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Volume 4 | Issue 2

Article 6

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12-1-2000

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### Recommended Citation

Frank, W. A. (2000). The Catholic Mind: Culture, Philosophy, and Responsibility in Higher Education. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 4 (2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.0402052013>

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# THE CATHOLIC MIND: CULTURE, PHILOSOPHY, AND RESPONSIBILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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*This article argues that any quest to establish or strengthen Catholic identity in educational institutions is ultimately a question of philosophical foundations. The author discusses the importance and fragility of culture as it applies to Catholic thought and analyzes the philosophical components necessary for sustaining a dominant cultural ethos. The article concludes with a tentative formulation of four responsibilities of professors in Catholic institutions of higher learning.*

Educators assume the task of transmitting and advancing key elements of culture. Among these is a philosophical component that is essential to the Catholic mind. It is of vital interest, therefore, for Catholic educators to maintain the lively presence of the philosophical component in the Catholic cast of mind. The argument rests upon the twofold conviction that a culture is more authentically human to the degree that it is influenced by openness to the presence of transcendent truth and that this openness is a disposition that must be actively cultivated.

The discussion begins with a reflection on the nature of culture. The ulterior goal is to increase our understanding of the aims and importance of education by indicating the cultural significance of a founding animus behind the work of a university. The existential fragility of culture, addressed in the first section of the essay, gives a mild note of urgency to the work of educators. The second section explains what is meant by the philosophical component that is essential to any authentic culture. It is characterized as a cast of mind commonly evident in life's experience of wonder, love of truth, a concern for purposes, or an interest in beauty. Generally, the capacity to distance oneself from the immediacies of one's everyday concerns and professional tasks is

essential to philosophy. This section also clarifies how this basic cast of mind should be a fundamental concern of Catholic higher education. The conclusion considers four professional responsibilities that are ordered toward transmitting and advancing this cast of mind through the work of teachers and researchers in institutions of higher education.

## MEANING AND FRAGILITY OF CULTURE

In the primary sense, culture exists as an active, living form of life in a community or society. It is the shared intelligibility that informs and directs a community's inclinations and sensibilities. It is the network of attitudes enlightening and disposing persons as they judge and act according to norms of their community or society. It is experienced as a web of sentiments, expectations, and anticipations that condition personal presence in the world. Culture establishes the practical realm of what is possible and acceptable in human intercourse.

Personal life is negotiated in the categories of right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, sensible and silly, comic and tragic, public and private, honest and dishonest, gentle and coarse, banal and mysterious. These categories are first made effective by being received in and molded by the affective processes of human persons. The philosopher Buttiglione (1997) observes that "in the life of a nation, literature, music, and art have precisely the task of forming the social archetypes, of determining the modes in which the great values will be interiorized and lived" (p. 360). The archetypes that Buttiglione discusses mediate between the raw spiritual powers of the individual and the fundamental norms that govern the meaning of life. The creative thinkers, poets and prophets of a people carry on this work of determining the modalities in which the values and disvalues of a culture will be concretely interiorized. One should not too exclusively identify a culture's creative agents with its great artists, however, for much of culture originates in the discrimination and poetry of the thoughts, sensibilities, and language of common people.

What is important to realize is that there is a particular language of the spirit by which people engage one another and their environment. This language is culture. It alerts us to the salient values in life's many situations. It lubricates our judgments and mobilizes our desires. Culture, in other words, is somewhat like a prejudice and a habit. Through it, the basic truths of a group instruct and direct desire.

The idea of culture employed here expresses several points emphasized in a short essay by Maggiolini (1989), the bishop of Como in northern Italy. He explains that "the human being, in the visible world, is the only actual subject of culture" (p. 162). In other words, culture is primarily an attribute not of things, buildings, books, or institutions, but of men and women. It names the concrete manner in which they deploy their personal powers in

their engagements in the world. Second, he says that the human being is culture's "sole object and its end. Culture...is that by which the person *is* more fully, attains a fuller measure of his being" (p. 162). In sum, "culture is the person himself who expresses himself, thinks and acts, who creates certain determined contexts of values and of behavior, and by these is helped or hindered in his efforts to become more fully what he should be" (p. 162).

