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Educational Pastoral Care in school

An Argentinian perspective

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June 2006

Introduction

More than a model or the carrying out of school pastoral ministry in the reality of today's Argentina, what is being offered to you, dear reader, is an earthquake or hurricane which, after the tremor or shock, does not leave things the way they were. For the initiate, the tremor causes the fall to earth, if not of conceptions, then of a practice of school pastoral ministry which resisted success in religious as well as in secular contexts. For the non-initiated in pastoral theories and proposals, there opens up a virgin universe for reflection and practice, regardless of the educational material being imparted or the school task which has been entrusted, since the text is aimed at all those involved in the task of teaching - yes, at all without exception. Even the title suggests a lot to us: "a look of faith at the task of teaching", since, as you will discover at the end, pastoral ministry in schools is above all "a way of looking at the task of education, the school subjects, the daily duty". This is because it is more a question of situating ourselves in a responsive and collective manner, than of plans, extracurricular activities or chapels and liturgical ceremonies.

Without fear of being wrong I would say that the present booklet puts on an equal footing the physics teacher and the religion teacher, the modern languages teacher and the co-ordinator of catechesis, the receptionist and the Pastoral Ministry co-ordinator, the Latin teacher and the Brother who prepares the children for First Holy Communion, just to take some examples which seem quite conflicting. The above is certain, allowing for a little exaggeration, if we admit, as is expressed brilliantly throughout the booklet, that the fundamental keys are the question of attitude, relationship as the basic foundation, the faith-culture/science-life dialogue and synthesis as the only task of the educational pastoral project.

I said at the beginning that a concrete model was not being offered; it is rather a window through which to look, a compass with which to orientate ourselves, a frame from which we can situate ourselves in the action, a 'mysticism' which enters into the mystery and the hope - with few answers and many questions,

and endless coming and going, as is demanded by wisdom and discernment.

Rather than an individual reading, a group treatment with all those involved in the educational community, would be advisable. The questions at the end of each chapter are magnificently thought out so that you and I, by means of profound questions, are able to participate passionately in a curriculum project that will be pastoral not only because of its religious activities in the timetable but fundamentally because “the school succeeds in having a bearing, with the gospel message, through the whole school curriculum, on the thought and life of adults, young people and children who move within it, with a view to the construction of the Church, through the arrival of the Kingdom of God in the world”.

To help us with the “how” of such a serious claim, the booklet gives us various concrete examples from what is practiced in a real education centre.

To begin

Questionnaire for personal and group reflection

Before beginning our text, we would like to ask you to reflect and put your cards on the table.

- What do we mean by Pastoral Care?
- What do we mean by education?
- Does bringing these two elements together make any sense? What would that sense be? What consequences does that have for us as educators?
- What would be unique about Educational Pastoral Care?
- What notion do we have of the religious aspect?
- What would be the most important thing in setting up educational pastoral care?
- What place does it occupy in our lives?
- How, in each one of us, does the relationship function which implicates the attraction to religion with feelings and moral commandments?
- What conditions can be foreseen as necessary by the Community of Brothers and the educational institution in which we work so that educational pastoral care may be provided?
- What do we think of the specialty(ies) which we teach? To what extent do we think that they have some relationship with what religion is?
- How many group/community structures exist in the educational operation in which you work?
- What is the principal agent for institutional change in the educational operation?

Educational Pastoral Care: what are we dealing with?

“Ultimately, the foundations of education are spiritual. (...) By spirituality of educators, I understand the operating commitments which, from a perspective of faith, support and impregnate the whole of their educational activity”

Thomas Groome.

No one is unaware that the Catholic educational institutions cannot offer a way of seeing the world which penetrates the students in sufficient depth and in a durable way so that social life is changed and the state of things is changed. With all the more reason we do not ordinarily note that our students come to the end of their schooling with a clear idea of the Christian life, of what it means to be a human being, of society and of the world, which can be in harmony with the Gospel. Many of our schools entrust that to a series of evangelising devices, such as the catechism or youth groups.

This document wishes to draw attention to the overall organisation of the school. We must work towards a type of pastoral care that is specifically educational and school based. It is fitting to think of school and its educational content as a field of pastoral action.

When we say *pastoral* we want to include the practice of the church community which, following the way of acting of Jesus, seeks to collaborate in the coming of the Kingdom of God to the heart of society by implanting ecclesial communities. What interests us is to find out how far schooling and its content can contribute to this coming and to setting it in place. Religious acts which are performed in school must be distinguished from Educational Pastoral Care. Maybe, there are Mass and times for

catechism, maybe there is a youth group or there are many volunteers working in working class areas. That is one thing. But Educational Pastoral Care is a different thing, because for the activities that we have just mentioned, it is not necessary that there be a school. A chapel would be sufficient.

In our schools the religious elements are juxtaposed alongside all the other elements of the school curriculum. Limited to the times for catechism or the subject that replaces it, they do not come into relationship with the other specialties except when there is a certain clash. And we would like to point out here that that is the main problem to be solved.

We will speak of this work as of a task to be brought to a successful conclusion: the faith - knowledge synthesis, the faith - culture synthesis. This is the work that each Brother, each lay person, each Principal and each teacher (and each student) must do, each on his own behalf. Our pastoral care teaching or the formation we offer the teachers in our institutions does not usually take into account this specific aspect. But ordinarily those taking part do not end up 'owning' the process. This is something that de La Salle invites us to achieve. It is an unresolved task; especially in these times when many (Brothers, Principals, teachers and students) have not enjoyed the Christian initiation that makes this synthesis possible. In the best cases, we dedicate ourselves to diffusing Lasallian thought.

The difficulty with the synthesis, at the time when plans for the separate school subjects are being introduced, is complicated. This is so, in our times, because of the slight importance attached to the Christian religious event, in secularised societies like ours, and by the limitations their initial catechesis has had, and still has, on the Brothers, the teachers, the students and the families.

So, we are suggesting some basic covenants:

1. The characteristic of the school is its educational aspect, which is given concrete expression in its curriculum.
2. An educational team is characterised by its knowledge, its learning and its culture.
3. What those who attend a school, even a Catholic one, want is learning.

4. If the school wants to make a pastoral proposal, it must be a pastoral effort linked to learning, to the things learned. If the pastoral care that we term educational is not part and parcel of the school curriculum, within the subjects taught, if it is not found there, then, there is no pastoral care. It is as simple as that.
5. Juxtaposition (when it is not simply bursting in upon or interruption) is not a valid path for educational pastoral care.
6. Critical examination of the sciences in these times of change can make this pastoral care possible.
7. All this is impossible if there is not a group of educators aware of the necessity for change. The principal agent of institutional change is the teacher and the teacher in a group or community which is aware and responsible.
8. This implies an initiation or a re-initiation of the educators which is religious as well as political.

Questionnaire for personal and group reflection

- What do you think of what has just been outlined?
- What do you think of the diagnosis that has been sketched?
- What information for or against can we bring?
- Do we agree with these “basic covenants”? Why?
- What kind of formation do the educators need for this?

Towards a programmed plan

*“God acts by means of an incredible process
changing in its physical appearance and
historically-culturally complex
and He began it a very long time ago”*

Sallie McFague

A mystique of the world.

We have a good understanding that pastoral care - in school as well as anywhere else - starts with serious, discerning research into the action of God upon the world and upon history. But reading the signs of the times means that we have the faith conviction that the Word of God is alive in our times. That is the starting point. The pastoral question is absolutely not “How are we going to speak of God to the people of today?”. The pastoral question is always “How is Jesus talking to the people of today?”.

The one who asks the first question is not looking for signs. He is convinced of having heard from God, and of knowing what he said to Him once and for all. From his point of view, pastoral care is a problem of means, a problem which consists in checking what adaptations of language must be made so that everlasting truth may be understood. So, it is a problem of means, techniques and dynamics.

By contrast, the one who asks the second question knows that the problem resides in the intermediaries. He knows that God has spoken in Jesus in a unique and complete way. But he also knows that the Spirit has been given to the world and that Jesus is the Lord of History. The Council has reaffirmed this ancient idea: “The Son of God, by his incarnation, has united himself in a certain way with all men” (GS 22). From this it follows that everything created and everything human is the expression of God in time, a means of encountering God. Affirming the Lordship of Jesus over History is affirming that no era is outside his influence.

Affirming this is the pathway to discerning the signs of the times. It is broaching the matter by means of the voices of Jesus in today's culture. It is preparing ourselves for the reception of The Word under words that, perhaps, we were not expecting.

That is the starting point for pastoral care in schools. It is having a positive attitude towards the world; more than that, a mystique of the world, of today's world; an attitude which is connected with faith.

Pastoral care cannot always be done in school.

But this positive attitude needs a subject. There are some necessary conditions for pastoral care in school. The first of these is the existence of a community of educators aware of its mission; one group of educators, or several, who have sufficient awareness of mission to mobilise everyone with a view to planned action.

