

# Toward a Canadian Political Philosophy of Education

Mario D'Souza

Volume 7, Number 2, 1994

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1073279ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073279ar>

[See table of contents](#)

## Publisher(s)

Canadian Philosophy of Education Society

## ISSN

0838-4517 (print)

1916-0348 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

## Cite this article

D'Souza, M. (1994). Toward a Canadian Political Philosophy of Education. *Paideusis*, 7(2), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073279ar>

© Mario D'Souza, 1994



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

# Toward a Canadian Political Philosophy of Education

Mario D'Souza, University of Windsor

## 1. *Some Issues for a Potential Canadian Political Philosophy*

### 1.1 *The Citizen as a Person, the Common Good, and the State*

"There is a great difficulty as to how one should state the case in order to arrive at the truth," says Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*.<sup>1</sup> This is a problem that faces most philosophical activities. It may seem defiant, therefore, in light of this Aristotelian maxim, for philosophers of education to venture into Canada's constitutional maze in an attempt to state the case as a means to arrive at the truth. For those who maintain that the subject and nature of the philosophy of education is far from clear,<sup>2</sup> the annexing of the term "political" would be seen as merely adding to this initial lack of clarity.

Yet, what about the rest of the title: "political philosophy of education"? Wherein does the nature of this marriage lie? Is the entire educational enterprise set in a "political framework,"<sup>3</sup> or is it that "democracy is just too shaky a concept to be used in educational philosophy"?<sup>4</sup> Thomas H. Groome writes about the relationship between politics and education:

I understand political activity to be any deliberate and structured intervention in people's lives which attempts to influence how they live their lives in society. . . . If education pretends to be a private or nonpolitical enterprise, it is treating us as beings "out of time," rather than "in time." But such a pretence is just that—a pretension. Educational activity cannot be confined to some private sphere. As a deliberate and structured intervention in people's lives, education in time is eminently political.<sup>5</sup>

A political philosophy of education could vary greatly, however, depending upon the use of the terms politics, philosophy, and education. In this paper, these three terms are being used against a metaphysical and transcendental backdrop, not necessarily adhering to any one particular religious tradition—thus, giving the term "citizen" a broader meaning as one who possesses a rational and a spiritual nature. "The actual existent is a concrete human person, and the concrete human person is never just a "citizen."<sup>6</sup> In this light, the state does not become an absolute good, nor an absolute end. But why? Precisely because of who the citizen is as a human person, and because of what the citizen enjoys in a civil society in terms of fundamental and inalienable rights. For citizens are

beings of a moral order—that is, free and equal among themselves, each having absolute dignity and infinite value. As such, they transcend the accidents of place and time, and partake in the essence of a universal Humanity. They are, therefore, not coercible by any ancestral tradition, being vassals neither to their race, nor to their religion, nor to their condition of birth, nor to their collective history.<sup>7</sup>

Even in a multicultural and pluralistic country like Canada, ignoring the metaphysical and transcendental nature of the citizen works to the detriment of the state because the common good of political society is both communal and personal. It is communal insofar as the citizen is a member of the political community. It is personal insofar as the aspirations of the citizen may rise

above the boundaries of such community. Without some general reference to the metaphysical and transcendental nature of human beings (for we are persons insofar as we are both material and spiritual beings), the common good simply collapses into a collection of specific goods.<sup>8</sup> Naturally, in a pluralistic context, the state does not support any one particular philosophical or religious system, yet neither can it ignore the integral nature of its citizens, given this metaphysical and transcendental backdrop. In this context, the state should look on itself as a means of perfecting the political nature of its citizens, both for communal and personal political development. This task must be carried out by reconciling authority with human beings without destroying their independence—one of the oldest problems of political philosophy.<sup>9</sup>

A political philosophy of education must reflect on the nature of the state and what role students, the active citizens of tomorrow, shall play in the state. Mr. Trudeau, in formulating a vision of modern Canada, says that the state exists for its citizens and not the other way around. The state exists in order to make it "easier" for its citizens "to attain some of their common objectives," and through its legal system the state endeavours to "safeguard the development of its citizens."<sup>10</sup> Given Groome's definition of political activity and Trudeau's definition of the purpose of the state, we may conclude that a political philosophy of education must offer some reflection on what these common objectives might be and what the development of its citizens might entail. All this because education deals with citizens in their temporality. It has no choice. Most definitions of education, like Groome's, see it as a structured and deliberate intervention which attempts to influence how people live their lives in society, and, in this context, in political society.

