

A Theory of Philippine Politics and Its Implications for National Development: Discussion

PROFESSOR DOLORES MAGNAYE-MAKALINTAL: My question is this: If the citizens of the Philippines need to be remolded through education probably in the new concept of duties and responsibilities of citizenship, should they be educated along the lines of social duties, community needs, national development, land reform, housing and other socially-oriented development plans to the partial if not total disregard of "political values of freedom and participation which we cannot deny upon the wisdom of our collective experience"?

DR. RAUL P. DE GUZMAN: Let me say that I owe much of my earlier training in political science to Dr. Arcellana. And if I raise some searching questions on her paper now, it may be partly due to the early training I received at the department of political science of the old College of Liberal Arts.

In a sense, I was looking for something more in the paper and there are a number of disappointments. I thought the paper would tackle such current issues as the theory of constitutional authoritarianism. In going back to Plato and Aristotle, we could put it in the context of what has happened in the Philippines. Some of us may still be bothered by the new philosophy that the President has proposed and so I think that in a conference like this we may have to tackle such a concept and that should be part of the theory of politics as it applies to the Philippines. There is a reference to Plato's philosopher-king in political science. Of course, we know we have asked the question in classes, "What's the best form of government?" And we readily answer that it's a benevolent dictatorship. We can say that it's the best form because when you think of decision-making, it's supposed to be fast because only one man makes the decision. And it's supposed to be for the public good because of the use of the adjective "benevolent". And so Plato's philosopher-king

would run along the same line—he is supposed to be a wise man. But we ask the next question, “How do we get this man in a political system?” “How does he emerge?” One issue in political science is on the selection of the leadership in the country. We might have a monarchical system and so a family may have been divinely ordained and, therefore, we have no problem if there is a consensus in that system about the monarchical rule. The Western countries have developed a representative form of government so selection is by election. In other places, of course, we are familiar with power struggles so that if you have a vacuum in the leadership then you have groups aspiring for leadership. So we have to tackle this issue. And it may not be sufficient to just say that Plato’s philosopher-king would be something we could use in the Philippines.

Another central problem in the study of political science is “How do you promote the responsible use of power?” And so we devised institutional mechanisms for the purpose. Our old experience in the separation of powers, checks and balances would be along that line. Admittedly, it failed, if we accept the criticism about the old society. We can say that the institutional framework did not lead to the responsible use of power so we ask the question, “Why?” Probably we say that the congressmen and the senators, the old politicians, were beholden to vested interests who may have helped them in their elections, but could we say that the administrators and the technocrats under the New Society would be much better than the politicians? And could we say that those exercising power now would be much better than the senators and the congressmen? So that is a problem that we have to tackle—the institutional forms, the mechanisms that we have to establish because if we rely on the philosopher-king then it would be a matter of faith. I mean, we accept that the king is wise and would rule for the good of the country. So if it becomes a matter of faith then there would be no more discussion. Even the reference to the Aristotelian model—we say we rely on laws, but who makes the laws? The laws can be made by one man as well, so you are back to the philosopher-king. Or the laws could be made by a small group or by the representatives of the people. Is it necessary to involve the people through their representatives in the formulation and in the implementation of the laws? We could ask the question whether participation is a critical issue, or a critical variable in the establishment of legitimacy and stability in

the political system and ultimately in the attainment of development goals. Mention was made about the abolition of Congress and probably many would agree about that. But we have to ask the question, "What role was the Congress performing before?" One role was the policy review, so we can ask the question now, "What is the system of policy review?" Who reviews the policy proposals? Or are they drafted in one small corner in a department and then signed into law? But what are the consequences of that kind of arrangement? Would some degree of openness in the policy-making and the participation of the people be necessary for the purpose of achieving a more responsive government, a government that will be responsive to the needs of the people?

I was looking also for at least some reference to scholars who have written about Philippine politics because a number of the scholars misjudged the situation in the Philippines in the 1960's. If I may cite two works: Jean Grossholtz's *Politics in the Philippines* and O. D. Corpuz's book *The Philippines* were both quite enthusiastic about Philippine politics then. I think that the judgment of Corpuz and Grossholtz is that taking all things into consideration, the Philippines was well on the road to political development, that we had a mature political system. There was some reference to the bargaining theory in Grossholtz's book. You have the participants in the process and through the bargaining process, they are able to achieve a responsive government. I'm looking for this because many scholars and observers were quite shocked about the development in the early sixties and the seventies so we have to search for other explanations on why things happen as they happened in the last three to four years.

I was looking also for a more empirically based paper and less of a normative and prescriptive paper. I think one basic problem in our field of political science is the institutional, legal and normative approach. We make judgments about the way our people are, for example. But I'm not sure whether these generalizations could be true. There was some reference about our people in the paper—that our people, being ever good followers, will be no trouble. They are cooperative and uncomplaining, have begun to plan their families—and all throughout the paper they will be judged like this. For example, this reference to curb the population explosion. This may be based on the view that our family planning program is indeed success-

ful when indicators would show that there are problems. If we take note of the challenges to the political system, the problems we have in Mindanao (of course, I don't know the scope of this) should also be posed as another question.

And I was looking also for a statement of what national development means, although probably in the other papers these would be tackled. In one part of the paper there is a reference to the socio-economic aspects and political development takes a backseat. Probably we should tackle this question. What is meant by national development? You may have attended many conferences wherein this has been discussed. We speak of achieving or promoting a better quality of life for our people, but that is so generally stated. And sometimes some people would use the phrase that "development means liberation of men" — with reference to the literature about development in Latin American. Sometimes we speak about development in terms of promoting economic growth, and now we speak of social justice.

I would say that with reference to the economic and social aspect we have a clear picture: we want a quality of life for our people, etc. But I'm not sure if we have the same idea about political development.

And so if we consider the political dimension as the one I mentioned, we have to agree on what we mean by Philippine national development, if you think of the process of the increase in the capacity of the political system to respond to the increasing needs and demands in society. But there is one aspect in that view about political development that we have to tackle. This is the view about legitimacy and as we review about participation and the question I have raised earlier, "Is participation really a critical element in the political system that would contribute to the establishment and stability necessary to achieve socio-economic progress?"

So I think that these should also be tackled along with the other points that I have related to this larger issue which I have raised. As I have stated it may not be fair on my part to ask for something which have not been discussed. My only feeling is that probably in a paper on the theory of Philippine politics we should be tackling the really relevant issues.