

The Catholic Social Teachings and the University

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The task of disseminating/teaching the Catholic Social tradition within the University cannot skirt around the person and location of the academician/professor and the hearers' context and concerns. The academician's expertise, exposure to various disciplines, and especially the culture of research would, however, introduce a certain problematic with regard to the particular process of handing on a tradition to students. This problem/tension between dissemination and interpretation reflects the classic hermeneutic problem. Using some principles of interpretation, this article clarifies the task of a creative dissemination as essential to the handing on of Tradition. Teaching the Catholic Social Teaching tradition becomes not only transmitting content but also an involved and embedded process of passing on a meaningful and valuable heritage. This concern to disseminate a significant Catholic Social Teachings tradition within the University may entail the development of the following: 1) attention to students' social condition; 2) a more critically-informed social commitment; 3) the cultivation of an inter-disciplinary expertise and; 4) the nurturing of a deeper social awareness. All of these would enhance the process and exercise of relevant dissemination.

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The various approaches and perspectives offered by the academic disciplines open up views that expand understanding; even

as the most personal insights of academicians have given focus and shape to their research, publications, and lectures. The university provides a setting for both this expansion and focus of the mind. It may thus aid, in one way or another, a more enriched reading and more effective teaching of the Catholic Church's Social Teachings.

For years, courses on the Catholic Social Teachings (CST) have been offered to students of Catholic Universities or Universities run by religious institutes. Those courses are usually based on the documents which derive their impetus from Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*. Such documents centered on the Popes' and Bishops' teachings formally presented in the Papal encyclicals, synod documents, and bishops' conferences proceedings that refer back to *Rerum novarum*'s approach to various social questions. In 2004 the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has released the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church – a work that sums up the fundamental tenets of the whole Catholic Social Teachings tradition.¹

Many Catholic educators have wanted to discover not only the substance of the social teachings but also their relevance. For them, teaching the CST tradition becomes not merely transmitting *content* but more as a *process* of passing on a meaningful and valuable heritage. This process of making a content relevant entails the more creative task of interpretation/reinterpretation. People who have learned from the CST will somehow become part of the same process of making it known to others through their more informed insight.

Hence, time for CST educators must be a constant process of discernment/analysis, always trying to find the right balance between the tradition's content and the process of making this content personally and socially significant. Admittedly, this careful balancing has become necessary to maintain that portrayal of Jesus who is always relevant because of his concern for people. The CST

¹ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004).

cannot truly develop into a relevant ecclesial material without its message of concern especially for people adversely affected by societal processes such as work and spending/consumption.

However, it is also because of the twin aspects of tradition (as a content and a process) that we observe a perennial tension – something which we may not fail to notice in the role of the academician who will now be expected to pass on a established content in a fashion significant to hearers.

While Catholic educators convey insights from the Social Teachings tradition, they have found it necessary to be equally knowledgeable about their students' background. The educators' position within the university would call for a sufficient understanding not only about the academic background of hearers but also their upbringing, social location, and awareness. The university venue seems to expect so much from everyone taking part in its intellectually demanding environment.

Coming from various places and different perspectives, students bring into the university their values, interests, ambitions, and loyalties. They have their own anxieties, sorrows, and hopes about their place in society. These concerns are too important to ignore. To listen to students seems to be a task comparable to listening to the Catholic Social Teachings.

In this article, I will present several interlocking activities/concerns that mark the involvement of every academic who brings into his role the responsibility to share the Church's social teachings to the university: the dissemination of the Church's social teachings, the attention given to every student's social concerns, the development of a more critically-informed social commitment, the cultivation of an inter-disciplinary expertise and, the fostering of a deeper social awareness. This is not a complete list; but, one that offers a script for an integrated role of a university professor who tries to make sense to a wider public the Catholic Church's Social teachings.²

² Cf. John Paul II, *Sapientia christiana*, Apostolic Constitution on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (April 15, 1979); John Paul II, *Ex corde ecclesiae*, Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities (August 15, 1990).

Dissemination of the Church's Social Teachings

The CST tradition was "formally inaugurated" with the promulgation of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum* on May 15, 1891. This document started a practice among leaders of the Catholic Church to formally deal with and write their views on social matters from the perspective of ethics and the Christian faith.

In the CST, the intramural aspect of the Papal or Episcopal communications highlights the invitation for every Christian to reflect on and respond to the ethical challenges raised by the various crises in society. This is evident when John Paul II referred to the social teachings as a "valid *instrument of evangelization*" (*Centesimus annus* 54). The ecclesial voices, however, could not just be confined within the Christian walls. Their significance could reach beyond the Christian readers' interests.

In dealing with the social question, the Popes and the Bishops comment on matters that have affected a greater number of people living outside the confines of Catholicism. In fact, the CST had a catholic (a universal/general) significance for the general public already disposed to hear about its social predicament, about the Church's hopeful propositions, and definite assertions regarding social responsibility.

