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Ateneo de Manila: Problems and Policies, 1959–1939

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Ateneo de Manila: Problems and Policies, 1859-1939

JOSE S. ARCILLA, S.J.

A week after the Jesuits had taken charge of the *Escuela pia*, an editorial appeared in the *Boletín oficial de Filipinas* (18 December 1859) praising the Jesuits for their methods of teaching which "cannot be better. They combine clarity with depth and . . . enjoyable explanations."¹ The Jesuits were new to Manila, having arrived just six months previously, but they had quickly won the hearts of the people. Before their expulsion in 1768, the Jesuits had been teachers at the University of San Ignacio. Remembering this, the people of Manila promptly went into action and approached the Ayuntamiento which, in turn, petitioned the Governor General of the Philippines to entrust the floundering *Escuela pia* to the newly arrived priests. To forestall further delay, the latter issued on 1 October a decree putting the school under Jesuit administration.

ESCUELA PIA TO ESCUELA MUNICIPAL

The *Escuela pia* was a primary school for boys subsidized by the city government, but it was "poorly administered and hardly frequented by the pupils." There was also an *Instituto de Reyes* to complement the studies begun at the primary school, as well as a girls' school directed by a lady who had passed the examination in Madrid. But, as Governor Fernando de Norzagaray (1857-60) noted, these could not compare with the schools in Europe nor satisfy the wealthier Manila residents. Something, too, had to be done for the *indios* who, with astonishing ease, learned to read and

1. Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus, Loyola House of Studies, Quezon City (APP), III-1-006.

write despite schools "badly financed with the community funds." The coming of the Jesuits, then, was an answer to a problem they had long been facing.²

The Jesuits were not altogether surprised at this turn of events. But it was a departure from their original instructions which they felt they could not change without superior authorization. They were back in the Philippines to evangelize the pagan hill tribes of Mindanao and its adjacent islands, and they tried to play for time in order to consult their religious superiors. But with the colonial authorities brooking no delay and the Governor General assuming full responsibility before the home government, the Jesuits had no other choice than to assume charge of the primary school. On 10 December 1859, then, they inaugurated the *Escuela Municipal*, as the school was renamed, holding classes for twenty-five out of thirty-three boys on the list.³

Three weeks before classes opened, Fr. José Fernández Cuevas, Mission Superior in the Philippines, explained in a letter to his Provincial Superior in Spain why the Jesuits had accepted the school and what they planned or hoped to do, incidentally providing us with an initial glimpse into the policy that made the Ateneo the school that it has become.

Three choices, according to Cuevas, awaited the Jesuits in the Philippines: parish work, active missions, and teaching. Parish work was contrary to the spirit of the Jesuit Constitutions. It tied the men down and entailed a number of risks to religious discipline. But active missions were very much in accordance with the

2. The Ayuntamiento of Manila had made this request as early as 8 June, about a week before the Jesuits arrived from Cadiz: Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu, Rome (ARSI), *Phll.*, 1001-I, 4. See also the letter of Governor Norzagaray to the Council of Ministers in Madrid, dated at Manila, 6 October 1859: Philippine National Archives, Manila (PNA), *Jesuitas*, Box 3, bundle 1.

3. For a summary of the beginnings of the Ateneo municipal, see Pablo Pastells, S.J., *Misión de la Compañía de Jesus de Filipinas en el siglo XIX. Relación histórica . . .* (Barcelona, 1916), I, chapter II; Horacio de la Costa, S.J., *Light Cavalry* (Priv. printing, 1942), pp. 35-51. See also the letter of Fr. Cuevas to the Provincial Superior in Spain, dated at Manila, 20 November 1859: ARSI, *Phll.*, 1001-I, 4. We know that the initial reaction in Madrid was disapproval of the transfer, but on representation by the colonial government, the decree of 1 October 1859 was approved early in 1861. For some details about the Escuela pia, see José S. Arcilla, S.J., "The Escuela Pia, Forerunner of Ateneo de Manila," *Philippine Studies* 31 (1983): 58-74. For information on the other educational institutions in the Philippines in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, see *El Archipiélago Filipino. Colección de datos . . .* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1900), vol. 1.

Jesuit vocation, and these they would soon initiate, once preliminary details were ironed out.⁴

What about teaching and running schools? There was nothing against them in the Jesuit Rule, as far as Cuevas knew. In taking charge of the former *Escuela pia* in Manila, the Jesuits were facing the same, if not greater risks than in Europe, considering the "sloth and weakness" of the natives. On the other hand, it would free the Jesuits from direct control by the Patronato and continued dependence on the government subsidy, "all that subservience under which every religious order in these islands is groaning." By means of the school, the Jesuits could provide education to those who aspired neither to the priesthood nor to a career in law. Third, the Jesuits would be in a special position to serve the government, both by winning the good will of those unfavorably disposed to the colonial officials and by teaching "sane ideas" to their sons who were thus spared from traveling to Calcutta, Singapore, or Paris. In anticipation of further misgivings, Cuevas assured his superior that the Jesuits were acting only in obedience to the government. The Governor General had promised to obtain the royal approval. All the Provincial had to do was to send five more priests to the Philippines.⁵

This was, then, how the Ateneo began, not quite as an afterthought, but as a godsend in a near-desperate situation. There was, wrote Fr. Juan Bautista Vidal, assistant to the Mission Superior, neither schools nor religious education in the Philippines, practically speaking. Without saying so, he implied that the Ateneo was needed and the Jesuits should not miss an opportunity to be of service to the colony.⁶ Accepting the *Escuela pia* was a chance to offer a more lasting service to the Filipino people than merely running a successful primary school for boys. The Jesuits hoped to provide for a "carefully chosen" group a balanced program of education that, besides academic training, would include the "theory and practice of Christian religion, the rules of etiquette and good upbringing." More than the former *Escuela*, the Jesuit

