José Rizal and the Asian Renaissance†

RAUL J. BONOAN, S.J.
ATENEO DE NAGA
PHILIPPINES

In recent decades, events in East Asia have caught the eye and imagination of the world. Diminutive Japan has tilted the balance of trade against the giant economic power of the United States of America, its conqueror in war. The Philippines stunned the world with its display of "people power," the first in a series of non-violent revolutions which brought down dictatorial regimes and reconfigured the globe. China has become the new business mecca of multinational corporations. At the handover of Hong Kong, the Chinese lit the sky with artworks of fire signalling their determination to dominate both heaven and earth in the next century. In 1996 the results of an international Mathematics test administered to a random sampling of secondary school students all over the world surprised Asians themselves: Singapore, South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong took the top four places. The tallest building in the world is no longer in Chicago but in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The temptation is to focus on the economic dimension and facilely encompass these developments in a newly coined phrase, the "East Asian Economic Miracle." But economic growth is only in function of a multifaceted, wider, and deeper development. In fact, what is taking place is a social and cultural resurgence and revival. After centuries of marginalization, colonialization, gunboat diplomacy, and unequal treaties, the peoples of Asia are gaining confidence in themselves and mapping their own future. Anwar Ibrahim, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, has called this phenomenon the Asian Renaissance, an epoch-making transformation analogous to the other renaissances that have taken place in history, particularly to that which emerged from the 14th-16th century Italy.[1]

†Lecture delivered before the Filipino American Historical Association, Chicago, 10 October 1997.

[1] Anwar Ibrahim, *The Asian Renaissance* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1996), pp. 17-31.

This mighty upsurge has been a-building for well over a hundred years. Its precursors were Asian thinkers like José Rizal, Muhammad Iqbal, Rabindranath Tagore, Sun Yat Sen, and Mahatma Gandhi—all born in the last century and bred under colonial rule. Their ideas awakened the peoples of Asia from a deep slumber and cultural amnesia. The first in the series of international conferences on the Asian Renaissance sponsored by the Malaysian Government and held in October 1995 was on Dr. José Rizal. In a major paper at the conference, Anwar called Rizal a humanist and a Renaissance man, a multifaceted *(mutafannin) homo universalis.*[2] Whether he was aware of it or not, he was echoing the view of the eminent Filipino historian, Horacio de la Costa, who had asserted that, spiritually, Rizal belonged not to the nineteenth century of Darwin but to the fifteenth century of the Italian humanists. For de la Costa, Rizal ranks with Confucius, who lived five centuries before Christ, as well as with Mahatma Gandhi, in terms of his understanding of what it is to be a human being in the vast lands and ancient cultures of Asia.[3]

Such expressions of high esteem are in stark contrast with the assessment of two Filipino writers who have engaged in Rizal-bashing in recent decades. In their view, Rizal was a middle-class *ilustrado* whose sympathy for the people was academic, confined to the depiction of the social conditions of his time. He in fact feared and distrusted the common *tao* and repudiated the Katipunan uprising, which was depicted as a revolt of the masses.[4] "We cannot say," says Constantino, "that Rizal himself will be valid for all time and that Rizal's ideas should be the yardstick of all our aspirations. . . . neither are all his teachings of universal and contemporary relevance."[5]

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[2]Anwar Ibrahim, "José Rizal: The Discourse on the Asian Renaissance," ed. M. Rajaretnam, *José Rizal and the Asian Renaissance* (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kajian Dasar, 1996), p. 38.

[3]Horacio de la Costa, "Rizal as Humanist," *The Background of Nationalism and Other Essays* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1965), 47-48; "The Eastern Face of Christ," *Asia and the Philippines* (Manila: La Solidaridad Publishing House, 1967), pp. 162-69.

[4]Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses, The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1996), p. 109.

[5]Renato Constantino, "Veneration Without Understanding" (Third National Rizal Lecture, 30 December 1969), p. 26.

Let me just say briefly that the argument is only as strong as its Marxist underpinnings. Events in this last decade of the century have shown the basic fragility of Marxism both as philosophy and polity. Moreover, historical research has given the lie to the statement of Agoncillo and Constantino that the concept of Rizal as a national hero was imposed upon Filipinos by the Americans. Long before Dewey's battleship appeared on Manila Bay, even during Rizal's own lifetime, the poor people of Laguna—probably the remnants of Hermano Pule's *confradía*—awaited his return like that of a "second Joshua."[6] Bonifacio sent Dr. Pio Valenzuela to Rizal to ask for his support. Emilio Jacinto ended a rousing speech with: *Viva Filipinas! Viva la Libertad! Viva el Doctor Rizal!* Without his knowledge and consent Rizal was made honorary president of the Katipunan.[7] It was the Katipunan itself that made Rizal a hero even before his death.