But why live in society? Is not the state's assurance of rights and duties equally an assurance for citizens to live private lives? If so, then common objectives and the development of citizens would become an impossible and meaningless task. Such ideals only make sense insofar as one accepts them as a good. And it is a good because society enables the citizen, who is more than a citizen, to develop perfections as a whole person through communication and shared knowledge, and in relationship with other people. Society also enables the citizen to make up for deficiencies of the human condition, physical and material deficiencies, and, in doing so, society enables the individual citizen to attain a fuller life with greater accomplishments. Thus, society not only enables her to develop as a citizen but also as a person.<sup>11</sup>

A potential Canadian political philosophy of education cannot ignore the two laws of politics as laid out by one of Canada's most articulate political thinkers, Pierre Trudeau:

The first law of politics is to start from given facts. The second is to take stock of the real relationship between forces that may divide or unite the existing political factors.<sup>12</sup>

To those facts and relationships we must now turn.

### *1.2 Canada: Bilingual, Multicultural, and Pluralistic*

The recent round of constitutional discussions in Canada has led to some clarification, as well as to the expression of some profoundly different views, about the Canadian federation. The rejection of the Charlottetown Accord has

temporarily banished the future of Canadian federalism into a political limbo from where it continues to cry out for help.

We find ourselves in a vast and rich land, the envy of the world, and yet we continue to agonize about our national identity, which may well be the mark of being a Canadian. We live in a complex political society which is officially bilingual and multicultural and, naturally flowing from this, pluralistic. So, while there are two official languages in Canada, there is no official culture, but there are numerous cultures which the federation recognizes through its Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship. If this is not complex enough, Canada continues to be torn by strains of nationalism, most prominent of which is the French-Canadian variety which identifies itself ethnically, though not exclusively. It also identifies itself with the province of Quebec, the French language, and a quest for independence. A second strain is English-Canadian nationalism, which is situated in the rest of Canada and today identifies itself through the uniting force of the English language and less and less with a particular culture or ethnic group. Within this second strain exist a number of sub-strains which are regionalistic in nature. Thus, for example, different attitudes, values, and beliefs distinguish the Maritimes from the Prairies, or Ontario from British Columbia. A third more recent strain has arisen from the Aboriginal peoples, who can claim unto themselves a particular culture and *Weltanschauung* and all that these it entail. While this is a hurried and somewhat simplified political picture of Canada, it is the landscape of Canadian democracy: three distinctive strains of nationalism coupled with numerous other cultures and two official languages. Some have said that, while Canada is socially a multi-cultural society, it is not so politically.<sup>13</sup>

By this, they mean that Canada is defined by two cultures, the Anglophone and the Francophone, and the resulting interplay between these two cultures. To the Francophone Quebecer, however, multiculturalism is another way of referring to the Canadian Anglophone community. Thus, for the Francophone Quebecer, multiculturalism is something that exists outside the boundaries of the province of Quebec, and is viewed as a threat to the political power of that province.<sup>14</sup> Critics have also condemned the emphasis on cultural differences and see it as a means of domination initially imposed by the British upon all other Canadians as a means to maintain a social order, resulting in a "vertical mosaic."<sup>15</sup> The cynic might maintain that multiculturalism is merely a concession to the rest in order to allow English and French Canadians to go on bickering between themselves. The difficulty with this last suggestion is that it fails to account for so-called "minority ethnic groups" because they, too, fall into the two other major divisions of either English or French Canada, and thus, are parties in the bickering themselves.