4. José Fernández Cuevas to the Provincial, Manila, 20 November 1859: ARSI, *Phil.*, 1001-I, 4. See also the same Jesuit's letter to the Governor General of the Philippines, Manila, 12 February 1861: Archivo de la Provincia Tarrconense de la *Compañía de Jesús*, Sant Cugat del Valles, Barcelona (ATa), E-II-a-7.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Father Juan Bautista Vidal to his brother, Manila, 6 November 1859: ATa, E-II-a-1.

school was to emphasize Catholic doctrine and a style of life expected of a practicing Catholic.⁷

Another noteworthy point is the traditional Jesuit policy of selectivity. Rather than try to reach directly the entire population, the Ignatian norm was to concentrate on a few capable individuals and train them as leaders to leaven society. The Ateneo municipal⁸ was not for every boy in Manila, but only for sons of Spanish and other influential families in the city. This was not a deliberate policy of the Jesuits, but of the city residents who had originally financed the *Escuela pia*. It was only with the opening of a dormitory in 1865 that Ateneo accepted both *indios* and Chinese *mestizos*; even then, only those who passed certain minimum standards were admitted into the school. The idea was not how *many*, but how *well* the Jesuits could educate their charges. Significantly, a question the Fathers wanted answered immediately, even before they began teaching, was how free the Prefect of Studies would be to expel students from the school. The Jesuits were not interested in numbers, but in the quality of the school and its students. Any potential source of harm was weeded out before any damage was done.⁹

ATENEO AS A SECONDARY SCHOOL

Meantime, Ateneo grew. Nine days after the opening of classes, enrolment rose to 75; on 2 January 1860, it jumped to 120; the following March, there were 175 boys. At the end of the first school year the following August, the total was 210 boys divided into what one would now call elementary classes.

The Jesuits, convinced they had made the right decision, wanted to do more, but they could not; there just was not enough classroom space. And there were not enough Jesuits. Only three of

7. *Reglamento para la Escuela municipal de Manila sostenida por el Excmo. Ayuntamiento y Regentada por los PP. de la Compañía de Jesús*. (Manila: Imprenta de Ramirez y Airaudier, 1860).

8. The school was originally called "Escuela pia" because it was first planned as a pious foundation. It was called "Escuela municipal" when the city government of Manila agreed to take charge, and later, Ateneo municipal de Manila, when the primary school was raised to a secondary school in 1865. See Arcilla, "The Escuela pia."

9. The first rules for the future Ateneo were approved on 15 December 1859: "Comunicaciones del Orden con el Gobierno," ATA, uncatalogued. See also *Libro de consultas de la Misión de la Compañía de Jesús en Filipinas . . .*, especially the extraordinary *consulta* or conference held on 6 October 1859: APP, IV-001.

the first six priests who had arrived in June 1859 could be spared to teach, while one of the four coadjutor brothers had to act as porter. Until the arrival of the third group of missionaries in 1862, the little they could do only faintly followed the traditional Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* or plan of studies characteristic of Jesuit schools. They had to be satisfied with merely adding subjects not taught in the former Escuela pia: history, geography, elementary mathematics, physics, chemistry, and natural history, which were obligatory; and French, music, and drawing which were free electives.

At last in June 1862, the third group of Jesuit priests and brothers arrived in Manila, and Fr. Cuevas felt he could now execute a plan he had been maturing in his own mind. The Governor General had once approached him to ask whether the Jesuits would agree to raise the Escuela Municipal to a secondary school. The Jesuit program of studies and the successful results shown in the last public examinations showed that they already had a nucleus for such an institution. With a minimal increase in the budget, would it be possible to effect the change?

The Jesuits said it was possible. Three of the elementary school subjects would be repeated in the secondary school anyway; they could be suppressed, or, better, be included in the new program. All they would have to do, then, was add two more courses. Thus, the new Ateneo would offer a program of seven years schooling: *Infima* (divided into two sections), *Inferior* (also divided into two), *Media*, *Superior*, and *Suprema*.

The lowest class (*Infima*) took two years. In the first, the pupils studied the most elementary ideas of religion, good conduct, deportment, reading and writing, Bible history, and geography. The second year repeated these subjects, adding a few other notions.

The next class (*Inferior*), also divided into two groups, studied the same subjects but in greater depth, presumably because by this time the boy, now older, was considered capable of assimilating more detailed information. In the first section, or the third year in school, rudiments of Spanish grammar and basic arithmetic were added. The second section, or fourth year, added also universal history, the geography of Oceania and the Philippines.

Media class, or the fifth year, continued the same subjects, but with more emphasis on history, geography, style and composition, arithmetic, algebra, and geometry.

Superior year had algebra and geometry, to which were added trigonometry, botany, and zoology.

Finally, the *Suprema* class gave time to the physical sciences, like physics, mineralogy, and geology.

At first glance, this seems quite a formidable program for boys seven to twelve years old. But, as Fr. de la Costa remarked, there are two ways of teaching a subject:

To study a science in the first way – as a specialty, a career – maturity of mind is necessary; the reasoning powers must be developed. To study a science in the second way – as a side line, an adjunct to culture – not much more than memory is required. Now the memory of man is freshest, is most retentive in childhood. It is for this reason that Father Cuevas and the Ayuntamiento assigned the acquiring of a “gentleman’s” knowledge of the sciences to what would be today the intermediate grade. This accessory, if necessary, erudition out of the way, it was possible to devote the next stage in cultural education to the faculty which next develops in a man after his memory – his imagination; it was possible then to work with undistracted intensity in the humanities, or what they would call today Poetry and Rhetoric.¹⁰

The boys were in school from eight o’clock to eleven o’clock in the morning and from three o’clock to five o’clock in the afternoon, Sundays and holidays excepted. They had no classes on Thursday afternoon, and they had no long summer vacation as there is today. Because of the heat, classes were “suspended” from April to June. There were no other holidays, except that the two upper grades enjoyed a nine-day Christmas break, the three Carnival days (the traditional “farewell-to-meat” days before Lent), and a month’s rest from 15 May to 15 June.

