to leave for Spain in May 1882, he had not yet lost his profound esteem for the Spanish Jesuits of the Ateneo and the education they had given him. The day before his departure he revisited the Ateneo. “In the afternoon I said goodbye to the Jesuit Fathers, who gave me letters of recommendation to the Fathers in Barcelona. I owe a great deal to this religious order — almost, almost, everything I represent.”³

His affection for the Jesuits did not diminish during his first stay in Spain, nor did he fail to acknowledge the benefits he had received from his Ateneo education. But his horizon had greatly expanded, and his ideas were now quite different in many respects from those of his former mentors. Both these aspects of his development had become quite clear by 1887, when he published his *Noli me tângere* in Berlin and then returned to the Philippines. A month after the novel appeared, he wrote to his Austrian friend Blumentritt concerning the young Filipino nationalists in Madrid:

These friends are all young men, creoles, mestizos, and Malays; but we call ourselves simply Filipinos. Almost all were educated by the Jesuits. The Jesuits have surely not intended to teach us love of country, but they have showed us all that is beautiful and all that is best. Therefore I do not fear discord in our homeland; it is possible, but it can be combated and prevented.⁴

At the time he was writing this, he had already expressed a more critical evaluation of his Ateneo education through the lips of the *filósofo* Tasio in his novel. The Jesuits, says Tasio, are the ones who have brought the natural sciences to the Philippines, which is only now emerging from the Middle Ages. Hence here they truly represent Progress, but in Europe they are dragged along behind the chariot of Progress which they cannot any longer lead.⁵

Whether or not this passage in the mouth of a fictional character fully represented Rizal's weighed judgment is not easy to say. He did, however, return to the Ateneo shortly after his arrival in the Philippines, anxious, it would appear, not only to renew his

2. *Ibid.*

3. “Diario de viaje: de Calamba a Barcelona,” *Escritos*, 1:33.

4. Rizal-Blumentritt, 13 April 1887, *Epistolario Rizalino*, ed. Teodoro M. Kalaw, 5 vols. (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1930–38), 5:111.

5. José Rizal, *Noli me tângere*, 3rd ed. (Manila: Librería Manila Filatélica, 1908), pp. 296–97.

friendship with his Jesuit professors but to discuss his ideas with them. His own report to Blumentritt makes clear that there was indeed a gulf between his ideas and theirs:

Their greatest reproach was the passage in which I had put the Jesuits at the rear of the chariot of Progress; they told me that the Jesuits stood in the vanguard of Progress. I replied that this could not be, for the Jesuits dare not accept its principles, the liberal principles of Progress, etc., for example, freedom of the press, freedom of thought, freedom of religion. Father Faura observed that his Order had many learned scientists; I agreed, but observed in turn that science is not Progress itself, but only its material component. It is only the acceptance of its principles which actually constitutes Progress.⁶

It can be said, of course, as is implied in Rizal's letter to Blumentritt cited earlier, and as I have argued elsewhere more extensively, that the humanistic perspective imparted by Rizal's Ateneo education had given him not only a breadth of vision which would enable him to profit from his European experience, but that it had also imparted basic philosophical principles on justice and human dignity which would find their full flowering in Rizal's mind later. This remains true even though, as Rizal pointed out, his mentors, weighed down by the burden of an authoritarian, reactionary nineteenth-century Church, did not dare to draw the conclusions to their own premises.⁷ Those who have today experienced the denial, in the name of development and progress, of those freedoms Rizal insisted were the true constituent of progress, can appreciate better how much more far-seeing as a whole he was than his Ateneo professors, even while acknowledging the shallowness and insincerity of many of the nineteenth century European liberals and the injustices committed in the name of liberty. No doubt it was this experience of incomprehension on the part of his former professors that Rizal alludes to in *El Filibusterismo*, when he pictures the Jesuits disowning Ateneo alumnus Isagani upon his arrest. The novelist's reply to the sentiments placed in the mouths of the Jesuits is trenchant, harsh:

"That young man is destroying himself and will cause us harm! Let it be known that he did not learn those ideas here!"

6. Rizal-Blumentritt, 2 February 1890, *Epistolario*, 5:533-34.

7. See John N. Schumacher, "Philippine Higher Education and the Origins of Nationalism," *Philippine Studies* 23 (1975): 53-65.



