

## “Beyond Tolerance”

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The demands of American cultural pluralism and the choices of Catholic educators have, over the past two decades, heightened the public character of Catholic higher education.<sup>1</sup> Catholic higher education may be legally private, but it is morally public. This fact presents both educators and the church with new problems. I wish here to discuss the dilemma of Catholic higher education when, in pursuit of its publicness, it confronts pluralism within and without its walls. I will rely heavily on the educational philosophies of John Dewey and Bernard Lonergan in doing so,<sup>2</sup> but before I do, I need to state briefly my belief on three matters relevant to a consideration of the task of higher education.

First, Lonergan writes that the task of education is "constructing a world of meaning and value," and discovering a "vocation" in that world (finding "something to do in the world" is another way he puts the latter).<sup>3</sup> Are these legitimate goals of higher education? The phrases sound suspiciously religious, do they not? I would say yes; they are not only legitimate goals of students but also legitimate hopes and intentions of universities for their students, and not only for private but also for state educational institutions. Interestingly enough, I would get little argument from the recent investigators. Both Derek Bok and Ernest Boyer, for example, are clear that the college experience is a time for grappling with the questions of values and vocation.<sup>4</sup> Bok especially seems nervous about indoctrinating students into a predigested set of values, but nonetheless has praise for those educators who help students clarify what their lives are for and what they are worth. And so, aside from those who think that values and commitments are matters of feeling and essentially private, we can take it as a matter of not uncommon opinion that terms such as "commitment," "values," and "vocation" name important human realities which are personal rather than private, and which can and ought to be dealt with in the educational system. I do not think that even



John Dewey would disagree, except insofar as the language might suggest a return to what he thinks of as supernaturalism.<sup>5</sup>

A second question is this one drawn from a reading of Dewey: Is there a special character to education in a democratic society? Dewey's position here is that every society shapes its education according to its political and social structure and ideals, and that democratic society is not different in this respect.<sup>6</sup> The ideal, at least, of a professedly democratic society is anti-elitist and anti-classist. The ideal includes free and open communication among essentially equal citizens and among the various social groups included. Education, of course, is torn between the actual elitism and classism of American life and its egalitarian and communitarian ideal. But education must foster the ideal and attempt to incarnate it in its own communal life if, as Dewey claims, education is not an antechamber to social and political life but is that life being lived in continuity with the larger society around it.<sup>7</sup>

Dewey was not wrong to point to the special tension that exists between a society dedicated to an egalitarian ideal, to freedom of communication and to a common approach to common problems on one side, and on the other side religious communities and institutions whose internal life is authoritarian and hierarchic, and who are inclined to put their own interests before those of the civic community.<sup>8</sup> But this is simply another example of the strain between a culture and its subcultures which the Catholic church, among others, has shown can be mediated in various constructive and even prophetic ways. The Catholic church's educational institutions have been among the most ardent supporters of American democratic ideals and procedures, and so have displayed the fact that tension between political democracy and hierarchic religion is not unmediable. So clear is the success of American Catholic education in this regard that the American church has often felt the breath of Rome upon its more egalitarian and democratic neck.

A third belief, this one relying on both Lonergan and Dewey, is that community is established upon common meanings, values, decisions, action, and communication.<sup>9</sup> While the Roman Catholic church is unquestionably a community with its own meanings and values, constituted as a community by common decisions of faith, the church understands



itself as *included* in the civil community and not separate from it. The Catholic church is, then, not a sect. But doesn't pluralism combined with "free and open communication of meanings" imply the dissolution of the differences among the many worlds of meaning?

The effect of the presence of other worlds and communities on one's own unquestionably makes a difference to one's perception of one's own world and community, but the precise effect depends on how one constitutes that presence.<sup>10</sup> My own view is that if the presence is freely chosen and on equal terms, then the presence *should* modify one's own world as well as that of the other, and that one's world will be stronger and healthier for it if one's world includes an affirmation of the values of intelligence and freedom. This is a typical liberal assumption, I grant. But I have seen innumerable times in my devilishly pluralistic classes in religious studies at the University of South Florida that dialogue need not, indeed most often does not, mean the dissolution but rather the reappropriation and transformation of a heritage.

