

"Paradigms of Justice and Love"

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"Service learning doesn't belong in an academic curriculum." Twenty-five years ago I repeatedly heard words similar to these when I was involved in setting up Boston College's PULSE Program. Much has changed since those days, but the basic challenges remain the same. Is there a legitimate, properly academic role for service learning in the curricular offerings at our colleges and universities? Are the dual commitments of the Jesuit tradition--to excellence in scholarship and to Christian service merely two parallel, and not intersecting, tracks? Or is there an intrinsic unity between the two? What kinds of curricular structures might embody this unity--if indeed it is a unity?

Looking back over the twenty-five years since the founding of the PULSE Program, I believe that its model of service learning has something to offer in response to these questions, because the PULSE model rather uniquely emphasizes the *combination* of service praxis and academic reflection. The benefit of this type of combination was put into words by a senior PULSE student, Russell Turk, who has since gone on to a career in medicine. Russell says that he never considered himself to be "very contemplative," but the PULSE program gave him "no real choice to be otherwise":

It's not that an idea taught in a classroom cannot be as profound [as learning through an experience]; it is simply that when you live through the principles discussed in class, they become imprinted in you, and become more integrated and permanent in your life. I now see that philosophy is not something that should only be learned in special experiences like a classroom or the homeless shelter where I volunteer. Philosophy should be learned everywhere you go, and applied to everything you do.



The PULSE Program's emphasis on the combination of service praxis and academic reflection originates in two decisions made at the inception of the program: that students would receive academic credit for participation in an off-campus field project in combination with specially designed academic courses; and that the program would concentrate on field projects that have a social-service or social-action focus rather than, say, a pre-professional training focus. In choosing these as our working principles, we were deliberately opting not to follow simpler paths suggested by two more familiar ideas. First, we decided that PULSE would not adopt an internship model, in which academic credit is awarded for solely pre-professional, non-academic activities. Second, we intentionally adopted a position counter to the prevailing conception of the contemporary university--that its proper province is the cultivation of critical thinking alone, with all other functions consigned to an ancillary status. We were motivated by a conviction that there is an intrinsic connection between theory and practice--that careful study of our intellectual and religious traditions can inform and transform practice in profound ways, and that appropriately structured forms of praxis can add depth to the comprehension of theoretical issues.

Over the past thirty or so years, we have witnessed a great transition in the academic standards and structures at our Jesuit colleges and universities, and our standards now may be said to emulate those of the great secular universities. Their ideal of higher education received its most influential contemporary articulation from Max Weber, whose well-known fact-value dichotomy has led to a correlative divorce, in principle at least, between the academic quest for knowledge and public pursuit of practical ends.¹ Unfortunately, this way of conceiving of the purpose of the university tends to obscure the fact that the great modern emphasis on science and higher learning was itself derived from the Enlightenment's hope that modern forms of reason would liberate human life. That is to say, behind the academic ideal of the fact-value split lies an implicit value commitment--higher learning is for the sake of forming liberated human beings. In the Enlightenment ideal, reason reveals the truths about the highest values, such as justice and love. It therefore remains as true today as ever that, more than anything else, what students acquire in institutions of higher learning are



"paradigms" about what is most important in life--"paradigms" of justice and love. From this point of view, I would contend that there is a serious crisis in higher education, and that it derives from the desperate shallowness of the paradigms of justice and love our students are currently acquiring in their classrooms as well as in their dormitories and through extracurricular activities.

Of course there are narrow and pernicious views of the relations between theory and practice, which contend that the university must subordinate its thinking to the needs judged "relevant" to contemporary times. We were well aware of this danger when we were developing the PULSE Program, and explicitly eschewed any model that would subordinate academic inquiry to ideological or narrowly conceived "practical" goals. Still, we did not possess a clear alternative model for several years. The PULSE model did not emerge full-blown at the moment of its inception, but took shape gradually, through a process of trial and error as we learned from the many valuable things that happened (and failed to happen) in the hearts and minds of students enrolled in the program. In this article I would like to describe the model that eventually did emerge, in the hope that this may contribute to a larger discussion about the prospects and possibilities of service learning in general.

One way of understanding the PULSE model's efforts at integrating theory and practice is to focus on the problem of transforming students' paradigms of justice and love. Since I am adapting Thomas Kuhn's term, "paradigm," to the problem of service learning, I shall begin by explicating what Kuhn means by that term and by showing how it relates to the communal identity of natural scientists. In the sections that follow I shall extend the term in order to analyze some of the prevailing paradigms of justice and love that influence our students, and the sorts of communities with which they identify. The final sections will reflect on some of the limitations of those paradigms, and consider the possibility of facilitating a conversion to a paradigm that transcends those limitations.



Paradigm and Community in Kuhn's Writings

Possibly the most influential publication in this century devoted to topics in the philosophy of natural science has been Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. It has sparked three decades of animated debate and disagreement among philosophers of science, and has stimulated the thinking of many outside that field. It is not my purpose here to take up a critical study of Kuhn's work (although on one point alone I shall have something to say in the last section of this article). I wish simply to draw upon his ideas in order to highlight salient features of the PULSE model. 2

Kuhn adopted the term "paradigm" to analyze the complicated processes through which scientific knowledge changes. What he referred to as "normal science" is a more or less continuous process of accretion accomplished by a community of scientists who share one and the same paradigm. There is also a discontinuous process--"extraordinary" or "revolutionary science"--in which a scientific community abandons a previously held paradigm in favor of a new and incommensurably different paradigm (4-9).

Kuhn's use of the term "paradigm" is ambivalent, as his critics have noted, and as he has acknowledged (174-87). In its most basic sense, however, a paradigm is what a community of scientific investigators shares and what constitutes it as a scientific community (4,10,179). Kuhn speaks of paradigms as "incommensurable ways of seeing the world and of practicing science in it" (4). Paradigms consist of an interrelated set of shared beliefs, values, instrumentations, exemplars and what Kuhn called "symbolic generalizations" (4, 10, 181-87). His most succinct statement about paradigms runs as follows:

Effective research scarcely begins before a scientific community thinks it has acquired firm answers to questions like the following: What are the fundamental unities of which the universe is composed? How do these interact with each other and with the senses? What questions may be legitimately asked about such entities and what techniques employed in seeking solutions? (4-5)

The most important aspect of paradigms, in Kuhn's view, pertains to the task of puzzle-solving, the effort to explain phenomena. Kuhn takes puzzle-solving to be the fundamental activity of any scientific community. Even the most impressive solutions by innovative



thinkers, however, do not by themselves form an adequate basis for a scientific community. It is also necessary that these solutions be "sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve" (10).