Culture gives a concrete form to human life, but it is also important to distinguish it from the determinisms of nature. For culture appears as man's response to the fact that in his freedom he is expected to complete nature. Human persons craft themselves in a way that is not true of wholly natural entities. If the idea of the "natural man" is to have any validity then it must be taken paradoxically. In its literal sense the expression is a distortion, a misleading figment of the imagination. Men and women are not wild. Wildness is not an option for human beings, as though we did not need civilization, and could choose to live outside of it. This is not to deny that there are universal material conditions of human existence, certain generic biological and psycho-social necessities that are lived out in people of all times and places. But such necessities are no more the substance of human experience than clay is the essence of a funeral urn. The elements of human nature need to be exercised, and this actualization always assumes a specific, concrete form not already determined in the givens of nature. For example, everywhere men speak a language, they rear their children and worship their gods. Yet the specifics of language, education, and religion reflect the unpredictable differences of human choice.

The leap from generic, universal, and material conditions to the concreteness of actual, historical life covers a profound gap. Although it may look slight once the step is taken and we look backwards at the achievement, the emergence of rational animals into history is a momentous happening. History requires an influx of a causality wholly unseen in nature. Choice introduces something of another order. The craft and prudence that lift mankind beyond what is given by nature spring from the spiritual resources of human freedom and intelligence. Nature does not beget or preserve the particulars of language, architecture, religion, cuisine, clothing, economics, or politics. Creativity—some combination of willpower, prudence, and artistic genius—gives us the world and history of human experience.

Although it may be that history is the necessary realm for the discovery of truth and the achievement of man's salvation, it does not follow that the makers of history are not responsible to a truth and a good that transcend the immanent dimension of history. The point is that the agents of a healthy, vibrant culture make history with a regard for the transcendent truth. Among the most important defining moments in a culture is its turn toward a transcendent reality. Historically this has happened in both philosophy and religion. The philosophical and the Christian mind suffuses all expressions of the

human spirit with an interest in what lies beyond the immanence of all natural and historical reality. Socrates, for example, was inveterately an Athenian and yet larger than Athens. More radically, Christ requires his followers to be in the world but not of it. A moment's reflection shows the paradoxical nature of such a culture. Because it is culture, it particularizes one's personal capacities in the modality of a sensibility and intelligence that colors all thought, action, and production with the values of archetypal norms. At the same time, its distinctive cast means that every cultural expression must be critically judged in the light of transcendent ideals.

The idea that by its very nature any culture is a fragile reality introduces a note of mild urgency. An anecdote reported by the English medievalist Southern (1953) helps make the point. The main character in the story is Fulbert of Chartres (960-1028), who was among the more learned men of his day. His brilliance was instrumental in the emergence of the celebrated School of Chartres as a major center of learning in the 11th and 12th centuries. The story goes like this. A learned man named Reginald from the cathedral city of Cologne, in the course of his study of one of Boethius's commentaries on Aristotle, was mystified by a passage that said that the interior angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. He did not know what it meant, and in correspondence with an equally learned colleague in Liège, had come no closer to the correct meaning. Reginald concocted some plausible, but incorrect, interpretation and mentions that "once when he had been passing through Chartres he had taken the problem to Fulbert" (p. 202), who after much discussion, had agreed to Reginald's faulty explanation. In effect, a basic knowledge of Euclidean geometry was unknown to some of the brightest scholars of the West. What is true of geometry and knowledge in general holds for other elements of culture such as law and religion. What takes generations to establish can be swiftly and profoundly lost.

