

The Faculty, or the Faculties, in the American Catholic University

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As one facet of the larger framework of the common good, the institutions of education have been known to require teachers, among whom are experts in common sense – parents, family, members of a tribe, neighbors, etc. Furthermore, in the higher cultures, those which have achieved complex differentiations leading to the formation of sciences and scholarship, persons who would be teachers were gradually expected to learn from those who had already appropriated a specific field of knowledge. They were required to manifest their own knowledge by means of successfully passing through an increasing number of "degrees," among which are the baccalaureate, the masters or license, and the doctorate. When potential teachers moved through the masters and doctorate levels, they were given "faculties" or positions of professing a particular field of knowledge with authority. The Oxford English Dictionary notes that beginning in the thirteenth century, when the medieval universities were increasing in importance, not only was a person identified as having a "faculty," but a group of "professors" was also identified as being "a faculty."

Just as the medieval universities were created from within Christian faith and the Church, in the United States, the modern universities were established primarily by the Protestant Churches. This being so, these universities included in their curricula connections between secular knowledge and the religious knowledge revealed in Scripture, and developed within those traditions. As a result of George Marsden's study, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*¹, modern scholars are familiar with both the collapse of the Protestant universities and the confused interrelationship of secular and religious knowledge. Marsden's lengthy work is an historical record of the disestablishment of those colleges and universities whose founding had been religious and Christian. This disestablishment² was not one required by the secular order, but one which was carried out as a result of a major transformation of their place in American culture.

Marsden's study has its parallel in another recent essay on education in America, one published just six years earlier than Marsden's and one which, strangely for an academic book, became a best seller. This was Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*.³ Bloom's work, of course, was not a study of the disestablishment and secularization of the Protestant colleges and universities. What Bloom found to be the disease of the soul in the American academy was a result of both the collapse of the classical enlightenment and the loss of its influence in learning and the discipline it fostered in shaping civility. In other words, Bloom reported on the failure of the modern American academies to teach, in any systematic way, to the younger generations, the hard-won differentiations of intelligence and virtue. Thus was lost, he claimed, the skills of developing knowledge and

of acquiring virtues, as well as advancing their greater precision, when they were found to be incomplete and in need of further corrective insights. Lost as well, was the participation in the tradition as it had accumulated its knowledge slowly from generation to generation.

The failure, Bloom suggested, was a massive sell-out to the mandarins of cultural trivialization. It was a great "cheat" for the students because it refused to introduce them into the age-old tensions between passion and intelligence, virtue and vice — both personal and public — and the connection of wisdom to learning and living. These elements are all matters that are required even for the secular expectation of growth in science and social progress. Such fields of study had formerly included the fact that the differentiation of learning that resided in science and scholarship required discipline, sacrifice, appropriation, apprenticeship and honesty. Bloom, a student of Leo Strauss, identified the new situation as one in which both faculty and students substituted the ancient tradition of wisdom, with its need for further unfolding, with their own immediate experiences; not the experiences of the soul in its spontaneous yearning and desire for beauty, truthfulness and virtue, but the unlimited and unmediated experiences of the sensate world. Bloom knew that this truncation, which he named "the closing of the mind," was very much a responsibility of the faculty and administrators of universities.

Bloom differs, of course, from Marsden in that he is a secularist, and writes from no religious point of view or tradition. As a result, there is no place for grace in Bloom's plea for a contemporary recovery. Like his teacher, Bloom sought a healing of the modern tradition, and the reversal of its Machiavellian reduction of virtue to power, by a reintroduction of classical texts and teaching. In the end, of course, he was hopeless about such a recovery. He knew that the academy would continue to propose more and more specialized science and scholarship; that there would be little, if no, knowledge about the reality of good and evil and how they both are related to scholarly specializations and technologies.