And now to the dilemma, of which there are two forms, one confronting state education and another denominational education:<sup>11</sup>

1. Since our society is culturally plural, how can its state education present a norm of any sort that goes beyond what all can agree to (and that, in our society, seems precious little)? In the worst case, aren't public education and educators condemned by the logic of pluralism to a value-free professional training in which all meanings and values are left to the private sphere, or, where meanings and values appear, to a strict neutrality in their regard?

2. If denominational education has an evangelical or religious norm, how can it serve any but its own communicants and prospective converts? Isn't denominational education in the worst case sectarian, conversionist, anti-public, and anti-democratic?

The glory of state higher education in my experience of it is its ability to reproduce the national environment on the classroom scale. It brings the range of worlds of meaning and value into contact with one another and permits and, at its best, encourages a look beyond the limits of one's own community and into the mind and life of other communities. We may have in the classroom of the state university the closest thing to a non-classist situation



one can find in American life.

The liability of state higher education is its tendency to soft-peddle differences, to ignore the processes by which students integrate their beliefs and values with their educational experience, to avoid the problems of clarifying and defending values, to balk at the question of the truth of the many meanings presented in the culture and studied in the humanities, to talk tolerance and yet work with positivist assumptions in determining what questions and subject-matter are relevant to the actual working of the educational system, and to be unable to say anything serious from a moral perspective. The reasons for this are many, and they include both constitutional law and the conviction of the American liberal democratic tradition that tolerance allows America to work as a political and social system.

In spite of its liabilities, public higher education is crowded with faculty and administrators who resist these tendencies and habitually act against them. Whereas in the denominational institution the context supports affirmations of meaning and value and the practice associated with them, in the state institution the people who give their lives to education must provide moral and intellectual fiber to a context which can demand very little of either from its constituencies, aside, that is, from the standards developed by the professions and specializations themselves. Like the nation, American public higher education is a set of operations, abilities, and interests in search of a community, a many which needs to be welded into one.

The glory of denominational education is that it presents to society what public education thinks it cannot, a perspective from which one can sort out what rings true to human experience and what does not, and what is right from what is wrong. Denominational education has displayed to the American public two things: that one can believe and yet think, and that one can serve the common good while deeply involved in the life of a particular community of meaning and value. Throughout its history denominational education, even when it has played to its own special public, has been deeply concerned with the American public and has not conceived itself as unattached to the republic. Catholic higher education in particular has been clear on this, that in addition to preserving its



religious tradition, it meant its students to serve the republic. In other terms, the vocations in this world which Catholic educators have sought to encourage in their students have never been restricted to the "religious life," but to the service of the republic and humankind in "secular" life.

On the other hand, denominational education is caught between its loyalty to its own religious community and its service to the public. Is the denominational college dedicated to augmenting a democratic and pluralist vision of our common life, or is it a sectarian institution dedicated to preserving and furthering the special truth discovered by its founding religious community? The earliest evangelical colleges included among their statutes a statement that no one would be excluded because of denominational affiliation and that all denominations would be treated with respect.<sup>12</sup> Philip Gleason, in a recent lecture at Holy Trinity Parish in the District of Columbia, remarked that the founders of the early Catholic colleges, including Bishop Carroll, viewed Catholic colleges as a service to the nation and not only to the church, and included a similar statement in their statutes.<sup>13</sup> Cynics will point out that all these institutions needed every student fee they could scrape up and so were not in a position to exclude students of any sort; and they will wonder as well just what sorts of pressures students were under to convert to the denomination that ran the college. But cynicism aside for the moment, it is just possible that at the outset of denominational education there was the notion that the college was meant to serve the nation as well as the church, and that in this sense it was conceived to be a public institution.

Tension exists for our institutions of higher learning. Dewey wondered whether there was a contradiction between truly democratic education and the interests of a nation that was deeply flawed by elitist and classist interests.<sup>14</sup> Contrary to popular notions of his views, Dewey was highly critical of the practice of democracy in America, and thought that if, as he hoped, education would be the instrument by which America might be truly democratized, then educational institutions must rise above capitalist and individual self-interest and educate the students to the same.<sup>15</sup>

There is bound to be a parallel tension felt in the higher education caught between the



church and culture, for some church leaders may not consider the church itself in any sense a public institution and may find it suspicious that educators have two publics and two tasks in mind. The tension will be especially acute when the academic specialists begin to turn their academic-critical apparatus on the church as they are used to doing on society and begin to raise questions about the interests of the church.

