A Homage to the "Sublime Paralytic": Apolinario Mabini & the Advent of Filipino Historical Consciousness

E. San Juan, Jr.
University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, USA
philcsc@gmail.com

Abstract

For some perverse reason, Apolinario Mabini, though acclaimed as the "brains of the revolution," has remained a "sublime paralytic." What is sublime is not his being crippled but his thought and ideals that underwrote the whole period from 1896 to 1903, when he died, a victim of cholera. This essay argues that Mabini laid the groundwork for the Malolos Congress and the first Philippine Republic. He was the Republic's first prime minister (from January 23, 1899 to May 7, 1899) and first secretary of Foreign Relations. In the latter position, he was tasked to confront two imperial powers: the defeated Spanish authority and the U.S. military and civil officlals whose racist ideology Mabini exposed—his signal contribution. What is perhaps "sublime" or still not appreciated is Mabini's articulation of the emergent national-class consciousness embodied in the entire revolutionary process.The Republic's legitimacy and its ethical/moral foundation was articulated by Mabini in his letters and discourses, chiefly in the "Decalogo" included in his draft of the Republic's Constitution; and in his memoir, *La revolucion filipina*, the key narrative of our national transformation. Mabini's decisive role in thematizing the collective ethos of the anti-imperialist struggle aganst Spain and the U.S., and its radical resonance for current radical mobilization, remains to be fully recognized. This essay is an initial attempt to do that via a speculative exploration of Mabini's historical-materialist thought and its vision of a sovereign, egalitarian, and progressive Philippines.

Keywords: revolution, sovereignty, colonialism, freedom, natural law, identity, Filipino-American War

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In order to read the future destiny of a people, it is necessary to open the book of its past.
— Jose Rizal, "The Philippines A Century Hence"

[We fight for independence, but also] to keep the torch of liberty and civilization aflame in Oceania, so that it may illuminate the night which now debases and degrades the Malay race, and show the way to its social emancipation.

— *Apolinario Mabini, La Revolucion Filipina*

Almost every Filipino is familiar with the iconic figure of the legendary Apolinario Mabini, as the "sublime paralytic," or "dakilang lumpo." He is portrayed as either seated on a wheelchair or on a hammock, portaged by several men. It may be extravagant to surmise that the Philippines is distinguished in the planet as the only country where one of its revolutionary heroes (counting Rizal and Bonifacio as part of the triumvirate) is always represented as a man in a wheelchair, paralyzed. Not wounded but crippled—a telling iconic figure of an independent republic reduced into a colony in the Filipino-American War of 1899-1913 (Constantino, Miller, & Tan).

One of course thinks of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in a wheelchair. But of course the discrepant historical contexts demarcate these two historical personalities: Roosevelt was the leader of the conquering Empire. He was not resisting invading hordes destroying villages, killing thousands of natives, creating a "howling wilderness" that still reverberates up to now. Nor was he imprisoned and deported to the remote outpost of Guam for being the intransigent 'insurecto," the former Prime Minister of the beleaguered Republic who continued to defy the imperial leviathan from prison. The Spaniards spared Mabini from the dungeon because he was a cripple, while his friends associated with Rizal's *Liga Filipina* were arrested and shot. But the Americans did not show lenience to the paralyzed "recalcitrant," determined to stifle the "brain of the revolution" (O'Connor; San Juan, "Mabini Diyalektika").

We cannot assume that almost everyone today knows Mabini. Former president Benigno Aquino, Jr. was surprised that some young students asked why Mabini was always portrayed as seated, whether in pictures or movies (Ocampo 80-82). Mabini's face has become familiar in paper money and iconic portraits. The historian Ambeth Ocampo has tried to popularize Mabini in several newspaper columns. He corrected F. Sionil Jose's novel, *Poon/Dusk,* in which Mabini's polio was ascribed to syphilis, a slander derived from the rumor spread by the treacherous *ilustrados* in Malolos in 1898.

Mabini gained fame when he was summoned in June 1898 by Aguinaldo from Los Banos where he met Paciano Rizal, Miguel Malvar, Emilio Jacinto, and other Katipuneros. With the recommendation of Felipe Agoncillo, Mabini was made a personal adviser to General Emilio Aguinaldo (Kalaw 42). Mabini is credited for establishing the foundations of the Revolutionary Government, as outlined in his *Panukala sa Pagkakana ng Republika ng Pilipinas* and other writings collected in the two volumes of his works entitled *La Revolucion Filipina* edited by Teodoro M. Kalaw. While Prof. Majul's book on Mabini has given us a summary of Mabini's political ideas, the framework of his worldview and its contemporary resonance has scarcely been explored, inasmuch as the substantive discourse on war, revolution, and geopolitics found in the essays and letters still needs careful contextualization and scholarly gloss.