The more urbanized and secularized settings of towns and cities were the immediate provenance of the observed social problems in Pope Leo's *Rerum novarum*. The delayed development of the Industrial Revolution in Italy brings to mind the seemingly belated response of the Church to the sufferings caused by the "new things" brought about by industrialization in England. This may also indicate the growing sensitivity of the Church elders to the many pressing social problems that affect people already becoming very near the Vatican.

The groups adversely affected by the development and proliferation of factories in 18th century England could not immediately expect from the Rome-based Popes (Benedict XIV [1740-58], Clement XIII [1758-69], Clement XIV [1769-74], or Pius VI [1775-99]) to write a position regarding the new social questions since these social facts would only reach most parts of continental Europe in the 19th century. The socialists, however, were in the

forefront with their engaging pro-labor manifestos. But when the "new things" have arrived in Italy, it was timely for Pope Leo XIII to lend a Christian voice to the realities and issues that have affected masses of people who migrate from the countryside, work in factories, and survive/suffer miserably in squalid conditions.³

Once we realize that the social question is not limited to the sight and hearing of Christians but also to other interested groups (labor associations, socialist groups, State, non-profit organizations) we may have to consider looking at the CST as one among many voices that have tried hard to make sense of the new forms of trouble that affect people of various persuasions, gender, races, and, eventually, classes.

To speak about the dissemination of the Church's social teachings would thus bring into relief the specifically Christian reflection and involvement of the Church with the social problems/questions that have affected the whole of humanity. This is also true when we talk about proclaiming the CST within a Catholic university. Universities, including Catholic ones, are no longer just melting pots for various interests but more of a boardroom, or a symposium where conflicts are not necessarily dissolved by an anticipated consensus. Within a University, mutual corrections are not unwelcome but even considered unavoidable. John Henry Newman's 19th century understanding about the University as primarily promoting mutual education reminds us to be wary about a triumphalist input-making process of dissemination. Dissemination, in the sense of mutuality, is also proclaiming the message through the bar of discussion.

Nevertheless, John Henry Newman's reminder about education through oral instruction still holds true. Educators within the context of a University are tasked not only to participate in discussions with their peers and students but also to perfect their

³ Cf. the claim of Waterman: "Why did the Roman Church wait until 1891 before uttering any official teaching about the industrial economy? Why, when it did, was it so hostile to the market order? Why, in view of its lack of confidence in the market, was it so opposed to socialism? The short answer to all three questions is "The French Revolution." A.M.C. Waterman, "The Intellectual Context of Rerum Novarum," *The Review of Social Economy* 49, no. 4 (1991):465 (465-82).

trade and become one of the experts in their field. This does not just involve lectures and instructions but also the progressive development of skills through research which have become more interdisciplinary, and thus more demanding, in character. In other words, lectures and discussions assume the background qualities of personal dedication and passion for research. This is not to take a shot at methods of imparting knowledge or education to learners. It points out how imparting knowledge would become less of a personal quest if it is not backed-up by a culture of research that seeks not only dialogue with other researchers but also with the social context. The following quote from Newman deserves attention:

Nevertheless, after all, even in this age, whenever men are really serious about getting what, in the language of trade, is called "a good article," when they aim at something precise, something refined, something really luminous, something really large, something choice, they go to another market; they avail themselves, in some shape or other, of the rival method, the ancient method, of oral instruction, of present communication between man and man, of teachers instead of learning, of the personal influence of a master, and the humble initiation of a disciple, and, in consequence, of great centres of pilgrimage and throng, which such a method of education necessarily involves. This, I think, will be found to hold good in all those departments or aspects of society, which possess an interest sufficient to bind men together, or to constitute what is called "a world." It holds in the political world, and in the high world, and in the religious world; and it holds also in the literary and scientific world.⁴

Even if a professor in the University is challenged by the presence of various interests, he/she will always have a chance to contribute his own into the whole process of discussion. But as mentioned, this entails a backup of a different kind of intellectual armory coming from a more self-engaged kind of intellectual processing. The public engagement through University education presupposes the personalized wrestling with the blending of public pools of knowledge. To make sense to oneself the repository of knowledge, a certain amount of exercise of detachment for personal enrichment is

⁴ "The Idea of a University," 1954.

definitely required. Newman affirms: "...still I think it must be allowed on the whole that, while teaching involves external engagements, the natural home for experiment and speculation is retirement."⁵

