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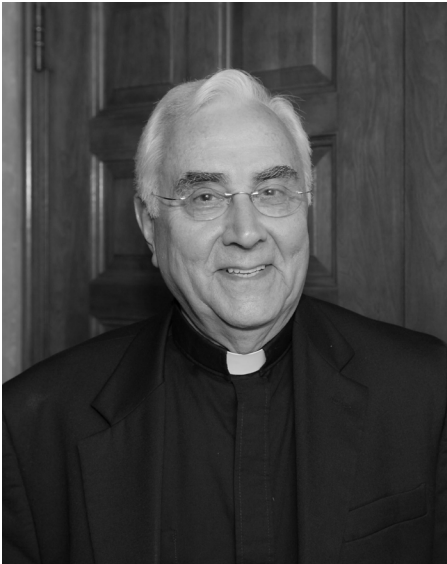
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Chapter 14

Educating for Liberation: Musings on Pedagogy in a Spiritan Key

Catholic academic institutions cannot isolate themselves from the world, they must know how to enter bravely into the Areopagus of current culture and open dialogue, conscious of the gift that they can offer to everyone.¹

Part One: Aspirations and Inspirations for Catholic Education Ministry



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In 1962, I was in my second year of theological studies expecting to be ordained the following year. It was also the year of the first session of the Second Vatican Council. During the same year, I encountered a confrere, Father Anton Morgenroth, CSSp, who, after working in Tanzania for some years, had returned to the States to do an Ed. D. at Columbia University. Meeting him and enjoying his friendship until he died at age ninety-one, had a radical impact on me as a religious-missionary priest, changing my worldview theologically, philosophically, and spiritually.

1. Pope Francis to the Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014.

Why? “Morgey,” as he was affectionately known, introduced me to the writings of Romano Guardini, one of the greatest Catholic thinkers of the twentieth century. Guardini’s approach to life’s great questions in the light of Christian revelation radically changed my way of thinking and shaped my journey in educational ministry, both as a teacher and an administrator. I learned from Guardini how to admire the great Tradition of the church, but not to submit to the temptation merely to return to past forms in which that Tradition was historically expressed. Rather the Tradition should be seen in tandem with the vast changes shaping a new world order. Fear of the changes taking place would end up in defensiveness; true faith and hope would possess the courage necessary to relate the Catholic worldview (*Weltanschauung*) to a world which no longer offered cultural supports for faith.

In his *Letters from Lake Como*,² Guardini gives masterful intuitions into the immense cultural paradigm shift already underway on a world scale. One of the areas Guardini is concerned about in the *Letters* is how we conceive of education and pedagogy in this shift of cultural paradigm. He writes:

True education is rooted in being, not in knowledge A new humanity must emerge of more profound intelligence, new freedom, new inwardness, new form . . .

I find everywhere a longing for living education . . . The standards of authenticity, vitality, and essentiality are awakening, and the desire for a new mode of education is present, dubious though the results may yet be in detail. Those who are of this spirit recognize one another for all the differences.³

Guardini⁴ is concerned with the relationship between faith and culture, faith and reason, faith and character. When we met, Morgenroth had just completed his doctoral dissertation, “Foundations of Pedagogy according to Romano Guardini,” in his conclusion summarizing elements of Guardini’s insights into “pedagogical impulse.” Guardini’s contribution is particularly enlightening for what can distinguish pedagogy/education in Catholic-sponsored institutions of learning, and more particularly, when related to elements of our Spiritan pedagogy. I say, “can distinguish,” because in order for it to do so, it must be intentional and flow from the very life of those who participate in what Guardini calls the “pedagogical impulse.”

2. *Letters from Lake Como* (transl. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Eerdmans: Michigan/Cambridge, U.K., 1994). Original: *Briefe von Comer See* (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag, 1927).

3. *Ibid.*, 88, 83, 94.

4. *Grundlegung der Bildungslehre* (Wurtzburg: Werkbund-Verlag, 1926).