While Bloom and Marsden differ from one another, they both know that there is an intimate connection between education and culture. They both know, as did the ancient secular and Christian thinkers, that it was culture that gave shape to the social forms and institutions of civil society. Thus, for them, it was important that there be a faculty which could open all the levels of the disciplines and connect them to the dynamic eros of the soul and scholar's own self-knowledge. Both consider that those who have learned from past accumulation of knowledge need to bring to light the traps and pitfalls that could deform the souls of those who will be the future incarnate shapers of culture. That insight is well understood by the mandarins of the modern ideologies of fascism and communism, who quickly sought to control the faculties of the universities of their regimes, and who established camps for recalcitrant learners who opposed their socially arranged viewpoint for both intellectuals and citizens.

Those of us who consider the present situation of Catholic universities, and the role of faculty within them, can benefit from Marsden's and Bloom's social and historical analyses. We can also learn from a more recent study that examines the political and legal

institutions and policies of American civil society and culture. This study offers a precise insight from classical wisdom, namely that the condition of the souls of the citizens and the structures of the transmission of a culture clearly shape the institutions of self-government.

Such an analysis is the topic of Michael Sandel's recent monograph, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*. Sandel presents an historically detailed account of a major shift in the American political vision that has profound consequences for a Catholic university. While it is not possible to spell out the step-by-step emergence of the change that he identified, it is nonetheless important to note the substance of his analysis in what he calls "the theory we live now in contemporary America. Our public life is rife with discontent...Despite the achievements of American life in the last half century – victory in World War II, unprecedented affluence, greater social justice for women and minorities, the end of the Cold War – our politics is beset with angry frustration."⁴

The source of this mood, Sandel argues, is that we have been socially and politically transformed through a variety of court rulings. These have created a transition from our being a nation grounded in republican liberalism to one that forms itself as a procedural republic, or procedural liberalism. Sandel distinguishes these two forms of public order by noting that in the former, the political philosophy of the nation supported a vision of the common purpose, or common good, among the citizens, and it cultivated their virtue and moral excellence. The contemporary republic, which sets the present condition of all our institutions, including secular and Catholic academic universities, is one in which the public order is neutral about any common purpose or good, and rather "insists on toleration, fair procedures, and respect for individual rights - values that respect people's freedom to choose their own values."⁵

In a longer remark on this issue, Sandel notes the following:

Participating in politics can be one among the ways in which people choose to pursue their ends. According to republican political theory, however, sharing in self-rule involves something more. It means deliberating with fellow citizens about the common good and helping to shape the destiny of the political community. But to deliberate well about the common good requires more than the capacity to choose one's ends and to respect others' rights to do the same. It requires a knowledge of public affairs and also a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake. To share in self-rule therefore requires that citizens possess, or come to acquire, certain qualities of character, or civic virtues. But this means that republican politics cannot be neutral toward the values and ends its citizens espouse.⁶

The reason Sandel's secular account of the present condition is so important for those who are engaged in teaching at a Catholic college or university is two-fold. First, the Catholic intellectual tradition, and its philosophical translation of education, is grounded in the ancient discovery and formation of the common good, and this tradition now stands in dialectical opposition to the public philosophy that claims its civil institutions are

neutral in regard to the common purpose and good of the natural human order. Second, no Catholic college or university can ignore the fact that several faculty who have been trained in the various secular, or religious, private graduate schools, have been trained into a public philosophy which is at odds with one of the Catholic university's fundamental constitutive concerns and tasks.

Sandel's central thesis is very important, for there is a major conflict in the theories of the larger political order in which Catholic colleges and universities exist, and in the major commitments of procedural liberalism, with its repudiation of the support of a common good. But, as he shows in detail, this is "the theory we live now in contemporary America." Most of the contemporary cultural conversation and most of the programs that Catholic universities create as manifesting their commitment to the common good are in contradiction with "the mission statement" of the political philosophy and the world in which we live. Furthermore, it is quite possible that the mission statements of Catholic universities are in the process of being translated into procedural liberalism. Such translations stand in dialectical opposition to the Catholic tradition.