The process of dissemination of the CST somehow cannot skirt around the processes involved in the reproduction and maintenance of a University culture. In saying this, I am not unaware of some problems or fears expressed by some groups about this process of discussion, reinterpretation and adaptive dissemination of traditional ideas. Without a doubt, such a process would require some degrees of tolerance, eclecticism, relativization of ideas and values, and even a certain detachment from institutional commitment (cf. academic research and discussions requiring a high degree of objectivity). Be that as it may, the Gospel message cannot be drowned by academic rules within a University setting (even within a Catholic University) if this flows from a commitment to proclaim Jesus through the modern/post-modern demands of respect for freedom, autonomy, and individual rights. Along these lines, Jesus's words may sound encouraging: "Don't forbid him, for there is no one who will do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For whoever is not against us is on our side. For whoever will give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you are Christ's, most certainly I tell you, he will in no way lose his reward." (Mk. 9: 39-41) Freedom, autonomy, and individual rights may not be too self-serving in the light of Jesus's qualification of "giving a cup of water to drink." The "freedom from" (or "autonomy from") dimension will find completion in its "freedom for" direction, especially when the free self moves with compassion towards those who are in need.

Attention to every student's social condition

Looking at *Rerum novarum's* time (1891) and place (Europe) would immediately raise the question of relevance to our own time and space. Granted that the original document was followed-up by the more recent encyclicals and synodal documents, a question is

⁵ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* xiii, <http://www.newman-reader.org/works/idea/index.html> (accessed January 16, 2007).

still to be raised regarding their significance to younger audiences like the students of a University, being documents written by elders or serious-minded leaders. The time/setting factors alone really call our attention to the great distance that divide the generations and societies of 1891, etc. and generations and societies of the second millennium; the ages of the Church's writers and those of their readers (e.g., youth-students of today) further widen that gap.

Most, if not all, students (in their late-teens) are pre-occupied with many "personal" or very "private" matters: friends, intimacy, conflict with parents, health, grades, thesis, loneliness. If some of them are also inclined to look at the more serious aspects of life (career, faith in God, raising a family) such are tackled outside the more public or socially-circumscribed parameter or venue. Modern students' lives are usually not embedded within a communitarian or ecclesial setting. Nevertheless, the biography and the diverse social backgrounds of the students cannot be avoided if one will have to reach out to them in a spirit of dialogue towards mutual education.

In dealing with personal matters/problems, the students commonly express their ways of coping through their individual dispositions and with some help from familiar sources; and they reach out for solutions from various non-traditional sources: popularized books, magazines, journals, friends, TV, internet, and some professionals. It is, of course, unthinkable for them to immediately consult the Papal encyclicals or synod documents in dealing with personal troubles. Their personal problems are to be handled through more familiar ways or popular manners that are framed by our present society and culture.

The subject matters tackled by the CST are more social in scope and more complex. In this sense, the social documents are more appealing to an audience preoccupied with issues that go beyond the personal and the private. It is, of course, not unthinkable to find some students already occupied with broader social problems (e.g., illiteracy, homelessness, environmental destruction). However, most students are more busy with personal studies, personal ties, personal problems, and pleasures or the "lighter side" of life. As a body of documents dealing with serious topics, the CST challenge students to go out of their privately-restricted

worlds and enter into the social concerns of the elders of the Catholic Church. This, again, raises the question of significance. For no matter how important the point of view of the elders are in the CSTs, there are other familiar sources catering to the students' queries: other books, internet sites, mass media, trusted authorities outside the Church, family, and friends.

It is equally important to emphasize that the CST authors have written about matters that have produced, mainly unintended, troubles in many areas of society. These are serious matters which come directly from the world of the workplace, centers of governance, arenas of power, profit-making boardrooms, and other fields of exploits over human and natural resources and habitats. These are not the usual things that would stuff a teenager's consciousness. The young have more familiarity with the world of spending, consumption, play, and spontaneous self-searching rather than the world of work dominated by adults. To be able to make the young familiar with the adult-created troubles might help them not only to become more aware about their future but also about how today's market transforms itself, for profit-maximization, into dispensers of juvenile and juvenilized commodities. This latter issue adds relevance to an otherwise too adult-focused CST. The educator may have to involve the students in the understanding of the CST's concerns as matters of the young and not just of adults; as matters of the present and not just of the past. They could immediately relate to the world of the adult if they would feel its effects on them. The continuity of the past may not catch them unaware if the past is something that they feel part of their present.

To better understand the process of communicating the social teachings to students, it is important to examine the passing on of this heritage as significant and meaningful. In this regard, it would be helpful to distinguish between *sense* and *significance* as constitutive elements of what is considered *meaningful*.⁶

⁶ See Thomas W. Gillespie, "Biblical Authority and Interpretation: The Current Debate on Hermeneutics," in *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1986), 196-201.

Sense refers to intelligibility while significance refers to the reader's/hearer's concerns vis-à-vis the message of the texts. The sense of the text may not be characterized as unmeaningful but as insignificant. When a community shows interest in the sense of the text it is only because it is intelligible *and* significant.