Re-discovering the Moment of the "Sublime Paralytic"

Why concern ourselves with Mabini today after over a hundred years of forgetting hidden by the alibi of official commemorations? Why bother ourselves with the 1896 revolution or the Filipino-American War (1899-1913), one of the bloodiest wars of conquest that killed 1.4 million Filipinos, and converted the Philippines into a durable colony? The reason is that its expunging from public memory explains how the return of the U.S. military to its bases came about, and how the putative 'postcolony'' devolved into a neocolony, as before. This explains also why Mabini is a forgotten hero, ignored if not maligned.

The Philippines as the U.S. "showcase of democracy" in Asia suffered a meltdown with the Marcos dictatorship (1972-1986). What happened? This precipitated inquiries into how the Philippine possessions came about via that genocidal war, the primal scene of predatory rape. Among other historians, Stuart Miller compared that colonial intervention (epitomized by the Balangiga incident) with the Vietnam War in its unconscionable brutality (268-276). In this bloody acquisition of the islands, Gabriel Kolko noted how "from 200,000 to 600,000 Filipinos were killed in an orgy of racist slaughter that evoked much congratulation and approval from the eminent journals and men of the era" (287). Howard Zinn described the efforts of Mark Twain, William James and others in the Anti-Imperialist League to stir up mass opposition, remarking how some Black soldiers (the most famous is David Fagen) joined the Filipino revolutionaries in their realization that they were fighting the same war against White Supremacy and capitalist exploitation (310-313).

The Filipina historian Luzviminda Francisco counted a million dead after Roosevelt declared the war over in 1902, referencing the thousands slain in General Bell's campaign in Batangas and the "wanton slaughter in Mindanao and astonishing death rates in Bilibid Prison" and Albay province (19). History textbooks in the Philippines and the U.S. typically devote pages to the Spanish-American War during which the Filipinos defeated the Spanish forces and declared independence while facts about the Philippine-American War were scarce or marginalized. It was bound to be a dangerous secret or a mysterious affair. Not only was that war significant in establishing the U.S. as an Asian power for the first time, but it also revealed the extraordinary amount of violence and deception that U.S. "Benevolent Assimilation" and its touted civilizing mission involved then and now.

The Identity Problematique

Meanwhile, chronicles like Stanley Karnow's *In Our Image* or its template, David Joel Steinberg's patronizing book, *The Philippines*, found ambiguities and ironies in the war of suppressing the Philippine Republic, a war that allegedly equalized master and slave, lord and

bondsmen. Both the colonizer and the colonized oligarchy are to blame for producing a supposedly hybrid, amorphous Filipino psyche or personality spoiled by a "damaged culture" (on this topic, see Eric San Juan). Steinberg even quoted Imelda Marcos to prove his thesis: "The Philippines is in a strategic position—it is both East and West, right and left, rich and poor. We are neither here nor there" (Steinberg, 129). Erased or eclipsed is the inaugural origin of this identity dilemma in the amnesia over the Philippine-American War.

Not to be outdone, our Filipino expert in this field, the anthropologist Fernando Zialcita, opined that given the four Great Traditions in Southeast Asia, the Philippines belongs to the Western one, like Singapore, Flores, and East Timor (279). And although he takes pains to point out certain unique Filipino traits, he succumbs to the temptation to be globalist or cosmopolitan, as if to demonstrate that he knows everything as a neoliberal globalized intellectual. Zialcita concludes with his meticulous inventory of styles and motifs with the platitude already rehearsed by Karnow, Steinberg, etc: "Because of its unique history, the Philippines has an identity that connects together both sides of the Pacific Ocean" (299). In short, we are performance artists, as protean and versatile as the mythical figure of the West or our local trickster persona.

It may be that the return of the colonizer in expanded military bases in "the pivot to Asia" has confronted us again with the Empire's hubris, accompanied by the return to power of the Marcos dynasty and its bloody entourage. We are compelled to grapple again with the problem of identity in being forced to choose between the United States and China, given the conflict over sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea. Who are we in this game of geopolitics, the latest ruse of reason after the fallacious "end of history"? Where do we belong? Is it a matter of geography, culture, or historical genealogy?

