Often we overlook a fundamental problem in Jesuit higher education — namely students are already well-educated before they enter college. I am not referring to their high school or grammar school education but rather their cultural education, that is, their education in a given culture’s ways of thinking and doing.

The questions I propose to consider are: first—what is the nature of this cultural education? second, why do most of us working within the university fail to take into account the cultural education of our students and ourselves? and third, how could we as Jesuits begin to reorient the cultural identities of ourselves and our students? The urgency of these questions can be appreciated when you realize that a cultural education is primarily a moral and religious education. Take American students. They arrive at universities like Georgetown and Boston College already having a philosophy and a theology. It is embedded and incorporated in their ways of living. If we think of institutions as recurring patterns of cooperation among people or, more briefly, as the ways people behave, then you can define culture as the motives and meanings that explain why people behave the way they do. These motives are the concrete lived philosophies and theologies of the people. Such motives may be reasonable or unreasonable, moral or immoral, religious or irreligious. Culture implies habits of minds but more especially habits of heart. Culture is the spirit of a people and it is expressed symbolically in the diction, demeanor and dress of the people, in their architecture, music, stories, cartoons, posters, monuments, movies and other media, in their technology and modes of transportation. It is in these symbols that you will find the lived dreams and drama of a people.

To focus the issue of this paper then: schools are one of the recurring patterns of cooperation of a people and culture is why the schools
operate the way they do. The first question of my paper, then, taking into account my own American context, is — what is the spirit of America, what are the habits of the American heart?

Thanks to Robert Bellah and his associates this is a question that is quite familiar for most of us. The authors of *Habits of the Heart* found that there are two operative languages in today's American culture — the cost-benefit and career oriented talk of Benjamin Franklin and the "I'm OK, you're OK" therapeutic and self-expressive language of Walt Whitman. They also found that rampant individualism is associated with both of these languages. Individualism is one of Americans' most defining characteristics these days. The starting point for these reflections was Tocqueville's classic study *Democracy In America*. But Bellah and his associates do not think Tocqueville paid sufficient attention to the problem of individualism as the real danger in a democratic culture. I would like to offer a slight disagreement. I think a careful reading of the text *Democracy in America* will show that Tocqueville may not have used the exact language of individualism but there can be no doubt that is exactly what he meant especially if one interprets his text in the light of his basic question.

Tocqueville took his basic question from Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. Tocqueville remarked that he never let a day go by without reading either Montesquieu, Rousseau or Pascal. In Montesquieu we find the first classic text of the modern science of culture and it was by reading Montesquieu that Tocqueville came to the question:—what is the spirit of American democracy? The first few chapters of *Democracy in America* present possible answers but fail to hit the bull's eye. Chapter four yields the major discovery. The spirit of the people is their belief in the Sovereignty of the people and for Tocqueville this is astonishing. Not God, not Christ, not the King, not even the government, in America it is the people who are sovereign. More important, the sovereignty of the people is not some sort of a theory or leading idea, it stands out in "broad daylight" as Tocqueville likes to put it. You can see it everywhere in the way American people behave, in their mores and manners, in their social, political, economic and religious behavior. The sovereignty of the people was first proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence but it was embodied and ritualized in the War for Independence and it has remained to this day the orienting spirit of Americans.
Here we have an initial answer to my first question concerning the basic orientation of American students and faculty including Jesuits — our basic cultural commitment to the sovereignty of the self is a somewhat small step and the step was taken by John Stuart Mill.

I received dramatic proof of Mill’s modification of the American spirit when I was teaching a course to Law students several years ago. After discussing Tocqueville’s text we took up Mill’s *Essay on Liberty*. Everyone in the class suddenly felt at home. The language of Mill was the language they were being taught in their other law courses. It was today’s language of individual rights and liberty, the language of my right to choose what I as sovereign decide to think and do. Mill had read Tocqueville and he was disturbed by Tocqueville’s warning that the sovereignty of the people could easily turn into the tyranny of the majority, and so he developed his theory of individual rights to counter this tendency. Since the sovereignty of the self seemed like a corollary to the sovereignty of the people, it was readily implemented by American judges and legislators and soon became the law of the land.

