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CHAPTER TWO

Living the Questions of Learning and Faith

The ways faith and learning are linked in our lives and thinking are complex, with personal factors often playing as important a role as logical argument. The task of Christian scholarship involves the exploration of these already existing connections as much as it involves the forging of new points of contact between faith and the academic disciplines. This kind of reflection requires that we take issues of ethics and aesthetics into account alongside logic. When that happens, Christian scholarship becomes a matter of "living the questions" as much as it is a search for definitive answers.

If we are going to enlarge the conversation about Christian scholarship, we must begin with a frank acknowledgment of the untidy humanness of the endeavor. While Christian scholarship, like all other forms of scholarship, ultimately seeks to express itself in reasonable modes of communication that can be examined and critiqued in the realm of public argument and conversation, the soil in which Christian scholarship typically grows is not the soft loam of ideal logic but the gritty ground of our full personhood. Individuals who become Christian scholars do not usually take up that calling because they suddenly decide they need to build previously nonexistent bridges of rational connection between the isolated parts of themselves, which they identify respectively as faith and learning. Instead, most people who become Christian scholars do so because they know faith and learning are already intimately bound together in their lives, and they feel a need to explore that faith-learning/learning-faith hybridity in an intelligent manner. Because that is the case, the task of Christian

scholarship always includes a mapping of one's own soul as well as a mapping of the many more external ways that the interactions of faith and learning can help us understand the world in which we are enmeshed.

The Princeton University sociologist Robert Wuthnow says that virtually all the Christian scholars he knows have ended up becoming Christian scholars for these kinds of reasons. He suggests that the typical scenario runs something like this: a person "learns the basic stories of Christianity as a child, becomes a scholar sometime later, and yet continues to be influenced by the questions those stories asked, even though his or her rational arguments, theological outlooks, and philosophy of life may have undergone much change."[1] Wuthnow says faith does not so much give these scholars ready-made answers about how faith and learning are supposed to relate as it gives them a set of open-ended questions about how they *might* relate. In essence, their life stories impose an extra set of questions on their scholarship—questions of meaning, value, responsibility, and sometimes questions of pain and loss. These questions are not uniquely Christian, nor are they even uniquely religious, but Wuthnow implies that Christian scholars, and undoubtedly scholars who are deeply rooted in other religious traditions, find it harder to push these questions aside than their more secular counterparts. So when Wuthnow asks whether "it is possible to combine a deep personal commitment to the Christian faith with the life of the mind," he answers by saying that, of course, it is possible and that the best way to do it is by "living the questions" of intelligent faith rather than by trying to provide neat and tidy answers to all the quandaries of life.[2]

The foregoing might imply that Christian scholarship is in a certain sense a simple fact of life: if one is raised as a Christian or converts to Christianity one cannot help but produce scholarship that is in some way influenced by Christian ideals and points of view. If you are a Christian the scholarship you produce will be in some sense Christian. On one level, this is undoubtedly true. Faith, because it involves deeply held convictions and values, will naturally flavor almost everything one does. But that is not the whole story. In the same way that people work hard to develop their natural talents through years of practice if they want to become great musicians, athletes, or scholars, individuals who hope to be truly excellent Christian scholars will have to work at developing the natural connections that already exist between their faith and learning. They will need to carefully explore those connections through self-reflection as well as conversation with others.

The end result of this process will not necessarily be the neat and systematic articulation of a fully integrated Christian scholarly worldview. More often than not it will be what the Jesuit political philosopher David Hollenbach has called a "fragile achievement"—a tentative and provisional understanding of the connections of faith and learning that is rooted in one's way of life as much as it is an expression of one's life of the mind.[3] This is a rather different posture

than that of the integration model discussed in the previous chapter. The integration model defines the ideal of Christian scholarship in relatively dispassionate terms as the rational, objective examination of academic learning in the light of Christian faith. It is something outside the person, and it is often more argumentative in tone than it is either contemplative or conversational. While rationality and argument clearly have important roles to play within Christian scholarship, self-reflection and nonargumentative dialogue with others must also be part of the picture. Martin Marty helpfully clarifies this distinction between arguments and conversations. He says that the typical situation in an argument is that "one contender knows an answer, turns it into a proposition, and debates it with the intent to convince or defeat an opponent." In dialogue something else is going on. Marty writes: "Conversation partners do not [claim to] know everything. . . . They relish the presence of others, of those who are different; they enjoy the contributions of the many." What is more, unlike arguments that are necessarily oriented toward a clearly defined goal, conversations usually meander along "toward some end, but not always a well-defined one."[4] Conversation is more like a walk through the woods than a race around the track; it is more cooperative than competitive.