The Jesuits did not lie, no. Those ideas God alone gives, by means of Nature.⁸

In the last hour of his life, he would express somewhat different sentiments as he walked to the place of his execution, accompanied by two Ateneo Jesuits. On catching sight of the towers of San Ignacio Church, he asked his companions, "Is that the Ateneo?" To their affirmative reply he continued, "I spent seven years there." Then turning to his court-appointed defense counsel, Lieutenant Luis Taviel de Andrade, he said: "Everything that the Jesuits taught me was good and holy; it was in Spain and abroad that I went astray."⁹ Though Fathers Vilaclara and March who walked beside him no doubt felt that the work of the Jesuits had been vindicated, Rizal's statement cannot be taken as an objective

8. J. Rizal *El Filibusterismo*, facsimile of 1891 first edition (Manila: R. Martinez, 1958), p. 215.

9. [Pablo Pastells, S.J.], *La masonización de Filipinas: Rizal y su obra* (Barcelona: Tipografía Católica, 1897), p. 39. W. E. Retana, who cites the Jesuit account, notes that Taviel de Andrade had verified to him their authenticity (*Vida y escritos del Dr. José Rizal* [Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1907], p. 431).



Far left: Main building of the Ateneo Municipal in Intramuros during Rizal's time. (*Memorias de un estudiante de Manila. Autobiografía escolar inédita del Dr. José Rizal* [Manila: Cacho Hermanos, 19 de Junio de 1949], p. 20.)

Left: Jose Rizal, at age 13, while a student of the Ateneo Municipal. (Austin Craig, *The Story of Jose Rizal: The Greatest Man of the Brown Race*. [Manila: Philippine Education Publications Co., 1909], p. 11.)

appraisal of the relations between Rizal and the Ateneo. Much of what he had learned abroad, and much more of his own reflection on his experience and on the conditions of his country had also contributed to making him not only the hero of his people, but a permanent source of inspiration in their struggle for justice and freedom. The Spanish Jesuits of the Ateneo had indeed made their contribution, but it was surely not the Ateneo alone which had made Rizal the towering figure that he had become and was to remain in the development of the Filipino nation. No institution, no educators, however skilled and devoted, can make that kind of proprietary claim to the achievements of their alumni.

The fuller truth rather lies elsewhere: the Ateneo of the Spanish Jesuits did contribute much to the formation of the man Rizal; but Rizal too was to have his impact on the Ateneo of the future, on the Ateneo of the Filipino Jesuits; he too was to become *their* teacher, as that of his people as a whole. The growing national consciousness found in him its creator and embodiment to such an extent as to merit for him the appellation of "the first Filipino,"

as his principal biographer, Leon Ma. Guerrero, has called him. His ideas, then, have pointed out directions and posed questions to which the Ateneo today, as well as the Filipino people as a whole, must seek to respond.

It is this thought which serves as the unifying theme of this Rizal centenary issue of *Philippine Studies*. Its articles not only take up some themes of the thought of Rizal; they also attempt answers to some contemporary issues facing the nation — issues which concerned Rizal and which he tried to answer for his own day, but which call for new or renewed responses in contemporary Philippine society. It is to these issues that four Filipino Jesuits of today's Ateneo, its professors or its alumni, address themselves. They center around two major concerns of Rizal — the shaping of a nation of free Filipinos, and the relation of that nation to the Christian faith which he never fully abandoned, but with whose contemporary institutional form he had to struggle.

Raul J. Bonoan studies Rizal's concept of God's providence guiding the Filipino people to its destiny, which he sees as a fundamental concept in Rizal's political philosophy. The personal trust in God's provident care over himself, which surfaces so frequently in the *Memorias* of Rizal's student days, evolved in his maturer thought into a conviction that God had been guiding the destinies of the Filipino people as a whole, and would continue to do so. The Filipinos for their part must build their nation on the example and suffering of their forebears, confiding in no external means or even on political maneuverings, but only on their own efforts and their willingness to suffer under God's guidance to bring about the redemption of the nation in freedom. Rizal provides not only a political philosophy, but truly a theology of liberation, one which has much to say to our contemporary society still in search of that freedom.

