RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE COMMUNIO APPROACH

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The idea to work on religious education and the communio approach began with my own experiences in teaching college theology, my exposure to the local religious education scene through the Formation Institute for Religion Educators and my interest in the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and the communio group that he founded.

Although I had very little exposure to the texts of von Balthasar throughout my M.A. coursework in the Loyola School of Theology, I found his work particularly striking. At the outset, his approach seemed like one that was explicitly Catholic and captured the heart. The emphases on beauty, sanctity and the like, highlighted aspects of the faith that I had not seen developed in more mainstream studies in religious education, especially in the local scene. More importantly, certain characteristics describing how Filipinos naturally relate to God indicate a certain affinity with these highlighted aspects. Among these characteristics are: (1) a deep religiosity and openness to the spiritual dimension;¹ (2) devotion to Mary and the saints;² and (3) our affinity to aesthetics—through the love of music, dance, celebrations;³ and finally, (4) the centrality of gratitude (utang na loob) and interiority (kalooban).⁴ As such, the communio approach promises to open up new ways of communicating the faith in a more
inculturated manner.

A further development in theology likewise points to the value of taking a closer look at the *communio* approach. The current interest in themes such as theological aesthetics, the Catholic imagination, the affective dimension, narrative approaches, myths and storytelling—in various fields of theology such as morals, Scripture, liturgy and systematics—may be understood as indicative of a felt need to complement "informational/logical" approaches with more experiential and contextual methods in theology. It is worth mentioning that, in some cases, it is the very proponents of the so-called "logical" approaches who are calling for the shift in theological method. This movement may be of help to religious educators, specifically in the area of developing a more integrated approach to religious education.

This study is therefore an attempt to contribute to the continuing effort to make religious education in the Philippines more Filipino and more distinctively Catholic by presenting one theological approach—the *communio* approach—as a possible basis for tertiary-level religious education. In its first part, this article explains the need for such an approach through the following steps: First, the general thrusts of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) and the *National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines* (NCDP), with regard to catechesis and religious education, are discussed. Second, various problems that show the "practical" difficulties encountered in integration and inculturation are tackled. Third, distinctive problems in integration and inculturation on the tertiary level are highlighted. At each stage, the need for a specific theological approach to ground religious education is argued.

In the second part, this article describes the *communio* approach—its roots and emphases, its main proponent, David Schindler, and finally, a few contributions that the *communio* approach can make to improve tertiary-level religious education.
Part One: The Need for a More Filipino, Catholic Approach to Religious Education

I. General Thrusts in Religious Education: Integration and Inculturation

A. Background

1. The Renewal of Evangelization in PCP II

In the light of our faith, we have surveyed our pastoral situation in the Philippines, envisioned what we have to be as Church, and how we need to renew ourselves and our ways of evangelizing. The Lord is calling us to announce His gospel more powerfully, to be more effectively a leaven of society, and more authentically point to the Kingdom of God.6

These words aptly describe the task that the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) undertook when PCP II convened in 1991. The council was our national Church’s response to Vatican II’s call for renewal in the context of the changing social and cultural needs of the country.

The above quote gives us an idea of PCP II’s general approach to renewal. The council starts off with the real, felt needs of the country based on a survey of concrete problems, then articulates the envisioned ideal that the Christian faith prompts in us. It is within this dialogue of faith and life-in-context that the council formulates concrete, general steps toward renewal. To borrow the terms of the NCDP, the approach is one that tries to “bridge the gap” between faith and life. Such an approach echoes Paul VI’s thrust for integral evangelization based on the “unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social.”7 Such an approach also reflects inculturation, for it takes as its starting point the Philippine context of “Lights and Shadows,” and calls for greater efforts at inculturation throughout.
2. The Renewal of Catechesis in PCP II

Of primary importance in this renewal of evangelization is the renewal of catechesis, the “first element of a renewed evangelization.” The priority of this specific renewal was reached through the same approach. Posing the question, “How can we live as Christians? As Filipino Catholics?” the council answers, “To know, to love, and to follow Christ in the Church which he founded.” Following this is a description of what has to be done for the renewal to take place: “We have to retell this story to ourselves, that we may more credibly, more authoritatively, tell it to others.” On this broad, general level, the council adopts the themes of integration and inculturation.

More specifically, catechesis is objectively understood in its relation to the other essential dimensions of faith. Thus the priority conferred on it is understood to be a relative one, i.e., qualified by the emphasis on integrating it with the other two “renewals,” namely, renewed social apostolate and renewed worship. The council stresses this point by showing the inter-relatedness of the three renewals.

The necessity of inter-relating the three renewals, however, does not destroy the explicit focus on renewing catechesis. In fact, PCP II points out that this priority goes back to the Synod of Bishops in 1977 and the NCDP in 1982. Papal documents, such as Catechesi Tradendae of John Paul II and Evangelii Nuntiandi of Paul VI, likewise assert this priority. What PCP II explicitly calls attention to is the basis for asserting such a priority, that is, catechesis’ primary and essential role in renewing all aspects of the faith.

As of late, a good number of local official documents on catechesis have been published, both exemplifying and pushing for inculturation and integration. In 1985 came the NCDP, our own adaptation of the General Catechetical Directory. This was followed by the publication of the Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines which, as discussed previously, gave first priority to catechesis. In 1994 came the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) and in 1997, our own Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC). In 1998 came A Companion to the CFC and the Summary of the
CFC. The most recent milestone was the publication of the Filipino translation of the CFC in 2000, called *Katesismo para sa mga Pilipinong Katoliko* (KPK). Finally, a revised NCDP is currently on the way, following the new *General Directory for Catechesis*.

The abundance of such materials is an excellent sign that work is being done to improve religious education/catechesis specifically in the thrusts of integration and inculturation. These efforts notwithstanding, there seems to be a lack of systematic work on the theory of religious education in the Philippines today. Indicative of this problem is the lack of material, i.e., scholarly work, journal articles, etc., on the deeper problems underlying the immediate and observable concerns in religious education. In order to introduce the general area, the next part of this chapter will give a brief sketch of the meaning of these thrusts in light of the general problems to which the thrusts respond, as well as general problems in their implementation.

**B. General Exposition**

1. **Integration**

Integration is a key principle that goes through the official documents on religious education/catechesis previously listed. It first came up in the NCDP as a means to address the general difficulty in responding to the directives for an “organic and systematic catechetical teaching” that John Paul II calls for. *Systematic* here means, first, programmed for a definite goal; second, focused on the essentials of the faith which need to be communicated in current, attractive and captivating terms, while being sufficiently complete. Third, it means that catechesis must present an integral Christian initiation, open to all the other factors of Christian life. The NCDP, thus, specifies that the general problem in catechesis and religious education is on the level of implementation, not in the enthusiasm or desire of those involved.

Generally speaking, *integral* religious education means a holistic instruction in the faith. It is not a new gimmick or fad; rather, it is based on the reality that faith, being an integral whole, requires an
instruction that corresponds to its structure and reality. As such, it
tries to communicate loving knowledge of the faith as opposed to a
rationalistic knowing.