Trudeau's analysis of the errors of Canadian nationalism—concerned mainly with French-Canadian nationalism—sets the stage for a better understanding of both federalism and multiculturalism. Nationhood, says Trudeau, is little more than a "state of mind" where "every sociologically distinct group within the nation [has] a contingent right of secession."<sup>16</sup> The contradiction of nationalism is that it is reborn from the bosom of the very state to which it gave birth: "In other words, the nation first decides what the state should be; but then the state has to decide what the nation should remain."<sup>17</sup> The error of nationalism is that it distorts the idea of the common good by linking it to a

particular ethnic group rather than to all people, irrespective of their ethnic origin. This distortion renders nationalism intrinsically totalitarian. A truly democratic government, on the other hand, can never be nationalistic, for it must promote the good of all its citizens, without special favours to one particular ethnic group.<sup>18</sup> The danger of French-Canadian nationalism, says Trudeau, in being intrinsically identified with one province and one linguistic group—an error in itself, for it confuses language with ethnicity—is that the province of Quebec would become a “closed society, which would only spell extinction for French-Canadians living outside Quebec, and the development of a ghetto mentality for those living within it.”<sup>19</sup> While Trudeau’s analysis is convincing, he does not pay much attention to the seeds of modern French-Canadian nationalism sown in a policy set forth by his own government: official bilingualism. Does this policy not suggest two founding nations? Does this policy not mature into Quebec’s claim of being a “distinct society” within the federation? Trudeau’s response is that a “woollier concept” than Quebec’s call for “special status” is difficult to imagine.<sup>20</sup>

Of the three forms of nationalism in Canada, the French-Canadian variety appears to be the most volatile. It also grows more difficult to understand given the demographics of modern Quebec and the presence of a substantial multicultural population. In attempting to court this new group, nationalists in Quebec rely more and more on a linguistic interpretation of nationalism.

The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism defines ethnicity as “a sense of identity rooted in a common origin. . . whether this common origin be real or imaginary.” Whereas it describes the essence of ethnicity as:

a way of being, thinking, and feeling. . . a driving force animating a significant group of individuals united by a common tongue, and sharing the same customs, habits, and experiences.<sup>21</sup>

With the presence of a multicultural and Aboriginal population in Quebec, it is difficult to imagine, given the above definitions, how modern Quebec separatists could reconcile their vision of nationalism based solely on language. This point, however, is disputed by Charles Taylor who sees “language as the indispensable basis of self-expression and self-realization.”<sup>22</sup> This, says Taylor, is how French Canadians look upon their language. Anglophone North America, however, views the English language as “an unproblematic medium of communication.”<sup>23</sup>

A document published by the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, in attempting to simplify the concept of multiculturalism, only adds to the confusion. It asks, “Does multiculturalism include Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples?” Its answer is: “The multiculturalism policy is for all Canadians, including Aboriginal Peoples.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, the same document fails to ask a parallel question: Does multiculturalism include French and English Canadians as well? The difficulty is that while French Canadians and Aboriginal peoples view multiculturalism suspiciously as an attempt to categorize them as just another “ethnocentric group,”<sup>25</sup> Anglophones are sometimes seen as “spectators and not participants”<sup>26</sup> in the multicultural enterprise.