Many of the open-ended puzzles which confront a scientific community gradually give way to solutions. But some resist solution for long periods of time, and certain new phenomena or ideas may resist integration into the paradigm (52-76). Scientific communities are aware of the existence of such "anomalies," and yet generally remain untroubled about their existence. These anomalies are simply regarded as puzzles whose solutions will come as a result of future intermediate accomplishments, and are set aside for the time being (77-82).

Occasionally, however, "an anomaly comes to seem more than just another puzzle of normal science" (82), and in such cases the scientific community enters a discontinuous, revolutionary period. In such a period, clarity about just what the paradigm is--which beliefs, values, rules and so on are essential and which are dispensable--itself becomes a problem (83). Some scientists become willing to abandon the paradigm altogether and seek a new one. Eventually one is found that gradually attracts the allegiance of great numbers of people from the former scientific community and becomes the basis for a new community of scientific practice. When this sort of large scale shift in allegiance takes place, according to Kuhn, a scientific revolution has occurred.

Paradigms in the Contexts of Justice and Love

I would now like to indicate briefly how Kuhn's notion of a community grounded in a shared paradigm can be used to interpret the ways people think about justice and love, and to identify issues in service learning. In the first place, to use "paradigm" in this connection is to draw attention to justice and love as problems. Ultimately, concerns for justice and love come down to questions about how to act justly or lovingly in the concrete situations in which one finds oneself. Students pose these questions and seek answers, I believe, within the context of something like paradigms of justice and love.



Second, just as scientists learn their community's paradigm in their professional education, so also we acquire our paradigms of justice and love from the communities to which we belong--family, neighborhood, peer group, college or university, church, country, and the like. In Kuhn's terms, this means we acquire shared beliefs, values, instrumentations, exemplars, and symbolic generalizations. Of course these terms mean something different in relation to problems of justice and love than they do in the context of natural science. Here, "symbolic generalization" refers to terms such as "freedom," "evil," "rights," "happiness," "sacrifice," "passion," "care," "helping," and to how they are concretely understood and applied to different people and different circumstances. "Exemplars" are people, institutions, or events that show what it is to act justly or lovingly according to a particular paradigm. "Instrumentation" would refer to methods and techniques, both acceptable and not acceptable, employed as means for achieving justice or love. "Values" here primarily refers to the scale of priorities according to which various goods are arranged--expressed, for example, in a phrase like "People are more important than things." Finally, "beliefs" denotes the most fundamental views regarding human nature and the ultimate significance of the universe held by a community.

In order to give a clearer indication of what I have in mind in adapting Kuhn's ideas to justice and love, I shall first describe two "incommensurable" paradigms of justice that prevail among virtually all students when they first come to the PULSE Program. These paradigms roughly correspond to what we mean by "conservative" and "liberal" in this country. I shall then offer a kind of topography of paradigms of love held by our students.

Two Prevailing Paradigms of Justice

The conservative paradigm places a high value on the system of rewards inherent in the organization of American economic institutions. Most students sharing this paradigm have come to college to enter that system at its most prestigious and glamorous levels--as professionals, as governmental officials, or as business managers. They believe that this system will reward them for their talents (and few doubt that they are sufficiently talented)



and for their hard work. In this paradigm, the system of economic rewards holds the key to happiness (which in this case means absence of privation) and freedom (possessing the means to do what one wants and to go where one pleases). Even though certain other qualities--such as friendships and family intimacy--are included in this paradigm's vision of happiness, economic rewards are considered indispensable for these as well.

The system is, therefore, perceived as just, since talent and hard work are rewarded with the highest human goods: freedom and happiness. Students in this paradigm share the belief that these goods are available to every member of our society and, if people do not achieve the desired level of happiness and freedom, it must be because they lack talent or ambition. This does not mean that these students--especially those who enroll in the PULSE Program--are insensitive to those who do not attain high levels of success. They recognize certain imperfections in the existing system; but they perceive these imperfections as anomalies that will be overcome in time by means of the paradigm itself. Above all else, however, this paradigm's most fundamental belief is in being realistic, pragmatic, and practical; and, if some people do not succeed, the realities of nature and human nature dictate that this is the way things must be.

As these students get older, they begin to articulate their paradigm in terms of property rights and a system of free enterprise. Yet initially the paradigm is understood in terms of an exemplar--usually one or both parents--who did work hard and sacrificed in order to achieve happiness and freedom. Finally, justice is conceived of principally as a matter of problem-solving, of improving the system's efficiency by removing obstacles (ignorance, crime, government bureaucracy) to its smooth functioning.

In a certain, somewhat dim, sense, these students tend to think of themselves as contributing to solving problems of justice in their field projects, insofar as they can offer instruments (such as education) to, or instill values (such as hard work) in, those they meet. To conclude, let me stress that students holding this paradigm are *not* insensitive to injustices; they perceive themselves as being deeply concerned with what *they* regard as justice.



Students belonging to the conservative justice paradigm now constitute a decidedly larger community among those who enroll in the PULSE Program. A sizable though smaller group shares in the liberal paradigm. In this paradigm, the value-priorities revolve around these students' strong feelings of indignation toward what their paradigm regards as the greatest evils: poverty, oppression, suffering, failures to insure respect and dignity, and restrictions upon choice. In this paradigm, justice as a problem-solving endeavor is a matter of eliminating these great evils. Central to their paradigm is the sense that "somebody has to do something" to overcome these evils.