Conversation, as opposed to argument, also allows "the real" to penetrate into our discussions of and reflection on Christian scholarship. George Dennis O'Brien, following Jacques Lacan, defines "the real" (he always places the term in quotes) as the mysterious totality of life in all its messy, wonderful, and troubled complexity. O'Brien, a Catholic layperson and past president of both Bucknell University and the University of Rochester, explains that "the real" is elusive and mystical, and "runs beyond the neat orders of 'normal' academic pursuits."[5] But simply because "the real" exceeds the grasp of academic discourse does not mean it can be ignored. "The real" is part of the steady drumbeat of our ordinary lives and emotions, and it can erupt into our thinking at almost any minute without our ability to control it. The University of Chicago philosopher Martha Nussbaum has described such emotional occurrences as "upheavals of thought," and she insists that we take them seriously as "essential elements of human intelligence." In her view, abstract, logical thinking by itself is "too simple to offer us the type of self-understanding we need" because it cannot "grapple with the messy material of grief, love, anger and fear" that so profoundly shapes our lives.[6] O'Brien says the proper response to these kinds of affective experiences is not to distance ourselves from them through objective analysis but to pour ourselves into "the real" through participation in the ebb and flow of life, through love of the people around us, and through commitment to the values, ideals, and practices that make life meaningful. Even if we cannot "integrate" all of that into our scholarship, O'Brien argues that Christians have to try to take it academically into account. He says "life participation" is the "grammar" of Christian scholarship.[7]

This chapter examines what that might mean—how Christian scholarship might look if it was undertaken in a conversational and cooperative style that was open to the claim of "the real" on our lives. Such scholarship would emphasize connections more than differences—connections of one's scholarship to one's life as a whole and connections with other scholars who are seeking to understand the world in that holistic kind of way. In this style of Christian scholarship, even the differences that supposedly separate the secular academy from the realm of Christian faith would be minimized on the basis of shared humility in the face of truth and shared mystery at the wonder of life. As the Christian educator Craig Dykstra explains, Christians believe

> that all fall short of the glory of God and are deeply in need of forgiveness and grace. At the same time, the spiritual foundation of intellectual inquiry may not ultimately be hubris, but humility in the face of realities that do not finally submit to our fantasies and manipulation. These are complementary convictions, and that fact suggests a way in which religious communities and colleges and universities, even secular ones, might fruitfully understand and relate to one another: by searching out as many complementarities as possible and by working to redeem one another where sins are being committed.[8]

This chapter focuses on two people who envision Christian scholarship in just that way.

Ernest L. Boyer's Moral Vision of Faith and Scholarship

Ernest L. Boyer was commissioner of education under President Jimmy Carter and then presided for many years over the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He was one of America's greatest twentieth-century educators, and he was also a devout Christian, associated at different times in his life with the Brethren in Christ Church and the Society of Friends. At the core of Boyer's religious faith and at the core of his vision of public education was a profound belief in the underlying connectedness of all things. Boyer was convinced that nothing exists by itself, in itself, for itself. Everything and everyone is related to everything else. He liked to cite his friend the biologist Barbara McClintock as saying "everything is one."[9] He was also fond of quoting Mary Clark, another well-known biologist, to the effect that "social embeddedness is the essence of our nature."[10] Perhaps Boyer's favorite comment on the subject, however, came from the literary figure Mark Van Doren, who once said: "The connectedness of things is what the educator contemplates to the limit of his [or her] capacity."[11] While Boyer believed that connectedness is a fundamental fact of life—part of the warp and woof of how God has put the universe together—he was simultaneously convinced that the connectedness of the world is often underappreciated. The connections within creation have a living quality to them. They are more organic than they are logical or mechanical and, having that lifelike quality to them, the connections of the world are, like life itself, both durable and fragile. They need to be nurtured and cultivated or they might wither and die.

Within the human community, especially, Boyer believed that the connectedness of persons is both a fact and a moral mandate. That is, the fact of mutual connectedness contains within itself a required ethic of mutual care. Because we are all dependent on each other, we have a natural moral obligation—a human obligation that is also a Christian obligation—to act in ways that preserve and improve the webs of connection that sustain us. To undermine those relationships or to sever them intentionally would be both morally wrong and just plain dumb.