We must note two things about that prime analogue of renaissances. First, the Renaissance was a product of cross-fertilization of ideas. Second, in discovering Graeco-Roman literature and culture, the European Renaissance discovered humanity. Or, more accurately, it was a rediscovery of the human being which was discovered in the literature of the past. Thus, Shakespeare in *Hamlet* could rhapsodically express the Greek idea of the human being as the measure of all things: "What piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension like a god! the beauty of the world! paragon of animals!" Then the noble but tortured Dane adds the tragic question: "And to me what is this quintessence of dust?" (Act II, Sc. 2)

I hope to show how Rizal employed ideas from the West to bring an understanding of what it was to be man and woman within the unique

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[6] *"Ay! José ang mga tao rine ualang ibang itinatanong at inaasahan cunde icao. ang lalong cahirap hirapan na mga taga bundoc nagtatanong sa aquin ñg iyong pag ooi, tila umaasang ikalawang Josué na mag liligtas ng caralitaan* . . . (Ah, José! The people here ask about and hope for no one else but yourself. The poorest mountain dwellers ask me about your return, as if hoping for a second Joshua to free them from their sufferings.) Letter from M. Eleojorde to Rizal, 26 May 1889, *Epistolario Rizalino*, ed. T. M. Kalaw, 5 vols. (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1930-38), 2:183.

[7] Edited & translated by Horacio de la Costa, *The Trial of Rizal* (W.E. Retana's Transcription of the Official Spanish Documents, rev. ed. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996), pp. 108-09.

complexities of the late nineteenth century Philippines, and what it meant to construct the new reality of the Filipino nation. This, I believe, was Rizal's unique contribution to the Asian Renaissance.

Philosophical Awakening

More than Iqbal, Tagore, Sun Yat Sen, and Gandhi, who had ready access to the wisdom of their respective traditions—Islamic, Indian, and Chinese—down the centuries and the dynasties, Rizal relied heavily on Western thought, specifically the Enlightenment, for the elaboration of his political ideas.

The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement which stretched over a hundred years from the 17th to the 18th century. Its thinkers were known as the *philosophes.* "The Enlightenment," Kant states succinctly, "is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another."[8] The motto of the movement was *Sapere aude,* "Dare to think on your own." Its principal doctrine, therefore, was the autonomy of reason. This principle and its transcription into political liberalism were the philosophical anchors of the American and French Revolutions. "The Rights of Man," a document formulated shortly after the French Revolution, contained in fact the distillations of the thought of the philosophes Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu.

When Rizal arrived in Spain in 1883, the Age of the Enlightenment had closed a hundred years earlier in Europe. But Spain, long isolated intellectually and culturally from the rest of Europe, was only beginning to feel the impact of the ideas of the Enlightenment, which was heady wine for Rizal. In the *Noli Me Tangere,* his character Tasio was a philosophe, *el filósofo,* whose place was taken by Padre Florentino in *El filibusterismo.* In fact, Rizal himself perceived his role to be that of a philosophe, like Voltaire, shedding light on those who sat in darkness.

A brilliant attempt at enlightening his people was occasioned by the petition of some women of Malolos to the central government for the establishment of a night school in their town. They wanted to be taught Spanish, an aspiration opposed by some ecclesiastics. Rizal was much

[8]Immanuel Kant, "What is the Enlightenment?," in *The Enlightenment, A Comprehensive Anthology,* ed. Peter Gay (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 384.

elated by this news and hastened to encourage the women in a long epistle published in *La Solidaridad.* Long before the age of feminism and gender sensitivity, the letter advocated the emancipation of women, pointing to their enslavement and lack of education as the cause of Asia's underdevelopment. *"Ito ang dahilan ng pagkalugami ñg Asia; ang babai sa Asia'y mangmang at alipin."*[9] (This is the cause of Asia's misfortune: the ignorance and enslavement of women.) Women had been taught to achieve sanctity by subservience to the friars. Now Rizal told them that true holiness lay in the pursuit of what was right, *ang pagsunod sa matuid.*[10]