Canadian multiculturalism, therefore, now appears to be associated with the policy which deals with visible minorities who do not trace their origin to the English or French race, language, way of life, and culture. But just who is the

subject of multiculturalism? What about, for example, a Canadian from Pakistan who grew up speaking English and who may know more about the War of the Roses, Shakespeare, and the nature of Canadian higher education than an English Canadian? Or, conversely, what about a Canadian from Algeria who grew up speaking French and knows more about Descartes, the various French Republics, and the role of the Jesuits in founding Quebec than a French Canadian? What are the boundaries of multiculturalism? Are they intellectual and, as the examples above may suggest, possibly snobbish? Does multiculturalism concern simply issues of novelty and curiosity which, taken on their own, are largely superficial and easily disregarded? For multiculturalism does tempt us to "mistake the products of culture for culture."<sup>27</sup> It seems that multiculturalism makes novelty into a way of life and reduces cultural expression to the curious and the quaint. Cultures, however, are sophisticated world-views, rich with symbols, ritual, and linguistic expression which attempt to deal with values and a way to provide meaning and dignity to human life. In this regard, then, and failing to cure the curious, one conclusion could be that children of visible minorities, born in Canada, should consider actively seeking to divest themselves of the cultural inheritance of their parents and to replace it with the general culture of North America, with the anxious hope that they will blend in and not attract attention and curiosity concerning a culture with which they have no association save the memories of their parents and grandparents that grow dimmer with every passing day. Canadian multiculturalism may appear to be sailing along on a sea of practice, but wherein lies its theory? Where is its intellectual backbone? "Minority cultures may mean more than folk songs and dancing. But exactly what else do they mean?"<sup>28</sup>

## 2. *Canada Today: The Arena of a Canadian Political Philosophy of Education*

### 2.1 *The Perfection of the Citizen's Political Nature*

To regard Canadian multiculturalism simply as a means to deal with the diversity of cultures is to regard it minimally. It is not a convincing reason, nor could multiculturalism so conceived be relied upon as a lasting cohesive force for the Canadian federation. Furthermore, a system which encourages peoples of different cultural identities to live out their aspirations in the same society is both "recent" and "genuinely new,"<sup>29</sup> suggesting that much conceptual work needs to be done in this area. Canadians should not rest content on the conviction that multiculturalism appears successful because its stress on cultural diversity has ensured, by and large, a sense of racial tolerance. Tolerance is not particularly high on the list of democratic ideals, and tolerance left to itself can gnaw at a genuine understanding of the common good. Moreover, "tolerance—which runs counter to conceit—does not come from knowing how other people dance, worship, and get married."<sup>30</sup>

The state, as we have seen, exists in order to enable citizens to pursue their common objectives and to ensure the development of its citizens. Naturally, to do this, the state must seek to bring about a just society whose most important value is freedom.<sup>31</sup> A just society seeks to ensure freedom because its citizens are more than just citizens and more than just recipients of political freedom.

Yet, why should a citizen be concerned about cherishing freedom if the state assures it? Because freedom—personal freedom—enables individual citizens to develop their political nature without which the attainment of common objectives and the development of all citizens would not be possible. Two questions arise from this claim: What is meant by political nature? Why develop one's political nature?

What is meant by political nature? Only a part of the question is answered by the Aristotelian claim that: "man is by nature a political animal; it is his nature to live in a state."<sup>32</sup> First, the use of the word nature in reference to politics involves the political growth of the citizen. Second, civil society (political society), in being a human creation, is not given by nature. Human beings, however, are inclined towards such a society for the perfection of their rational nature.<sup>33</sup> It is the perfection of this inclination which is important and which puts the Aristotelian claim into perspective. Individual citizens depend upon political society for their full development as "human" citizens. The political nature of the citizen in a pluralist state is not based on metaphysical or doctrinal principles but on practical ones. Nonetheless, these practical principles are a vital means of perfecting the citizen's rational nature. In a pluralist state, however, the practical quality of this political nature is based not simply on "pure reason" but upon a "fundamental agreement between minds and wills on the basis of life in common."<sup>34</sup> It is a life based upon a "*civic or secular faith*, not a religious one,"<sup>35</sup> a faith concerned with promoting commonly held principles of social and political life. This is what Jacques Maritain has to say:

Thus, it is that men possessing quite different, even opposite metaphysical or religious outlooks, can converge, not by virtue of any identity of doctrine, but by virtue of an analogical similitude in practical principles, toward the same practical conclusions, and can share in the same practical secular faith, provided that they similarly revere, perhaps for quite diverse reasons, truth and intelligence, human dignity, freedom, brotherly love, and the absolute value of moral good.<sup>36</sup>

Political nature, then, is the integration of all those human potentialities that are realized in the life of the citizen in living a truly human life in communion with others in a pluralist state. It is based not on doctrinal or metaphysical agreement but on a secular and practical unity.

