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Raul J. Bonoan, S.J.

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**Moral Education Revisited: Truth  
and Justice as Educational Goals**

RAUL J. BONOAN, S. J.

While current discussions on value formation seem to focus on elementary and secondary education, moral development remains integral to the total educational task, which includes the tertiary level. It is significant that the Education Act of 1982 defines the formation of "moral and spiritual values" as a national developmental goal and further sets up "moral integrity" and "spiritual vigor" as aims of the general education program on the college level.<sup>1</sup> This article assumes that value formation should occur not just over and above, side by side with, or parallel to academic training, but rather that the two must be fused into a unified process, that value formation should take place precisely through the teaching of the humanities, the natural and social sciences.

Two points will be discussed in this article: first, the Filipino tradition of moral education, and second, the promotion of two moral values, which are crucial to social transformation today.

This article is a paper read at the APCAS National Conference, held at the Ateneo Professional Schools, Makati, Metro Manila, 19 July 1984.

1. Batas Pambansa Blg. 232, *The Education Act of 1982*, Sec. 3 and Sec. 23. This is in keeping with the constitutional provision that educational institutions develop character and personal discipline. (The Philippine Constitution, Art. 15, Sec. 8[4]). These policy statements of the Education Act were derived from the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education, *Report of the Special Area Group on Higher Education*, p. 65. The Report, however, speaks of the promotion of only "cultural" values. The insertion of "moral and spiritual values" and the mention of "moral integrity" and "spiritual vigor" as aims of the general education program indicate the wider perspectives of the drafters of the Act.

## THE FILIPINO TRADITION OF MORAL EDUCATION

Wittingly or unwittingly, the Batasang Pambansa in 1982 was affirming a long national tradition reflected in the ideas of Filipino thinkers, in particular those who attended the pangs of our national birth, who upheld the primacy of moral education and saw it as essential to social and political change.

## RIZAL

In his perceptive critique of Rizal's concept of nationhood, Cesar Adib Majul pointed out that Rizal's overriding concern was the formation of a new national community, the Filipino nation.<sup>2</sup> Indispensable to this task of nation-building for Rizal was moral regeneration, which must have priority over the political options of revolution and separation. The weakness of the national moral character must first be remedied by the leaders of the new emerging nation. It was axiomatic with Rizal that the people got only the type of government they deserved. Paraphrasing a popular adage, he said: "Like people, like government."<sup>3</sup> If the government was tyrannical it was because the people allowed it to be so. A morally weak government could not long endure among a people of indomitable moral strength. A people possessed of fortitude, integrity, love of truth and the habit of study, could not but produce a government that would establish the conditions for justice and freedom.

What then did Rizal, his country's physician, prescribe for this malady? First, let the people act with courage and integrity in the face of persecution. Let the people and their oppressors know that suffering is like a cauterization which stimulates the regeneration of a diseased bodily organ; harrassments, imprisonments, tortures and death itself will toughen the overly tender skin of the Filipino people and strengthen the national moral fiber.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, there is

2. Cesar Adib Majul, *A Critique of Rizal's Concept of a Filipino Nation* (Diliman, Quezon City, 1959).

3. Jose Rizal, "Sobre la indolencia de los Filipinos," *La Solidaridad* 2(15 September 1890): 202. For a lengthier treatment on the subject of moral regeneration, see Raul J. Bonoan, S.J., "Rizal on Divine Providence and Nationhood," *Philippine Studies*, 25 (1977): 154-57.