The community is always the source, place and objective of every planned evangelising action. Pastoral care - neither school based nor any other kind - does not exist if it is the action of only a single person. Fundamentally, pastoral action aims at creating a believing social subjectivity, and in educational pastoral care it is a matter of strengthening the groups so that they can successfully carry out their faith project starting with the school; because pastoral action seeks to implant the Kingdom of God in society by the implantation of ecclesial communities. But there is no pastoral care in school if the educators are not its driving force. Pastoral care cannot be the work of religious men or women separated from the total group of educators; it cannot be the business of a little group of catechists or members of the administration who want to mobilise the overall group. The principal agents of educational pastoral care are the educators. Those charged with education are the parties involved in school pastoral care.

Educational pastoral care is always planned action. This means that, starting from a discernment of the present situation - and everyone takes part in this exercise - in tension with the challenges of the Kingdom of God, all seek to respond together by means of an initiative which brings about the conversion of individuals and groups to the Gospel (cf. Pueblo Document 1307).

This planning of educational pastoral care will recognise the differences, the lack of equality and the pluralist points of view that exist among the educators. But it will be understood that the story of everyone is the evangelical preparation of each for the meeting with the believing community.

This planning is the practical means which the discernment of the signs of the times assumes and which we spoke of a moment ago. The person who sees the present situation as the Word of God in the words of men, finds opportunities, meets suitable times, *kairoi*.

School Pastoral Care: one goal, two processes, three choices, four fronts, five abilities.

To speak of School Pastoral Care is to refer to a very complex action, although profoundly unified. What is unique is the goal to which all are summoned: the **faith-life-culture synthesis**. That is the ultimate goal of educational activity: forming communities of believers who meet one another around culturally significant cultural learnings to review them critically in the light of faith so as to find there personal and group conversion. That is the objective of all the contributors: principals, teachers, auxiliaries, families, religious and lay persons.

This goal takes shape, in school life, through **two processes**, which, in their turn are diversified into multiple activities. On the one hand, there is a process which has to do with the **evangelisation of the culture and the inculturation of the Gospel**. It is the process of discernment undertaken by the educational community to discover God at the heart of the cultural domain, and this is the province of schoolwork, and to develop, through it, the domain of the Kingdom. The privileged place of the activities in this process is held by the systematic studies. But, in addition, it is the equally essential process of **evangelising daily situations**. It is not only a matter of offering a profoundly evangelical view of life as a coherent structure; it is important that this view be operative in the daily lives of all those who work in education. Recognising the Word of God in the “domains of human dignity, fraternal union and liberty, in all the excellent fruits of nature and of our own efforts” (GS) leads us to grow in dignity, fraternity, liberty and

to the transformation of society into a different society. The privileged place for the activities associated with this process include: daily life together and mutual caring, unforeseen situations which require our intervention, setting up groups and communities of faith, learning how to make choices and the fostering of vocations, and activities associated with aid, solidarity and missions.

Thinking in terms of educational pastoral care in a school which wishes to entertain this goal helped by these two processes implies **three options**. In the first place, educational pastoral care considers education **as secular** (not secularised). This means that the centre of school activity is not catechesis, but the world and its knowledge. At the heart of this knowledge is humankind - each individual and the whole of mankind. For this, at the centre of school life are persons, the whole person and everybody. The central interest in school activity is the world, scientific and treated pragmatically; a world understood as an intermingling of relationships. Relationships between persons are what constitute the tissue of the school and the tissue of the world and of its learnings. Educational pastoral care recognises in this an evangelising activity: it brings into dialogue the secular and the Christian in an interplay of questions and answers.

A second choice consists in **searching for an alternative society**. In a school proposing to give Christian inspiration, we teach with a view to transforming both society and ourselves. Yes, even in these times of disenchantment and rubbishing utopias, we affirm that a different world is possible. That is why educational pastoral care is something which discerns with the poor as the starting point.

In the third place, educational pastoral care thinks in a **missionary manner**. Christendom no longer exists. What are needed are processes of initiation and on-going re-initiation. It is a matter of the foundation and the re-foundation of ecclesial communities, temporary for most of the time. We cannot expect to be conducting Catholic schools, for Catholics and run by Catholics. In the ambiance of Christendom, the Catholic school filled a maintenance role. In our secularised society, it is a matter of initiation. Religion and moral values are open, pluralist questions in schools. It is important to seek dialogue, like Paul on the Aeropagus. Our God, the God of Jesus Christ, is here, although some of us disregard him.

The school goal can be thought of as **four fronts** which enable us to design renewal processes leading us to planned activities aimed at educational pastoral care. We think in terms of fronts, not of dimensions or options. School life is unified, but we can divide it into four parts, on the basis of four fronts.

On one side, there exists what some pedagogues call **the Matrix for Institutional training**. Others speak of institutional climate or ambiance. Graciela Frigerio¹ defines it as the mode by which the institution comes to life, is built up and lives with itself. All of that is what makes of the school a truly anthropological place: a space filled with history in which the face to face relationship confers a special identity on those who live there. Or, on the contrary whatever prevents this place from building its image; because it is a matter of an ambiance favourable for life or for its opposite. Elements going beyond school life, such as the social conditions of education, make up part of this Matrix. But, basically, they are elements which can be planned: school equipment, community relations, institutional reasonableness, professional participants, time allocations, resources, regulations, behavioural expectations, animation, professional formation and participation. Finally there is all that makes up the content of a school culture. It is a complex front which can seem to us elusive, but which should be planned.

From another direction, we have a much more dynamic and visible front: the meaning of life offered by the institution, **its school programme**. A school fixes on a certain kind of educational proposal because it believes it makes sense. Ultimately, what is being said is that it is possible to live in a human way by learning what is proposed. A school working on a Christian inspired plan tries to say something more: it tries to discover a Christian dimension in these very learnings, seeks to set up a dialogue between the content of all its specialties and those of the Gospel. It seeks to educate to wonder and contemplation, to give an introduction to the Christian life. As Father Alberto Parra² says pastoral care either permeates the school programme or is non-existent.

¹ A contemporary, Argentinian educator and pedagogical researcher. She specialises in themes in educational institutions.

² Columbian Jesuit theologian with great influence on Latin-american theological thought, on the meaning of liberation theology.

But awareness of this Christian dimension of the subjects taught likewise calls for a form of catechesis, some **periods for the explanation of the Gospel**, some compulsory, others optional. Some will have a permanent place in the timetable, others at significant specified times.

Finally, a series of elements run through the whole programme. These **transversal themes and parts of the curriculum** are the ethical framework of the undertaking to educate and evangelise. This could be a motto for the year that is worked on in all kinds of ways; it could be some special topics which are presented for everyone; it could be one part of the year when everybody concentrates on a specific point. At a certain time, there must be space to take cognisance of the unity of school life, because the project is all-embracing: the faith-life-culture synthesis.

And this synthesis can be expressed as **five abilities** that all the fronts strive to develop. The Delors³ report has accustomed us to thinking of school as a place where one learns to make acquaintance, to do and to live together. That comes down to saying that the school develops the scientific, technological and ethical abilities and the ability to communicate. But, in addition, the school with a Christian ethos must develop wisdom, an ability to discern.

³ UNESCO report, *Education contains a treasure*. Santillana. UNESCO. Madrid 1996.

Questionnaire for personal and group reflection

- What kind of pastoral questions do we usually ask ourselves? Are we experienced in picturing the two positions?
- What do we think of the goal of the Christian school? Is it one-dimensional or pluralist?
- In what sense is that the goal of educational pastoral care? What are its consequences for our task?
- And what about the choices of the Christian school? Are they the ones mentioned earlier? Are they ours?
- Are the objectives of educational pastoral care equal in importance? What connection is there between them?
- How do the abilities to be developed in view of educational pastoral care run through everything: the task, the processes, the options and the fronts of educational pastoral care?

A Vista for Educational Pastoral Care

*"When we succeed in understanding that
it is in relationships that knowledge is found,
we discover the dawning of a different world: persons, their
transparency, their participation;
that is what educates.
And not the content of programmes."*

Pedro Maria Gil Larrañaga

Here I want to give an account of a first step that must be taken when we wish to set up processes for change in institutions.

Quite often we stress unilaterally those processes which go from bottom towards the top, in a constructive manner. However, without participation, without agreement or joint review, no renewal is possible. Institutional educational pastoral care planning, which is a participatory process, is always the appropriate answer for carrying on the process of conversion understood as a process of dialogue. But that is not the only necessary element.

Bernard Lonergan⁴ identifies two educational processes following the tradition of John Dewey. There are processes that proceed from bottom to top, processes of construction starting from practices and rising to theories. But there are likewise ways of proceeding from top to bottom. The first ones call forth creation and the second healing. The downward process consists in simultaneously favouring the same ideas and the mission carried out by all. It is love which will lead us to choose a worthwhile project together, to change our ways of judging reality, to change our understandings of things and to adapt our practices to them.

Both are necessary; healing and creation; creation and healing. They are processes which we construct, always being aware of the tension which exists between the institutional will and the lib-

⁴ 1904-1984. A Canadian philosopher and theologian whose life journey led to the implementation of an epistemology and a methodology which is proving very fruitful for us in pedagogical and pastoral areas.

erty of individuals. No text, no institutional system can guarantee change. But change without institutionalised negotiation is difficult to verify.