I think Bellah would agree that the “rampant individualism” he finds abroad in American culture today is completely consistent for a people who feel they are the sovereign. The behavioral motives embodied in the two major cultural languages that Americans are speaking today may not be exactly the languages that Tocqueville heard spoken in America in 1833 but they are certainly direct descendants of that language of the people’s sovereignty.

Directly related to Tocqueville’s basic orienting question about the spirit of American democracy was his advice to any people who were going to establish a democratic government. Tocqueville did not question whether Americans or Europeans were going to establish democratic governments; he thought that was inevitable. Rather his question was whether they would establish virtuous and meaningful democracies or vicious and meaningless ones. Democracy was inevitable but the basic worth of such democracies were still to be decided. And the decisions depended on whether the people understood, as Tocqueville himself claimed to have understood, what the problems were, and the possibilities, that democracies had to face. As you read through the first volume, Tocqueville is still somewhat optimistic about solving these problems and realizing the possibilities of a democratic way of living. But by the end of the second volume, written five years after the first,
he is very pessimistic and toward the end of his life he becomes even more so. In these later writings Tocqueville's warnings about what may happen to democratic men and women sound like Nietzsche's description of the last man in the prologue to Thus Spoke Zarathustra, or what Alan Bloom has called "easy going American nihilism".

Contrary to what many Americans think, Tocqueville makes it clear that American democracy is not founded on the Bible nor do its basic principles stem from a biblical heritage. The disturbing conclusion to these reflections on Tocqueville as a source for identifying the spirit of American culture is that it is almost impossible to be an authentic American and a true Christian. An authentic American tends to think of himself or herself as a sovereign while a true Christian thinks of self as a servant. There is a basic opposition then between living the story of the New Testament and living the American story as it has been interpreted and embodied in the personal and communal lives of Americans. But human beings are never a single story and the orienting spirit of a person or a people always involve tensions or struggle between opposing tendencies. This is why Bellah and his associates frequently found Americans unable to find a language to talk about some of their deeper desires especially those which centered on friendship and love. It seems to me we can find these same tensions in our students, faculty and in ourselves.

Not only do we not have the languages to talk about our religious lives but most of the current language is fundamentally disorienting when it come to talking about religious friendship. One of the strange paradoxes I have found among students who are actually doing Christianity is that they still speak a self-centering therapeutic language. They are actually living as servants of other people but they talk the language of sovereigns. They feel genuinely obligated to help their neighbor but they talk in terms of their neighbor's rights not their own duties. If one wonders why the present debate on abortion is about rights and not about duties, if one wonders why we can no longer sustain our social and religious commitments, if one wonders why the economic market place has assumed such sovereignty for Americans, if one wonders why the Jesuit University has become more and more like other American universities, then, Tocqueville is the place to start your reflection. There is an addition, a brilliant series of books on American culture beginning with Henry Nash Smith's Virgin Land, and including recent
publications by such authors as Leo Marx, Marshall McLuhan, Michael Kammen and Robert Bellah. The history of culture has become one of the most interesting and important fields in the university today.

I did not mention Alan Bloom’s book *The Closing of the American Mind* because this text raises deeper and more complex questions and it is to these reflections I will now turn. I will begin by asking my second question: why did I, like most writers, in considering the contemporary university, place the central emphasis on the curriculum and not on the concrete cultural behavior of our students, faculty and administrators? The answer is complex but we can begin by noting that the American culture Tocqueville observed during the nineteenth century grew out of the two great cultural movements of the prior century, namely, the Enlightenment and Romanticism. More specifically we are closer to Kant’s way of thinking then to Aristotle or Ignatius of Loyola. It may seem surprising to group Aristotle and Ignatius against Kant but let me explain.