Most of these students, like their conservative counterparts, seek professional or managerial careers, but (with the exception of special education and social work) they do not usually view these careers as having much to do with accomplishing justice. Rather, poverty, oppression, loss of dignity, and suffering, according to their paradigm, have not been solved by the present system of economic rewards because they cannot be solved by it. (That is *their* belief about reality.) Auxiliary systems of human services and governmental protection are believed to be required in order for justice to prevail, and social legislation to fund or enforce such programs is the instrumentation by means of which this is to be accomplished. Where their conservative counterparts view these problems as peripheral anomalies, the students operating out of a liberal paradigm regard them as the central and urgent measures of injustice. Because these problems are regarded as so pervasive and massive, the instrumentation required to overcome them must be correspondingly massive--large scale government intervention. Ask most of these students "what needs to be done" and they will tell you that the "government" is the somebody that needs "to do something"--pass new laws or fund new social programs. The exemplars for students committed to this paradigm can be someone they know personally, but it is more likely to be a national figure such as Jesse Jackson, Hillary Rodham Clinton, or Edward Kennedy, or a national event such as the passage of Civil Rights or New Deal legislation.

Finally, the great human goods of freedom and happiness are conceived of as what results more or less automatically from the elimination of poverty, oppression, disrespect, and



suffering. Hence, *any* structure that requires acquiescence and accommodation--that proposes *any* limitation upon choices--can come to be viewed as oppressive. Such structures, therefore, need to be overcome. Authenticity, defined as expressing one's own self without regard to what others may think, becomes the highest value.

As the liberal students develop intellectually, they begin to articulate their paradigm of justice in terms of equality and respect for human dignity. Interestingly, however, respect for human dignity tends not to entail very much beyond entitlements to economic goods--primarily food, housing, and health care and avoidance of derogatory speech. Oddly, despite the liberal paradigm's significant divergence from the conservative paradigm, the two views of freedom and happiness are almost identical, stressing absence of economic privation and social-political restraint as the highest human goods. The liberal paradigm augments this slightly with statements such as "I cannot be free until all are free," or "I am happiest when I'm helping others," statements that seldom sound very convincing, at least to me.

A Topography of Paradigms of Love

It is more difficult, I think, to characterize our students as adhering to one or the other of two alternative and competing paradigms of love. Instead, I find it helpful to think in terms of a kind of topography of these paradigms. There is considerable overlap across this landscape of paradigms, with one and the same student committed to two or more paradigms that are not particularly commensurable with one another, though students for a time seem largely innocent of this fact.

One index to the lines of demarcation among these paradigms is the way that a student will use the word "love." The vast majority restricts this word to romantic and domestic contexts--love of boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, children, immediate relatives. Naturally enough, the exemplars that give substance and meaning to the term are members of their own families. Usually, however, certain figures from literature, cinema, and the arts also provide exemplars that fill out their paradigm of love. Within this paradigm the instrumentation is domestic mutuality of affection and indeed of passion, as well as



reciprocity of self-sacrificial deeds. Moreover, domesticity--in the sense of a fairly high level of economic prosperity--is considered indispensable to this vision of love. On the whole, students holding this paradigm tend to be much more convinced of the importance of income to a successful, loving relationship (*e.g.*, living together) than they are about the bonds of holy matrimony.

For some students the proper use of the term "love" ends here, and it would be at least anomalous, if not almost immoral to them to consider love as something taking place outside the immediate context of domesticity. Many other students, however, subscribe at least in practice to additional paradigms of love, although most of them are still uncomfortable with actually using the word "love" in these extended senses. For these students as well, the domestic paradigm remains paramount.

The most common additional paradigm of love has to do with "being nice" to people. It is the closest most students come (initially, at least) to the type of love associated with patriotism in its noblest sense--love of one's fellow citizens. In this paradigm citizen-love reduces to tolerance--the non-judgmental acceptance of those who are "different" from oneself. The problems of loving crying out most urgently for solution within the purview of this paradigm are problems of how to get more people to be more accepting of others. This paradigm's exemplars are usually certain peers and teachers--and here exemplars who are not "nice" are just as illuminating as those who are. Because of the importance attached to being non-judgmental, however, the mutuality and reciprocity characteristic of domestic love are not part of the instrumentation of this paradigm. Tolerance is a kind of "live and let live" paradigm, which tends to foster a high valuation of independent action, with an accompanying abhorrence for the messiness that is inevitable in human mutual commitments. As long as strict boundaries exist between the spheres of domestic love on the one hand, and being nice on the other, students can maintain allegiance to both paradigms. If those boundaries weaken, however, marital and familial relationships themselves tend to become construed according to criteria of tolerance. If this happens, marital love becomes conceived of as "two free and independent selves who make no demands upon one another"



as one of my students put it. It is a shallow vision of marital love, as the authors of *Habits of the Heart* and the late Allan Bloom have aptly shown. ³

A third type of paradigm of love has as its focus what used to be called "acts of charity"--except that now students call it "helping." This paradigm is quite common among PULSE students, for most of them come wishing to "help" others through their field work efforts, though "helping" is not very clearly thought out. Usually helping is understood in relationship to some exemplar, and here their religious backgrounds often are important. Their exemplars can be someone they know personally--clergy, teacher, relative, or less frequently, a parent--or a more famous figure--Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Archbishop Romero, for example. Helping tends to share something in common with domestic love--it requires face-to-face contact. Indirect institutional activities--food drives, fund raising, efforts at organizational and financial background support to a service agency--fit uneasily into this paradigm's vision of helping. Helping also tends to share some of the basic values of the liberal and conservative paradigms of justice, for "help" tends to mean giving people a portion of the basic economic goods (food, clothing, shelter, medical care) or giving them something that will enable them to acquire these goods (*e.g.*, through education or rehabilitation). Giving one's time, or listening attentively, or agonizing over someone else's plight do not seem much like help from the perspective of this paradigm. Thus, helping also tends to be one-way--from the helper to the helped--and if the helper receives something in return, this would tend to mitigate the degree to which this act could be regarded as genuine help (love). Students' commitments to the helping paradigm of love are often in an uneasy coexistence with "being nice," since helping causes dislocations with regard to being non-judgmental. It is hard to think of oneself as helping another without entertaining the judgment that the other is in need of help. Still, this dual commitment is possible so long as one does not have to try simultaneously to help and to be nice to a person who severely taxes one's ability to do either--the kind of people PULSE students often encounter at their service placements.