But Rizal was concerned with the liberation not of women alone but of all Filipinos. Thus he translated Kant in the language and imagery which his people would understand:

> *Ang kamangmanga'y kaalipinan, sapagka't kung ano ang isip, ay ganoon din ang tao: taong walang sariling isip, ay taong ualang pagkatao; ang bulag na tagasunod sa isip ng iba, ay parang hayop na susunod-sunod sa tali.*[11]
>
> Ignorance is slavery inasmuch as human beings are measured by their thinking. People who cannot think on their own are devoid of humanity. One who follows blindly the thought of another is like an animal led by a leash.

He likewise echoed Rousseau's opening lines of his *Social Contract,* that whereas all were born free they were everywhere in chains:[12]

> *(Ang bawat isa) para-parang inianak ñg walang tanikala kundi malaya, at sa loob at kalulua'y walang makasusupil, bakit kaya ipaaalipin mo sa iba ang marañgal at malayang pagiisip?*[13]
>
> All are born free without chains, with a will and a soul that cannot be conquered: why would you allow your noble and free mind to be enslaved by another?

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[9]Rizal, "Sa Mga Kababayang Dalaga sa Malolos," *Escritos de José Rizal,* 10 vols. (Manila: Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal, 1961), 7:60.

[10]*Ibid.*, 7:58.

[11]*Ibid.*, 7:63.

[12]Rousseau, *The Social Contract,* in Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment,* 332.

[13]*Escritos de Rizal,* 7:57.

Rizal identified the condition of his people in the 19th century with that of the *ancien regime* in 18th-century Europe, which had driven Rousseau into making his startling generalization.

The moral reawakening entailed a new ethos and a new morality with a strong social and political dimension: *"ang tao . . . ay hindi inianak para mabuhay sa sarili, kundi para sa bayan* (a human being is born not for himself or herself alone, but for the nation).[14] He likewise appealed for solidarity: *"ang isa-isang tingting ay madaling baliin, ngunit mahirap ang isang bigkis na walis* (sticks may be easily broken singly, but not a bundle of them)."[15]

Historical Awareness

That Rizal the *philosophe* was also a physician was not an accident of history. For many a *philosophe* were practicing physicians, like John Locke, a physician who became a philosopher precisely as a physician, teaching philosophy precisely on medical principles and invoking "experience" as the court of final appeal.

As his country's physician, Rizal had to look into his patient's history. He decided therefore to do historical research in the Library of the British Museum. His edition of Morga's *Sucesos* with his own copious notes was published in 1890, followed by articles which brought to bear the results of his research on the Philippine situation. His purpose, he stated, was, after examining the present situation in the country in the *Noli*, to study the past, awaken his people's historical consciousness, and recapture "the last moments of our ancient nationality."[16]

Rizal extolled the ancient Filipinos for their high civilization, active commerce with neighboring peoples, and thriving industry and manufacture, which included shipbuilding, agriculture, mining, cannon foundry and silk production. But under the Spaniards, neighbors that had long traded with the Filipinos, were prohibited entry. The government imposed taxes and instituted monopolies. The famous Galleon

[14] *Ibid.*, 7:63.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] José Rizal, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas por el Doctor Antonio de Morga, obra publicada en Méjico el año de 1609 nuevamente sacada a luz y anotada por José Rizal y precedida de un prólogo por Prof. Fernando Blumentritt* (Paris: Garnier, 1890), p. v.

Trade carried few Philippine products. Spanish colonial policy had constricted development and driven the inhabitants to indolence and impoverishment. He commented:

> Is it strange that the Philippines remains poor in spite of its rich soil when history tells us that the economies of advanced countries took off and were on their way to progress and development the day their civil liberties were restored and restrictions were lifted? The countries with the most active trade and industries are those that are most free, like France, England, and the United States. And Hong Kong, which compares poorly with the smallest of our islands, has more commercial activity than the entire archipelago, because it is free and well administered.[17]

Rizal's solution sounds familiar and modern: liberalization and freedom of trade.

