

The Catholic University: A Priority in Developing Countries

1. *Do We Agree?*

People who are in favour tell us: Universities should be “agents of change.” Catholic Universities in developing countries is technological change. Hence Catholic Universities must give a strong motivation to the people in developing countries especially through their Faculties of Technology.

People who are against tell us:

(a) The opening and building up of Faculties of Technology by Catholic Universities in developing countries was and will be for the immediate future only possible because of generous help from outside the country. For how long can this aid go on? In several developing countries the government is growing more and more suspicious; religious groups of the non-Christian majority are becoming more and more irritable about the aid given by christians from other countries to christian institutes in the country. Requests have already been made that this kind of “foreign aid” be but under governmental control.

(b) What will be done when new expensive technical devices are needed, in order to keep our faculties up to the mark? Can we pay the bill when our equipment after ten or fifteen years is obsolete and needs to be replaced?

(c) Many Catholic Universities are constantly in the red. The only way out is raising the fees, with the result that we, in

poor countries, are often working for the better-off ones, for the already privileged ones. We try to escape this suffocating circle by saving and begging for money, as much as we can, so that we are to help some poor students; but the help remains very limited. Are there many Catholic Universities admitting pro Doc more than 10% of the total number of their students?

(d) In Indonesia, sometimes we are not so sure that our educative influence on our young people is strong enough, to encourage them to strive for social justice. Remember: they are raised, most of them, in well-to-do families who are more interested in maintaining them in changing unjust social structures.

If our influence is not strong enough — perhaps because the students are so busy with material things in some Faculties that there is not much time left for studying spiritual values —, couldn't it be that in the future the results of our education will appear to be opposite to the results we had hoped for?

The following are only a few thoughts, based on circumstances in Indonesia, but which help us to take into careful consideration different circumstances between East and West and even the different situation among countries of one area.

2. Priority Should be Given

Notwithstanding the objections mentioned above, this paper supports the idea that Catholic Institutes of Higher Learning should be given priority in developing countries, especially the Social Faculties. The same may be said of faculties of technology in these developing countries where the Catholic community is able to resolve the above-mentioned (and other) difficulties. There should be at any rate, better planning among Catholic institutes and, where possible, better cooperation with the government.

2.1. Motivation.

(a) In Indonesia one often hears: "We need many Institutes of Higher Learning because the boys and girls leaving secondary school cannot find a job". During a Congress of Private Institutes of Higher Learning in Yogyakarta some years ago, it was difficult for a good number of participants to comprehend that

unemployment cannot be used as a motive for starting new Institutes of Higher Learning.

(b) What should we think about the motive of Apologetics? Formerly, in Western countries this was valued as an important motive "so that we are able to take a firm and intelligent stand in the conflict between faith and science". There are western scholars who call the discussion on the conflict between faith and science "out of date". They don't see the *raison-d'etre* of a Catholic University in this context. Prof. van Melsen (Mijmegen) puts it a bit more carefully. He says that in western countries, with a christian background, this conflict has been overcome.

As for Indonesia with big and strongly muslim areas, this conflict is still acute, especially for the intelligentsia. In traditional Islam the holiness of the Qur'an demands that it is to be read and followed "ad litteram"; its authority is divine and therefore not to be subjected to human exegesis; its regulations are not culturally, nor locally, nor chronologically determined but are valid for all cultures, places and times. The difficulties for muslim believers are obvious. Here lies an important task for Catholic Institutes of Higher Learning. The interpretation of inspiration, as it is given in orthodox muslim Theology, fits in very well with the explanations of many theologians about how God works in this world with absolute sovereignty. New tendencies such as the Reformisms of Muhammad Abduh are looked upon with reservation in traditional Islamic milieu; muslims who have modernized are not altogether sure of themselves.

The same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of that kind of thinking found in illiterate societies but which still has a strong influence among our people, educated people included. At the end of this paper we will see what can be done by Catholic Institutes of Higher Learning concerning this problem. Let us now first give some ideas about the real *raison d'etre* of Catholic Universities.

(c) We quote from the Declaration on Christian Education (no. 8, etc.) "No less than other schools does the Catholic School pursue cultural goals and the natural development of youth. But it has several distinct purposes. It aims to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the gospels spirit of free-

dom and charity. It aims to help the adolescent in such a way that the development of his own personality will be matched by the growth of that new creation which he became by baptism. It strives to relate all human culture eventually to the news of salvation....” This is called in no. 9 the “ideal of a Catholic School”; it is obvious that with many — some times a majority of non-christian students, adaptations have to be made. Quotation: “Catholic Schools can take on forms which vary according to local circumstances. Thus the Church feels a cordial esteem for those Catholic Schools, found especially where the Church is newly established, which contain large numbers of non-Catholic students.” This is the case in Indonesia and in many developing countries, where great non-christian religions are nourishing the spiritual life of the people. Working among them and in societies where the values of the Gospel are still unknown by the great masses, our Institutes should contribute towards spreading the notion and the practice of justice; they should cooperate in purifying the relations between men; they should assist the people in discovering the real meaning of human life. According to the Dutch bishops in their letter to the catholics of The Netherlands here lies the real task of catholic schools, from primary schools to Universities (11 Jan. 1977). We are very lucky in Indonesia with a Government that explicitly tries to realize a development of the whole man. Expectedly the leaders tell the people that material development must be accompanied by spiritual development. But: “the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak”. We see already that weakness in the form of brute egoism; we see also, in the future, the danger of a utilitarian education, which will undermine the richness of spiritual values in our societies.