Jesus Christ, key to the Christian school.

School is an institution, that is, a public, social complex created to safeguard the communication of the culture. That is why the school is a fruitful, creative meeting-place between generations in the area of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together.

The school that has a Christian inspired plan is the one whose plan is understood in the person of Jesus Christ, God and man. In a Christian inspired plan Jesus Christ is the key-person, the key that enables a different meaning to be given to the things learned, the reorientation of action and opening onto an horizon of transcendent hope. In a school with a Christian inspired plan, all the pieces of learning are integrated into Christian wisdom, and this is the ability to discern from the point of view of the poor.

In it, faith and culture, faith and life are united in a way analogous to the union of the Son of God with humanity in the mystery of the Incarnation - that is without one becoming the other - without confusion - without one being absorbed in the other - without separation - without their being able to be thought of separately - without division - without conflict between them... Between culture and faith, life and faith, there is a relationship of discontinuity and interruption, but, at the same time of consummation and plenitude. There exists a discontinuous totality, difference in communion, in collaboration. And that is the kernel of what we are calling educational pastoral care. In a school with a Christian inspired plan, there is, therefore, a unique agenda: the faith-culture-life synthesis, developed through multiple pastoral, pedagogical processes. Thinking of the school in this way is:

- understanding it as a spiritual reality. It is a place where men and women, children, adolescents and adults can have an authentic experience of the Spirit. It is, at the same time, a cognitive, ethical and religious experience.
- speaking of education in terms of initiation, because the school sees itself as an ecclesial community; the commu-

nity of communities, it is the place where the Gospel is incarnated into the culture which dialogues with the entire culture even though it be popular, childish, adolescent and juvenile.

- not thinking of it as outside the system, but in collaboration with other institutions and with men and women who are pursuing the same kind of research although with other inspirations.

The pedagogical relationship at the centre of the school.

The school, the place where generations dialogue about learning, is set up as a place of relationships. The relationship between the pedagogical agents is in fact the fundamental tissue of school life. This pedagogical relationship has an institutional character. It is born of society's need of a space aware of maturation and socialisation. This institutionalised link between generations creates a feeling of belonging, awareness of the social "we". The relationship is, these days, the social concept of redemption, as was, in modern times, the concept of reason.

This pedagogical relationship is extremely rich and complex. The teacher and the pupil are implicated as persons whose relationship confers on them this identity. The knowledge and transformation of learning and social conflicts is what brings about the relationship. In it, jointly is a relationship between persons, between generations, between human and social groups, between political and economic interests and between the mysteries.

In a school with Christian inspiration, this same relationship is the religious locus par excellence. The content of this relationship affects, at the same time, learning and its objects of knowledge, together with the choices and the scale of values for discernment, with the methods and attempts at transformation of persons included in the relationship, with cultural developments and the social conflicts at the heart of which development takes place.

The purpose of personal transformation is the transformation of society. Persons are transformed when the multiple conflicts that

weave these relationships are resolved: cognitive conflicts, relational conflicts, conflicts of values, social conflicts, emotional conflicts... Thinking of relationship as a tissue of conflicts implies thinking about it as a kind of self-transformation and self-awareness, of mutual transformation and mutual coming to awareness in which all the actors come away transformed by the methodical and conscious resolution of the conflicts.

Understanding the centre point of school life as a relationship puts the setting up of communities in the main stream of the task of running and animating school life. It is apprenticeship for community - that of the class, of the department of similar subjects, of teaching teams... It is the one woven by the school day by day. And it is in the heart of this apprenticeship for community that one can discover God and his mystery in Jesus Christ. This community apprenticeship is the Church being formed.

This pedagogical relationship, the centre of school life, is the alternative that adult communities are putting forward in order to re-develop social life with its economic, political, social and token conflicts. To learn means to be in touch with the life of the society and to live its conflicts in its midst. Besides, learning must originate starting from the viewpoint of the poor. The pedagogical relationship is thus transformed with the social conflicts and their Christian dimensions in mind; it is a prophecy of a better life in which conflicts will be a thing of the past.

The class as the place of relationships.

We give the name 'class' to all areas of training purposefully organised. We call 'place' every human area which, by breaking into it or living in it, does not give us an identity, but enables us to meet ourselves face to face with others and gets us to participate in a part of history with increasing awareness. In the classroom, the relationship is lived between a community of adults and a community of young people, set up as training communities.

The adult Community includes the management, the teachers, non-teaching personnel and groups of families. During the pedagogical relationship, each of these groups acts in a different way in harmonious participation.

This community comes to the realisation that it is called by God, summoned, *to establish a common democratic way of life* within which all conflicts relating to values are resolved, going beyond the interests of individuals and groups.

This democratic vocation of the adult community leads it to open classes in which *all can meet with joy*, creativity, and freedom of thought and research.

This democratic vocation that draws together the adult community leads it to create classes *open to the social context and committed* in a praxis which gradually transforms, in spite of setbacks, and because of them, and adversity from educational, social and economic politics. That is why the school with a Christian ethos assumes a solid commitment to justice and for justice as a way of building a different society.

This inclusive democratic vocation, bringing transformation to the adult community leads it to look upon *authority as service* exercised in a united way in what concerns the educational and evangelising mission. It seeks participation in forming the plan, in decision-making, in understanding the theory and in the criteria for organising the school task.

This constitutive, transforming and participative democratic vocation does not consist in hiding differences, but *in setting up dialogue within the differences*, in union in the midst of the diversity in the unique, educational and pastoral project. The conversion of persons and groups, the conversion of the institution itself to its Christian inspiration, is at the centre of the notion of vital structuring of the educational project.

This vocation that is democratic, inclusive, transforming, participative and open to dialogue brings the adults in the community to experience *their cultural life as a place of meeting with God*. God, foundation of the meaning of what is learned, matrix of fruitfulness and all truth, good and beautiful, can be touched in the training effort that is at the centre of the educational relationship. This cultural life of the school is also the fabric of the relationship of persons with their own contentious link with learning. This wise effort is the hallmark of the educational relationship. It is through this relationship of persons with learning that the school understands its life of prayer, celebration and sacramental meaning. This means that it is the same as that with the religious content

that must be discovered. That is why the pedagogical relationship is a pastoral relationship and a pastoral activity. Consequently, a school with a Christian ethos grasps that there need to be school periods when the religious content of the relationship can have a Christian explanation.

The class, the place of relationship, is the locus of evaluation; the place for evaluating the processes, the behaviours, successes and failures. As it is desirable that the place that fixes its worth be seen as a place of standing, the adult community indicates clearly what are the values at stake in the pedagogical relationship and in what sense it is hoped that they will be lived by all those taking part. Authority is the means of attaining the objectives that the community of adults has received from the hierarchic and charismatic Church as well as from the families. Authority is at the service of the children, adolescents and young people. The community organisation - it takes part in the management - seeks to analyse all the possibilities of the persons and groups who are present in the large group of the educational work.

From another point of view, the community of children and youths is the determining pole of the pedagogical relationship. Their presence, their quest and their social position as pupils set up the school like this. The community of children, adolescents and young people brings to the classes and the pedagogical relationship a huge baggage of learnt material: they know how to learn, how to act, to be and to live together. They take part in a childhood, adolescent or youth culture which is their own. These pieces of learning are the starting points and workplaces through their importance in the dialogue - always conflictual - with the culture of the adult community. This knowledge and the lives of those who have built them up are an evangelical preparation for announcing the Mystery that the adult community has achieved from the start of its own ecclesial life. Each child, each adolescent, each youth must be known personally so that the adult community can be at the service of their deepest needs in the way that is most advantageous to them; this needs to be so especially in the case of pupils with needs beyond the ordinary. In this way, the school with a Christian based curriculum is concerned to organise diversified activities which can cover the interests/cares and needs of all. Thus, the adults in the community will be able to be elder brothers to the students that families entrust to them.

The teacher, key-agent for institutional change.

The educational relationship is not a mere profession. The school community with its Christian ethos is not just an organisation. The educational relationship, from the Christian point of view, is a ministry, a service of the Church, stable and communitarian. It is the name of the educational relationship looked at in Jesus Christ, Servant of God and men.

It is in this educational relationship that the teacher is called to meet God, soul of the world, companion of life and transcendent matrix of all culture. It is his own outlook on life - his ability to know, his ability to act, his ability to be and his ability to live with others - everything that is part of his personal account of the culture which, as mediator, the teacher presents to the training community in which his educational task unfolds. It is his groping quest of life and culture which will lead him to journey on in faith torn between what is already achieved and hope. It is his own faith-life-culture synthesis, always on the march and always the fruit of grace which makes him a sign of the Kingdom in the community of adults to which he belongs.

However, the teacher as agent of institutional change is always a subject of social transformation. An important element of pastoral teaching, which coincides with the task of management, is the creation of the social subjectivity of the school adult community. Setting up faith communities as communities of scientific, pedagogical and pastoral research and as an environment for democratic sharing, is moving in the same direction. This social subject, transformer of the school and society always lives the tension of a sense of achievement and hope, of what has been secured and what is desired, of what is understood and what is unknown, of faithfulness achieved and openness to the future.