Moreover, evangelization was in partnership with conquest: baptism made the converts "not only subjects of the Spanish king but also slaves of the *encomenderos* and even slaves of the Church and convents."[18] He also stated that "the primitive religion of the ancient Filipinos was more in conformity with the doctrine of Christ and the first Christians than was the religion of the friars."[19]

What Rizal was saying was that the Filipinos had a history quite apart from Spanish conquest and an "ancient nationality" quite apart from the communities *bajo la campana* set up by the peculiar alliance of Cross and Crown. In the pursuit of their destiny, it was imperative that Filipinos recover from this collective amnesia and revive a consciousness of their pre-colonial roots.

Rizal's new historical perspective quickly became an essential element in Philippine nationalist discourse and found its way into the initiation rites of the *Katipunan.* The neophyte was asked to answer three questions: (1) *Ano ang kalagayan nitong Katagalugan nang unang panahon?* What was the condition of the Philippines in early times?; (2) *Ano ang kalagayan ngayon?* What is her condition now?; (3) *Ano*

[17] *Escritos de Rizal,* 7:246.
[18] Rizal, *Sucesos,* p. 78.
[19] *Ibid.,* 315n.

ang magiging kalagayan sa darating na panahon? What will she be in the future?[20]

Rizal's Politics: Building the Nation

Rizal's lifelong goal, which amounted to an obsession, was political: *redención nacional,* national redemption. In the beginning, he was advocating a change of status of the Philippines in the vast Spanish Empire. Subjugated by the Spanish conquistadors and administered—often inefficiently—as a colony for three centuries, the Philippines must now be treated as a province of Spain.

The philosophical basis for this assimilationist position was best expressed in a landmark speech Rizal gave in June 1884. At a fine arts exposition in Madrid the works of two Filipino painters garnered top awards: Juan Luna's *Spoliarium* was awarded a gold medal of the first class and Felix Resurreción Hidalgo's *Vírgenes expuestas al populacho* a medal of the second class. At the banquet honoring the two painters, Rizal jubilantly acclaimed Spain and the Philippines as *dos pueblos,* implying that the Filipino was of equal standing as the Spaniard. Rizal's assimilationism was based on the universal principle of the equality of all peoples and races. Luna and Hidalgo were the glories of both Spain and the Philippines. "Born in the Philippines they could just as well have been born in Spain, because genius knows no country barriers, it grows everywhere, it is the patrimony of all like light, like air: cosmopolitan as space, as life, and as God himself."[21]

By the standards of the late nineteenth century colonial Philippines, Rizal's idea of *dos pueblos* was most radical. The speech, published in *La Solidaridad,* made Rizal a marked man in the colony. Society was by custom and legal practice stratified into *peninsulares, criollos, mestizos,* and *indios.* They were by no means equal. Even Spaniards did not all enjoy the same legal status: a baby conceived in Spain in its Spanish mother's womb but born upon her arrival in Manila, was by the fact of

[20]Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses, the Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1956), pp. 48-49, 57; Reynaldo Clemeña Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution, Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979), p. 92.

[21]*Escritos de Rizal,* 7:18-19.

its place of birth a *creole,* one rung lower in the social ladder than its mother and other *peninsulares.* Rizal fought this gradated racism and affirmed the equality of all humanity, including the *indio.* His empirical proof? Luna and Resurrección Hidalgo, who had won over European painters.

But Spanish intransigence convinced him of the need of a more radical and comprehensive solution: independent nationhood. For one thing, he pointed out, the inexorable law of history dictates that colonies eventually declare themselves independent.[22]

If there was no Filipino nation, it was for the simple reason that the inhabitants were not one people with a common political allegiance. For that is what a nation is, and that allegiance is based on three things: a tradition or a shared historical experience, a consensus or a shared understanding of what a nation is all about, and a compact or shared agreement among the citizens based on the national tradition and consensus.[23] The Philippines had been merely a geographic expression for the archipelago of 7000 islands and their inhabitants grouped together politically by the Spanish colonial administration. But in the second half of the nineteenth century, the reality of the Filipino nation was beginning to emerge.

Benedict Anderson has said that a nation is an "imagined" community.[24] Not that a nation is a work of fiction, but that in the minds of the people there lives the image of their national community. A nation exists when a significant number of the people consider themselves and act as a nation, and believe themselves to be in communion with hundreds, thousands, nay, millions and millions of persons they have never seen nor will ever meet; in fact, with millions of men and women now long dead, and many more still unborn.[25] In the late 19th century, the inhabitants were calling themselves Filipinos and thinking of themselves

[22] *Ibid.*, 7:160.