The second question is: Why develop one's political nature? The citizen, in being more than a citizen, naturally desires to live in a just society. This claim seems to follow if one accepts that human beings depend upon life in society for the perfection of their rational nature and, secondly, if one accepts the importance of the communal achievement of practical unity in the modern pluralist state. The development of one's political nature is, then, linked not only to active citizenship but also to the development of one's rational nature. Furthermore, the identity of the citizen in contemporary society is achieved not monologically but dialogically. Charles Taylor says:

Thus, my discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others.<sup>37</sup>

Trudeau's significant praise of Canadian federalism reinforces this position: "I believed in federalism as a superior form of government; by definition, it is more pluralist than monolithic and, therefore, respects diversity among people and groups."<sup>38</sup>

In order for a Canadian political philosophy of education to proceed and succeed, it must start from the facts, but it must advance to a greater vision. Could this greater vision be that a pluralistic and multicultural Canada perfects the political nature of its citizens at a much higher level than would a monolithic Canada? If so, must we not educate students about their personal enrichment in such a nation through the growth and development of their political nature? This moves multiculturalism to a higher and more profound ground, rather than leaving it simply at the level of acquaintance with other cultures. Education needs to communicate the fact that the perfection of political nature leads to the perfection of the whole person for life in political society. Furthermore, it needs to communicate that the dignity of the citizen is not simply the result of the good will of the state but arises from the intrinsic nature of the citizen as a person, of which one characteristic is to live in political society.

Canadian pluralism should be seen as contributing to the harmony and growth of the state. It should be considered a genuine means of enriching one's political nature through cultural diversity. Furthermore, a sense of respect for human existence leads to the realization that all citizens share the same specific human nature.<sup>39</sup> This principle, apart from being a significant defence against the madness of racism, grounds co-operation and collaboration on a secure metaphysical foundation. Equality in the modern pluralistic state is based neither on an equivocal nor on a univocal idea of culture and history.<sup>40</sup> Rather, it is based on equality understood as essentially analogous and polyvalent. Equality is manifold through the presence of various cultures and it is one in that all human beings share in the same specific human nature. Justice, compassion, friendship, and co-operation are secured in this common human nature. In this context, a fidelity to the truth as expressed in various religious beliefs is not so much a "fellowship of beliefs but a fellowship of persons who believe."<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the two questions pertaining to the perfection of the citizen's political nature act as the foundation for a political philosophy of education. Failure to refer to those two questions could result in failure to provide a cohesive force for the unity and welfare of the Canadian federation.

## 2.2 Educational Implications

The following statement does not present a flattering picture of the Canadian educational enterprise:

...unlike other comparable industrialized countries, Canada has *neither* produced a politically motivated educational reform, rooted in a conception of the country's future, nor has Canada blocked such a reform, as it happened in a number of European countries.<sup>42</sup>

Such a picture does not bode well for Canada which is in the midst of economic and social restructuring, which, in turn, puts great demands upon its educational system. Can such an already burdened system afford the introduction of a comprehensive political philosophy of education? If not, can Canada ignore one of its most significant educational challenges?



A political education must equip students who live in a complex society with something more than an education in civics.<sup>43</sup> Educators have traditionally relied upon a liberal education to educate the student for all spheres of life, one being the dignity and responsibility of citizenship. It is a reliance that must continue to serve modern Canada. A liberal education is an active architect in designing the modern pluralist state. Such an education, precisely in being liberal, rises out of the confines of injustice, enslavement, and inequality, and replaces them with justice, freedom, and equality. And it does this through intellectual convictions.

