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REIMAGINING REFLECTION IN FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION:
A FREIREAN-JESUIT PERSPECTIVE

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By
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INTRODUCTION

The ubiquitous bell tower at John Carroll University looms over every building, asserting itself from almost every spot on campus. Often associated with the school's Jesuit heritage, the tower traditionally appears in prospective student brochures, alumni letters, public photography, and student shirts that are bought in the bookstore. One semester while teaching directly under the tower, in the only classroom on the third floor of the Administration Building, my class and I began every lesson after the bell marked the hour with its permeating chimes. The clock's regular chiming informs the campus community of the time but also draws faculty, students, and staff together to recognize and center themselves within the present moment: an important skill that lies at the center of Jesuit education.

At John Carroll University whose mission is to transform students into ethical and well-informed scholars who commit themselves to the common good, I began thinking about how I could further foster these Ignatian values and the subsequent focus on reflection in my composition course, EN 125, Seminar on Academic Writing. Like the bell tower which intermittently interrupts the campus and asks its community to pause and recollect their thoughts, EN 125 at John Carroll attempts to teach undergraduates how to look and look again at their writing in order to improve and interpret their prose on a deeper level. When students begin to deeply analyze and investigate their prose and individual writing process, they are more likely to produce essays with purpose that effectively influence readers. Without an astute awareness and continual contemplation of one's choices as they compose upon the page, the author's rhetorical stance, relationship with readers, and written product often falter. In short, when a class engages in activities that incorporate writerly reflection, they not only strengthen their ability to express

their thoughts on paper, but improve how they interpret the arguments of others and how they communicate with readers or those around them. To promote the common good within the writing course, students must cultivate rhetorical awareness and understand how their writing responds to others and to the world at hand.

Recent research in writing studies has theorized ways in which the composition course can foster this goal of rhetorical awareness, generating ethical writers who are aware of the rhetorical choices they make. In his book, *Provocations of Virtue: Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Teaching of Writing*, John Duffy offers us a point of departure by arguing for writing instruction that prioritizes what he calls the “virtues” of credible writing: “truthfulness, accountability, and open-mindedness” (13). He promotes a curriculum that focuses on the fundamentals of effective argumentation from our country’s inability to “talk to strangers” and engage with those who disagree. It is not difficult to find a pundit’s take in the media or a debate in American politics where argumentation, as Duffy notes, has been “reduced to assertions and counter-assertions, claims and counter-claims” that all produce a chain of rash reactions instead of logical conclusions (8). Duffy’s book reminds us, therefore, of the urgent need for our country to revise its pattern of dishonest rhetoric and teach students in first-year writing these virtues of ethical argumentation.

Duffy’s argument is important to those of us who teach college writing because first-year writers must begin to develop as young adults who understand the social influence of their words and the importance of establishing a well-respected stance, whether or not the audience endorses the author’s same viewpoint. The words, “ethical” and “virtuous” throughout *Provocations of Virtue* do not adhere to someone’s personal character or the content of their prose. Rather,

Duffy's use of these terms refer to how the writer develops their claims, shares outside evidence, and builds upon the perspectives of critics. Specifically, he draws from Aristotle's vision of ethics, "a virtue-based ethics of writing is the quality of what Aristotle termed *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, the ability to know when such speech or writing is called for, at whom it should be directed, and how it may be best expressed" (Duffy 16). Duffy encourages composition instructors to teach students more explicitly how to analyze their writing and the rhetorical choices they make. Throughout this essay, then, I will use Duffy's argument that students must reflect on the ethical and rhetorical decisions they make as writers, as a springboard to coalesce similar aims of reflection in both Jesuit rhetorical education and Freirean pedagogy.

The Jesuits have always aligned education with the development of the self. Ordained as a religious order in 1540 by Pope Paul III, their founder Saint Ignatius and his early followers, as Patricia Bizzell writes in her essay "Historical Notes on Rhetoric in Jesuit Education," were "well equipped to be educators, as all were 'from an academic elite'" (40). Known for their devotion to rigorous academic study, the Jesuits followed the Pope's orders to build and manage schools throughout the 16th century, which later paved the way for a transformative liberal arts curriculum that still seeks to enhance the intellect and character of students today. As a rooted Catholic pedagogy, Jesuit higher education strives to construct a course curriculum that builds upon the Christian values of academic excellence, reflection, societal justice, informed action, and the development of the self. David Leigh in "The Changing Practice of Liberal Education and Rhetoric in Jesuit Education" illustrates how Jesuit schools strive to prepare the whole student, attempting to mold them into adults who are well-versed in every personal, professional,

and communal sphere; the learning process at such institutions must enhance the self, the student, and their role in shaping the community. Leigh confirms that Jesuit universities share these “four goals: the practical goals of preparing for significant work; the social and civic goal of preparing leaders for society; the liberal goal of preparing a well-integrated person of intelligence, feeling, and eloquence; and, most important, the moral and religious goal of preparing a person for a mature relationship to God and other persons” (126-127). Thus, many Jesuit institutions see a deliberate and inherent connection between the self, the world, and others—a connection that is forever embedded in their pedagogical practices, especially within the writing classroom.

This focus on the relationship between the self and others aligns with the Jesuit focus on rhetoric. Rhetoric, since its inception in ancient Greece as a response to the growth of democracy, refers to the art of producing effective arguments that successfully lead one’s audience to some type of action through the rhetor’s exceptional argumentative skills, the mastery of language, and the illustration of good character. Saint Ignatius and his followers dedicated themselves to the study of rhetoric and accredited its practice to the development of the self and the well informed, honorable author; they believed that the orator or writer learns to influence his or her listeners so that they might promote the common good as well. Though, in order for the author to construct a credible argument that moves others, they must do so in a way that is articulate and convincing. Writing in Jesuit higher education, therefore, aims to achieve two goals: *eloquentia perfecta*, eloquent and clear writing, and *cura personalis*, consideration of the whole student or the development of one’s character. While *cura personalis* is commonly defined as creating meaningful and attentive student-to-teacher relationships, it also requires

undergraduates to learn from their course content and simultaneously grow as a person and citizen as well. When melded together, these two goals of writing in Jesuit higher education, promote the development of the knowledgeable and ethical writer. Similarly, many writing programs at most universities, private and public, work to fulfill these attributes in their mission statements and learning goals. At John Carroll, for instance, all students are expected to enhance their written communication skills and strengthen their character in order to impact the world through just action during their time at university and after, using their exposure to rhetoric to help facilitate that informed action.

These common themes of effective writing and informed action are weaved throughout the theories of Paulo Freire, one of the early advocates of an educational movement known as liberatory pedagogy, a pedagogical theory that aims to empower the student so that he or she works alongside the instructor as a regarded equal. Influenced heavily by liberatory theology,¹ Freire claims, as Pace and Merys attest in their research on Freire and the Jesuits, that the traditional teacher-to-student power dynamic in secondary and higher education oppresses the student due to the instructor carrying all of the authority (240). In 1968, Freire laid out his educational vision in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which “has become a type of ‘ur text’ for what is now known as critical pedagogy, a theory and practice of teaching that, as Ann George states, ‘envisions a society not simply pledged to but successfully enacting the principles of equality, of liberty and justice for all’” (Pace and Merys 234). This same intention to create a

¹ Liberatory theology began as a movement in Latin America in the 1970’s as a way to dismantle oppressive organizations (Paley 353). Liberation theology “emphasizes spiritual as well as social, political and economic liberation” working to erase oppressive tendencies through a Christian lense (Evans 135,138).

humane and active learning environment aligns with the Jesuit mission to care for the whole student and promote justice in and outside of the classroom.