The notion of integration has many applications in different lev-
els. There is the main integration called *life integration* that focuses on
bringing together the Christian message and daily life. The types of
integration, which are specific means for doing life integration, are:
*structural integration* focusing on relating the three constitutive dimen-
sions of Christian Faith—doctrine, moral, and worship; *integration
within each faith dimension; source integration* which involves relating Scripture,
Church teaching and human experience; *program integration* which
emphasizes relating content, method, within a catechetical or reli-
gious education program; *subjective integration* which deals with integra-
tion within the believer; and *environmental or contextual integration,
*i.e.*, inculturation. The point of distinguishing these aspects is to give
a clearer understanding of integration so as to clarify how it can be
more effectively attained.¹⁷

2. **INCULTURATION**

At the outset, it is important to note that inculturation is neces-
sarily involved in integrating catechesis and religious education. Aside
from the fact that catechesis and religious education always occur in
the context of a culture, an integral approach—*i.e.*, one that stresses
the wholeness of the gospel message—necessarily implies
inculturation. To say that faith and life form a whole, in which nei-
ther one is complete without the other, implies the distinctiveness
and inseparability of both faith and culture. *Redemptoris Missio*
describes the process of inculturation as the "intimate transformation
of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity
and the insertion of Christianity in various human cultures."¹⁸ Having
presumed the distinction between faith and culture, the defini-
tion then explicitates the unity. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, likewise, takes
this approach.¹⁹ In addition, a more recent local document, the "Pas-
toral Exhortation on Philippine Culture,"²⁰ discusses inculturation
as a central aspect of building up the local Church and, as such, is
more fully defined as the following:
Inculturation is a process by which an ecclesial community lives its Christian faith and experience within a given cultural context, in such a way that these not only find their expression in elements of local culture, but also become a force that animates, reshapes and profoundly renews that culture so as to create new patterns of communion and communication within that culture and beyond it.  

PCP II responded specifically to the deficiencies of the faith of the Filipinos listed in the position paper “Religious Concerns” prepared for the council. The deficiencies are as follows:

...ignorance of the doctrines of the faith, especially highlighted by the fundamentalist challenge; insufficiently personal and social, due to lack of adequate catechesis for the great majority of the faithful; not sufficiently missionary, as seen in the tendency to relegate “mission” to a select few. These deficiencies are then ultimately traced to the lack of inculturation of the faith.

Consequently, PCP II called for greater formation on inculturation, and inculturation in all aspects of faith.

The processes of integration and inculturation are inextricably linked since both have to do with the relationship between culture and faith. The aforementioned documents are consistent in affirming that these processes involve a continuously deepening, interior knowledge of the culture and the faith. The NCDP reiterates that the process of inculturation

...involves more than simply “clothing” the message in indigenous symbols, rites and forms. More fundamentally, it is a deeper insight and understanding of Christ Jesus which becomes part of the Filipino’s soul, whereby the faith becomes part of the Filipino’s self-becoming.

As such, the process involves the whole people of God, not just some “experts,” and will be, expectedly, effected more by the “real demands and needs of Catholic Filipinos than by carefully worked-out theories of liturgists, catechists, and theologians.” This point needs emphasis especially considering the

...tendency to adopt uncritically, many of the untried theories im-
ported from other lands, notwithstanding the gap between where Filipino Catholics really are in their faith and the new theories proposed.  

This “tendency” comes up in recent problems of Philippine religious education.

II. PROBLEMS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The problems in integration and inculturation are encountered on many levels. The following section shows that the difficulties have been seen in: (1) recent problems in Philippine religious education; and (2) PCP II’s views on religious education and the goal of Catholic education.

A. Recent Problems

1. VALUES EDUCATION/MORAL RECOVERY PROGRAM

Two developments in the late 1980s bring to light the need for greater efforts at integration and inculturation. These are the launch of the “Values Education Program” and the report submitted to the Senate’s Committee on Education, Arts, and Culture, entitled “A Moral Recovery Program: Building a People—Building A Nation.” These were understood to be the education sector’s contribution toward the efforts of national transformation, following the new mandate of the 1987 Constitution.

Both are based on a markedly secularist approach to morality, “characterized by the distinctive methodology proper to the behavioral and social sciences.” That such an approach was taken is understandable considering that public schools were involved in the program. Nonetheless, such an approach meets criticism from a religious education perspective because such a view pre-empt the articulation of the essential and objective faith dimension of moral education. This is not to undermine the specific value of the social science approach. Rather, the point is, educators involved in the development of such programs need to recognize that this social science approach to morality does not present all dimensions of reality.
Such a reduction inevitably leaves out what may be the critical faith element that is necessary and valuable in itself and in the efforts at integration and inculturation. Put another way, in the attempts to show the wholeness of moral life (integration) and to educate within the local culture (inculturation), educators cannot simply set aside a primary cultural trait of Filipinos, i.e., being *maka-diyo* or God-centered.

2. **Theology vs. Religious Studies**

   The debate regarding the move from theology to religious studies in some Philippine Catholic colleges and universities is of a piece with the preceding discussion. The main difference between the two courses/programs is clearly that of method, the so-called “neutral” standpoint in religious studies and the presumption of faith on the part of theology. Although both are legitimate fields of study in the context of a Catholic university, religious studies alone, i.e., a “value-free,” disinterested study of religion, is seen as inadequate in: (1) the pursuit of the truth of the human being’s religiosity; and (2) the essential place of theology in defining a Catholic university. A third factor from our specific cultural context may be added to the position: (3) the religious worldview and values of the Filipino. In this particular issue, we must consider the truth that Christian knowledge is a matter of involvement, i.e., loving knowledge, and that the Philippine context lends itself to a more Catholic—as opposed to secularist—approach to religious education.

3. **Miscellaneous Problems and Abuses**

   Another danger related to the faith-and-culture relationship is the tendency to overemphasize the particular culture or experience so as to compromise the universal truth of the gospel. This point is especially significant in these times when doubt is cast on reason’s ability to get to truth, along with the general dislike of absolute statements. In this regard, what has to be remembered is that inculturation is ultimately, objectively based on the Incarnation. Although not exactly a “practical” guideline, such an assertion shows the balance that may set aright the tendency to overstress the concrete, particular aspects of revealed truth.
From the foregoing discussion, the general thrusts of integration and inculturation in religious education are seen to be grounded subjectively, in real needs and problems of the country; and objectively, in the reality that religious education communicates.

B. PCP II’s Approach to Religious Education and Catholic Identity

1. Exposition

PCP II presents its approach to religious education within the context of the Catholic school. The council first commends Catholic schools for their contribution to the total well-being of the country. Then it points out the distinct advantages of Catholic schools relative to non-sectarian schools. However, the “real” assessment is done when the council takes a look at the graduates of Catholic education in the country who, “despite the distinct advantages of their schooling, do not seem to have sufficiently assimilated Christian values.” It then goes on to examine the deficiencies of Catholic schools and the causes for these deficiencies. Finally, it enumerates how Catholic schools need to be reformed.32

While the council recognizes the secular contribution of the Catholic school, it asserts that the institution’s primary goal is evangelization33 and, consequently, evaluates schools according to that measure. The concomitant claim is thus, to “make religious education the core subject of the curriculum, with the function of binding together all disciplines, while giving due respect to autonomy.”34 Other reforms called for to make schools more effective means of evangelization are the following:

(1) spiritual formation of the school’s employees; (2) exposure to the poor of administrators, faculty, students, staff, etc.; (3) consistency of school policies with its vision-mission; and finally, (4) cooperation with the parents and families in the task of evangelization.35

Such a view of both the Catholic school and religious education has come under a lot of criticism, as well as a lot of support.
2. A CRITIQUE OF PCP II’S VIEW

The Catholic identity of a school is a topic to which the Church has paid much attention. The many Church documents that deal with this topic have been consistent in positing that a Catholic school is, first and foremost, a school with the primary goal of education. A significant document entitled “Catholic Schools” (1977) begins to argue this point with the following quote:

To understand fully the specific mission of the Catholic school, it is essential to keep in mind the basic concept of what a school is; that which does not reproduce the features of a school cannot be a Catholic school.36

The document then moves on to an examination of the general purpose of a school by first defining what a school is, i.e., a school is “a place of integral formation by means of a systematic and critical assimilation of culture.”37 It is only after this step that a school’s Catholic identity is discussed.

According to the document, the distinctive ground for a Catholic school’s educational enterprise is to be found in Christ. By this, the document means that a Catholic school’s task of “cultivating human values in their own legitimate right in accordance with [a school’s] own particular mission... has its origin in the figure of Christ,”38 in whom “all human values find their fulfillment and unity.”39 That the Catholic school’s goal is education, modified by the Catholic faith, is put succinctly in the following quote:

If like every other school, the Catholic school has as its aim the critical communication of human culture and the total formation of the individual, it works towards this goal guided by its Christian vision of reality.40

This foundation on Christ and the Christian vision of reality are the premises for a Catholic school’s distinctive task, that of integration between faith and culture. This is in view of leading the students to a more personal integration of faith and life.

