

“SOBRE LA IMPORTANCIA QUE TIENE EL ESTUDIO DE LAS
CIENCIAS PARA MEJORAR LA SOCIEDAD Y SOBRE LOS
BENEFICIOS INMENOS QUE DE ELLAS PUEDEN REPORTAR
LOS PUEBLOS”

DISCURSO

EN LA APERTURA ANUAL

DE LOS ESTUDIOS

DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE MANILA

EL 3 DE JULIO DE 1871

POR

EL R. P. FR. MIGUEL NARRO,
DEL ORDEN DE PREDICADORES,

CATEDRÁTICO DE LA MISMA

MANILA

IMPRENTA DEL COLEGIO DE SANTO TOMÁS

A CARGO DE A. AOIZ

1871

FOREWORD

Belen Lorezca-Tangco, O.P.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCES IN DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETIES

The inaugural lecture, “On the Importance of the Study of the Sciences to Improve Society and on their Immense Benefits for Societies,” was delivered by the Rev. Fr. Miguel Narro, O.P., Professor, University of Manila, on July 3, 1871.

It was printed by the Colegio de Santo Tomas Printing Press, Manila in 1871.

The distinguished lecturer expressed his gladness to be in the illustrious assembly on the occasion of a popular and prestigious competition. He points out the sweet satisfaction over the rich harvests in the science of agriculture, and is sustained by the hope for more harvests. The seed of intelligence has been cultivated in the Bachelor of Arts programs, nourished and made applicable. The grounds have been grateful with fertility, giving way to noble existence. Father Narro underscores the trust given him by the assembly to contribute to the luster of the event by speaking on the importance of the sciences to improve society and their immense benefits for communities.

He asks the assembly to observe keenly the development of humanity and of society, evolving in strengths and weaknesses in interrelations among communities. In regard to interrelations he opines, “There is no middle ground between reason and violence; more so between fear and coercion; these do not save communities. Material force and terrorism as elements of power can only produce oppressors.” From observation, it could be deduced that another must be saving principle and director of human society, principle which is in unity and harmony with the different elements of life, that communicates without violence, and knows how to drive society to its noble destiny. Which could be this principle?

The prosperity of each community comes out from the prosperity of each individual inhabitant, like the perfection of human body is also the result of the perfection relative to each part. In studying men and his attitudes, one could find the education of man’s thought and heart for the teaching of science and the Catholic moral as a base of social prosperity. From the remotest antiquity, it has been noted that societies submitted to the dominion of men of science and under their intellectual direction, a seemingly fabulous prosperity and development came.

Citations abound in Egypt, Greece and Rome. Egypt was governed by men of sciences; her sages and priests were always the most respected and recognized by those bellicose people who witnessed the government change to the direction

of public business. Constant prayer for leaders and by leaders in the governance of societies came out from the mouths of the wise. Indeed, prayer for continued growth and good relations has been significantly attached to the magnificent nations in the Orient. With the famous Thebes the Upper Egyptian Territory, Memphis, the pyramids, the obelisks, and the great lake meant to rectify the flooding of the Nile, and the numerous canals of Lower Egypt yielded the geniuses who built these up and are well remembered. However, with the discriminating tastes of the sciences, rivalries occurred.

Greece, as a nascent nation, was lulled in the cradle by the lyre and became a classic country for poetry, architecture, sculpture and painting. A country of philosophy and the rest of science. The natural and progressive development of the human spirit and in a special way of that intelligent nation could be gleaned. Homer communicated the enthusiasm of his genius to all the people of Greece and implanted the seed of that civilization which had raised his country to a great height and whose days of glory spoke of him through the centuries. The names gloriously remembered include Hesiod, Sappho and Anacreonte, singers of the fields and of feasts; Teognido, Cleofonte and the same Solon who, transferring poetry from the temples and the fields to a practical life and its direction, embellished with their enchantments—the moral precepts; Aesop of Frigia, whose renaming as fable-maker, equaled the fame of Homer as epic poet; Sophocles and Euripides who perfected tragedy; Socrates and Menandro, principal figures in the comedian genre; Herodoto de Halicarnaso, Thucydides and Jenofonte who gave History the perfection which then they were capable of; Themistocles, Solon, Aristides and in general, the many who came to reign in oratory and be part of the nation's destiny; Pericles who excelled in eloquence and gained its authorship; Lisias, Isócrates and Demóstenes whose names sufficed to immortalize civilization.

Conquered by the Romans, the poets and philosophers of the nation triumphed in the sciences and literature, sacrificing though, at almost all times, the authenticity of the Greek taste. Their fast fall was caused by the usage of wealth and prosperity as instruments of perdition and by the ineffectiveness of legislations even by the wisest lawmakers. This was a proof of the weakness of reason and the abuse which it can do by means of sin. "It is necessary that we have permanent principles of our beginning and of our end—principles to which the most illustrious men who were imperfectly known had abandoned themselves. All the sciences, all the ingenuity was not enough to make one man truly virtuous."

Education and the study of the sciences facilitate the elevation of society's classes, but to those of low birth, such elevation had yet to be awaited. Education and intellectual development of the states constitutes a powerful means to obtain the well-being of society when such instruction is animated by the celestial whisper of Christianity. In proper tone, Christianity nourishes the understanding of the truths

in the sciences, strengthens the will towards virtues so that it would not be weakened by false brilliance of things and worldly interests, subordinating these to the greater fineness which would be proportionate to stability. Who doubts this, anyway?

The study of nature bares secrets; its application is founded in truths of known luck which perfected reason, accustomed it in finding with remarkable exactitude in all branches of knowledge. It guides one's intelligence from the most obvious to the most detached from natural matter. With her help, one would be able to gauge the profundity of the ocean, and reach the immeasurable spaces. How many advantages one would obtain using well the most prodigious invention of human genius!

Rational principles applied to inseparable properties of the bodies could double up the fruits of speculations. There should not be any cessation in following advancements which started in the XIII century with Alberto el Granada and Roger Bacon and which was followed by Bacon de Verulan, Descartes, Newton, Leibnitz and other more notables in the sciences.

With such studies as agriculture, industry and commerce, which serve as fountains of public wealth, this native land would rapidly prosper, with accompanying wishes that she knows to subordinate the material interests to the ultimate morals of life. The incalculable riches, which the benevolent hand of the Creator have entrusted to man, need the rational stewardship of man himself.