Questionnaire for personal and group reflection

- What do we understand by discernment from the point of view of the poor? Is it possible in our educational work, in our Brothers' Community? What conditions does it require?
- Do we believe in the need for raising the religious question between students and teachers?
- What is our understanding of the pedagogical relationship?
- What is our understanding of training and our employment?
- How is our educational work evaluated from the point of view of its calling to be democratic, assimilative, transformative, participative and in dialogue as a community?

Educational Pastoral Care is part of the programme or it does not really exist

*“An education directed towards wisdom,
centred on the humanities,
directed towards the development of persons with
the ability to think correctly
and to rejoice in truth and beauty,
is an education for liberty, and a liberating education.”*

Jacques Maritain

The aim of setting up educational pastoral care, is to move from a model of pastoral care made up of religious events which take place in school, to a model of pastoral care which considers school activity itself as the methodological means of inculturating the Gospel, as the Latin-American bishops say in the San Domingo Document (271). That is a theological way of saying that what the programme of an educational operation is suggesting, is the proposal of the meaning of life that the school gives to those who come to it.

The contribution brought by schools, considered as pastoral institutions, has a very specific profile. In this chapter we are interested in thinking about how far schooling and its content can contribute to the coming of the Kingdom and its fulfillment.

A sketchy programme.

In the present situation, school periods in “religion” take place side by side with all the other parts of the programme. Enclosed in times for catechism or the topic that takes its place, they relate with other subjects only when some contradiction crops up. On the other hand, normally, they co-exist peacefully enough (or with the same indifference!) as chemistry does with English literature.

In another chapter we allude to this as being a goal of the school, the only one viz. the faith-science-culture-life synthesis. But, in

most cases, this is a task which each principal, each teacher, (and each student) must settle for himself and in his own way. The paramount importance of Christian support in the environment of basic formation of the teacher, and formation while exercising the profession, should be able to be focused on this point and collaborate in it.

The difficulty with the synthesis that the teachers and students must achieve raises two questions. On the one hand there is the presentation of sketchily planned projects. On the other hand, there is the meaninglessness of the traditional understanding of the Christian religion in secularised societies like ours, and the limitations that catechetical initiation has had and still has. To this is added that we have made the content of schooling seem “natural”, as if we believed that the content of the programmes remains fixed, existing outside a series of historical and political processes which have formed it and frozen it in place.

Towards a programme which mediates evangelical inculturation.

Let us take a somewhat closer look, recalling what has already been said: what is distinguishing about the school is its educational orientation, which is made concrete in the subjects it teaches. The distinguishing mark of a professorial body is its knowledge, its learning and its culture. What those seek who apply to a school, even a Catholic one, is learning. If a school wants to make a pastoral proposal, then it must do so with learning as the starting point, a pastoral system starting from the topics taught. If educational pastoral care does not reside in the academic side of the school, in the subjects taught, if it is not found there, then, quite simply pastoral care is non-existent. The juxtaposition of religion-catechetics-liturgy (when it is not simply rushed or an interruption in what is normally done so that nothing changes afterwards) is not a valid pathway towards the faith-culture-life synthesis.

We are going to suggest as a valid way of structuring this type of pastoral care, a critical reflection on the sciences together with an attentive consideration of what we can call dialogue between scientific training and questions about faith.

Knowledge and concerns (*interests*).

In the first place, we invite you to recall the reflection of the critical theory on the necessary link between science and concern, between knowledge and interests. We shall follow the classic study of Jurgen Habermas⁵: *Knowledge and concerns (interests)*. For him, three interests characterise present day sciences: technical interest or interest in adaptation, and these are related to the natural sciences; practical interest or communicating which concerns human relations and is at the origin of the human sciences; interest in emancipation or critical interest, and this strives to direct the two other interests towards the permanent liberation of humanity from what is enslaving it and from its fears and which is at the origin of the social and political sciences.

A faulty understanding of things has sometimes led us to give a privileged place to the humanities in dialogue with the faith. But technical interest should not be considered as a non-human interest. It is a consideration of the bias of technical thinking that could lead us to such favouritism. It would be like remaining at only one pole of the dialectic with modernity. And what is under consideration in what concerns critical thinking is to be able to take a point of view which enables us to understand modernity - and capitalism which is its foundation - as the best or worst that could happen to humanity.

In the technical commitment itself, in preoccupation with nature and its mastery of adaptation lies the possibility of transcending an ethical and a religious commitment. There is an ethical responsibility which cannot be divorced from scientific truth. Justifiably, Habermas's point of view and that of all critical theory lies in the response to the objectivism which is presupposed to be ethico-positivist. Truth and justice are not dissociated, except in the prejudices of the scientific method and in positivist practice. Everything that is possible is not true. Only that is true which enhances the life of humanity, of each man and each woman, of all humankind, of those living today and in the future.

The same could be said about preoccupations with social issues, with communication, with sport, with art and politics. Without

⁵ A contemporary German philosopher, of the Frankfurt school.

some linkage of these interests with emancipating concern, everything can be transformed as ideological questions and with slight importance. The critical Christian educator is a political educator or he is not a Christian.

Knowledge in the school.

In school, the meaningful proposition which constitutes the scholarly web of knowledge is composed essentially of three elements: the scientific, the artistic and the ethical. The three elements relate to previously explicit interests. They are pedagogical transpositions born of the same interests, the same preoccupations, but integrated into the historical processes which gave birth to the school programme.

A sense of the sacred underlies these same interests, when the person or group takes an over-all view of other kinds of experience. For Bernard Lonergan, the flux of the conscience is the subject which is his problem; he constructs his horizon; he chooses his world. In this flux interests vary according to the mode of experience in which the subject is living. Lonergan distinguished the ordinary structure of experience from the intellectual model of experience. It is the change of interest that triggers the change of formula. The passage from one kind to another, from one horizon to another, from one interest to another stems from the appearance, within the experience, of an interest in satisfying the curiosity occasioned by certain phenomena in a persistent manner in the conscience of the subject.

The sciences are structurings which allow the lives of subjects to be ordered in such a way as to favour the intellectual kind of experience in a permanent way. Scientific education will, therefore, be an activity which seeks to insert into the nature of ordinary experience, the question of understanding. Science is preoccupied with the ordinary world through judgements, valid for all, for the relationships of objects between them.

The arts, on the other hand, are an objectification of a purely experimental kind., meaning that what you see is experienced as seen, what you hear as heard. This objectification awakens feelings which bring into play a particular understanding of what art is, a different understanding from scientific understanding, an

understanding of the mysterious, of the fascinating, of the sublime. There is a meaning in art which likewise leads us towards a common world, which is general and not private. This is because art is not simply spontaneity, but the objectification of something seized upon as important for man. Artistic objectification finds its fulfillment in a way which invites sharing in its meaning in an immediate manner. Artistic creations (pictures, musicals, sculptures, architectural designs, poetry, narratives, dramas, films...) introduce us into a world of human potentiality. Artistic education makes us pass from our private little worlds to the world of everyone by means of reflection on artistic creations.

Over and above the model of intellectual experience there exists a practical type of experience. If experiencing things in an intellectual way has put us in touch with total, universal truth, the practical model sends us back to the pragmatics of specific decisions. What has to be done now, in this place, by me, in these circumstances? It is the ethical way of doing things. But this practical way can be open to an outlook which goes beyond the concrete situation when we make an ethical reflection which seeks to reach a normative rule and not only a specific decision.

Passage from the ordinary way of experiencing things to the intellectual way of experiencing them is a passage from personal interests to a world of common interests. Passing from one to the other is always a liberating event. It is the reorganisation of the subject which implies a conversion (intellectual or moral, according to the matter), and this is a complete reorganisation of the subject. Educating is always seeking the widening of the horizon of the subject and favouring setting up new interests as permanent fluxes.

But there is a final expansion of human concern, an opening of experience to the religious, an opening to a religious outlook. This happens when the desire to know (the intellectual way) or the desire to act properly (the practical way) are open to the unconditional: the desire of the love of God, of a love without limit.

Knowledge and the religious question.

Even in the technical commitment there is a possibility of meeting with God, the Life of the World. The natural world, for whoever is open to the love of God, shows God clearly. The critical

Christian educator is a mystical educator or he is not a Christian. In the commitment to the human or hermeneutic sciences, in the scientific commitment in the interests of the community, there is the possibility of openness to ethical and religious commitment. Philosophy, history, sport, music or painting are activities in which commitment to understanding can be open to the way of acting uprightly, and, by the same token, meeting God, Soul of Communication and of all justice. God himself is communication. In developing the social sciences both ethical commitment and religious commitment are as possible as commitment to the interests of others, although it is easier to see in the former.

The change in horizon, in types of experience is a change of interests, of preoccupation. It is a matter of exposing the preoccupation to a higher configuration. And this is always a free, dialectical act in which the base is the desire that it establish us as subject. The passage to a religious type of experience has something akin to desire, hope and its expression, which is what it is about.