A fourth kind of paradigm of love is what I would call the "empowerment paradigm."



Although this paradigm is usually one arrived at after a crisis of incommensurability occurs between the helping and the tolerance paradigms, a small number of students already subscribe to this paradigm when they register for the PULSE Program, and so I include it here. In this paradigm there is an attempt to resolve the tensions between helping and being non-judgmental; which is often expressed through the symbolic generalization of "helping people to help themselves." Instrumentations for this paradigm may include education and rehabilitation programs, but greater emphasis is placed upon efforts such as community organizing, consciousness raising, and dramatic "events" intended to attract public and media attention. This greater emphasis reflects a fundamental belief about reality--power, not affection, is the fundamental human *desideratum*. Genuine concern for the other is properly manifested in working to help them achieve power over their own lives, and this usually means wresting power from someone or some institution that has more than its fair share. Affection is all right, as long as it does not become the vehicle for duping people out of their rightful claims to power over their lives (which is what usually happens, according to this paradigm). In this paradigm, therefore, there is a kind of neo-puritanical circumspection about affection: Let it not grow too intense.

Missing from this topography are paradigms of love more prominent at other times and places, paradigms such as those having to do with patriotism, or *philia* (love of friends in the manner portrayed by Plato and Aristotle), or the Chivalric or Romantic visions of love as a deep longing and an arduous quest, or the direct non-violent action of Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., or the paradigm of genuine Christian agapic love. Rarely if ever are students aware of such alternative paradigms of love, or aware that such paradigms signify something different, grander or more inclusive than their own paradigms.

I certainly do not intend these brief sketches of the paradigms of justice and love as complete or comprehensive social psychological analysis of our students. Although these paradigms certainly are held by large numbers of our students, it is also true that many students do not fit easily into these categories. My intention here has been, rather, to show the value of transposing Kuhn's work into the field of service learning in helping us to notice



and to think about the ways our students regard justice and love--to "touch them where they live," as one of my colleagues put it. In addition, this transposition of Kuhn's ideas can suggest a connection between service education and paradigm shifts, which is the topic of my next section.

Crisis of Paradigms

One of the characteristics of paradigms, Kuhn observed, is that they are largely unarticulated. Scientists *practice* their paradigms with great ease, and yet would be very hard pressed indeed to give a non-trivial account of what they are doing. The same holds true for paradigms of justice and love. The need to articulate a paradigm becomes intensified in a period of "crisis" according to Kuhn, and this effort at articulation itself frequently contributes to the process whereby a paradigm shift takes place. Moreover, as Kuhn noted, "novelties of fact" and "novelties of theory" are particularly effective ways of inducing paradigm change (52). Taken together, these Kuhnian observations about the conditions that promote paradigm shifts offer a way of thinking about the PULSE model of service learning.

To put things simply, the PULSE Program is primarily concerned with bringing about a change in students' paradigms of justice and love. It seems that a prerequisite to this change is that students gain a clearer understanding of the paradigms they currently hold. This means giving them many opportunities to articulate their paradigms, opportunities that for us have included (a) regular supervisory sessions conducted by the field supervisor; (b) small, weekly discussion groups conducted by the professor; (c) weekly journal assignments; (d) periodic papers on a topic relating field and course material. Yet, if these assignments do assist our students in appropriating and transcending their paradigms, it is primarily because their field work presents "novelties of fact" and the classroom presents "novelties of theory" which provoke a need for paradigm articulation and change.

The students' field encounters have proven especially effective in provoking reflection and reassessment of their paradigms of justice and love. One conservative student's paradigm was challenged when his desire to instill the value of "fair competition" was challenged as he



coached a street-hockey team in a low-income neighborhood. A kind of crisis occurred for him when the boys let him know what they thought of "American sportsmanship." In the end, he said, all that he really accomplished was giving the boys something to do to replace their otherwise listless afternoons. The fact that he could actually begin to discern a value in doing just that was a shift for him. Other students have been confronted with their visions of "the good life" in their service to multiply-handicapped children who, they gradually realize, will never "make a contribution to society" by holding a lucrative or prestigious job. This is a "novelty of fact" for them; it provokes a crisis insofar as they can no longer hold that their paradigm will eventually solve this anomaly. Through this discovery, these students have been prompted to seek a vision of life that holds a place not only for the children they serve, but also makes a different kind of sense of the career paths they themselves had been pursuing. Still other students have become perplexed by the fact that people they work with are poor, not because of laziness or a lack of talent, but because they are defeated, or not proficient in English, or simply old. They encounter, not poverty, but poor people in all their human complexities, and the encounter creates pressures for new ways of "being realistic." 4

Service encounters can lead to crises in the liberal paradigm as well. One enthusiastic Big Sister encountered a girl who wanted only a good time from her, not her help. This Little Sister's resistance to her efforts challenged her sense of what the worth of her efforts might be. Another volunteer, who had done all the paperwork to enable an elderly woman to move to better housing, was dumbfounded when the woman changed her mind at the last moment. The depth of her attachment to home and neighborhood--the woman's sense of place--was quite anomalous to my student. Other liberal students have been disconcerted by the continual regression of alcoholic men and women they befriend and counsel, despite all the efforts they and the professional staff have made. Others experience a crisis in their paradigms when they are confronted with the high rates of recidivism in correctional institutions where they volunteer. Many are shocked when they realize that housing programs for the poor or economic and medical assistance for the elderly have made their



overall plight worse.

Equally disruptive of their conservative and liberal paradigms are their positive discoveries. One student found the elderly, isolated, blind man she visited to be "the happiest man I know." Another discovered a gentleness, care, and a kind of altruistic morality in the way "street women" treated each other within the walls of a house of hospitality, in contrast to the coarse and aggressive ways they dealt with the outside world. Yet another saw "beauty" in some of these same women. They have at times discovered life among the dying, happiness among the poor, joy and hope among the oppressed, and nobility among the suffering. They encounter intransigence where their paradigms expect success; they find happiness, freedom, creativity, and love where their paradigms predict none. These field encounters provide irreplaceable stimuli for paradigm change.