But does modern men struggle alone with the problems of progress? Aren't we all beginning to get uneasy at present rapid changes and their side effects which frighten our people? Doesn't the UNESCO Report, “Learning to Be,” give evidence that we are far from ready for the new age? Don't we fear that our system of education, determined by science and technology that are becoming more and more specialized, will become a utilitarian system which has no time or opportunity for cultural and spiritual development?

Whether we want it or not, we are forced into efficiency, efficiency, efficiency: Looking at the present needs, those flowing from development and specialization of knowledge and technical know-how, truly the times require skills, real education and technical abilities that can solve the problems that might arise. But instead of happiness, a consumer-oriented life brings dissatisfaction; instead of peace, it brings anxiety.

In the national as well as the international dimension, the gap between the rich and the poor is becoming wider and deeper. Now, a small portion of the people is turning from belief in God and putting their trust in self and technical programs; another, even larger group, has lost all hope of being able to lead a life worthy of man's dignity. Too much power in the hands of a few individuals and a few countries makes the rest of the world, millions of people, feel and indeed become, powerless. And their ideal, their vision of a "fulfilled man", is not likely to emerge from this state. In the face of science and technology which both praises and blames, enriches and impoverishes, unites and divides, the man in the street says: Why is that? It confuses him — progress and regression, promises of a better life. He feels mixed up; the age promises him everything and gives him nothing.

To return to an idea I mentioned earlier is this paper: The high hopes placed in science and technology still have not been realized. Professor Van Melsen clarifies the problem in this way: What if, at some future time, science can explain everything; for example, it can analyse evolution so that the beginning of the world is clearly explained as well as the beginnings of men. It is still very true that the mystery of WHY there is matter, a world and men, cannot be explained by science. And what if, at another point, science has progressed as far that all man's needs are taken care of and there is no more poverty, sickness, hunger, stupidity, discrimination, etc. man still must face death. This surely will remind him of the limits of human efforts. These limits will also make him aware in a sharper and more bitter way that his efforts to better the world cannot be complete. And what if life on this earth does become complete; man will then see that the most important elements of happiness are not found in the spectrum of wisdom of science

and technology, but rather in man-to-man communication and love. But, too, each person who has experienced love has to conform that the giving and receiving of love are also limited on earth. In summary, the values of sciences and technology are very important but they are not complete themselves. They must be added to in order to give to society a fulfilled person.

This brings us to the next point. The inspiration and motivation that comes from religious belief will complete the value of science so that those efforts of men will take on wider and deeper meaning. Here I want to stress that the motives of science and technology per se must be limited. A name like "homo economicus" or "homo faber" simply cannot express all the possible aspects of a person. Because of this, when the apex of man's happiness is sought within the limits of one aspect only, we are confused. We see a mistaken interpretation of the use of science and technology. And even more dangerous, this mistaken idea will grow strong in time because of the attitude of utilitarianism in scientific education. Don't think I am belittling the development of science and technology; these must be encouraged in private institutions of higher learning, even though our efforts are hindered by social, economic and monetary factors. We must try to become centers of learning which are up-to-date, on a par with the corresponding government institutions. But along with academic excellence, private institutions of higher learning must bring a motivation and inspiration that can set as a correction to the mistaken interpretation that science answers all man's needs. And this correction which is hoped for from the private sector should not only point a warning finger at the attitudes of utilitarianism and materialism as reasons for education; but it must also warn against the teaching of humanism for its own sake. Yes, we should have a humanistic approach in our education but not humanism solely.

In her speech, "The Asian Response to the Faure Report", a Japanese sister, Sister Mary Elizabeth Setsuko Omino, in Rome, used a formula which expresses well the thought which I introduced earlier. "The narrowness of the report (Faure) is not found in the values expressed. Christians also held and live out these values. The narrowness is found rather in the fact that the values stated do not point to anything greater outside

themselves. They are closed in on themselves and thus revolve endlessly in the same circle." (Paedeia No. 4, pp. 22-23). The inspiration and motive force of Catholic higher education is wider than the expressed dimensions in the Faure Report.

The task of Catholic higher education is the same as government higher education in such aspects of study as quality, honestly, perseverance — all of which have their foundation in divine revelation. In divine revelation we are told why we must communicate with all people, why we must be obedient to the voice in our heart of hearts, why we must make a world that is worthy of every man, why we must prevent domination by any individual or group, whether religious or otherwise. One sentence in revelation justifies the existence of Catholic higher education (and other private education according to their beliefs): "God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son..." The love of God Arrahman Arrahim comes to us as individuals and in community. Because of this, Catholic higher education must serve all men equally in science, technology, the social sciences and all other academic needs.