The inclusion of significance within the scope of meaning gives greater leeway for the tasks of interpretation and application. When we include the element of relevance to the concept of *meaning*, the CST will be seen to provide an opening for multivocal significance before every involved reader/hearer.⁷ The present readers/hearers of the text may not share with the original readers/hearers of the word the same language or concerns that they share with the author. What meaning that the original readers/hearers pick up clearly depends on the elements of language and context as well as on the possibility of a real dialogue between the author and the interpreters who share a common situation. While there is a wide distance between the original author/hearers and the present readers/hearers in terms of language and time or space, the text carries a presentness that breaks the original intention of the author or the immediate significance for the original audience. As the previously oral discourse attains a different form in writing, the text carries on a different career of its own.⁸ Thus, the poly-

⁷ It is instructive to make a distinction between the *original* and *present* readers/hearers of the text. The *original* hearers/readers are those possible readers/hearers in the author's own context. In such a case, the readers/hearers and the author share the same context. Moreover, there is that element of immediate application of the author's message to his/her context. These *original* readers/hearers have the opportunity to confront the author even face to face. The *present* readers/hearers, on the other hand, are those who read and hear the original author's text but, by reason of distance in time or place, could only be regarded as the original author's future readers or listeners. This possibility of future readership may not have been contemplated by the author. A confrontation between the author and the present readers/hearers who come from different contexts is no longer possible.

⁸ See Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Forth Worth: Texas University Press, 1976), 93. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Translated by Garrett Barden and John Cumming (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 357; German original, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).

semic nature of every interpretation⁹ is opened by the *written* form of communication. There is no longer a common situation, no opportunity for a question-and-answer dialogue and no shared significance. But through reading, meaning is appropriated as significant, which may otherwise be an estranged being due to the temporal and spatial gap between the author and the present audience.¹⁰

E.D. Hirsch, Jr. wants to eliminate the confusion produced by the two aspects of *meaning*. He insists on fixing the term *meaning* to the textual or authorial meaning and reserves *significance* to the textual meaning's relation to a person or to whichever entity one may relate the former.¹¹ Sense therefore, for Hirsch, is solely the meaning presented by the text.

Authors who argue for the "semantic autonomy" of the text actually predicate it to the significance of the text rather than to the authorial sense.¹² They do not overlook the independent status that the written text gains as it lies in front of different readers. The text is no longer bound to the textual meaning. When the advocates of "semantic autonomy" say that the text acquires a meaning independent from that of the author's intention, *they are not saying that the meaning of the text lies solely on the interpreter's reading*. The significance is not substituting the sense of the text. They advocate rather for the primacy (in stress) of the present, for the past sense's significance.

⁹ Cf. the following: *Interpretation ... is the work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning*. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations, Essays in Hermeneutics*, edited by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 13. There is interpretation wherever there is multiplicity of meaning. It is in interpretation that this multiplicity is shown.

¹⁰ See Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 43-44.

¹¹ E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 8.

¹² This semantic autonomy dovetails with some concerns of the "more-than-literal" exegesis, which goes beyond what the original author meant. See Raymond E. Brown, "Hermeneutics," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 605-623. Cf. Ernst Fuchs, *Hermeneutik* (Bad Cannstatt: R. Möllerschön Verlag, 1954).

What Hirsch has defended in restricting “meaning” to the textual is helpful in determining what is constant in the text. He forgets, however, to point out the intentional sense and the intentional significance of the original author. In other words, the textual meaning is not really limited to its sense but already imbued with significance as its original readers/hearers relate to it. There is no monologue in a genuine communication.

Could we hope for an eventual attention given by the young generation to an older generation’s point of view? Could the youth, in their ways of transcending their personal world, consult the CST instead of or in addition to the other more familiar secularized and commodified sources? This may become possible if the text is presented to them in a way that is both full of sense and significance.

This is a formidable challenge: to be able to deal with diverse interests not necessarily congruent with the principles pursued by the CST; and at the same time promote the values for which Jesus has suffered and died.

Development of a more critically-informed social commitment

Fealties and involvements are constraints on the mode of thinking. Political leanings and/or economic standing are factors that give direction to perceptions and motivations. One’s fealties influence one’s view on things. Views about history or development, for instance, may be determined by one’s social location. As a conservative politician cannot possibly deliver a lecture on labor protest as a function of radical social change, so is one only able to *effectively* talk from one’s own loyalties’ expectations. A theoretician’s line or “expertise” is prescribed with some form of capacity and limits by his/her political leaning or economic standing.

One’s fealties and involvements are, however, not absolute determinants to cognition or reason. One is also free (relatively speaking) to break away from old social locations and loyalties and choose new ones.

As a member of a University, the theology/religious education professor has loyalties that shape the mind. The social location that one chooses is also fealty-generating and one that leads to

choice or articulation of a particular form of philosophy or model of theological research. It is this consideration that a theologian's choice or theoretical creation should reflect a commitment to what the CST stands for; that is, commitment to proclaim the Reign of God vis-à-vis society's problems or troubles.

