Jesuit and Feminist Education

INTERSECTIONS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Edited by Jocelyn M. Boryczka
and Elizabeth A. Petrino

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5 *Paideia* and the Political Process

The Unexplored Coincidence of Jesuit and Feminist Pedagogical Visions

PAUL LAKELAND

There are two aspects to every university. The first and most evident is that it deals with culture, with knowledge, the use of the intellect. The second, and not so evident, is that it must be concerned with the social reality—precisely because a university is inescapably a social force: it must transform and enlighten the society in which it lives. But how does it do that? How does a university transform the social reality of which it is so much a part?

Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J.

I entered the classroom with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer . . . education as the practice of freedom . . . education that connects the will to know with the will to become. Learning is a place where paradise can be created.

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

Pedagogies are not, at their best, disembodied theories to be applied prescriptively in any and every conceivable situation. The best of them are flexible methods with an internal sensitivity to the context out of which they initially emerged and the many and varied contexts in which they might profitably be applied. Flexibility is essential, given the number of variables at work in the educational process. Even within the classroom—which is by no means the only or perhaps even the most important component in education—instructor, student, institution, and social context are each a moving target, never still and always changing. Pedagogy, then, if it is not to be simply an abstract, confining method, must be couched in the most general and generous of terms. A successful pedagogy shapes a learning environment; it does not control its outcome.

Both feminist and Jesuit pedagogies are significant precisely because of their expansiveness, their sensitivity to context, and their dis-ease with any suggestion of confining or determining the range of acceptable outcomes. It would make a mockery of bell hooks's understanding of education as "the practice of freedom" to suggest it must result in particular outcomes.[1] The anonymous author of a women's studies syllabus who wrote that "we will look at all questions and issues from as many sides as we can think of. . . . Skepticism about oneself is essential to continued growth and a balanced perspective" was right on the money.[2] As, by the way, was Ignatius of Loyola, a sixteenth-century Basque nobleman and founder of the Society of Jesus, in his insistence that we "should not dispute stubbornly with anyone," but rather "give our reasons with the purpose of declaring the truth . . . and not that we should have the upper hand."[3] This statement was far more revolutionary in its time than we might imagine, as the twentieth-century Jesuit Walter Ong made so clear in an essay on the "masculinity" of classical academic style, when he wrote that "until the romantic age, academic education was all but exclusively focused on defending a position (thesis) or attacking the position of another person."[4]

As we examine the relationships between feminist and Jesuit pedagogy, there is a danger that we will think solely in terms of the productive conversation or interaction that could take place between the two pedagogies. In my opinion, this is too narrow an outlook and we run the risk of failing to take advantage of what both have to offer to one another and to the missing third term, the Jesuit college or university. In what follows, I propose to explore some similarities between the two pedagogies, to unpack some of their respective complexities by suggesting that we look at each as *paideia* rather than as pedagogy, and to suggest the educational and political value of a strategic alliance between the two in calling our Jesuit institutions to pay closer attention to their social and religious responsibilities.

The best starting point for considering relationships between Jesuit and feminist approaches to teaching is in an examination of their respective positions vis-à-vis the larger umbrella of "critical pedagogy." Critical pedagogy, inspired by the work of the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, takes it as axiomatic that education involves a critique both of society and of the norms employed in the educational process. Of its

nature it challenges both the sociopolitical and the educational status quo. In 1992 Henry Giroux wrote that critical pedagogy "signals how questions of audience, voice, power, and evaluation actively work to construct particular relations between teachers and students, institutions and society, and classrooms and communities." This form of pedagogy "illuminates the relationship among knowledge, authority, and power."[5]