There were two kinds of examinations: private, which were frequent during the school year; and public, at the end of the school year when prizes and medals were awarded to the deserving. Academic competition and excellence were encouraged, a tradition made famous by Rizal’s description of his own sense of accomplishment when he reached the top of his class.

THE CUEVAS REPORT

Occasioned by the petition of two teachers in Ilocos for a raise in their salary, the Governor General of the Philippines

10. de la Costa, *Light Cavalry*, p. 44.

created a Superior Board of Primary Instruction in 1857 to reform the education system of the Islands. The Board submitted its recommendations, but they were conveniently shelved. Five years later, in 1862, Governor Jose de Lemery (1861-62) asked Fr. Cuevas to study the Board's recommendations and add his own observations. Hardly noticed by historians, this Cuevas report is a landmark in the history of Philippine education, for it led to the establishment of the *Escuela Normal de Maestros de Instruccion Primaria*, the only teacher-training institute in the Philippines during the Spanish regime. The value of this Cuevas Report lies in the explicit philosophy of education outlined in the report which oriented the policies of the Escuela Normal and the Ateneo municipal.^{1 1}

The key to any educational reform is the teacher, Cuevas began. Hence, the basic need in the Philippines is for trained teachers. But even before this, no concrete policy would succeed unless the existing defects of the Philippine school system were faced and remedied. What were they?

Schools in the Philippines offered neither intellectual and literary development nor moral or religious formation. "No European nation," Cuevas admitted, "surpasses the Philippines in the number of people who can read and write, but in no other schools is there such lack of historical and humanistic training." There was hardly any attempt to train pupils to compare things, seek out and analyze their origins or causes. The memory was neglected. Many of the Filipinos did not know their true name or that of their parents. They could not even identify the days of the week.

Much less was any religious training given. The catechism was learned in a "literal and merely superficial manner without understanding . . . doubtful points are not clarified through similes and comparisons . . . divine and church laws are not explained in detail" This was all the more to be regretted since, strictly, "education is the cultivation of the moral powers of the child." And so, concluded Father Cuevas, there must be an effort to produce "men of principle, forthright, and hardworking in order to complete the work of the Creator . . ." ^{1 2}

11. "Plan de Instrucción Primaria por el P. José Fernandez Cuevas, S.J., Manila, 20 de Abril de 1861;" ATa, "Colección Pastells," Tomo CX (documento 11); in the same volume "Preámbulo al plan de estudios elevado al Superior Gobierno el 27 de Mayo de 1866 por la Comisión de Estudios creada por decreto del Superior Gobierno de 6 de Octubre de 1863," (documento 13).

12. Ibid.

This was what Ateneo stood for. By 1880, the school had more than doubled its enrolment, prompting the harrassed Rector to plead before the Provincial Superior in Spain for more space to accomodate 170 boarders and the more numerous day scholars. The increased student population was a heartening sign of the people's trust in the Jesuits, he noted; but it was not good to perpetuate a situation in which at least twelve of the boarders used the wings of the auditorium stage as their dormitory!

ATENEO AND RIZAL

Documentation on the Ateneo in the time of Rizal is not as abundant as in the earlier period. The initial flurry to inaugurate and consolidate the school was followed by a routine, perhaps less interesting period, but an important time, nonetheless, when the policies earlier enunciated were being carried out. But we are not completely bereft of information. We find references to the Ateneo in the usual sources of Philippine history and in the scattered writings of its graduates, especially Jose Rizal, the Ateneo alumnus *par excellence*.

Ateneo offered two programs.¹³ The first was a five-year curriculum of "*estudios generales*" leading to the Bachelor of Arts

13. There was only one *public* secondary school, the College attached to the University of Santo Tomas. Ateneo and Letran were *private, first class* secondary schools, so classified because they offered the complete program leading to the A.B. degree. Others were *private second class* secondary schools because they offered only certain subjects taught by licentiates in Philosophy or Science, or A.B. graduates who passed an hour's qualifying examination. Students in the city had to take the examinations prepared by UST, while those in the provinces had to face an examination board composed of the Alcalde mayor, the parish priest, and his teacher. In 1886-87, there were forty-one private secondary schools of the second class. The Ateneo, a private secondary school of the first class, offered both the complete program of "*estudios generales*" and the "*estudios de aplicación*." Between 1865 and 1874, the passing percentage for the "*estudios generales*" at the Ateneo was 70.92 percent, with 27.33 percent of the graduates obtaining honors and various prizes. Between 1874 and 1882, the passing percentage was 83.25 percent and 24.64 percent obtained honors and prizes. At UST, between 1877 and 1882, the passing percentage was 53.71 percent. But 10.58 percent of the students enrolled had to be dropped from the class lists for absences, and 25.31 percent did not take the final examinations. Thus, for this five-year period, the failing percentage was only 10.10 percent. See the report on Philippine education prepared for the Madrid Exposition in 1887, and a similar one earlier submitted to the Colonial Exposition at Amsterdam in 1883; Archivo de la Universidad de Santo Tomas (AUST), *Libros*, tomo 212. I would like to thank Fr. Pablo Fernandez, O.P. who called my attention to these two reports.

degree required for higher studies in medicine, law, or the ecclesiastical faculties. As mentioned, the entire Ateneo curriculum lasted seven years, if we include the two preparatory years we would now call the "primary school."