The anecdote emphasizes the fragility of culture, which exists only in the actuality of the spiritual powers sustained by the interior life. Scholars have given much thought to the inventive genius that goes into altering and enlarging culture. Equal if not greater genius is required for the vigilance that maintains culture. Dumb inertia or sheer momentum carries no weight in the spiritual life. In the absence of active regard, particular elements of culture descend to what St. Augustine would call the abyss of forgetfulness.

## **THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND CHRISTIAN MIND AND THE UNIVERSITY**

The institution of the university, which cultivates the acquisition and transmission of knowledge, is itself a historical artifact of culture. Its invention was a response to the profusion of knowledge in the 12th and 13th centuries and to the pressing practical need for young men of new learning to assume

posts in an increasingly complex European society. The original universities vastly exceeded the ambitions and achievements of the antecedent monastic and cathedral schools that had carried the burden of higher education in the Christian West for the previous 500 years or more. In his 1988 Gifford lectures, MacIntyre (1990) asked the question, "What are universities for?" "What peculiar goods do universities serve?" (p. 222). He proposed in response that "universities are places where conceptions of and standards of rational justification are elaborated, put to work in the detailed practices of enquiry, and themselves rationally elaborated, so that only from the university can the wider society learn how to conduct its own debates, practical or theoretical, in a rationally defensible way" (p. 222).

Seven hundred years after their original founding, MacIntyre has pared down their purpose to the barest nub. As he conceives it, universities are centers that foster debate over the very standards of rationality that society will ultimately adopt. However, it seems that the possibility of such debate rests upon a most important precondition. Within the cultural confines of the university inquiring minds are liberated from the received modes of inquiry and standards of rationality. But such freedom is not simply given. This sort of intellectual liberality is an intellectual or spiritual achievement that occurred originally in the turn of Greek thinkers toward philosophy and was subsequently appropriated within theological inquiry. In due time, this critical spirit of intellectual freedom was institutionalized in the university. As a condition of its pursuit of knowledge, the university evolved as the principal bearer of the philosophical and theological spirit. In a significant measure, European culture has conceived itself in the liberty that this critical reason enjoys.

Neither philosophy nor Christianity is primarily a branch or division of knowledge. They are more properly a defining animus. It is truer, for instance, to say that one is philosophical than that one knows philosophy, that one is Christian, than that one knows Christian things. In fact, knowledge springs from a form of life. The propositions of knowledge, its facts and dogmas, are not passed on like discrete items to be fixed in the memory like museum pieces. Rather, they are continually tended and increasingly interconnected in the critical spirit of mind that harbors them. The most essential obligation of Catholic education is to nourish this critical spirit of mind and to encourage the extension of its light into every field of research.

So what precisely is this decisive spirit of the mind? The basic truth about human existence that continually informs authentic culture rests upon a distinction that has been variously described. It concerns the matter of love, those objects that make a claim upon our passions, those interests that draw forth our powers of intelligence, imagination, and will. Consider the case of Socrates, who lived the latter part of his life in the conviction that the interest of politics, civic religion, economy, family, and friendship did not suffice

the human spirit. Even the optimum portion of pleasure, health, wealth, and honor would leave a person like himself wanting. "What is more?" Common Sense might ask. "Truth and wisdom," the Philosopher would answer. As Socrates put in the *Apology*, the unexamined life is not worth living. The examination Socrates has in mind requires a measure of withdrawal from the passions that tie us to the ordinary loves of our life. The logical space created in this withdrawal encompasses two realities: the self's interiority and glimmerings of transcendent truth. Included are the basic discoveries of the notion of the human person and the source of its incomparable dignity, which become moral axes in classical thought. Socrates was not an idealist who scorned a nugatory worldly existence. For one reason, he had too fine a sense of humor. Moreover, he enjoyed his particular friendships and maintained a grudging piety for the city of his own and his children's birth. Nevertheless, it is true that all of his worldly enjoyments were tinged with the gall of a spirit left wanting. By his practice of philosophic inquiry, Socrates acquired a language of the spirit that "bid the soul to gather itself together by itself" (*Phaedo*, 83a-b). This personal solitude gives to men or women the standpoint from which to wonder critically about the truth of their worldly commitments. Two and a half millennia later, Maritain, in his *Person and the Common Good* (1947), continues the same insight when writing that the metaphysical tradition of the West defines the person in terms of independence, as a reality which, subsisting spiritually, constitutes a universe unto itself, a relatively independent whole within the great whole of the universe, facing the transcendent whole which is God (p. 30).