Any attempt at integration between faith and culture must take into consideration the value of knowledge and culture as such. The
document strongly states, “it would be wrong to consider subjects as mere adjuncts to faith.”41 Other documents corroborate this statement. The text entitled “The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School” (1988) likewise says that a distinguishing characteristic of a Catholic school is that it “interprets and gives order to human culture in the light of faith.”42 According to the text, this task “cannot mean a lack of respect for the autonomy of the different academic disciplines... nor can it mean that these disciplines are to be seen as merely subservient to faith.”43 The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences’ “Theses on Inculturation”44 likewise asserts culture’s legitimate autonomy and proper identity as grounded in creation and should not be viewed as a means to something else.45

*Ex Corde Ecclesiae* approaches the Catholic identity of a Catholic university similarly, i.e., by speaking of the institution first as a university, then as Catholic. As a university, this institution is an “academic community which, in a rigorous and critical fashion, assists in the protection and advancement of human dignity... through research, teaching, and various services”46 whose basic mission is a “continuous quest for truth.”47 The document then gives four characteristics of Catholic universities, namely:

(1) a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such; (2) a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research; (3) fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church; (4) an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life.48

The same document brings up the important role of theology which Catholic university undertakes “in the search for a synthesis of knowledge as well as in the dialogue between faith and reason.”49 Theology is said to contribute to the other disciplines, just as other disciplines contribute to theology.

It appears then that “Catholic Schools” and other related documents differ from PCP II on the basic understanding of what the
Catholic school is. Hence, what is a school’s primary goal and, consequently, its relation to evangelization? Ultimately, PCP II’s position undermines a proper way of relating faith and culture.

The problem in PCP II’s position seems to be the confusion of a school’s primary goal with its distinctive characteristic. A Catholic school does contribute to evangelization, precisely in its being a Catholic institution; however, this does not make evangelization its primary goal. When a school’s primary goal is reduced to evangelization, culture is absorbed by faith. Proper inculturation and integration is not possible with the inadvertent denial of the reality of culture.

A further difficulty with this position is that unless there is a clear idea of what a school should be doing, efforts at improvement will be misdirected. In other words, the question should not be “How can we get Catholic schools to evangelize more?” but, more fundamentally, “What should a Catholic school be doing?”

Of a piece with this problem is PCP II’s appraisal of religious education, i.e., the council considers “religious education as the core subject of curriculum.” Such a view has been criticized in the past because of its “lack of foundational and objective basis.” In simpler terms, this means, objectively, that religious education is in fact one subject among many, equal to the other disciplines, affected by other disciplines just as much as it affects others.

There are reasons for treating religious education as one subject among many. It is difficult to believe that any single course can provide the badly-needed “worldview.” Second, what could this assertion (religious education as the core subject of curriculum) mean in practice? It comes dangerously close to a fideistic or integralist position that compromises the legitimate autonomy of other disciplines, producing the exact opposite of what various Church documents affirm.

On a positive note, PCP II’s view of the role of religious education within and the goal of a Catholic school, can be seen as indicative of a positive desire on the part of the local Church hierarchy and Catholic educators to express more explicitly the role of Catho-
lic faith in education. This is, indeed, consonant with the strong sense of religiosity of Filipinos acknowledged earlier.

C. Further Concerns

The foregoing problems were tackled precisely as difficulties in integration and inculturation. They are problems that compromise the unity-and-distinction of faith and life because, in each case, either faith or life are absorbed by the other. The values education debate and the push for religious studies both show the absorption of faith into life, while the PCP II formulations show faith absorbing culture.

These problems give us insight into inculturation, as well, because they reveal the Filipinos’ openness to and desire for being more explicitly Catholic. As such, an adequate response to these problems needs to take into consideration the need for a more Filipino, thus overtly Catholic way of dealing with the distinctions and relationships between faith and reason, faith and culture, grace and nature, etc. In other words, there is need for a theological and philosophical approach which is more attuned to this element of Filipino culture.32

Another concern that religious educators ought to realize is the presence of an implicit philosophy and theology that underlies the definitions and our practice of religious education. In the local scene, Fr. Joseph L. Roche, S.J., calls for more reflection on the implications of the pope’s recent encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*.33 The need for a sound appreciation of the role of reason in the catechists’ ministry is shown in the constant temptation to fall into either rationalism or fideism, as the following quote illustrates:

On the one hand, PCP II pointed to certain fideist tendencies when it complained that “our faith is centered on rites of popular piety, not on the Word of God, doctrines... (and that) the vast majority of our people greatly lack knowledge of, and formation in their faith.” (PCP II no.14) On the other hand, it also recognized a tendency toward rationalism in some Catholic schools in which religion is “relegated as simply one of the many courses,” “while other courses may even promote values contradictory to the Catholic vision.”34
Other specific examples were given, such as the apparent lack of a proper understanding of doctrine as saving truths, the misconception of “mystery,” both of which reveal fideism; and the use of “the experiential approach” pushed to the extreme, expressing rationalism.55

The same author, in a later article, brings up a similar point, namely, the need for becoming aware of the undeniable place of an implicit philosophy in communicating the faith, especially in this new age of social science. Yet he indicates that in the Philippines, “the nagging question of whether any ‘metaphysics’ is necessary remains.”56

It may also be helpful to mention two notions that could clarify the idea of an implied philosophy and theology in education. One is Marcellin Flynn’s idea of a “hidden curriculum” and another is the point C.S. Lewis makes in his essay, The Abolition of Man.57 Albeit in different contexts, both bring to the fore the notion of an implied philosophy that comes with the logic of lessons and examples, the school atmosphere, etc. Characteristic of Flynn’s “hidden curriculum” is that it is assimilated, not deliberately taught. Furthermore, precisely because of the “hiddenness,” the tendency is for students to take what is learned through the “hidden curriculum” as reality, the way things are, as opposed to one among many possibilities.58 As for C.S. Lewis, his practical example of the grammar teachers who, in an attempt to teach grammar, i.e., what the statement “this is sublime” meant, inadvertently taught the young students relativism by reducing the statement’s meaning to “I have sublime feelings.”59 The point here is that what is taught and done in a school connotes and is based on some philosophy of education, whether the school recognizes it or not. The problems in Philippine Catholic education brought up in this thesis seem to point to a lack of appreciation of this fact.

This idea comes up in a stronger, more focused way in Schindler’s work, when he asserts that there is no such thing as a purely formal method with no substantive content, which is his main argument against the claim of neutrality in American liberal institutions. In other words, Schindler claims there is always an implied (metaphysical/theological) content in any discipline’s method, whether it is recognized or not.60
In summary then, this section of the article has pointed out a necessary, and seemingly neglected, step in the process of understanding, if not resolving, many problems in religious education. The various issues tackled seem to be indicative of the deeper problem in religious education, the need for making explicit a philosophy and theology which can more effectively ground religious education in the Philippines today. Perhaps the call for renewal of catechesis of PCP II, the thrust toward greater efforts at integration and inculturation, can be pursued more effectively by recognizing the theological underpinnings of the problems encountered in religious education.

After this crucial element is recognized, we may then ask which particular theological/philosophical approach can be an appropriate and effective basis for religious education, that is, whether a scholastic approach, or a more monastic or patristic logic such as that informing the *communio* approach, or any other logic for that matter, is more suited to the Philippine context.

### III. Problems on the Tertiary Level

The tertiary level poses distinctive problems in integration and inculturation. While the foregoing section tackled individual problems of religious education in the country, this section describes the context of tertiary-level religious education and shows what new problems specific to the tertiary level emerge. What is immediately observable on the tertiary level is the presence of a confluence of factors, all modifying the efforts at integration and inculturation. These factors are as follows: (1) the evident “separation” among academic disciplines; and (2) the psychological/faith stage and concerns of the students. Finally, some conclusions on the needs of tertiary-level religious education will be drawn based on these factors.

