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School Ethics Reconsidered

Gertrudes R. Ang

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Our criticism of Dr. Laurel's political and moral philosophy is necessarily limited to the extent that it is based solely on an exclusive analysis of his *Credo—Pro Deo et Patria*. How far Dr. Laurel's *Credo* can be said to represent definitely his political and religious thought or merely a position arrived at in prison, can be decided only after a thorough investigation of his other writings and speeches. In this respect the past and forthcoming Dr. Jose P. Laurel Memorial Series of publications will be most welcome. Until further study is made of the entire *corpus laureliana*, Dr. Laurel's *Credo* cannot be taken simply as his political and moral philosophy. Moreover, some conclusions made in our present evaluation of his *Credo* will remain tentative.

Yet with all these fine (and needed) distinctions made, one is still impressed with Dr. Laurel's political and moral philosophy as somehow the summation of a life truly dedicated to God and his country. It was most fitting then that he entitled his Moral and Political *Credo—Pro Deo et Patria*—an autobiography which reveals the soul of a great man who lived for God and his country.

VITALIANO R. GOROSPE

School Ethics Reconsidered

The low estate of ethical behavior in some circles in government, business, and industry has been noted with alarming frequency in recent newspaper and magazine articles. One reads over and over again that honesty and integrity are fast disappearing from public life. This slump in morals has, of course, been going on for some time, but the mere fact that there is a slump need not make us accept it as something that is here to stay. It is a sign of the times; but we make the times and we can, if we wish, start a movement in the opposite direction. For this, inevitably, we must focus our attention on the schools. Unfortunately, what has been happening in the educational world is not likely to convince people that the school, college, or university can work the needed miracle.

An observation of educational processes in our schools leaves us in no doubt that there is a moral slump here too. Even if the majority of students and teachers keep fairly high standards of honesty, the prevalence of a wide range of educational malpractices justify many of the attacks that have been leveled at our institutions of learning.

Any one who has had even a remote connection with certain colleges and universities is familiar with the prevalent practice of cheating or copying at examinations. Every twelve months or so we are

duly shocked by new reports of ingenious techniques used by students to obtain passing grades in tests without the labor of acquiring the necessary knowledge. The pity is that adults who should know better wink at it and boast of what *they* got away with in their younger years. They smile approval when a son or daughter profoundly remarks that what is unforgivable is not cheating but being caught cheating. At the other extreme are those who would abolish cheating by abolishing examinations.

But tests have become increasingly important in the life of every pupil, student, and civil servant. We are subjected to tests on all levels—local as well as national. Our present system demands that no one pass to a higher grade, win a degree, or obtain a professional license without some form of examination. Top-notchers in board examinations of one kind or another are assured of appointments to desirable positions and add prestige to the schools that developed their talents. It is clear, therefore, that the stakes involved in examinations are high; the temptation to do well in them at all costs proportionately strong. The personal conflict involved is not always resolved in favor of honor and honesty. Hence the persistent reports of the theft and sale of examination papers, and of downright bribery of examiners.

It is wrong to expect tests to be easy and pleasant. They are tests precisely because they entail preparation and determined effort—neither of which is easy or pleasant. But because they are difficult, examinees feel that any subterfuge may be used to “beat the system.” And because more and more are doing just that, cheating and bribery have become commonplace. The revelation that cheating is rampant no longer shocks students; worse, it may no longer shock teachers.

Students are often required to write documented themes, term reports or research papers. Even if the students do their own research and writing, there still exists an opportunity for cheating. They may incorporate passages and ideas from books without acknowledgment. Students who are affluent enough may engage the services of a facile writer, one experienced in the composition of research papers. This ghost writer, who is likely to be a financially embarrassed professor or student, may produce a term report, a master's thesis, or even a doctoral dissertation for a price.