Briefly, Morgenroth summarizes some of Guardini's insights as follows:

1. Guardini attempts to find a philosophy of education rather than philosophize about, or apply philosophical insights to, education. He recognizes that the whole problem of man's formation is deeply embedded in religion, in the world of ultimate ideas, in philosophy and psychology.⁵
2. Guardini bases his philosophy of education on two German words: *Bild*, the *image* of what constitutes a person, and *Bildung*, which signifies the pedagogical impulse, *the why and how of the educational process*. The impulse or driving force flows from and responds to the image of the person being educated. "Man's dignity, his personal and individual creation and call by God, are taken for granted."⁶
3. Guardini describes this pedagogical action within the framework of his Christian worldview, a definite view of man and his world, of culture and its relation to man and religion, with definite views of freedom and the concrete situation of history. They are the views of a Catholic seen with discerning clarity, with penetration, and expressed with lucidity in his writings.⁷ The educational impulse is, in essence, relational, addressing our relationship to the Divine, to the self, to others and to the world.
4. Educational efforts that merely focus on self-fulfillment, the development of one's talents, following one's inclinations and finding oneself in self-realization will inevitably falter in the vast cultural structures of government and business that limit or impede self-realization to those employed.⁸ When a person lives with an awareness of vocation, they can face anything life brings, success or failure. The inevitable in life shapes how our freedom is exercised. The educator's delicate task is to raise a sense of responsibility as the person engages freely in facing defeat as well as success. In this *Bildung* (educational process) the ultimate worth of the individual person—scientist, engineer, lawyer, pharmacist, musician—is retained.

Morgenroth makes it clear Guardini assumes the revealed understanding of the person; "pedagogical action aims at the realization of an image through encoun-

5. Morgenroth, "Foundations of Pedagogy according to Romano Guardini" (Columbia University, 1962) 147.

6. *Ibid.*, 148.

7. *Ibid.*, 151.

8. *Ibid.*, 154.

ters with the world and is perfected in the service of the objectively given sphere of values, of persons, of God.”⁹ This requires forgetting the self, losing the self, and ultimately learning to love and serve God. Without this self-realization/self-transcendence, the person remains *inhuman*. Anyone who seeks to teach must already be being formed in this way. Otherwise, neither teacher nor student will be capable of entering into *dialogue*, which is at the heart of the pedagogical impulse. In true dialogue, the self will not intrude into the relationship between teacher and student. Dialogue at its best is a manifestation of what it means to be human.

Contextualization: Catholic Education and Contemporary Society

When we look at our contemporary worldwide cultural situation, we notice dialogue has largely disappeared in human relations. In great part, “communication” seems to have been reduced to manipulation, intimidation, and violence. This indicates a distorted understanding of what a human is and what it means to “relate.”

In a pluralistic, secularized society, we function based on multiple images of the human. Our American way of life has been heavily shaped by individualistic understandings of the human as defined by Enlightenment philosophers. Their images of the person are as limited as the worldviews they attempted to create. In detaching reason from faith, they had to struggle to create their own images of the person, either pessimistic (Hobbes), optimistic (Locke), or skeptical (Hume). Having created those images, they were faced with the task of explaining how individuals live in society. We recognize their images of what constitutes a person are as limited as the capacity of their intellects, so they neglected the more comprehensive relational nature of the person contained in Revelation.

Our educational efforts often are built on the diminished images of the person we inherited from the Enlightenment (cynicism, skepticism, or pessimism). These efforts, therefore, consist in handing on compartmentalized information (schools and departments of . . .) which “career track” students in order to make them “successful” in their fields of employment.

While recognizing the immense cultural shifts that were occurring, Guardini continued to be hopeful. He writes:

9. *Ibid.*, 152.