The concern with Filipino identity has been with us since the conquest. But in the wake of neoliberalism and postmodernist globalization, Western scholars are advising us to forget the past and look forward to a decentered, marketized future. We don't have any history to be proud of or to be concerned about. Did we just drop from the sky or

spring from the earth like mushrooms? Two Australian experts, in their book *Post-Colonial National Identity in the Philippines* (2002, reissued 2018) criticized the official centennial celebrations of the revolution in 1998 by the Ramos regime. They questioned the viability of our "supposedly shared historical past" due to its limitations (non-inclusion of minorities, etc) and look to a future in which people are treated with dignity (181). Forget celebrating the 1896-1898 revolution and accept transnationalism—they advise us. These neoliberal sages are coaxing us to join the globalizing carnival of performative egos, to celebrate Eurocentric pluralism, which translates into obeisance to the IMF-World Bank regulations directed by Washington and NATO authorities—or else, succumb to anarchy. (Of the disaster on the economy wreaked by IMF-World Bank "structural conditionalities," we can endorse the arguments of Edilberto Villegas, Dale Hildebrand, and the contributors to *Mortgaging the Future*, edited by Vivencio Jose.)

Apropos of critiques of that Centennial, the most cogent and incisive is that by Renato Constantino who has been bewailing the Filipino amnesia of that violent destruction of the first Republic founded in the Malolos Convention. We had already vanquished the Spanish forces by the end of 1898. Constantino has been persistently complaining about the omission or erasure of the resistance to U.S. invasion and pacification. He reminds us that "through the alchemy of miseducation, the Americans were transformed from conquerors to solicitous friends…The war against the Americans was glossed over and…the Americans were made to appear as accidental visitors who out of a spirit of altruism accepted the burden of educating the Filipino…Our defeat resulted in an occupation of our country which continues to this day…These have been ninety years during which we were transformed from a victorious, independent state to a colony, and from a colony to a neocolony" (History 27).

The war of resistance against the American colonizers was a "non-event" for many Filipinos today who are ignorant that we already enjoyed independence before February 4, 1899, when the U.S provoked the war. This ignorance created "the myth that the Americans saved us from Spanish oppression." Constantino observes further: "In this savage

war, which lasted for nearly a decade, the Americans committed all sorts of atrocities in order to crush the patriotic resistance. The Philippine-American War, which establishes the real origins of the relationship between our two countries and exposes not only the savagery of the army of occupation but also American motives for colonization, should not be allowed to recede from our national memory" ("Truth" 21).

Consider the phenomenon of how ideological effects are taken for granted as normal or natural. When the latest Western fashions/fads and the current fetishisms (for Taylor Swift, for example) are celebrated today in social media and corporate-controlled communications everywhere in the neocolony, the problem of Filipino identity appears to have been resolved by U.S. technocracy and Washington/Pentagon diktat. Neoliberal globalization (championed by our two Australian scholars) has almost extinguished the nationalist impetus initially sparked by Claro Recto, Lorenzo Tanada, and Jose Diokno in the fifties. This subterranean current was revitalized in the First Quarter Storm Movement and the mass mobilization against the Marcos dictatorship in the seventies and eighties. Now, with the U.S. move against China in the dispute over Taiwan, the neocolony has been instrumentalized again (as during the Korean and Vietnam wars) as a springboard for U.S. geopolitical maneuvers against China, perceived as the formidable challenger to US global hegemony.

In Quest of the People's Nation

Is nationalism an outmoded pathology, as our neoliberal pundits claim? The liberal scholar Isaiah Berlin reviewed its genealogy in the reaction of the German romantics who combined "wounded cultural pride and a philosophico-historical vision" to forge resistance against oppressors (1980, 348), This was before Marx and Engels proclaimed that the proletariat is international, not belonging to any nation. The main task of the proletarian movement in the capitalist nations is to overthrow its own bourgeoisie. The German romantics alluded to by Berlin focused on the creative will and collective genius of peoples over against the *philosophia perennis* of the French Enlightenment and the triumph of the natural sciences.