#### A. Religious Education’s Dialogue with Other Disciplines

The issue of how to understand the relationship between religious education and other academic disciplines within a Catholic school is most evident in the context of a Catholic university. This is
due to the fact that unlike the grade school or high school levels, it is on the college or university level that individual departments, schools or colleges, are separate from, and relatively independent of, one another. That universities are involved with higher and more specialized learning requires that departments in their individual fields of study be autonomous of the others. While this is true, the university, precisely as a wisdom community demands that such specialized knowledge be pooled together.\(^{61}\) Hence, the need to articulate, in a clearer manner, the relationship between faith and reason, and faith and culture, becomes more pressing.

Unlike the integralist tendencies for which PCP II’s views were criticized, on the college level, the danger seems more to be the marginalization of religious education. That theology has been in some way marginalized can be historically seen in the continuous decrease in the required number of units in theology in Catholic colleges here and abroad.\(^{62}\) To use a more down-to-earth example, an ordinary college student pursuing a degree in business would naturally take more business courses than theology courses. It would be perfectly understandable then, if in this student’s thinking, theology would seem peripheral, or of minimal value.

### B. The Faith of Students

In combination with the factors discussed above, one has to consider the critical faith, psychological, moral, emotional stages of college-age students. Various Church documents on Catholic education and catechesis recognize their stage as one characterized by less dependence on their families and the increasing desire for individual autonomy\(^{63}\) which is due to the search for their own identity and role in society.\(^{64}\) As such, they experience certain conflicts between the values handed on to them and the values they now seek. Adolescents, therefore, form groups and associations with others of common interests and values.\(^{65}\)

Religious educators affirm these descriptions. Kevin Nichols says that it is natural that adolescents react against the things of childhood and this includes faith. They begin to be more critical, “seeing
that reality could be differently organized and interpreted.”  

At the same time, at this stage, “the social order begins to influence them more forcefully: the attitudes and customs of the teenage world, and also social and political questions. The religious world may begin to seem unimportant, unreal or dull.”  

Marcellin Flynn calls this stage of faith a “searching faith.”  

Adolescents and young adults typically undergo a process of putting to question the faith they accepted from their parents. It is typical for them to temporarily abandon their childhood forms of faith.

Flynn reminds religious educators that this stage is valuable, and sometimes necessary, for a more mature faith to develop. This stage must, therefore, be acknowledged and addressed in Catholic schools’ courses and programs. For example, on the one hand, the feeling among many students at this stage that raising questions makes them “bad Catholics” has to be corrected. In response to this, the idea that questioning within the faith is a positive activity needs to be stressed. This “questioning” within the faith has to be distinguished from “doubting/losing faith.”  

In line with this, Nichols emphasizes that respect for the students’ freedom and growing autonomy is especially important during these times.

C. Specific Needs

In light of the foregoing discussions on the place of religious education within a university and the students’ stage of faith, the need for apologetics clearly emerges. On one hand, there is nothing new about this concern, for it is an imperative of Christian faith, not only of tertiary-level religious education, that one give an account of why one believes. Nevertheless, this concern is especially pronounced in the tertiary level because questions regarding the relationships between faith and culture, reason, and freedom, are inevitably raised, whether on the level of the individual student or of the Catholic university as an institution. The implication, then, is to include this particular thrust in both the content and method of tertiary-level education.

Having identified this specific need, the next question that has
to be asked is exactly how to address this need. This study, first of all, presumes that solid articulations of the relationships between faith and culture, reason, and freedom, are best found within a theological approach. As such, I propose to address the said need by looking at one theological approach—the \textit{communio} approach, as a possible basis for a response to the problems articulated in this chapter.

\textbf{Part Two: The \textit{Communio} Approach}

The ground has now been set for tackling the theological approach that this study proposes to be used as a basis to respond to the problems discussed in Part One. Hence, we begin with a brief look at the roots of the \textit{communio} approach in \textit{ressourcement} theology and Vatican II ecclesiology. Then, the \textit{communio} approach's distinctive emphases are introduced through a general discussion of Hans Urs von Balthasar's work. Then we focus on David Schindler and his general "project," particularly his development of the principles of the \textit{communio} approach in light of how to approach the "Catholicity" of Catholic education. At each stage, the immediate connections between religious education concerns and the \textit{communio} approach will be indicated.

\textbf{I. Roots of the \textit{Communio} Approach}

\textbf{A. Ressourcement Theology}

\textit{Ressourcement}—literally, "return to the sources"—was a broad intellectual and spiritual movement in the 1930s to 1950s in the European Catholic community. Although it involved the Belgian and German theologians, the key figures here were the Jesuits at Fouvrière and the Dominicans at le Saulchoir—de Lubac, Danielou, Congar, Chenu, as well as Bouyer, and von Balthasar.

At that time, they did not think of themselves as belonging to a formal "school"; however, they were united in upholding that the prerequisite for \textit{aggiornamento} in the Church was \textit{ressourcement}. They agreed that for theology to address the present situation, i.e., the
widespread secularism of the time, there was need to recover the Church's past. *Ressourcement* theology, therefore, involved "a return to the Church's two-thousand year-old tradition, for the purpose of drawing out the meaning and significance of the sources for the critical questions of our time."72

Special mention must be given to the movement's rediscovery of the works of the Church Fathers with their emphasis on spirituality. Scholastic and neo-scholastic theology had long abandoned and dominated Patristic theology.

The *communio* approach, through von Balthasar's work, is informed by the spirit of this earlier movement. This is to be seen in its thrust toward becoming more explicitly Catholic in our conceptions of the world—in its metaphysics, anthropology, economics, politics, education, etc. The use of categories—such as sanctity, the Marian *fiat* and contemplation—in developing these areas is one obvious example of the influence of the *ressourcement* movement.

**B. Vatican II**

In 1992, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) stated that "the concept of communion (*koinonia*) which appears with a certain prominence in the texts of the Second Vatican Council is very suitable for expressing the core of the mystery of the Church and can certainly be key for the renewal of Catholic ecclesiology."73 In his well-known book, *Models of the Church*, Dulles likewise asserts that the principal image used by *Lumen Gentium* is that of the Church as People of God, one whose emphasis, like the image of Body of Christ, is communion. Dulles also states that People of God is still the dominant model for many Roman Catholics who "consider themselves progressives and invoke the teaching of Vatican II as their authority."74

Some key notions of the Church as *communio* may be put forth here. In its opening paragraph, *Lumen Gentium* states that the Church is "in the nature of a sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and unity among all men."75 Hence, we see what CDF's Letter to the Bishops referred to as the two inseparable
aspects of the Church as *communio*: the vertical aspect, i.e., communion with God; and the horizontal aspect, i.e., communion with one another in Christ. Schindler broadens our understanding of these two aspects by providing a metaphysical/theological basis, i.e., that of von Balthasar, how institutions can more closely “mirror” and foster communion with God and among people.

It is also important to mention that the Church is grounded in the unique, originating *communio* that is the Trinity. As such, the Church community on earth is directed toward eschatological fulfillment in the heavenly Church.

More could be said about *communio* ecclesiology as such but Schindler himself does not spend time on its theory or definitions. He is not concerned with fundamental ecclesiology; rather, he focuses on developing the worldly implications that such an ecclesiology puts forth. In light of von Balthasar and with the *communio* group, Schindler’s concern is to show the extent to which *communio* ecclesiology brings with it a new understanding of the world as *imago Dei*. Such an understanding is said to be one that is able to provide a basis for interpreting and addressing the cultural problems of the Anglo-American context which, at root, are claimed to be theological and metaphysical.