While there are those who still seem to be under the impression that the significance of feminist pedagogy is directly connected to sitting in a circle in the classroom or studiously refraining from suggesting a student could ever be wrong, feminist theorists have always known that the story is more complex than this. Jennifer Gore, for example, helpfully distinguishes the approach of women's studies to the issue of feminist pedagogy from that of schools of education. She suggests that the former emphasizes how to teach and what to teach, while feminists in the field of education promote a radical critique of educational practice informed by feminist theory. Then there are the various ideological subdivisions of the feminist enterprise across a fairly wide political spectrum, each of which subtly modifies the expectations of a feminist critique of society. We could doubtless argue that this too is an oversimplification, and Gore would probably agree, but what I find especially instructive is that, in Gore's words, "the two strands seem to similarly address classrooms."[6] It is as if whatever transformation feminist pedagogy imagines in society has its privileged locus, at least its starting point, in the classroom, perhaps because the feminist classroom, unlike society at large, is one in which feminist principles can set the rules.

The convergence of differing feminist pedagogies over the significance of the classroom is instructive not least because the classroom is modeling a vision of human relationships that an educator neither should nor could believe to have a place only in the classroom. It also importantly implies that there is a substrate to feminist pedagogies that exceeds the ideological standpoint of this or that variety of feminism. In feminist and other critical pedagogies, we are mapping a world by our praxis. Even in traditional classrooms there is an implicit vision of social relations. It would be foolish to imagine that a classroom devoted solely to the passive absorption and retention of facts could serve anything other than an instrumental vision of society. Feminist pedagogy seeks to overcome such sheer social replication in practice in the classroom and, by implication, in the world beyond it.

What may not be so readily noticeable is that Jesuit pedagogy stands in remarkably similar relationships with the traditional classroom and with the world beyond it. While Jesuit pedagogy is usually summarized by reference to the holy triad of experience, reflection, and action, the nuances are better captured by Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, current superior general of the Jesuits, as "a process by which teachers accompany learners in the lifelong pursuit of competence, conscience and compassionate commitment." Indeed, Kolvenbach has pointed out that Ignatius of Loyola himself "appears to place teachers' personal example ahead of learning or rhetoric." Somewhat surprisingly, Kolvenbach found support for this view in Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, where he wrote that "Today students do not listen seriously to teachers but to witnesses; and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."[7] Evidently, the holy triad operates in the context of the Jesuit notion of *cura personalis*, the care of the whole person. Feminist pedagogues and others are going to be the first to agree with Kolvenbach that the care of the whole person has social and political connotations, and so it is for Jesuit pedagogy. "What then does a university do, immersed in this reality? Transform it? Yes. Do everything possible so that liberty is victorious over oppression, justice over injustice, love over hate? Yes. Without this overall commitment, we would not be a university, and even less so would we be a Catholic university."[8]

While there is no question that feminist pedagogy has been in the forefront of critical approaches, the same is not always assumed about Jesuit pedagogy. Indeed, those who have consulted the *Ratio Studiorum*, the founding document of Jesuit education produced in 1599, may be excused for thinking that the system was rigid and hierarchical, though the words on the page probably do not do justice to the extraordinary practice that led Jesuit colleges and schools to become such an important feature of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Any pedagogical approach that promoted rhetoric, dance, and drama on the scale that Jesuit schools did had to be more than it seemed in print. Moreover,

a careful reading of the *Ratio* shows its genius to have been a blending of the medieval scholastic pedagogical traditions of repetition and disputation with a true Renaissance humanism. However, it is true that after the Society of Jesus was suppressed by papal edict in 1773 and restored in 1814, its approach to education, as to so many other things, was much more formalistic and pedestrian than it had been in the pre-suppression Society.

