

RELATIVO A LA PRIMERA ENSEÑANZA EN FILIPINAS.

DISCURSO

PRONUNCIADO

EN LA APERTURA ANUAL

DE LOS ESTUDIOS
DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE MANILA

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POR EL. M. R. P. FR.
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DEL ÓRDEN DE PREDICADORES

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MANILA

ESTABLEC. TIPOGRÁFICO DEL COLEGIO DE SANTO TOMAS
Á CARGO DE A. AOIZ

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FOREWORD

Belen Lorezca-Tangco, O.P.

ON THE PRIMARY TEACHING IN THE PHILIPPINES

The address “In Relation to the Primary Teaching in the Philippines” delivered at the opening of the academic year in the University of Manila was a most refreshing salvo of reflections to the academe. The inaugural lecturer, Most Rev. Fr. Ramon Martinez Vigil, OP was Professor of Philosophy, Curator of the Museum of Natural History, Inspector of Schools of Latin, and Associate, *Real Sociedad Economia de Amigos del Pais de Filipinas* (Economic Society of the Friends of the Philippines). This lecture was printed in Colegio de Santo Tomas Printing Press, Manila in 1870.

In commencing his lecture, Fr. Vigil notes the happy ending of the first evolution of matters embracing secondary teaching, and the fifth meeting he holds in the modest place. He narrates the conquests of sciences in the progressive development of intellectual life in the community and shares his best experiences. He underscores the reason for his acceptance to speak: the friendship and affection of the participants. He could lead a traveler, who has been exhausted in conquering the summit of a mountain, to retrospection into the past, and imbibe the lessons obtained from the long walk up to the acme of rest.

Secondary teaching, following primary teaching, comes as a blessing en route towards higher education. It is a product of much debate and conflict, gaining victory despite heavy opposition which only enhanced its relevance. Like other human conceptions, this plan of secondary teaching had loopholes. The indifference of the Hispano-Filipino youth towards this branch of teaching was notable. It was wished that the Bachelor of Arts program, Industrial Chemistry or Applied Mechanics in the Arts would be offered. Would it be that the ingenuity of Hispanos-Filipinos be providentially attracted towards the mysteries of the Sacred Sciences?

With a brief indication of the obstacles to literary advancement in the islands, the distinguished lecturer mentions with pleasure the proper esteem earned by the University and the institutions in its district. He observes the same practice

of study, assiduousness in the halls of study, noble practices in the examinations, submission to and respect for professors, and strict observance of the scholarly discipline, in spite of strange suggestions which attempted to blur the brilliance of literary glory. The schools and colleges of professors also merit accolades for such feats. All of these institutions competed with great efforts and produce to improve instruction.

The literary department had received the best of luminaries and had published the most important scientific works. It augmented the teaching materials, enriching instruction relative to drawing, physics, chemistry and mechanics. Among the scientific acquisitions was the establishment of the Museum of Natural History – a call to wield major impact on the development of industry and of commerce.

Agriculture, the first in the arts, receives from the natural sciences its most precious knowledge. Botany, in which rich cultivation of vegetables could be useful to men and in which pests hinder luscious growth, could have the means to sustain rich cultivation and extirpate harmful agents of soil and air. Vegetarian physiology is the faithful guide in the principal operations of labor, fertilizer and in the perfection of cultivation of gardens and flowers. There is Zoology, whose races of animals could offer areas for study and sources of savory meats. One could learn the tricks of enemies and the ways of multiplying them, as well as knowing which animals could be used to destroy them. There is Geology which drives the rich springs and sources to the cultivator who discovers the wealth in the earth's womb. It is a necessary knowledge to determine the nature of the terrains and the means to improve these.

Natural history generates a great deal of learning in mineralogy, geology which could be the rock foundation in determining native products. The catalogue of the museum would have a complete listing of the wealth of the archipelago. The archives of the sciences bare a great reason for the contents' pricelessness; a monument of admiration could be built to these precious contents.

As an Inspector of schools, the distinguished lecturer shares his administration and awe for the secular and religious professors whose merits abound. Their indisputable dedication to the education of the youth and to the education of the community at large was coupled with their exemplary living and shining morality. Their didactic methodology and self-abnegation that earned the trust of the parents were truly remarkable. This kind of teaching would be recommendable especially for those students who did not have good knowledge of the Spanish language. Despite the obstacles presented by the imperfect organization of the primary letters and the prevention of further imperfections in the secondary teaching materials, the results were at least satisfactory, if not brilliant, the lecturer notes.

The first book that ought to be given to the youth is that which explains the abstract word theory. The study of general grammar would save much time in the study of languages and once understood, the immutable laws that direct the language, logic and rhetorics would be more understandable. Which language would be most suited for literary education, form the good taste of the youth and constitute a good humanist? A universal practice is the 3-year study of Latin. The current language presents a complete collection of examples: of purity, of precision, of elegance, of beauty.

Education is no other than the perfection of man. Being a composite of soul and body, of spirit and matter, and gifted with physical, intellectual and moral faculties, man could attain that education which could be perfect if it facilitates the development of all the said faculties. Man ought to study himself and study nature. Can man contemplate the harmony and regularity of the planetary movements, the scintillation of the stars, the phases of the planets and uncertain course of the meteors, the slippery fecundity of the soil without elevating himself to the Supreme Being, without asking for reason of the Author of such stupendous wonders? In contemplating the ineffable light of his intelligence which St. Thomas called participation of God's reason, and in observing the purest sentiments of his heart will he not ask about his ultimate destiny and for the laws that would have guided his conduct to reach this destiny? Another most essential objective of human being would then be the study of this great BEING, and the ends which have been proposed for man - - the *opus* so good, so wise and so magnificent.