Mabini inherited the radical orientation of European freemasonry and the liberal-democratic principles of the Propagandists. Mabini's valorization of national sentiment, while invoking the labor of workers and peasants, upheld the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and communal mores articulated with the forms of life—the traditional customs, practices, folk rituals, etc.— the *Sittlichkeit* (Hegel 1977, 212-24; see also Inwood 1992, 90-93) or ethos of the non-ilustrado strata. (In actuality, Mabini's roots in the village peasantry and urban plebeians disqualify him from being labeled a kindred of the creole ilustrado like Rizal, Del Pilar, Paterno, etc.) This unique synthesis of the *ilustrado* and proletarian historic bloc functioned as the organic matrix of his vision of Filipino sovereignty elaborated in *La revolucion Filipina* (hereafter, LRF), For Mabini, sovereignty resides permanently in the people, the indigenous masses. Republican democracy derives from this concept of national-popular sovereignty. This is a legacy whose historical significance, and normative value as an orientation for transformative praxis, is a desideratum in any endeavor to define a Filipino identity in our time.

Even though Mabini's tenure as government official was short, his impact was profound and enduring. His involvement with the Republic was cut short when the cabal of ilustrados—their names are now infamous: Pedro Paterno, Felipe Buencamino, Benito Legarda, Felipe Calderon, and others—forced him out of office. His role as Premier and Secretary of Foreign Affairs was brief. By May 9, 1899, he was replaced by Paterno and was in the margins of power until his capture by American troops in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija, on Dec. 10, 1899. His reputation as uncompromising dissident probably began when he refused to take the oath of allegiance, persisting in his public denunciation of the occupying regime, until General Athur MacArthur ordered his arrest and deportation as an "insurecto" to Guam on January 7, 1901. He was amnestied after two years and allowed to return on Feb, 26, 1902, swearing the oath to a customs officer. Weakened and sickened by his imprisonment in Guam, Mabini died of cholera on May 13, 1903; he was 39 years old.

It was his memoir, *La revolucion Filipina (*published in 1925*),* and his responses to the American colonizers, that constitute Mabini's inscribed contribution to our sense of nation-hood, more precisely, an emergent national identity. According to Dr. Rafael Palma, Mabini embodied "the soul of a glorious era" of Philippine independence, from the Katipunan rebellion and the Malolos Republic. Praised as "the brains of the Revolution," Mabini may appropriately be called its symbolic tribune, if not its tragic and utopian inquisitor. His biographer Teodoro M. Kalaw speculated that "when the history of our revolution is studied, and the chaff is separated from the grain, and the outstanding men and events of this turbulent epoch of our revolution are recognized, Mabini appears as a prophet who saw things clearly and divined the aspirations and desires of the country, interpreting its best aspirations, channeling, when he could, the occurrences toward its logical and natural course" (1-2).

In the pioneering inquiry into Mabini's philosophy by Dr. Cesar Majul, Mabini emerges as the chief progenitor of the Filipino national community-in-the making. While Rizal and others articulated the foundational principle of collective honor and dignity, Mabini summed up the accomplishment of the 1896 revolution as well as the resistance against U.S. invasion in 1902. Freedom or popular sovereignty was the paramount categorical imperative: "Let us not forget that we are on the first steps of our national life and that we are called to climb only by means of the standards of virtue and heroism; and let us not forget above all that if we do not grow, we will die without having even been great" (Majul 395-96). This community born from the struggle operates on rational principles, guaranteeing full rights, equality and justice for all its members. Such principles also dictate suppressing the drive for personal advantage in order to free ourselves from "perpetual tutelage." And unless we do that, "we cannot combat our enemies because we have not yet finished the struggle within ourselves." Mabini endeavored thus to answer the urgent classic humanist anxiety regarding what we should think, how we should act, and what we should hope for.

In Mabini's visionary foundation of the Republic, expressed in the May 1898 document, *Panukala sa Pagkakana nang Republika nang Pilipinas*, the maxims for constructing the organic protagonists of the national community were first laid out as part of "The True Decalogue.' "El Vedadero Decalogo." Its models were the Masonic Moral Code, Bonifacio's "Ang Dekalogo ng Katipunan" and Jacinto's "Ang Kartilya ng Katipunan." Contrary to malicious allegations, it was not meant to replace the biblical "ten comandments." Rather, it recommended precepts or guiding rules for those committed to the revolutionary goals of freedom from colonial domination and clerical obscurantism. Mabini submitted those recommendations for the deliberative judgment—his term is "pagkukuro" or reasoned critique—of each participant of the nascent democratic polity. It was not an authoritarian diktat.