The close connections of Jesuit pedagogy to critical pedagogy emerge in documents produced by the order in recent years. After the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), the Society of Jesus, like so many other orders, was redirected to its roots in search of an essential charism that might have become occluded and—among other things—found a need to produce a new vision of education, almost a new *Ratio*. Two documents, "The Characteristics of Jesuit Education" (1986) and "Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach" (1993), articulate this renewed vision. The first of the two proposes twenty-eight principles that should guide Jesuit pedagogy. It incorporates statements such as "The task of the teacher is to help each student to become an independent learner."[9] It encourages the adult members of the learning community to form personal relationships with students so that these adults can "be open to change" and can "continue to learn." Teachers should challenge students to reflect on their personal experiences so that they can "develop a critical faculty that goes beyond the simple recognition of true and false, good and evil."[10] The 1993 document, which attempts to offer practical proposals for implementing the principles, makes the enlightening claim that "pedagogy is the way in which teachers accompany learners in their growth and development."[11] Through reflection, learning is moved "beyond the realm of an objective grasp of facts, principles, and skills to the level of personal meaning" in order to promote "action based on conviction."[12] Moreover, lest the specter of indoctrination appear in the minds of readers, the claim is that "what is needed is a framework of inquiry that encourages the process of wrestling with significant issues and complex values of life, and professors capable and willing to guide that inquiry."[13]

There are clearly a number of structural similarities between the two pedagogies. In the first place, both pedagogies are learner centered. Second, both step firmly away from the supposedly traditional model

of instruction, of a teacher imparting knowledge to a group of students who begin from a blank state. Third, they define themselves more in terms of the activity of learning than they do by the content of what is taught. Fourth, they see the classroom as a space for consciousness-raising that will, if successful, spill over into life beyond the classroom and beyond the college years. Fifth, they envisage the ultimate purpose of education to be personal and social transformation rather than social replication.

The connotations of the word "pedagogy" do not help to convey the idea that education is a process that is so much larger than the dynamics of the classroom. I therefore want to suggest the abandonment of "pedagogy" in favor of the term *paideia*. James Fowler has defined *paideia* in the following way. It involves "all the intentional efforts of a community of shared meanings and practices to form and nurture the attitudes, dispositions, habits, and virtues—and in addition, the knowledge and skills—necessary to enable growing persons to become competent and reflective adult members of the community."[14] *Paideia* is the term that best signifies the total educational role of the entire institution as it prepares citizens of the world. More attuned to Socrates than to the sophists, *paideia* encourages us to think of education as a process of learning to be in the world constructively, a way to take an attitude to the world that demands action. Education happens, sometimes despite our intentions, in the particular mix of classroom instruction, role-modeling, experiential learning, and peer interaction that makes up the entire life of the student during the four undergraduate years. *Paideia*, rather than pedagogy, should be our focus, because it forces us to pay attention to far more than the narrow confines of the classroom. The values and practices of the entire institution teach in ways that classroom instruction alone does not. They should lead our students to an intentional awareness of the world for which we are preparing them, to take a constructive attitude to that world. Above all, I think, *paideia* looks to consistency between classroom instruction and the social and political face of the academic institution, and it stresses the role of education, both in the classroom and outside it, as modeling a social vision.

I suspect that most of us have little difficulty recognizing feminist pedagogy in the shift to *paideia* but may find the inclusion of Jesuit

pedagogy to be a little more challenging. The problem here is that feminist pedagogy, especially where it is allied with women's studies departments in Jesuit schools, often feels that it stands in a critical if not always oppositional relationship to the culture of the institution. My point is twofold. First, we should not make the mistake of automatically associating Jesuit pedagogy with the prevailing institutional structure of the Jesuit institution. Second, Jesuit pedagogy, rightly conducted, stands in a precisely similar relationship to the institution qua institution, as do most feminist pedagogues. The two pedagogies are oriented toward a particular *paideia*. Both may find themselves out of step in strikingly similar ways with the *paideia* of at least some Jesuit institutions. Jesuit colleges and universities are not guaranteed to have seen or made the connection between the values of their pedagogy and the lived choices of the institution. Jesuit pedagogy can, I think, learn something from the strategies of feminist pedagogy, especially its classroom strategies. And feminist pedagogy can learn from the way in which Jesuit pedagogy stresses a discernment process that is not immediately interpretable in ideological terms.