The second program of studies was a shorter curriculum of two or three years leading to the diploma of *perito agrimensor* (Master Surveyor), *perito mercantil* (Master Businessman), *perito mecanico* (Master Mechanic), or *perito quimico* (Master Chemist). At the end of these studies one had to pass an hour's examination and be at least twenty years old to be able to practice his profession.¹⁴

The available evidence shows that this diplomate program was not as popular as the program of general studies. One writer mentioned that this was due to the "native character of the indio," although the more probable explanation is the lack of industry and trade in the country which discouraged people from pursuing the more practical "*estudios de aplicación*." What is interesting, however, is the fact that the Ateneo was not unaware of the socio-economic needs of the country. For example, English and French were offered alternately in the last two years of the secondary General Studies Program in an effort to equip the students with the necessary language skills after the Philippine ports had been opened to international trade.

We have the curriculum of studies Rizal pursued, but it is more instructive to note its effect on him. The random titles of books he mentions in his youthful diary and in his later writings and letters reveal a mind open to the rich heritage of literature and scholarship. Rizal had begun schooling

. . . still a boy, with little knowledge of the Spanish tongue, with an intelligence only partly developed, and almost without refinement in my feelings. By dint of studying, of analyzing myself, of reaching out for higher things, and of a thousand corrections, I was being transformed little by little, thanks to the influence of a beneficent professor Cultivating

14. The *estudios de aplicación* followed after the program of primary education at the Ateneo. It was, therefore, possible for a student to finish all his studies and be a Master Surveyor, or Master Chemist, but be disqualified from practicing his profession because he was younger than the minimum twenty years of age required by law. For a brief list of the subjects offered at the Ateneo, Letran and UST, see *Memoria Histórico-Estadística sobre la Enseñanza Secundaria y Superior en Filipina Escrita con Motivo de la Exposición Colonial de Amsterdam por encargo de la Subcomisión de Estas Islas* (Manila: Establecimiento Tipográfico de la Oceanía Española, 1883): AUST, *Libros*, 212.

poetry and rhetoric had elevated my feelings, and Virgil, Cicero, and other authors showed me a new path which I could take.¹⁵

More than the mechanical skill of writing and reading, it was his personal growth as a human being that Rizal treasured from his Ateneo education.

THE JESUITS AND THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION

When the Bonifacio revolt erupted in August 1896, the Jesuits were accused of having been privy to the separatist movement, if not its principal cause. By educating the indios, it was said, the Jesuits had produced the enlightened class that had spearheaded the Revolution. Not only that, the opinion went around that because the Jesuits were not the object of hatred as much as the Friar Orders, they were *menos españoles*. In the words of Fr. Pio Pi, Mission Superior, the Jesuits were aware that this was the feeling of part of the Spanish community in Manila, except, interestingly, among the Spanish laity. If the classes had been handled by Spanish lay teachers, it was said, the students would have imbibed a deeper love of Spain.¹⁶

What was the basis of this anti-Jesuit attitude? Was it merely intramural, ecclesiastical or professional intrigue and jealousy? We cannot say exactly. But an article appeared in a Barcelona weekly, *La Semana Católica* (29 November 1896), written by Bishop Martínez Vigil of Oviedo, in which he pointed out that the Philippines was the easiest and also the hardest colony for Spain to keep. The native indios, he explained, "tenderly" loved the Catholic Faith received from the friars who had treated them with a fatherly care. The natives cherished the King of Spain with

15. *Memorias de un Estudiante de Manila*, Cap^o V (English translation by Leon Ma. Guerrero). In this age of specialized training, there is hardly a school where *one* professor teaches several different subjects. In this situation the professor meets his students only once a day and this naturally diminishes the personal contact between him and his students. The opposite was true in Rizal's Ateneo, when one teacher was assigned to *one* course or class and he taught practically all the subjects studied by the class. The teacher was thus in constant contact with his students, an experience which greatly profited Rizal when he was at the Ateneo. For a list of subjects each Jesuit at the Ateneo was assigned to teach in 1886-87, see *Exposición General de las Islas Filipinas en Madrid. 1887. Comisión Central de Manila. Memoria Correspondiente a la Sección 8^a Grupos 72 y 73* (Manila: Tipografía del Colegio de Sto. Tomas, 1887): AUST, *Libros*, 212.

16. Pió Pi to the Jesuit Superior General in Rome, Manila, 14 September 1896, and 30 September 1896: ARSI, *Phil.*, 1001-XI, 17-18.

affection, whose tribute they paid with "devotion." On the other hand, this religious but "uncultured" people have now tasted alas! the so-called modern liberties, which divide instead of unite. As a result force was necessary to keep them loyal to Spain; even then, it was not sure force would succeed. The Revolution was proof of this:

. . . rather, only partly for there are still surprises awaiting us. We also know something of the influence the brilliant *Escuela Normal de Maestros de Filipinas* exercised on the insurrection If God and the gallant Polavieja do not apply the remedy, there already will have surfaced several hundreds of teachers, as well as *gobnadorcillos*, justices of the peace, and other personages lately recruited, lest the friars monopolize for Spain the government of the people.¹⁷

Two weeks earlier, Fr. Miguel Saderra Mata, Rector of the Ateneo, had written to the Jesuit Procurator in Madrid energetically denying that the Jesuits in Manila had been the principal cause of the Revolution because they had been offering an academic program that was "cosmopolitan" and not Spanish enough. Not meant for publication, this letter nonetheless found its way into print, appearing in a Madrid paper, *El Siglo Futuro* (10 December 1896).

If the charge were true, argued the Ateneo Rector, the Manila government would already have said so, instead of pointing its finger at the masonic lodges in the Philippines. More in detail, Saderra Mata questioned what "cosmopolitan" education meant. Certainly, except for Philippine history which was taught only in the Philippines, all the subjects were cosmopolitan, i.e., they "can be taught everywhere, although perhaps more extensively in the Philippines in order to carry out one of the purposes of the Ateneo, namely, that people might no longer have to travel abroad to complete their schooling." And this, he asked, was wrong?¹⁸

Jesuit education in Manila was not Spanish enough? Only the ignorant say that, Saderra Mata wrote. Which students studied at

17. *La Semana Católica de Barcelona*, N^o 371, 29 de Noviembre de 1869, páginas 757-760: ATa, E-II-a-3.