Mabini forewarned his readers: "Bagamat ako'y hindi si Moises at di rin namamansag na tagapagbatas ng ating bayan, ay naghahanay ako sa iyong pagkukuro ng sampung katotohanan, na ang pagkakilala't pagsasagawa nito't maghahatid sa atin sa pagtatamo ng pinakananasang Kalayaan, o kaya'y ng pangakong Kasarinlan" (quoted by Mabaquiao 18). Notice the invitation to the "pagkukuro" of the reader, and also the use of the conceptual metaphor of travel—'maghahatid" to fulfill desire and to realize the promise of sovereignty or self-determination—all prospective and prophetic. The creed for the revolutionary partisans are found in fourth, fifth and sixth advice:

> *Icapat, ibigin mo ang iyong bayan o Inang bayan na ka-ikalawa ng Diyos at ng iyong puri at higit sa iyong sarili. Sapagkat siya ang kaisaisang Paraisong pinaglagian sa iyo ng Diyos sa buhay na ito. Bugtong na pasunod sa iyong lahi, na kaisaisang mamamana mo sa iyong mga nuno at siya lamang pag-asa ng iyong inaanak. Dahil sa kanya ay humahawak ka ng buhay, pag-ibig at pag-aari, natatamo mo ang kaginhawahan, kapurihan at ang Diyos (Panukala 3).*
>
> [Fourth. Thou shalt love thy country after God and thy honor and more than thyself: for she is the only Paradise which God has given thee in this life, the

only patrimony of thy race, the only inheritance of thy ancestors and the only hope of thy posterity; because of her, thou hast life, love and interests, happiness, honor and God. (*Mabini's Decalogue*)]

Ikalima. Pagsakitan mo ang kaginhawahan ng iyong bayan higit sa iyong sarili. At pagpilitan mong siya'y pagharian ng kabaitan, ng katwiran at ng kasipagan. Sa pagkat kung maginhawa siya ay pilit ding giginhawa ikaw at ang iyong kasambahay at kamaganakan.

Ikaanim. Pagpilitin mo ang kasarinlan ng iyong bayan. Sapagkat ikaw lamang ang tunay na makapagmamalasakit sa kanyang ikadadakila at ikatatanghal. Palibhasa'y ang kaniyang kasarinlan ang siya mong sariling kaluwagan at kalayaan, ang kaniyang pagkadakila ang magdadala sa iyo nang lahat mong kailangan, at ang kaniyang pagkatanghal ang siya mong kabantugan at kabuhayang walang hanggan. (Panukala 3)

[Fifth, thou shalt strive for the happiness of thy country before thy own, making of her the kingdom of reason, of justice, and of labor; for if she be happy, thou, together with thy family, shalt likewise be happy.

Sixth. Thou shalt strive for the independence of thy country: for only thou canst have any real interest in her advancement and exaltation, because her independence constitutes thy own liberty; her advancement, thy perfection; and her exaltation, thy own glory and immortality. (*Mabini's Decalogue*)]

In effect, Mabini strove to establish an organic synthesis of self and community, as well as prefigure in the process the synergetic linkage of past and future of the community. The individual worth and identity are inseparable from the fate and destiny of the concretely defined community in its historical specificity. This characterization omits any reference to race, sect, or other tribal attributes. If a nation, as Otto Bauer once defined it, appears as "a totality of people who are united by a

common fate so that they possess a common character," (Davis 150), then Mabini's community may claim to be a nation in its historical specificity. We are aware, of course, of other conceptualizations: the nation as imagined community, invented tradition, etc. What differentiates Mabini's notion from others is that it invokes the passage of events, the transformation of actors/citizens and institutions. The organic identity of the Filipino nation has been forged in the revolutionary struggle against mercantile Spanish colonialism and against the finance-capitalist logic of a racialized, capitalist power, the United States. Such historical-materialist perspective informs Mabini's concept of the Filipino nation then emerging.

For Mabini, sovereignty belongs and resides in the people, the victims of dominating powers and the protagonists in transforming institutions. It empowers its citizens, the subjects/agents of empathy and care. This historical specificity or historical situatedness is enough to distinguish Mabini's theory of national self-determination from other modernist, or postmodernist notions of nationalism. In this lies its originality and germinal potential.

For Whom the Balangiga Bells Toll

Mabini is also noted for emphasizing the need for a double revolution, the external and the internal, in LRF. What the dialectical interactions of these two transformations are, remain a topic for further analysis and critique. One may hazard a hypothesis. While the external process clearly refers to the plotted configuration of events in LRF, the internal process appears to signify an elaborate and complex pedagogy focused on the acquisition of critical self-consciousness. Arguably, the two processes may occur simultaneously, or in parallel trajectories. When will and intelligence coincide, the human actor changes herself together with her environment, her concrete situation. Since I have just published a commentary on Mabini's magisterial work (see "Sa Pagitan"), allow me to sum up my arguments for recognizing Mabini as the major theoretician of the animating spirit of the 1898-99 revolution.