The religious question can present diverse faces; one is the question of the universe, its intelligibility, and its foundations; another is the question of absolute morality and its connection with concrete options; still another is the question of the origin and future of the world and of ourselves; a different kind is the question of the meaning of life; still another kind is the question of the usual limits of existence. All these questions require an introduction to be formulated and welcomed and to receive a response. This is so because one effect of the positivist culture in education, joined to fragmentation and specialisation, has taken the form of hiding these questions.

Very often, opposition to the religious question as the irresistible desire to know has developed, at the same time exaltation of feeling as a fundamental component of religion. But the religious question is neither feeling, nor concept, nor a judgement. The question, of itself arises from the irresistible desire for knowing. But it is a desire which needs an introduction so as not to stop at intermediate answers. Going from awareness to understanding, from understanding to discussion, from discussion to decision, and from decision to action is a cognitive and moral challenge which needs some preparation. And that culminates in love which opens progressively from intimate love to social love in the

direction of religious love. And when this loving environment develops into something permanent all the activities of people feel its effects.

This conscious, dynamic state of being surrounded by love is the life of the Spirit spread over the hearts of believers. From that position we experience, we understand, we judge and we decide in a radically different way. We see with new eyes, eyes which take an interest in what concerns God: they look at everything as He sees all things, seek to please him in everything, and understand life as a gift coming from Him. That is what we call the spirit of faith, the spirit of Christianity. "Faith is knowledge born of religious love" (Lonergan). It is a knowledge which grasps something of greater value than life, society, culture and persons. It is the ultimate self-challenge of the subject. Here the religious question is changed into a decision which implies responsibility: How do I respond to Love with love?

This religious development which is faith and the questions that go with it, this enlarging of the horizon always has a tortured dialectical character. It is never an end point. It is always moving forward without ever reaching the shore. It is always the joy of the encounter and of the authentically responsible decision. In addition, it always consists, by coincidence, in a rediscovered lack of authenticity, recently rejected and always re-appearing, with the provisional possession of the true and the good.

Reconstructing the school programme: knowledge, interests/concerns and the religious question.

Starting with a triple linkage we set about reconstructing our programme proposal:

On one hand, we go beyond the fragmentation starting with a political decision. It is a matter of questioning the thinking about sciences and arts by joining together the interests of adaptation, communication and emancipation. This is not impossible. It requires a long course of discussion amongst the teachers, but it is not impossible. A beginning could be made with a consideration of the concrete choices in the programme which the school puts forward in its Plan of the Institutional Programme and those that the teachers put forward in our own class plans. The consid-

eration should look for the historical understanding of the topics that we are proposing. On one side, thinking about the history of the topics will lead us to discover when and why the theories and practices we teach were formulated, what they claim to respond to, which problems they aim to solve and to what extent they include a liberating concern in how they are developed. On another side, locating at the present time the problems related to these theories and practices would contribute to the reinsertion of scientific developments in more meaningful settings for our students and ourselves.

On the other hand, there is the matter of going beyond the limits we impose on ourselves (and which we impose on the students) in our desire for knowledge. Nor is this a simple task. But it is possible. It is a matter of re-supplying our desire for surpassing ourselves, to nourish the desire for questioning the foundations of our experience, of our intelligent understanding and of our reasonable actions. We must make ourselves capable of finding the Face of God at the base of our interests/concerns, of basing all on his name, of finding Love as the Origin of all we have every day, and of becoming enamoured of this Love, or rather, of letting ourselves be loved by Him.

It is only if the teachers, as a group, join together to be a community of ideals and of faith, that we shall begin to reflect on the kind of life we are living and what we are teaching. This is the condition on which there will be some possibility of our accompanying our students in formulating their own questions about science, art, ethical commitment and their faith. And it is then that we shall have something to suggest.

Questionnaire for personal and group reflection

- Are we in agreement on this concept of school activity?
- How is the relationship between the content areas of our educational work envisaged? Is there some connection with the reflection presented here?
- What are our thoughts about critical reflection on the sciences and the possibility of dialogue between scientific training and questions about faith?
- In what ways does concern for communication, adaptation and emancipation operate within the specialties we work at?
- The Christian educator is a political and mystical educator, if not, he is not a Christian educator. What do we think of this statement? What formation does it necessitate? What possibilities are there of working in this way in the school in which we teach?

Educational Pastoral Care: the religious hermeneutics of the teacher

*"If since my childhood (...)
I have always loved to examine Nature,
I can affirm that I have not done so as a "savant",
but as a "devotee".
I have the impression that whatever
my efforts may have been,
even relative to a purely natural object,
it was always a religious effort and substantially unique."*

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

We are always left with the same conviction: educational pastoral care is not the same as the one that runs religious activities side by side with daily training tasks. On the contrary, it is a matter of exposing the school culture to its religious root starting with our faith in the Incarnation of God in our history.

In the previous chapter, we suggested a route by which to overcome the fragmentation to which positivist culture (and the manner in which Catholic schools have carried out pastoral care) has subjected our lives, and thereby transcend the cognitive limits it has imposed on us. The path has something to do with the history of the subjects taught in schools, and limiting situations to the problems we suggest, by understanding the two things as a political option which merges concern for emancipation with concerns for adaptation and communication, in a dialectical manner. It means putting into practice what, in other chapters, we have called the pedagogy of discernment starting from the point of view of the poor.

Let us likewise point out the necessity of forming groups/communities for research, together with faith groups, to reflect on those matters.

The basis for these affirmations rest on several convictions. First of all is the certitude that cultural forms can change into expressions of religious belief. Whatever is authentically human can be traced

to some ultimate preoccupation, to an absolute, to its very root, to the one we call God; because from Him is born all artistic creation, all scientific research, all moral or political action. The task of the Christian educator is rooted in the awakening of awareness to this root. Let us repeat: the critical Christian educator will be a mystic or he will not exist.

That is the reason we can insist that the choice of subjects, the work of the teacher in constructing the programme for his school-work, is a religious interpretation in itself. The invitation to the tactical and mystical choice implies putting himself in touch with concern for emancipation, communion and adaptation. And, at the same time, it gives an opening into the questions included in the school disciplines, going to the ultimate root which is God himself, which transcends the world as truth, goodness and beauty, in Him. Making the two choices while choosing the subjects is not a mechanical task. On the contrary, it is a work which leads us to question ourselves about ourselves and the meaning of our lives. Planning is a task which has something to do with the discovery and (provisional) answer to the fundamental questions about human life (our own and that of others) as it appears in the school disciplines and in our own life.

If the culture, which the school disciplines transpose pedagogically, is connected with the search for the meaning of life which humanity is continuing to look for throughout history, the task of educators consists in incarnating in a specific context the same problems and the same research. That means locating problem situations: finding where problems exist similar to the ones that the history of the school subjects shows us as having been resolved. And it means being able to put the school culture at the service of the context.

Acting like that, we insist, means posing the question for ourselves. The teacher who strives to understand the background to the content of his subjects and relate that to local problems asks himself what is the meaning these subjects have for him and for life, and in what way these questions and answers have some anchorage in him. If, moreover, these questions are pursued right down to the ultimate root of their meaning, it will be possible to advance in the direction of an appropriate religious response. If the teacher is a Christian, he will be able to find in his tradition

some answers which will inspire his own. But he will not be able to economise with a personal answer.

Trace the story of the disciplines.

We said in our previous chapter that tracing the story of the disciplines is raising historical questions about their content (answers found in one era, solutions brought, solutions yet to be discovered, open questions...). But it is likewise possible to think of the story of school subjects in another way. To this will be related the themes we are going to suggest as in the following example.

In this instance, the totality of school subjects is considered to have a double theme: the social sciences and christology. It is to consider the concern about emancipation as having two sides as a theme for general programming. Let us consider that the social sciences (at least starting from some epistemological options) deal with the historicity: what man does about man, about interpretative reconstructions and about cultural constructs. In fact, asking the question about the historicity of the disciplines necessitates an historical mentality on the part of the teacher. And, in our case, this is an historical mentality which is open to the Gospel.

Let us suggest some criteria as guides for the building up of these themes. The historicity of the school disciplines should be able to support hope, solutions and wishful thinking. Thinking along an historico-social axis which organises the selection of topics is a way of thinking which is not positivist and is identified in some way with a particular subject: the oppressed fighting for their freedom. This is because those oppressed are the subject of the history, not humanity understood as an abstraction. That is why history should not be looked upon as an epic sequence, but as a battlefield of mutually excluding projects.

And from that starting point, we can think of a second criterion for our themes for disciplines. It is not a matter of a naïve and optimistic relationship considering history as an automatic force on the way to the best, in which a believing standpoint could think of the Kingdom as a dependency of progress. No. It is rather a matter of a complex relationship of the imprecision of the Kingdom in the historical dialectic of the Redemption always complete as offered to God and incomplete when it is received by

a free human being. And the linking of the themes, which facilitate dialogue between the disciplines and scheduled periods for the explanation of the Gospel, should respect the complex relationship between the happiness (of all mankind and of each human being) which is the theme of the “profane” disciplines and the Messianic Kingdom which is the theme of the scheduled periods for explaining the Gospel, especially school catechesis. These double-edged themes can be applied to the ensemble of school disciplines.