We can make the point a little clearer by spending a few moments with the key meditation on the Two Standards from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. In Ignatius's formulation, the exercitant is invited to view a great plain where the armies of Christ and Lucifer are arrayed, and to decide under which banner to stand and fight. Pretty obviously, Ignatius did not expect the exercitant to choose Lucifer! But the imaginative exercise is directed toward seeing how the world is a place of struggle between the good and evil spirit, or we might prefer to say the forces of good and evil. My own reworking of this language asks for a choice between energies that promote the truly human in a world that is our home, and those that are in effect anti-human. Ignatius encourages us to use our imaginations to see beneath the surface of things, to see that the world is a site of decision making, that we really cannot just absolve ourselves from the need to take sides. Will we side with the forces of good, with everything that supports human flourishing? Or will we side with the forces of evil, of all that is destined in the end to narrow and destroy the truth of human community and solidarity?

This meditation contains the two critical components of Ignatian education. The first is the careful and imaginative attention to the details of the world, in other words, the educational importance of understanding the world in which we live in the most sophisticated and critically aware manner of which we are capable. This is where we can confidently affirm that everything taught in the most theoretical and the most practical of our classrooms, from pure mathematics to literary theory to accounting practice, is integral to Jesuit education, because it all contributes to the enrichment of our awareness of how our world really works. And the second component is the call to make a decision that will be consistent with the foundational understanding of the human person and the human community. This is where *paideia* is most apparent, because the capacity to make a good decision is not simply acquired in the classroom but comes to pass as a result of the entire educational process: in the classroom, in the values absorbed from living within a community that practices what it preaches, and in the informal exchanges within a community with a common vision.

A Christian university must take into account the gospel preference for the poor. This does not mean that only the poor will study at the university; it does not mean that the university should abdicate its mission of academic excellence—excellence which is needed in order to solve complex social issues of our time. What it does mean is that the university should be present intellectually where it is needed: to provide science for those without science; to provide skills for those without skills; to be a voice for those without voices; to give intellectual support for those who do not possess the academic qualifications to make their rights legitimate.[15]

At this point, we might consider the relatively recent Jesuit recognition of the importance of work for justice and the commitment to its inclusion in classroom pedagogy and institutional *paideia*. In the 1986 document referred to earlier on "The Characteristics of Jesuit Education," it is made quite clear that "in a Jesuit school the focus in on education for justice," and that the goal of the endeavors is "a new type of person in a new kind of society."[16] The three distinct aspects of this education for justice are that justice issues are treated in the curriculum, that "the policies and programs of a Jesuit school give concrete witness to the faith that does justice," and that "there is no genuine conversion to justice unless there are works of justice."[17] An important

characteristic of this commitment is the decision to make "a preferential option for the poor." Although Jesuit educations must sometimes struggle to make this concrete, the public commitment is there. Those who are less powerful, whose lives and priorities are on the margins of society, not at its heart, should be the special concern of these educational communities of justice. Although the terms are not used here, the call is for a pedagogy that blends seamlessly into *paideia*.

There is no doubt that at times in its history the Jesuit tradition has been guilty of sexism and the preservation of patriarchy, but in its espousal of a preferential option for the poor it may have something to offer to enrich feminist pedagogy. The movements of womanist and *mujerista* thought within feminism testify to women's own awareness that the feminist movement can sometimes fail to recognize the roles of race and class in the plight of women and can indeed, in some of its forms, be frankly bourgeois. In their Thirty-fourth General Congregation in 1995, the Jesuit Order produced a document recognizing their past failures in sexism and committing themselves to a more positive future (Decree 14). But woven even within this document is the important recognition that gender issues are complicated by the intersecting oppressions of war, race, poverty, and migration.