As there are questions raised for the church by the college's attachment to the larger culture, there are problems--deeply felt--in the college itself. What justification is there for a Catholic college "80%" of whose student body is non-Catholic? For Catholic colleges which take in students without inquiring into their religious status? Who keep no record of the percentage of non-Catholics in the student body? Who admit that there is no religious test for admission and no quota? Or a Catholic college which claims that religious belief and practice is irrelevant to hiring and tenuring? Or how do we explain a college which insists that its president be a member of a religious congregation and at the same time has no obligatory religious services and reduces its theology requirement to six credits or fewer which can be fulfilled by taking courses in those religions which only three decades ago we still termed false and even demonic?

However we may justify all this, and I am interested in justifying some of it, it does present one with a problem. Something serious has happened to Catholic education. The Roman Catholic Church in the United States chose long ago not to recommend the public educational system to its young. It chose, rather, to construct its own system, to confirm students in its own constructed world of meaning. It still supports a vast educational establishment and, if Andrew Greeley's figures can be trusted, the Catholic population is prepared to go on doing so.<sup>16</sup>

Roman Catholic education, and especially higher education, has fled neither its own religious vision nor its public function. It has expanded its attention to its neighbors' visions and realities. And over the past quarter of a century, in a particularly vigorous way, it has reaffirmed its embrace of American pluralism and, for all its powerful ecclesial sentiments and convictions, it has refused to become sectarian. In fact, American Catholic higher



education is already public. It is chartered by the state; its existence is entrusted to boards which are not ecclesiastical in makeup; for most of this century it has sought and found accreditation from public bodies; it uses no religious test for admission and, in many cases, for hiring; it is recipient of large amounts of public money; its course requirements in theology are taught according to American academic criteria and not under ecclesiastical supervision; its campus ministers are ministers and not proselytizers; and even when it clearly affirms its Catholic heritage, it does not impose it even upon its Catholic students. The problem of Catholic higher education is no longer with its public commitment; it is now with its ecclesial definition, and with those Catholics and their ecclesiastical leaders who do not understand and thus reject what the leaders of the educational institutions have been up to for the past quarter of a century. The colleges have been redefining their Catholicism.<sup>17</sup>

Let us recall the range of response to the American ethos of colleges of other American religious bodies. I will name only a few: Dartmouth, Yale, Oberlin, St. Olaf, Mercer, Baylor, Liberty, Bob Jones, Wheaton. A recent case is the severing of its relationship with the North Carolina Southern Baptist Convention by Wake Forest University, which, according to its president, does not in any way presage a surrender of its dedication to the Southern Baptist heritage.<sup>18</sup> Catholic colleges are passing through the same process of assessment and realignment as did their evangelical cousins and will in all likelihood find similar modes of response to the challenge--although one would hope that very few will go the way of either Dartmouth or Bob Jones University.

Moreover, there is an interesting point of comparison between the evangelical polity and the Catholic colleges. The Catholic colleges are, by and large, free of hierarchic control. They are the most congregational of all Catholic institutions from the point of view of their organization. They are quite often, to my experience, jealous of their ecclesiastical independence. They are far more dependent on their boards and presidents and faculties for their Catholic identity than they are on local bishops and religious congregations. This proves a danger, from the point of view of those who would wish a single solution to the problem to hold the field; but from another point of view, the flexibility which this



arrangement affords makes it possible for Catholic colleges to be on the front line of the relationship between the church and the culture, to be exploring new ways of being Catholic which are hard to come by for other Catholic institutions. This possibility is important for the Catholic church in the United States and perhaps in the world. It may be as important to the church's future as the Polish Catholic experiment in working out a constructive relationship with a Marxist state or the experiments of people's Catholicism in central and south America.

Of overwhelming importance from my point of view in trying to understand the relationship between higher education and a culture full of options in meaning and value is this: Catholic higher education is dealing with American culture as it in fact is in all its plurality, and it has chosen to take that plurality into itself in terms of students and faculty. Although that poses a difficulty to the definition of its Catholic nature, it also affords us a unique experiment in understanding the public responsibilities of academic institutions and the flexibility of Catholic identity.