There seems to be a significant parallel between Ignatius’ *Exercises* and Aristotle’s *Ethics* that opposes them both to Kant’s ethics. Aristotle and Ignatius have written manuals for the practice of moral and spiritual virtues while Kant gave us a theory of ethics that prescinds from the practice of the theory. To understand Aristotle’s Ethics you have to go out and practice the virtues, and to understand Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* you have to pray and live them. The doing and praying are intrinsically necessary and both require of the exercitant considerable effort if they are going to understand what Ignatius and Aristotle were writing about. With Kant however there is no practice necessary, it is rather a question of correct thinking.

A second and perhaps more important similarity and difference among these three thinkers regards the important of feelings. In both Aristotle and Ignatius feeling and affectivity are an important part of the exercises. For Aristotle, the test for verifying the presence or absence of virtuous actions is the ease and pleasure with which you perform them. For Ignatius, the standard for knowing the activity of God’s movements in your heart is in their careful discernment of the affectivities of the soul. Kant, on the other hand distrusted any appeal to affectivity as an appeal to the empirical, which as he learned from Hume, is very
contingent and so cannot serve as a norm for universal and necessary judgments. The affective or emotional state of the subject could not provide a discerning norm for making moral judgments.

A third contrast among these authors is the role that tradition plays. For Aristotle a person who does not live in the presence of virtuous people who exemplify and dramatize the right way to live doesn’t stand much of a chance of becoming virtuous and living the most choiceworthy way. For Aristotle, to know virtue is to do virtue, but to do this you need to observe and imitate fellow citizens living virtuous lives. Likewise for Ignatius to know Christ is to study his way of living and imitate him. Kant, on the other hand, following Rousseau, opts for a self-enlightened, self-legislating autonomous subject whose decisions cannot be based on any anthropological tradition since these are empirical and contingent and, therefore, unable to provide the universal and necessary standard for determining personal or social decisions. Only a pure science of morals that is intrinsically independent of concrete circumstances and situations could provide universal, certain, and necessary norms for making moral decisions. The concrete circumstances of our lives are not necessary but contingent, and they change in such unexpected ways that only a practically wise and virtuous person will know in any given situation what the morally right way to behave is.

A fourth and final difference between Kant and Aristotle and Ignatius has to do with our knowledge of God. For Aristotle, Supreme human happiness is an activity of the soul in conformity with virtues, and the best way to live is according to the highest virtue and in conformity with the best part of us. This, for Aristotle, would be to live like the gods, for there is part of us that is divine. And this “divine participation” is not only knowable but do-able. Kant would insist that the divine is not knowable but can only be postulated. Aristotle disagreed. For this reason it was not difficult for the Greek Fathers to take over Aristotle’s ideas on the contemplative life and to transform them into a model for Christian living. But this transformation involved a fundamental shift from a virtuous life that could be developed by human efforts to a virtuous life involving habits that could only be formed by the direct action of God working within the human soul in a supernatural way. The issue was put in a vivid and dramatic way in the Confessions of St. Augustine.
In Augustine’s *Confessions* we have an account of the problem of living an intellectual moral and religious life. From his studies in neoplatonism Augustine learned about the contemplative life of the scholar but at the same time he could not succeed in straightening out his moral life. Like St. Paul, he realized that just because you know the right way to live doesn’t mean that you will do it. For Augustine there was nothing wrong with the Greek notion of the good life except that it didn’t work. People are morally impotent. What is needed is not only an intellectual conversion of the mind but a religious conversion of the heart. What is needed is for God to take out the heart of stone and put in a heart of flesh. What we need are habits of the heart that only God can give. Here we find the central mistake, as much of Tocqueville as of most members of the academy, including ourselves. We tend to think that if we know the right way to behave, then that is what we will do. We are unwilling to admit that there is no moral solution to our immoral living. The only solution is religious. That is the difference between Aristotle and Ignatius.