For Rizal as well as other key thinkers of the nineteenth century nationalist movement, freedom had as a key constituent element the civil liberties and political rights that his Ateneo professors "dared not accept," as Rizal said of them in the letter cited above.¹⁰ In recent years it has been the fashion in certain circles to dismiss the emphasis given to many of these rights by labelling them a heritage from the American colonial regime, ill-suited to the contemporary Philippine situation. In answer, Joaquin G.

10. See note 6 above.

Bernas traces the evolution of the Filipino tradition on some of these rights and liberties, demonstrating that, far from being American importations, they were at the heart of Filipino aspirations long before the American occupation was effected. Tracing the development of Philippine jurisprudence in the field of property rights, civil liberties, and freedom from arbitrary searches and arrests, he shows an evolution which has been influenced, no doubt, especially in the colonial period, by American jurisprudence and colonial government suspicions, but in which Filipino experience and tradition has also made itself felt, contrary to conservative American jurisprudence. Particularly was this true as regards the inviolability of the person and the domicile, a concern reflecting the bitter experience of Rizal and so many other Filipinos in the struggle for freedom near the end of the Spanish regime. Though the evolution toward a concept of property with definite social obligations has continued, Bernas sees the past few years as a retrogression from the long-standing safeguards Filipinos had evolved against arbitrary search and arrest, as well as from the growing jurisprudential consciousness of the importance of civil rights which had evolved since 1946, when the nervous colonial government was removed. One may observe that Bernas is seen not only responding positively to the challenge Rizal threw to his Spanish Jesuit predecessors in vain, but prolonging Rizal's concerns to an even more urgent present.

The close relationship between Christianity and Filipino society and culture under the Spanish regime made it inevitable that the struggle for political rights and national independence would have profound religious repercussions as well. Here the Ateneo education of the nineteenth century failed to assist Rizal and other Filipino *ilustrados* to reconcile their nationalist and libertarian aspirations with either the traditional Catholicism of their homes or the more intellectualized version taught in the Catholic institutions of higher education.¹¹ Rizal, imbued with the religious atmosphere of his family, model of piety among his fellow students at the Ateneo, fervently placing himself under the protection of God and the Virgin Mary as he left his alma mater, and deeply religious even up to his early years in Spain, was soon singled out as a freethinker,

11. See Schumacher, "Philippine Higher Education," pp. 62-65.

a heretic, one who had suffered "the shipwreck of his Faith."¹² Nonetheless, his was not a facile shedding of the beliefs of his youth. He was haunted by the need to find a reconciliation between the Christianity he saw inculcated in the Philippines of his day and his scholarly studies and nationalist aspirations. One finds him wrestling with the figure of Christ, trying to believe, and unable to do so, trying to escape from his youthful faith, but unable fully to put it aside.¹³ In a Philippine society in the process of rapid transition, there was nothing for those in the vanguard of change but the static image of Christ of their past.

It is in this context that one may see the relevance of the study of Jose Mario Francisco to the failure of the Ateneo and other Catholic institutions of learning to present Christ meaningfully to a large part of their students. Through the mirror of Tagalog literature in three periods of Philippine history, Francisco studies the image of Christ which reflected the aspirations of each age. In the failure of the institutional Church to present Christ meaningfully to those aspirations he sees an explanation of the complexities, even contradictions, found in a Filipino society and culture nonetheless still deeply imbued with Christianity.

In the society of Rizal's day, where the influence of the Church on society was all-pervasive, it became the target of almost all nationalist Filipinos. The intervention of the Spanish clergy at all levels of government has created a sensitivity to Church "interference in politics" which persists even to the present. That very influence, however, was a servitude to the State which led the Church to support with its moral influence and religious sanctions, or at least keep silent about, State policies which many of the clergy privately acknowledged to be unjust.¹⁴ But worst of all,

12. The phrase is attributed by Rizal to Father Sánchez, in his letter to Father Pastells from Dapitan, 9 January 1893, *Epistolario*, 4:85.

13. See, e.g., his letter to Blumentritt, 25 December 1888, *Epistolario*, 5:369-71; *Noli me tângere*, pp. 278-79; and more systematically, in the Ph.D. dissertation of Raul J. Bonoan, S.J., "The Rizal-Pastells Correspondence: A Theological Critique," (Ateneo de Manila University, 1976), pp. 381-403.

