

## THE FILIPINO STUDENT AND CULTURAL VALUES

There is nothing "sacred" or "natural" about cultural values that they cannot be questioned, examined, or intelligently tampered with. On the contrary, once they are encrusted with a sanctity, a reality, *sui generis*, all their own there is the danger that cultural values, rightly or wrongly, will begin to control and condition thoroughly the individual. A Filipina student, for example, ill and handicapped, after a serious operation, refused to ask help from and to be helped by other Filipinos because to do so would expose her physically to them. And this was against the cultural value of modesty, the sacredness of which could not be violated, even in near — death! Here, man was made for cultural values not cultural values for man! Man becomes a subject, a subordinate to his creation. That such thinking could be countenanced by teachers involved in the

situation and justified on the basis of Filipino culture makes one doubt the efficacy of knowledge to penetrate into the lives of people, causing a changed behavior marked with rationality and intelligibility. (The non-integration of knowledge with actual practice was previously noted.)

This is not to say that one must not respect his cultural values and heedlessly throw them all away in the name of scientific knowledge! As it is, the world is "overdebunked," as Romain Gary puts it, and its brokenness, fragmentedness, and emptiness is felt everywhere. Surely, one cannot help empty it anymore! Rather, the idea I covet with Philippine educators is to examine our cultural values lest they have a crippling influence and paralyzing effect upon us, making us all impotent to act upon an idea, a suggestion, a notion which is practical,

rational, humanistic, and from the point of view of scientific knowledge, indeed, desirable. Societal values, unless they are to wither away and lost their potency and vibrancy, through years of inbreeding and lack of empirical justifiability, must be continuously analyzed, assessed, and criticized. This is the task of an educator.

If, as found out, cultural discontinuities are necessary factors for the development of original and critical thinking, independent and self-reliant traits, then, perhaps, imaginative educators can find out effective ways and means to introduce discontinuities in society through the schools so that the youth may profit from them. As of now, the foreign values in the educational system have not been manifestly successful in inducing discontinuity patters in society. As already stated, the societal life in the Philippines has basically remained indifferent to the concerns and professes values of the educational system. As in other cultural practices, changes with regard the rearing of the young can be effectively introduced in a so-

ciety. If the schools believe that the individual who is truly a human being can think, decide, for himself, and is responsible for his decision, then, perhaps, some inquiry into the Filipino family system may be made. Its strengths and weaknesses must be located and suggestions for possibilities toward restructuring it may be studied. The idea is not to disintegrate or destroy the family concept thus inviting societal and personal problems related to the Western atomic family system. Rather, the idea is to develop the individual and to allow him a life of his own at the same time to maintain group solidarity. It is a relation that neither exploits one nor the other, but allows both to draw support from each other. The Filipino family, perhaps, may be taught that it needs to be cruel, sometimes, in order to be kind, so Shakespeare counselled.

In terms of learning, critical mindedness, not simple memory work, must be stressed. Grounds on which claims to knowledge, or to a type of knowledge, are made must be analyzed and assessed. Or

else, biased opinions or interpretations of facts can be mistaken for knowledge and presented as truths. This can be a dangerous indulgence! Empirical facts, often obscured by a welter of interpretational theories and ideas, must be located, isolated, and presented in their purity to the students. Facts and judgements of facts must be differentiated. In this way, opinion, information, belief, and knowledge are distinguished from one another. The student then becomes acquainted with the ways in which knowledge is formed. And more important, he learns whether or not to trust the prevailing ideas of his time and, if he does, how far he may trust them. This involves a comprehension of the present limitations of knowledge as discrepancies and inadequacies in different types of assertions are discerned.

This, of course, does not mean that opinion, information, and belief be altogether adjoined in favor of knowledge. There is little of

knowledge, if it is defined in a rigorous and exacting manner, such that one can know only when one knows why or on what grounds and evidences. If everyone were forbidden to say anything or to act on any proposition that could not be proved or verified empirically or through the rules and language of logic and mathematics, very few things indeed would be done and most of life stopped. Moreover, to the important problems of life, for example, religion, even politics, certainty of conclusions is hard to come by. It does not begin to compare with certainty of knowledge that "my umbrella is on the desk." Even so, the student must be taught to reach sound conclusions, to distinguish between well-grounded and ungrounded assertions by a close regard for evidence and proof. This cannot result when learning is construed as primarily one of memory work. — *By Evelina M. Orteza, From The Education Quarterly, Oct. 1965.*