Like Socrates, Aristotle knew that it was better to suffer injustice than to commit it. But to base your way of life on the beatitudes, to choose to follow Christ in his passion as Ignatius proposes, is not to live naturally but supernaturally. Such a way of life does not contradict nature but it does transform and transcend nature. When we try to live naturally we fail. Naturally we ought to be willing to do what we know is correct, but concretely we are frequently unwilling to do so. And this problem is not superficial; it is radical. It does not happen once or twice; it happens every time human beings make decisions. Moral impotence is a radical and recurring problem and no one escapes it unless they receive a special grace from God. Augustine’s reflections on our moral impotence are as relevant today as they were in his own day.

The question that now has to be asked is: if medieval culture did in fact assimilate these Aristotelian and other Greek sources, then, how could thinkers like Kant have so misinterpreted Aristotle’s *Ethics*? Two books that provide a context for answering that question are Alan Bloom’s *The Closing of The American Mind* and Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*. I will return to Bloom’s book in the next section; here I will focus on *After Virtue*. What is especially interesting is the way MacIntyre argues that accepting Benjamin Franklin’s account of the virtue means rejecting Aristotle’s position. I have already noted that in
Habits of the Heart, Franklin’s utilitarian individualism forms one of two major languages in our contemporary American culture. This means that the language horizon of American students and faculty involves a rejection of the ancient and medieval moral horizons. I think MacIntyre’s explanation of the loss of the medieval and ancient moral horizon by Enlightenment thinkers like Kant, Hume, and Benjamin Franklin is a helpful first step in answering my question. However his failure to properly evaluate Kierkegaard’s own criticism of these same thinkers seriously limits his explanation. Since Kierkegaard’s criticism can provide a framework for answering my question I would like to stress several of his important discoveries.

Kierkegaard’s criticism of Kant’s ethics is that the autonomous, self-legislativing subject of his second critique is neither autonomous nor sovereign. The so-called self-enlightened subject is simply a mask for the dark fears of a person who dreads his own sickness-unto-death. This might seem that Kierkegaard is returning to the concrete subject of Aristotle ethics. To some extent this is true but in a more important way he goes beyond Aristotle in introducing a new way to express the basic moral and religious meanings of a person’s lived world in ways that place him closer to Augustine and Ignatius.

Aristotle assumes that the subject of his ethics is an Athenian citizen and his questioning directs attention to the best way to live as a citizen in the Greek polis. In answering this question Aristotle outlines the virtues to be practiced and vices to be avoided in moving towards the good life of the statesman and the philosopher. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, presents one with three different and dialectically related life-scripts or stories — aesthetic, moral and religious — each of which is related to a basic decision and attitude towards one’s own horizon of death. The important point of contrast between Aristotle and Kierkegaard, however, is not in the way of life chosen, but in the type of decision that they are referring to. Kierkegaard draws attention to a basic decision that will ground a whole series of subsequent decisions, a basic commitment from which will flow a whole way of life. Second, and equally important, this decision is characterized by a basic mood or emotion that is essential to understanding the nature of the basic choice. The mood of this decision is spelled out by Kierkegaard in terms of “fear and trembling.” Third, and most important, the reason why this choice is basic and foundational for other commitments is because it
involves a choice about the infinite and eternal. Put simply, every basic choice involves committing oneself for or against God. This can be seen if we briefly examine the dialectical relation between the three different ways of living — aesthetic, ethical and religious.

For Kierkegaard, to shift from an aesthetic way of life to an ethical way or from an ethical to a religious way of life involves a fundamental conversion, that is, turning away from one basic commitment, and orienting identity and reconstituting oneself within a new horizon. It is not a question of development but rather of a rejection of one way of living and selecting a new and opposite way. Certainly this notion of conversion as the aim and basis of dialectical method was well known among ancient and medieval thinkers like Plato and Augustine. But there is a basic methodological difference between the way Kierkegaard discussed conversion and the way it was understood in the ancient and medieval cultural context.