In the narrative of LRF, Mabini created the space for the birth of the Malayan race in the field of modern geopolitics. It is a narrative

with allegorical tragic and utopian implications. Replete with crucial moments of *peripeteia* (reversal) and recognition (*anagnorisis*), Mabini's discourse recounts the adventure of one protagonist's reflexive consciousness as he tracks the vicissitudes of the struggle against two empires, one decaying and one convulsed in birth-pangs, marching and sailing across the Caribbean and the Pacific. Mabini attempted an inventory and judgment of all the characters and events involved. In the dialectic of mutations inside and outside, in the motives of characters and the contingency of events, he charted the vicissitudes of the anticolonial struggle against Spain and the United States. He envisaged the birth of a nation indivisible from its Malayan matrix and Asian heritage.

In brief, Mabini composed the historical self-consciousness of the collective will. He sought to adjust the classic concept of natural law borrowed from Western discourse to the concrete situation of the anti-colonial war engaging the consciousness of slaves of color (Majul 79-90). Placed in that historic conjuncture, Mabini thus stands out as the only articulate if cunning critic of U.S. racism and the class contradictions as seen from the peculiar optic of a subaltern inhabiting an archaic tributary economy. What was at stake were the dignity and rights of exploited *Indios*, workers and peasant-serfs, that Mabini center-staged in the theater of national-popular revolution. We can consider LRF a document of the Filipino people that revolted in order to demonstrate to the world its singular virtue: the emancipatory, subversive spirit of the community surging forth from the awakened sense of self-worth, honor, and the justice-seeking virtue of the oppressed and exploited.

To illustrate Mabini's concept of a national community—a theme ably discussed by Majul—let me quote from Mabini's response to General Bell who commanded the ruthless pacification of Batangas (Linn 300ff). Before Bell contacted Mabini on how to handle the guerilla war, Mabini as political prisoner appeared earlier before the Taft Commission to find out what limits the Americans would put on Filipino sovereignty. Mabini asserted that "sovereignty belongs to the people by natural right" (*Letters* 256), so that even if the Americans allowed local government, Mabini declared that that was not possible "where the people are not given real and effective participation in the constitution and running of that same government." Since the Americans offered

only force and refused to listen to "the voice of reason," Mabini argued that it was useless to continue the meetings. One cannot converse with the agent of violence, lethal force. The choice for the Filipinos was "dishonor or death." Mabini chose honor first and fidelity to the community of victims with needs.

And so when he replied to General Bell, Mabini pursued the same tack in the face of superior force by saying that if force is the only rationale of U.S. invasion, then guerilla war is the only way Filipinos can defend their homes and their freedoms." Historically contextualized, violence acquires meaning and legitimacy from the ends and purposes of the victims, the subjugated people, whose needs are privileged (Marcuse, 1966). In fact, not resisting the violation of one's honor and natural rights would be a sign of irresponsibility and lack of civilization. Mabini tried to remind the General that the Filipino resistance can be compared to the American colonies' struggle for emancipation against the British. But this invocation of the Enlightenment principles of fighting for justice and honor seemed useless on the face of American belief that Filipinos did not know how to govern themselves, and that they were sullen mischievous children to be civilized with a Krag.

In effect, the American promise of tutelage negates itself. Force cannot engage in dialogue. Mabini finally sums up the lesson gained by the revolution: the experience of acquiring collective self-consciousness through sacrifice in the struggle. He postulates the birth of an organic, popular will for self-determination—that is, determining the resources available for developing the potential for enlarging the freedom and happiness already attained, and satisfying the anticipated flourishing needs of the entire country. Mabini elaborates on the dynamic unity of contradictions:

> …the present state of culture of the Filipino people shall not put up with subjugation by force as a permanent condition. The Filipinos may be vanquished now and again, but as long as they are denied every kind of right, there will not be lasting peace. The Spaniards were able to rule the islands without great troubles for three centuries because the Filipinos were then sunk in the most complete ignorance and they lived without

> consciousness of national solidarity. Today it is different; today the Filipinos share in the life of other nations and they have tasted, even if only for a short time and in an incomplete manner, the joys of an independent life ("In Response" 99).