18. Miguel Saderra Mata, S.J. to Joaquin Sancho, S.J., Manila, 28 de Octubre 1896: APP, V-2-033. There is a draft of an essay dated 11 January 1897, clearly written as an answer to the article of Bishop Martinez Vigil. Perhaps because of its sharp tone, Superiors decided not to publish it. See "De estadística y sentido común . . . y de actualidad," ATa, *Cartas inéditas*, F 1897.

the Ateneo? Why, the sons of Spaniards, of Spanish mestizos, of foreigners! Native boys were accepted only if their condition or "conduct was not appreciably different . . ." And while in the Ateneo, the students wore clothes in the Spanish style, they spoke Spanish, and their food was what suited the climate, the same kind of food other Spanish families in the Philippines ate! A reading of the academies yearly held at the Ateneo from 1867 to 1896 would show the students imbibed nothing but things Spanish. For example, in 1867, an academy on the "Discovery and Civilization of the Philippines" was presented; in 1877, on the "Conquest of Granada"; in 1883, "Spain in Lepanto"; in 1886, "Catholic Spain"; in 1890, "The Glories of the Spanish Marine"; in 1895, "The Crusades"; and in 1896, "Religion and the Fatherland."¹⁹

Now, continued the Rector, which school prided itself on its *españolismo*? It was public knowledge that many, disgusted with the professors at the University, had left the Philippines to finish their studies abroad, where they had learned separatist ideas. The most famous example was Jose Rizal. But, how many actually left for Europe at the suggestion of the Jesuits? Most of them acted on the advice of other priests. In 1887, a well-known Visitor of one of the Friar Orders in the Philippines had arrived in the country and was known to have urged several young men from Batangas to study abroad, even volunteering to act as their guardian. But he soon saw the evil results, and he had to desist from his original plan. And who tried to hold back Baldomero Roxas, the representative of the Manila lodges at the Congress of Masons in Madrid in 1894? Who, on the other hand, had urged him to return to his country?²⁰

This polemic on the loyalty of the Jesuits and their graduates was at bottom a debate on the colonial policy for the Philippines. In the words of Martinez Vigil, the revolution was especially dangerous as it aimed at the "root of the tree, destroying the public and the individual conscience, for it erases from those simple, scarcely enlightened souls the very last traces of religion

19. Saderra Mata to Sancho, APP, V-2-033. See also the letter of Eustaquio de Salcedo to the editor of *El Comercio* praising an academy presented by the Ateneo students in December 1896 and which he describes as "*simpático y conmevedor*" because of its "espíritu esencialment patriótico que lo informaba, merece ser conocido por todos los buenos hijos de España . . ." APP, I-3-290/291.

20. Saderra Mata to Sancho, *ibid.*

and love of the King of Spain.”²¹ In other words, if the Roman Catholic faith is preserved and the friars monopolize the government, or are at least consulted on matters relating to the colony, the Philippines would continue to be loyal to Spain.

Not all accepted this view which regarded the Philippines as essentially a mission, and that Spanish presence in the Islands was justifiable only in virtue of the papal delegation to the Spanish Crown to spread the Gospel to the new world. The need, therefore, was to strengthen the Church, for every threat to the faith of the native population posed a danger to the Spanish political hegemony in the new world. Because of political developments in the nineteenth century in Spain, this mentality had petrified into intransigence suspicious of every modern or liberal idea from which the Filipinos had to be quarantined at all costs.

An opposite view appeared in the Filipino daily, *La República Filipina* (3 December 1898). It may perhaps seem a little late, but it can be taken to express accurately the feelings of the people during those critical days.

The individual freedom of every member of society should be the prime concern of the State, the author of the article insisted, for it is the “only means by which the citizen’s power to judge is free . . . undisturbed by empty ideas or errors, or the strength of emotions.” Once people are emancipated from “unreasonable fears, low instincts and coarse choices,” they begin to love free civil order. But this would not be possible unless people have learned to think maturely. Precisely, the Revolution would not have taken place without an antecedent growth of the Filipinos in intelligence. And this is the point of the article:

. . . to what do we owe such a notable improvement in such a short period of time? What light guided us? What loving hand took hold of ours to guide us? . . . one is forced to conclude that this visible change took place when the enlightened corporation of the sons of Loyola took charge of the education of our youth, when that illustrious Society established the *Ateneo municipal* and the *Escuela Normal*.²²

This is high praise, but that was exactly what the Jesuits had set out to do when they took charge of the *Escuela pia* and, later, the *Escuela normal*. As explained to the Governor General of the

21. Martinez Vigil, *ibid.*

22. *La República Filipina* (Mandaluyong) 3 Diciembre 1898: APP, V-2-035.

Philippines in 1861, the school was a means to "lift it from the prostration or rather nothingness in which primary education in this challenging colony lay."²³ How well the Jesuits succeeded is clear. Interestingly, early in the revolutionary months, practically all the students of both schools stayed on. It was only when the movement spread all over Luzon that, in the words of a Jesuit historian, families "changed colors," unable to resist the promise or the battlecry of independence.²⁴

UNDER THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Classes reopened at the Ateneo as soon as conditions permitted after the fall of Manila in August 1898. But things had already changed. With the separation of Church and State under the new dispensation, the school lost not only its annual subsidy from the city government, but also its legal charter as a public school. A new language had been introduced, requiring new textbooks and teachers who could teach English. The establishment of free public schools where religion was not taught, and the arrival of American Protestant missionaries, created a challenge the Spanish Jesuits had not faced before. They had to make the Ateneo the premier school it had once been; otherwise, it would have meant relegating it to a secondary position with little or no influence, besides confirming the old canard that Spanish Catholicism was backward and unprogressive.