You can certainly argue that a conversion from self-centered satisfactions to a life according to the virtues provides the normative foundation for Aristotle’s *Ethics*, but as Professor MacIntyre has pointed out, Aristotle’s *Ethics* presupposes a metaphysical biology. In such a context ethics depends on metaphysics, and metaphysics depends on first principles, and these in turn are necessary and true because they are self-evident. Metaphysics for Aristotle was primary, and moral virtues were secondary and derived. With Descartes, the subject moved to the center of the metaphysical stage, and with Kant, metaphysics was out and the practical intellect was given pride of place over speculative intellect. Kierkegaard accepts the turn to the subject but insists that the subject is not an autonomous, self-legisitating subject but a particular person who is going to die, therefore the central problem in ethics becomes whether death is a basic boundary condition or an invitation to a divine transfiguration. The question for Kierkegaard is not whether a man or woman has an immortal soul but whether you — the concrete conscious subject — are immortal? More important, the sovereignty of self is not an idea but rather, as Mircea Eliade would say — it is the lived story of the American people, or as Kierkegaard would say — it is the basic commitment and orienting identity of the American people.

My second question was why I failed in the past to consider the concrete cultural orientation of faculty, students and Jesuits as a basic context in reflecting on the nature and purpose of Jesuit universities. The
reason why a faculty tends to think of ethics primarily as a theory taught in a classroom and not a story practiced in student dormitories and in their own lives is that we are all in varying degrees "children" of the American enlightenment-romantic tradition and not of the ancient and medieval tradition. Not only are our lived languages for the most part forgetful of those ancient traditions, but the basic orienting meanings of American culture are in fundamental opposition to these meanings and values. For most Americans who not only story themselves as sovereigns but also behave that way, the lived language of being a servant of the people would mean recalling a very "dangerous memory." For such people to change their basic commitment would mean not only living a different story but becoming a quite different person. And, as Kierkegaard has argued in a very Augustinian context, the problem is not discovering what the proper moral way to live is, since most people know this. The real problem is moral impotence, what St. Paul meant when he said — "A man who is unspiritual refuses what belongs to the spirit of God. It is folly to him. He cannot grasp it because it needs to be judged in the light of the Spirit. A man gifted with the Spirit can judge the worth of everything (1 Cor. 2:14). This position was repeated by Augustine and a host of Christian thinkers but it was forgotten by Kant and Hegel and, even more surprisingly, by such a remarkable cultural scholar as Tocqueville.

Certainly Tocqueville recognized, unlike Kant and Hegel, that the problem was not only instilling proper mental habits but, more importantly, the formation of affective or motivating habits of the heart. But Tocqueville never recognized that moral impotence is permanent, radical, and recurrent, and that the problem will not be solved by discovering a new political philosophy. The problem is to discover and develop a religious democracy grounded in a religious culture whose basic orientation and fundamental destiny is to God.

Tocqueville did not grasp this problem. For him religion served a utilitarian purpose, it acted as a booster for motivating people to be moral in their mores and manners. More importantly, Tocqueville accepted the Enlightenment prejudice that religion was to be a private affair, a matter of personal choice. Religion was to be depoliticized. Politics and economics were intrinsically moral and cultural for Tocqueville but they were not intrinsically religious as they were for Augustine and Aquinas. Tocqueville did not see a contradiction between the spirit of
American Democracy — the sovereignty of the People — and that the way to God was by repentance, suffering, and the love of our neighbors. He correctly grasped that American culture did not grow out of a biblical context but because he did not realize that if you try to keep God out of the American market-place, the law courts, and the legislative halls, then our recurring problem of moral impotence will invite the emergence of the sort of soft tyranny that he prophetically described at the end of his second volume.