Freire's work has had enormous influence on writing teachers. For many writing teachers, Freirean practices honor the power of the written language and its ability to inform and erase oppressive tendencies. Students and instructors in first-year writing who follow his mode of instruction are encouraged to grapple with societal justice issues and reflect on the ways in which society has played a role in shaping their identities and written prose. When given this opportunity to rethink and understand how hierarchical power structures might work in their community, first-year writers are encouraged to construe their own narratives that prevent oppression and maintain a new openness to other voices and criticism around them. Through this method of Freire's socio-political reflection, undergraduates might situate themselves as more informed and proactive writers who can "transform the world" with their written word (Freire 60). When student authors spend the time to investigate controversial topics that question particular practices of justice and meaning within their own lives, they are more likely to hear other perspectives, maintain this stance of openness in their writing, and realize the ability of their written prose to enact positive change in their communities. This practice of critically thinking about the self, reflecting on one's writing, and addressing themes of social justice exhibit the significance of reflection within the writing classroom and its ability to marshal effective ethical based writing that influences the outside world.

In this paper, therefore, I argue that John Carroll's First-Year Writing Program, as part of a Jesuit University, should more overtly implement a style of Freirean-Jesuit reflection that prompts students to contemplate both the written word and world. While much of the curriculum

now encourages students to become reflective users of rhetoric, a more overt focus on what Duffy, the Jesuits, and Freire argue can lead John Carroll students to think more deeply about their rhetorical choices and writing process. In doing so, undergraduates are more likely to craft clear and eloquent writing with greater awareness of social justice, of their position in the world, and of their development as informed citizens and writers who value the common good and produce well-formed ethical arguments.

To make this argument, I address the critical role reflection plays in the writing classroom and the often overlooked connection between Jesuit rhetorical education and the ideas of Freire in writing studies. These sources include Duffy's *Provocations of Virtue*, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Pace and Merys's essay, "Paulo Freire and the Jesuit Tradition." In doing so, I show how the Jesuits prioritize reflection and its crucial goal of inducing informed action, connecting it again to Freire's pedagogical goals and theories in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. I then emphasize the benefits of a reflection-based writing classroom, setting up the essay's focus on the Jesuits' two critical rhetorical ideas—*eloquentia perfecta* and *cura personalis*—and how they inform many of the goals of John Carroll's first-year writing program. Here, I build on the current curriculum by proposing that the program should implement continuous practices of reflection throughout the semester by assigning a double-entry dialectic journal and frequent critical freewriting exercises throughout the semester. Including these two tangible practices of reflection will push students to further develop as eloquent writers and citizens who are for and with others. When students do not reflect on a regular basis, they miss additional opportunities to critically think and build upon their previous learning.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CLASSROOM REFLECTION: DUFFY, FREIRE, AND THE JESUITS

One of the key connections among Duffy's *Provocations of Virtue*, the Jesuit value of rhetoric, and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, focuses on their advocacy for reflective practice in the writing classroom as a method to strengthen student writing. All three believe in the inherent power of written language to affect, motivate, and enact action in its readers. While Duffy promotes a type of writing instruction that solely advocates for an intensive study of the techniques of effective rhetorical writing, for instance, the Jesuits and Freire build upon this single goal; they believe that the author should not only enhance their understanding of effective rhetoric and argumentation but should also enhance their personal character and commitment to the common good throughout the learning process. When combined together, a Freirean-Jesuit rhetorical curriculum specifically calls for practices of transformative education in which the whole student benefits by reflecting on one's writing to reach *eloquentia perfecta* and on one's societal discourse and personal life to practice *cura personalis*. Nevertheless, Duffy, the Jesuit rhetorical curriculum, and Freire all point to the importance of an ethical, informed, and trustworthy author who continually investigates and refines their written prose through classroom reflection.

This focus on responsible use of language acts as a connective thread through the work of Duffy, the Jesuits, and Freire. Whether it is through the interactions of teachers and students in the classroom or on the page between writers and readers, an ethical and conscientious use of language is the ultimate goal of all three of these authors. This section of my paper addresses the

role of Duffy's rhetorical virtues, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and the Jesuit tradition of rhetorical education in building stronger reflective practices in first-year writing.

Duffy's specific claims in his book, *Provocations of Virtue* allows writing instructors, at JCU and other institutions, to understand the pertinent significance of overtly teaching the fundamentals of writerly reflection in first-year writing. He notes like many other rhetoricians in the field of composition studies that the act of writing inevitably consists of making choices that will affect intended readers. Though, he ultimately warns that if professors of EN 125 fail to explicitly show students how to contemplate their written choices and produce ethical essays, their students are less likely to understand the practices of efficacious argumentation, reflect on their own writing, and take into consideration those whom their work will affect (Duffy 11). By articulating the ways in which student writers often forget to consciously contemplate their rhetorical decisions as writers, Duffy reiterates how this explicit focus on ethics in the writing process can revitalize the composition course and the writing of undergraduates.

To do so, Duffy first details the significance of writerly reflection within the writing process, especially within the first-year writing course. He first describes that the very act of composing itself requires "ethical reflection and decision-making" because each word is chosen based upon the author's subject and intended purpose (Duffy 11). However, he notes that this does not mean that all writers deliberately contemplate these "ethical concerns as they write"; they may simply decide how to construct a sentence or paragraph without acknowledging how those rhetorical decisions matter for their essay or intended readers (11). From Duffy's previous experience of teaching first-year writing, only a small number of his students came to class who "learned to associate such ethical qualities with acts of speaking and writing... that is, [to] arrive

with the understanding that their rhetorical practices, their claims, proofs, and counterarguments, speak as much to their character as to their messages” (124-125). In other words, a majority of college writers who enroll in courses like Seminar on Academic writing are not acclimated yet to thinking about *how* they frame their written content on a general basis, nor may they regularly associate their prose with their own reputation as an author. Duffy communicates that many first-year writers, thus, have not received an overt form of instruction that is grounded in rhetorical reflection or discussions about constructing truthful and respectable claims. In general, writing teachers at large may teach the rhetorical triangle and the fundamentals of effective argumentation, but they may dismiss pertinent opportunities to show students how to reflect on their writerly choices and distinctively demonstrate the importance of this kind of reflection within the classroom.