Yet, why should an ethnically diverse citizenry study a unified curriculum through a liberal education? First, a liberal education gives the student the wherewithal to struggle for justice, freedom, and equality, and to struggle for them with others. Second, a liberal education unites the student to a community of learners through the dignity of the intellect. A modern pluralist nation like Canada depends upon this intellectual unity and conviction, upon the ability to dialogue and disagree intellectually with other citizens. Canadian educational institutions face the herculean task of producing an economically relevant workforce. Equally daunting is the realization that economic viability will not hold the country together. In such a climate, a liberal education, as opposed to an early specialized education, continues to be an invaluable asset.

Political education, by definition, is not insular but relies on other subjects such as history, sociology, philosophy, economics, law, and so on. Political education, therefore, is nourished on a diet of liberal education. The student, who is more than a student, is being prepared to act morally and responsibly in society, a preparation made possible through the perfection of the student's political nature. A liberal education enhances the perfection of the student's political nature and, thus, enables the student to see politics and democracy in a broader perspective. "Is democracy to be defined solely in terms of a form of political life, or in terms of a way of life appropriate for all phases of life?"<sup>44</sup>

Teaching politics in Canada, has, for the most part, been concerned with teaching issues. As a result, students seem unable to move to more "general concerns or draw general conclusions from it."<sup>45</sup> A movement to general concerns and conclusions needs to be situated within a larger context, not simply a political context of contemporary Canada, but a context which sees democracy as appropriate to the various phases of life, and to all people as they go through these various phases of life. Thus, political life in a democracy is seen neither as the snobbery of an elite educated group, nor is it associated too closely with the Western tradition, and, thus, considered the snobbery of a cultural group.

Can contemporary Canada rely on a broad curriculum with the hope that somehow the humanizing qualities of a liberal education will spill over and wash the political surface clean and replace it with a new political vision for tomorrow? Are intellectual convictions sufficient to unite students? Are such convictions reliable in the face of individual passions and even prejudice?

The answer to all three questions is no, but it is a qualified no. Educational institutions must recognize the inadequacy of relying solely on intellectual convictions as a means of political unity. They must also rely upon ways of engaging both the mind and heart of the student. Life in common depends upon certain dispositions, attitudes and virtues which do not necessarily depend upon intellectual convictions. Respect, care, concern, an appreciation of the equality

of all people, and so on are dispositions and attitudes that even the poorly educated may possess and live by.

First, liberal education runs the risk of becoming a bookish education with little more than a shuffling of ideas without necessarily carrying them out. It also runs the risk of suggesting that the only task worthy of the student is intellectual in nature. This is both dangerous and erroneous, given the fact that many students do not complete high school education, let alone gain entrance into the university. Certainly some limited introduction of vocational education is possible within the broad framework of a liberal education and is a counter balance to an overly intellectual/analytical education. Equating a responsible citizen with an academic/intellectual citizen is both erroneous and dangerous.

Second, philosophers who have suggested the teaching of a "democratic charter" (commonly held principles such as justice, freedom, equality, human rights) speak of how this can be done to emphasize personal conviction as well as recognize a plurality of beliefs. Maritain has occasion to say that

The most rational solution, in tune with the pluralistic principle, would consist to my mind, in having the teaching of the democratic charter given not by one, but by several teachers belonging to the main religious or philosophical traditions represented in the student population of a given school or college, each one of those teachers addressing the students of his own spiritual tradition.<sup>46</sup>

In teaching this Charter, the teacher's convictions are vital. For apart from making it human and lived, it situates that tradition in a context, at the same time making that particular tradition real and worthy of respect as opposed simply to an issue of novelty. It also moves the understanding of culture and tradition to a wider field beyond the simplistic claims of Western superiority. Students need to come to their own spiritual and cultural center, but each student also needs to be able to embrace a larger communal picture, and teaching this Charter from individual perspectives will greatly assist the student in this regard.