Is Catholic higher education for the church or for the culture? Is it denominational, or is it public? Is its ideal the Kingdom of God, or is it the Great Community? The dichotomies are simplistic, for both sets are true of Catholic higher education. Catholics must converse (intellectually and spiritually) with the many other communities of meaning in our culture. We need dialogue as individual persons and as a religious community, and nowhere more intensely than in our educational institutions. We are in need of others if we are to clarify ourselves. Dictation and repetition are the worst of methods for achieving self-understanding. We will not solve our problems, except nominally, by turning to ecclesiastical authority for definitions.<sup>19</sup>

The rest of the church and its leadership obviously has a legitimate concern in all this, and part of the difficulty for educational leaders is negotiating that concern so that it contributes constructively to solutions. The leadership of the church has shown itself highly ambiguous on this question of inculturation and pluralism. Vatican II was a turning point of monumental significance, but the results of it remain at least mixed, indicating a conflicted



judgment and a divided heart. The church has to some degree shucked classical consciousness and taken on historical consciousness. It has dropped the notion of a single cultural norm and accepted the empirical notion of culture. It has redefined its relation to other religions and even to negators of religion, and taken them as dialogue partners, seeking common ideals wherever they may be found.

Yet, as classicism identifies common understanding with identity of word or concept, language and behavior, so Rome continues its drive for tight universal legislation for higher education and shows itself unhappy with theological pluralism within the church. We educators have shown ourselves hesitant as well. For example, in spite of the genuinely ecumenical bent of Catholic theologians and religionists, we have yet to see a genuinely ecumenical major faculty of theology under Catholic auspices. It would seem that many Catholic institutions of higher learning have accepted responsibility for the public nature of higher education, but there remain problems of ecclesiastical reaction and of a coherent theological defense of a new relationship between Catholicism and its cultures. Nor is it a question whether Roman Catholics can live in a pluralist culture, for the church is thoroughly engaged in it. The final question which the church must answer is how far it will tolerate pluralism within its walls. To that question the experiment of Catholic educational institutions may provide a great deal of the answer. But how shall a pluralist culture be met?

### **Beyond Tolerance**

Tolerance is a central virtue in the American civic tradition. God knows we have had a massive amount of intolerance in fact--and we Catholics know that as well as any religious group--but we have had the rhetoric of tolerance to appeal to in breaking down the cultural and political hegemony of White Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, for example. We American Catholics believed in tolerance before we were the recipients of its practice.<sup>20</sup>

To tolerate means, according to Webster, to endure or resist action without grave or lasting injury; to suffer to be or to be done without prohibition, hindrance, or contradiction. One can see the political usefulness of a virtue of this sort, even if it is immediately clear that the virtue is essentially negative. It means the willingness and the ability to put up with



something the elimination of which might be more difficult or dangerous. So far as it goes, tolerance has stood the citizens of our land in good civic stead. But it carries some connotations and associated meanings with which one might quarrel. There are three possible meanings of the term that I want to mention.<sup>21</sup> There is the tolerance of the Enlightenment, at least as it has reached us in our academic and civic traditions. It serves as no answer to the questions surrounding pluralism, except in the minimal sense that it at least occasionally has restrained its possessors from acting against those whose cultures differ from its own. It has two huge flaws. One is its arrogance and concealed classicism; it takes own truth for granted, along with the falsity or inauthenticity of the tolerated. Although it is willing to allow the other opinion or way of life to exist, it merely watches from a distance, certain of its own truth. Its second flaw is that it leads nowhere, and most especially it does not lead to understanding, either of the other or of oneself. At its worst it is the tolerance of the bigot.

There is as well the tolerance of that chastened child of the Enlightenment, the American liberal for whom all beliefs and values are relative and ungrounded and who, although he or she espouses values and has beliefs aplenty, is so struck by their limitations that he or she cannot imagine that there may be very good reasons for holding them. This is the tolerance of the muddle headed liberal who is so often the subject of mockery by conservatives and neo-liberals, the relativist tolerance that will not engage in serious critical conversation about beliefs and values because, in the final analysis, no belief or value is incorrect or wrong.

The tolerance of the Enlightenment and the tolerance of liberalism are no longer adequate for dealing with the realities of American political, academic, and ecclesial life. They either permit us to avoid and ignore the other or they permit us to talk with the other without taking the conversation seriously. They militate against the very task of education: they may allow the other, whether student or faculty member, to "construct their world of meaning" but they do not aid in it or lead to it. Neither of these versions of tolerance befits the teacher or the administrator who cares about the integrity of education and of religious belief and practice.