4. Rizal-Members of the Association "La Solidaridad," 18 April 1889, *Epistolario Rizalino*, 2:167.

need of good example, which especially the national leaders are called upon to provide. Virtue is contagious; the power of example moves history, changes the character of the people. Alluding to reports that in 1872, at the hour of his execution, Father Burgos wept like a child, while Father Gomez, head held high, stood erect and serene, blessing the crowd, Rizal expressed regret that Burgos had fallen short of the ideal. "If Burgos at his death had shown the fortitude of Gomez, the Filipinos would be other than what they are today."<sup>5</sup> If example was needed, the propagandists must be the first to give it, by pursuing a new courageous policy, namely, the complete abandonment of pseudonyms in their publication, *La Solidaridad*.<sup>6</sup> The use of real names would prove the moral integrity (*entereza*) and spiritual vigor (*valor*) of the writers and inspire others by their example. Thirdly, Rizal prescribed the new ethic that must characterize the network of relationships in the new national community, the ethic of selfless motivation. The new leaders must work for the nation, not for themselves; for utterly selfless motives, not for personal gain; or else God will not bless their work. In another harsh judgement on Burgos, Rizal claimed that God did not support him because there was a tinge of self-interest in his fight for the secularization of the parishes.

The men that have preceded us fought for their own interests, and therefore God did not support them—Novales for promotion, Cuesta for vengeance, Burgos for his curacies. We however fight that justice must prevail, we fight for liberty, for the sacred rights of man, we ask nothing for ourselves, we sacrifice all for the common good. What have we to fear?<sup>7</sup>

For Rizal then, whose dream, fictionalized in the *Noli* and clearly stated in his letters, was to set up a school for his countrymen, the task of nation-building called for an education which must aim at moral regeneration. Upright personal behaviour and a sense of selfless service, especially on the part of the leaders, were essential to the life of the emerging nation. Thus Rizal's own political involvement was marked by the anguish of personal decisions based on profoundly ethical reasons. By 1891 Rizal saw the futility of the propaganda work in Europe and was exhorting his fellow Filipinos to return to the Philippines and lead the struggle there. After years of self-exile in Europe and six months in

5. Ibid.

6. Rizal-Del Pilar, 22 June 1889, *Ep. Riz.*, 2:200.

7. Ibid, p. 201.

Hong Kong, against the advice of his family, his friends and foes, he boarded a ship that would take him to the Philippines. Knowing full well that death of some form awaited him there, he wrote a letter to his countrymen, his last will and testament, and gave it to a Filipino resident in Hong Kong, to be opened in the event of his death, in which he stated that his decision was a matter of conscience (*mis deberes de consciencia*). "I wish to make those who begrudge us of love of country see that we know how to die for our duty and our convictions."<sup>8</sup>

#### BONIFACIO AND JACINTO

The *Katipunan* likewise placed a high premium on ethical behavior as a requirement in achieving its goal of union of vision and purpose and national emancipation through revolution. Candidates were screened, their private lives investigated, those found morally deficient were excluded. Members were to abandon a disorderly life and were asked to abide by a code of ethics. In fact two codes were proposed, one by Andres Bonifacio the other by Emilio Jacinto. Upon reading Jacinto's *Kartilya* or Primer, Bonifacio thought it superior and decided to withdraw his son.

Bonifacio's Decalogue or *Katungkulan Gagawin ng mga Anak ng Bayan* was more religious in tone, faith in God being the first commandment which was to find expression in love of one's country and neighbor, ending with the statement that the aims of the *Katipunan* were God-given and that the desires of the country were the desires of God. Noteworthy is the high dignity it assigns to labor; the *katipuneros*, mostly peasants and laborers, were exhorted to certain values: calmness (*kalamigan ng loob*), firmness (*katigasan*), patience (*katiisan*) and confidence (*pag-asa*) in their daily work.<sup>9</sup>

Jacinto's *Kartilya*, on the other hand, was more literary and full of unction. The dignity of man was expressed in the powerful, melodic cadence of his Tagalog prose.