The final complexity to note is an institutional one. While there remain a number of women's colleges, there are not, as far as I know, any feminist universities. Neither are there universities that have explicitly committed themselves to feminist pedagogy and *paideia*. However, I want to suggest that the Jesuit universities, of which there are twenty-eight in the United States alone and many more around the world, not only may provide the most supportive home for feminist pedagogy but are in fact already committed to a *paideia* that is utterly consistent with the principles of feminist pedagogy. Let me say it boldly: The nearest thing we have in American higher education to feminist educational institutions is Jesuit colleges and universities. Of course, there is no perfect fit. Jesuit institutions have made great strides in appointing women to faculty and administration positions and ensuring fair and equitable compensation, but there is little doubt that a lot more could be done. But the essential principles of Jesuit *paideia* mandate classroom openness and an institutional integrity that is at one with the vision of feminist education.

Where serious differences may exist between Jesuit and feminist visions, and consequently where most friction may occur and most growth may be possible, is in the area of religious identity and ethical vision. Of course, there are lots of Catholic feminists, but feminism itself is not distinctively religious, and many of its most outspoken communicators are secular people who are not at all well disposed toward institutional religion. More neuralgic still, while feminism is pluralistic, the majority of feminist academics take a position on reproductive rights that is not comfortable with the public position of the Catholic Church, to which Catholic academic institutions must be in some sense faithful. Many individual Catholics and even many Jesuits may as private individuals share pro-choice positions on abortion or advocate the rights of gays and lesbians to marry. But while they will recognize the rights of conscience and freedom of speech, they cannot in the end espouse an institutional position different from that of the Catholic Church.

The ultimate test of the compatibility of Jesuit and feminist pedagogies, curiously enough, will be how they negotiate their differences on religious and ethical issues. Jesuit academic institutions are safe havens for feminist pedagogy because, in the first instance, Jesuit pedagogy is very similar to feminist approaches and, in the second, because providing space for the civil and humane process of mutual learning over contested issues is a sine qua non of Jesuit institutions. We should argue, said Ignatius, so that the truth should appear and not that we may seem to gain the upper hand. Difference of opinion on important issues, say Jesuit and feminist pedagogies together, is where we test our unity of outlook about how the educational process must proceed. What students conclude about this or that issue is less important than that they submit themselves to an academic discipline that leads them to know why they think what they think, and to make it their own. And this must be facilitated by an institution that shows in its concrete practices that it is committed to the struggle for justice, and that it takes principled stands on justice issues.

The vision of the Jesuit and, yes, the Catholic university, has to be one—as the old saying goes—in which the noun is "university" and the adjectives are "Jesuit" and "Catholic." While Jesuit and Catholic

institutions may, because of their religious affiliation, be unable to promote particular ethical choices or lifestyles, they may not and should not be anything other than entirely open to an ongoing and mutually enriching dialogue on the trickiest of moral issues between and among the different interest groups within the faculty. The commitment to justice woven into the *paideia* of the institution, at once Jesuit and feminist, should see to that. When you put limits on what may be discussed or place boundaries around points of view you consider not open to discussion, when you say, "This or that is not on the table," then you are not behaving in the manner of a university. But, at the same time, when you declare debate and research to be value free and when you place everything that is truly human "off limits," you are also not behaving in the manner of a university, certainly not a Jesuit or a feminist university. Feminist/Jesuit *paideia* takes the more difficult path, when it is true to its deepest impulses, of honestly confronting the most challenging issues of justice in our world as concerns of priority, and finding ways to ensure that the institution as a whole, not just the classroom, testifies to those convictions. All institutions have a little bit of the demonic within them. I suppose a Christian would say that this is the institutional face of original sin, and both Christians and others might agree on the category of structural injustices. The agenda of feminist pedagogy is always rightly sensitive to the need to correct the failings of the institution, whether on matters of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, or whatever. It is one of the consciences of the university. In Jesuit institutions, its greatest ally in this task is Jesuit *paideia* itself.