With this realization, Duffy gives composition instructors at John Carroll and other first-year writing programs some ideas of how to explicitly teach ethical writing. He first proposes that each class should frequently look at various examples of writing and practice identifying specific rhetorical virtues on the page (Duffy 130, 124). By pinpointing where a writer strengthens their argument’s validity or fairly considers the viewpoint of opponents, students can begin to understand the rhetorical virtues and implement them into their own writing. Duffy also requests that the composition class should welcome “dissensus” by analyzing and composing effective counter arguments that rationally respond to other perspectives (133). To reconfigure the ways that EN 125 traditionally teaches argumentation, instructors should additionally treat a writer’s argument as more than a written claim but should encourage his or hers class think of it as “an exchange between others and ourselves” (116). Doing so, as Duffy

proposes, fosters a reflective atmosphere where students begin to deeply analyze the ways they talk to readers and critics who might disagree with their written opinions upon the page (116). Cultivating this type of awareness that reviews how students use language and respond to others, pertains to Freire's ideals of a liberatory pedagogy in which the classroom should promote equality and ethical teacher-to-student relationships.

Freire's Liberatory Pedagogy

Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* outlines how writing instructors can ethically and respectfully attend to students through his liberatory practices and challenge them to construct informed writing that catalyzes informed action through socio-political reflection. Although Freire wrote prolifically, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is his best-known work and the book in which he first articulated his pedagogy. As such, my essay will focus primarily on this text. In his book, Freire criticizes the traditional modes of instruction, what he terms the "banking" model, in which students are seen as "mere 'depositories of facts'" who memorize endless amounts of information and regurgitate it somewhere later (45-46). In this oppressive power relation, Freire writes, "the teacher talks and the students listen, the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, the teacher chooses the program content, and the students adapt to it, and the teacher is the Subject of the learning process while the pupils are mere objects" (46). From these statements, Freire showcases how easy it is for the instructor to become the focalization of the college classroom and stifle student voices even if he or she means well. In order to change this tradition of disproportionate teacher-to-student relationships, Freire argues that the class should become "co-investigators"

who learn alongside the professor and have the ability to choose what they learn throughout the course (53-54). One way to create a more just classroom environment, that Freire suggests in his book, is to encourage reflection; he especially views the practice of reflection as a means to uncover these oppressive forces and act against them in and outside of the academy, claiming that “[o]nly human beings are praxis—the praxis which, as the reflection and action which truly transforms reality, is the source of knowledge and creation” (73-74). For Freire, praxis is the combination of reflection and action; practice should arise out of constant reflection and reflection should be based on this practice. In all, reflection, in the light of this notion, becomes a means to perform purposeful actions and truly learn as an active intellectual.

Freire’s focus on reflective practice echoes the proposals of Duffy and the Jesuits for constant reflection in the first-year writing classroom. Under his method of socio-political reflection, critical contemplation must consist of constant dialogue and critical thinking (Freire 70). In the composition course, this “constant dialogue” that Freire insists upon might consist of class discussions or writing prompts in which students attempt to grapple with their relations with each other, their professor, and society in order to view language as a source of political agency and outlet for informed change. Both Freire and the Jesuits deeply defend writing that goes beyond the goal of eloquence; they attest the written product must have a higher purpose that betters the community and writer as well.

Jesuit Reflection: A Spiritual Practice that Necessitates Action

Freire’s focus on responsible language use and the importance of reflection parallels the Jesuit focus on reflective action. The desire to regularly reflect within the classroom began with

Saint Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. In their essay, "Contemporary Liberal Education: Slowing Down to Discern," Victor R. Declos and Randall P. Donaldson analyze the benefits of Jesuit contemplative practices from a historical and psychological perspective; they argue that reflection and activities that involve "slow thinking" can aid others to uncover new insights and activate deeper forms of learning in our fast paced society. They point out that when engaging the *Exercises*, participants follow a "'discernment of spirits,' contemplating one's own inner state and sense of self by exploring one's inner thoughts, imaginings, emotions, inclinations, desires, feelings, repulsions, and attractions...becoming sensitive to these movements, reflecting on them, and understanding where they came from and where they lead us" (8). Ignatian reflection, therefore, involves interpreting one's inner self and outside forces that affect their current individual state.

However, this Ignatian intention of a formed awareness should not just percolate within the individual but should lead to action. In his chapter, "Ignatian Discernment," James Gaffney argues that for Ignatius and the Jesuits, "the traditional contrast between contemplative life and active life did not seem radically dichotomous. What [Ignatius] typically contemplated was action" ; he reflected in order to know his inner self, build his relationship with God, and more importantly, to better serve those around him (155). In other words, Ignatius believed that followers of Christ should similarly reflect on their lives and the world around them in order to more readily respond to God's will and the needs of the Church. Ignatian contemplation, in this sense, should result in informed and purposeful actions that mirror a deliberate and just life. The cultivation of a Jesuit-like spirituality should, therefore, inform the whole person through continuous reflection and discernment, all the while, prompt one to act and respond to the

present needs of the society. For instance, in her essay “Reflection: Echos of Jesuit Principles in Rhetorical Theories,” Krista Ratcliffe argues that the basis of Jesuit learning rests upon the devotion to self-actualization for oneself and others. By looking at the history of Ignatian Spirituality and the *Exercises*, Ratcliffe argues that one can interpret the inherent connection of the Jesuit values of critical thinking, service, growth via discernment, and the development of character within the academy (397-400). In short, the nexus of Jesuit education, including their rhetorical curriculum, lies upon this desire for the attentive student who understands the importance of personal and academic contemplation to better mold them into an individual who is ready to serve our world.

This underlying foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises* heavily influenced the Jesuit liberal arts curriculum that develops the whole student. Leigh in his essay, described that the Jesuits cultivated an educational system “that is incarnational, that is transforming, and that is socially and historically embedded... As *transformative*, Jesuit spirituality calls for not a contemplative or private religious or philosophical life, but for an education that prepares students for responsible service of others to transform a broken world, to make it a kingdom of God, a place for justice and peace” (134). Echoing this claim of Leigh, every student at a Jesuit institution should ideally change in mind, body, and spirit and then use their individual transformation to influence those around them (Leigh 132). Likewise, Ratcliffe notes that the Jesuits follow the model of “[g]rowth via discernment [or] (*transformative learning*)” in which students are challenged to reflect on their lives and coursework, critically think, and go the extra mile to apply those lessons learned in the classroom to the “non academic setting of the world” (398).

By doing so, as Ratcliffe reminds us, students can come to know themselves more deeply and positively impact their society by promoting narratives of justice (398).

Without reflection, as Duffy, Freire, and the Jesuits through the example of Ignatius attest, student writers cannot ethically and effectively come to a genuine understanding of themselves or rightfully act within the world. Without action, one fails to fully utilize their skills and talents to better serve their community and develop as a man or woman for others. It is important for rhetoricians and instructors of first-year writing to acknowledge this pertinent connection of reflective action within Duffy's practice of ethical writing, Freire's method of socio-political reflection, and the Jesuit goals of rhetorical education. By looking at this underlying theme of reflection and informed action, teachers of rhetoric can realize the inherent need for almost every composition course to include practices of Freirean-Jesuit reflection to transform the whole student and in turn, enhance their rhetorical training.

