

American Catholic Higher Education: The Experience Evaluated

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WHY SHOULD THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY SURVIVE?

**A study of the character
and commitments of Catholic
Higher Education.**

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A philosopher, as distinct from the historian or sociologist, applies himself in a paper such as this to the problem of articulating standards of criticism rather than to the gathering of data. To the extent that data are used they will include personal experience, general impressions, and a review of available empirical materials.

My experience of higher education is the following. From 1947-1950 I was an undergraduate, majoring in philosophy, at John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio. John Carroll is a Jesuit institution and at least during the time I was there it was less a university than a slightly expanded liberal arts college. During 1950-1951 I was admitted as a layman to study philosophy at the Dominican House of Studies, River Forest, Illinois. This institution was a seminary, but my courses were selected for my own purposes of philosophical formation from various parts of the curriculum. Thus, although I did not live in, I came to know many of the seminarians in various years of the program. From 1951-1957 I was in residence at the University of Chicago, working on my Ph.D. in philosophy. The philosophy department at Chicago during those years was pluralistic, representing various types of philosophy. It did not include Thomism: Mortimer Adler and Yves Simon were at the University of Chicago but were not members of the philosophy department, and I had little contact with either of them. From 1957-1972 I was a member of the faculty in the department of philosophy at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., where I taught both at the undergraduate and at the graduate levels. In 1972 I moved to my present position, as professor of philosophy at Campion College, which is a Catholic college federated with the provincial University of Saskatchewan Regina Campus, in Regina, Canada. My teaching at Campion is strictly undergraduate.

A period of intense self-criticism took place in American Catholic higher educational circles beginning in the mid-1950s. The initial point made by critics was that the intellectual quality of their

graduates was inadequate, as evidenced by quantitative comparisons between various attainments by graduates of Catholic colleges and graduates of non-Catholic colleges. However, the front of criticism rapidly broadened to include almost every feature of Catholic higher education. The wave of criticism abated somewhat with the beginning of Vatican II on October 11, 1962, as attention shifted from the Church's educational enterprise to the Church itself, and to such particular issues as the contraception controversy. During the next decade a great many changes have taken place in Catholic colleges, seminaries, and universities. These changes have been shaped in part by the preceding period of self-criticism, in part by a variety of circumstantial factors. Some changes have been so great that the identity of many hitherto Catholic institutions is now in question. The current problem for reflection thus becomes: What is there that is distinctively Catholic about the Catholic college or university, indeed, even about the Catholic seminary?

My present reflections are divided into three parts. First, a review of the respects in which the criticism of the late 1950s and early 1960s was sound, i.e. respects in which Catholic higher education was falling short of what it should have been. Second, a recapitulation of the changes that have taken place between 1962-1972 and suggested reasons why one might be less than enthusiastic about some of these changes. Third, some thoughts on the question: what is distinctively Catholic about a Catholic institution of higher education?

Criticisms of Catholic Colleges

Certain undoubtedly sound points made during the period of self-criticism regarding Catholic higher education did not touch the issue of the nature and purpose of Catholic institutions as Catholic. For example, the extent of wasteful duplication and useless competition was pointed out and more rational integration of Catholic higher education was indicated. My impression is that later changes have not improved matters in this respect. But the problem is a functional one, not involving any fundamental principles. Catholic higher education is not a system; there is no central authority in control of it; no one is in a position to organize the entire enterprise in a rational fashion.

Another valid complaint often made was that religious orders and congregations sponsoring Catholic institutions did not sufficiently distinguish the academic community from the religious community itself. This confusion caused various problems, including difficulties about the status of lay members of the faculty,

modes of governance in the academic community inappropriate to it, and the choice of academic officials by processes and criteria more suited to the religious than to the academic community. In these areas recent changes have made a considerable difference in some institutions and very little difference in others. The confusion between academic and religious communities still factually exists in some places where it has been abolished on paper, while in other places the confusion has been dissolved in fact without being resolved formally. In any case, this problem is one of organization, not a question of ultimate principle.