It would be clearer to say that I am no advocate of a false pessimism, for there is a valid pessimism without which nothing great is ever achieved. . . . Contemporary man can bring himself to destruction of both the interior and exterior orders or he can fashion a new universal order, a space where he could fit himself and, conscious of human dignity, lay the roadway of the future.¹⁰

He was prophetic in describing what many of us are experiencing today.

Loneliness in the faith will be but the more terrible. Love will disappear from the face of the public world, but the more precious will that love be which flows from one lonely person to another, involving a courage of the heart born from the immediacy of the love of God as it was made known in Christ.¹¹

This, I believe, contains the challenge standing before those who are moved by the “pedagogical impulse” rooted in our Catholic-Spiritan worldview. This worldview offers an understanding of persons living in a communion of justice and peace, each person living freely and responsibly in the dignity of their uniqueness, their special call providing a unique service for the commonweal of the community. Proclaiming the Spirit who gives life enables each person to cry out, “*Abba, Father,*” and experience their freedom as children of God. This lies at the core of the *Bild* and *Bildung* of the Spiritan “pedagogical impulse.”

Two: Spiritan Mission, the Foundation of the Spiritan “Pedagogical Impulse”

Several years ago, I was invited by our provincial superior to identify and describe elements of Spiritan Catholic educational ministry. My response to his request was based on the first two chapters of our *Spiritan Rule of Life*, which identify our Spiritan vocation and mission. In the section, “Theological Foundations for the Spiritan Educational Ethos and Ministries,”¹² I indicate

10. *The End of the Modern World* (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2001) 113–114.

11. *Ibid.*, 108–109.

12. See “The Heartbeat of Spiritan Education in the US,” *Spiritan Horizons* 8 (Fall 2013) 101–114.

eight elements: 1) Indwelling Presence of the Transcendent; 2) Following the Lead of the Spirit in Life; 3) “Relational and Communitarian Living”; 4) “Self-Transcendence in Sacrificial Love”; 5) “Relishing Diversity”; 6) “Masters Of Dialogue”; 7) Solidarity, Subsidiarity and Discernment”; and 8) “Preferential Love for and Outreach to the Poor.”¹³

Using Guardini’s categories of image (*Bild*) and the Formation/Educational process (*Bildung*), I would like to revisit some of the emphases Spiritan educational ministry is built on in both its formal and informal contexts. I say formal and informal because all Spiritan ministry is, at best, educational in focusing on how the Divine Spirit leads the person in community to fullness of loving relationship with the self, the world and the Divine.

1. All aspects of our educational ministry are rooted in the essentially relational nature of persons. We seek to bring the image of persons to fullness in relation to every dimension of existence and knowledge, with a true sense of the dignity of the person who lives in a secularized world where this dignity is so often distorted. Fidelity to their image and vocation enables them to know which cultural forces either tarnish or enhance their image and dignity. The indwelling Holy Spirit leads them to self-realization through self-transcendence in sacrificial love. Awareness of being called to serve others provides a foundation for their sense of responsibility and accountability.
2. Spiritan education seeks to provide a Cenacle Moment. We invite those we educate to experience and share an inner sacred space where they realize they are not alone. In that space they can take down the shutters and open the bolted doors of self-interest and self-indulgence and experience the freedom that comes with reaching out to the world together, united in the beauty of our diversity which we relish. Hope is shared and we do not succumb to loneliness or anxiety of our age. We are bonded in the image of God which we share.
3. This Cenacle Moment also lets those who have been imprisoned by generational or cultural conditioning go free, know who they are and who they are not. This freedom in the truth allows us to be masters of dialogue and seek the truth with all people of good will. We are free to use and offer our gifts (charisms) in seeking the good in common. We accept each

13. *Ibid.*, 107–109.

other as mutually exchanged gifts. Our biases diminish and we grow in our capacity for objectivity in what we see and do. This interior freedom is at the heart of our pursuit of happiness, a happiness found in the ability to contribute to the good of others and ultimately in our relationship with God. We take joy in knowing we can cross boundaries of all kinds: intellectual, ethnic, ideological, political, national.