In this context, the broadening of the humanities and the liberal arts in our day is not simply an act of liberation. It also acts as the foundation for a comprehensive political philosophy of education. In this regard, the following statement is particularly important:

Multicultural societies and communities that stand for the freedom and equality of all people rest upon mutual respect for reasonable intellectual, political, and cultural differences. Mutual respect requires a widespread willingness and ability to articulate our disagreements, to defend them before people with whom we disagree, to be able to discern when disagreement is respectable, and to be open to changing our own minds when faced with well-reasoned criticism. The moral promise of multiculturalism depends on the exercise of these deliberative virtues.<sup>47</sup>

Two points need to be made. First, the dispositions, attitudes, and virtues necessary for political education, as opposed to purely intellectual convictions, will not be successfully developed if the educational institution is required to perform this task without the co-operation of other educational agencies such as parents and religious institutions. Second, in spite of its name, political education in a pluralist state is not limited simply to politics, and this because citizens are not just political beings. Political life becomes "empty agitation if it does not aim at something which is not political."<sup>48</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

Do we need a Canadian political philosophy of education? Multiculturalism and bilingualism are distinctive features of the Canadian federation. They make for a uniquely Canadian experience, one that must engage the hearts and the minds of all citizens. The perfection of the citizen's political nature in Canada depends upon these two realities, both in terms of the "dialogical" nature that Canadian society must grow towards as well as an awareness of the complexity and strains of its constitutional history. In this light, it would appear that a Canadian political philosophy of education might be the very means whereby this engagement of mind and heart may be realized. Canadian students today need some philosophical view, one gained through a liberal education and the teaching of the democratic charter, to unite them and give them a means to develop their political nature. They need this unified approach because there is nothing else to fall back upon; there are simply no great icons of political, religious, intellectual, or even historical unity to hearken back to. The country is too pluralistic. So while it may be important to stress the place of participation in political society, and not just the acquisition of knowledge, it is equally important to realize that participation may fail to become a reality if a nation sees itself as a collection of various ethnic groups with no unifying force save the cold and impersonal law of the land—that is, the Constitution or the Charter of Rights. Institutional education is not private. It is a communal activity, and the philosophy of education bears witness to this fact. A Canadian political philosophy of education would attest both to the communal nature of education as well as to a preparation for communal life in a pluralist state.

Obviously neither nationalism nor the tensions of bilingualism and multiculturalism are likely to disappear with the introduction of a Canadian political philosophy of education. Yet, such a discipline does offer some hope in steering through this complexity. Such a discipline must start from the given facts and examine the real relationship between forces (Trudeau), but it must also move to a confident foundation in order to arrive at the truth (Aristotle). It must ask and answer why human beings seek a communal life in political society and how this affiliation perfects their political nature. In so doing, a Canadian political philosophy of education could relocate the discussion away from the myopic and insular concern of ethnicity for its own sake or nationalism for its own sake, and begin a fresh philosophical discussion as to why we should consider ourselves to be fortunate in being Canadian citizens.

The achievement of common objectives and the development of citizens are not realized if they are directed solely at political community. On the other hand, political community is where Canadian citizens meet in common, in unity. It is the forum where common objectives and the development of citizens must occur. What is required is a philosophical vision which not only makes a common enterprise possible, but which is also able to answer why a common enterprise is necessary.

The discipline of philosophy is "primarily concerned with interpretation or understanding and only secondarily with application."<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, both politics and education are realized in community and seek application. The Canadian political sphere requires a vision of political community as an integral

human enterprise and not simply as a specialized field of politics in isolation. A political philosophy of education can formulate that vision because it is based upon the conviction of human wisdom as well as the conviction of the application of such a wisdom in political community. Canada feels the urgent need for the application of such wisdom.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, translated by H.G. Apostle (Grinnell, Iowa: The Peripatetic Press, 1979), 44.