[23] Horacio de la Costa, "The Filipino National Tradition," in *Challenges for the Filipino,* ed. Raul J. Bonoan (Ateneo Publication Office, 1971), p. 44.

[24] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[25] "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." *Ibid.*, p. 15.

as one people. In the development of the image and concept of the nation, Rizal's creative genius and power of imagination played a crucial role.

Of his vast literary production, Rizal's novels occupied a primary place in shaping and sharpening this image. First of all, the *Noli* and *Fili* are clearly addressed to Filipinos. Rizal imagines Filipinos reading the book, addressing them with a sense of familiarity and bonding.[26] He invites the reader to enter with him into Don Santiago's house ("Let us go up the stairs, oh you my reader."), walk the streets of San Diego, and view the Pasig river. Rizal's characters—the subservient businessman Don Santiago, the coy and pious María Clara, the altarboys Crispín and Basilio, the voluble Fray Dámaso—are recognizable figures in contemporary society. Rizal shows his Filipino readers how the inner world of the novel fuses with the world of their day-to-day life. The characters, the readers, and the writer are all presumed to be one people. Then in his notes to Morga, he identifies Lapu Lapu, Rajah Soliman, and the inhabitants conquered by the expansionist Spaniards as ancient Filipinos in historical continuity with the Filipinos of contemporary times.

In 1892 Rizal made a momentous decision. He had come to the conclusion that the time for writing was past. It was now the time for action. He returned to the Philippines, and shortly after his arrival attended the organizational meeting of the *Liga Filipina*, whose statutes he had drawn up. At his trial Rizal was accused of rebellion for founding the *Liga*, which his prosecutors claimed was the *Katipunan*. Rizal countered that the *Liga* was not subversive and that its aim was the development of industry, culture and the arts. True, the *Liga* was not the *Katipunan*. But the very wording of the statutes suggests that it was no ordinary civic organization. Listen to the *Liga*'s purposes as written by Rizal: "unification of the entire archipelago into a compact, vigorous, and homogeneous body; mutual protection in time of need and necessity; defense against every form of violence and injustice; the development of education, agriculture and commerce; and the study and implementation of reforms."[27] What could such broad and far-reaching aims mean but that Rizal was laying the foundations of the new nation?

[26] *Imagined Communities*, pp. 32-33.
[27] *Escritos de Rizal* 7:303.

Many a time Rizal toyed with the idea of revolution. But he opted for a philosophy of non-violence, which he articulated in the *Fili*: "In these times the sword counts for very little in the destinies of peoples. But we must win our freedom by deserving it ... by loving what is just, what is good, what is great to the point of dying for it. When a people reaches these heights, God provides the weapons, and the idols and tyrants fall like a house of cards, and freedom shines like the dawn."[28] A revolution might succeed, but if there was no nation, the people would be back to square one. "What is the use of independence, if the slaves of today become the tyrants of tomorrow?"[29]

Some nationalist movements in 19th-century Africa and Asia assigned primacy to the state, often viewed as a means toward nationhood. By way of contrast, Rizal set priority on building the nation, and his principal means was education. Thus, what is distinctive of his concept of the nation is that it was based not on race, ethnic origin, religion or language, but on the common principles and values which would emerge from education.[30] The binding factor was the broadening of the mind.

Agoncillo, Constantino, and some newspaper columnists have held to the radical opposition between Rizal and Bonifacio. But perceptive historians have indicated the complimentarity of their roles: Rizal led to Bonifacio and independent nationhood; on the other hand, Bonifacio looked up to Rizal and wanted him rescued at all cost. While Rizal as prisoner condemned the *Katipunan*, he never rejected in principle the necessity of rebellion. In fact, when writing his *Ultimo Adios*, Rizal was aware of the *Katipunan* uprising and seemed to acknowledge the validity of this option:[31]

En campos de batalla, luchando con delirio
Otros te dan sus vidas sin dudas, sin pesar:
El sitio nada importa, ciprés, laurel or lirio,

[28]José Rizal, *El Filibusterismo* (Manila: Rizal Centennial Commission, 1957), p. 276.
[29]*Ibid.*, 277.
[30]Georges Fischer, *José Rizal, Philippine 1861-96. Un aspect du nationalisme moderne* (Paris: Maspero, 1970), p. 117.
[31]Floro Quibuyen, "Rizal and the Revolution," *Philippine Studies* 45 (1997) 2:44-49.