Boyer was especially attuned to the ethics of human relatedness because of the way it applied to his own field of disciplinary expertise: communication. Boyer firmly believed that language has the power either to build or to destroy human lives and organizations; humanity lives in a world of language, and the ways people use words can either improve the life they share together or terribly harm it. Thus, for Boyer, the ability to speak and listen is "a sacred trust" that entails a clear moral mandate always to speak truthfully. He said: "Truth is the obligation we assume when we are empowered in the use of words."[12] Human relations are sustained "by the honesty of our words, and by the confidence we have in the words of others."[13] When trust is broken through the use of dishonest words—lies, propaganda, or artful dodges—all of humanity suffers. Boyer's Anabaptist religious roots undoubtedly predisposed him toward this view of language. The Anabaptist movement stressed the importance of plain, direct, honest speech. In fact, Anabaptists took the responsibility of honest communication so seriously that they refused to take any kind of oath for fear it would imply that their normal modes of speech were not fully truthful. For the Anabaptist movement, linguistic honesty was a divine command; for Boyer, it was also a requirement of being human. On this issue, and on many others, his faith and his academic perspectives were perfectly attuned.

Ultimately, however, Boyer believed this ethic of human relatedness found its purest expression not in the fair and honest exchange of words but in a willingness to reach out in tangible ways to meet human needs. Service to others was the foundation of Boyer's philosophy of life and education. Boyer said he had learned this truth from his grandfather, the most important mentor in his life: "When Grandpa was forty, he moved his family into the slums of Dayton, Ohio. He spent the next forty years running a city mission, working for the poor, meeting the needs of those who had been pathetically neglected, teaching them. He taught me as I observed his life, that to be truly human one must serve."[14] Throughout his own distinguished career in education, Boyer

never tired of repeating the dictum that "to be truly human, one must serve." Service to others was not a nice moral add-on to the rest of life; service was part and parcel of what it meant to be human. It was the best way existentially to understand the actual connectedness of human life, and it was simultaneously the highest moral expression of humanity's interrelatedness.

Given the great significance Boyer assigned to the connectedness of the world in general, it will come as no surprise that he thought the notion of relationality ought to be at the heart of all scholarship and education, and especially at the core of Christian scholarship and education. At one point he commented:

> We urgently need to shape a curriculum that shows relationships, not fragmentation. Today's students are offered a grab-bag of isolated courses. They complete the required credits, but what they fail to gain is a more coherent view of knowledge and a more integrated, more authentic view of life. To put it simply, their sense of the sacred is diminished. . . . We affirm differences, but fail to capture the commonalities. And in the absence of larger loyalties, we're settling for little loyalties. Students are hunkering down in their separate interests failing to find the relationships that bind.[15]

If that was true of students, it applied even more to the faculties of the nation's colleges and universities. For years budding young scholars had been told that the wisest thing to do if they wanted to advance in their individual fields of study was to find some little niche of knowledge they could know better than everyone else—and then to claim their intellectual property rights over that piece of academic turf. The way of advancement in the world of higher education was through hyperspecialization. Especially in the sciences, any display of serious interest in subjects unrelated to one's focus of research was interpreted as a sign of lost concentration and weakened scholarly resolve; the same basic attitude could be found dispersed throughout the academy, including the humanities. Boyer thought many professors had contentedly become masters of "little loyalties" and were actively passing those minuscule senses of scholarly allegiance down to their students. Boyer was deeply troubled by this state of affairs. Knowledge was fragmenting, and lives were being truncated by the narrowness of education. An appreciation of the whole was being lost: the world was no longer being seen in its complex interrelatedness. As the wonderful relational complexity of creation was parceled off and packaged in neat little unrelated blocks, a sense of the sacred was being lost as well.

On this point, Boyer's thinking was, despite his Anabaptist upbringing and church affiliations, profoundly Catholic. A commitment to the unity of all truth has been a hallmark of virtually every Catholic discussion of scholarship since at least the time of Thomas Aquinas. Boyer agreed. He would also have agreed with the Catholic contention that the unity of the world includes the

sacred. In fact, it would not be wrong to call Boyer's view of the world sacramental. Boyer believed that even the smallest act of care or kindness could sometimes convey enough grace that it could transform a life from despair to hope. And it was not just that the world *could be made* sacred by such acts, he also believed that in many ways the world *is already filled* with the sacred. God is already sacramentally present in the world. Boyer argued that the sacred is "inextricably interwoven with the most basic of human impulses."[16] He knew this sacred dimension of life was often buried under the rubble of the world's brokenness, but it was there nonetheless, and the task of uncovering it was not a job for Christians alone. Instead, the process of discovering and nurturing the sense of the sacred that adhered to human experience was a project in which all of humanity not only could be but needed to be involved.