More fundamental criticisms, however, were also leveled fifteen years ago on the declared purposes of Catholic institutions of higher education. Again and again, statements were quoted which formulated those purposes in terms providing a chance for Catholics to gain the benefits of higher education while being protected from the dangers to faith and morals expectedly encountered in non-Catholic institutions. These formulations betrayed an essentially negative attitude toward the world of non-Catholic higher education, and more importantly often betrayed a negative attitude toward the purpose of Catholic higher education itself, i.e. seeking not so much to attain a good as to avoid an evil.

But other more positive formulations of the purposes of Catholic institutions of higher education were often overlooked or purposely ignored by the critics of the late 1950s. These positive formulations stressed Catholicism as a worldview, a way of life, and a principle of a complete culture. To provide an intellectual, moral and spiritual formation, a formation which integrates higher learning within the Catholic worldview, and to develop for students a pattern of life-experiences to be lived within the framework of Catholic principles, these were objectives not commonly stressed.

Such positive purposes explained features most characteristic of the Catholic college as it existed a generation ago. Systematic courses in philosophy and theology were required. Strict discipline of behavior on campus and sometimes even off campus was expected. Spiritual exercises such as daily Mass and an annual retreat were required.

Criticism of some of these characteristic features of the Catholic college, in my judgment, was well taken. For example, the systematic courses in philosophy were for the most part a rationalistic version of Thomism which St. Thomas himself would not have recognized. Textbooks, which were often uniform for an entire department, were English-language versions of earlier Latin seminary manuals. A foundation in real scholarship in the history of philosophy, even of medieval philosophy, was lacking in these manuals.

Incompatible philosophical positions were dealt with in a question-begging and simplistic way; even at that, few "adversaries" dating after the middle of the last century appeared. There was no encounter with contemporary philosophical thought. This decadent scholasticism was supposed to integrate the college curriculum, but the abstract theses to be memorized by students derived from a problematic situation that antedated the development of modern science and the emergence of critical historical scholarship. Because the theology courses, of which more will be said in a moment, were not based on the seminary manuals that corresponded to the scholastic philosophy texts, the philosophy courses failed to relate in any clear and direct way even to theology.

Theology courses often were taken seriously by no one. They contained a repetition of material that students already had covered in high school or even in grade school. Intellectual quest for understanding of faith was displaced by unreflective inculcation of religious information, with an intellectually inadequate apologetics much emphasized.

The intellectual shortcomings of the philosophy and theology courses were matched by the practical shortcomings of the attempt at moral and spiritual formation. This formation involved outward conformity to a detailed set of rules and practices, but it did not guarantee any inward acceptance or conversion. The freedom of the student was not elicited to make a commitment to values which might have grounded the practices he was expected to enact. The ethics and spirituality appropriate to the life of the student as a scholar was not stressed. Patience and honesty in scholarship were not virtues particularly stressed, and "apostolate" referred to what a student might do after he graduated, not to what an intellectual community might do with students' active cooperation.

Some might think these criticisms unfair, but not so. It may seem unfair to criticize their programs for failing in respect to these goals because nothing the colleges could have done would have guaranteed moral commitment and spiritual conversion. Catholic colleges were at fault not so much in failing to attain moral and spiritual formation, as in promising the impossible and then using inappropriate means to try to fulfill the impossible contract. The situation with regard to the theology and philosophy courses was similar. Uniform courses and standards were required of all students. The fact that genuine philosophical reflection is not something of which many students are capable did not seem to matter. Decadent scholasticism was a consequence of expecting every seminarian—and later every Catholic collegian—to study philosophy as every priest was expected to have an ability to teach theology. The college courses did not even have the seriousness of the seminary program in which specialists in various fields worked.

More Recent Changes

In the second part of this paper, I note the changes which have occurred and reasons why some of them beget less than widespread enthusiasm.