My conclusion from this reflection, then, is that the faculty and students in Jesuit universities are living within a cultural horizon that is not Christian and that we are for the most part critically and reflectively unaware of this cultural context. This does not mean that we may not be living or trying to live Christian lives. What it does mean is that there is, in varying degrees, a contradiction between the cultural lives we are living and the way we tend to think about themselves. Now, if a Jesuit University wanted to set as its goal the cultural reorientation of its students and faculty how could it go about achieving this goal? I do not think that Kierkegaard would be of much help in solving such a problem within an academic culture. I will give my reasons by presenting a brief account of what happened in the western university after Kierkegaard’s death.

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It was not until late in the nineteenth and early twentieth century that Kierkegaard’s voice began to be heard. The reason for the delay was that Kierkegaard did not address the major theoretical problems that were emerging during his own life-time, namely the ongoing developments in mathematics and the natural sciences and the emergence of new social sciences. Kant and Hegel did deal with these problems and so it was their philosophies that set the framework for most of the university research in the nineteenth century. Because Kierkegaard failed to address these questions he had little to say about what became the central problem of the late nineteenth century, namely, how to develop human or cultural sciences that were not modeled on the methods of the natural sciences. It was these problems which brought into focus two of the major questions of the twentieth century — history and hermeneutics. And it is these questions that still lie at the heart of the twentieth century curriculum crisis, namely how to integrate into a
meaningful whole the new natural sciences with the new human or
cultural sciences. The first step in solving this problem was to retrieve
the ancient wisdom of Plato and Aristotle that had provided the frame-
work for the Christian medieval thinkers. The preliminary work in this
retrieval was carried out by German classical scholars but the major step
was taken by Martin Heidegger. For the sake of brevity I will not dis-
cuss Heidegger himself but instead focus on two of his most famous
students whose scholarly research relates directly to our question,
namely, Leo Strauss and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

Both Strauss and Gadamer have followed Heidegger in cutting
through the Enlightenment prejudice against the basic importance of
tradition and have reopened the conversation with the ancient and
medieval world. The influence of Leo Strauss’ teaching and scholarship
in American universities is simply stunning. There are professors at
practically every major university who are students of his or have taken
their questions from him. Alan Bloom is at present the best known of
his students and the basic thesis in the *The Closing of the American Mind*
is unthinkable without Strauss’ reading of the Great Books. Strauss’
contribution to our present discussion was to analyse the context in
which Tocqueville wrote and to show that the modern liberal state pro-
claiming the sovereignty of the people was grounded in a series of phi-
osophers who had explicitly rejected both the ancient and biblical con-
text.

Gadamer went even further, and having rejected both the neo-
Kantian and Husserlian posing of the question within the horizon of
the modern scientific project stemming from Descartes, returned to the
Socratic-Platonic dialectical conversation that focused on questions
concerning the best way to live. He insisted that an authentic inter-
pretation of ancient texts would involve putting your own cultural and
personal assumptions on the table and letting the text question your
own horizon. Gadamer has reformulated the Kierkegaardian proposi-
tion that to discover the truth of a text could mean changing the basic
orientation of your own cultural horizon. More importantly, Gadamer
has retrieved the pivotal importance of Aristotle’s *phronesis* or prac-
tical wisdom for discerning and deliberating about the truly wise or truly
noble way to act in personal and public affairs.

Finally, Gadamer has shown that Aristotle’s practical wisdom lies
at the heart of all the social sciences, which means not only that the
social sciences, law and business are intrinsically moral but it also means that lawyers, politicians and business managers will only make practically wise decisions if they are virtuous persons. The fact that universities are now adding courses in legal ethics, business ethics, and medical ethics, does not mean that they understand and accept Aristotle’s paradoxical position that you know the just way to act by observing and practicing just ways of acting. Rather, the present rash of ethics courses in law, business, and medicine is the belated realization that the social sciences are not value-free and cannot be modeled on natural science methodologies. This is a negative realization. Positively, what has to happen is that social scientists have to realize that human sciences are not only intrinsically ethical but that they are intrinsically historical and grounded in meaning.