The third type of tolerance recognizes the limits of historical consciousness and the need for concrete communities of symbol and understanding and custom and finds other views, perspectives, and values a challenge and a possible source of blessing. This tolerance is based on humility and on respect for the minds and hearts and history of others. It is active tolerance, not arrogant or condescending. It is the Protestant tolerance practiced so movingly by Martin Luther King who could learn from Augustine, Tillich, and Gandhi, and the Catholic tolerance of Pope John XXIII. When it is practiced with full heart, it is the sort of tolerance that seeks the truth in the life and words of another and assumes that there is a truth there to be found. This tolerance is extremely difficult for orthodox Christians to practice since it may do funny things to one's sense of doctrines, but it is the sort of virtue that is crucial to both the interreligious and the academic situation. Perhaps this virtue, at its best, ought to be called something other than tolerance, for it seems to take us beyond tolerance.

Derek Bok in his recent book *Higher Learning* makes some helpful comments on tolerance:

The questioning of traditional values and the emergence of many contrasting beliefs and lifestyles present an entirely different set of challenges for the university. On the one hand, if we are to remain true to our pluralistic traditions, it is crucial to encourage undergraduates to respect contrasting attitudes and conflicting points of view. Fortunately, the American college does well in this endeavor....

On the other hand, if the universities do nothing but emphasize tolerance, they may simply succeed in fostering a kind of moral relativism that looks upon ethical questions as matters of individual preference immune from rational argument or intellectual scrutiny. Such attitudes will further weaken the ethical restraints essential to society and further loosen the bonds that join human beings together.

Bok understands the problem. Now listen to his solution:

Such prospects call for greater efforts to search for common values and explore their contemporary meaning. This has long been the province of the humanities. The challenge



now is to renew this effort and to seek fresh syntheses that reconcile new insights and needs with more enduring human values in order to bring coherence and diversity into a healthier balance once again.... Whether the humanities can possibly live up to their traditional aspirations at a time when the surrounding culture offers so little encouragement is itself an open question. It would surely be mischievous to berate humanists for failing to succeed in an enterprise that may be beyond anyone's capacity.<sup>22</sup>

If I am not mistaken, Mr. Bok has just finessed the solution to the question on pluralism and ethics. Bok states the problem, tells us its alternate dangers, indicates in whose province the solution lies, suggests that the poor humanists may not be able to measure up to the burden, which failure would be the fault of the surrounding culture that has the problem to begin with, and concludes with the admission that the problem may be beyond solution.

Earlier in the book, the author celebrates, on the one hand, the tolerance which leaves students "to arrive at answers by themselves" lest we fall into "rank indoctrination," and rejoices in the "greater questioning of traditional values," in the "richer profusion of lifestyles," and the "reconsideration of tired dogmas," yet, on the other hand, he hesitates over "a certain loss of coherence and a weakening of the bonds of common belief and mutual trust" that "help to bind together ... the claims of individuality and community." He quotes Daniel Bell to the effect that ". . . the real problem of modernity is the problem of belief."<sup>23</sup>

There is no doubt in my mind that Bell is correct. One may agree with Mr. Bok's perception of the problem and even sympathize with his balancing act while finding his comments on the solution to be evasive and unenlightening. As is typical with the liberal position, and I regard myself as a liberal on these matters, this one has no next move; it is frozen between liberal tolerance and classicist indoctrination. Flustered when faced by the fact that values and commitment are "beyond reason" and that he may be pressed "beyond tolerance" if he is going to meet the issue, he retreats to the praise of pluralism and concomitant handwringing over loss of social cohesion.

What might Mr. Bok do instead? To put it briefly, he might enter the fray. He might tell us how he thinks human life ought to be lived, why he lives it as he does, from what



community he has drawn his understanding and where he gets support for it, why he doesn't live the way others do and what he thinks about their ways of life. It would also help if he would tell us whether he lives as he does because he thinks it true to his and our common humanity. He might tell us whether his mode of living has for him a religious horizon. And then a serious conversation could begin. Short of these acts of self-appropriation whereby traditions become self-consciously matters 'handed over,' pluralism can only seem chaotic (to classicism) or an unmediable good without reasonable foundation (to the latest variety of empiricism, post-modernism).<sup>24</sup>

I do not wish to be misunderstood here. I am no fan of William Bennett or Allan Bloom.<sup>25</sup> Although I disagree with Bok's recourse to individualism in the American style and tolerance in the liberal style, I far prefer it to Bennett's neo-classicism and tolerance in the Enlightenment style, and to Bloom's nostalgic elitism. The following recognitions seem to me vital to any Catholic attempt to cope with pluralism:

1. That we are in tow to pluralism for the long haul and that rehearsals of the old liberal-conservative polemics, whether political or theological, are no longer helpful;
2. That the first step to meeting the problems of intellectual and moral pluralism in the university and outside it, among faculty as well as among students, is to get the communities to clarify their positions and talk to one another about them, rather than evading both clarification and conversation;
3. That we must take responsibility for our positions both in their status as beliefs (rather than as supernaturally guaranteed knowledge) and in the search for intelligible explications of them;
4. That appropriation of one's own position involves criticism of it and the consequent probability of development and change in understandings, and so the possibility of trouble with our own religious community;
5. That there is a social reality of importance beyond one's own community of meaning and value, and that is the larger civic and human community the meaning of which religions reveal and of which the religious community, whatever its importance, is only a part.



And, thus, I say: if we are to find ways to cope with the realities of our civic and ecclesial life, we must press "beyond tolerance" to take responsibility, intellectual and spiritual, for our convictions, and to exercise and argue those convictions with some courage in the political, the educational, and the ecclesial arenas. The American bishops have set us a splendid example with their letters on peace and the economy, letters which are clearly public in their intent, their temper, and their rationale, and consequently open to disagreement and the criticism of Catholics and others.

Lonergan mentions in his lectures on education that in education these days we do not have too much use for the terms "true and false."26 In part this is because of the etiquette of tolerance forced upon us by pluralism. Partly it is due to the implicit positivism of our academic life which ties the terms to what can be verified empirically and leaves everything else up for grabs. In part it is due to the epistemology of American pragmatists who maintain that what we are after in inquiry is not truth but ideas to use in changing situations. Lonergan himself describes the findings of scientific inquiry to be the best available opinion rather than the true and the false.27 But since pluralism is the fact of our American life and we are to take it seriously, then the demand for clarification of the differences among us becomes paramount, and the issue of the true and the false is bound to reappear with a vengeance. We have to begin to practice what Lonergan calls dialectic, the search for the roots of the differences among us.28

The question of the true and the false will reappear not only in the classroom debates among the various moral and religious perspectives represented there, but in the relationship between the Catholic academic and the church. Roman Catholic higher education cannot avoid being critical of its own community--any more than the American university can avoid finding out about American life and politics what Americans and their politicians prefer not to hear. One is simply not able to avoid the hard questions of truth and falsity when one comes to one's own church traditions because it is irresponsible to exempt it from the scrutiny that every human institution must undergo. Questions occur to humanists, philosophers, social scientists, theologians and religionists, and the questions must be



pursued. One is up against an absolute if there ever was one: the dynamic of human intelligence which, once it gets organized and under way, cannot be interfered with without serious damage to the individual and the institution. Charles Peirce wrote, in his own version of the transcendental imperative: "Do not block the way of inquiry."<sup>29</sup> Thus, the meaning and the truth of the doctrine of papal infallibility can no more escape scholarly examination than can the origins of and reasons for American policy toward central America. While special sensitivity is called for in matters of ecclesial doctrines, once one faces other traditions as human, one cannot afford to take one's own *for granted*, although one may take it to be true. But theology's task in the face of the pluralism of culture and the specializations of intelligence in the university is another topic, and I must return to ours.

Intellectual, moral, and religious differences cannot and should not be ignored (or excluded) by academic leaders. The educationists are responsible to make use of disagreements and differing versions for their students and the health of their institutions. I am thinking about issues that lie between humanists, scientists, and professionalists, between teachers and administrators, between students and faculty, between theologians and bishops, between religious communities.<sup>30</sup>

Moral, spiritual, and religious pluralism among students and faculty should be taken advantage of rather than ignored, and for two good reasons. One is the good of the society, and the other is the good of the church. I think of the health of a society and a church in which intelligent disagreements and searching criticism, especially self-criticism, ought to replace repression and acrimony.