Philosophy, however, and least of all metaphysics, is not the way that Everyman will acquire the critical language of the spirit. And yet, subsequent to its original discovery and entry into culture, many men and women will acquire this critical spirit. Thomas Aquinas soberly describes the limitations of philosophy in the first article of his *Summa Theologiae* I, Question 1, Article I: "The truth about God, such as reason can know it, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the mixture of many errors." In other words, it is thanks to religious faith and not philosophical tutelage that Everyman is able to measure or check his worldly attachments by an overarching love for truth.

Christianity not only democratized certain key philosophical teachings, it enhanced them. Of particular importance for our purposes is the notion of original sin or the personal capacity for self-will or egoism. Let us appeal to Augustine of Hippo to draw out the main point, since few have spoken about sin with such clear philosophical insight as did he. In his view, every human person struggles with the conflict between the tendency to will what he loves into the truth and the opposing inclination to will to love what is the truth. Augustine's moral realism illustrates his belief that every man begins his moral experience subordinating or instrumentalizing his sense of the truth to

the interests of self-will. Christian life reverses the order of the loves. The theological virtues concretely restructure a person's affective responses, sensibilities, and dispositions so that they reflect the subordination of one's personal powers to the claims of the God of revelation. It is important to understand that docility to the transcendent truth—whether through philosophy or revelation—rests upon the freedom that struggles to love the truth alongside competing partial loves. The innate contrariety at the center of the human heart keeps one's personal orientation to transcendent values permanently in jeopardy.

Yet when the critical spirit of philosophy and Christianity becomes part of one's mentality it is interesting to note the profound spiritual ambiguity that conditions experience. At issue is the question of whether one's concern with the immanent realms of existence—politics, economics, family, friendship—sufficiently answers to the deepest desires of the human person. If it does not, as the classical tradition holds, then the human spirit qualifies its worldly interests and loyalties. From the political point of view, for instance, Socratic wisdom divided Athens. Wisdom often conflicts with the pieties that secure cities. St. Augustine took a dark view of ancient Greek and Roman civilization. Gibbon (1932) blamed the fall of the great Roman Empire on the essentially uncivil Christian religion. On the personal side, Augustine spoke of the universal, unavoidable desire for truth and wisdom, but at the same time, saw that the inevitable response to its call is to try to hide it from oneself. Truth makes difficult demands upon personal being. Because the human heart suffers a profound contrariety at its core, the self's existential interests conflict with its essential teleology. Human life, in its individual and corporate forms, plays out the conflict between power under the sway of self-will and power subordinating itself to a transcendent truth. In favor of truth's cause lies the intrinsic beauty of truth itself and mankind's innate, even if inconstant, susceptibility to its allure. In fact, the deepest human liberation flows from the self's subordination of itself to truth. But this cannot be seen from the other side of the experience, while one still tries to condition all objects of one's interest by the immanent determinations of human will. Prior to the penetration of truth into the core of the self, freedom suggests itself as the accumulated power of self-will, as self-commanding autonomy.

Whether one thinks of it in terms of the philosophic attitude of Socrates or the conversion of heart in Christianity, philosophy and faith exist in men and women to the degree that they penetrate their personal powers of imagination, intellect, and will. The attitudes and dispositions we are speaking of here are instances of culture, as described in the first section. They condition the passions, inclinations, and rational assessments that prompt one into action. As with any culture, faith and philosophy have their lexicon and grammar, their canon of stories, their dogmas, rituals or exemplars through which they convey a distinctive attitude toward the world and other persons.