Other aspects of our graduate programs have not been free from dubious ethics. When, in the absence of a specialist, a professor is asked to direct a thesis or dissertation in an area alien to his particular field, he should follow one of two courses: refuse to undertake the job or go to the trouble of getting acquainted with the field while he is in charge of the research project. The easier step to take would be the first one, but certainly, neglect to do either is reprehensible.

Then, too, oral examinations should be conducted with the best qualified professors as examiners. Short of illness or conflicting academic duty, such professors should be invited to examine the candidate; otherwise, the candidate's sponsors on faculty may be suspected of wanting to shield him from real questions which may result in his failure. The deliberate lowering of standards for particular students in order to give them the grades necessary for their degrees is patently a breach of academic integrity.

There have been several exposés of diploma mills. In these substandard establishments, what is to prevent the unethical from purchasing impressive but worthless certificates or diplomas which they can later use for social, financial, or professional advancement?

Other more subtle unethical practices have crept even into the hallowed reaches of higher learning. Some professors and administrators have followed the example of students (or was it the other way around?) in making unauthorized and unacknowledged use of other scholars' research. Passages or ideas may be "lifted" from monographs or textbooks and then distributed or sold to students as lecture notes or textbook substitutes.

On the administrative level, ethical behavior is sometimes notably neglected. Favoritism in teaching assignments, promotions, and appointments without due regard for academic merit or qualification; nepotism; the use of position in unduly influencing a subordinate; even selling merchandise to subordinates who find it hard to refuse to do business with their superiors—examples of these are plentiful.

If educators are to serve as examples to the younger generation—as indeed they must—they ought to concentrate on raising the level of the entire educational process to the point where ethics is the norm and not the exception. The tightening up process may take three forms: principle, prevention, and punishment.

In the first place, a deep understanding and appreciation of ethical values must be communicated to all who are undergoing or transmitting education through classes in ethics, seminars in professional ethics, and at every other opportunity.

At the same time, educators should assume that a system of ethical instruction is not sufficient. Preventive measures such as scrupulous secrecy in examinations, careful surveillance during tests, reasonably framed examinations, opportunities for retesting and rechecking, oral tests and interviews, must be taken into account and put into practice.

Third, a consistent policy of justifiable punishment should be adopted where instruction in ethics and preventive measures are found in-

effective. Teachers and students who are made aware that the school authorities are taking ethics most seriously would be deterred from dishonesty. They would learn that cheating in any form would carry penalties severe enough to have the teacher fired or the student expelled.

As the gates of the schools are flung open again, let us make certain that we shall conduct educational institutions noted not only for their magnitude but also for their excellence; and their integrity.

GERTRUDES R. ANG

Today's Native Is Yesterday's Visitor

In the Philippines, nationalism is *in*—and this is a good thing. Nonetheless, when I was asked to induct and address the new officers and members of the U.P. Botanical Society on August 18, I took the opportunity to make an obvious distinction that is sometimes forgotten. There is a big difference between resistance against something that is alien and bad, and resistance against something that is alien, but good or neutral. My opinion is that the first way of acting is defensible, while the second carries within it the seeds of cultural decay. Cultural growth is nourished by selective receptivity to external influence.

At the present time there are many Filipinos (and non-Filipinos, myself among them) who see modernization in the Western mold as a mixed blessing. This view breeds a certain sensitivity to imports from the West. Sometimes the concern is prompted by an influence clearly recognized as bad. In this case, the outside influence is rejected without hesitation; it is seen as harmful to basic values which (the rejectors feel) should be retained regardless of any change in the social or economic system. Thus we hear outcries against movies and TV shows that glamorize violence, or against an intruding fashionable club of American origin that features scantily-clad hostesses. This kind of concern has probably always been in the Philippines and—in one form or another—it is found in every society in the world. It is part of the cultural danger-warning system. Frontal attacks on cherished values are easily discerned and the posture of defense is correspondingly bold.

There is another kind of concern, however. This worry seems more characteristic of newly independent nations whose reflective citizens wish to be quite sure that they can modernize along lines suitable to themselves. They do not care to be manipulated or