14. In the Jesuit archives of the province of Tarragona, in the Colegio de San Francisco de Borja, San Cugat, Barcelona, Spain, there are numerous private letters in which injustices of the government to Filipinos are deplored. There are many indications of private intervention with government authorities to obtain redress of such grievances, but none of public denunciation, even when private intercession had failed. Similar letters to government officials from friar parish priests can be found in the Philippine National Archives and the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid, and no doubt in the archives of the other religious orders. But one finds public denunciation only of *filibusteros*.

the Spanish clergy as a whole set all their influence against the national struggle for independence, even when it became the aspiration not merely of a few ilustrados but of the broad masses of the Filipino people. If less attacked by Filipino nationalists than the other Spanish clergy, and even accused of disloyalty to Spain by their more chauvinist fellow-Spaniards, the Jesuits of the Ateneo, whatever may have been their contribution to facilitating the rise of Filipino nationalism, failed no less than their other compatriots in acknowledging openly the justice of those aspirations of the Filipino people, or more probably, in even recognizing it at all.¹⁵

Bishop Francisco Claver's paper faces squarely the thorny question of "the Church and politics." If the Church is to preach the full Gospel of Christ, it must speak out on the moral dimensions of government, on human rights, on justice, on the type of development that governments attempt to prescribe for the people – even at the risk of the loss of the Church's own institutions. This "political action" on the part of the Church cannot be in defense of its own institutions and interests, but in behalf of the true development and liberation of peoples, "proclaiming liberty to the captives," according to the words of Scripture. Such a concept of the role of the Church in society flows not from any ideology, but from the essence of the Church as the People of God, not a Church of the clergy. It signifies "the Church as Communication" – a Church which performs its mission of liberation not in conversations between bishops and government officials, but in dialogue with all its people, in listening to all, in allowing all to participate in its decisions, in making all co-responsible with the hierarchy of the Church. As such a community of the people of God, it will become in reality an instrument of liberation, for it will enable the people as a whole to determine its own development and in that process to achieve its own liberation.

15. Besides various such indications in Rizal's writings, a notable example is the book of Francisco Foradada, S.J., *La soberanía de España en Filipinas* (Barcelona: Henrich, 1897). This book, written to show the illegitimacy of any attempt now or in the future to emancipate the Philippines from Spain, was in large part an effort to refute the accusations made in Manila and Madrid that the Revolution had been promoted by alumni of the Ateneo and the Jesuit-run Escuela Normal. In the archives of the Philippine Province, Loyola House of Studies, Quezon City, there is a large bundle of protestations of loyalty gathered by the Jesuits from the alumni of the Escuela Normal to counteract these accusations (V-14-1897). See Pablo Pastells, S.J. *Misión de la Compañía de Jesús de Filipinas en el siglo XIX*, 3 vols. (Barcelona: Henrich, 1916-17), 3: 283-85 for Jesuit fears in 1897 that the government would suppress their schools as a result of these accusations of being unpatriotic.

To be sure, Rizal did not see all that is implied in the full liberation of his people. Precisely, a recurring theme in the articles here presented is the process of historical development that has taken place in explicating the fullness of meaning contained in the concept of God's providence over His people, in the meaning of Christ and Christianity for Filipino society, in the understanding of civil and political rights, in the role of the Church in society. But it may be hoped that this introduction and the papers which follow may show not only that Rizal had a great deal to say to the society of his time, but that many of his concerns remain, or have come back to us in a somewhat different form, today. If those of the Ateneo can take pride today in what their predecessors were able to contribute to the formation of the national hero, even to helping to sow in him the seeds of nationalism, they must be conscious of what Rizal has taught them, together with the rest of the Filipino people, about the contribution due from them toward the achievement of a just and free Filipino society. If their Spanish Jesuit predecessors, with whom they stand in continuity of aspirations, were unable to comprehend fully what their outstanding student attempted to make clear to them, it is to be hoped that these articles will show that their authors have indeed learned from the outstanding alumnus of the Ateneo, and are trying to bring that joint heritage to today's Filipino society, still seeking justice and freedom.