There are other documents we can cite—such as Mabini's reply to General Wheeler's questions (dated December 25, 1899; *Letters*, 233-36), and his well-publicized "A Filipino Appeal to the People of the United States"—to offer evidence of Mabini's refusal to renounce his convictions and ideals. More revealing of Mabini's integrity and principled stand are the replies to General MacArthur and the Taft Commission (*La Revolucion*, 233-38, 252-54, 267-69). In his report on the meeting with MacArthur who insisted that Mabini take the oath of allegiance to the U.S. and rebuffed Mabini's demand for equality and justice, Mabini stated that "all negotiations which would involve the renunciation of political and civil rights would be dishonorable because it is our duty to sacrifice everything, including our lives, to preserve them" (*La Revolucio*n 237),

After his capture in December 1899, Mabini replied to questions posed by General Joseph Wheeler, among which is one inquiring about the causes of the revolution. Mabini succinctly answered: "The popular desire of the people to have a government that would assure to the Filipinos freedom of thought, conscience and association; immunity in their persons, homes and correspondence; popular representation in the drafting of laws and imposition of taxes; equality of participation in public offices and public benefits; respect for laws and property; and the progressive development of public welfare with the help of means offered by modern progress" (1965, 234).

And before he was deported for his publicized opposition to U.S. rule by force, Mabini reaffirmed his libertarian, collectivist commitment in a letter to American journalists on January 22, 1900. He reiterated his principles: "The Filipinos maintain the fight against American forces not because of hatred, but to demonstrate to the American nation that, far from looking with indifference [on] the country's political situation, they know, on the contrary, how to sacrifice for a government that will assure her of individual liberties in accordance with the wishes and necessities

of the nation" (*Letters* 239). From this perspective, the Filipino nation had already acquired undeniable presence in the form of a continuum of sacrifices incurred in the people's resistance to imperial domination.

Suffice it to say that for this occasion the letter to Bell may be said to exemplify Mabini's political sagacity as a partisan of progress. It also expresses the ethics of the Philippine revolution in affirming the Filipino potential for rational progress in the given historical situation. The Filipino struggle to overthrow colonialism was intended to establish and extend "freedom and happiness in a commonwealth, insuring "a life without fear and misery, and a life in peace" (Marcuse 1966, 1340). Mabini's praxis (in dealing with the victors) proved dialectical in confronting the Republic's defeat as an opportunity to resolve the contradictions of the failure of the external revolution (due to the backward mode of production and its debilitating social relations) and the partial victory of the internal one—-a unity of opposites.

Either dishonor (surrender to imperial power) or death (defending the nation's sovereignty and freedom) was the dilemma posed to Mabini throughout the years of resistance and exile. Practical reason embodied in the national form of life, the ethos of resistance in the war against Spain and the United States, survived insofar as Mabini and those compatriots who shared this historical experience (as epitomised by LRF) continued to impart its lessons to the succeeding generations fighting for progress in freedom, equality and justice. The affinity of Mabini's ordeal with the national-liberation struggles of the twentieth century cannot be more eloquently affirmed. He reflected on the origins and goals of the struggle. Without this historical self-consciousness, without the recovery of popular memory and a prophetic imagination free from dogmatism and sectarianism, the current struggle for justice, national democracy, and genuine sovereignty cannot be advanced as a collective, self-rectifying enterprise. And it cannot be developed further without organic links to the communities of victims united by years of oppression and resistance. Our common historical situation with its reversals and discoveries, with all protagonists recognizing the tortuous narrative of past struggles with its contradictory mélange of failures and successes, will serve to define the historical contours of the nation and the process of its protagonists re-inventing its destiny.

Mabini has always been praised as the "brain of the revolution" to demarcate that physical part from the rest of the body. All Aguinaldo's decrees from Kawit, Cavite, to Malolos, were written or prepared by Mabini, from June 1898 to May 1899, when he resigned from the government. He conducted negotiations with the American military officials in March 1899; the Americans refused any ceasefire or armistice, offering only autonomy, not recognition of sovereignty. During this time, Mabini was aware of the Boxer Rebellion against Westerners in China (1899-1900) and the Boer wars in South Africa against the British (1881-1899) since he mentions the name of Stephanus Kruger in LRF (see also *La Revolucion* Vol, 2, 274-78)—wars of resistance that suffered defeat but upheld exemplary heroism and strategy for future emancipatory action.