<sup>2</sup>See Barry Chazan, "The Limits of a Philosophy of Education," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 3, (April) 1971, 59.

<sup>3</sup>Patricia White, *Beyond Domination: An Essay in the Political Philosophy of Education* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 87.

<sup>4</sup>Spencer J. Maxcy, "The Democratic 'Myth' and the Search for a Rational Concept of Education," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 19, (May) 1985, 23.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), 15.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Donahue, "Freedom and Education: The Pluralist Background," *Catholic Education: A Book of Readings*, eds. Walter B. Koleski & Edward J. Power (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), 46.

<sup>7</sup>Pierre E. Trudeau, "The Values of a Just Society," *Toward a Just Society: The Trudeau Years*, edited by Thomas S. Axworthy & Pierre E. Trudeau, translated by Patricia Claxton (Markham, Ontario: Viking, 1990), 363-364.

<sup>8</sup>Jacques Maritain, *Freedom in the Modern World*, translated by Richard O'Sullivan (New York: Gordian Press, 1971), 46-47.

<sup>9</sup>Pierre E. Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1968), xxii.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 18 & 21.

<sup>11</sup>See Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, translated by John J. Fitzgerald (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1966), 47-48.

<sup>12</sup>Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians*, 8.

<sup>13</sup>See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education: Cultural and Linguistic Pluralism in Canada* (commissioned by the Multiculturalism Directorate, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, 1985), 8.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>See John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).

<sup>16</sup>Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians*, 189.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.* 190.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 169

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 42

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, xxiv.

<sup>21</sup>Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *Report, General Introduction* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), xxii & xxxi.

<sup>22</sup>Charles Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian* 7(2), (Spring)1994

*Federalism and Nationalism*, edited by Guy Laforest (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1993), 101.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, *Multiculturalism: What Is It Really About?* (Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1991), 18.

<sup>25</sup>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 7 & 9.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 10

<sup>27</sup>T. Barr Greenfield, "Bilingualism, Multiculturalism and the Crisis of Purpose in Canadian Culture," *Canadian Society for the Study of Education Yearbook*, 3, 1976, 118-119.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 131-2.

<sup>29</sup>Robin W. Lovin, "Must We Disown Our Past to Become a Multicultural Society?," *Liberal Education*, 78, (March/April 1992), 4.

<sup>30</sup>Jacques Barzun, *Begin Here: The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 131.

<sup>31</sup>Trudeau, "The Values of a Just Society," 357.

<sup>32</sup>Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by T.A. Sinclair (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1967), 28.

<sup>33</sup>Ernest L. Fortin, "St. Thomas Aquinas," *History of Political Philosophy*, edited by Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 253.

<sup>34</sup>Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 108 & 109.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>37</sup>Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 34.

<sup>38</sup>Trudeau, "The Values of a Just Society," 360.

<sup>39</sup>See Maritain, *Man and the State*, 85.

<sup>40</sup>See Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, translated by Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 138-139.

<sup>41</sup>Jacques Maritain, *Ransoming the Time*, translated by Harry L. Binsee (New York: Gordian Press, 1972), 123.

<sup>42</sup>Greenfield, "Bilingualism, Multiculturalism and the Crisis of Purpose in Canadian Culture," 112.

<sup>43</sup>See Marshall W. Conley, "Political Education in Canada: The State of the Discipline," *Teaching Politics*, 14, (January) 1985, 20.

<sup>44</sup>Teresa MacIsaac, "The Impact of Politics on Curriculum Decision Making," *Curriculum and Teaching*, 1, 1986, 47.

<sup>45</sup>Conley, "Political Education in Canada," 29.

<sup>46</sup>Maritain, *Man and the State*, 123.

<sup>47</sup>Amy Gutmann, "Introduction," Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"*, 24.

<sup>48</sup>Josef Pieper, *An Anthology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 122.

<sup>49</sup>Philip H. Phenix, *Philosophy of Education* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 15.