JESUIT RHETORIC AND THE RATIO STUDIORUM

Since their ordination, the Jesuits have always had a profound devotion to the written word and rhetoric. John O'Malley, a Catholic historian and Jesuit priest confirms that the tradition of Jesuit rhetoric lies upon the notion that "a satisfying human life [is] not self-enclosed and self-absorbed but directed, at least in some measure, to the common weal... Rhetors were by definition, therefore, public persons" who spoke for themselves and "for the sake of other human beings" as well (X). Jesuit rhetorical education, then, prompts students to give back to their community in some way through the written or spoken word; only the effective communicator who becomes a learned person carries this power to enact change. Ignatius and his first followers

were so committed to this idea of the noble rhetor that they enrolled in a rigorous rhetorical curriculum at the University of Paris. Ronald Modras, in his essay, “The Spiritual Humanism of the Jesuits,” explains that due to Ignatius’s “Renaissance culture and upbringing... the early Jesuits believed in the power of education, or ‘good letters’”; they understood that a rhetorical education would enable them to not only become learned men who mastered the written language but also as citizens who could more effectively respond to those “on the margins” (13,7). In addition to this arduous rhetorical education they received in Paris, the Society of Jesus was known for transferring what they learned in the writing classroom to their service within the streets. In their book, *Traditions of Eloquence: The Jesuits and Modern Rhetorical Studies*, Cinthia Gannett and John Brereton show how the application of rhetoric is much more than demonstrating sophisticated arguments and exceptional communication skills for the Jesuits; it was a deliberate means to enact social reform, adapt to current circumstances, and live their lives as missionaries. Gannett and Brereton write that the Order “[was] constantly advised in all their ministries to adapt what they said and did to times, circumstances, and persons’... a very rhetorical stance” (3-4). Transferring this same rhetorical ideal to adapt and cater to one’s audience, as Bizzell highlights in her history, they radically altered their own behavior as ordained men in order to better serve their community; they rejected the traditional religious wear and refrained from certain priestly devotions to make themselves more readily available to those in need (41). Indeed, Gannett and Brereton confirm that from the birth of their organization, the Jesuit’s “own training was saturated with rhetoric, aiming for mastery of both theory and practice. [They] have always been identified as being, and creating, powerful rhetors across sacred and secular domains...the whole order can be seen as a ‘rhetorical system’” (2).

These early actions of the Society of Jesus and their diligent concern to adapt to the circumstances around them, percolated into the schools they built and their current educational mission to enhance the intellect and character of all who enter their universities; their students too, diligently studied the art of writing in order to better respond to others on the written page and those within their community.

Recent scholarship in Jesuit rhetoric points out key connections among Ignatian spirituality, rhetorical education, and ethical development. For instance, since the early Italian Renaissance, as Modras articulates, “good literature” and writing was often associated with one’s ethic (12). Similarly, Gannet and Brereton have noted that Ignatius in his own letters, calls others to strengthen their writing and words in order to move one’s “neighbors” for the “greater glory of God” (1). In his book *The Ignatian Spirituality Reader*, David Fleming defines the practice of Jesuit rhetoric as “the study of speaking and writing well, a historically prominent and remarkable program of instruction involving both theory and practice aimed at the moral and intellectual development of the student” (qtd. in Paley 347). To create institutions that similarly fostered their dedication to reflection and the common good, the Society of Jesus needed a rhetorical curriculum that taught audience awareness, accelerated argumentation, and persuasion to generate a student body who understood the components of effective communication. These learning goals would eventually be articulated in, arguably, the most important document of Jesuit education: *The Ratio Studiorum* of 1599.

The Ratio Studiorum outlines, among other subjects, the Jesuit guidelines to the teaching of rhetoric. In her essay, “Cura Personalis in Practice: Rhetoric’s Modern Legacy,” Karen Paley shows that under this published document, “the goal of education was the classical man who had

reached ‘perfect eloquence, *eloquentia perfecta*’ in which the speaker knew how to convey his thoughts “with facility and elegance” (347). Though this value refers to the character of the speaker as well; if one’s audience perceives the author to denote good character, they are more likely to support his or her words, thereby strengthening their argument. As we have seen, the end goal of Jesuit rhetoric is to cultivate what Paley calls “a certain kind of person: engaged, articulate, resourceful, civil—a person trained in, conditioned by, and devoted to what one calls eloquence” (347). Under this criteria of *eloquentia perfecta*, writers are to demonstrate a finesse of the written word and emulate Duffy’s virtues of ethical writing. This value of “perfect” writing along with the author’s character has paved the way for developing the liberal arts curriculum at Jesuit universities throughout the centuries.

The Values of Eloquentia Perfecta and Cura Personalis

It is important to note that the Jesuits have developed numerous goals for higher education. However, the two attributes, *eloquentia perfecta* and *cura personalis*, detailed below, directly relate to the writing classroom and the intentions of John Carroll’s First Year Writing Program. By recognizing their many meanings and what these two concepts look like within practical instruction, first-year writing teachers at JCU and at large can know how to tailor their daily lessons to include this type of Jesuit-Freirean reflection that I will argue for throughout the following pages.

Eloquentia Perfecta

This concept of *eloquentia perfecta* in *The Ratio Studiorum* derived in part from the Jesuit admiration of the Roman orators, Cicero and Quintilian (Gannett and Brereton 9). In her review of Jesuit rhetoric, Bizzell shows how the early Jesuit rhetorical curriculum read and studied many of Cicero's texts due to his exceptional word choice and "ethical content" (43). Likewise, Gannett and Brereton point out that "Cicero served as the embodiment of the Jesuit ideal: he was a supreme stylist, whose facility with language they regarded as perfect, and his life provided an example of a public rhetoric whose broad range of writings served as a basis for emulation" (10). Throughout history and today, the composition course in higher education aims to teach students how to write and present themselves in a similar fashion.

One reason for Cicero's influence on the Jesuits was his insistence on the social role of rhetoric, a role that echoes the Freirean-Jesuit focus on reflection and the greater good. In his book on rhetoric, *De Inventione*, Cicero argues that orators are credible only if they speak with eloquence and promote the common good, noting that "wisdom without eloquence does too little for the good of states, but that eloquence without wisdom is generally highly disadvantageous and never helpful" (3). Here, Cicero endorses the author who writes with "wisdom" and an awareness of their society, doing so in a way that is clear and aesthetically pleasing. He goes on to claim that the writer who writes for their own sake, "is nurtured into something useless to himself and harmful to his country, but the man who equips himself with the weapons of eloquence, not to be able to attack the welfare of his country but to defend it...will be a citizen most helpful and most devoted to his own interests and those of the community" (4). Like Duffy,

the Jesuits, and Freire, Cicero defends the speaker or writer who composes with awareness and clarity with the intent to positively affect their audience and the world around them.

Similar to Cicero's focus on eloquence and the common good, the Roman orator Quintilian, advocated parallel goals, goals that the Jesuits would later adapt in their development of *eloquentia perfecta*. In his book, *An Introduction to Classical Rhetoric: Essential Readings*, James Williams shows how Quintilian encouraged the student of rhetoric to become a "good man who speaks well" (401). In Book I of Quintilian's foundational text, *Institutio Oratoria*, which outlines his educational theories, he himself states, "[s]o let our orator be the sort of man who can truly be called 'wise,' not only perfect in morals but also in knowledge and his general capacity for speaking" (403). From this statement and the similar claims made by Cicero, it is evident that the eloquent author must demonstrate their expertise in effective communication and maintain an ethical rhetorical stance so that their audience might perceive them as this "good" citizen who means well. This ideal of the well-versed and considerate author is crucial to embed within the curriculum of first-year writing because it reminds students to compose in such a way that is purposeful and acknowledges the other; a discernible link that Freirian pedagogy, Jesuit education, and Duffy support. Likewise, when students are challenged to maintain such an ethical and rhetorical stance of good character, they must reflect, look back, and contemplate every word they choose as an author, refining their rhetorical stance and credibility on a continual basis; students cannot attain eloquence and good character without deeply thinking about their writing and how it responds to their audience and the outside world.