Equally important to this process of change, however, is the theoretical material treated in the courses. Here we have been greatly influenced by contemporary scholarly assessments of ethical and political theory. Some of that scholarship argues that modern paradigms of social, political, and ethical practice arose from a deliberate and dramatic break from classical norms. It traces the conservative paradigm to concern with power and "rational calculation" in Hobbes and Locke, and the liberal paradigm to Rousseau's and Kant's preoccupation with a certain vision of dignity, autonomy, self-expression, and authenticity. It likewise traces the origins of both of these traditions to Machiavelli's despair of the efficacy of faith in a transcendent good--a good beyond the satisfaction of passions and the allaying of fears--and his substitution of force as the primary human reality. In our discussions of classical and modern authors, we try to provide frameworks within which students can articulate their own paradigms. From our critical discussions of these authors, we try to help students recognize the limitations of their paradigms. Socrates' insistence in the *Gorgias*, for example, that the happier person is one who, if confronted with the option, "suffers injustice rather than doing injustice" is disconcerting to both the conservative and liberal paradigms, both of which equate happiness and justice with the absence of privation. Study of Rousseau's account of the "state of nature," set as it is in contraposition to the commercial life, disturbs



some conservative students' sense of complacency about their paradigm.⁵ Liberal students, on the other hand, find Rousseau's account gives them apt language to express aspects of their own paradigm. They are, therefore, all the more disturbed when this ideal of the state of nature is set alongside Jane Jacobs's account of the long-range social consequences it has had upon urban life. ⁶ Jacobs's analysis of the intricate and subtle social patterns in neighborhoods that give rich meaning to people's lives, along with their own first-hand volunteer experiences, provoke crises in their own American-bred sense that "humans are by nature asocial." Again, Max Scheler's scathingly critical assessment of "humanitarian love"--which bears a remarkable similarity to the students' paradigm of "helping"--elicited this response from one student: "Well, if *that's* humanitarian love, what am I doing volunteering at the hospital?"⁷ On the other hand, our discussion of the role of the Hebrew midwives in the grand drama of *Exodus* challenged for some students the notion that great political power is required to bring about justice. Or, Aristotle's discussions of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* have opened up reflections upon loving and betraying clients they encounter at their service placements, as well as their dormmates, in ways they'd never previously considered.

"Novelties of fact" and "novelties of theory" came together in one of the most poignant moments I have witnessed in my teaching in the PULSE Program. Nancy Cantu enrolled in my PULSE course as a junior, majoring in French and Political Science. She volunteered in the education department at a temporary detention facility for male juvenile offenders. In one of her journal entries Nancy recorded an encounter she had with a detainee I'll call Tom. Tom had been arrested for dealing drugs and was bragging in front of the other juveniles in Nancy's tutoring group. "He could not stop bragging about his own apartment, his stereo system and all the cars he has bought," Nancy wrote:

I let him talk about all these things without interrupting, because I thought it would make him happy.

But the word "happy" triggered a connection with classroom discussion:

I started to think about Plato's and Aristotle's definitions of happiness and its true meaning. It was then that I realized that even though Tom was very proud of his material possessions, he was



not happy with them nor with the way he had acquired them--with drug money. During my conversation with Tom I came straight out and asked him, "Tom, were you happy doing what you were doing? Were you satisfied with earning money from the dealing of drugs?" Tom turned away from me and said, "Well, man! It was good money!" I told him he was avoiding my question. "What do you think?" he replied. "Of course I'm not happy but you wouldn't understand anyways." I told him I did understand. I told him something of my life and the difficulties I went through in coming to the United States. [She had moved with her family from Mexico a few years before.]

Four weeks later, after Tom had been placed in a permanent program, he wrote to Nancy, thanking her for listening to him. "No one ever really listened to me before. I've thought a lot about what you said and I'm thinking about going back to school so I can get a job," Nancy was not convinced that he would be able to carry through on his resolution, but her encounter with Tom made Plato's and Aristotle's standard of living justly more than an intellectual curiosity for her. The shift to a paradigm of just living different from her own was made possible by the intersection of theory and practice, in a way that neither theory nor practice alone would have accomplished.

To date, courses in the PULSE Program have tended to rely upon philosophical and theological texts to introduce these "novelties of theory," because our courses have been offered primarily by the philosophy and theology departments. Robert Coles has recently shown, however, the tremendous potentialities of great works of literature to accomplish much the same sort of thing in connection with service activities.⁸ These novelties of fact and novelties of theory bring about considerable articulation and reflection among our students. For some, the novelties induce a crisis situation--the need for an alternative paradigm.

Limited and Unlimited Paradigms

According to Kuhn, a crisis in a paradigm eventually leads to a "conversion," to "faith" in a new paradigm (150-59). This way of speaking has led his critics to charge him with making



paradigm choices ultimately an irrational and relativist enterprise (191-206). The force of such accusations depends a great deal on what one means by "conversion," and how one understands its relationships to reason. Unfortunately, the way that Kuhn himself has construed both reason and conversion does indeed make him vulnerable to those charges.

This is not inevitable, however, nor must a model of service learning dedicated to shifting paradigms of justice and love be arbitrary or irrational. For both the biblical tradition and the tradition of ancient philosophy suggest that conversion may be indispensable for the pursuit of true wisdom. The central moment in Plato's *Republic*, for example, is a conversion of intellect and affect. In the Cave Allegory, the prisoner of shadows is "compelled to stand up, to *turn around* his neck, to walk and look up toward the light" (515c). Likewise, the climax in the *Book of Job* is a conversion (42:6), which takes place when Job is faced with the revelation of Yahweh's surpassing wisdom; Yahweh, who created the cosmos out of wisdom, nevertheless replies in a personal way to Job's complaint. Such sources suggest that conversion is intrinsic to reason because true wisdom concerning justice and love super-abounds in intelligibility and surpasses finite comprehension. Hence, genuine dedication to the truths about justice and love entails a shift from finite modes of thinking about them toward ways of thinking and behaving that preserve the transcendent mysteriousness of justice and love.