The Catholic university has a special role to play in the maintenance, intensification, extension, and application of these fundamental attitudes.

Catholic universities are charged with the task of rational inquiry at the highest level. The scope of this inquiry is universal, for as a corporate body it is responsible for the integrated totality of knowledge. Its mode of inquiry is broadly theoretical, which is to say that it pursues the basic distinctions and foundational principles that justify particular knowledge in the various arts or sciences. Christian faith is in no way alien to rational inquiry, since its very substance is a love of the truth. This love sustains itself in the keen consciousness of a countervailing tendency to invest in the trappings of truth that are nothing more than the outworkings of self-will. Imbued with this attitude, the Christian thinker can be as critical as any Freudian, Marxist, or feminist who would test all knowledge claims and norms for their self-serving biases.

Catholic rituals may differ from the particulars of a Druid or an Aztec cult. But the expressions “Catholic knowledge” or “Christian science”—except when they signify the understanding of Catholic or Christian things—are confused terms. The Catholic intellectual harbors expert knowledge in a Christian mind; and, as with any mentality, it influences his capacity for insight and judgment. Sectarian practices do in fact fashion the spirit. They are a practical necessity for acquiring the Christian faith. Why and how that is so can itself become a question of inquiry to be taken up in the universities. With respect to the non-sectarian disciplines, however, the employment of the Catholic mind is a public exercise in a worldly activity. Its evidences and opinions are common property. Its truths dignify and enhance human life, or it is not truth. The fact that universities were originally conceived in the heart of the Church and have been sustained by the Christian churches almost exclusively until the last century and a half suggests a particular congeniality between Christian faith and the work of inquiry conducted at the university level.

Catholic faith endorses the axiomatic philosophical conviction that the intelligibility of reality is available to the human intellect. In addition to the critical element found among the classical philosophers, Christian faith also insists on divine transcendence and the corresponding limitation intrinsic to the reach of human minds. But most of all, the Christian spirit preserves the distinction upon which any critical inquiry is reared. I refer to the distinction between truth and power. Truth is not a form of power; it is not a love, passion, inclination, drive, capacity, or potency. If truth holds sway, it is not by virtue of any force that it exercises, but rather because some person has subordinated his will to its directive. An honest, strong, well-trained reason catches glimmerings of truth, and its more ample and more certain teaching speaks to those who have ears of faith. The greatest challenge to an authentic culture, therefore, is to cultivate in its people a spirit of attachment to and hospitality for the truth. To the extent that this is done, then respect for the

dignity of human persons and regard for the natural law will inform the actions and institutions that make up the world we live in. In this way, a countervailing force whose only cause is the disinterested love of truth will meet the inevitable forces of egoistic self-will. It is naive to think that the forces of self-will will not often have their way. But we can reasonably hope for a culture in which the human spirit does not altogether spend itself in an unmeasured pursuit of self-interest, whether it takes the way of the hollow sensualism of the consumer society or that of totalitarianism's cruel brutality.

Men and women disposed to measure the employment of their personal powers under the authority of transcendent truth have their role to play in all areas of professional life: the marketplace, the courts, the churches, governmental bureaus, research laboratories, media studios, and the halls of academia. Since the founding of the universities, however, progress in all these distinct spheres of work has been increasingly promoted by the knowledge and cultivated habits of the academic mind.