In philosophical curricula, a tendency away from the scholastic textbook and toward courses in history of philosophy developed. Serious philosophic works were made part of the reading list in order to help students locate philosophic problems within their historical context, and to instigate student reflection and argument on the problems. But genuine philosophic reflection is not something of which many students are capable, as became clear. Some philosophy teachers met this difficulty by omitting the problematic aspect and any demand for student reflection. Instead they simply taught the history of philosophy as a discipline for its own sake. Such courses obviously could achieve only a superficial and rather schematic picture of the subject matter and were hardly more relevant to the remainder of the college curriculum than the scholastic system. Moreover, a smattering of acquaintance with the history of philosophy tends to breed scepticism and relativism in students who reason that since the history of philosophy does not tend toward a clear consensus on a single set of answers, all answers must be equally valid, and equally subjective.

Other philosophy teachers took a different tack. They sought out recent and contemporary works having a philosophic content which students could understand. Camus became popular, plays of Sartre were widely read, Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy*—a work as unscholarly in its history as any scholastic manual—was adopted here and there as a text. But the fact that students could read and understand some of the assigned works did not suddenly make most of them philosophically reflective and critical. Instead, they simply accepted the content of the work or the content of the teacher's remarks as a body of doctrine to be learned and repeated on the final examination.

Other teachers still attempted a systematic presentation—in notes and/or in lectures—of a single, integrated philosophic position. In some cases the position was a fruit of personal reflection and philosophic development; in other cases it was the standard position of the graduate department in which the individual had studied. This last point needs to be clarified. Not all narrow-minded dogmatism masquerading as philosophy is confined to textbook scholasticism. There have been philosophy departments in American non-Catholic universities where pragmatism or logical positivism or a particular form of analysis has been the prevailing orthodoxy, treated as ultimate truth to be inculcated in both graduate and undergraduate students. Teachers who turned to systematic

presentation of a single, integrated philosophic position sometimes ridiculed a "Thomism" they had never understood and their students had never encountered. Paradoxically, their own procedure was a form of indoctrination not different, except in content, from the most decadent scholasticism.

As various approaches were attempted in a philosophy department and as experiments rapidly succeeded one another, the content of courses and/or reading lists varied greatly from professor to professor and from one semester to the next. Under these conditions it was natural enough that students, administrators, and faculty outside the philosophy department should reason that since the philosophy program had lost its former integrity, it need no longer have its former share of required hours in the college curriculum. For this and other reasons, there has been a trend toward the reduction or even the elimination of the philosophy requirement in the Catholic college.

In departments of theology, there has also been a movement away from religious formation and from the catechetical approach—except that the "Dutch Catechism" has acquired a certain vogue. Some departments have brought in non-Catholics to teach the traditions other than Catholicism; these professors often have been of liberal persuasion and not deeply immersed in the more orthodox aspects of their own traditions. Many departments allow students to elect their theology courses from a set of nonintegrated offerings. Controversy tended to overcome theological scholarship and reflection, journals such as the *National Catholic Reporter* replaced the old apologetics' textbooks, and marriage courses became a forum for opinion in favor of the permissive approach to sexuality. Previously suppressed material displaced theological works of unquestionable orthodoxy. The theology in Catholic higher education consequently has followed the general theological movement outside the Church, setting aside the ultimate authority of the magisterium in favor of personal opinion or popular opinion, otherwise named "conscience" and "sensus fidelium."

While programs in philosophy and theology were in the process of disintegration, the old methods of moral and spiritual formation were also abandoned. Strict rules were relaxed again and again, and the requirement of various spiritual exercises were reduced and in many institutions eliminated. The serious student sometimes found that he could no longer live and function in a dormitory on campus, so lax did discipline suddenly become. And students who no longer were forced to make an annual retreat might find themselves pressed to accept a substitute in psychological counseling.