Ang kamahalan ng tao'y wala sa pagkahari, wala sa tangus ng ilong at puti ng mukha, wala sa pagkaparing kahalili ng Dios, wala sa mataas na kalagayan sa balat ng lupa; wagas at tunay na mahal na tao, kahit laking

8. Rizal-His Countrymen, 20 June 1892, *Ep. Riz.*, 3:348.

9. Teodoro Agoncillo, *The Writings and Trial of Andres Bonifacio*, (Manila, 1963), p. 67.

gubat at walang nababatid kundi ang sariling wika, yaong may magandang asal, may isang pangungusap, may dangal at puri; yaong di napaaapi't di nakikiapi; yaong marunong magdamdam at marunong lumingap sa bayang tinubuan.<sup>10</sup>

A man's worth does not consist in being a king, or in having a sharp nose and a white skin, or assuming as a priest the office of being God's representative. It does not consist in being one of the great ones of the earth. What though a man be born and raised in the wilderness, and speak no language but his own? If his ways are gentle; if his word is true, if he cherishes his good name, if he neither suffers nor commits injustice, if he knows how to love the land that gave him birth and to come to her assistance, that man is really and truly great.<sup>11</sup>

In view of the enormity of the tasks ahead, Jacinto branded as erroneous the view of work as punishment and something to be ashamed of. Rather, work is God's gift, a blessing and reward. He excoriated the wealthy for their love of ease and their bad habits, invoking Balagtas' *Florante at Laura*:

Ang laki sa layaw karaniwa'y hubad  
Sa bait at muni't sa hatol ay salat.

The *Kartilya* enshrined traditional Christian moral principles as well as Filipino cultural values, such as selflessness, being true to one's word, not wasting time, keeping secrets, chastity and respect for women, the golden rule. But these now gain new applications for the task of the Katipunan — *papagisahin ang loob at kaisipan, ipagtanggol ang inaapi*<sup>12</sup> — and new meaning in the light of a new reality, *bayang tinubuan*.

In brief then, the Katipuneros sounded the call for unity of minds and wills in the revolutionary struggle against oppression. The prescriptions of Bonifacio's *Katungkulan* and Jacinto's *Kartilya* were aimed at moral development, the inculcation of moral integrity and injection of spiritual vigor, among the katipuneros. The ethical code had priority over particular rules and regulations for the objective was to equip the revolutionaries with moral, social and cultural values so much needed in the impending task of revolution.

10. Jose P. Santos, *Buhay at Mga Sinulat ni Emilio Jacinto* (Maynila, 1935), p. 62.

11. The English translation is by Horacio de la Costa, S. J. from his *Readings in Philippine History* (Manila: Bookmark), pp. 233-34.

12. Santos, *Buhay*, pp. 60-62.

## MABINI

The theoretical justification of the Revolution and the articulation of the program of government fell upon that great intellectual leader, Apolinario Mabini. Initially firmly committed to reforms and legal procedures, he later saw the futility of peaceful means and joined the Revolution to become its sublime thinker and ideologue. Like the good scholastic philosopher that he was, he distinguished between two aspects of the Revolution, the external and internal. The external Revolution sought to overthrow the Spanish regime and establish new structures of government in accord with democratic republican principles. To achieve this end, Mabini wrote his *Ordenanzas a la Revolución*, eighty-nine regulations all told, which articulated the justification and objectives of the Revolution and the broad lines of the revolutionary government. But the external Revolution called for an internal one, the process of radical moral transformation. “. . . We must change radically not only our institutions but our manner of behaving and thinking. A revolution which is external and internal at the same time becomes a necessity; we must base our moral education on solid principles and renounce those bad habits which for the most part we have inherited from the Spaniards.”<sup>13</sup> The guidelines for the internal Revolution are contained in Mabini's *Verdadero Decálogo*, which, in his own words, was to serve as “the solid base and fundamental principle of the moral education of the Filipino as a human being and a citizen.”<sup>14</sup> What Mabini had in mind was the same as in Rizal: the formation of a new national community, which for Mabini became a more pressing task in view of the sure outcome of the Philippine Revolution and the recently declared Spanish-American War.