Following Heidegger’s discovery that we live in language, Gadamer has argued that we live, not in an immediate world, but in a world mediated by meaning, and that the meanings are carried in cultural symbols that together form our tradition or what I have called culture. Unlike MacIntyre, Gadamer would insist that the second enlightenment stemming from Hegel must be made central to the social sciences if one is to situate correctly within an historical context the problems that Aristotle and Kierkegaard raised. And it is not only the history of human deeds that stands in need of interpretation but, more importantly, the prior context that motivates our personal and collective decisions, namely our symbolic living in stories, songs, and other cultural modes of communication.

After two thousand years of reflection on the human person as the animal who reasons, contemporary thinkers have begun explicitly to explore the human person as the animal who symbolizes. This does not mean a rejection of the role of reason in our lives, but it does mean that symbols provide a prior and more comprehensive context for understanding why as a human race we have been motivated to do what we have done and how, as people and persons, we may decide to make ourselves to be and to behave in the future.

Despite these major achievements and contributions of Heidegger’s students, both have failed when it came to the problem of integrating mathematics and the natural sciences with the human sciences. Central to the classical curriculum of the past and to the Jesuit schools was the study of mathematics and science, just as central to scholastic
metaphysics was the problem of uniting the human and natural sciences into an integral whole that would provide for a unified and comprehensive curriculum of studies leading students to contemplation of God.

This was the philosophical model that medieval scholasticism inherited from Aristotle. Granting the new context of the first and second Enlightenment of the 18th and 19th centuries we may ask if contemporary Jesuit thinkers can afford to turn their back on contemporary math and science or write it off as Heidegger and his students have done, dismissing it as having fallen under the domination of what the ancients had referred to as a technical art. I would want to argue against Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger that, unless you know mathematics and science from inside the horizon of these disciplines, you cannot judge the truth of these human endeavors.

What Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger have done is to accept the cover story that scientists had inherited from Bacon, Galileo and Descartes that the sciences are practical and utilitarian and intended for the domination of nature. I would argue that the same sort of dialectic that Kierkegaard recognized between what the Danish Christians said they were and what they were actually doing also operates between what scientist say they are doing and what in fact they are doing. As Albert Einstein put it so neatly — Don’t pay any attention to what physicists say they are doing, rather watch them. And a new generation of historians of science has done just that.

During the past twenty five years historians of science have been assembling a surprisingly new account of the history of science. Their account of what scientists did during the past four hundred years is presently being assembled in a brilliant series of monographs from our major university presses. I am thinking of such class studies as The Caloric Theory of Gasses by Robert Fox, The History of Statistics by Stephen Stigler, The Discovery of the Conversation of Energy by Yehuda Elkana, and literally a hundred other titles all published in the last twenty or so years. The picture that is starting to emerge from these distinguished studies may call for a fundamental reassessment of our understanding of the beginnings of modern science. Rather than Newton’s discoveries in gravitational physics, it seems that the emergence of thermodynamics in the nineteenth century marks the profound break with western classical science as it had existed from the time of Aristotle.
Seventeenth and eighteenth-century science had developed a mechanistic and deterministic view of the universe that assumed world-processes were governed by certain necessary laws. On these deterministic assumptions LaPlace presented the scientific world with an atheistic account of the order of the universe. In contrast, the statistical theories of the nineteenth century which grounded the new thermodynamic account of world process have radically altered the mechanistic assumptions of seventeenth-century science. In place of a fixed deterministic universe, statistical mechanics, quantum theory and relativity present us with an infinitely more complex and mysterious universe that not only encourages but invites a new and more comprehensive religious interpretation.