Other changes in Catholic institutions of higher education aimed to reduce or eliminate the difference between a Catholic institution and its counterpart, the nonsectarian institution. One important example is the trend toward selecting prospective faculty members by what are called "purely academic criteria"—that is, without any inquiry about the individual's religious commitment and his understanding of the relationship between that commitment and his scholarly activities. In some Catholic institutions invitations to teach philosophy and theology have been extended in this way.

Undoubtedly there are a number of circumstantial reasons why Catholic institutions have been tending to identify with the non-sectarian model, not least of which has been the need to meet explicit or implicit criteria for financial aid and grants. But that was a later development. In the pre-Vatican II period of intense self-criticism the non-sectarian institution became for some Catholic educators the model of what a university or college ought to be. Comparisons were constantly made between Catholic and non-Catholic institutions. Sometimes the failure of the Catholic college to attain its own purposes by its own means was validly criticized. More often, however, Catholic institutions were condemned as mediocre or worse in comparison with the standards of excellence established by the best of the non-Catholic institutions. But in these cross-comparisons a very important point was not fully grasped by most of the critics, viz., that the typical nonsectarian American institution of higher education is not ideologically neutral. As much as any sectarian institution, it is shaped by a worldview and a set of values which it concretely embodies and to some extent openly declares.

This worldview and set of nonsectarian values is drawn largely from the outlook of the Enlightenment with some accretions from more recent movements, and includes the following points:

1. There is no supernatural revelation which demands acceptance. Legitimate religion, if any, must be reducible to human experience and reason alone. Religion, in any case, involves values, and as such it is not objective truth but private opinion.

2. There is no unalterable truth about reality which can be known with certitude. Truth can only be attained through methodical research, the paradigm of which is research in physical science. Truth, therefore, is based only on experience and is subject to revision in the light of different and subsequent experience. An exception may be made for formal truth, such as that of mathematics, but such formal truth does not inform us about reality as such. In any case, everything evolves, and all thinking is relative to a certain stage of development.

3. There is no transcendent source of values. Values are a function of the relation of man to his natural environment, express subjective feelings, or at best express requirements of a certain state of culture. In any case, evaluation must be distinguished from objective cognition. Thus, if man and society are to be known objectively they can only be known through sciences which are not evaluative.

4. Knowledge is power. Knowledge accumulates and as it does man gains increasing control over nature. And since man himself is part of the subject matter of objective inquiry, his problems too will be resolved with increasing knowledge and its application. Thus man is in principle perfectible or at least open to indefinite progress, and scientific research is the principle of man's salvation. In this sense, the nonsectarian university and college often adopts for itself the saying: "You shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

It should hardly be necessary to point out that this ideology is altogether at odds with Catholic faith. For Catholic faith, there is a supernatural revelation publicly communicated as objective truth. It is also an article of Catholic faith that God can be known by the light of natural reason, and thus that there is at least a minimum of unalterable metaphysical truth. Further, Catholic faith teaches that values are grounded in the purposes of God the Creator, and that the meaningfulness of human life is an objective fact without which it is not possible fully to understand man and society. Finally, man's salvation depends not on any automatic principle of progress through research but on the interplay between the vocation of divine grace and the free response of man to that vocation.

Not every element of the ideology of the nonsectarian institution of higher education escapes criticism from within its own pale. In recent years, for example, there has been a tendency to demand that the institution recognize certain political and social values, and shape its activity more in accord with those specific values. Some exponents of the "new left" will not be satisfied unless the prevalent Enlightenment ideology is replaced by something approximating the philosophy of Karl Marx.

The secular ideology here outlined is generally taken for granted in the nonsectarian institution. Some concrete policies are shaped by this ideology: the exclusion of conservative theology, based on religious commitment; the division of knowledge into exclusive problem areas, research into each of which is conducted with a view of accumulating truly objective knowledge; the increasing electivism of undergraduate programs, reflecting the lack of any general principle of integration transcending the particular disciplines.