Love of country was second only to love of God. The individual must develop his faculties and talents so that he may contribute to the cause of justice, the common good and human progress. The prosperity of the country must have priority over one's own. Going beyond Bonifacio's and Jacinto's love of neighbor, Mabini exhorted his countrymen to love one another not as neighbors

13. Apolinario Mabini, *La Revolución Filipina*, 2 vols. (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1931), 1:105. See also Cesar Adib Majul, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1960), pp. 153-54.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

only but as friends, brothers and companions, constituting as they do a new community sharing the same interests, aspirations, and destiny. Beyond merely affirming the dignity and equality of men, Mabini urged the people to recognize authority only in officials selected by them, the reason being that authority emanates from God who in turn speaks in the consciences of the people so that only those elected by the people have real authority.<sup>15</sup>

It is possible to trace the long tradition of moral education among the Filipinos beyond the Filipino thinkers that have been mentioned on to Modesto de Castro's *Urbana at Feliza*, Balagtas' *Florante at Laura*, the various versions of the *Pasyon*, and numerous others. But the distinctive contribution of the early Filipino political thinkers was that they pushed the moral consciousness of the Filipino beyond the borders of the family and its intricate extensions and the wider limits of linguistic groups (e. g. Katagalugan, Kapampangan), to become aware of an even larger community—the *patria adorada* (Rizal), *lupang tinubuan* (Bonifacio), *bayang tinubuan* (Jacinto), *querido pueblo* (Mabini),<sup>16</sup> and inextricably linked moral education with social and political transformation. As Majul observes, for them there was no sharp dividing line between politics and morality, one could not be divorced from the other.<sup>17</sup> Political ends could be achieved only by moral means, political decisions must abide by a noble code of ethics. While the nation as a whole must live by moral values, much more was expected of national leaders who must be ethical and exemplary in their private as well as public lives.

In fact, Mabini placed the blame for the failure of the Revolution on the lack of moral integrity of the revolutionary army, in particular he cited abuse of women, but principally on the person of the chief executive, Emilio Aguinaldo.<sup>18</sup> His judgment on Aguinaldo was unusually harsh: he achieved his position through dishonest means, mistook his personal aggrandizement for his country's good, refused to use qualified persons in favor of perso-

15. Ibid, pp. 106-07.

16. Vitaliano Gorospe, S.J., "Sources of Filipino Moral Consciousness," *Philippine Studies* 25 (1977): 295.

17. Cesar Adib Majul, *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution*, rev. ed., (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1967), p. 36.

18. Mabini, *La Revolución Filipina*, 2:317-18, 321. To Majul Mabini's indictment appears "unduly severe." For the factors that contributed to this judgement, see Majul, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution*, pp. 339-44.

nal friends and persons bound to him by family ties. Aguinaldo must bear the responsibility for the assassination of his rival, Andres Bonifacio, and the death of his chief of staff with whom he had disagreements, Antonio Luna. The punishment for his crimes, wrote Mabini, was moral death, more bitter than physical death, and the defeat of the Revolution. The point is clear: ethical codes have primacy over constitutions, laws and decrees because of the firm conviction that only moral and spiritual values could justify and successfully animate attempts at social and political change.

#### THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

There is enough evidence that this tradition of moral education has endured through the twentieth century. For instance, Teodoro M. Kalaw wrote the *Cinco Reglas de Nuestra Moral Antigua*, published in 1935, five traits of the traditional Filipino character, namely, courage, chastity, courtesy, self-control, and family unity. Camilo Osias, an Ilocos-born educator, statesman and one of the early products of the American educational system, who attempted to articulate a Filipino philosophy of education centering on what he called the *tayo* (we-pluralized or communal) concept, as opposed to the *ako* (individual), *kita* (dual), and *kami* (we-exclusive) concepts drew up a list of fourteen virtues.<sup>19</sup> Among them were hard work and thrift, values ingrained in the Ilocano character and reinforced by the Protestant ethic of work.