The change from the Spanish to the American system was painful, but it had to be made. As the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines wrote to the Jesuit Superior General in Rome, "the important language of the future will be English." The government, he added, had decided that "only English education shall prevail in these Islands, and only such schools and educational establishments as those who use the English language, are likely to succeed and receive encouragement from the Government."²⁵

23. Cuevas to the Governor General, 12 February 1861: A Ta, E-II-a-7.

24. A summary description of the vicissitudes of the Ateneo during the revolution can be found in Pastells, *Misión*, Vol. III, Ch. XVII; *Cartas edificantes de los Misioneros de la Compañía de Jesús en Filipinas, 1898-1902* (Barcelona, 1903), Sección IV, "Noticias de Manila."

25. The Apostolic Delegate in Manila to the Jesuit General, Manila 19 November 1906: ARSI, *Phil.*, 1002-V, 13; also an earlier letter dated at Manila, 29 December 1905: ARSI, *Phil.*, 1002-IV, 14-a.

To their credit, even before Dewey arrived, the Spanish Jesuits had already foreseen such a situation and had made provision that some of them should study English. Still, it would not be true to say that the Ateneo was transformed overnight. For all their heroic abnegation and dedication, not all the Spanish Jesuits accepted the change.

And yet, a total of 150 applicants had been refused admission to the Ateneo for the two school years 1907-08 and 1908-09. Three years later while the school population rose to 295, another long waiting list of prospective students attracted to the Ateneo's "good teaching" had to be similarly refused admission for lack of room. Government approval of the Ateneo system of instruction which it had recommended to the other educational institutions which "wanted government approval of their courses of study," apparently interested people in the Jesuit school.²⁶ Still, it was true that the Ateneo, holding on to Spanish, was fast becoming an anachronism in a society where English was the *lingua franca*.

Father Robert Brown, an English Jesuit who had come to the Philippines at the turn of the century, wrote that by insisting on the use of Spanish in the classrooms, Ateneo was missing a golden chance to be of real service to the people. Only an hour was assigned each day to the study of English, and an American scholastic taught it for only three quarters of an hour daily to six students! This naturally brought on complaints. The Superior, wrote Brown, was convinced the "people don't want English." Yet the Assumption College next door was filled with students and could not accept more students because there was no room. And at Assumption College not a single Spanish word was heard. Frank H. Carpenter, Executive Secretary in the Philippines, had approached Fr. Brown unsure of what to say, for he had always assumed that the Jesuits could adapt themselves to any circumstances, except in Manila! The best families continued to send their sons to the Ateneo, but these boys would not be available to serve as "Governors and Mayors, and yet these were the men required . . ." In public examinations, the Jesuit boys "did splendidly in everything except English and in this subject they invariably failed."²⁷

26. Brother Francisco Riera, S.J. to Juan Ricart, S.J., Manila, 27 November 1911: *Cartas edificantes de la Provincia de Aragón* (1911) 2: 204.

27. Robert Brown, S.J., "Animadversions on English and the Jesuits in the Philip-

About a year later, in 1908, Fr. James Monaghan, one of the early American volunteers to the Philippines wrote in almost the same words. On graduating, "the students do not know the language well enough to fill the position of clerk in any government office: and those completing the commercial course cannot obtain a position in any business house where a knowledge of English is required."²⁸ A government school of commerce taught more English and so, ". . . the leadership among the future business men of the Islands will not be held by our Alumni." The Spanish Jesuits seemed completely oblivious of the need of English. Higher education was once a Jesuit preserve, but it was no longer so. Unless they changed, the letter continued, the Jesuits would soon be useless:

The aim of a Jesuit college should be to train men for present and future leadership. *But our students are almost entirely excluded from commercial and official positions, which in consequence are being filled by students of the Public schools. We are identifying ourselves with a losing cause; our chances for leadership are fast disappearing.*²⁹

How do we explain this apparent administrative myopia of the Jesuits at the Ateneo? It was not really myopia, but a stubborn hope that the Spanish language would persist, coupled with the fear that with its disappearance, Spanish culture, *Hispanidad*, and the Catholic Faith would die away.

A cursory glance at the public specimens and academies regularly held in the first fifteen years or so of the twentieth century reveals the strong emphasis on religious formation in the school. In 1904, a *certamen artistico-literario* was held in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the pronouncement of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Three years later, the Ateneo students staged an *acto literario* in honor of the fathers attending the First Manila Council. In 1909, to honor the golden anniversary of the return of the Jesuits to the Philippines, a dramatic presentation, *Heroismo y Cobardia*, was staged by the students, with music composed for the occasion by Felipe Buencamino, then a teacher at the Ateneo. Perhaps, the "*melodrama de costumbres*" entitled *La Virgen de Vacaciones* typified the kind of stage presentations

pines," probably 1907: ARSI, *Phil.*, 1002-VI, 20.