How far Catholic institutions imitating the nonsectarian model have adopted, at least implicitly, the fundamental ideology of the nonsectarian educational enterprise is difficult to say. It is not disputed, however, that many faculty members in certain Catholic institutions, including philosophy and theology teachers, share the common secularist ideology. And not all who share it are lay faculty whose degrees were received in non-Catholic institutions.

One important sign of the extent to which Catholic institutions of higher education have accepted the ideology common to nonsectarian institutions is the measure of acceptance in Catholic circles of the common conception of academic freedom, and its application even in the field of theology. Many sources have contributed to the common notion of academic freedom, but perhaps none more than the thought of the German Enlightenment. Professors who had excluded supernatural faith from their own intellectual lives were dependent upon political authorities who were concerned less with promoting religion than with excluding religious conflict from their principalities. The professors therefore formulated a notion of immunity that protected the interests common to themselves and the political authorities—the academician should be free to publish and teach anything (including religious unbelief) so long as he did not advocate any particular religious faith.

The first report (1915) of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the American Association of University Professors considered that in the United States religious bodies had a right to establish institutions to propagate their faith. But the committee held that such institutions

do not, at least as regards one particular subject, accept the principles of freedom of inquiry, of opinion, and of teaching; and their purpose is not to advance knowledge by the unrestricted research and unfettered discussion of impartial investigators, but rather to subsidize the promotion of the opinions held by the persons, usually not of the scholar's calling, who provide the funds for their maintenance. Concerning the desirability of the existence of such institutions, the committee does not desire to express any opinion. But it is manifestly important that they should not be permitted to sail under false colors. Genuine boldness and thoroughness of inquiry, and freedom of speech, are scarcely reconcilable with the prescribed inculcation of a particular opinion upon a controverted question.

In other words, one who accepts an obligation to teach the Catholic faith as true cannot enjoy academic freedom because he is com-

mitting himself to inculcate what from the point of view of the standard ideology of higher education is nothing better than "a particular opinion upon a controverted question."

Catholic Distinctiveness

The third and final part of this paper considers what is distinctively Catholic about the Catholic institution of higher education.

The document, "The Catholic University in the Modern World," drawn up by the Congress of Delegates of the Catholic Universities of the World, meeting in Rome, November 20-29, 1972, formulated the essential characteristics of the Catholic University in the following way:

Since the objective of a Catholic university, precisely as Catholic, is to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of contemporary society, the following are its essential characteristics:

- 1) a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such;
- 2) a continuing reflection in the light of Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;
- 3) fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church;
- 4) an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life.

The statement in this document concerning academic freedom and theology is considerably nuanced. The topic is treated under the heading "IV B. Relations with the Catholic Hierarchy." Thus the focus on those drawing up the document seems to have been upon possible confrontations between theologians in universities and ecclesiastical authorities. The document expects the theologian to accept the right of the magisterium to judge the value of his theology, its authentic catholicity, and its conformity with divine revelation. At the same time, the document asserts that theologians must be able to pursue their discipline in the same manner as other research scholars, keeping in mind the nature of the discipline. The

document seeks a minimum of episcopal intervention, only as a last resort, when orthodoxy is at stake, and only in keeping with the norms of the academic institution itself.

As a whole, the statement of purpose and the treatment of academic freedom of the theologian does not coincide with the common ideology of nonsectarian American institutions of higher education. Indeed, this document can be read and developed in such a manner as to suggest some important directions for Catholic higher education. My personal interpretations of the document may not correspond in all details with the intention of the authors.

The document calls in the first place for a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such. Now, presumptively this requirement includes a demand for Christian inspiration on the part of individuals. In practice, what this might mean is that permanent appointments to the faculty of the Catholic institution of higher education should be contingent as a general rule upon the fact that the individual is both a committed Catholic and a committed scholar, a professional interested in integrating within his own personality these two aspects of his identity. Potential students should be informed that the institution is seeking to integrate all human knowledge in the light of faith, and any student who is not basically committed to the faith should be so advised.