If the three authors noted above have contributed widely to the larger context in which faculty are trained and work, it remains that one of the most rigorous thinkers in these matters must now be engaged. That thinker is Alasdair MacIntyre, and the text is composed by his 1988 Gifford Lectures, published under the title, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*. Here we have an historical and philosophical account of the three contemporary models of human intellectual and moral insights and consequent policies developed by their different representatives, or faculty, in the university. MacIntyre identifies the three models as *de facto* ways in which major questions and debates in the university occur or are arranged. In addition, he examines the sources of these models and traces out their implications for the university and the culture. He also manifests quite clearly how these models are not only incompatible with one another, but are in dialectical opposition to each other, both in their origins and their consequences. He refers to these models as "incommensurate with each other."

Briefly, the three models are 1) the Encyclopedic – with its origins in the European Enlightenment of the 17th-19th centuries; 2) the Genealogical – or Postmodern – with its origins in the philosophical aphorisms of Friedrich Nietzsche; and 3) the Tradition guided enquiry – with its procedures of self-correcting knowledge and its origins in the worlds of Athens and Jerusalem, i.e. of reason and revelation.

The Encyclopedic model is placed first, because it is the underlying vision of Adam Gifford's will in the establishment of the lectures that carry his name. Gifford followed the general Enlightenment comprehension on human rationality, and so assumed that there would be one scientific methodology capable of accounting for all the natural sciences, as well as for morality and religion, as they would be analyzed by the social and human sciences. In the last case, it was assumed that a rational scientific religion would finally replace revealed religion. This was radically important for the Enlightenment vision of rationality because it takes its stand on the fact that prior to scientific

formulation there can be no legitimate "commitment to some particular theoretical or doctrinal standpoint."⁷

The primary formulation and mediation of this particular notion of the rational world was to be the Encyclopedia, and especially for Gifford, and those with whom he collaborated, the Ninth Edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. In this text, as envisioned by the editors, all knowledge would be organized not by the inner dynamic of questions and answers, but by a neutral image of the cosmos, as had been suggested by Baron Friedrich H. A. von Humboldt. Such neutrality would reflect the rationalist claims about knowledge and would make the Encyclopedia the foundational text, replacing the Bible, as a founding text of western culture. Finally and importantly, the Encyclopedic model assumed that "genuine science, as contrasted with the thought of the prescientific and the non scientific...has a particular kind of history, one of relatively continuous progress."⁸

The second model, the Genealogical, arises both from within and in opposition to the Encyclopedic model. The task for the genealogist is to critique the Enlightenment and then dismiss it. This model's primary text is Friedrich Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals, which is a subversive narrative designed to undermine the central assumptions of the Encyclopedia. Where the encyclopedist aspired to displace the Bible as a founding text of culture, the genealogist intended to discredit the whole notion of a canon.

If the Encyclopedic model found truth in a unified scientific explanation, the genealogist finds that "Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions, worn-out metaphors now impotent to stir the senses, coins which have lost their faces and are now considered as metal rather than currency" (Über Wahrheit und Lüge im Aussermoralischen Sinn I).⁹

Here reason can provide no unity of anything. There is no single method or world, but a multiplicity of perspectives, and the genealogists need to write a history so as to unmask all claims to truth as merely expressions of the will to power. The subversion to be unmasked is that "there are no rules of rationality as such to be appealed to, there are rather strategies of insight and strategies of subversion." This task is grounded in the vision that allegiance to any claim of truth is "always a sign of badness, of inadequately managed rancor and resentment...The conduct of life requires a rupture, a breaking down and a breaking up of fixed patterns, so that something radically new will emerge."¹⁰

While this model is primarily an effort to subvert the Encyclopedic world-view, it also seeks to subvert any allegiance to truth and being, including the model of the historical, self-correcting tradition, in which a Catholic university is grounded both by the Revelation and its tradition in the Church. Importantly then, a genealogical university is a contradiction in terms, and that is why its representation is parasitic, living on both Encyclopedic and tradition-founded academies.¹¹ As parasitic, the role of the genealogist is "to deconstruct," or destroy, all scientific or scholarly claims to truth, because these are read as subversions and masks of resentment.