More important, it was not the philosophers or theologians who did away with the former Aristotelian notion of science as a search for universal, certain, necessary laws. It was the scientists doing science who eliminated this classical notion of what science was and replaced it with the new twentieth-century notion of science, thereby setting the context for new ways of thinking about nature, history, person, and God. For Aristotle, the sciences were simply a branch of philosophy, and the world he contemplated was a static, closed system governed by certain necessary causes. Today, science is independent of philosophy, with its own method and terms, and the universe it contemplates is no longer static and closed, but open, dynamic, and incomplete. Aristotle's tendency to contrast the necessary natural sciences with the contingent sciences of human affairs has been set aside and a new synthesis among these disciplines is now possible.

A final source for reorienting the cultural horizon of ourselves, our faculty, and students lies within our own Jesuit legacy. The central source of Jesuit inspiration in education has been the way Jesuits have appropriated the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. At the heart of these exercises is an invitation to enter into a mystical communion with God and our neighbors, both those who love us and those who feel estranged or alienated or even deeply resentful. Jesuits have not always responded to that invitation with the generosity and dedication that it deserves. The same is true of Christians in general. But Jesuits have special resources that could make the formation of a mystical community among colleagues and neighbors more probable than ever before. I would like to mention just one of these many resources — namely the enduring
legacy of the Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan. In the twenty-two volumes of his writings which began to be published last year by the University of Toronto Press, Lonergan has attempted to rethink the Christian tradition in terms of the developments in modern sciences, history and hermeneutics. He has tried to do for contemporary Christendom what Aquinas attempted for medieval civilization. I would like to cite one reference in these writings that pertains to the problem of developing new religious communities among people from different religious traditions.

Reflecting on recent histories of religion, Lonergan has argued that the fundamental characteristics of the world’s higher religions can be understood in terms of the traditional Christian theology of God’s sanctifying grace transforming our world. This means that God’s redeeming love has been and is presently being mediated through all of these religions. Such an argument does not diminish in any way the special mediation of God’s love through Christ but it does invite Jesuits and Christians in general to a more profound reading and implementation of the universality of the gospel message than we have practiced in the past. This means that the same sort of opportunities that are emerging from science for developing a more value-centered humanism also invite us towards a more broadly conceived religious humanism, and we have in the legacy of Bernard Lonergan writings a marvelous resource for responding to this invitation.

Jesuits have a special responsibility for meeting these challenges but Jesuits also understand that it is no longer possible nor desirable to do this without the collaborative effort of their university colleagues. We need to find new ways to work toward the discovery of a new species of a Jesuit university that will reorient its faculty and students from thinking about themselves as sovereigns and to begin believing and acting like servants.

A final word about this new species. New species cannot be planned but they can and do evolve from the creative efforts of a community dedicated in their beliefs to an intelligible but unknown future. To quote Jane Jacobs, author of Death and Life of American Cities: “There is a foundational difference between efficiency and creativity. Efficiency is for planners who wish to organize in more effective and intelligent ways what they already know how to do. Creativity is the related but prior process by which new economic enterprises, new cities and new
universities are discovered.” Only fools would want to organize their efforts inefficiently but it takes a wise woman to discover that creativity is very inefficient, very time consuming, a very messy business that is filled with mistaken ideas, that is unpredictable, and that operates primarily by trial and error. Study the universe and you will soon discover the steady cadences of the seasons, the recurring solar rhythms of day and night, the monthly lunar cycles, the resonating rhythms of the plants and people cycling steadily forward in regular recurring patterns. Yet listen again and look further and deeper and you will discover the vast intergalactic spaces where no living things dwell. Or think of the billions and billions of stellar systems where life as we know it could not exist, think of the endless trial and errors in the history of plant and animal evolution, the breakdowns, the extinct species, the floods, earthquakes, and other apparently random and disordered events. Consider finally our own human family and the disfigured, handicapped people and the very unequal distribution of human talent and intelligence. Our universe and our human family do not seem to be planned very efficiently but they are incredibly creative and if we can find the infinitely creative God who is at work within our lives and who can make all things new we will have the center for a new scientific and religious humanism and for a new species of Jesuit university.