Similarly in 1938, President Quezon approved a sixteen-point Code of Citizenship and Ethics, the work of a national committee, to be taught in all schools. One ethical principle has special interest for us since it upholds the value of a new democratic exercise: "Safeguard the purity of suffrage and abide by the decision of the majority."<sup>20</sup>

19. Camilo Osias, *Life-Centered Education* (Quezon City: Bustamante Press, 1954), pp. 112-26.

20. Camilo Osias, *The Filipino Way of Life, The Pluralized Philosophy* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1940), p. 110.

## PROMOTING HUMAN VALUES: TRUTH AND JUSTICE

Let us now turn to some practical considerations on the subject of moral development. What we really want is not new codes and decalogues but results in terms of moral integrity and spiritual vigor. After all, there are not lacking moral exhortations in various forms—pastoral letters read in church, manifestos signed by religious and civic groups, and national leaders urging us on television to compassion, sobriety and rectitude. But often enough when teachers are exhorted to prudence and circumspection regarding social and political issues, there is the unstated assumption of morality as a private affair, divorced from politics, business and other aspects of public life.

Let us discuss just two values: truth and justice.

## TRUTH

From time immemorial the traditional aim of institutions of higher learning has been the pursuit of truth through the acquisition of knowledge and research. Study can be backbreaking, but it should be at the same time an exciting experience. Very often, however, it becomes dull and dreary, the sheer and slavish memorization of dates, data, and details. For instance, science becomes the accumulation of facts and laboratory experiments merely follow the script in the manual and are expected to come up with known conclusions. No wonder perhaps, that our schools have astronomical enrolments in technological courses but only a sprinkling of majors in the basic sciences, on which technology is based. In fact, to do science should mean the thrill and training of suspenseful personal observation of empirical data that would make the student come to a moment of insight. But even such thought-provoking topics as the effects of the Industrial Revolution elicit sheer repetition of the textbook's or teacher's views on the subject, rather than curious inquiry and personal interpretation.

Study is not the storing up of facts, but going beyond them in search for truth and meaning, the selfless inquiry into the mystery of reality which is greater than the human mind and impinges so persistently on human life. As long as courses and teaching techniques do not stimulate students to think for themselves and seek

the truth for the sheer love of it, we have failed in our primordial task.

If politics has been divorced from morality, similarly there is often the unstated assumption that academic training in the tertiary level at least, especially in the sciences, has but a tenuous association with moral development. But the habit of study and the love of truth do have a moral dimension and contribute to the development of the human being at a profound personal level. The student who studies persistently three, four, six hours a day and pursues the truth with selfless motivation develops values badly in need today, namely, accuracy of observation, honesty in reporting, intellectual humility which bows to the facts, respect for authority as well as responsibility, autonomy and initiative. He begins to have a sense of purpose and direction in life and a commitment to the truth. And since all facts, events, data are interconnected and all truth is one, the serious thinker and lover of truth is better disposed to enter more deeply into the truth of his inner self, cultivating a profound self-awareness, interiority, moral integrity and spiritual vigor.

What is said of the individual is true of the school and the national community. Commitment to truth is incumbent on the school and society at large if our national life is to assume the lofty purpose of pursuing our developmental goals. But the honest and disinterested pursuit of truth calls for a climate of sincerity and honesty. Such a climate is woefully absent when media remain silent about the truth, distort it or tell falsehoods, so that when they do tell the truth they are no longer credible. In 1981 classes were called off for nearly a month and the reason given in the papers was that time was needed to repair the roads damaged by the typhoon when in many parts of the country it did not even so much as drizzle. Have we sacrificed the value of truth and moral education for some other? Who fired the gun that felled Aquino? Who instigated his assassination? Who murdered the four Lakbayan marchers and buried them in a shallow grave in Cavite? Who hogtied, paraded in public, tortured, and killed the Langoni nine? Who was responsible for the massacre in Antique? These are not just political questions; they are moral questions as well, which have a lot to do with the education of our students, their training in the pursuit of truth, which demands a climate of truth. Truth is indeed hard to come by. Where is the honest man

who speaks the truth?