As mentioned above, the Catholic university has its roots in the third model, that of an historical self-correcting tradition that has its originating moment in a pre-scientific

commitment to the historical appearance of truth in a Divine Person, and to the teaching that flows from that Person and His relationship to all other knowledge that human reason can propose and examine. Because the tradition is self-correcting, those who operate from within it know that its history is "not yet completed." As historical, it needs both to introduce persons into its "craft" at specific points of time and to help them comprehend how their specific moment of entering the tradition has developed as a result of those who have preceded them within the tradition. In the context of modern conflict, it needs to articulate its own historical examination of the principles of human rationality. This allows for the possibility of future achievements that are based upon prior discoveries and accounts for how later advances depend on prior achievements, now acknowledged as incomplete.

In such a context one knows and shares a "craft" and a history in common with some persons and in conflict with others. As noted, this tradition arises in a pre-scientific acknowledgement of gifts, of freedom and gratitude, and later transposes these realities and actions by means of deeper explanations. This model, with its allegiance to the Bible and the Church, calls thinkers into a humility before the complexity both of divine mystery and of its own historical tradition.

In an interesting account of the handing over of the "craft" of this model, there is something required that is not definitively part of either of the other models, namely the invitation to the appropriation of an historical scholarly field, and the self-appropriation of the knower, himself or herself. As MacIntyre notes, "Aquinas held that all education is in an important way self-education: 'a teacher leads someone else to the knowledge of what was unknown in the same way that someone leads him or herself to the knowledge of what was unknown in the course of discovery.'" So the practical matter of transmitting a tradition requires ways of ordering knowledge and learning, "through which the pupil relives the history of enquiry up to the highest point of achievement which it has reached so far, by rescruinizing those arguments which have sustained the best supported conclusions."¹²

How then do the Encyclopedic and Genealogical models respond to the tradition-guided version of historical self-correction and tradition? As different versions of human intelligence develop in contact and in contradiction with each other, they can frequently come to the point where they must admit that they have major incompatibilities. In this matter the response of the two prior models to the third version is as follows: "from the standpoint of the encyclopedist no tradition qua tradition is rational... for it is only to methods and principles to which rational appeal can be made. So also from the standpoint of the genealogist no tradition can be rational...Rationality is, and can be at best, no more than one of the provisional masks worn by those engaged in unmasking the pretensions to rationality in others."¹³ At this point it is clear that the three rival versions cannot be collapsed into one or another by some modern potion.

It is necessary, then, to examine the claim that these models are "incommensurate with each other." In his "Introduction," MacIntyre is clear that those in the modern conversation need to know about the differences between the versions of rationality and

"institutional arrangements." Despite the complexity of these distinctions, he notes "that the contemporary university...has apparently ineliminable and continuing divisions and conflicts within all humanistic enquiry." Then in summary he spells out the characteristics of the conflict:

We have together produced a type of university in which teaching and enquiry in the humanities (and often enough in the social sciences) are marked by four characteristics. First...remarkably high level of skill in handling narrow questions of limited detail. Secondly,...promulgation of a number of large and mutually incompatible doctrines...which define the major contending standpoints in each discipline. Thirdly...the shared standards of argument are such that all debate is inconclusive. And yet, fourthly and finally, we still behave for the most part as if the university did still constitute a single, tolerably unified intellectual community...¹⁴

The fact, as MacIntyre's models make clear, is that what universities have today are one, or two, or three faculties.¹⁵ This fact can be read through the postmodern celebration and delight that in having three faculties we have true pluralism. Or it can be read through the context of a tradition-guided community which differentiates between a benign and a radical pluralism.¹⁶ The former is an enriching presence and presentation of the various dimensions of the human community with its ups and downs, its quests, successes and failures, its plurality of images arranging or playing with the wonders of the cosmos, of grace and mystery. The latter is an attack on the spheres of nature and history and is disgusted at the naiveté of anyone who would claim that they begin to live, think and learn from within a tradition that has its roots in a specific place and time. Worse would be that such a claim rests on a Divine Person and a Revealed text. All of that must be confronted as merely a mask of power and deception. So the problem is that radical pluralism is a cancer in need of healing.