4. These characteristics of image, which underlie our Spiritan educational ministry, enlivened and led by the Spirit, enable us to hold in balance the tensions we experience as we seek just and peaceful modes of living. They reflect our desire for unity (solidarity) and diversity (subsidiarity) on many levels of our personal and global relationships. They are the reason for our preferential love for the poor.
5. Our educational impulse is free from rigid conformity and chaotic relativism. We seek to live a Christocentric inclusive pluralism that sees all people created and loved by the Living God through the eternal Cosmic Christ. This opens us to receive truth revealed or discovered in all its forms. For us, the only way to live out educational mission is through dialogue.
6. Ours is a dialogue for discernment. Only through dialogue can we learn the art of sifting motives and desires to spur us on in our search for a life-giving truth, a truth which unites us against anything impeding our unity. Without such shared discernment, it is extremely difficult to work together in our intellectual pursuits when faced with major cultural paradigm shifts. How else can we cope with a world *now driven by science and technology*? A world *struggling to find* a new world order and effectively use its power? Economic systems stretched at the seams? Questions of migration? Questions of integral ecology?

Pope Francis in his encyclical letters, *Laudato Si*” and *Fratelli Tutti*, offers an agenda for the Catholic educational impulse now and in the future. The content of both letters touches every intellectual pursuit offered by a Catholic university. In them, Francis offers an example of how we must relate all academic endeavors to our Catholic worldview. In “*Fratelli Tutti*,” Pope Francis uses the Parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate the Christian worldview rooted in transcendent love. The parable captures Jesus’s understanding of persons in relationships, which go beyond boundaries to create the community God desires. The Pope proposes how we have to transcend boundaries in addressing questions related to

liberty, equality and fraternity; re-envisioning the social role of property; rights without borders; the politics we need; international power; the art and architecture of peace; immigration, global politics, the family and education. All of these require minds and hearts that move intellects to contemplate the real needs of the world and seek solutions always with an eye of care for the poorest. The title of the letter, “*Fratelli Tutti*,” defines us as one human race. It is not possible to understand Francis’s educational impulse unless we know it is driven by the Spirit towards Christ as the Omega Point. The entire letter is rooted in an “educational impulse” that respects the dignity of every person as a child of God, all sisters and brothers, across all ethnic, religious, and other human-created boundaries. For me, what he proposes flows from and leads to the “educational impulse” and proposes the agenda for intellectual pursuit in today’s university environment. The Spiritan educational impulse resonates beautifully with the Pope’s insights. The Holy Spirit leads us to sift the spirits inherent in our intellectual pursuits. Distinguishing the dispositions of mind and heart enables us to unite in our educational endeavors or causes us to remain fragmented in our silos of learning, thereby robbing us of the integrated worldview we long for.

This Spirit-lead educational impulse is alive in the ministry of Spiritans and their collaborators. We need only look at the movements of the Spirit that embody the characteristics outlined above, whether at Duquesne University, Holy Ghost Prep, the Orphanages of Auteuil, the school for Maasai girls on the Ngorongoro Crater, a high school in Dar-es-Salaam, or in many other countries. We educate persons, led by the indwelling Spirit, to be persons fully alive in their vocations as they participate in creating a better world wherever they are.

Two Cities Co-Mingled

Saint Augustine, in his *City of God*, eloquently states how we live in a co-mingled world—of the “earthly city” and the “heavenly city.” At the risk of oversimplifying his thought, the earthly city is a self-enclosed world with no end beyond itself; the heavenly city looks for its fulfillment in God as its ultimate end. His image can be applied to how we currently live our Spiritan-Catholic educational impulse. These two “cities” encounter each other every day in our institutions. The “earthly city” is contained, to a great extent, in the worldviews of our departments and schools in the way they pursue their intellectual disciplines without specific reference to life beyond this world. Many of the values and expected patterns of behavior, defined by the “earthly city,” determine the

outcomes (what is valued) of the programs they offer. These outcomes are meant to shape the thinking and the behavior of the graduates. Accreditation agencies (e.g., AACSB, ABA, NEA, etc.) regulate curricula and licensing exams. These standards in turn are influenced by larger cultural economic, social, political and legal institutions, which shape and direct our lives and work as citizens. All of these presume various images of persons and how they must function in their career of choice. The underlying images remain unspoken, but they are there and pervade the entire pedagogical impulse of each academic discipline.