The academe is a place that provides a setting for intellectual formation and fealty cultivation.¹³ It is here where the educator is confronted by a variety of research models, theories or thematized views about the world or human existence. It is also here where s/he *formally* assumes an approach consistent with the values to which Jesus stood for: an approach that enthrones the values of compassion, forgiveness and self-sacrifice. This would be a real consequence of the educator's reading of the CST replete with calls to side with the poor and the marginalized of society. In this regard, a University education which promotes the CST may have to assume a dialectical and embodied mode of theorizing and commitment.

Dialectics as an outlook emphasizes the "viewing of things as moments in their own development in, with and through other things."¹⁴ The understanding that "everything is related to everything" is primary in this outlook. What is contemplated here is the dialectical process where relationships, especially oppositions, are understood as productive and transformative. Conflictual or opposing forces are viewed not in their respective fixed positions but more in their dynamic interactions toward advancement or growth. This is also reflected by the prophetic stance of Jesus versus the religio-political leaders of his time. There is no stopping in a monolithic stance since a ceaseless movement is always attributed to it, i.e., as a limitless dynamism. For a mind that has taken up a dialectical outlook there is no stopping in the negative alienating situations since they are seen as part of a whole historical dynamic of interrelated forces or entities.

¹³ We do limit the meaning of the *academe* to the places that provide the setting and resources for scholarly learning, research and investigation. See David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 14ff.

¹⁴ See Ertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 52.

As a mode of thinking, a dialectical reason is one that sets no limits to theory and practice. It does not rest in any term or proposition. It is reason in motion, rest-less in its endless search for truth, for real enlightenment that seeks its fulfillment in human emancipation. Thus, it is never content with just any form of practice; much less in some stale and hardened forms. It is always aligned with progressive practices in history, with movements of change or transformations that never rest with their own constructs. More positively, negative alienating situations (contrast experiences) are approached from the perspective of transformation for the Reign of God.

The initial drive of theorizing before concrete discord is not aimed at some speculative synthesis but *real* reconciliation. If the mind is able to reconstruct a fragmented totality, any theorizing that seeks to fulfill this project must happen in thought alone without reaching out to reality. The dialectical process becomes embedded in the process of thought itself, as the synthesis is a product of cognitive activity. A more materialized theoretical activity before a historical fragmentation entails, however, [its] embeddedness and functionality in practical involvement; and thus dialectics in praxis. Since the educator is not so much confronted by the need to reconcile thought with reality, and since s/he understands that the situation of poverty and oppression, as judged by the Popes and the Bishops, is a practical problem and not a theoretical one, his/her approach gives primacy to praxis whose consummation is in human wholeness in Christ.

With this embodied end in mind, because theologizing is done with reference to action in reality, the educator adopts new kinds of tools not so much from philosophy but from the social sciences, or from philosophy already in close and constructive relation with the social sciences. The CST authors have provided examples of this kind of relationship with the social sciences.¹⁵

¹⁵ The Popes would have consulted, in one way or another, the following authors for their social and economic theories: Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, Franz H. Mueller, Rodger Charles, S.J., Drostan Maclaren, Johnnes Messner, Oswald von Nell-Breuning, S.J., E. Cahill, S.J., Heinrich Pesch, S.J., Friedrich von Hayek. See Robert A. Sirico, "The Late-Scholastic and Austrian

Rerum novarum has been confronted by the Industrial Revolution's social troubles. The document has thus dealt with such troubles with the help of some 19th century social theories. The subsequent CST documents have been influenced by other sociological schools current in their period. As newer social problems appear or are discovered, more up-to-date social theories develop. Social theories of the past two centuries have emphasized on the troubles emanating from work, from the fields of production, and from the activities of dominant politico-economic players. Today's social troubles emanating from consumer/spending habits may need the more consumer- and everyday life-focused sociological approaches. This more recent development in sociological analysis should complement one's reading of the CST.¹⁶

The social sciences bring out the *object* of a transformative education, which is consequently treated axiologically; they "analyze the concrete misery of the real world, the mechanisms that create it, and consider possible models of liberation from it."¹⁷ This use of the social sciences is done, therefore, in reference to transformative praxis. In this regard, a broader understanding of one's social involvement within the University is also linked to the educator's close links with the more sociologically-oriented academic disciplines.

The cultivation of an inter-disciplinary expertise

The Catholic social thought as reflected in the Papal/Episcopal documents about social issues is also a product of an inter-disciplinary endeavor. Oswald von Nell-Breunning's contribution

Link to Modern Catholic Economic Thought," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 1, no. 2(October 1998), 122-129; F.B. Pike, "Spanish Origins of the Social-Political Ideology of the Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century," *Americas* 29, no. 1 (1972): 1-16.