C. *Communio* and Hans Urs von Balthasar

1. The Journal

The *Communio: International Catholic Review* is an international quarterly publication that first came out in Germany, January 1972, as the *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift: Communio*. The idea to publish this journal came from some members of the Papal Theological Commission, under the leadership of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger, Karl Lehmann and Henri de Lubac, as a response to the “serious tension, polarization, division even in the Catholic Church.” They all agreed that there was a felt need to communicate a sense of the communion, or fellowship in John’s terms (1 Jn 1:3), which is the inner life of the Catholic Church.
Hence, they envisioned the journal to be one that would "both come to grips with the current theological confusion and work on a supra-national level to advance true community in the Catholic Church."\textsuperscript{77} Such an aim involved "approaching topics of concern to Catholics from two sides—from a reflective depth and from the aspect of koinonia which makes up the life-bonds of the Church."\textsuperscript{78} In general terms, the journal’s aim is to create \textit{communio}, not merely talk about it.

Upon the journal’s founding, there was talk of it being anti-\textit{Concilium}, a journal associated with Rahner and his approach. Compared to \textit{Concilium}, \textit{Communio} is considered to be relatively "more European in its focus, more suspicious of political theologies, more interested in spirituality and in the world of the imagination and the arts."\textsuperscript{79} More will be said about this in the next section; nevertheless, the comparison is useful to give an idea of the general content and method of the journal.

Aside from these general characteristics, \textit{Communio} was envisioned as a journal of Christian culture, by including themes that were not explicitly on revelation, and studies that illustrated some article of the Creed by way of a secular reflection. Such a method presupposes that one and the same reflection is capable of joining together, without confusion or separation, theology and philosophy.\textsuperscript{80} A brief look at the work of von Balthasar will give us some idea of how this method works.

2. \textit{Von Balthasar and Rahner}

In “A Résumé of My Thought,”\textsuperscript{81} published shortly before he died, von Balthasar summed up his work in the following quote:

I have thus tried to construct a philosophy and theology starting from an analogy not of abstract Being, but of Being as it is encountered concretely in its attributes.... And as the transcendental run through all being, they must be interior to each other: that which is truly true is also truly good and beautiful and one. A being \textit{appears}, it has an epiphany; in that it is beautiful and makes us marvel. In appearing it \textit{gives} itself, it delivers itself to us: it is good. And in
giving itself up, it speaks itself, it unveils itself: it is true (in itself, but in the other to which it reveals itself).”

Such a statement, according to Scola, shows the deepest movement of Balthasar’s theology, thereby indicating the logic of his thought. Here lies the distinctiveness and novelty of his work. How then is such a thesis developed? What follows is a beginner’s attempt to map out the path of Balthasar’s thought.

A comparison was made earlier between the two journals Concilium and Communio. Underneath the immediately observable differences lie the two different philosophical/theological approaches of Rahner and von Balthasar. In the above quote, von Balthasar clearly distinguishes between starting with an analogy of abstract Being versus Being concretely encountered in its attributes. Such is von Balthasar’s basic assessment of the root difference between their methods. Von Balthasar thereby proposes a different starting point—at least in terms of the subject—that of participation in Being rather than Rahner’s preapprehension of limitlessness. He thinks that an approach that begins with the potential orientation of Being toward concrete form allows us to give more emphasis to positive capacity, or at least to make a clearer distinction between negative infinitude and positive capacity. That this approach is indeed more concrete and positive can be seen in his metaphysical paradigm, that of the mother’s smile.

The infant is brought to consciousness of himself only by love, by the smile of his mother. In that encounter the horizon of all unlimited being opens itself for him, revealing four things to him: (1) that he is one in love with the mother, even in being other than his mother, therefore all being is one; (2) that that love is good, therefore all being is good; (3) that that love is true, therefore all being is true; and (4) that that love evokes joy, therefore all being is beautiful.

Scola restates the above in concise terms: the child perceiving the smile on its mother’s face learns that “being (the whole of it) is self-communicating love, in this self-communication speaks and reveals itself.”
From these texts, von Balthasar's starting point is evident: "a being appears... gives itself... speaks." Such is the basis for his great Trilogy, comprised of the Aesthetics, Dramatic and Logic. He begins with the Aesthetic because for him it is beauty, or better, Glory, that is the "true breach through which being penetrates into man." It is "the primary and central 'face' of serious reality as it graciously discloses itself." Here we may find a third characteristic mark of his approach, that of an emphasis on objectivity as opposed to subjectivity.

This objectivity comes with the notion of Gestalt, or form:

...an inside and outside inseparably joined, a concrete dynamic figure which pervades every single being by unifying it in all its parts, and which opens it to that Being which informs it and renders it capable of giving off in turn, its own splendor.

It is important to note that splendor breaks forth from the form itself, not from the subject's perception of it. Waldstein offers a demonstration of what this involves:

When another being discloses itself to me, I become aware of an interior space which expresses itself in an outward form (Gestalt). From a mysterious depth upon which I cannot close my grasp, the other comes to appear. The paradigmatic case of such depth is the free self-revelation of persons as an aspect of freely-given love....

As such, according to von Balthasar, the ultimate "form" is the triune God, whose glory is to be seen most fully in Christ. God appears—He appeared to Abraham, Moses, and to Isaiah, and definitively in Christ. The theological questions that pose themselves, therefore, have to do with how we distinguish and perceive this appearance of glory. To continue, this glory is not merely an object to be looked at, rather, it seizes us to become its co-workers. This glory after all is God's action in this world in which we are called to participate and understand through action, as well. Hence, he follows the Aesthetic with the Dramatic. Here he deals with the question, "How does the absolute liberty of God in Jesus Christ confront the relative but true liberty of man?" He asks this because, from one point of view, it is the encounter of the two freedoms that consti-
tutes salvation history. Finally, he concludes with the Logic, which deals with the questions of how God can make himself understood to the human being, and how the limited human being can make sense of the Word of God.

Such is von Balthasar’s alternative to the transcendental approach which he places within the whole tradition of European mainstream philosophy that “negates the sense of belonging in a world by its obsession with subjectivity and the self-constitution of the subject.” His emphases on the concrete (attributes of being, via analogy), the positive (participation, dialogue) and the objective (Gestalt), make for a philosophy and theology quite opposite of what was considered mainstream in Europe at the time. It is important to note that von Balthasar’s objections are not so much addressed to one particular theologian as to this broader approach. Likewise, Schindler, working from von Balthasar’s thought, is against traces of this system found in what he calls “North American liberalism.”

To continue, von Balthasar turns his attention to the “cost” of the transcendental approach. Although abstraction was able to establish “conditions of possibility” for faith, what was lost was a sense of gift and of wonder, i.e., contemplative receptivity in the face of the world’s richness. In other words, it is a loss of the ability to perceive the mysteriousness of being. This is the very attitude that predisposes one to perceive God. His reason for developing such an approach, among others, is mainly a pastoral one, that is, to respond to the need to once again teach today’s positivist/atheist person “to see.” The Christian, for von Balthasar, “remains the guardian of metaphysical wonder which is the point of origin for philosophy and indeed for authentic human existence.” This is so because of the centrality of the notion of gift/gratuitousness in Christianity to which today’s positivist/atheist is blind. By gift we mean “gift as first spoken by the trinitarian God in Jesus Christ and received into creation through Mary and the Church by means of the Holy Spirit.” The form of his theology, can be summarized in the “Christic-Marian-ecclesial fiat” which Schindler uses as a paradigm for his thought as well.
In a more down-to-earth discussion, Robert Barron describes the difference between Rahner and von Balthasar in terms of how both theologians ground knowledge of God, i.e., in subjective consciousness (Rahner), and contemplation of the form of Jesus (von Balthasar). The alleged tendency of the transcendental approach is "to restrict the form, sequestering it in the confines of the generic human experiences of openness to the Mystery."\(^\text{95}\) Barron further describes the kind of Catholicism depicted by this approach as one that lacks color. His formation as a young Catholic in the 1960s and 1970s was supposedly dominated by this kind of theology. The abuse that theologians fell into was making Catholic theology "as non-threatening, accessible, and culturally appealing as possible."\(^\text{96}\) The tendency was thus the downplaying of the supernatural.