We look with envy at the economic progress of our Asian neighbors. Universities in South Korea, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan put our educational system to shame. How come we have fallen so far behind? If it is not the lack of brains, how much of a correlation is there between the moral environment and the low level of scientific and industrial growth, between the climate of untruth and the present economic crisis? It is for our philosophers and social scientists to find out. In any case, let us teach our students to pursue the truth — in the classroom and outside the classroom; within themselves, in society and in the world — not just with persistence and diligence but with a consuming passion for the truth.

#### JUSTICE

The concept of social justice, which seeks to give more in law to those who have less in life, undergirds the whole purpose of the Education Act of 1982. In seeking to correct the situation in which the poor have less access to quality education, the Education Act turns our attention to a whole bundle of interconnected disparities, a situation that is unjust and an injustice that is structural, that is to say, there are institutions in our society—social structures at the local, provincial, regional, and national levels—which have injustice built into them. In what does this structural injustice consist? Simply this: the concentration of political power, economic wealth, and access to quality education, health and other services in one small segment of the population, side by side with the powerlessness, poverty, and lack of resources for human development among the majority.<sup>21</sup> The social structures are such that the distribution of the benefits of growth in

21. The primer on the Education Act issued by the MECS says as much. "In many countries, university education is not for all. But sometimes, the systems by which we define qualification for university or college education are often biased in favor of certain sectors of society and against other sectors, not because of the intelligence of the students but because of social institutions. The provision, with respect to the State undertaking the duty of promoting equality of access to education, therefore, refers as well to tertiary education in which the exclusion of certain citizens from the enjoyment of this level of education is occasioned not by intelligence but by other causes over which the State has resources and power to influence." "On Policies, Procedures, and Technicalities," *MECS Journal Supplement* (February, 1983), p. 2.

terms of income, housing, medical and educational services becomes increasingly unequal, the poor becoming poorer and the rich richer; or as in the case of the present economic decline, the poor suffer more than the rich.

This justice was deplored by President Marcos himself in his 1974 "Report to the Nation":

Colonialism had implanted [in the Philippines] a system of privilege and power that inevitably divided the people into classes: ruler and ruled, rich and poor, strong and weak . . . The history of this country since 1946 tells us that . . . no form of economic development could take root in our country unless premised on the broader goal of social transformation.

How do we form the value of justice among our students? First of all, whether we like it or not, many of them are answering the question and solving the problem for themselves. This is a given fact that we have to accept. Secondly, values are learned not so much by listening to a lecture, reading a book, moral reasoning or value clarification, but by choosing and doing. In actual fact, justice is valued by doing works of justice. How does this actually take place?

First, awakening occurs when the student comes in contact with the poor or actual situations of injustice.<sup>22</sup> He may join the squatters in the barricades to resist eviction from Commonwealth Avenue or Navotas. Or he may walk in the rain during the Aquino funeral drinking from the same cup as the shoeless laborer beside him. Next as the visits to the barrio or squatter area become more frequent, awareness gives way to a growing commitment. Contacts are not just isolated and sporadic but become part of a program, usually undertaken within an organized group. Tutoring poor children in English and Mathematics, instructing laborers about their basic rights, engaging in preventive medicine and primary health care in some barrio—all these entail deeper and deeper choices demanding small and big sacrifices: no free weekends, less recreational expenses, less time at home, less dates, and even lower grades. Then comes a point when a person is challenged to correct not just *this* injustice and assist *this* poor family but to

22. Bienvenido Nebres, S. J., "Education for Justice: The Teacher's Role," a paper delivered at the General Assembly of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines, 25 June 1983.

commit himself to justice on a structural scale, to change social structures in any way he can. A career path has to be chosen: Procter and Gamble or a development agency which pays far less, business in Makati or teaching in a school in Mindanao, Makati Medical or the community health program in Irosin, Sorsogon. Finally, for many if not for most, political involvement becomes an imperative since structural change occurs most effectively through the interventions of power and politics. So he joins an activist student group or an underground movement, a political party in Mindanao, a youth movement, or runs as candidate for the Batasan.