28. James Monaghan, S.J. to Father Mullen, Manila, 8 December 1908: ARSI, *Phil.*, 1002-VI, 22.

29. *Ibid.*

at the Ateneo. Composed in verse by Fr. Manuel Peypoch, S.J., it described a wayward student who had used his father's money wantonly, leaving his two brothers without any funds to pay their tuition fees at the Ateneo. In the words of a Jesuit who claimed he had collected about twenty-six printed programs of these dramatic presentations, ". . . any public act has a drama, or at least a scene," especially in the school year 1910-11 when there were more than the ordinary number of stage presentations.³⁰ In other words, the Ateneo continued to be a good school where education was taken seriously and it still attracted families to send their sons there. But this was the tragedy. For, although the parents preferred Ateneo to the religion-less public schools, their hands were tied. Not all could do as the Attorney General of the Philippines who sent his son to the Ateneo but hired a special English tutor after school hours. The Jesuit school continued to draw its own share of students, but so did the other schools. The country, wrote Fr. Monaghan, was "in a feverish thirst for education, and the manner in which the youth of all classes are pouring into the educational centers, and the sacrifices they make for the end in view, recall in a measure the history of the old university of Paris."³¹

Still, it was not as bad as it looked. The Ateneo managed to hold on and more than survived. In 1913, Fr. Joaquin Vilallonga, Rector of the Ateneo, received a letter from the president of the University of the Philippines, assuring him that if the future Ateneo graduates would be as well prepared as the "students who entered the College of Law last July and are doing very satisfactory work," there would be no problem admitting them to the state university.³² A year later, when the Commissioner on Education found out that Justice Norberto Romualdez had obtained his A.B. degree from the Ateneo, he desisted from further inquiry into the latter's academic qualifications.³³

30. Manuel Ma. Sauras to his brother, Mario Ma. Sauras, S.J., Manila, 15 March 1911: *Cartas edificantes de la Provincia de Aragón* (1911) 2: 192.

31. Monaghan to Mullen, Manila, 8 December 1908: ARSI, *Phil.*, 1002-VI, 22.

32. Joaquín Vilallonga, S.J. to the Jesuit General, Manila, 4 January 1913: ARSI, *Phil.*, 1002-XI, 4.

33. *Cartas edificantes de la Provincia de Aragón* (1914) 1: 136. *A propos* of this incident, in 1928 the UP debating club went on a tour and won all its engagements in the United States. The best debater was Teodoro Evangelista. Asked how he had developed as a speaker, he answered that he had learned everything he knew at the Ateneo where he had obtained his A.B. degree.

In 1919 a Visitor arrived in Manila, and one of his recommendations was to stress the importance of English, even to the extent of sending a few Jesuits to Australia to study it. He also insisted that, following the principles of the *Ratio*, prior attention should be given to the moral formation of the young and only secondarily to their scientific, literary, and social development. Lay teachers at the Ateneo ought to be inspired "as much as we can with our Jesuit spirit and formation" ³⁴ The Jesuit school, in other words, was to be a center of spiritual and intellectual growth.

We need not detail the circumstances that led to the decision in 1921 to entrust the Philippine Mission to the American Jesuits of the Maryland-New York Province, while reassigning the Spanish Jesuits in the Philippines to the Bombay Mission in India. The first group of American Jesuits assigned to the Philippines arrived in June 1921. But the warmth that welcomed them was not enough to melt the chilling reality that although the Ateneo "was undoubtedly the best school in the Islands . . . of late it has been living on its reputation." Perhaps the Americans had come just "in time to pull it up to standard and keep its old reputation." ³⁵

ATENEOS IS AMERICANIZED

First of all, the program of studies had to conform to the longer government program requiring four years after high school in order to obtain the A. B. degree. This meant more teachers and a new set of textbooks. Because there were never enough Jesuits, lay teachers had to be recruited. But this meant paying salaries comparable, if not better than those paid by the public or Protestant schools. This in turn required funds. Luckily, in Fr. Francis X. A. Byrne the Ateneo found a man who knew how to make haste slowly, and at the same time had a true sense of values to guide him. As he wrote to the Provincial Superior, the Ateneo had no choice but to succeed:

Here is a people losing the faith largely through the medium of the public school and Protestant educational activity and dormitories and the like, by means of endless money and men. The Ateneo is at present one of their more serious, if not their most serious rivals, if it can be maintained and

34. *Libro de Consultas*, pp. 27-28: APP, IV-354-a.

35. Francis X. A. Byrne to the Provincial Superior in New York, Manila, 13 August 1921: APP, V-2-059.

kept up to standard. Our boys are drawn largely from the classes that usually furnish the political and industrial leaders, they already represent much of the wealth of the islands. Without teachers to keep up the standards we must fail, and it would be better for us to return to the United States. Many, indeed, will be glad to have us fail.³⁶

And so, the Ateneo changed. It became an English-speaking school, philosophy and the exact sciences were pursued with even greater determination, drama and the theater revived, and sports and athletics, even military drill, were introduced for the first time. In April and May, the students rode up up to Baguio for the novel program of summer camp training to develop character and self-reliance. Gradually the people began to see that a school run by the forward-looking American priests could be just as good, if not better than the others, and still be Catholic. And as a natural effect, the enrolment grew, a sign, wrote the Rector, that "in spite of many serious difficulties, we have won the people."³⁷

The Ateneo never had a full complement of Jesuits and various solutions were offered to end the perennial shortage of personnel. One was to close the Grade School and free the Jesuit in charge for other work. But it was opposed. Families usually sent their sons to their alma mater from their first year of schooling until graduation from college. This meant that the Ateneo college was fed by the high school, which in turn was fed by the grade school. Closing the Grade School department, therefore, meant drying up a source of students for the two higher departments of the school.³⁸

A decade's experience since 1924 had convinced the Jesuits that not all boys were capable of learning Latin. Only a few were competent in English when they began first year high school at the Ateneo. This was a more urgent need for studies in later years. After an intensive year, therefore, in English, the new plan called for a division of the students into two sections: one, to pursue the classical Latin program, and the second, to devote more time to English instead of studying Latin. If this was not adopted, the advisers to the Rector argued, students would have to be dismissed from the school and others who might wish to transfer to the Ateneo would have to be refused. But, of course, a decrease in

36. Byrne to the Provincial, Manila, 4 January 1922: APP, V-2-075.

37. Byrne to the Provincial, Manila, 2 June 1925: APP, V-2-194.

38. Byrne to the Provincial, Manila, 4 January 1922: APP, V-2-075.

the enrolment meant a loss of revenue, making it harder for the school authorities to make both ends meet. In other words, the most idealistic plans had to reckon with the most prosaic realities of daily living!