Ex Corde Ecclesiae calls on the members and leaders of Catholic colleges and universities to be faithful to that proper model that reflects their origin in the Biblical revelation and the Church's intellectual tradition. It is one of the interesting visions of the encyclical that a Catholic university has the responsibility of connecting the intellectual tradition to both a life of faith and to the ordinary life of persons in society. The reason is because human intelligence is one of the ways in which the human person is properly understood and nourished, or as the encyclical states "knowledge is meant to serve the human person." It continues, "In this context Catholic universities are called to a continuous renewal both as universities and as Catholic."¹⁷ In the same vein, when a Catholic university is concerned with its institutional role and responsibility, it notes: "...being both a university and Catholic, it must be both a community of scholars representing various branches of human knowledge and an academic institution in which Catholicism is vitally present and operative."¹⁸

Among the several tasks that the encyclical urges for a university in the tradition-guided model, is that its representatives are called to undertake an integration of knowledge. While this task is never completed, the faculty at such a university have a responsibility from within the tradition that grounds the Catholic college or university, "to work toward

a higher synthesis of knowledge, in which alone lies the possibility of satisfying that thirst for truth which is profoundly inscribed in the heart of the human person."¹⁹ Insofar as this is the institutional and personal responsibility of such academies, the faculty have the responsibility of setting "the content, objectives, methods and results of research...within the framework of a coherent world vision."²⁰

From this understanding it follows that the present account of the Catholic university, in relationship to its intellectual tradition, and the institutions responsible for mediating it and improving it, are not fulfilling Ex Corde Ecclesiae's vision if they function in the encyclopedic or genealogical versions of knowledge and life. The encyclical calls for those who have the authority and responsibility for recruitment of faculty and administrators, to seek out those who are "able to promote that identity. The identity of a Catholic university is essentially linked to the quality of its teachers and to respect for Catholic doctrine."²¹ While faculty in the self-correcting tradition-guided model must continue to translate knowledge generated from within these other models into some mode of coherence, they must also make clear where there is no coherence.

One of the additional requirements for those ordering the Catholic university is that all teachers and administrators, "are to be informed about the Catholic identity of the institution and its implications, and about their responsibility to promote, or at least to respect, that identity." Now the important issue is: How many of the community promote the identity of the institution? How many respect the identity? Without a sufficient number of the former, the latter has little purpose.

One of the ways of identifying faculty and administrators "who are able to promote that identity" could be by learning in what version of knowledge they envision their research and teaching. In which of the rival versions do they place their project. This can be helpful in identifying persons who are also respectful of, even if unable to promote, the tradition. It would not be too difficult to request that those prospective candidates who are invited to the campus for interviews be asked to prepare a two or three page essay explaining their vision of human knowledge and how they understand the way in which their particular discipline has, and does develop.

For the time being, the Enlightenment vision grounds the encyclopedic university, but the Enlightenment vision is undergoing a fast and painful death. Two things can be expected: the representatives of the parasitic, genealogical community will necessarily seek to extend their destruction to the Catholic universities. Thus there is a need for Catholic universities, to support programs like the Collegium project, which seeks to help younger graduate students who are interested in becoming faculty members at Catholic universities. Given the present situation, which is no doubt why Ex Corde Ecclesiae was written, some Catholic universities will become whatever genealogical universities will become.