One of my proudest moments as a teacher at Fairfield occurred over ten years ago. At the end of a lengthy campaign on the part of students and a few faculty members to obtain union recognition and decent working conditions for our custodial staff, with little or no progress made, the students occupied Bellarmine Hall—the principal administration building—in the time-honored fashion of the late sixties and early seventies. At one point in the day or so of occupation before the university administration finally capitulated to the justice of the case, students hung from one of Bellarmine's windows a banner displaying the message: "Practice the values you teach us to live by." It brought

tears to my eyes and to not a few others, I think, to see concrete evidence that sometimes the teaching process works. A significant number of students remembered things that had been said to them in philosophy and religious studies and many other courses. But more important, they had seen the difference between the simple iteration of truths in a classroom context and the force of an institutional commitment to those same truths. They had reflected long and hard on the injustice of what they saw around them, they had discerned carefully and at length, and they had taken action. In my view, this was a textbook example of the Ignatian pedagogical method and, even if some in the university community were as mad as hell with those students, they were a shining example to us of all that we ought to hold dearest.

Please note that some in the university community *were* as mad as hell, including some at the vice-presidential level and above. There is no guarantee that the Jesuit institution is living up to the value of Jesuit *paideia*. Like all institutions, it has a tendency toward what Dorothee Soelle, the great Lutheran theologian, so quaintly and accurately referred to as necrophilia. All institutions—she was talking about the Church—tend toward a love of what is dead, like rules and regulations and structures. If they make such things priorities, and a critical relationship to the wider society is played down, then the fabric of the institution quite literally works against the Jesuit and feminist agenda of social transformation, and toward the stultifying promotion of social replication. All institutions need bureaucratic structures, but they are means to an end. In the typically dense phrase of Jürgen Habermas, all societies need to struggle against "the colonization of the lifeworld by the system."[18] That colonization, that necrophilia, is what feminist and Jesuit *paideia* exist to challenge. If their respective lessons are learned, then the institutions will model much more successfully the kind of society we hope our alumni and alumnae will work to realize. Let us end with a few more words from Ignacio Ellacuría.

> But how is this done? The university must carry out this general commitment with the means uniquely at its disposal: we as an intellectual community must analyze causes; use imagination and creativity together to discover the remedies to our problems; communicate

to our constituencies a consciousness that inspires the freedom of self-determination; educate professionals with a conscience, who will be the immediate instruments of such a transformation; and constantly hone an educational institution that is both academically excellent and ethically oriented.[19]

6 Feminist Pedagogy, the Ignatian Paradigm, and Service-Learning

Distinctive Roots, Common Objectives, and Intriguing Challenges

ROBBIN D. CRABTREE, JOSEPH A. DEFEO, AND MELISSA M. QUAN

Many alternative or "liberatory" pedagogies share common or related philosophical roots and have evolved through decades (and in some cases centuries) of debate about the role of education in society, the appropriate curriculum, the ideal nature of classroom interaction, effective relationships among teachers and students, and the desired outcomes of education in a multicultural democracy. Three such pedagogies are explored in three usually divergent literatures: feminist pedagogy, Ignatian pedagogy, and service-learning pedagogy. This chapter brings these literatures together in an exploration of the commonalities among the three pedagogical traditions, in which their historical and philosophical roots are discussed, some shared assumptions about teaching and learning are identified, and the objectives of each for the production of individual and social transformation are described.

In addition to describing these three pedagogical traditions, we explore some of the divergences among them, using each perspective as a critical lens and analytical tool with which to examine and challenge the others. We share specific teaching experiences that illustrate both the strengths and shortcomings of each approach-in-action in order to demonstrate how an inter-articulation of the three approaches to teaching—each with its own social history, philosophy, and set of practices—can inform institutions, teachers, and students as we work together to create meaningful pedagogies that are truly transformative.

Three Pedagogical Traditions

A relatively in-depth description of each pedagogical approach is crucial. Even a cursory review of the academic literatures on feminist,