Mabini was imprisoned by the American troops on December 10, 1899 and eventually deported to Guam in June 1901 and released on February 26, 1903 on the condition that he take the oath of allegiance to the conqueror. He died from cholera on May 13, 1903. While in Guam, Mabini composed his magisterial LRF, the elegiac testimony of a race that vanquished Spanish colonialism and challenged the evolving imperialism of the U.S. Analyzing the causes and consequences of the popular-democratic movement, Mabini affirmed that the Filipinos had already won emancipation and exercised their right to a progressive, just and egalitarian mode of life. This brief period was interrupted by the deceptive and unrelenting violence of U.S. forces premised on a racist ideology designed to subjugate people-of-color. Mabini called attention to the racist logic of U.S. occupation.

Of his generation, Mabini was the only one who understood the racist/white-supremacist motivation, the ideological animus, underlying U.S. colonization. In elucidating the world-view of the American conquerors, Mabini discovered the covert but manifest racism in the policies of the invaders that violated natural law. Natural law, in Mabini's usage, entails the view that humans are rational and capable of self-critical action, in the interest of equality and justice (Neumann 90). He perceived the treacherous motive of McKinley's "Benevolent Assimilation" slogan. One might conclude that compared

to the progressive intellectuals of his generation (e.g., Rizal, Jacinto, Isabelo de los Reyes, etc.), Mabini was the only one who fully discerned and comprehended the racializing hubris of the US ideological-political apparatus. He grasped what this meant for the plight of workers and peasants in a colonized milieu. Overall, the energy of Mabini's critical mind surged forth from the organic desire of the working masses to overthrow all impediments to releasing its potential and freely manage their own lives and destiny.

Mabini's afterlife may be said to have haunted the transition from Spanish domination to American hegemony. Within that circumscribed duration of the Malolos Republic up to the execution of Macario Sakay in September 1907, we witnessed the radical transformation of the community's spirit that forged a path between the old feudal colonialism of Spain and the predatory racist ideology of U.S. capitalism and its hegemonic entailments. Thus Mabini unwittingly resembled the mythical folk-hero Bernardo Carpio of the Indio barangays, standing between conflicting mountains. Mabini's truly prophetic shaping of the conscience of the Malayan race, while serving the revolutionary forces until the end of his life, may be said to chart the perilous and precarious future of the Filipino people craving for a singular historic identity. The future cannot be glimpsed except as the promise and unfulfilled tasks inherited from the past, as intimated by the totalizing intuition of the folk-saying:"Ang hindi lumingon as pinanggalingan, hindi makararating sa paruroonan.".

We may consider a heuristic proposition, as a provisional conclusion to this exploratory inquiry. Mabini's affirmation of classic humanistic principles, such as the primacy of natural law or natural rights as a universal axiom, is an attempt to compensate for the defeats suffered by the Malolos Republic, notwithstanding the inadequacies of some of its leaders. His trust in the working-people's power was unwavering. But the universal telos of that struggle is given concrete determination by the narrative of the events summed up in LRF. We may venture to suggest that Mabini's thought embodied the will to invent compensatory strategies against the new colonizers, generating a symbolic power that sublimates defeat by inducing a catharsis of the

collective psyche and mobilizing his compatriots to invent weapons for future anti-imperialist war of position and maneuver.

Perhaps the most memorable tribute to Mabini's contribution to our history was made by historian Teodoro Agoncillo: "Mabini's contemporaneity lies…in his character as man and Filipino—a character which is eternally Filipino, yet universal in his emphasis on the inevitability of freedom, the dignity of the human race, and the sanctity of moral life. His virtues were those of any great man of any time and any place to whom integrity was as sacrosanct as faith. He is our contemporary because the present, which interweaves with the past to formulate the future, stands in need of him" (11). That homage may be considered a more elaborate gloss to the 1922 Philippine Press Bureau's preamble to a reprint of Mabini's Decalogue: "Mabini was undoubtedly the most profound thinker and political philosopher that the Pilipino race ever produced. Someday, when his works are fully published, but not until then, Mabini will come into his own."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

E. San Juan, Jr. is emeritus professsor of Comparative Literature, Washington State University, and author of the following books: *US Imperialism and Revolution in the Philippines* (Palgrave), *Carlos Bulosan: Revolutionary Filipino Writer in the U.S.* (Peter Lang), *Lualhati Bautista, Nobelista* (U.S.T. Publishing House), *Maelstrom over the Killling Fields* (Pantax), and the forthcoming book, *Recognizing Apolinario Mabini: Inquiries into the Struggle for Justice and Sovereignty* (University of the Philipppines Press).