Both of these classical orators heavily impacted the way the Jesuits constructed their rhetorical curriculum and its value of *eloquentia perfecta*. Due to their influence, students at

Jesuit institutions often imitated the stylistic moves of Cicero and Quintilian, “combined with moral discernment...focus[ing] on ethics and communication, virtue and authority, knowledge and social obligation” (Peters 322). This insistence on discernment and ethical communication connects to my argument since, as Paley notes in her essay on *cura personalis*, the Jesuit writing course seeks to generate young adults ““who are intellectually, morally, and religiously integrated and responsible to become public leaders in a well-governed state” (347). The end goal of creating aesthetically pleasing speech, as she insists, is to improve one’s expression of thought, one’s personal character, and one’s ability to act for the greater good (346). Paley, therefore, along with other researchers on Jesuit rhetoric, unveil the connections between *eloquentia perfecta* and informed action. The good writer must double as an educated rhetorician and active citizen who possesses this “blend of verbal facility and ethical action” (Bizzell 39). In other ways, he or she must possess “the capacity to reason, to feel, to express oneself to act, harmonizing virtue with learning” (Paley 347). Thus, the act of formulating admirable academic writing for the Jesuits is a continuous process that aims to shape the whole student as an informed intellectual and person of good character. K.J. Peters in his essay, “Jesuit Rhetoric and the Core Curriculum at Loyola Marymount University” builds upon this notion that to produce eloquent writing, students at Jesuit institutions receive instruction that goes “beyond rote knowledge” (322). They instead learn how to engage in “more complex learning skills of understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (Peters 322). Teaching this value of polished prose simultaneously works to transform the intellect of the student and the “virtue” of their written assignments (Gannett and Brereton 10).

Hence, *eloquentia perfecta* connects to my essay's discussion of ethics and reflection because, like Duffy's provocations of virtue, *eloquentia perfecta* relates to the type of person the writer displays upon the page—in other words, character. This idea of eloquent prose often works to transform the student writer's credibility, what the rhetoricians call *ethos*. In other words, *eloquentia perfecta* becomes a tool of reflection for students to see the connection between eloquent writing and good character. This focus on responsible language use connects, too, with the second Jesuit idea, *cura personalis*, an idea that shares the similar goal of transforming the author's character through reflection.

Cura Personalis

Another main focus articulated in *The Ratio Studiorum*, one that remains a major consideration in current Jesuit rhetorical education, is the treatment of students as active learners or whole people, known as *cura personalis*. *Cura personalis* refers to the care of the whole person which can manifest itself in numerous ways throughout the writing classroom; since the 1960's scholars have related it to the pedagogy and the character of the teacher, "the relationship between student and teacher, and the students' relationship to the larger community" (Pace and Merys 243). Overall, this term refers to the human dimensions of a person, ultimately recognizing that all students are a human person inside and outside of the university. An institution that cultivates this ideal, as Paley notes, "encourages personal integration of the student's thinking, feeling, choosing, evolving self. It does this by fostering not only academic and professional development but also physical, social, psychological, moral, cultural, and religious/spiritual growth" (346). Fostering the conversion of character like *eloquentia perfecta*,

“care for the whole student” welcomes both the intellectual and the “personal” (Paley 356). Deliberately attending to the well being of every student also exemplifies many of the pedagogical goals throughout *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that strive for humane practices within the writing classroom.

Freire’s proposal of a liberatory pedagogy in which the instructor and class work together to develop an ongoing attentive relationship, provides one way to invoke this Jesuit value of *cura personalis*. In their essay, “Paulo Freire and the Jesuit Tradition: Jesuit Rhetoric and Freirean Pedagogy,” Pace and Merys argue that the Jesuit influence in Freire’s native Brazil influenced his theories of liberatory pedagogy. Two arenas where this influence took shape, they note, is through *cura personalis* and *eloquentia perfecta*. Pace and Merys explain that the “care for the (individual, whole) person...[also] focuses on the personal relationship between teacher as guide and student as journeyer, a relationship in which the teacher listens to the student during teaching and draws students toward personal initiative and responsibility for learning” (243). Being fully attentive and available for students derives from this Freirean and Jesuit idea of treating each student as “fully human” or equal.

While first-year writing instructors undoubtedly serve their students during class time, the Jesuits argue that every EN 125 instructor should guide and mentor their students in and outside of the classroom. Pace and Merys build upon this argument and show in their essay that one of the ideas that Freire took from the Jesuits is that writing teachers must be “present to the student at every point in the learning process... [which means] more than simple availability during office hours. It centers on an effort to understand the student as a person and a learner at every point in the student’s journey in education” (243). This conception of frequent adaptation echoes

Paley's insistence that teachers must be attuned "to the reality of the person in front of you" (348). This insistence lies at the heart of the Ignatian commitment to justice and the common good; if writing teachers are better equipped to listen to students and see them as more than mere vessels to be filled, they create an atmosphere in which true transformative learning can occur. Implementing *cura personalis* into the first-year writing course, then, not only signifies concern for student success, but attempts to follow Freire's goal to neutralize the teacher-to-student power dynamic. When instructors are present to their class on an individual basis, as Pace and Merys show Freire learned from the Jesuits, "both the teacher and the student are jointly responsible for discernment, growth, and development" (244). This development of the teacher-to-student relationship, thus, can enhance reflective practices in the classroom, laying the ground for an environment that is better equipped to spur the academic and personal growth of the whole student.

One way to invoke *cura personalis* in the writing classroom, and one that will be addressed in more detail later in my discussion of EN 125, is to allow students to compare written texts to their own individual lives. When given this opportunity to associate the written word with their own experiences "students can transform their philosophical beliefs, sense of self, and *reexamine what they think*" (Paley 354). They, in other words, can propel their self development as young adults and citizens if they are to uncover new connections between themselves and their academic course content. In his essay, David Leigh explains that "*cura personalis* is a process that leads to "engaged writing" or a "self engaged" pedagogy that enables students to contemplate their own position in the world (qtd. in Paley 346). This value of the whole self therefore moves beyond the gates of the academy and asks students to reflect upon

their own writing and beliefs as a college writer and citizen like we have seen in Freire's method of sociopolitical reflection; a concept that regards both the academic and "personal" as equally important. Those who garner a better understanding of their sense of self and the society around them ultimately produce more informed and credible writing that is likely to enact change, promote social justice, and attract a wide variety of audiences. Therefore, both *eloquentia perfecta* and *cura personalis* are essential to incorporate into any composition classroom that desires to produce the ethical and well-versed student.