As such, he criticizes the approach for not adequately engaging the heart and imagination; and hence, for not adequately inspiring "real assent."\(^\text{97}\)

In response to this article, Dennis Doyle argues the validity of the transcendental approach and its emphasis on "generic" human experience. He says that in his own life, "there was a way in which generic 'religiousness' preceded commitment to Christ."\(^\text{98}\) There was a need for a pre-evangelization before he became ready for Catholicism. Doyle further criticizes Barron's way of classifying various theologians and philosophers and ends by saying that Catholicism requires different theological approaches. His overarching assertion is that "the need to understand the faith in itself and the need to find categories by which one can understand one's faith in relation to the modern world are mutually interdependent tasks."\(^\text{99}\) To accomplish these tasks, Catholics need to draw from both Rahner and von Balthasar, recognizing the values and limitations of both theological approaches.\(^\text{100}\)

Recognizing the disparity, value and limitations of both von Balthasar's and Rahner's approaches, I have nonetheless chosen to pursue von Balthasar's approach, given that the transcendental approach has dominated much of college theology in the Ateneo de Manila University in the past decades. In light of Barron's call for a
more explicitly Catholic theological approach, as well as Doyle’s call for drawing from different theologies, the following sections trace some implications of von Balthasar’s theological approach as Schindler presents them in his *communio* ecclesiology.

II. SCHINDLER AND THE COMMUNIO APPROACH

A. Overview/Introduction and Criticisms

David Schindler is currently a professor of Fundamental Theology at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Washington, D.C., and is editor of the English edition of the journal *Communio*. His book *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation*, published in 1996, contains his key writings, most of which are articles previously published in *Communio*.

Komonchak considers Schindler to be “a sharp critic of efforts to argue for a fundamental compatibility between the philosophy that underlies the American political and economic experiment and the Catholic vision of things.” In this book Schindler criticizes what according to him are two main presumptions or two errors that flow from the “unintended logic” underlying Anglo-American liberalism. These are: (1) the claim of theological-philosophical neutrality in its political, economic, and educational institutions; and (2) the primacy of human agency or “construction” in the individual self, overemphasizing the individual self and its doing and making. In response to both of these presumptions, Schindler shows that: (1) the claim to neutrality is simply false, as the claim itself already brings with it certain substantive assumptions; and (2) emphasis should be put on being and receptivity, to correct overemphasis on human agency or doing. He makes these two criticisms in light of his attempt to develop an approach, based on the theology of von Balthasar and Vatican II, toward understanding the world and the Church’s mission to the world.

Schindler’s opponents describe his work more strongly, i.e., considering it as “an attack against the very possibility of constructing a
‘religiously informed public philosophy for the American experiment in ordered liberty.’ In other words, they consider his effort as contrary to what he himself sees he is doing. Another critic accuses him of toying with monism, and Komonchak remarks on the lack of mention of the Holy Spirit in his ecclesiology, as well as on his method of argumentation. Nonetheless, his explicitly Catholic approach and worldview, along with his corresponding emphasis on gift and receptivity, though immediately applied to the U.S. situation, are worth studying in relation to the Philippine context.

B. The Communio Approach and Catholic Education

Several articles in the Communio journal tackle the issue of Catholic education. Some common thrusts that go through these texts are the emphases on a more intrinsic view of the relationship between Catholic faith and education. Schindler pushes this thrust quite far by proposing that a rethinking of the implied openness or closure to revelation of all academic disciplines is the way to integrate faith and education.

1. The Basis of Catholic Identity

In the article “Sanctity and the Intellectual Life,” Schindler proposes that “sanctity should provide the ‘inner form’ of intellectual life, in a way that (sanctity) affects both the methods and content of the modern academic curriculum.” To give an overview, the following points were the steps taken by Schindler to argue his point:

(a) Admitting that sanctity is a category that applies to human subjectivity, he argues that analogously, sanctity can be understood to apply to all of being, including those at the sub-human level.

(b) As such, the category of sanctity should be applicable to the objective content and methods of various academic disciplines, including the physical sciences. Here, Schindler describes a priori what accounts for a method that can be considered as “informed” with sanctity.

(c) These points are developed in the context of a discussion on how to conceive of or ground a school’s Catholic identity.
Schindler invokes von Balthasar’s christology, theology of mission and the notion of analogy to ground the position that sanctity is a category applicable to all creation. First, Schindler quotes von Balthasar’s position that “the mission that Christ receives from the Father forms not only his office and destiny as Redeemer, but the essential traits of his nature.” In other words, Christ’s mission and person are considered identical. The difficulties of this position notwithstanding, the point that I would like to draw is that even without this presumption, some of Schindler’s arguments can still hold. By virtue of being created “in Christ, through Christ, and for Christ,” all being “images” Christ and shares in his mission albeit analogously. Schindler defines this mission as loving service and obedience to the Father; in a word, sanctity.

According to Schindler then, what does it mean for all Being to share in Christ’s mission? Unfortunately, Schindler does not give a full answer. He simply returns to one point brought up in the metaphysical debates—that the key to understanding all of being is Being’s highest instance, the person—and reiterates his emphases on gift and receptivity. He then refers the readers to von Balthasar’s Theologik for a “detailed unpacking” of what it means for all being to share in Christ’s mission. The discussion is then brought to how we ought to understand nature, i.e., what is an approach that accounts for “being-as-love?”

In the “sanctity” pertaining to academic disciplines

Schindler contrasts the ancient (e.g., Aristotelian) and modern (e.g., Baconian) approaches to the study of nature to set the stage for his argument. The difference, he says, is like the difference between an organism and a machine:

The difference between the two lies in a different sense of relation and interiority. On the ancient understanding, nature acts from within—orders itself in terms of causes named efficiency, form, and finality—and its unity is more than the sum of its parts. On a modern understanding, nature is more a function of forces acting
from without—of efficient causes now understood to be external—and its unity is exactly reducible to the sum of its parts.\textsuperscript{111}

An organismic view of the natural world thus “indicates a sense of spontaneity, relation, interiority, finality... that is consistent with (and) genuinely analogous to that indicated at the level of the person.”\textsuperscript{112}

Schindler qualifies his statement by saying that this point does not deny nature’s integrity and legitimate autonomy. Rather, his argument has to do with the \textit{kind} of integrity and autonomy proper to all of creation. This kind of autonomy is one characterized by “loving service and obedience” to the Father, analogously interpreted through all the levels of being. Schindler says his effort is to give a sense of how radically “loving service and obedience,” and hence, “sanctity” extends into the cosmos. As such, he claims not to reject the gains of modernity, science, technology and the like. He says he does not reject the mechanistic view of nature \textit{per se}. What ought to be rejected are disciplines and methods that have been formed with a false sense of autonomy.

What does he mean by this false sense of autonomy? To answer this question, he re-asserts one of the fundamental axioms of his \textit{communio} ecclesiology in the following statement:

...no act of intelligence... can ever remain neutral with respect to God. God is somehow implicated in every act of knowledge, from the side at once of the subject (the act of knowing) and the object (what is known). Every methodical inquiry will, out of necessity, involve an abstraction of some sort from God, in a manner that carries some definite sense of openness or closure to God.\textsuperscript{113}

As an example, he returns to the notion of knowledge-as-power and shows that it bears a wrong kind of abstraction from God. On a positive note though, Schindler gives various examples of studies by scientists that show how their methods change given this view of nature, such as Fabré, Russell, and most significantly, Bohm,\textsuperscript{114} who admits that the methods in the teaching and research of physics will change if love were to be understood as the basic order of the universe.
Rethinking the methods of the various academic disciplines, as the foregoing scholars have done, is something that Catholic universities must be committed to doing according to Schindler. He challenges Catholic universities to consider this new way of "integrating," i.e., at the level of the logic and methods of the academic curriculum.

c. the "sanctity" of academic disciplines as the basis for a school's Catholic identity

Schindler's argument is partly a reaction against what he deems is an inadequate way of grounding a school's Catholic identity. He asks, at the start of the article, whether securing Catholic identity, through creating a distinct moral environment, heightened social sensitivity, selective hiring policies, fidelity to the Magisterium and the like, is enough. While Schindler acknowledges that these factors are important and indeed contribute to a school's Catholicity, the "core" of a university is its intellectual life. Insofar as the "holiness" of the intellectual life or, more specifically, the implications for the methods of the academic curriculum are ignored, a school's Catholic identity will simply be peripheral. In other words, Schindler's bold assertion is that a school must understand and explicit its Catholic identity as affecting even the methods of its academic courses. Unless a school considers this, the connection between the Catholic faith and education is practically reduced to an extrinsic one.