¹⁶ See the writings of Marshall McLuhan, Zygmunt Bauman and Jean Baudrillard; see also the theoretical perspectives offered by Norbert Elias, Erving Goffman, Alfred Schutz, Pierre Bourdieu, Gerhard Schulze, Anthony Giddens, and Michel de Certeau.

¹⁷ Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell and Fernando Segovia for Chapter 5 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984), 19.

to the formulation of *Quadragesimo anno* (QA) is instructive. His teacher, Heinrich Pesch, who is now considered the father of "solidarism" pervades the pages of QA. Solidarism is a program for social reconstruction, "designed to strike a balance between the excessive individualism of capitalism and the excessive collectivism of socialism,"¹⁸ a system that Nell-Breunning had translated into QA. The progressive character which social analysis has taken shape in the various social teachings documents indicates an advancement of every attempt by the Popes and the Bishops to better understand social reality. This also suggests the various ways through which every citizen ought to concretize one's desire for sociological clarity as well as for social transformation.

There are several ways in which an educator for the CST may be related or exposed to hazards in the use of the social sciences. Some amount of diffusion of academic goods from other disciplines will be observed in every interdisciplinary endeavor, be it a use of empirical data, appropriation of social analysis/conclusions, or application of analytical tools.

Data transfer poses the seemingly least "dangerous" process involved in a researcher's/ teacher's use of the social sciences. Data is quantifiable and verifiable and thus may seem to be more innocuous. However, those who do not bother to verify all data used may be misled or blinded by persuasive arguments. The accuracy of data is usually taken for granted mainly because of the convincing arguments attached to them.

The appropriation of a certain social analysis is a more risky process since it asks one to assume not only the correctness of data but also the soundness of procedures and analytical presuppositions. It is not that empirical data transfer involves no assumption of presuppositions; it is not, however, always linked to assumed analytical tools. Moreover, sociological approaches are also circumscribed, to a great extent, by their position in or dependence on the social framework. Nevertheless, the social sciences (particularly those that pioneered in philosophy) have warned about the context-dependent or socially-constructed character of every

¹⁸ John C. Cort, *Christian Socialism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 289.

reasoning (not to mention the inner-world's power disturbing the subject's autonomy).

Some educators may not be aware, for example, of the tools of analysis employed in understanding/explaining their data. There are cases when a discipline will have to borrow models of analysis from another field, which is already beyond the educator's concern, but it brings problematic items into its own conclusions.

Transfer of analytical tools assumes a greater amount of participation or direct involvement in either data-gathering or social analysis. It is no longer a reliance on a product but rather on the ways in which to produce a product. The tools of data-gathering and analysis will have to form part of the ethicist's arsenal of theorizing, since the use of such tools will be responsible for the continuing study about reality. Expertise or *academic habitus* in the application of sociological procedures and method in ethical theorizing may have to be established in order to offer more unified discussions between reality and the propositions offered as direction and impulse to a reality-grounded life.

In this kind of relationship, the critical stance of the educator to the object social as well as to the social science disciplines is most likely optimal. It is only by way of this closer constitutive/cross-fertilizing relationship that the process of reflection on social matters may proceed with greater reflexivity and objectivity. In this way one's position as part of a reflexive process of ethical production will also have to open up to the challenges of reality, where people are and where the social sciences are.

Fostering a deeper social awareness

The development of a deeper social awareness is fostered by a socially-committed perspective.

In the field of architecture, a perspective is that which serves as a reference point for an architect's plan for a building. It aids the architect in bringing or arranging the different elements of an edifice into their proper relationships and relative importance; it is also that point of reference which serves as guide for bringing into view or highlighting a certain angle or aspect of a work. When the architect shifts perspective the constitutive elements of an

edifice are also brought together or arranged in a different manner; a shift in perspective would mean a shift in what is shown or regarded as important or highlight.

When creating a work of art, a painter will also have to determine the particular perspective from where a figure's angle of view is to be based. A figure's shapes and lines take their determined positions according to a perspective set by the artist. Those determined positions would now give the figure its characteristic presentation or its visual stance. Thus to start drawing a house based on a central point of reference (i.e., the center of the drawing paper) would present the house to the viewer as an edifice launching itself up from such a central perspectival point. This central perspectival point, thus, gives the artwork a character, a quality which cannot be captured by a perspective from the periphery.

The term perspective could also mean somebody's point of view. Instead of looking at perspective as a reference point from where the builders or artists could start composing their creations, one can look at it as that point from where some things are in view. In other words, perspective is a person's or a group of persons' vantage point or viewpoint from where realities and ideas are perceived, examined, analyzed, understood, etc. It is that point where one can stand and possibly gaze at one's horizon.

A certain thing (or idea) represented apart from a specific vantage point lacks the referential factor that would endow it with a concrete quality, a specific character or a particular feature. Something will be seen or understood in a less concrete or even less interesting manner when one fails to assign to it a character or a familiar feature. This character or feature manifests itself by grounding a story, a person or an idea in a social setting which serves as grid of perspectives or viewpoints.