More often than not the process takes place quite apart from school structures. Now if we refuse as educators to participate actively in this process and remain seated at our desks with self-complacency, then we actually abdicate our role as moral educators at least in the one value of justice so essential for social transformation.

What then can we do in our schools? First, let us provide for our students, especially those possessing leadership qualities, opportunities of exposure to Philippine social realities and meaningful service to the poor. In many schools now there is a separate office that institutes and supervises social involvement programs. These programs however, should be more than just exercises of good personal behavior and civic-mindedness, else they become as anemic as the defunct YCAP. The newly-decreed National Service Program gives no promise of doing any better. Rather, social involvement programs must be directed by the view that the Philippine social problem is one of structural injustice, that the participants must be challenged not just to change personal behavior but to devise and carry out changes in the structures of society.

Some may object that their students are poor themselves. But the poor need such programs too, for the condition of poverty does not necessarily make one aware of the problem of injustice. The poor boy from Tondo may well use his NSTA or State scholarship to rise above his poverty and transplant his family to Magallanes Village with little desire to change the condition that continues to impoverish his neighbors in Tondo. When Paolo Freire developed his pedagogical method of "conscientization," his target was not the rich but the poor whose consciousness he wanted to raise so that they can liberate themselves from their

oppression.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, let us be convinced that a program of contact with and service of the poor should be an essential component of a significant number of our academic courses. The challenge before us is to integrate classroom lectures and social involvement activities, academic training and justice-as-value formation into a unified educational process. Unless this is done academics will remain divorced from the burning issues of life, impotent to bring about transformation, and social involvement will lack that sound theoretical and rational framework which gives direction, permanence and effectivity.

The recent national elections is a case in point. Involvement in this exercise, whether by way of participation or active boycott, has made many students aware of neuralgic issues and problems of Philippine politics. In the process many came to value those things which made the system work or lacking which the elections became a mockery: vigilance; sincerity; honesty; a sense of community; constancy and hope in the face of ambushes, massacres and massive fraud; the sanctity of the popular will. Students have every right to expect resonances within the school structure itself in support of such values. The administration should welcome student governments. And student elections should be encouraged since they are instructive and formational, heightening sensitivity to fraud and dishonesty and the determination to protect the sanctity of the ballot. But that is not enough: forms of involvement in the national elections could well be an essential component of such courses as Political Theory and the Philippine Constitution. Could not the first-hand experience of the constitutional process at work or of actually being thwarted not enliven an often lifeless course?

This integration can and must take place in other courses to make an impact in our educational program. English teachers can send students to observe squatters in their struggle against relocation to Sapang Palay or to interview scavengers or newspaper boys, and ask them to write about their experience and discuss their compositions in class. There is a medical school in Mindanao which makes community medicine its main thrust and medical work in

23. Ibid.

the barrios a requirement of their courses. Business and economics students can be assigned to trace for themselves the actual pattern of ownership, production, finance and marketing in given areas, to see for themselves how the system only serves to widen the gap between rich and poor. The same can be done in courses in Social Philosophy and Sociology. Of course this demands of the teacher a lot of creativity and a high sensitivity to the problem of institutional injustice in our midst.

Thirdly, let us impart to our students the basic minimum at least, of a sound political education. As educators we are generally disinclined to politics and are often exhorted by authorities of Church and State to a certain detachment in this regard as befits our role in society. But if the value of justice calls for structural change, and structural change takes place through the use of power and the interventions of politics, then our students must be instructed in the rudiments of politics and the acquisition and use of power. Politics is too important to be left to politicians. Let us not leave the political education of our children to politicians, or to ideological movements of various colors. Let us guide them in the maze of ideas and ideologies; let us discuss in the classrooms the alternatives of peace and violence; above all let us teach them the primacy of moral integrity and spiritual vigor in politics where often enough dishonesty and physical force hold sway. Last but not least, if we cannot teach them to gain and wield political power the better to be able to bring about structural change, let us at least inspire them to do so.