Since its founding some 700 years ago, the institution of the university is distinguished by its twofold mission of research and teaching. Society needs the knowledge and habits of minds cultivated in the ethos of a university. Toward this end, sponsoring societies have been remarkably indulgent with the university. They have granted university communities a large measure of self-governance and endowed its professors and students with leisure. These political and material allowances acknowledge the fact that the kind of knowledge needed to sustain a liberal society originates in an atmosphere of self-criticism, in thought that assumes a practical distance from the necessary, pressing, and partial interests that dominate political and economic activity. However, the personal attitude that refuses to spend itself in the pursuit of the partial and individualistic goods of pleasure, wealth, honor, and power, a disposition of the spirit that we earlier called Socratic or philosophical, does not belong exclusively to university professors and their students. Even less is the Christian faith the special prerogative of intellectuals. These basic conditions of the spirit belong to the general culture of a people, and are frequently instanced in men and women across all walks of life. The distinction of the university community lies not in its spiritual elitism, its keener sense of truth or justice. It is not likely that on average purer characters are to be found among university professors than among housewives, clergy, military officers, businessmen, or school teachers.

One should not overstate the autonomy of the university. It is not a complete community. It is porous with respect to the larger community. Most obviously, its students regularly pass from larger society and move back into it, carrying with them the legitimate desire for shouldering the responsibilities of practical, worldly affairs. Second, the chartering mandate of the university rests upon the authority of a spiritual tradition over which the university community has no proprietary claim. The desire for wisdom and truth is

nourished in the traditions kept alive in the culture of the larger society, most especially in its religion, public art, and system of laws. To imagine the university as an ideal community governed by academic judgment worthy of being extended to the broader society is a form of madness. Modern disasters with utopian thinking should have cured us of such fancies. Theology should not govern religion. It is wrong to imagine that philosophic inquiry aims to replace common sense and professional judgment. No amount of theoretical understanding of law will yield the jurisprudence of a good judge. University research strengthens, even purifies, extramural professional judgment, but it cannot substitute for it. Paradoxically, it is often the wise among practical folk who estimate best the worth of the university. They keenly feel the limits of their understanding of the tradition they draw upon in exercising their practical and professional judgment. They are aware of how one's measure of common sense and prudence runs dry as the variety and sheer quantity of work increase. The regulative norms and principles of a discipline or a profession require ongoing critical examination, which is a decisive task of the university.

Recall the earlier claim that an authentic culture cultivates the lure of transcendent truth and wisdom. It fosters an openness to them in the affective and dynamic potentialities of a people. The university is responsible for an essential step in the mediation of the transcendent ideals of truth and wisdom to the basic spiritual dispositions and attitudes that give rise to personal action. University research and teaching provide, at the level of principle, rational clarity and order for the disciplines. The university is constituted as a professional community of thinkers who attend to the presence and absence of transcendent truth in the manifold arts and sciences. Insofar as the Catholic faith jealously guards the truth from falsification at the hands of self-will, it is especially suited as an animating spirit in the field of knowledge.

## **PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR**

Since it is the culture of the university faculty that keeps the animating spirit of philosophy and Christian faith alive in the day-to-day working of university life, let me conclude with a discussion of four areas where individual university professors bear the weight of responsibility for sustaining this specific culture.

### **RESEARCH**

The intensification and extension of one's understanding of reality is the most essential work of the university professor. The first responsibility is to the truth. To mitigate the apparent sententiousness of the claim, one need only

recall the measure of frivolous willfulness and special interests that too often determine the path of inquiry. Aristophanes laughed at it in the *Clouds* and Jonathan Swift satirized it in Gulliver's account of his visit to the Academy of Lagado. Behind the laughter is the spectacle of spiritual waste and hovering disaster. The employment of spiritual powers for understanding, unhinged from truth's authority, especially in our contemporary culture so dependent upon bureaucracy and technology, will lead to the impoverishment of culture. Although, as we said previously, authentic culture is not dependent upon the university for the authoritative presence of the truth, it does depend upon it to extend this authority into the pursuit of knowledge at its highest level. In addition to the authority of his or her discipline, the professor in a Catholic university is responsible to the authority of the Catholic faith. Again, faith does not here refer to an invisible mark, an inexpressible feeling or an otherworldly revelation. It is a conversion of heart that sustains itself in a panoply of dispositions, sensibilities, and attitudes expressed in the tradition of its literature, practices, and institutions. It is the responsibility of the Catholic university professor to appropriate the elements of this faith in the pursuit of knowledge.

