

ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF THE EDUCATION  
OF THE IDEAL CITIZEN AND ITS RELEVANCE  
TO CONTEMPORARY PHILIPPINE POLITICS

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate School  
University of San Carlos  
Cebu City

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Philosophy

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by  
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October 1980

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This thesis entitled "ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF THE EDUCATION OF THE IDEAL CITIZEN AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY PHILIPPINE POLITICS," prepared and submitted by Mr. Demosthenes C. Mateo in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION.

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## DEDICATION

To my beloved wife, Elsa, and our lovely children, Junjun, Soren and Maila, whose love and cares and gaity makes me confident of the future, to them whose presence lightens my life's load, I dedicate this humble work.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer expresses his indebtedness to the following persons and agency, who in many ways contributed a lot to the completion of this study:

Fr. Quintin C. Terrenal, SVD, Ph. D., my adviser, for his scholarly criticisms, guidance and personal encouragement; the members of the committee - Miss Virginia Jayme and Miss Rosario Manzanares for their scholarly and friendly support and especially Miss Amosa Velez, not only for her unfailing encouragement but also for the many favors she gave this writer in his studies;

The President of Central Mindanao University, Dr. Isabelo S. Alcordo, for his unweaving support for my graduate studies; Dr. Marcelino N. Maceda, Dean of the CMU-College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Lamberto Boloron and Prof. Pedro Guasa, Jr. for their professional and administrative support, brotherly encouragement and help during my two-years study;

The Philippine Government through the EDPITAF for the scholarship it granted me;

My parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ponciano Mateo, Sr. for their parental understanding, sacrifices and prayers for my success; my sisters, Zenaida and Patria and brother Ponciano for their sacrifices just to make my college dreams come true; and to the rest of the family to whom I owe a lot of considerations, moral support and love;

Above all, to GOD whose Divine grace is always a reality for those who acknowledge HIS presence and Love,

To them I say thank you for everything. D.C.M.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

One of the perennial problems, which many philosophers all over the world are concerned with, is education. Their concern for human welfare engages them in profound speculation regarding educational matters. Man, in a sense, is naturally a political animal. He cannot live forever outside the sphere of human interaction. That is why education, in the writings of philosophers, must aim to produce not only good men for personal happiness but also functional citizens for the benefit of society.<sup>1</sup>

While this aim is generally agreed upon, differences of approach to its realization appear even among philosophers. In the last analysis, the source of their differences is their different opinion on what precisely is the nature of man and the nature of the state. There is also the question of primacy between individual freedom and the power of the state over the individual. The question plays a very important role in the formulation of specific educational goals in society. As Jacques Maritain puts it, "A theory of education is based on a

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<sup>1</sup>"Education," In The Great Ideas: Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World, Vol. II, (1952), p.377.

conception of life;"<sup>2</sup> hence, it is "not an autonomous science, but dependent on philosophy."<sup>3</sup> In this regard we see philosophers holding opposed positions not only on political but on educational matters as well.<sup>4</sup> Still others, with their sound appreciation of the problem, try to strike a balance on such a question. They hold the ends of the state and of the individual citizen to be one. A proponent of this philosophical position is Aristotle. He holds that there should be a harmonious balance between the organic state and the ethically functional citizenry. With a view to such harmony, he formulated his theory of education.

The relevance of Aristotle's political and educational position to the present Philippine political and educational set-up is too evident to be ignored. Since it is on education that the progress of the nation greatly

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<sup>2</sup>Jacques Maritain, The Education of Man; The Educational Philosophy of Jacques Maritain. Edited by Donald and Idella Gallagher (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>Thus, Jacques Maritain, for instance, criticized Rousseau's social contract - in the light of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy - as making the state and every social institution mythical entities; he has shown subsequently how this position led, in fact, to totalitarianism - Scholasticism and Politics, 3rd ed. (London: Geoffrey and Bless, 1954), pp. 74 ff.

depends, a sound educational philosophy becomes necessary. It is necessary to anchor education on a philosophy which emphasizes a balanced physical and moral development of the citizen and a harmony between individual freedom and social responsibility. Such is Aristotle's philosophy of education.

The Philippines is a developing country. Through its present visionary leader, it has initiated a bold thrust toward establishing a new society. This thrust, being a radical act of national re-direction, needs to be understood by every Filipino citizen on whom its realization ultimately depends. Of great interest is the theory of "participatory democracy" as being implemented particularly through the citizens' assemblies. The reason for this is simple; the stability of "participatory democracy" in Philippine politics, in the long run, would depend very much on the quality of education which each citizen receives. This statement will be better appreciated by looking into the nature of "participatory democracy" and of the citizens' assemblies.

"Participatory democracy" is a political theory, which stresses direct and active participation of the citizens in the crystallization and deliberation of political issues which directly concern them. This is



in sharp contrast to the old political set-up, wherein political issues are crystallized and deliberated upon only by the political representatives, whom the citizens elected during election time. Under "participatory democracy" every adult citizen is enfranchized or absorbed into the political machinery insofar as they are the true repository of political power in the state. The means of absorbing them is through the citizens' assemblies. The citizens' assemblies are political forums wherein the citizens actually exercise their political duties of crystallizing and deliberating their own political problems. Here we see that "participatory democracy" and the citizens' assemblies are intrinsically related with each other; the latter being a political creation which puts into actual practice the theory of "participatory democracy." To quote President Ferdinand E. Marcos on "participatory democracy:"

This political structural reform is by no means minor. In the context of our experience it is quite revolutionary. The gap between the humble citizen and the center of national power is narrowed down considerably. But what is of paramount importance in this reform is the advent of participatory democracy. The masses no longer need wait until controversies and issues of the day are crystalized for them by the vested groups in the media; they crystalized the issues themselves. In this way

their opinions and sentiments are felt directly by the political authority.<sup>5</sup>

And on the citizens assemblies:

To begin with, the modernization of the 'barangay' system in the form of the citizens assemblies, restores /political/ power to the people, where it properly belongs. All citizens from fifteen years and above, are entitled, indeed obligated, to lend their voices to the consideration of great national issues. This is a drastic improvement over the old 'representative' system, in which the mass of citizens indulged in politics as a spectator sports, applauding and supporting the loudest and shrewdest - in a word, the more effective demagogue.<sup>6</sup>

In a word, then, "participatory democracy" and the citizens' assemblies are only fit for politically enlightened and politically involved citizens; in other words, for citizens who are well-educated and who will not fall into the political traps of the oligarchs and the demagogues. How supportive, therefore, are the educational policies of the state of the ends of "participatory democracy" is an issue which must be clarified in the mind of every Filipino citizen.

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<sup>5</sup>Ferdinand E. Marcos, The Democratic Revolution in the Philippines (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall International, 1974), p. 154. (Underscoring is the author's.)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 153. (Underscoring is the author's.)