This service also has another goal, i.e., to make clear that "unlimited" growth in a limited world is not possible. We must look again at our values which more and more influence growth and programs. We must be brave enough to teach that science and material programs are not goals in themselves but are rather just one way to work towards the "whole" man. Private education must persevere in teaching that true social progress must be rooted in complete social awareness, an awareness that comes when man sees man as God sees him. Government education has no reason to take this approach; so what is lacking in government education should be provided by private education.

Let us now go back to the problem of faith-science, using some ideas from the article of Heimo Dolch (cf. reference). At least in Indonesia, but I think also in other developing countries with non-Christian religions, the problem is still crucial for most thinking people. We must formulate something that can be received by intellectuals as well as by religious people: God is the foundation and source of all truth. It is not possible that research into the problems of human communication will discover truth contrary to that found in revelation, i.e., that God loves

all and desires the salvation of each man. There cannot be a difference of opinion here.

It is also not necessary to feel anxious that private education will belittle technology or any other science. To see man as God sees him but not to simultaneously strive to improve the quality of human life in the social order, would be a serious error. People who have that attitude ask something unthinkable from their religion. In the past two centuries, both the intellectual and the religious sides have made mistakes.

Prejudice in both sides, the intellectual and the religious, finally caused them to be separated by a wall. Luckily, this wall is broken down now. But the results of disagreement and separation are still felt. In the present Catholic view, faith and science are essentially and fundamentally different, but cannot be wholly separated. The essential and most fundamental difference between science and faith is not the knowledge that some truth can be found in one sphere and not in the other.

A division like that between the object of faith and the object of science certainly does not clarify completely the connection between these two mental activities of man. We must have a stance, for science as well as faith, with regard to all objects — it is that way that we do it which will differ. Because God has given the earth to man to understand and to use for his good. He has also given his Son to save all men on the earth. So, it is right and fitting that if man wants to understand the world in order to use it well, he must willingly submit himself to the Creator of all.

In closing, a complaint will perhaps be heard. Are not these ideas too unrealistic, kites flying in the sky?

In answer: It is true that occasionally there is a clash between the realities of science and religion — their borders are very close. What happens then?

Cardinal Newman gives a very valuable insight in this matter. While he maintains the essential difference between the activities of thought and of faith, he admits that the two activities go hand-in-hand within man and appear to be a unity-faith as "new life" which is given to us by God and thought as our efforts to understand and to use this new life. It is not necessary to see

these two in terms of division. In one man, both thought and faith work together. But, because the activities are essentially and fundamentally different, the limit between the two should be set; one clear limit that cannot be set by individual desire, but also — and this is the difference from the previous wall of division — a limit which is not static again but which is a dynamic one. In this view it is acknowledged that man is permanently on the way; he is permanently trying to understand in a fuller way the content of God's revelation, the content of his religion; he is permanently trying to understand more deeply all the phenomena he is researching.

In religion and in knowledge there can be found similar matters:

- (a) Both of these are "human acts";
- (b) Both give affirmation, an active verification of certain truths;
- (c) For both truths which are accepted by man there is a similar principle. But in these matters of similarity, there also emerges differences:

(ad.a) Thinking forms a "human act" and this is due to the ability of man himself; faith constitutes a "human act" which can only exist with the grace of God.

(ad.b) Method of reaching truth is through thinking and forming a logical conclusion.

(ad.c) A living truth is the result of thinking limited by existing knowledge of all phenomena which have been researched by man. Living truth that is contained in faith is directed toward the eschaton which is "all that later we will enjoy in eternity in contemplation and all that leads us to eternal life," as stated by Thomas Aquinas.

Therefore, because of similar factors in science and in faith, the two cannot be separated in an absolute way; but because of an essential difference and foundation, there must be a distinction. It depends on us, the servants of science and the servants

of Faith, to define these distinctions in a dynamic way to foster a dynamic life in a genuinely human way. It must be made clear that each intellectual who believes holds valid and established truths from the scientific sector which cannot be in contradiction with eschatological truths. Further, it must also be clear that scientific efforts which are not attentive of the eschatological, lack in fulness: they still need something.

This something can be given by Private Institutes of Higher Learning. Let us hope we will fulfill this noble task in a worthy manner so that national development in each of our countries will bring all our people to a genuine happiness.

REFERENCES.

Prasaran-prasaran Seminar Pembinaan Perguruan Tinggi Swasta di Indonesia, 23 sampai 26 Januari 1971 di Yogyakarta.

Heimo Dolch, "Nouvelle lumiere sur les Relations entre la Science et la Foi", in *Recherche et Culture*, Fribourg Suisse, 1965, pp. 222-234.

Van Melsen. *The Specific Mission of the Catholic School in the Learning Society of Tomorrow* (Speech at the ninth plenary session, O.L.E.C., Rome, June 1974.)

Msgr. N. Geise
Rector, Catholic University
Parahyangan, Bandung, Indonesia