Dramatically, the alternatives of these versions read as differently as the book of Ecclesiasticus, chapter 44:

Let us now sing the praises of the famous, the heroes of our nation's history, through whom the Lord established his renown, and revealed his majesty in each succeeding age. Some held sway over kingdoms and made themselves a name by their exploits. Others were sage counselors who spoke out with prophetic power. Some led the people by their counsels and by their knowledge of the nations law; out of their fund of wisdom they gave instruction. Some were composers of music or writers of poetry.

and Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra, "Zarathustra's Prologue #5":

I will speak unto them the most contemptible thing: that, however, is the last man! ... Lo! I will show you the last man. What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star? — so asketh the last man and blinketh. The earth has become small, and on it there hoppeth the last man who maketh everything small. His species is ineradicable like that of the ground flea; the last man liveth longest.

"We have discovered happiness" — say the last men and they blink thereby..."Formerly all the world was insane," — say the subtlest of them, and blink thereby. They are clever and know all that hath happened: so there is no end to their raillery. People still fall out, but are soon reconciled — otherwise it spoileth their stomachs. They have their little pleasure for the day, and their little pleasures for the night, but they have a regard for health.

"We have discovered happiness," — say the last men, and blink thereby.²²

References

1. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. Note Marsden's concluding insight in his "Introduction": "Ironically, therefore, Protestant universalism (catholicity, if you will) was one of the forces that eventually contributed to the virtual exclusion of the religious perspectives from the most influential centers of American intellectual life." p.5.
2. See an altogether different, but collaborative, study of the social and cultural impact of the consequences of the disestablishment of the Protestant churches and universities in Phillip E. Hammond, *Religion and Personal Autonomy: The Third Disestablishment in America*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992.
3. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1987. Bloom's work is something of a deeper reading of Part I, Chapter 4, of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Ed. by J. P. Mayer; translated by George Lawrence, Garden City, NY, Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969. It is there that Tocqueville identifies the precise shift in what made America new; namely, that the people understood themselves as absolutely sovereign. Tocqueville notes that: "The dogma of the sovereignty of the people came out from the township and took possession of the government; every class enlisted in its cause; the (Revolutionary) war

was fought and victory obtained in its name; it became the law of laws." p. 59. He concludes, "The people reign over the American political world as God rules over the universe. It is the cause and end of all things; everything rises out of it and is absorbed back into it." p. 60.

4. Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*. Cambridge MA and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 3.

5. Sandel, p. 8.#

6. Sandel, pp. 8-9.#

7. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy and Tradition*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990, p. 17.

8. MacIntyre, p. 20.

9. MacIntyre, p. 35.

10. MacIntyre, p.42.

11. MacIntyre, p. 215.#

12. MacIntyre, p.129.#

13. MacIntyre, p. 117.

14. MacIntyre, p. 7-8.

15. See the remarks about the possibility of representing a Catholic historical self-correcting tradition at the now secularized Protestant, Duke University, in Michael J. Baxter and Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, "Eruditio without Religio?" #The dilemma of Catholics in the academy," *Communio* Vol.XXII, No. 2. (Summer, 1995) pp. 284-302. Here they write about the motto of Duke University, "Eruditio et Religio," and of the inaugural remarks, of the recently appointed President of Duke, Nannerl Keohane. Commenting on the motto of the university over which she would now preside, "she admitted, (it) left her immediately 'uneasy.' She noted that, 'The motto has an archaic sound if one provides a literal translation – erudition and religion.... [T]he emphasis on religion,' she confessed, 'seemed hard to reconcile with the restless yearning for discovery, the staunch and fearless commitment to seek for truth wherever truth may be found that is the hallmark of a great university.' Religion, in other words, is hard to square with good scholarship."

16. For a detailed account of this differentiation between benign and radical #pluralism see, Bernard J.F. Lonergan S.J., *Method in Theology*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1972, p. 326-27.

17. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 7.2.

18. *Ibid.*, 14.

19. *Ibid.*, 16.

20. *Ibid.*, 22.

21. *Ibid.*, II, 4.2.

22. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*. Random House, Inc., The Modern Library, New York, NY, 1954. Translated by Thomas Common, p. 11-12.