In short, both of the Jesuit values of teaching rhetoric, *eloquentia perfecta* and *cura personalis*, derived from *The Ratio Studiorum*, demand that writing teachers teach the written word in a way that pushes first-year writers to excel as an author and person who consistently communicates their point of view with a credible rhetorical stance and polished language. In order for students to emulate the techniques of Quintilian and Cicero, they in addition to learning the fundamentals of effective rhetoric, must develop their personal character which as Leigh suggests, can be done through Freirean reflection by reflecting on their lives and world.

Freire and the Jesuit Tradition

Freirean reflection, the responsible use of language, and the Jesuit focus on rhetoric and contemplation overlap in numerous ways. Yet, not much has been written about the link between the Jesuits and Freire. The only current research that overtly addresses this connection is Pace and Merys. In their essay, they argue that compositionists should take more seriously the practices founded by both Ignatius and Freire due to their inherent overlap of theoretical values.

They detail a more specific alignment between the Jesuit rhetorical curriculum and the claims made by this forefather of liberatory pedagogy:

Both Freire and the Jesuits share the common belief in the powerful role that language plays as the principal means of coming to know the world, in organizing daily reality, and in transforming the self and the world. Language for Freire and the Jesuits, is both a reflective and active practice. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he recognizes that knowledge of the world begins with knowledge and understanding of the word and that knowledge of language should lead to action within the world. (Pace and Merys 242)

Thus, for the followers of the Society of Jesus and Freirean pedagogy, the written and spoken word should involve both internal reflection and a greater consciousness of the world which should then lead to change (Pace and Merys 235). If the First-Year Writing Program at John Carroll adopts practices of Freirean-Jesuit reflection, students will discover new ways to wrestle with and express controversial topics, and interpret writing as a powerful tool rather than a passive activity they complete for the instructor. The composition course at JCU would then build upon its foundation that prompts students to grow as graduates who are challenged to do good within their own academic writing and personal lives.

While Freire's theories from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* revolve more around the politicized power dynamic of the teacher and student, problem posing and Jesuit education both call for a just classroom environment where students meld the written language with critical reflection—reflection on both word and world. Bizzell, in her essay, recognizes this connection as well when she points out the almost coincidental relationship between Freire's ideas and those

of the Jesuits. She stipulates that “Freire, Catholic educated and active in radical Catholic social-action groups, probably borrowed his metaphor from a traditional Jesuit way of talking about educational ideals” (48-49). Freire’s endorsement of reflection that spurs necessary action mirrors the Jesuit belief that one’s internal and contemplative life should lead one to reflect and then make effective decisions. He too, cannot view reflection without action. Freire asserts that “[w]ithin the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis [action and reflection] (60). Like the Jesuits and Duffy, the written language for Freire carries an ethical power and responsibility for all its composers.

In order to draw a more rooted connection between Freire and Jesuit rhetorical education, along with the importance of reflection in EN 125 at JCU, my audience must first understand the basics of Jesuit reflective practices. In the following section, I show why the Society of Jesus and the schools they constructed so readily contemplated the academic content of each course and how it related to the outside world. Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*, the first published document of the Jesuits, instructed its ordained men to continuously reflect and ignited the Ignatian desire to deeply investigate oneself and the environment around them. In general, the *Spiritual Exercises* spurred Jesuit educators to later transfer this individualized cultivation of spiritual awareness to the hallways of public schools.

REFLECTION IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

Reflection in the writing classroom plays a pivotal role in the learning process and is crucial in order for the student to develop *eloquentia perfecta* and to use language critically. In

their research, Declos and Donaldson suggest that reflection is more crucial than ever for a society that often relies on “fast thinking [that is] generally biased by preconceived, if subconscious, notions or stereotypes,” a point that builds upon Duffy’s remarks on our quick and inconsiderate societal discourse (8). When writers are reminded to slow down and reconsider their rhetorical choices, like Declos and Donaldson have recommended, they are able to consider more thoughtful and effective ways to construct their argument. Reflective thinking or “looking and looking again,” can also “lead to more openness to the point-of-view of others... [because] [i]t allows us to view our own ideas and those of others critically (8). If the goal of the First-Year Writing Program at John Carroll is to produce student writers who fully understand academic argumentation, audience awareness, and the role writing plays to build knowledge, composition instructors must cultivate a sense of “slow or deliberate thinking” when teaching the fundamentals of rhetoric.

Scholars of writing studies affirm the positive benefits that the composition course can reap from applying this Jesuit value of reflection to their day-to-day lessons. Renea Frey in “Rhetorics of Reflection: Revisiting Listening Rhetoric through Mindfulness, Empathy, and Nonviolent Communication” provides an example of a writing classroom that fosters this notion of reflective thinking; students frequently practice deep listening, empathy, mindfulness, and reflection in order to develop a more mature open minded rhetorical stance; the same aim of Duffy’s *Provocations of Virtue* (94). Here, Frey argues that “practices that promote mindfulness, introspection, and reflection could ‘enable rhetorical agency’ so that students become better listeners, readers, writers, and gain more comfort with uncertainty” (95). Practicing activities such as these that enforce deliberate awareness, establish new ways for writers to better grasp or

address their current rhetorical situation or task at hand. For instance, Frey comments on the role that contemplation plays in giving students more of a primary role in their writing, assignment topic, and chosen argument. She notes that “conventional notions of thinking posits a divide between the thinking subject and the object thought about, which allows little space for the deeper forms of understanding, empathy, and listening” whereas “contemplative pedagogies” value the idea of *kairos*, a rhetorical term that alludes to the notion of “being fully present” in which students can more deeply encounter their course material (96). In other words, Jesuit methods of rhetorical reflection can enable students to actively learn, develop new insights, and to become further involved with their own writing process.

By constructing a rhetorical curriculum that prioritizes writerly contemplation, composition teachers increase the likelihood for their class to improve *how* they write and logically construe their ideas on the page. From Frey’s students practicing reflective activities in tandem with their assigned writing projects throughout the semester, she testifies that students in their written essays were able to think in new ways that “went beyond conventional intellectualized knowing” (99). She explains that “[they] were able to gain a different type of awareness of their subjects, enacting the kind of awareness-based, ethical, rhetorical stance that creates the ‘necessary linkage between assertion and compassion’” (99). Frey, therefore shows us how an overt practice of reflection in EN 125 can prompt students to produce more eloquent and considerate writing that acknowledges its readers and the voices of critics. Students in her class were not only able to compose more “ethical and effective arguments” that adapted to their audience, but they were pushed to develop a “stance of openness” in which “*understanding* means listening to discourses not *for* intent but *with* intent” (99). As a result, Frey’s class

enhanced their abilities to write with greater awareness, compose well-informed arguments, and maintain an ethical and open rhetorical stance as first-year writers. We can see, here, that by pairing the traditional writing curriculum with reflection, students can more easily adhere to the components of *eloquentia perfecta* and Duffy's definition of the ethical and considerate writer.