Schindler develops this idea of an intrinsic versus extrinsic connection between "Catholic" and "university" in a broader context in his critique of Theodore Hesburgh's idea of a Catholic university. Schindler attacks the following statement of Hesburgh:

The church did not create the modern university world as it had helped create the medieval university world. Moreover, the church does not have to be present in the modern world of the university, but if it is to enter, the reality and the terms of this world are well established and must be observed.... One may add descriptive adjectives to this or that university, calling it public or private, Catholic or Protestant, British or American, but the university must first and foremost be a university, or else the thing that the qualifiers qualify is something, but not a university.
Schindler disagrees with this statement because he sees it as implying that the Catholicity of a university is a mere addition, as if it were simply “on top of” the substance of a university. The strong point that he makes in this article is that a school’s Catholicity ought to be seen in the terms of rationality it adopts even within academic disciplines. If there is such a thing as a truly Catholic mind and, correspondingly, Catholic thought, then a Catholic university must show forth this distinctiveness in the methods in its academic curriculum. Once again, Schindler’s call is not to restrict holiness to the moral sphere but to see it operative in thought, as well.

In this same article, Schindler further explains his point that the claim to neutrality is false. This claim is supposed to be embodied in liberalism which, in a school, stands for a priority of method over content. The problem with the claim to a “pure” method is that the claim itself already carries within it substantive assumptions, i.e., any objective content can now only be related to method “mechanistically” or extrinsically.

With respect to this issue, Schindler names two tasks of the Catholic university, namely:

(1) to show from within each discipline and in terms proper to each discipline how that discipline is being guided by a worldview...
and (2) to show how a Catholic worldview leads to a more ample understanding of evidence and argument, already within the terms proper to each discipline.117

2. **The Category of “Sanctity” and Religious Education**

It would appear that Schindler’s assertions, i.e., “religion [is] the core” and “the primary goal of the Catholic school is evangelization,” are in consonance with the positions of PCP II. Positively, both views call for strengthening Catholic identity; but negatively, both also tend toward destroying the distinction between faith and education—however vehemently this tendency is denied by the proponents of these positions.

It must be kept in mind that the two directives with which PCP II and Schindler conclude—i.e., “make religious education the core
of the curriculum” and “rethink the presuppositions of various disciplines,” respectively—are not identical. However, the common problem with the two positions is that neither keep in sufficient balance the legitimate autonomy of various academic disciplines and faith.

Schindler’s definition of what comprises “Catholic thought” does not distinguish between thinking that involves ultimate reality, such as philosophy and theology, and thinking that simply involves physical matter, such as the natural sciences. It cannot be denied that the physical/natural sciences have to deal with ethics and, as such, can be directly related to Catholic morality. However, these disciplines do need to exclude elements that properly belong to theology. There is a need to presume neutrality and to prioritize “method” if, for example, we are dealing with a scientific experiment. Such methods do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that faith, or the “gracedness” of physical matter is denied, or is seen as extrinsic to the thing being studied. The scientific method simply does not include it. If pushed far enough, Schindler’s argument does come close to monism, of which one of his critics has accused him.118

A further and obvious problem is that neither position, whether that of Schindler or PCP II, corresponds to the actual practice of religious education and the real means by which most schools today secure Catholic identity. What has to be remembered is that in a university, religious education always and at the same time: (1) offers its own specialized knowledge; (2) contributes to the whole university as a wisdom community; and (3) contributes to the service that the Catholic university offers to the larger community.119 Within these “roles” that religious education plays in a Catholic university, the distinction but not separation, between faith and education/culture, has to be always kept.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION TO PART TWO

This section has discussed the Communio approach by: (1) going back to its roots in ressourcement, Vatican II, and von Balthasar’s the-
ology; (2) tackling Schindler’s general project, then specifically, his positions on Catholic education; and (3) relating various problems and concerns of religious education to his assertions.

Schindler’s position on the Catholic identity of a university is grounded on the view that all academic disciplines presume in all their methods, a certain openness or closure to God. Schindler challenges Catholic universities to “broaden” their approaches to Catholic identity by going back to the metaphysical positions presumed by all their disciplines’ methods and checking whether they inadvertently preempt a Catholic worldview.

Whatever validity these claims hold, they have been shown to be arguable and relatively helpful insofar as they show how to criticize reality using a particular theological approach.

Conclusion

In sum, this article sought to answer the question, “How can the communio approach contribute to the improvement of religious education on the tertiary level in the Philippines today?” A major assumption was that of the distinct-yet-inseparable relationship between theology and the field of religious education. The above question specifically asks how the communio approach can serve as a basis for religious education.

Part One therefore discussed the need for renewal in catechesis and religious education and the shape that renewal has taken, i.e., in the areas of integration and inculturation. Based on the problems in the local religious education scene, as well as on the responses provided, the clear desire and need for a more explicitly Catholic approach to religious education surfaced. This was understood to be in line with Filipino religiosity on the one hand and, on the other, the present recognition among theologians and religious educators of the need to balance logical approaches with more epiphanic ones.

Focus was then given to tertiary-level religious education. The
need for clear articulations of the relationships between faith and culture, and faith and reason, were seen as strong in the context of a Catholic university. Furthermore, apologetics was identified as a necessary aspect of tertiary-level religious education given the general stage of faith of college students.

As a response to the need articulated in Part One, Part Two provided an exposition on the *communio* approach by briefly sketching its history, summarizing von Balthasar’s method and emphases and articulating the main positions of Schindler on how to approach the “Catholicity” of Catholic education. These positions, he claims, are grounded in and manifest the implications of a worldview that places primacy on being as gift and the category of sanctity. Overall, what can be seen here is the specific reference to the Catholic Christian worldview and experience.

A keen sense of the problems in religious education, as well as the strengths and limitations of theological methods, is necessary and important for religious educators to develop. If educating in the faith involves taking certain positions on what the realities of our faith mean and how to talk about them, then it is for the teachers to ask the following questions: How consciously and critically have we adopted our positions? By what norms have our positions been judged? How aware are we of the philosophies (and theologies) of education, even religious education? These questions call religious educators to take a step back from the day-to-day concern of “what to do in class” to serious reflection on the presuppositions underneath their courses and teaching. This much-neglected step is, after all, a fundamental aspect of the religious educator’s task.
Notes


2CFC 45-48, NCDP 43.

3CFC 54.


8PCP II 156.

9PCP II 36.

10This effort at inter-relation is expressed in PCP II 182, “No true renewal can happen in one area (e.g. catechesis) in isolation from the other areas. Any genuine renewal must affect all three areas in their inter-relationship.” See PCP II 182-85 for a complete articulation of the inter-relations. Also see the article by Joseph L. Roche, S.J., “Catechesis/Religious Education in the Spirit of PCP II,” *Landas* 6:1 (1992) 145-65.

11See note no. 18 in PCP II 183, “Catechesis must without doubt have the first priority.” Also see NCDP 64, “the basic problem of the Church in the Philippines is a problem of catechesis.”

12Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, “General Catechetical Directory” in
Religious Education

Vatican Council II: More Post-conciliar Documents; hereafter referred to as GCD with paragraph number.


14Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997).

15John Paul II, “On Catechesis in Our Time” (Catechesi Tradendae) in Vatican Council II: More Post-Conciliar Documents, par. 18; hereafter referred to as CT with paragraph number.