Cadalso o campo abierto, combate o cruel martirio,
Lo mismo es si lo piden, la Patria y el hogar.

On the field of battle, fighting with delirium,
others give you their lives without doubts, without gloom,
The site nought matters: cypress, laurel or lily:
gibbet or open field: combat or cruel martyrdom
are equal if demanded by country and home.[32]

Rizal had opportunity to escape his exile and imprisonment a number of times. He turned down an offer by a group of rich patriots to abduct him from Dapitan, and if we may believe Agoncillo, at Manila Bay shortly before being brought to Spain, when informed by Emilio Jacinto of the *Katipunan* plot to rescue him, Rizal flatly refused to cooperate.[33]

Bonifacio opted for combat in the open battlefield. Rizal's conscious choice was for *cruel martirio* in the field of Bagumbayan. Lapu Lapu did not die for the Filipino nation for the simple reason that it did not exist in his time. Neither Diego Silang nor Francisco Dagohoy. Neither Hermano Pule nor even Fathers Gomez, Burgos, Zamora—precursors of a nation whose lines were still fuzzily drawn. By Rizal's time and precisely largely due to Rizal, the nation became a sharper reality. Rizal died for his country in such clear, express, and poetic terms as no one ever did before. *Querida Filipinas!/ Morir por darte vida, morir bajo tu cielo/ Y en tu encantada tierra la eternidad morir.*

Seven years earlier, Rizal had written a letter to his fellow Filipinos containing a premonitional allusion to his death. In the letter, in which he stressed that the example of the leaders impacted on the character of the people, Rizal expressed admiration for Fr. Gómez, who at the execution stood erect and serene, head held high, blessing the crowd, but sad regret that Fr. Burgos wept like a child. "If Burgos at his death had shown the fortitude of Gómez, the Filipinos would be other than what they are today."[34] But then the prospect of his own death gave him

[32]Translation by Nick Joaquin, *The Song of Maria Clara and other poems of José Rizal* (Manila: Alberto S. Florentino, 1969), p. 37.

[33]Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses, The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1996), p. 148.

[34]Rizal to the Members of the Association "La Solidaridad," 18 April 1889, *Epistolario Rizalino*, ed. by Teodoro Kalaw (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1930-38), 2:167.

pause. "Nevertheless, no one knows how he will behave in that supreme moment, and I myself who now preach and boast so much, perhaps I will show more fear and less courage than Burgos in that last hour."[35] Thus it was that when his turn came on that fateful morning of 30 December 1896, Rizal made a conscious, deliberate effort to die an exemplary death that would shape the national character and project the image of a noble people. He asked to face the firing squad, but was forced by the Spanish officer to turn his back. He refused a blindfold and would not kneel. He stood up, eyes uncovered, watching the bay and morning sky. The attending physician took his pulse; it was normal. As the guns fired, he made an effort to turn and fell on his side.

Rizal's execution shook the Filipino collective psyche to its very core. His farewell poem, hidden in an alcohol burner which Rizal gave to his sister, was copied and multiplied in various forms. Bonifacio himself translated it (or had someone translate it), and had it distributed to the *Katipuneros*, who read it eyes welling with tears and hands tight on their bolos.

As Anderson has pointed out, it is characteristic of the nation that it inspires so many not so much to kill as to die for it. It is hard to imagine someone dying for the Rotary or Lions Club or the Republican or Democratic Party. Dying for one's country assumes a grandeur which cannot be matched by dying for Communism or even Amnesty International.[36] It is in fact the incontrovertible proof of the living image of the national community, that the nation exists. With Rizal's death the birth of the Filipino nation became complete. The image of the nation which he conjured in life, he galvanized with his blood. It now remained for those others left behind and those still unborn, to constitute it into an independent and sovereign state.

Rizal did not merely translate the Enlightenment; he tamed it to serve his specific purposes and rigorously pushed reason's autonomy and the universal principles of justice and freedom to their ultimate political conclusions. His discovery of the ancient Filipino lost beyond the layers of Spanish accretions was a strong affirmation of the common humanity of the peoples of Asia with the rest of the world.

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[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Imagined Communities*, 132.

Recent developments in the Philippines—the efforts at reconciling Muslims and Christians in the national community, the expansion of commerce in the East Asia Growth Area, the vigorous democratic process and trade liberalization—may be viewed as the revival, the renaissance of things past of which Rizal dreamt a hundred years ago.