In addition to facilitating the ideals of *eloquentia perfecta*, an overt reflective classroom supports the idea of the "whole person" (Frey 94). These reflective practices allow the student to improve their writing but to also "develop concentration, deepen understanding and insight, and...cultivate awareness and compassion,' all practices that support *cura personalis*" because students are given valuable abilities that they can use as a person, employee, or citizen as they mature and leave the university (95). When undergraduates are engaged in writerly based reflection, they are able to think more deeply and go beyond the practices of critical thinking (95-96). In general, contemplative practices within the composition course possess the ability to transform the whole student along with their academic writing.

In order to understand how the first-year writing course at John Carroll can similarly benefit from implementing reflective practices, the subsequent sections will outline the current pedagogical goals of John Carroll's First-Year Writing Program. More specifically, readers will receive a brief background of how Seminar on Academic Writing at JCU currently implements practices of reflection.

Jesuit and Freirean Reflection in John Carroll's First-Year Writing Program

As part of the John Carroll University core curriculum, all students must complete Seminar on Academic writing, EN 125 in order to graduate. Part of the First-Year Writing

Program aims to foster the ideals of *eloquentia perfecta* through teaching the fundamentals of academic writing: effective argumentation, appropriate implementation of research, and clear understandable prose (“Program Overview”). While the program encourages students to reflect on their own writing and individual lives through the common five assignments throughout every EN 125 course, the curriculum does not currently display an overt implementation of reflection as Duffy, Freire, and the Jesuits have proposed. The five mandatory assignments of the curriculum include the rhetorical analysis, commentary, research, and personal narrative essays, all which focus on building the student’s ability to understand the perspectives of others and cultivate their own argument within the conventions of acceptable academic writing.

In the rhetorical analysis, the first major assignment of EN 125 at JCU, students must analyze an author’s argument and interpret how that author uses or fails to use the three attributes of the rhetorical triangle: ethos, pathos, and logos. The commentary assignment then challenges the class to compose their own original argument in response to the claims of another author. After this first half of EN 125, students are expected to write a lengthy research paper, continuing to build upon the previous learned skills of argumentation, and then compose a personal narrative essay in which the writer describes a significant event in their life that has impacted their current identity as a person. The final and most summative assignment of Seminar on Academic Writing requires each student to revise at least two of the major essays they completed throughout the course along with a cover letter that details how they have grown as a writer during the semester. Some select first-year writing instructors will also ask students to turn in a cover letter that reflects on their finished product for each of the four major essays before the portfolio project. By learning more about the course trajectory of EN 125, it is evident that

students are continually practicing their composing skills throughout the semester with the hope that they will become more informed and credible writers. Though, adding more deliberate practices of reflection to this rhetorical curriculum would further fulfil this goal.

To correctly enact the primary goals of the First-Year Writing Program at JCU— to produce well-versed writers who understand their composing process and the power of their written words, reflective practices must stand at the forefront of the curricula. The current assignments of EN 125 cue students to understand the fundamentals of rhetorical argumentation and begin to develop qualities of *eloquentia perfecta*, but they do not require each student to consciously contemplate their writing choices throughout the course; students, in this way, are not explicitly taught to decipher whether their writerly choices are ethical nor are they told to critically think about how their writing responds to the outside world on an ongoing basis. Therefore, composition instructors at JCU should consider assigning frequent reflective assignments throughout Seminar on Academic Writing that adhere to the pedagogical goals of teaching rhetoric for Duffy, the Jesuits, and Freire.

Current Practices of Reflection in EN 125

As noted above, many of the current assignments in EN 125 incorporate reflection. The personal narrative essay, portfolio assignment, and the act of composing cover letters do in fact ask students to either reflect on their personal lives or their progress as a writer. However, research within the composition field confirms that in order for true reflection or metacognition to occur, the writing course needs to necessitate continuous practices that foster reflection throughout the entire semester. In other words, professors should require students to reflect in the

same way that they might for the personal narrative assignment or the portfolio project at the beginning of the semester. JCU's First-Year Writing Program should therefore consider adding a more overt implementation of both writerly and worldly contemplation as part of the whole rhetorical curriculum. The following section will detail why a more deliberate addition of contemplative practices within EN 125 is needed to foster these two values of *eloquentia perfecta* and *cura personalis*.

Fostering Continuous Reflection in EN 125

Recent research within the composition field demonstrates why regular reflection in the composition course is so crucial to student success. For example, Jeff Sommers, in his essay "The Class Collage: Reflection Revisited," proves that instructors who do not make reflection a part of the ongoing course curriculum are not allowing students to reach their full potential as a writer. He suggests that portfolios or "final reflective assignments only work if the students have been engaged in reflection throughout the semester" (103). If students are not taught how to speculate or are not engaged in contemplative activities on a consistent basis, Sommers argues, they are less likely to genuinely reflect and exhibit the full benefits of an end-of-the-semester assignment. Without a deliberate focalization on reflection in first-year writing, he also notes that students will sometimes interpret cover letters or end-of-the-semester reflections as busy work or feel obligated to write what the instructor wants to hear to boost their grade during the final weeks of a course. As a result, he explains, instructors might encounter surface level reflections in which writers struggle to extract greater meanings from the course as a whole (101). Therefore, in order for undergraduates to truly become insightful authors who fully engage in

their own learning, Sommers articulates that students must regularly ponder their prose, methods of argumentation, and their beliefs about the writing process (101). In other words, writers must continuously evaluate their prose and their new formed perspectives as a writer. This research demonstrates the necessity of adding overt practices of reflection to the EN 125 classroom so that college writers are taught to thoroughly think about and evaluate their writing and rhetorical stance as developing authors.

In order to fully follow the integrated curriculum of the Jesuits whose aim is to produce students who eloquently communicate and carry an astute sense of self and their audience, students need to deeply analyze their rhetorical choices, writing process, and beliefs as a writer on an ongoing basis. Two classroom practices that can be employed in EN 125 to deliberately facilitate a Freirean-Jesuit reflective pedagogy include the dialectic journal and freewriting.

The Dialectic Journal

One way to encourage continuous reflection in the writing classroom is through the dialectic journal. In her book, *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*, Ann E. Berthoff argues that the dialectic journal allows students to reflect on their own writing and critically think in new and innovative ways. In this journal, as Berthoff notes, students write observations, thoughts, or ideas from a class lesson or lecture on one side of the journal and then critically reflect on these written notes on the opposite column. She describes that this technique “encourag[es] habits of reflective questioning” that asks students to further observe how they interpreted or wrote down the original information in the first column (45). With this method, the class engages in a double reflection on the written word and their

own writing process. Berhoff explains that this “double-entry” technique is effective because “it provides a way for the student to conduct that “‘continuing audit of meaning’ that is at the heart of learning to read and write critically. The facing pages are in dialogue with one another” (45). By writing in such a format, EN 125 courses are able to interpret the information or observations they originally jotted down and decide how they should respond on a deeper level to their previous remarks through critical and innovative thinking (45). This practical technique joins the Jesuit ideal of reflection and *eloquentia perfecta* because students are prompted to study the written word and better understand their own writing process by looking and looking again.