Not every historical question can be a theme in the sense we intend. Historical themes enabling thinking about school disciplines in a way that can be open to the Gospel must be of a kind that allow what Walter Benjamin calls interruption. This allows for times when decisions are taken in opposing historical subjects which enable dominant dialectical tensions at work in an historical epoch to be seen in a specific happening or in a particular life.

The task of drawing up a plan is a religious activity, as we have said. The dialogue of the teacher with the subjects he teaches is a serious topic for his own prayer. Planning, selecting the topics, is a task which includes the appropriate dialogue of the teacher with God, in the subjectivity of his own belief. And it must be brought about like this in silence and in word, in solitude and in community. This is done with the awareness and responsibility of a believer.

Let us come to the point.

Let us take an example: The choice of topics for Language, for the 3rd year of the Specialisation Cycle, in the Province of Cordoba, in Argentina, in the last year of the intermediate cycle. In our example let us suppose that all the teachers for all the school subjects have decided on an historico-christological theme. The theme sets up a dialogue of correlation in the style of the proposition of Paul Tillich⁶: religious nouns are the nouns of the culture of the time. The theme is presented as a pair of related questions. This can be done, for sure, in a different way. But let us try out the criteria that have just been mentioned.

⁶ 1886-1965. German Protestant theologian, strongly influenced by Heidegger.

The formulation of the annual theme of the specialty, among all the others possible, wishes to keep in mind taking up the theme for the whole course in the particular area of Language and Literature. The choice to baptise it “literature” expresses the intention of subordinating the linguistic aspects (communication and systematic thinking) to the literary aspects. It also indicates the adoption of a theoretical position which seeks to understand the literary phenomena starting from and in relation to the contexts in which they were generated.

In any case, “literature” includes diverse kinds of discourse, not only those classified as literary. The choice of texts aims at accentuating the historicity of the language (and of the literature) in the contemporary setting by localising it, making it more specific,

General Central Theme for the year
A new world order or the same disorder? Is there a place in this new order for the alternative of the Kingdom?
Central Theme for Language and Literature for the year
“Literature is what men make of it, it is what they choose to choose” (Jean-Paul Sartre - <i>What is Literature?</i>)
Block of “text stating content” topics
George Bush’s speech on “the pre-emptive strike”. “Global-phobic” speech in the world and in Argentina. Situations using formal oral communication. Relationship between intention and context. Analysis of the relationship between sacred and body (political) language in oral communication. Strategies for understanding. Strategies for organising arguments. Written argumentation and oral communication. Cohesion and coherence of the argumentation. Planning a speech presenting an argument. Oral exposition. Recognising and making use of the characteristics of the spoken word in debating speeches. Production of written commentaries on texts presenting arguments and others selected by the students. Using means of social communication and pre-recorded effects in political speeches presenting arguments. Making use of quotes from other texts.

“Poetry text” block

Selection of texts: Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*; Marti, *Vers simple*; Allen Ginsberg, *Aullido*; Campos Augusto, researching their suggestions on the internet; Samoilovich, *Le petit char de Eneas*; Bellesi, *L'âge doré* (poems about creators of cartoons); Gelman, “Notre Père du chômeur”. Characteristics of literary language and poetic text. Aesthetic intention in composing and reading. Literary genres. Genres of poetry. Avant-garde and poetic works. Avant-garde techniques. Avant-garde poets and their historical backgrounds. The relationship between poetry works, argumentation and politics.

“Short narrative” block

Selection of texts: Orgambide, P. (1999) *Les chômeurs. A typology of poverty in Argentinian literature*. UNQ; Gibson, W. *Quemando cromo*. Characteristics of narration. Theory of story-telling. Narrative genres. Realist, naturalist and ordinary writing. Satire. Science fiction and cyberpunk. Texts and context. Textual techniques in narrative writing. Writing commentaries on the texts read and on others selected by the students.

“Journalistic text” block

Selection of texts from Arlt, *Aguafuertes porteñas*. Situation of communications. Understanding and production of texts. Social conditions of journalistic production. Communication and technology. Communication and socio-historical context.

Opening up the “presenting arguments” block to its religious meaning

The same thing should be done with each bloc. Reduction in the size of this text obliges us to choose. The point of the exercise is to be able to find religious questions in the same topics in the “profane” discipline. Starting from the theme for the year for the particular year, the point is to find the opportunities and the difficulties for the alternative of the Kingdom in the new world order coming to birth.

According to what we have already stated in our book on educational pastoral care, *Levantarseñales de esperanza* (Vol.II, pp. 131-132), you must start from the possibility of democratisation which language and its mastery possess. Formation in communications always makes changes possible. They can be subversive as well as creative of communion. Reflection on using the means of communication and communication monopolies can give rise to the opportunity to let people have their say. The “global-phobic” dispute can be the opportunity for seeing it at work. This discourse underlies the dreams of humanity for a more fulfilling human life.

Appropriate reflection on the dialectic of religious language can help in seeing how all language can be understood in a religious way. In fact, all language has been at some time (or continues to be) a profane language. This is because transcendent realities can be reached only by language and by understanding it in an analogous manner: it is and it is not at the same time. All created reality is susceptible to expressing God, to being one of the “thousand names” of God. It is the same with contemporary language, strange as that may seem. The important thing is to have the key of Jesus to find, in literature and communications in general, the dreams, values, feelings, frustrations, struggles and convictions of people today, everything that Brother Pedro Gil Larrañaga calls “the Great Desire of humanity” through which God speaks to us today.

The important thing is the initiation to questions, to a pedagogy of questioning, as Paolo Freire says. We have said so in our previous chapter and we say so again. Learn to question, learn to question ourselves, learn to live with our questions. That is the key to religious education. As Rainer Maria Rilke said in *Lettres à un jeune poète*: Be patient with everything that has not been resolved in your heart, and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very strange language. Do not seek now the answers that cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them (...). Live the questions now. In living them, perhaps, in some distant day, little by little, you will find the answer without realising it...

The encounter of these language subjects and literature with the subjects within the domain of religious formation, will enable the

teacher of this topic to foresee how, starting from the compulsory periods for explanation of the Gospel, the questions raised in language and literature will find a specific answer.

A process of initiation is always simultaneously a route to integration in the community and a process of taking up questions, each time more radical, the answers to which set us in open dialogue with the community tradition, with the anecdotal identity of our faith community. Without that, there is no educational pastoral care possible.

Questionnaire for personal and group reflection

- What relationship exists between cultural forms and religious expressions?
- The religious interpretation of the teachers of themselves in the process of planning.
- How can we put our school culture at the service of our surroundings?
- How could we advance towards formulating the history of the disciplines?
- What kind of formation and teaching techniques imply asking questions and questioning ourselves?
- Do we invite them to think about their subject and their teaching activity from the starting point of the copied example? What dynamism do we discover? What potentialities? What changes?

Educational Pastoral Care: the dynamic of the implicit and the explicit

*At the time of the great eclipse,
all signs of the presence disappeared.
But this one presents itself.
Only as an underground phenomenon.*

Eugenio Trias

As we have already said in previously published chapters, a school with a Christian ethos, a school which succeeds in establishing educational pastoral care, is not simply the one which teaches catechism or provides for some religious activities within its timetable; not even if that is to ensure an environment overloaded with gospel values. It is so because it succeeds in integrating the gospel message across the whole school programme, onto the thinking and the lives of the adults, the youths and the children who attend it, with a view to building up the Church, the community of communities, for the coming of the Kingdom of God in the world.

But what is religious and specifically Christian, implicit in the whole of school life, especially in the body of knowledge, requires that it have some time, some periods for explanation of the gospel message. This chapter wants to discuss some elements related to the dialogical correlation of what is religious in the whole of school life with what is religiously explicit as a series of particular periods in the programme.

What is religious and its mediation.

We shall define religion as a personal commitment which makes sense of the entire universe and is manifest in adoration of a personal God; what is specifically Christian is then a dynamic state of loving without restrictions, lived out in a community, through the gift of the Spirit spread wide in our hearts; this personal gift is the complement of the Incarnation of God in the world.

Although all men are born capable of adoring God, capable of universal, limitless love, with the capacity for being God's companion in the work of giving life to the world and humanity, in spite of everything that capacity often remains asleep, corrupted, deformed or on the wrong track. The result of this is that the relationship between religiosity, religious education and community is always under stress, and always requires great care and mutual nourishment. There is no possibility of religion outside a matrix of human relationships, language, rites and symbols. In religiosity we distinguish the relationship with the divinity as a profound attitude of relationship with mediations of the divinity. These are signs and values culturally constructed. But let us not forget that the first relationship does not exist without the second. There is no faith attitude without mediations at the fringes of the latter. The things that mediate are translated into cultural language: poetical narratives (myths), dramatic liturgies (rites), ethics and doctrines. These are mediations formulated linguistically. Together they make up the theme of religious teaching beginning from the religious tradition of the community. This is what is related to the parts of the programme for explaining the religious message in the school proposal. But the mediations go beyond linguistic formulation in as much as they are religious and are integrated into what the school programme proposes as a whole.