Do these disciplines ever take time to reflect on the unspoken assumptions about the person and the community underlying what they teach and how they teach it? Are they able to reflect on their discipline in relation to the principles of Catholic social thought? Or how does their discipline relate to other fields of inquiry or research taught within the university? For instance, how are science and technology related to economic systems, social sciences and politics? How do academic policies, structures and procedures encourage or hinder collaboration of faculty across departmental boundaries teaching courses?

For the most part, we continue to work based on the 19th century presumption that knowledge falls into categories which never meet. Scarce consideration, or sometimes none whatsoever, is given to how one area of knowledge might be related to or included in discussions involving political thought, the economic and financial culture of Wall Street, biological experimentation, or the positive and negative effects of technological and social media and their effect on the world. At best, we continue to work on the premise that a Christian worldview, with its understanding of God, the person, and the world, should be merely relegated to a “department” (perhaps a “compartment”) of theology or religious studies, juxtaposed to other departments. Often, even those teaching theology, while imbued with the great Tradition of Catholic theological thought, have difficulty relating the worldview of the “heavenly city” to the “earthly city.”

Discussions and debates continue about what makes, or how to “recover,” the Catholicity of our universities. They propose various solutions to the question: some focus on the teaching of popes or a particular theologian or school of theological thought; others seek to establish a department of “Catholic Studies”; others call for an increased number of theology or philosophy credits required in the core curriculum; others want to make Catholicity the litmus test for hiring personnel, especially faculty. Each of these strategies has its merits. To me they still fall short of the relational essence of the Catholic “educational impulse.” They often reinforce the cleavage between the sacred and the secular, rather than

build bridges. They can easily lead to confining the Christian worldview to small circles of like-minded believers. A dialogue-driven Christocentric inclusive pluralism would help us inspire the Catholic vision of the Second Vatican Council in the light of papal teaching captured in the calls of Pope Francis today.

A Challenge

The challenge is that of shaping university structures to embody the Spiritan relational, educational impulse that transcends artificial academic boundaries. The Spiritan relational educational impulse challenges us to find practical ways to communicate the Catholic worldview and put the relationship of that worldview with other academic disciplines at the center of all of our educational endeavors.

First, it will move us to develop ways to introduce all undergraduate students to the beauty and liberating power of the essence of Christianity, Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word, and the Cosmic Christ; show the meaning of his revelation for life in all its aspects. This will require those teaching the Christian worldview to develop syllabi that relate faith in Gospel love to the way Christians will be called to live their journey in the American context.

Second, all theology faculty must be able to relate the great Catholic revealed Tradition to today's cultural realities by dialoguing and interfacing with all academic disciplines taught within the university. This presumes truth is one reality, whether revealed or discovered through reason. The object of the dialogue between and among disciplines is to relate the two in seeking what best relates to and serves humanity.

What I am proposing may seem quite radical to some. Yet I believe the proposals respect the essence of the Spiritan, Catholic "educational impulse" and relate revealed truth and intellectual pursuit in an integrating way. They both demand a new way of thinking about how the theological component of the university will be composed and understand its mission with the whole. This will determine how it services undergraduate students who are seeking to understand their faith commitment in light of how their *mores* (habits of the heart) have been shaped in the American cultural context.