Given this way of conceiving of the relationship between conversion and wisdom, I would like to speak of a contrast between limited paradigms and an unlimited paradigm of justice and love. The legitimacy of a model of service learning dedicated to shifting paradigms of justice and love depends upon *what sort* of alternative paradigm one shifts to. If the shift is from one limited paradigm to another, then the shift is indeed arbitrary and relative. By and large, what usually takes place in American education is a shift from one limited paradigm to another. Most frequently the shift is from conservative to liberal, or from "helping" to "tolerance" or to "empowerment."⁹

For Christians, however, conversion, *metanoia*, has always meant not merely change, but change to something unlimited, indeed change to a participation in Divine life: "I have come



so that they may have life and have it to the full" (*John* 10:10). Taken in this radical sense, "conversion" objectively denotes a shift from a limited to an unlimited paradigm. An unlimited paradigm of justice and love is evoked by symbolic generalizations such as "His works are great, beyond all reckoning, his marvels, past all counting" (*Job* 9:10) or Paul's assertion that the *dikaiosune* (righteousness or justice) of God--God's way of rectifying evil--is the free sacrificial gift of loving grace in Jesus Christ (*Romans* 3:24). Hence, the beliefs about reality according to an unlimited paradigm of justice and love hold that the most basic reality is the reality of the mysterious, transcendent activity of God's goodness, in which unlimited justice and love, reason and truth, are one. It is a paradigm in which what Johann Baptist Metz has called the "dangerous memory" of the history of God's saving activity makes us aware that God's justice and love encompass those who have succeeded as well as those who have failed, the oppressed as well as the oppressors. Such a paradigm finds problematic, and not merely anomalous, any order that stops short of that vision. It stimulates its adherents to draw upon all the intellectual and spiritual resources of the human-divine community and to work at all the problems necessary for the achievement of an order that is the fulfillment of that vision.

Our efforts at integrating theory and practice in the PULSE Program are oriented toward bringing to light the limitations of prevailing paradigms of justice and love. In that sense, we are endeavoring to do what Christians down through the ages have always done--to draw upon all the intellectual and interpersonal resources we can to unveil narrowness, and to broaden students' awarenesses about all that is truly entailed in both love and justice in the fullest senses. While this way of thinking about service education is explicitly informed by our Catholic and Jesuit tradition, the "novelties of theory" are appropriately drawn from non-Christian classical and modern texts as well as Christian writings, since the challenges to prevailing limited paradigms come from a multiplicity of sources.

Sometimes the "crises" lead to dramatic conversions, but more often they lead to the strengthening of the tentative commitments to an unlimited paradigm already present in the students. Through our classroom assignments, students are encouraged to consider the



testimony of religious authors and to probe their intellectual honesty through dialogue, writing, and comparison with authors of opposing views. Through their encounters with their field projects, our students are led to wrestle with the possibility of a meaningfulness to human life that transcends limited paradigms of human purpose. In any case, the faculty plays a key role in the way that it guides the student's reflections. The crisis of a paradigm opens up untapped dimensions of human personality--the dimensions where grace operates. Yet such breakdowns can be frightening, and students cannot be pushed or given easy substitutes for difficult answers. Hence, there is a need for intellectual dialogue and prayer--for the means of a continuous conversion--among the faculty members themselves, in order to deepen their own appropriations of the unlimited paradigm and gradually to root out vestiges of limited paradigms.

One particularly striking example of the problem faced by justice educators was related to me by a priest friend who is involved in spiritual direction. A young woman came to him who is a manager in a computer firm. She volunteered her time to certain social service projects most generously. Yet she was deeply troubled because, although she loved her work, she couldn't see how it could be contributing to God's work of justice and love. Is the production of computers an act of love? Is it just? Could it be? Are we to say that justice and love have nothing to do with such work? If so, are we not operating out of some limited rather than unlimited paradigm of justice and love? If our paradigms are dependent upon overt manifestations of suffering and oppression, does this mean that justice and love themselves are contingent, that they would cease to be possible in a world free of suffering? ¹⁰ These are questions that the faculty in the PULSE Program and those engaged in service learning in general need to debate among themselves if they are going to be of genuine service to their students.

Excerpts from the journals of PULSE Program students have been lightly edited, chiefly to eliminate possible sources of confusion or to correct obvious slips of the pen. Otherwise, they



are presented in the form in which they were submitted to PULSE instructors.

--Ed.

Notes

- 1.[\[back\]](#) See "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 129-156. The debate over whether theory or practice is the highest form of human life, however, traces back to Plato and Aristotle, especially *Nicomachean Ethics*, x. 7-8.
- 2.[\[back\]](#) Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Henceforth all page references to Kuhn's book will be given in parentheses in the text. The debate sparked by Kuhn is focused in two volumes. L. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); and F. Suppe, ed., *The Structure of Scientific Theories*, 2nd edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977). For Kuhn's broad influence, see, for example, the numerous listings under "Kuhn, Thomas S." in any recent edition of the Social Science Citation Index.
- 3.[\[back\]](#) See Robert Bellah, et al, *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), especially chapters 4 and 5, and Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).
- 4.[\[back\]](#) See Jane E. Zimmermann, "Journals: Diaries for Growth," *Synergist* 10/2 (1981): 46-50
- 5.[\[back\]](#) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse Concerning the Origins of Inequality* (1754).
- 6.[\[back\]](#) See *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: The Modern Library, 1993).
- 7.[\[back\]](#) Max Scheler, *Ressentiment* (New York: Schocken, 1961).
- 8.[\[back\]](#) See *The Call of Service* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993) and its companion, *The*



Call of Stories (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

9.[[back](#)] Clearly the distinction between limited and unlimited paradigms is a complex question, which cannot be adequately treated in the present context. Kuhn himself has no adequate way of conceiving of such a distinction. Bernard Lonergan, however, has suggested ways of speaking about conversion, in a non-relativistic fashion, as intrinsically related to a manner of knowledge-seeking that is unlimited and unrestricted. See his *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 104-124, 237-244, 251-253, 267-271.