16CT 21; NCDP 74-75.


19EN 20.

20CBCP, “Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture,” see especially par. 40-51.

21Ibid., par. 51.

22“There is good reason to believe that the faith of the Filipino people manifests these deficiencies because it has not been sufficiently inculturated.” Roche, “Catechesis/Religious Education in the Spirit of PCP II,” 53.

23See PCP II’s Decrees Part IV. Special Religious Concerns, articles 17-18.

24See NCDP 431-33 for quotes and points on inculturation.

25NCDP 69.

26Ibid.


31 John Paul II, "On the Relationship Between Faith and Reason" (Fides et Ratio) par. 5. Hereafter referred to as FR with paragraph number.

32 PCP II 622-46.

33 This problematic view is articulated in the following quotes: PCP II 628, "While evangelization is supposed to be the primary concern of Catholic education, we must sadly admit that in practice this has not always been so... religion, which should be the integrating factor, has not been treated as a core course...." Also see PCP II 637, "Catholic institutions should therefore reaffirm evangelization as the primary goal for education." For a fuller explanation of positions, see the article by Roche, S.J., "Catechesis/Religious Education in the Spirit of PCP II," 158.

34 PCP II 639.

35 PCP II 640-44.

36 Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, "Catholic Schools" in Vatican Council II: More Post-conciliar Documents, par. 25. Hereafter referred to as "Catholic Schools" with paragraph number.

37 Catholic Schools 26.

38 Ibid., 35.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., 36.

41 Ibid., 39.


43 Ibid., 53.

44 Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Theses on Inculturation" in New Directions in Mission and Evangelization, ed. James Scherer and Stephen
Bevans (Orbis, 1999) par. 5.1-9.3. Hereafter referred to as FABC with paragraph number.

45FABC 5.5.

46John Paul II, “On Catholic Universities” (Ex Corde Ecclesiae) in Origins 20:17 (4 October 1990) par. 12; hereafter referred to as ECE with paragraph number.

47ECE 30.

48ECE 13.

49ECE 19.

50PCP II 628.


52There have been many attempts at developing such approaches. See Dionisio Miranda, S.V.D., Look: The Filipino Within: A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-theological Moral Anthropology (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989); also see from the same author, Pagkamakatao (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1987). Another author is Leonardo Mercado, Elements of a Filipino Theology (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1975). This thesis does not, however, attempt to create a whole new theological system, but studies one that might help in the thrusts for inculturation and integration.


54Ibid., 4.

55Ibid.


58Flynn, The Effectiveness of Catholic Schools, 165.

59Lewis, 19.

60Schindler brings up this argument in the various articles and in his book

61 Roche, “Theology in a Catholic University,” 41.

62 Apparently, this is a problem of the humanities as a whole, not just of theology. Such an occurrence is understandable given society’s changing demands, i.e., the push for science and technology and the like.

63 CT 39. Also see GCD 86.

64 GCD 84.

65 GCD 85-87.


67 Ibid.


70 Nichols, 26.

71 Apologetics refers to that discipline of theology which is concerned with defense of or proofs for Christian faith. This definition is taken from Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Apologetics,” in The New Dictionary of Theology, ed. Joseph Komonchak, M. Collins, D. Lane (Pasay City: Daughters of St. Paul, 1991) 44.


74 Avery Dulles, Models of the Church (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974) 27.

76 *Communio*, inside cover.

77 Ibid.


82 Ibid., 3.

83 Rahner’s method involves an investigation of the “conditions of possibility” within the knowing subject. Kant’s work epitomizes this approach, which Rahner takes and mediates with Thomistic metaphysics. In any case, if for Kant the question is, “What in the human subject makes it possible to act morally?” for Rahner, it is “What are the conditions of possibility for faith in the human subject?”

Rahner’s response to the question lies in his notion of *Vorgriff*, the preapprehension of unlimited possibility and ultimately, a preapprehension of the very act of existing. This he arrives at by analyzing *agent intellect*, i.e., the power of making differentiations between perceived things and objectifying them, hence the possibility of speaking of them. *Agent intellect*, he says, can only operate if it has a sense of the difference between the concrete object and the unlimited existential possibility underlying it. Hence, our ability to distinguish between things reveals a preapprehension of the possibility of unlimited ways in which being reveals itself. This preapprehension is a preapprehension of God, not as an object but as the condition for grasping all objects. Through such a reflection, Rahner is able to articulate the conditions of possibility for faith. Abstraction is able to show that human subjects are potential hearers of revelation because they bear the capacity for knowing the infinite.

84 “Meta-anthropology” would be the more “Balthasarian” term to use. Philosophy, he says, presupposes not only the cosmological sciences but also the anthropological sciences and surpasses both. Scola says that this viewpoint right away situates ontological discourse within the human being’s enigmatic
structure, i.e., we are limited but capable of the entirety of being.

86 Scola, 7.
87 Ibid., 31.
89 Scola, 39. The notion of Gestalt comes from Goethe whose work influenced von Balthasar to a great extent.
90 Ibid.
92 Scola, 23.
93 Schindler, Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work, xi.
94 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., 9. Real assent refers to the kind of apprehension that “permits maintenance and conservation of what is known. This creates the images making possible our indwelling cognitive experience... and gives rise to new thought forms.” This definition is taken from Rino Fisichella, “John Henry Newman” in Dictionary of Fundamental Theology, ed. Rene Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1994) 735.
98 Dennis Doyle, “Beige or Technicolor,” Church 16 (Summer 2000) 11.
99 Ibid.
100 According to Doyle, von Balthasar can be criticized for lacking a well-developed theology of science and world religions. Both Rahner and von Balthasar can also be criticized for lacking an adequate theology of justice and liberation. Cf. ibid., 14.
102 Schindler, Heart of the World, Center of the Church, xiv.
103 George C. Weigel, “The Future of the John Courtney Murray Project,”

104 Graham Harrison, review of *Heart of the World, Center of the Church*, by David Schindler; in *The Month* 31:7 (July 1998) 290. The same accusation is made by Weigel in “The Future of the John Courtney Murray Project,” 280-81, where he states, “Here the classic continental bias against the possibility of a genuine development of doctrine emerging from the New World has been reintroduced, this time by American scholars who might have been expected to know better.” Weigel is referring to Schindler here. In the next paragraph, Weigel continues, “What radicals and restorationists (e.g. Schindler) have in common is a deep distrust of pluralism and a preference for a monistic society, culture, and polity that would, in all its constituent parts, reflect the Truth as the monists understand it.”

105 Komonchak, “Missing Person,” 35.


107 Ibid., 652.


109 This view of identifying Christ’s mission and person has been seriously criticized. While von Balthasar is said to follow St. Thomas, who says that the Son’s *missio* is the economic form of his eternal *processio*, von Balthasar pushes the point further and identifies Christ’s mission with his person. The problem with such a view can be summed up in the question, “How can anyone be his mission?” Christ’s person is eternal but his mission is temporal.

Anne Hunt shows that this problem arises because of von Balthasar’s concept of person, i.e., he distinguishes between a conscious subject and a person. According to Hunt, von Balthasar states that it is when God addresses a conscious subject, tells him who he is, and what he means to the eternal God—i.e., gives the conscious subject a mission, that we can say this subject is a person. See Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery: A Development in Recent Catholic Theology*, v. 5 in New Theology Studies Review, ed. Peter Phan (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997) 66-67.

110 The assertion “all being images Christ and shares in his mission,” even if qualified by the term “analogously,” can be problematic. The traditional Christian view of creation has always referred to the human being as image and likeness of God, not all of creation. The soundness of Schindler’s assertion
will depend how well he develops the notion of analogy in the succeeding sections.


112 Ibid., 663.

113 Ibid., 669.

114 Ibid., 669-70, note 29.


116 Ibid., 143.

117 Ibid., 171.

118 Harrison, 290-91.

119 Roche, S.J., “Theology in a Catholic University,” 54-58.