This consideration may seem radical. What difference does it make if the physicist or the mathematician is a believer or not? My reply is that there is, or should be, an important difference in motivation. The committed Catholic in a field of physics, for example, seeks to know God by knowing creation, and this attitude is one that can be communicated to students. He also understands the world as man's given home, not merely as an objective field of phenomena. This understanding gives him an appreciation of his subject matter that the nonbeliever lacks. Moreover, there are sensitive areas in physics relative to considerations of theology, as one can learn by discussing an area such as cosmological theory with a competent physicist who is also a serious Catholic. What effect faith might have on physics is an open question; we will never know until the project of integration is attempted. We need not imagine a discipline such as "Catholic physics" in competition with ordinary, secular physics. But we should not exclude a priori the possibility that the light of faith might make some difference to the development of physics, particularly inasmuch as the most profound theoretical problems in any of the scientific disciplines tend to have a philosophic dimension, and it is certain that faith can make an illuminating difference in philosophy.

The Rome document also calls for a continuing reflection in the light of Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human

knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research. Later sections of the document expand upon this idea by calling for interdisciplinary dialogue. I would propose that the project of integration or reflection in the light of faith should take priority in the Catholic institution over research. If this priority were accepted, it might lead to the abandonment by Catholic institutions of efforts to conduct doctorate programs, efforts which for a variety of reasons seem questionable in any case.

Obviously, if reflection in the light of faith is taken as a primary goal of the Catholic institution of higher learning, the quality of the theology faculty is of first importance. It is not enough that the theologians know the traditional doctrine and remain faithful to it; they also must be creative and capable of developing doctrine within the framework of the authentic tradition. On the other hand, the sort of creativity that abandons the traditional teaching of the Church in favor of some other tradition or some exciting contemporary worldview will be useless. There is no point in setting up an institute to study the ethical implications of new developments in biology and medicine, for example, and then staffing the operation with theologians who reject traditional Catholic teaching regarding sex and innocent life, and who substitute for this tradition in their reflections some alien ethical system or an eclectic set of personal moral opinions.

This consideration brings us to the third of the characteristics proposed by the Rome document: fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church. This point comes near the heart of the matter, and in relation to the concept of academic freedom can be summarized in five propositions.

1. Freedom is necessary for attaining truth, but in connection with revealed truth it is a secondary consideration. The primary condition for attaining truth is humility and the obedience of faith, simply because the First Truth gives Himself to man gratuitously in the divine revelation that is perfected in the Incarnation of the Word of God. The Word Incarnate is the Truth who liberates. The gift anticipates the quest and truth precedes freedom.

2. Faith is not a restriction on intellectual freedom. The presumption that leads to a judgment on faith from the alien position of unbelief is not a product of freedom, but of the bondage under which man's wounded nature suffers. Faith opens to the human mind an entire realm of truth otherwise inaccessible to it. At the same time, faith generates its own critique of the myths that compete with it, myths that are actually projections of the human mind on reality, but which claim acceptance as philosophic critique or scientific truth.

3. Faith is not reducible to the sources of knowledge of which man is naturally capable. The method of faith is revelation, which is expressed in articles authoritatively proposed. The autonomy of faith means that these articles are not merely opinions offered for discussion, but are principles. The truths of faith make an incontrovertible demand upon the mind of the believer, a demand no more open to denial than that made by the facts of experience or evident logical truths. There is a place for inquiry within the realm of faith; faith seeks understanding. Doctrine has developed in the past and we can expect it to continue to develop in the future. (I would go so far as to say that the present crisis in Catholic theology is largely a failure of genuine development.) But future development of doctrine will never contradict the principles of faith.

4. Faith does not remain solely at its subjective moment of commitment to God or to Christ, encountered personally and incommunicably. It is by hearing that we believe. The body of faith in truth comes to us through the Church. Some have tried to eliminate the contradiction between faith and a secular conception of academic freedom by reducing faith to something indefinite, always subject to rearticulation on the basis of reason and experience. For Catholics, faith is expressible in human language, the aptness of which is subject to the authoritative judgment of the magisterium. This authority is external to the academic community as such, but the Catholic institution of higher education must recognize the superior authority of the magisterium within its field of competence. Acceptance of this authority is the most distinctive mark—though not the most fundamental characteristic—of a truly Catholic intellectual life.