10.[[back](#)] For a theoretical treatment of these issues, see my "Ressentiment and the Preferential Option for the Poor," *Theological Studies* 54 (1993), 213-71.

More on the Pulse Program at Boston College

The PULSE program at Boston College originated in 1970. In its first full academic year, it enrolled 120 students in sixteen service placements in six courses. In this 1994-95 academic year, it has grown to 310 students in forty-six placements with twelve faculty members offering eleven courses each semester.

Most of the courses are interdisciplinary philosophy-theology courses that can satisfy students' core requirements. Only students placed in approved PULSE field projects are allowed to register for these courses, but students from any approved project can register for any PULSE course. As a result, the course themes are not specific to any one problem area, and yet have to engage the issues unique to each student's field encounters. This challenge, more than any other, has stimulated the development of the PULSE model.

The service placements have included tutoring and recreation programs for disadvantaged children, therapeutic programs for emotionally disturbed adolescents, drug rehabilitation projects, public interest research and lobbying, hot-lines, day-care service for parental assistance and pediatric AIDS programs, tutoring and dialogue at adult correctional institutions, visitation and other services to elderly people, and shelters and feeding programs for homeless men and women. Each project has a supervisor to whom students are responsible for their assignments. Supervisors, in turn, are responsible for helping students



learn about the settings and how to perform requisite tasks. Students volunteer ten to twelve hours per week, with regular supervisory sessions included in this time commitment.

The PULSE office is headed by a full-time director, Dr. David McMenamain, who also teaches PULSE courses. In addition to the director, the office personnel consists of an administrative assistant, and a select group of sixteen undergraduate students known as the PULSE Council. Student enrollment in the program's courses and placement in the program's field are handled by PULSE personnel. Each summer the office renews, modifies, or terminates placement agreements with the current set of agencies after a careful process of screening and evaluation. In addition, the office is responsible for developing various workshops, for communicating with agencies, for transportation and for a formal evaluation of each student's performance in the field.

Student Writing

"Power and Just Punishment" by Kerry Dolan

A punishment is just when it relieves a person from his or her injustice. The expression of remorse is often a sign of a just punishment. When it is received, justice is accepted. It is a sort of curing or cleansing that alleviates the harmful effects of the shameful action. A shameful action is one that causes the loss of respect of another because of the improper behavior of oneself (we are viewing ourselves through the eyes of another). The desire for what is best for oneself is the thing that is betrayed. The inconsistency of this results in a loss of self-respect. A just punishment is the only thing that can redeem these qualities.

Isaac, one of the boys I work with at Challenge, is charged with murder. In the midst of a heated argument with a friend of his, Isaac pulled out a knife and stabbed him. He thought that stabbing his friend would be a good thing: It would be the end of the argument and would be a demonstration of his "power." By exercising his control in every way possible, he believed he would feel better. His only regret, at first, was that he was caught and was going to be punished. Isaac's initial feelings are the same that Polus (in Plato's *Gorgias*) expressed: it



is not good if you get caught doing an injustice. What Isaac and Polus did not realize was that the injustice is worse if there is no punishment. They were also mistaking the definition of power.

Since then, Isaac has realized that stabbing his friend was not an exercise of power. It accomplished nothing and did not result in a benefit for him. Everything about what he did has turned out to be bad for him. He will be going to jail, he disappointed his family, and he has lost a friend. There was absolutely no good that resulted, even though he previously believed (falsely) that there would be. I overheard Isaac talking during lunch and he was saying all that he learned by being punished. He learned that it never does a person any good to do bad things. He continued to say that he was glad that he was being punished for what he did because now he knows that what he did was bad. If he had never gotten caught or never been punished, he would have remained ignorant and continued to follow his false beliefs about what would be a benefit to him.

Power is something that is a benefit (good) to its possessor. By using this definition, which both Socrates and Polus agreed upon, Isaac's actions were not expressions of power. Power is not what is actually wanted, but simply an avenue that one may be taking to get something that is desirable. All people want what is good for them and not what is bad. When people do not know what is good for them, they follow their beliefs about what will be good for them. This fact alone makes them powerless because the beliefs may be wrong. When a person commits an act as a means to an end (if I lie to my mother, for example) the actual goal is not the act, but rather the object of the act (to be able to go out). When a person does something that they believe will end in an advantage, and that action then turns out to be a disadvantage (the belief was wrong), then the person never really did what was wanted. Nobody wants what is bad for them. Therefore these examples do not demonstrate an exercise of power. The results were bad and not a benefit.

People are happy if they are honorable and miserable if they are wicked, but even more miserable if they do not receive a just punishment for their wickedness. The happiest person is the person who has no badness in his soul, and therefore never commits any evil acts. The



next happiest person is one who had been cured, through just punishment, of the wickedness. If one is not punished, then the evil is rendered permanent, never cleaned from the soul, and is the worst. Like Polus, many people believe that power is being able to get people to do things that would benefit themselves, but this is not what power really is. To have power, one must have the knowledge of the good. Isaac was misled by his mistaken belief of what would have been good for him. Socrates realizes that power is the knowledge of right and wrong.

This argument is defended by the fact that people always want what is good. What is good is always what is just because justice is best and that is what people always want. If there is knowledge about what is good, then no injustice, bad or evil will ever be done. Problems are most often encountered when people have false beliefs about what they want. The only way around this is to acquire the knowledge of what is right. This knowledge is the only that can give a person power.

Student Writing

"A Nice Guy" by Kevin Barry

A few days ago, I was telling my Dad about my tutoring a man named Chuck in the parts of speech. Chuck is a very eager and hardworking man who practically begs me for more homework to complete in his cell, and who tells me that he survives each day by having "faith in the Lord." I told my father that Chuck was "a really nice guy" and my Dad corrected me, noting that Chuck was in jail. I believe that my father was right but maybe the difference lies in what we define as "nice." Perhaps being "nice" is the ability to show one's desire to be in harmony with oneself and one's environment, through external actions, and can therefore be defined as acting in a way conducive to one's best interests. Therefore, when one is described as being "nice," it can be said that he is acting justly and in accordance with the positive good--his proper function, thus reflecting one's desire to achieve excellence and to be the best person one can be.