What I am proposing has implications for the criteria to be used in hiring theology faculty who understand and embrace the Spiritan educational impulse focuses on the action of the Spirit in every branch of academic pursuit in relation to divine revelation found in the Christian worldview. The criteria used for the hiring flow from the vision of the Second Vatican Council that relates the Word

of God to the “joys and hopes, the grief and anguish” of our world today (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 1). This requires theology faculty capable of doing just that. There must be interdisciplinary scholars able to relate the Catholic worldview to one or more disciplines; able to cross boundaries which separate us ethically, ethnically, religiously, politically, economically and intellectually. This implies the theology faculty will be composed only of bi- or tri-disciplinary scholars. Therefore, our pedagogy should be relational and interdisciplinary in essence: faith and economics, faith and science, faith and counselling, faith and education, faith and the health-related sciences, etc.

This approach would also shape the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees we offer in theology. Any M.A. or Ph.D. program that would require thesis or dissertation proposals must be interdisciplinary in nature and show how the Christian worldview integrates in dialogue with one or another intellectual discipline on a subject of mutual interest and how it impacts culture. Faculty must themselves be capable of mentoring students in this methodological relational and interdisciplinary framework.

Is it possible for professors of theology and philosophy, with their scholarly background in the great Tradition of Catholic thought, to work inductively, beginning with the questions raised in other fields of knowledge and offer responses to the questions considering the Catholic *Bild* of the person? How do we relate our faith worldview to questions of evolution, astrophysics, politics as a profes-



sion, our constitutional form of government, questions of life and death? Would it be too idealistic to encourage budding theology scholars to prepare themselves to be bridgebuilders with other fields of intellectual pursuit? How else will we be able to exist with the cultural paradigm shifts we are experiencing if theology is a discipline narrowly confined? If we were to adopt this approach to theological reflection, teaching and research would allow theology to function both in a “insider/outsider” role in academic pursuit. It would be integrated into and offer an integrating force for what a university is meant to be and to do.

We should delight in the fact our educational institutions create the space for a Cenacle Moment where we can break out into communication in others’ professional languages and enter their worlds of thought. It is the place where we encounter, dialogue, and discern with others to determine how best to serve humankind. Comingling of the “heavenly” and the “earthly” in today’s Catholic institutions is a given.

The Catholic *Bild* and *Bildung* must be omnipresent in the institution’s administrative style, maintenance and beauty of the physical plant, obvious in the relationships among faculty, staff and students. Most importantly, it must be evident in the community’s life of worship, adoration and praise of the One eternal God. To be Catholic means to investigate the impact of the Catholic *Bild* on every intellectual pursuit without arrogance, timidity or apology. This will not be easy simply because Agapic Sacrificial Love as a way of life goes against all our enclosed attempts at self-interest, self-indulgence or “intellectual property.” It also implies the Catholic worldview is open to receive the insights which human intellectual pursuit offer in understanding the worldview in a more complete way.

Conclusion

As I see it, Spiritan Catholic education springs from an awareness that the Spirit is moving and at work in *the entire community* as it yearns or groans for fulfillment. The divine Spirit is operative in all humanity and cultures. The “Benedict Option” is not the Spiritan Option. The former sees the church gathering as a small “monastic” remnant to maintain its fidelity to the Gospel. The Spiritan Option is to maintain fidelity while transcending all sorts of boundaries and to offer new horizons. The Spiritan educator proclaims the liberating vision of faith clearly because Gospel love empowers us to do so. We do this without defensiveness or fear of the unknown. We are people of dialogue. We speak with

meekness and respect for all. We proclaim a vision of the “heavenly city” in the mix with the “earthly city.” We are, as Jesus proclaimed, leaven for the mass. We are a community of persons, embodied spirits, both graced and fallen, free in taking responsibility for and in giving direction to our lives and consciences. We seek to hold the tension we experience living in the “earthly city” while yearning in hope of the “heavenly city.” In this tension we find the love and courage to live our vocation as educators waiting in God’s time for the heavenly Jerusalem to descend in which there is no longer any temple, nor need of sun or moon for light (Rev 21:22).

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