Not only should we use classrooms to explore the different worlds of students, but we should also utilize the public lecture forum. I think it is a mistake to exclude from that platform, and from public debate, positions which are *non grata* to the church, as it would be to exclude political questions. If the Pope can embrace Arafat and Jaruzelski and respectfully hear out his Jewish critics, we and our students can afford to hear respectfully Charles Curran, Mario Cuomo, Daniel Maguire, and Eleanor Smeal. Above all, it is pedagogically vital that students, Catholic and otherwise, have a chance to feel out the differences in



important positions as well as read them in textbooks.<sup>31</sup> A college which is interested only in formation in the Catholic tradition will not be interested in my suggestion; the college that is also convinced that its task is transformation of that tradition will be interested.<sup>32</sup> Again, from my own point of view, higher education sponsored by a church ought to be the mediator between the church and the culture, making as sure as it can that the maximum amount of clarity and charity is achieved between different belief and value systems.

In conclusion, let me tersely restate my position on the relationship between Catholic higher education and the church community. Education is public because knowledge and wisdom are public, and they are in no sense the property of a church community. An educational institution sponsored by the church is not in existence for the church alone, but for the society as well. Therefore, its responsibility is to introduce the student not only to the world of meaning of the church but also to the worlds of meaning available in the society. It is against its very nature for higher education to be exclusivist with regard to its community of students and teachers. Yet its roots in the Catholic church community ought to strongly support a critical as well as a constructive attitude toward the intellectual and religious pluralism of our society.

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## Notes

1. [\[back\]](#) This piece was written during a fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson Center in the Smithsonian Institution, 1986-1987. I am grateful to the Center for its hospitality and to Michael J. Lacey, Program Secretary on American Society and Politics, for his criticism and encouragement.
2. [\[back\]](#) Dewey's fullest text in philosophy of education is *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Free Press. 1944.1916). Bernard Lonergan's work on the philosophy of education is unpublished. His "The Philosophy of Education: Lectures by Bernard Lonergan," delivered at Xavier University in 1959 was transcribed and edited by James and John Quinn in 1979 and is available at the Lonergan



Research Institute at Regis College of the University of Toronto. It will appear in critical edition in the complete works of Father Lonergan to be published by the University of Toronto Press. For a commentary and extension of Lonergan's work on education, see Frederick E. Crowe, SJ, *Old Things and New: A Strategy for Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985).

3.[back] Lonergan, "Philosophy of Education," pp.133-135.

4.[back] On values and vocation, see Derek Bok, *Higher Learning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986). pp. 35-72, and Ernest L. Boyer, *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1987), especially chapters 13 and 18.

5.[back] Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), passim, and "Anti-naturalism in Extremis," in Yervant Krikorian, ed., *Naturalism and the Human Spirit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp.1-16.

6.[back] *Democracy and Education*, pp. 81ff.

7.[back] *Ibid.*, pp. 55ff; and *The School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1899). While the schools have not fulfilled Dewey's hope that they would carry through a democratic reform of American society. they have had sufficient reformist impact to provoke cries of protest from the more conservative leaders of both church and state. See note 25 below.

8.[back] The anti-democratic and anti-scientific cast of traditional religions are major themes in Dewey's rejection of them. See note 5, above.

9.[back] On meaning, value, community, and communication see Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, pp. 4-6; and Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Danton, Longman, and Todd. 1972), pp. 79ff, and on communications as a functional specialty in theology, see pp. 355ff.

10.[back] The other can be present as an oppressor, as was Antiochus IV Epiphanes to Israel in the second century BC; and the British to the Irish for a good part of the last millenium. Or one can be present to another as a sect fending off communication as many American fundamentalists tend to behave in the American university where they habitually avoid



taking courses which will involve them in discussion of religious beliefs. Or the presence can be dialogical, as it has been in the case of the Roman Church's attempt after the Second Vatican Council to engage other communities of religious meaning in conversation.

11.[\[back\]](#) I mention state education here only to highlight the problem that pluralism presents to Catholic higher education. The state college and university's problem with pluralism deserves discussion on its own.

12.[\[back\]](#) The statutes of the College of Rhode Island (1764) read: "...it is hereby enacted and declared that into this liberal and catholic institution shall never be admitted any religious test; but on the contrary, all members hereof shall forever enjoy full, free, absolute, and uninterrupted liberty of conscience .."This, of course, does not include Catholics, Jews, or atheists. The limits become clear when in the next sentence the founders tell us that the body is open to all denominations of Protestants. See Richard Hofstadter, *American Higher Education: A Documentary History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) I, 134-136.