5. Genuine theology is impossible unless the principles of faith are accepted. Catholic theology depends upon acceptance of those principles according to the modality of Catholic faith. Thus the Catholic theologian is not in precisely the same position as is a scholar in any other field. The Rome document states: "Fulfilling their function in the university, theologians must be able to pursue their discipline in the same manner as other research scholars, keeping in mind, as every researcher must, the particular nature of their own discipline." Setting aside the question whether the classification of theologians as research scholars does not betray an implicit affirmation of the secular paradigm of natural science, we may note that the important phrase in this statement is the qualification: "keeping in mind, as every researcher must, the particular nature of their own discipline." For the particular nature of the discipline of Catholic theology includes the judgmental role of the

magisterium. Theologies are falsified when they are condemned, much as theories in a natural science are falsified when the results of experiment go against them.

The fourth, and last, of the characteristics of the Catholic university proposed by the Rome document is an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life. The document later develops this statement in a manner that suggests that the Catholic institution of higher education would be directly involved in projects of development. I think such involvement is not the direction we should take, since practical involvement would distract from the intellectual aim of the academy. The Catholic institution of higher education, I believe, can serve the human community best by sticking to its own intellectual specialty, not by trying to transform itself into a social service agency. This does not mean that theory must be altogether separated from practice, but rather that the practical role of the Catholic institution of higher education should be in the field of articulating practical reason in the light of faith.

The Rome document also suggests that the Catholic university should be concerned with examining, from a Christian point of view, the values and norms which are predominant in modern society, thus responding to the widespread demand for values and ideals that can give meaning to life. This suggestion, I believe, points in the correct direction. The Catholic institution of higher education need not pretend that it is neutral on all the great issues that involve fundamental human values.

Since Leo XIII, the Popes have been trying to articulate Catholic social teaching. Their aim has been to provide an alternative both to atheistic socialism and to western secular liberalism. Their attempts often have been criticized by Catholic intellectuals, sometimes studied, but seldom positively developed. Catholic scholars seem to me to have three important duties to perform. First, to work out the concrete implications of the principles that have been enunciated in existing Catholic social teaching, so that concrete proposals in line with this teaching can be made at the practical level of public deliberation leading to action. Second, to prepare the way by study and reflection for the future expansion and refinement of Catholic social teaching. In other words, Catholic scholars should work out proposals for the consideration of the magisterium, rather than complaining after the fact about the narrowness of viewpoints on which the teaching has been based. Third, and most fundamentally, Catholic scholars should try to uncover the concealed assumptions in the social sciences, and propose interpretations of human life consonant with faith. To what extent

there exists a neutral body of social knowledge is uncertain, but existing social sciences seem to be based on questionable assumptions about the nature of man, the status of values, and the origin of history in free human acts.

In summary, a few conclusions seem to be in order. First, the self-criticism of the Catholic higher education during the last two decades was sound, if the positive purposes of Catholic education were norms of judgment. Second, some of the recent changes may not constitute progress, particularly insofar as an ideology of education alien to Catholic faith has been accepted as a framework for reform. Third, the Rome document suggests some directions for the future. In suggesting directions for the future, detailed proposals about philosophy and theology curricula in particular are not made because any workable solution must be at the level of the particular institution, respecting differences in the ability of faculty and students.

Finally, much of what is suggested here goes against the current trend. There will not likely be many American institutions of higher education considering themselves Catholic in one generation, because the number of committed Catholics seems to be shrinking. But if many of the several hundred institutions now existing fade away, some institutions that survive as Catholic, overcoming both financial problems and the process of secularization, will settle the future of American Catholic higher education.