Thus, something presented apart from a person's social grid will usually show itself in an ethereal way – rootless, detached, and having a general quality with little specifics.

Consider the sleeping behavior of people. We know what sleeping to most people means; but, we will really picture it if it is presented to us in a concrete way – one that also includes the "actor" and his/her situation and dispositions.

We will better understand someone's account of sleeping behavior if we contrast it with the account given by others who come from different vantage points.

The act of sleeping is generally regarded as a temporary suspension of consciousness, as a natural inactivity of the body, a rest needed for restoration of energy and for the repair of some damaged bodily cells or tissues. This is the meaning of the act of sleeping which we can communicate to almost everyone in this world. Even a gradeschooler can understand the nature of the act of sleeping this way. An Eskimo or an Australian aborigine may also understand it. Something desirable is brought by this kind of account about sleeping – its perceivable universality.

One may even try to say that there is a standard account of sleeping behavior. The standard account is apparently the kind defined by the experts, notably the medical experts: medical doctors, psychiatrists – the authorities on bodies and minds. These are the experts who have conducted some studies – experiments – about the sleeping activities of people. With their tools at hand – facilities, gadgets and other instruments that count, measure, record, and analyze available data – and with their technical-empirical methods of research, they are able to come up with conclusions about the practice of sleeping even as new sets of data in the future will contest their present conclusions. The controlled character of the study, the so-called objective nature of experimentation, the strict check-counter-check procedures, the step-by-step technical method – all these would somehow lend these experts some sense of authority which cannot be given to somebody who lacks similar credentials and expertise.

But what kind of account does our experts give us about the activity of sleeping? We don't have to line up those characteristic features that their accounts have. We are quiet sure that for them the act is a natural biological need. From the medical point of view, taking a good sleep is one of the essentials of good health. It is also an occasion to have dreams which could be a way of dumping cerebral garbage or, for psychoanalysts, providing leads to the hidden traits of the dreamer. Such a way of explanation presents the act of sleeping in its generality or its nature. This is truly helpful in formulating for us a generalizable account of

the act of sleeping. This means that the sleeping activity that they have defined can also account for the sleeping behavior of the Eskimos inside their igloo or the Australian aborigines or the African dessert's bushmen who use their elbow to elevate their head above the sandy ground, etc. Since those experts had delivered seemingly value-free accounts, these can rise above, if there are, different prejudices or preconceptions about sleeping in various cultures or contexts. Thus no matter what prejudices or preconceptions the Filipinos or the African Bushmen have about sleeping, the experts' account is still true. Truth here means therefore to possess a trans-national or cross-cultural character.

There is another way of understanding sleeping behavior – the way of the philosopher. The more philosophico-anthropological approach to the act of sleeping does not follow the technical experts' method. Theirs is a more speculative approach. Philosophers do not strictly use those instruments of science and technology, but they have language; they have tried to master it and they know how to "use" it, to be creative with images and language. They are of the very speculative but imaginative type; they are also disciplined, creative and very logical thinkers. They can formulate and communicate an account of sleeping by their sheer ability to compose ideas and concepts through systematic reflection and speculation. They provide us insightful accounts of sleeping behavior that are truly relevant to our need for the substantial, ultimately relevant or meaningful.

For example, one philosopher could look at sleeping as an expression of trust, a gesture of surrender to the realm of darkness. Another one could see it as a necessary plunge into the uncharted course of the unconscious. While another could see the act as a defiance against the unknown and even death itself. These accounts are by no means un-authoritative simply because they lack the backing of scientific experimentations and the element of testing and validations applied by technical scientists.

Philosophers are in their own ways also experts and authorities. One may also consider some of them as experts in their study of, say, events and traditions – the signs and imprints left by human beings. Philosophers can also arrive at conclusions about sleeping that have their roots in their in-depth studies of

the patterns of behavior of "sleepers" or insomniacs. They invent concepts, principles, models of thinking, etc., that could eventually help us towards a deeper, more meaningful understanding and perhaps the ultimate significance of sleep. Their reflections, however, are more ruthless (unrelenting), if not rootless. Their approach uproots us from our familiar grounds by forcing us to think with them. But theirs is not only an approach that undermines our local foundations and challenges our ever shifting supports in history, but also lifts us up into the seemingly more stable areas of ultimate significances and foundations. Their understanding of sleeping behavior is just "heavy," "deep," "mind-boggling," i.e., very philosophical!

But can such a philosophical, and that of the scientists' universal, account of sleeping behavior offer us something to change some of the negative features attached to the sleeping behavior of some people? Can philosophy's speculations and science's objectivity and universality be helpful in our struggle against the "oppressive character" of some patterns of sleeping behavior?