Another benefit of this dialectic journal lies in its practical flexibility; instructors can use it to serve any type of assignment or course theme. For example, writing teachers can use the notebook as a means for students to engage in Freirean-Jesuit reflection by requiring their students to respond to a reading or discussion that raises questions about socio-political topics. Doing so, would encourage students to reflect on their written language within the first column and any pertinent societal injustices that are discussed during class. Treating this tool in such a way would additionally motivate students to uncover the power of their written thoughts and potentially lead them to promote the common good through their writing and behavior outside of the classroom. Therefore, the dialectical journal can empower students to adhere to the goals of Duffy’s *Provocations of Virtue*, Jesuit Rhetoric, and Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: to cultivate a habit of making responsible decisions in one’s writing and personal life through reflection on both the written word and world.

Another practical way to use Berhoff’s journal consists of treating it as a creative outlet where students record their observations throughout their day and then reflect upon them within

the following page. Allowing students to use their own personal experiences as a means to discover other insights outside of the classroom could also challenge students to engage in awareness based practices on a continuous basis. In giving them the opportunity to write and make meaning outside of EN 125, this practice echoes the Jesuit value of the whole person, *cura personalis*, because pupils are invited to connect their own personal observations to their writing process or world. Instructors of first-year writing at JCU should deeply consider assigning a dialectical journal to implement practices of regular reflection throughout Seminar on Academic Writing. When assigned, this ongoing activity will push writers to thoroughly study the ways in which they respond through the written word, enhancing their awareness of their own writing and the environment around them.

Freewriting and the Reflective Classroom

While the dialectic journal encourages students to critically think and reflect simultaneously, instructors can also introduce the practice of frequent freewriting to honor the ideal of the critical writer and citizen. The concept of freewriting as a pedagogical tool to teach first-year writing was popularized by Peter Elbow in such books as *Writing Without Teachers* and *Writing with Power*. Freewriting involves the act of informal writing in which a student is given an impromptu prompt and asked to write without their pencil leaving the page. During this activity, writers are to dismiss all formal conventions of academic writing such as style, word choice, and spelling. Once they complete their first response to a specific question, the writer chooses a pertinent idea or insight from their initial draft and then completes a second free-write that revolves around their chosen point. These responses are usually not graded as a formal

assignment but, instead, are used to generate new ideas or insights in relation to a daily prompt or upcoming assignment. Similar to the double-entry journal, students are told to look at their work, reflect, and then continue writing, creating an opportunity to critically think and better understand the prose written in front of them.

This practice itself also fosters the Jesuit ideal of *eloquentia perfecta*. When students are freed from the pressure of correctness, they can more effectively brainstorm, construe their ideas, and later compose in a way that is more natural, fluid, and elegant. While some might initially argue that the act of freewriting hinders one's ability to practice organized and thoughtful prose, it challenges the student writer to think more deeply about their response and speculate how they might better express these thoughts in a later essay (Bean and Elbow 15). By using freewriting as a method to brainstorm, students can more easily express their ideas on paper "so that [they] might explore without fear and find out what [they] think" (6). When first-year writers are given this new outlet and space for low-stakes writing, they often discover new ways to present and grapple with potential arguments. Janet Bean and Peter Elbow in their essay, "Freewriting and Free Speech: A Pragmatic Perspective" point out that this classroom practice "can [actually] help students discover that [this] 'inappropriate' 'talking onto the page' sometimes yields language that's better for writing than their careful 'writing language'" (17). In other words, freewriting can be used as a reflective stepping stone to later produce more clear and eloquent language in EN 125.

Frequent freewriting exercises within Seminar on Academic Writing additionally adhere to the Freirean and Jesuit ideal of treating every student as a whole person. In "Utilizing Critical Writing Exercises to Foster Critical Thinking," Sandra Abbelglen et al. explains that this activity

temporarily empowers students and aligns with Freire's notion of a liberatory pedagogy because it "acknowledge[s] that students are not empty vessels; they are encouraged to build on their existing knowledge and are asked to take an active role in learning" (6). Writing freely promotes the aspects of *cura personalis* because students are seen as capable writers who can think and write for themselves without the teacher waiting nearby, ready to grade with a pen in hand (6). While this rhetorical tool can be used as a technique for students to reflect on their own writing, it can also prompt undergraduates to enact in Freirean-Jesuit reflection, like the dialectical journal, when they are asked to respond to specific prompts that question narratives of injustice.

Similar to Freire's views in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Bean and Elbow's essay argues for freewriting that goes beyond reflection on just the written word. They claim that this practice "carries an inherent political effect" and urge students to use it as a means to contemplate their world (15). By facilitating open ended prompts about socio-political topics, student writers can become more informed citizens who have "explore[ed] the ways in which they are often shaped by or 'written by' larger forces of authority and society—family, friends, and the wider culture" (16). Freely composing about such controversial topics can also enhance one's ability to express their thoughts in an ethical and respectful way as Duffy has proposed. For example, when a class is asked to look at their first response to a prompt that raises socio-political questions, they are often encouraged to reconsider their answers and achieve a more open stance that acknowledges the thoughts and arguments of others during their next free-write or formally assigned essay. Requiring JCU's composition instructors to facilitate frequent freewriting activities such as these, would support this ideal of regular reflection within the classroom that asks writers to slow down and reconsider their thoughts and the ways they present them upon the page. Overall, the

practice of continual freewriting in EN 125 can produce first-year writers who are ethical, educated, and devoted to humane discourses.

In order to practically implement the Jesuit-Freirian reflection that I have proposed, instructors in the First-Year Writing Program should implement frequent freewriting practices and the dialectical journal so that students might write more clearly and continue to build their ethical character.

CONCLUSION

Many first-year writing courses at large, and at John Carroll University in particular, have yet to implement an overt reflective curriculum that enhances the writing, character, and commitment to the common good in undergraduate students. Composition instructors, especially those at Jesuit institutions, have much to learn about the Society of Jesus and their long-forged tradition of teaching rhetoric and contemplative values throughout higher education. For John Duffy, Paulo Freire, and for many Jesuit educators, reflection lies at the center of achieving these goals of *eloquentia perfecta*, *cura personalis*, and informed action that many first-year writing programs strive to emulate. By looking at the often unnoticed theoretical connections between these three educational theorists, first-year writing instructors can better understand the significance of teaching deliberate reflective practices that prompt students to more deeply contemplate their rhetorical choices and the world around them.

To reinforce the rhetorical aims of the Jesuits, of Freire's vision of liberatory instruction in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and of Duffy's focalization on ethical writing in *Provocations of Virtue*, all three encourage reflection as a means to transformation and action. By reflecting on

one's ethical choices as a writer and how they talk to others upon the page, college students are more likely to strengthen their prose, rhetorical stance, and character, becoming the good person who speaks well to paraphrase Quintilian. Specifically, Freire's version of socio-political reflection asks students to critically investigate issues of social justice, challenging undergraduates to uncover the power of the written word and become more informed writers who promote narratives of social justice and the common good. Without regularly assigning activities that exhibit these methods of Jesuit-Freirean reflection, such as the dialectic notebook and freewriting in EN 125, first-year writers may miss the opportunity to develop fully as informed and responsible graduates who will go forth to set the world on fire after they leave the university. If we as composition teachers at John Carroll University are called to empower and transform the whole student, we must follow the rhythm of the bell tower's permeating chimes which tell us to look back, reflect, and reinvent our educational praxis on a continual basis.

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