13.[\[back\]](#) Gleason lectured on "Two Hundred Years of Catholic Higher Education" on 12/3/86. He pointed out that in the early nineteenth century the Catholic schools included up to one-third non-Catholic students; only later in the century, under the pressure of nativist bigotry, did we have the exclusion of non-Catholics. On the same subject, see Edward J. Power, *A History of Catholic Higher Education in the United States* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1958), pp.55, 114.

14.[\[back\]](#) *Democracy and Education*, pp.97-98.

15.[\[back\]](#) Dewey's Marxist critics, for example, took him to be an ideologist of bourgeois democracy. That he philosophically defended the democratic ideal is unquestionably true, and on the basis of that ideal he became a severe critic of Marxism in its Soviet form. That he identified the ideal with American practice and defended middle class interests is another matter and highly debatable in my opinion. For Marxist criticisms of Dewey and pragmatism see Harvey K. Wells, *Pragmatism: Philosophy of Imperialism* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971.1954) and George Novack, *Pragmatism vs Marxism* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975).



- 16.[back] Andrew M. Greeley, *American Catholics: A Social Portrait* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), chapter 9.
- 17.[back] The change in Catholic educational institutions is merely one facet of a pervasive change in the contemporary church as a whole. Educational institutions, however, have experienced peculiar economic, social, and political pressures in American society.
18. [back] *The Chronicle of Higher Education* v. 33, #17 (January 7, 1987), p.3.
19. [back] I am not denying to authorities a decisive role in the community definition of its meaning. For the conditions under which authority is authentically exercised, see Lonergan, "The Dialectic of Authority" in *A Third Collection* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), pp.5-34.
20. [back] Though Catholicism has been far from a tolerant religion historically, we are fortunate that through our ecclesial tradition we have inherited a strong sense of community and of doctrine which has enabled us curb some of the not so attractive aspects of the Enlightenment, namely individualism and the inability to believe.
21. [back] See G. Dalcourt, "Tolerance," in *The New Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 14:192-193. There is an interesting development of the author's view in the supplementary volume of a decade later, apparently as a result of the Vatican II Council's teaching on religious liberty; see 17:666. See also Maurice Cranston, "Toleration," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967), 8:143-46.
- 22.[back] Bok, *Higher Learning*, pp. 170-171.
- 23.[back] *Ibid.*, 48, 54-56.
- 24.[back] On the benefits and liabilities of structuralism and deconstruction see David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion and Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).
- 25.[back] William J. Bennett, *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on Humanities in Higher Education* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1984), and Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987). For



critical assessments see Norman Bimbaum on Bennett, "A Misguided Call to Spiritual Renewal," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* vol.32, #1 (January 9, 1985), p.128; and on Bloom, Martha Nussbaum, "Allan Bloom's 'American Mind,'" *The New York Review of Books* v.34, #17 (November 5.1987), pp. 20-26.

26.[back] "Philosophy of Education," p.152.

27.[back] The shift from the classical to the empirical understanding of science is described many times by Lonergan. See, for example, *Method in Theology*, pp 314-318.

28.[back] On dialectic as a functional specialty in theology, see *Method in Theology*, pp. 235-267. On dialectic as method in metaphysics, see *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), chapter XVII.

29.[back] *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. by Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955), p.54.

30.[back] On the issue of specialization and the consequent fragmentation of a faculty, my concern presumes my own experience and reflects my woeful interdisciplinary ignorance. Lonergan's transcendental method would help the university community enormously in this because it explains specialties to specialists in accessible universal terms, rendering classical laws and statistical probabilities intelligible in the same terms as history and hermeneutics. At the same level of generality he explains specialization as an historical phenomenon. See his discussion of "The Ongoing Discovery of Mind" in *Method in Theology*, pp. 300-319; and specialization and functional specialties. p. 125ff

31.[back] This applies not only to students and faculty, but also to nonacademic participants in public debate. For example, an analysis of the abortion controversy leads one to the conclusion that the language of vilification employed extensively by both sides is manipulatory, misleading, and alienating, and has little to do with either the communication of fundamental values or reaching a common understanding even if disagreement cannot be avoided. See a soon to be published paper by Marsha Vanderford of the Department of Communication, University of South Florida, "Vilification and Social Movements: A Case Study of Pro-Life and Pro-Choice Rhetoric."



32.[back] For the distinction between formative and transformative functions of religious language, see Rosemary Haughton, *The Transformation of Man* (New York: Paulist Press, 1967).

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