What I am asking is that when we are confronted with some concrete cases where the sleep of "sleepers" have negative features in them, can our experts in biology and in philosophy assist us in our task of changing the people's predicament? The fact is that there are kinds of sleeping behavior that can only be concretely understood if seen against the background of the negative conditions that our sleepers suffer. In other words, some kinds of sleeping behavior really raise issues that matter for morality. That means we are confronted with issues where our ethical stance matters, mainly because these issues force us to take a stand, for good or for ill.

Now, let us be explicit with our agenda. In our discussion about the different accounts of sleeping, we maintain that some of those accounts are not necessarily sufficient. When one is confronted with what is undesirable, negative, oppressive, dehumanizing features of the act of sleeping, one cannot just offer the scientific standard or the philosophical account where one maintains "objectivity" or one may remain uncommitted. There is more need to confront the problem as a moral problem than simply to treat it as an object of experiment or speculation. The latter approaches merely try

to understand and communicate sleeping in an "objective" way or explain it in a meaningful way. We could have a need for these approaches if their findings or reflections could help us in our task of helping some people oppressed in their situations. What we need is an approach that do not just understand sleeping behavior, but one that changes or transforms it when it is part of a dehumanizing order. Science and philosophy are helpful insofar as they assist us in our goal to promote individual and social well-being.

Suppose we take the sleep of Maria, a domestic helper, as our object of study. What does this particular domestic helper's sleeping patterns mean?

Let us say Maria has employers who demand excessively on her. When Maria sleeps she takes respite from their demands; but, they may dislike Maria's sleep because it deprives them momentarily of Maria who is such an obedient and industrious helper.

If we are sympathetic with Maria's condition, we will not remain on the level of explanation and stay with our account that just regards her rest as a mere biological necessity or a plunge into the unknown. We want something other than that. What we want is a characterization of the act of sleeping that could arouse sensibilities, make one become aware of the problem and thus move one to commit one's self to help Maria be freed from her predicament. We probably need a more engaged account of her sleeping behavior!

Our consciences are pricked when we learn that Maria's sleep is not something that would make employers happy because they cannot avail of her 'round-the-clock service anymore. Our hearts could be exhorted to compassion and could be moved to help Maria when we learn that her rest is something desirable because she will be gaining more energy for the next day's backbreaking schedule.

There are other examples of sleeping behavior which could bring us to further enlightenment about our moral agenda. Take the daytime sleep of some people like Pedro, a beggar and Clara, a club dancer. Pedro's daytime sleep is usually a sleep of a hungry man. He habitually lies on an empty stomach. The act of sleeping serves to make Pedro forget about his need for food. Some would need solvents to induce themselves to sleep or numbness to overcome the disturbing hunger pangs. Clara's daytime sleep is also

serving a purpose – to maintain her night job. Clara's sleeping behavior does not just mean maintaining health, but also maintaining a humiliating job. The act of sleeping here would take to mean a handmaid of club-dancing or prostitution, as the case maybe. Both of these accounts of sleeping are equally morally significant. These accounts would appeal to our role as moral agents who are expected to do something when involvement is called for. These accounts pose the morally challenging questions, like "What should you do to solve Maria's or Pedro's or Clara's problems?" These accounts may exhort us to denounce what is dehumanizing and affirm what is humanly uplifting. They point to issues that challenge and arouse us to get involved and do something to affirm what is truly good. They ask us to be moral.

If we have not taken into account the moral significance of Maria's life, of Pedro's status or of Clara's job, to our understanding of sleeping behavior, we could just have presented the usual account from the perspective of biology or philosophy that neither looks at sleep from the moral perspective nor from the perspective of those who suffer. And we could have failed to come up with a "more helpful" account. We could have come up with a less relevant meaning of the act of sleeping. We could have failed to make an account of the act that is more socially and morally relevant. This, however, takes for granted a certain perspective that is socially involved.

Educators may have to adopt a certain socially-relevant perspective to be able to offer some accounts of reality as morally relevant. To be morally relevant, a social awareness needs to be nurtured within a socially-embedded practice of education. Such an awareness may be vital for an enriching communication of the CST.

Conclusions

The reading and dissemination of the Church's social teachings must take into account the hearers' context and concerns. The dissemination of a tradition would also mean communicating its significance to its hearers. This way, imparting traditional knowledge is also opening up to the possibility of a better understanding because of the importance given to it by today's readers.

The concern to disseminate a significant Catholic Social Teachings tradition may entail the development of a more critically-informed social commitment, the cultivation of an inter-disciplinary expertise and, the nurturing of a deeper social awareness. All of these would enhance the process and exercise of relevant dissemination. The complexity and the seriousness of the task of teaching would demand a more intense and socially-broadened mental and social preparations. As a form of evangelization within a university setting, teaching the Catholic Social Teachings calls for an engaged Christian response to social issues, in a way that Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the hope of the poor. □