When one commits an act of injustice, as did Chuck, he is acting in a way contrary to his



proper function and desire for excellence and so can no longer be called "nice." However, when one becomes reformed through just punishment and is made just, therefore realigning himself with his desire for selfhood and excellence, is it not also true that in the process he may be able to exhibit "nice" behavior once again?

I believe that Chuck is a "nice guy" because I believe that he had begun to rediscover what truly is best for himself and what is conducive to making his life one that serves his best interests. This is not to say that Chuck is reformed, however, for reform comes when one knows that his proper function is a life aimed at excellence, and therefore seeks to live in accordance with this idea. I think that Chuck had a good idea about his achieving excellence in life--his concern for his work, his regard for others, and in his faith in God. However, it will take a further understanding of the highest good that is excellence and a commitment to what he knows is in line with his best interests in order to constitute a total reform.

Student Writing

"A Conversation with Anna" by Christine Pepe

During my placement, my supervisor usually stations me on one of the floors for an hour. I was sitting on the third floor, just "keeping watch" of the transitional working ladies. They encouraged you to bring books and read, so being a productive student, I succeeded in finishing up a history chapter. While I was reading, Anna came up and sat in the chair next to me. One of my goals when I go to Pine Street is to listen to what the ladies have to say and show them that someone does care. I want to provide for them a light in the harshness of their reality. Also for selfish reasons I suppose, they have so much to offer and teach about life. Anyway, after I had introduced myself to her, she began to express the fact that she was upset because she has not been able to get in touch with her daughter by phone. Then, she willingly began to tell me about her life. Equally incredible to me was the fact that I told her about my life too and she was equally interested. We shared.

Anna is a sixty-year-old homeless woman who lived in New York about thirty years ago. She became pregnant at the age of thirty by a married black man. Her mother wanted her to



have an abortion, but she refused. Realizing that everyone was humiliated because she had decided to bring [into the world, out of wedlock, a child of mixed race], she moved to Boston. Here, Anna alone raised her daughter. She said it was difficult because of prejudice and financial struggles. She felt as though economically she let her daughter down. Before her mother died, although she never saw her granddaughter, she admitted to Anna that she was glad that an abortion never took place. I do not know all the exact details about when her daughter moved out or the circumstances. I do know that Anna was a nun for quite some time. She also revealed to me that she had a drinking problem before and after nunhood, even recently. She told me also that she is handicapped, contributing to her difficulty to find work. Pine Street is giving her room and board as pay for her work at the shelter (Transitional Program) although currently she has not started working. I expressed to her how I felt the homeless were inhumanely clumped together as a statistic. She came out and said that she would never accept money from anyone, begging on the streets for example.

However, I quoted to her one of the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek/humble" and proceeded to explain what I had learned in class, that when someone lives in the right way, without patting himself or herself on the back, but rather acknowledging that being able to give is a gift from God, accepting is noble. When I give of myself, it is not because I am a noble person by myself. However, it is because God has created me and given me the grace, the gift to pass his divinity on. In a sense, when we give of ourselves, we are allowing someone else to experience God through actions. And of course this involves the hand of God leading us in that direction, provided we have faith. After I mentioned that Beatitude, I quoted another, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Then I continued to say that in a sense poverty and suffering can strengthen. We discussed the fact that we all play a role in the Kingdom of God, which she knew was continuing after death, eternal. I quoted what [Professor Byrne] said in class, "suffering can provide detachment from all the finite things to free one for the attachment to the infinite." I apologized because I felt shallow, sitting there saying that suffering strengthens. Compared to Anna, I don't know what suffering is. But suffering can strengthen, as well as cripple. She replied, "You are not shallow because you are



here, experiencing it." I guess in a way that is true, but I won't pat myself on the back.

As we continued this conversation, the entire time I was thinking to myself how incredible this was. I have never willingly preached to someone about God. Also, I have never been so captivated by our Faith. Even right there, the fact that I said "our" scares me because I doubted the Catholic Church and the reality of God all first semester. But part of believing is disbelieving. It comes down to faith. The disciples doubted Jesus when he was dying on the cross. But what would be the point if Jesus came gloriously, conquered dominantly and then saved himself?...

I asked her, "What is prayer to you?" I asked this because I have always wondered if the traditional idea, my Catholic school version of prayer, is the only way. I now know it is not. She replied, "prayer is anything you want it to be." To me, prayer is any experience of God, a deepening of faith. My experience with Anna was prayer. After my conversation with her, I wrote everything I could remember down, I never wanted to forget this experience...

Some of the things she said amazed me. For example, "I am just so happy to be alive and thankful to God for everything." I am thinking to myself, how exceptional is this woman? Hours before I was just complaining to myself about the cold and how miserable tired I was. How ignorant and selfish am I? My problems have been so trivial compared to those who truly suffer. Granted we all suffer, but complaining about it robs it of all nobility. This woman is homeless, handicapped, unmarried and jobless, yet she has a fondness of life. To truly live one must strive. And although she has suffered in the harshest sense, she is happy. She said that it is always important to remember that there is something higher, a divine force to which we owe everything. I truly believe this. Otherwise why would we be here? If we didn't have anything--or should I say anyone--to strive for, what would be the point of life? We would have no direction, acting only for selfish reasons. She said something that I had never heard before, "God wants us to love ourselves correctly." I know partially what this means. Love ourselves and each other in the eyes of God. It also as to do with fondness and respect for life because it is a gift...

An hour had passed, and it was time for me to go back downstairs. Anna had a key to the



elevator so she rode down with me. The things she said to me in the elevator probably affected me the most. She said that I made her so happy. She said that I am a great person and that my parents must be proud. The thought of my parents for some reason made me want to cry. That word "proud" has such immense power, especially in reference to my parents. It was one of those moments at which you just want to reach out. I wanted to hug her but I didn't. I have had some experiences like this, when you feel humanity. I can't explain it. It is a feeling you get through another person. I realized that I had experienced God through her. But isn't that why we are here, to share God's gift of faith with others through our words, action, touches, and eyes?