What is religious is progressive in man and is part of the whole of human development, with operations similar to other lines of development. The religious question is not independent of the operations of conscience. These operations are to test, to understand, to promote and to decide; although they are not dependent only on these operations. Religious thought is also a social and linguistic construct and culturally achieved. And in religious education, it is a matter of educating to a religious way of thinking.

Just as in the contact with other sectors of reality, the progressive appearance of operating capacities determines the kind of relationships established by man with the religious reality of those around him, it is the same for his possibilities of knowing and learning beginning from this same religious reality. But, at the same time, the web of human relationships in which we live, situate and give depth to the relationship with the other sectors of reality, including religious experience. The now classic theories of training, the psycho-genetic (Piaget) and the historical sociology

(Vigotsky) help us to understand this tension: there is a growing operating capacity in man throughout his life; but this operation takes place within the tissue of social relationships.

Religious education, work on mediations.

As teachers we are used to framing our work with these theories. Let us stress, that for the socio-historical theory, training is explained from the language that is a cultural instrument by which it is possible to establish inter-subjective relationships, which then pass to the intra-subjective plane. Human development is understood as a culturally organised process. It is a development organised by the spoken word, in our case, by the word of the believing community.

Beginning with the socio-historical way of seeing things, the main *area of close development*⁷ is fundamental. Vigotsky defines it as the distance between the level of real development and the level of potential development. The level of real development is determined by the capacity to resolve a problem in an independent way. In contrast, the level of potential development is determined through the resolution of a programme under the direction of an adult or in collaboration with a more capable companion. The area of close development is in the middle. It is a situation of the possible which is mediated by the culture. In educational processes, consequently, to be able to build together something significant, it will be necessary that there be between the persons working together a clarity about the situation, some symbols and some setting of experience, understanding, development and decision making, in order to create new settings and better, compatible, and similar symbols, between adults and children, youths or adults. This work is accomplished fundamentally through language. It is one task of dialogue; a dialogue in which mental operations are very busy.

What is equally valid in religious education is the necessity for working on the operators (in this instance the conscious ques-

⁷ I thank graduate Viviana Aragno for her point of view on the relationship of the questions of Bernard Lonergan with the Vigotsky notion of the area of close development. The limits of this chapter do not allow for the development the theme deserves.

tions, raised intentionally, about reality and about how we operate on this reality) by helping to formulate questions about the different levels of operation (trying out, understanding, evaluating and deciding) in a way each time more conscious, intentional and diversified. Religious education has something to do with diversifying awareness and with work on the language connected with it, in a way that enables collaboration in the progressive passage from the simple experience to the language that names it; from the language to the literary culture which hoards the religious history of the people on their understanding and development of the experience, above all in the Bible (or the Koran, the Vedas or the text proper to whatever the religion is) and in the humanist traditions derived from them; from the literary culture to the logical thought which structures scientifically, to the theological disciplines which reflect on the conditions, the structures and the methods of the theologies.

A teaching community which makes religious education possible.

As we have said in every chapter, the existence and consistency of believing communities are fundamental so that the formulation of the religious question may have some meaning and some response. Without adults there is no possibility of interaction which can be educational. Without believing adults there is no possibility of religious mediation so that the questions that arise spontaneously in the consciences of children and youths (when they have not been halted by positivist culture) may be able to find a response. But there is a prior dialogue and self-appropriation which, if the educators themselves do not achieve them, result in religious education succeeding only in a hasardous, perhaps even miraculous manner. Within the believing community, the significance which can spark religious questions and answers is articulated in diverse ways. This is so especially in this era of eclipse of all that is religious while there was a time which was so culturally marked in that way and which is coming back today in a new way. What is religious today is arising in the absence of its classic markers. It is coming back surreptitiously, like a symbolic fact, in its concern for justice, in its wonder faced with life and the world, in the encounter with oneself, in the loving encounter, in

meeting with pain, in meeting with death, in encountering ethical and aesthetic limits, in the search for the meaning of life. Those are the issues the community of believing teachers should think about if they want to make possible a zone of development close to the children, the young people and the adults themselves.

There is need for a dialogue which facilitates meditation on diverse religious mediations as on meetings between persons in which meanings and values act like vital commitments, affective and effective; as well as meanings and values incarnated in persons and communities: Jesus, the saints, the churches, the congregations, the men and women whom we know; likewise on artistic expressions which make a reality of meanings and values. All that requires much dialogue since they are meanings and values which are not linguistically formulated.

To ask questions and to question oneself, is the way to go about it.

Religious thought and its possibility, its questioning has a connection with what we can call, with Bernard Lonergan, the symbolic operator, that is, a question addressed to life as a symbol, a meaning lived out in the impersonal encounter, in the meanings themselves, in art. It is a question which interrogates the feelings as to the intended intentionality of its meanings. It is a question which asks if what we are feeling is not, by chance, rooted in a foundation beyond the sensible. It is a question which is emboldened to question the mysterious, the fundamental, the unconditional, the ultimate and the definite. It is a question which teaches unrestricted wonder about the foundations of the world, about historical dynamism, about liberty, about ethics, about the limits of life, about the meaning of life, and about love without limits. It is a question which cannot be asked outside the community because it is the question addressed by one feeling to another feeling. Only in this ambiance of loving belief does an example, like the one suggested at the end of the chapter, have meaning.

The whole of reality acts like a symbol. The affective reality of various personal commitments in the believing community, produces a series of symbolisations which can be useful in coordinating the potentialities and affective needs through goals superi-

or to the control of pictures and emotions. Transition from affective reality to consciously fulfilled experience is one of those superior goals. The evolution of the religious question will start from there. The symbolic operator works like this: by asking the hidden meaning in the symbolic. Teaching and learning to question becomes essential.

So, the teaching community must dedicate itself to researching carefully these symbolic meanings in school life. Thus, for example:

- On the one hand, there are the conventional religious symbols that the students probably know and whose meaning must be found again so that they fulfil the function that falls to them in supporting the religious question: religious pictures, popular feasts and devotions, rituals and sacraments...
- On the other hand, there are the powerful meanings of loving and being loved, of loving contact with those who are suffering, with friends, with those with whom we fall in love, with nature, music, acts of justice, sacred places or sanctuaries, with the limits of one's own life and the lives of others, with witnesses of the faith...
- And we can try to find out to what extent the elements of school life can have a religious meaning. The affective climate is one potential that school disciplines often hide. But there is neither science nor art without passion. That forms the underpinning of the dynamic of the implicit and the explicit as a dialogue between the school disciplines and the periods for the explanation of the Gospel.
- Researching the context and history of the disciplines likewise offers a way of connecting the questions that will show where the knowledge comes from as answers. And they can open up to the hidden meaning of the base on which they are built.

This is where the possibility opens up of considering in the spirit of faith both the world and its cultural mediations. The religious questions that arise in the detailed explanation of the disciplines when their religious content can be laid open by the teachers and the students in their research, will lead on to answers during times of catechism, of youth pastoral care or of the teaching of religion.

Gaps in the school and the explanation of the Gospel.

The faith community not only proposes symbols and interpersonal experiences, but it also proposes formulations of its beliefs. If we understand that the faith is a knowledge born of tested love, it is important to think about school catechesis (or religious education in general terms) as the possibility of opening a conscious and supported space, for contrasting beliefs with personal life, not so much from a moralistic and checking point of view, but as something connected with the possibility of reflection on the verification of the mysteries of the faith (Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, Future World) in our personal, community and social lives; because God is the Life of our life, the Matrix of our culture. All we have said in other chapters about the linking of the social sciences with christology (according to the themes for planning content which we have just worked through and which we dubbed 'historifying') finds its place here. This community mediation at the moment of drawing up plans is necessary to verify that the Christian message is realised in modern western institutions, to verify its dialectic and its openness to the idealistic. It is the core of the implicit/explicit dynamic in which arises a question such as the example suggested at the end of this chapter.

In catechesis, the dialectic character of the process must always be borne in mind. This is an interplay between life and belief since the process of appropriation is always in tension between what sends us forward and what we abandon. We are talking about formulations which will help us for a period. There are some formulations of our beliefs which we shall find life-giving in our personal or community fulfilment for a time; then, perhaps, they will no longer speak to us and we have to keep on searching.

Accompanying both persons and groups will consist of a series of therapeutic and creative love strategies in order to collaborate in lessening personal, group and institutional deviations until more authentic goals are realised. Work on the feelings is important in this accompanying. These feelings are so numerous that they link us to symbolism, like the ones that allow us to accede to the consciousness of values. What is religious is reduced neither to feelings nor to intellect; because Christian religious experience is to

be understood as unrestricted love, as a dynamic state conscious of love, joy and peace manifested in magnanimity, affability, goodness, meekness and self-control (Gal.5,22; 1 Cor.13,4-7). It is the experience of the mystery that possesses us and makes us live. The experience is manifested in a change of attitude when we are affected by the mystery. The better understanding of the meaning of the mystery and beliefs will lead to more aware and intentional experience. Christian faith is the knowledge that is born of experience of Christian love.