## DIGNITY OF STUDENTS

The act of education rests upon an ethical transaction between the teacher and the student. As the Congregation for Catholic Education (1998) put it, "Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man's most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings" (#19). Learning requires on the part of the student a measure of good will and acceptance of the teacher's authority. In the act of yielding to authority a person exposes himself to being instrumentalized. It is possible that what promises to be the genuine authority of truth might only be the sophisticated force of another person's self-interest. Generally, I think this ethical transaction between the student and the teacher is governed by the judgment that the trust given by the student will be met with corresponding responsibility on the part of the teacher. In such a compact the teacher commits himself to respect the student's capacity to stand independently in personal freedom before the truth. He also assumes the range of duties, such as preparing courses, grading papers, holding office hours, and writing recommendations, which are practically required if the student is to acquire the skills and virtues and to enjoy the opportunities necessary to attain professional competence. The university professor therefore carries, in the second place, the responsibility of directly influencing youth precisely at the stage of their lives when they enter into the larger culture as fresh bearers of critical knowledge and as the promise of its future.

## PROFESSIONAL TEMPERAMENT

The third responsibility is to maintain one's professional temperament. Just as athletes need to keep in training and maintain their focus, so it is in the academic life. The professor's rational powers need to move comfortably, with a kind of "athletic ease," in the logical space liberated from the tracks of reason determined by the pressing interests of political, economic, and personal life. One's personal style as a teacher or writer may be dogmatic or evocative, systematic or diffuse, cool or frenzied; it makes no difference. But it is essential to have a rational and critical intellectual approach tethered to interest in the truth of things. To maintain the essential elements of the philosophical and Christian mind in the ongoing mastery of one's discipline requires self-conscious effort.

It is useful to emphasize two marks of Catholic intellectual temperament. The first is a sense of wonder. Insofar as the desire that motivates inquiry is released from the anxious interests of self-will it becomes possible to be involved in the truth of things and to enjoy a pure delight in the beauty of reality. This mindset of leisure is the one spoken of so eloquently by Pieper (1963) at a time in the 20th century when anxious self-will was bent on silencing every reference to a transcendent truth. Among the signs of an abiding attitude of leisure is the presence of irony, gratitude, joyfulness, and penitence. These qualities enrich our understanding of reality and human things, for they allow us to see that things and personal actions have significance beyond the immediate interests of our selves or societies. The second mark is moral realism. The Catholic mind is acutely attuned to the self's tendency to will into truth the objects of its own unmeasured loves. It has learned to identify displays of power unchecked by truth. Regardless of how awful evil is, the Catholic mind is not surprised at its persistent presence in human affairs. Nor is it either blind to or ungrateful for the remarkable perdurability of good in the world. This moral realism protects one from the temptations toward utopianism, nihilistic pessimism, and integralism.

## CIVIC PIETY

Finally, university professors have the responsibility to maintain the pieties of their larger communities. What properly happens in the university draws upon spiritual resources more properly secured in the common life and by the authorities of society at large. Moreover, academic achievements directly influence the broader culture of a society. Consequently, professors have a responsibility to remain in solidarity with the concerns and loves of their larger, supporting communities. In the absence of such extra-academic bonds, the professor loses touch with the vivifying sources and larger purposes of his work. From a purely practical point of view, civic piety is a useful antidote to the hubris of an effective or utopian rationalism that is an occupational haz-

ard of academicians. More essentially, personal engagement in the fuller concerns of human life extends the range of reason necessary to inquire after the elusive reality of what some have called the permanent things. In a Catholic university, this civic piety is extended to the estate of the Church and especially to the sources of its authoritative revelation.

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