Vision and reality, how to reconcile them – that was the problem! What, in simple terms, was the role of the Ateneo? Fr. Thomas A. Shanahan, Procurator of the college, wrote that the Philippines should not be compared to New York. Education that best fit the needs of New York did not necessarily produce the best results in Manila. The Jesuits, in his opinion, were making a mistake insisting on a four-year A.B. curriculum. Educational work in the Philippines was one form of apostolate, and so, he added,

. . . we ought . . . to carry on our work as educators in the form that will best help the Church here. Now the Church is suffering untold harm here from Protestant school teachers trained in a Protestant Normal School and injecting their anti-catholicism into their pupils. What is most needed here by the Church is a Catholic Normal School If we run a Bachelor of Education course instead of a Bachelor of Arts course and could send out each year a number of young people who would be thoroughly grounded in their religion and would teach in the Public High Schools, incalculable good would be done.³⁹

If the Ateneo insisted on Latin,

. . . very many desirable boys would be barred from coming under the influence of our Catholic training (catechism, regular confession, communion, Mass, rosary, etc.). Considering the needs of the Catholic Church in this country at the present time in the matter of educating Catholic laymen, together with all the influence against the Faith in other schools and colleges, it does not seem A. M. D. G. to thus bar these students from the Ateneo.⁴⁰

And so, financial viability and apostolic reasons demanded a modification in the curriculum of the Ateneo. The “needs of the times and regions” required it, agreed the Superior General of the Jesuits in Rome. At the end of the first year, therefore, the high school students were divided into two sections. On graduation, those who finished the classical Latin program received the Ateneo

39. Thomas A. Shanahan to the Provincial, Manila, 8 April 1927: APP, V-2-212.

40. “Additional Notes from the Consultants,” 17 July 1934: APP, V-2-282. “A.M. D.G.” is an acronym for *ad majorem Dei gloriam* (for the greater glory of God).

Honors diploma, while those who had no Latin were awarded the Ateneo Passing diploma.⁴¹

At this time, more than one half of the students were leaving the Ateneo and transferring to the other schools in Manila. Students and parents were asked, and they frankly told their Jesuit mentors that, although the Ateneo was offering excellent training and a valuable program of high cultural formation, they did not want or need it. They preferred more "practical" courses. And so, wrote the Ateneo Rector, should they allow the situation to continue and allow the Ateneo to "slip back into a position of a Grade School or a small exclusive High School?" It was not a question of influencing the students; rather, there were no students to influence! As one businessman explained, "quality is above all things desirable, but . . . you've got to have sufficient *quantity* to sustain that quality."⁴²

NEW COURSES

Rather than remain a small exclusive high school, the Jesuit superiors decided to look for that "sufficient *quantity*." In 1936, a printed leaflet announced the opening of the Ateneo College of Commerce. It offered either a two-year program leading to the Associate in Commercial Science degree, or the four-year course to obtain the Bachelor of Science in Commerce degree. It was planned to meet the growing technical needs of the country by producing highly trained specialists "likely to be sought for in . . . positions of business leadership." At the same time moral principles and religion formed part of the curriculum, since "men are not made better citizens by mere accumulation of knowledge, without a guiding and controlling force The college ideal is

41. The question of Latin in the high school program first surfaced when it was removed from the first year schedule of classes for the first time in June 1934 (APP, V-2-267), and was not settled until 1937, when a special visitor was sent to the Philippines, Father John Fahy of Australia: "I am very glad that the program for Latin in the Ateneo had been settled by Fr. Visitor. The effects of requiring Latin for all high school students were apparent even this year. Many prospective students were and are still under the impression that this requirement is still in force and for that reason did not come to us." Fr. Henry C. Avery to the Provincial, Manila, 13 January 1937: APP, V-2-358.

42. Henry C. Avery to the Philippine Mission Superior, Manila, 17 October 1935: APP, V-2-319-c.

to cultivate the mind and to build and strengthen true character."⁴³ Soon another department was opened, the College of Industrial Chemistry, founded by Fr. Eugene Gisel, whose initial success was cut short by the Second World War. There was also the College of Law. In the bar examinations for 1940, the Ateneo Law graduates performed exceedingly well, proving once more that the Ateneo stood for excellence in education.

CONCLUSION

Significant in all this is the immersion of the Ateneo in Philippine society. From an elitist public school financed by the city government, the Ateneo grew into a private college whose activities could hardly be called "private." Established to answer an urgent social need, it has continued to play its role to serve the public good. The Ateneo was never a big school. It was never meant to be so; rather, the Jesuits envisioned their work as one of forming boys to "send them out as a leaven in the mass."⁴⁴ Those who are familiar with Jesuit spirituality will readily identify this with the Ignatian insistence on choosing only the generous few who are willing to give themselves *fully* to the service of God and their neighbor.⁴⁵ This, of course, has always occasioned the debate on just how many is too many for any school to educate properly. With a government subsidy during the Spanish regime the problem was reduced to a tolerable minimum; but with the introduction of a secular government at the end of the last century, the Jesuits were hard put to enable the Ateneo to continue its policy. At a critical period in Philippine history, both government and church officials looked to the Jesuits for help. And the Jesuits themselves realized they had an important part to play in the rebuilding of the new Philippines. As Fr. Byrne pleaded, "If we have a good school, we can save hundreds of leaders from going to Protestant and public schools, and from the loss of faith. If the leaders are saved, the people will be saved."⁴⁶

43. APP, V-2-346.

44. Joseph A. Mulry to John F. Hurley, Manila, 15 May 1939: APP, V-2.455.

45. *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, no. 136: "A Meditation on Two Standards."

46. Francis X. A. Byrne to the Provincial, Manila, 29 January 1923: APP, V-2-132.