However, the believer (in any religion whatsoever) as well as the non-believer (in all or certain religions) are in relationship with the cultural structures that form for the believer, those religious mediations, without which relationship with God does not exist. For the one as for the other, religious traditions are part of the huge cultural patrimony of humanity which must be acknowledged, understood and promoted and on which decisions are to be taken to build, through common values, a pluralist community of believers and non-believers; and this with all the cultural traditions.

The structure of mediations is complex. It demands an approach which is economic, historical, linguistic, aesthetic, philosophical, theological and religious.

In addition, one task is obvious: reflection on the story of the effects of the religious message and the religious reality in the world. There are mediations of religious reality, but there are likewise the effects of the religious fact. For example, it is possible to recognise in western notions of family, liberty, authority, progress, justice... - and in their historical forms - some of their own elements and others derived from the judeo-christian message; this is a necessary interplay between the religious milieu and the others.

An example of explicit-implicit work.

“Do all revolutions finish disastrously in institutionalisations which betrays their ideas?”

Let us make a selection of some content areas which take an ‘historifying’ theme like the one we delineated in the previous chapter. The teaching team which developed the proposition is using this theme in selecting content in the “Polymodal” of the

Humanities in accord with the Programme Project in the province of Cordoba, corresponding to the second year of the Specialisation Cycle (Polymodal) in a Catholic school with school catechesis according to the General Catechetical Directory. Among the possible educational variants, in one of the stages of the year, the teachers chose to make one theme depend on the historico-christological thrust corresponding to this year of studies (*the shape of the 3rd phase of capitalism and its cultural logic/Christian identity as place in the world lived as community*). This theme would allow for school plans to be tackled for four months. In the dynamic that we have just explained, the religious dimension implicit in the various pieces of content receives an explanation in a specifically 'religious' discipline. This content which makes the evangelical message explicit cannot be understood as such except if, in the remaining disciplines, questions about the mysterious dimension of their meaning are awakened.

Disciplines	Contents
Language	<p>Literary periods in the world and in Latin America. Avant-garde poetry in the XXth century. Its high point and its decline. Avant-garde poems as symptoms of exhaustion and as project impossible.</p> <p>The avant-garde discourse in manifestoes and in poetic achievements. Characteristics of the avant-garde language and poetical techniques. The procedures as separations from and contributions to the system and linguistic norm.</p> <p>Literary criticism and the link with other cultural and social areas. The work of Tarsila de Amaral as a literary movement related to Brazilian cannibalism.</p> <p>Olivero Girondo: <i>Manifiesto</i>, <i>Martin Fierro</i> and <i>Veinte poemas para leer en el tranvia</i>. Oswald de Andrade: <i>Manifiesto PAU Brazil</i>, <i>Manifiesto antropofago</i>. Vicente Huidobro: <i>Non serviam</i>, <i>Altazar</i>. César Vallejo: <i>Trilce</i>.</p>

	<p>Production of texts: manifestoes, poetry, critical commentaries.</p> <p>Oral communication: exposition, planning expositions.</p>
English	<p>Dramatic speech. The Elizabethan theatre. The works of Shakespeare. Old English and its phonetic and syntactical peculiarities. Shakespeare's literary techniques.</p> <p>William Shakespeare's <i>Richard III</i>. Reading, analysis and performance of scenes from the work. Language of the theatre and language of the cinema. Cinema and literature.</p> <p>Analysis of the film and its analogies with Nazism. Perception of the world of tyranny. Reading in the historical context of the textual and movie production. Reading in the present day context.</p> <p>Morphosyntactic analysis of fragments.</p>
Social Sciences	<p>History: bourgeois revolutions and the rise of national states. The revolution/institution dynamic: French Revolution.</p> <p>1848 Revolution, 1917 Revolution, Mexican Revolution, Cuban Revolution. Working out explanations of the many causes of the problem.</p> <p>Understanding the moment of intervention of avant-garde artists as related to the exhaustion of a stage in the expansion of capitalism and the institutionalisation of the Middle Classes in Europe and America.</p> <p>Analysis of the Rights of the Citizen and the Communist Manifesto.</p> <p>Geography: problems with town planning in the 20th century. The innovators in art and their speech as symptoms of the exhaustion of a specific society. Alternatives to city life and the basic industrial economy.</p>

<p>Mathematics</p>	<p>Descriptive statistics applied to the problems of town planning in the 20th century and the economic crises of the first quarter of the century: classifying and setting the facts in order. Showing statistics. Differing interpretations of the same facts. Means, mode and changes.</p> <p>The problem with chance and necessity. Its mathematical expressions.</p>
<p>Psychology</p>	<p>Context of the admission of psychology as a specific scientific area. Its coinciding with the avant-garde period. Common Freudian elements and their post-structural criticism.</p> <p>Analysis of institutionalisation as a psychological process.</p>
<p>Musical education</p>	<p>Music innovators. Process of innovation and making it respectable. Relationship between avant-garde and popular music: jazz. Connection between politics and avant-garde music: practical music.</p> <p>Auditory perception. Critical listening to different versions. Genres and styles.</p> <p>Constituent elements of the language of avant-garde music: sound, sound sources, technology, spatio-temporal organisation of sound, melodic designs, rhythms, harmony, fluctuation.</p> <p>Innovators and technology.</p>
<p>Biology</p>	<p>The problem of continuity and change. Theory of evolution. Processes of natural selection and adaptation. Biological diversity. Analysis of changes and continuity in certain living beings.</p> <p>Biodiversity and survival. Ecological thinking as evolution and institutionalisation.</p>

Chemistry	<p>The concept of change. Phenomena of transformation in the organic and mineral world. Analysis of the variables. Symbolic representation.</p> <p>Principle of conservation of mass and energy. The second law of thermodynamics and the problems of time and chaos.</p>
Physical education	<p>Olympic sports as revolution and institutionalisation at the start of the 20th century. Olympic competitions: their evolution.</p> <p>Analysis of individual and team athletic performances. Training and skill in certain Olympic disciplines.</p>
Scientific study of Management	<p>Human organisation as institutionalisation. Technical revolutions and their institutionalisation. Relationship between interests and products. Management process and revolution: understanding based on various models.</p>
Christian Formation	<p>Religions as institutions. Christianity as revolution which is institutionalised and itself is revolutionised. The revolutionary power of the Mystery of Christ. The historical relationships of Christianity: medieval feudalism, western modernity, the Christian spirit of capitalism, Christian anarchy, Christian socialism.</p> <p>Continuities and discontinuities between the historical Jesus and ordinary Christianities. Processes of breaking up in ancient and contemporary Christianity.</p> <p>Institutionalisation of avant-garde Christians with a religious obsession: monasticism, pauperism, the mendicants, lay ecclesiastical movements.</p> <p>The need for militant Christianity for the 21st century.</p>

Questionnaire for personal and group reflection

- To what extent do the selections of content that figure in the preceding pages allow for dialogue between the implicit and the explicit in the Christian message?
- Do you see a practical way to succeed?
- How do you see the relationship between school catechesis and other school disciplines?
- What do you think has to be done to contribute to the building up of educational pastoral care starting from your concrete performance within the educational work?
- Have you some question to help recognise the operations and symbols present in schools?

Some Lasallian themes to keep the search going

*“Thus we see, in the case of St Denis
as in that of others,
how God makes use of the light
of human knowledge, both natural and acquired,
to draw souls to Himself”*

Saint John Baptist de La Salle, MF 175.1

Educational pastoral care is not so much a question of school organisation or of the educational programme. It is a way of looking at the educational tasks, the school disciplines and the daily task.

Let us indicate, as if to signpost a road, a few central themes in Lasallian spirituality, which can help us to review, in the basics of our community identity, the foundations of this pastoral proposal.

- The profound unification of life as a basic spiritual trait; not making any distinction between our professional work and our own spiritual life.
- The Spirit of faith, as a way of looking at the world starting from God, going about our activities while seeking God at the heart of the activities themselves, looking upon history as a dialogue with God.
- The memory of the Presence of God, that is ahead of us in the depths of the world, in the depths of the Church and the depths of man; using all this as a means of cultivating the Spirit of faith with the reading of Scripture and as a means of supporting the interior life.
- Adoration of the Presence of God as an act which springs from faith in His Presence and in His Glory; Adoration in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; the First Adorer; the religious life we live in Jesus, following his footsteps.
- Jesus Christ, God’s Incarnation in the world, the basic mystery of all life.

For reflection and sharing

1. (in an academic milieu): At the end of each part questions are put which could be very useful and adaptable to every context.
2. (in other areas): What would be necessary in order to achieve a synthesis between faith, culture and life at the personal level? In the case of dissociation or a lack of coherence, where do the adverse effects emerge? What new paths could help us reach the desired harmony?

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