While Boyer had an almost mystical appreciation of the world's connectedness, he was also a pragmatist. He knew that in the modern world no one could know everything. Specialization is, accordingly, a required fact of academic life. This is especially so for those involved in what he called the *scholarship of discovery*,[17] where it usually is necessary to narrow one's focus to only one isolated part of reality in order to understand its intricate complexity. What he was unwilling to do, however, was to allow the label "scholarship" to be restricted to that kind of activity alone. The world itself is not divided up into the neat categories of analysis that the scholarship of discovery requires. Rather, the world is a complex, interrelated whole. Therefore, Boyer argued, the scholarship of discovery, though important, is inadequate by itself to fully understand either ourselves or the world as a whole.

In addition to the scholarship of discovery, Boyer said we needed other kinds of scholarship to help us see the world in all its interrelated complexity. Thus he called for a *scholarship of integration*, which he defined as the attempt to arrange relevant bits of knowledge and insight from different disciplines into broader patterns that reflected the actual interconnectedness of the world. (This notion of "integration" is obviously quite different from and unrelated to the integration model of Christian scholarship discussed earlier in this book.) Boyer also called for a *scholarship of application* (which he sometimes labeled the scholarship of engagement) that would take seriously the moral mandate of our interconnectedness, seeking to close "the gap between values in the academy and the needs of the larger world."[18] Finally, he called for a *scholarship of teaching* (which he also identified as the scholarship of sharing knowledge) that would focus on the means and ways of handing down knowledge, faith, wisdom, and wonder across the fragile bonds of connection that linked different cultures and successive generations to each other. Some have criticized Boyer's enlarged definition of scholarship for supposedly watering down the demands of real scholarship (meaning the scholarship of discovery). Boyer saw his definition as doing the exact opposite. It raised the bar of scholarship, requiring everything that the scholarship of discovery already de-

manded and then asking for more. It imposed on scholarship the requirement that it locate itself within the actual connectedness of the world and not falsely presume it existed outside the connected order of human relations in some independent realm of academic objectivity.

Boyer never explicitly described the role that he thought faith might play in this enlarged taxonomy of scholarship. Undoubtedly he would have presumed that the direct implications of faith are least visible in the scholarship of discovery, where the focused research methods of the disciplines predominate. Even there, however, he would probably have thought faith would play an active role in the selection of research topics. In the other three forms of scholarship, Boyer would surely have believed that the concerns of faith would blend naturally into one's work. According to Boyer, the ultimate purpose of Christian scholarship is to "celebrate the majesty, the integration, and the wholeness of God's creation."[19] In his estimation, the primary task of Christian scholarship is not to defend Christian truth against secular learning. That approach overstresses discontinuity and underestimates the actual connectedness of the world. Nor is it the primary task of Christian scholarship to analyze and critique competing worldviews, another exercise that emphasizes difference much more than connectedness or convergence. Instead, he said, the power of Christian faith is best seen in the way faith motivates scholars to observe the world in all its interconnected wholeness and to offer their skills and insights as a form of intelligent service to humanity and the created order in general.

According to Boyer, that kind of engaged scholarship is not something Christians can do all by themselves. Rather, Christian scholars need constantly to communicate with other scholars and work alongside them in the common human task of seeking to understand, nurture, and where necessary, mend the tough but delicate fabric of the world. Anything less than that—any kind of scholarship that is intentionally segregated from the larger human community—would itself be a denial of the interconnectedness that God had woven into the created order. Christian scholarship, according to Boyer, is at its best when it is humbly and almost invisibly immersed within the larger academy, tincturing the world of scholarship as a whole with a deepened sense of the unity of reality and of our responsibility to serve others, especially those least able to help themselves.

While Boyer thought that Christian scholars need to be active participants in the larger academy, rubbing shoulders with non-Christian academicians on a regular basis, this did not mean that he was critical of the existence of independent Christian or church-related colleges and universities. In fact, Boyer believed such institutions were a needed part of America's ecology of higher education. Private religious colleges and universities could explore certain points of contact between faith, the academic disciplines, and ethics that public universities simply could not address because of the constraints of church-

state separation. Boyer was a firm believer in religious freedom and, applied to higher education, that meant he even affirmed the right of Christian colleges and universities to require some kind of faith affirmation from faculty. What he was opposed to were rigid tests of orthodoxy and forms of Christian education that built walls between Christian faith and "secular" scholarship rather than bridges of care and mutual understanding.

Boyer's comments concerning the connections of faith, learning, and life were forged in the full light of public and political inspection. His chief concern—the role he thought he was called to play as a public figure in American society—was to inspire all scholars, and especially all teachers, to see their work as focusing on the task of understanding the world for the purpose of making the world a more caring and humane place for everyone. Given that context, Boyer clearly believed that Christian scholarship should not fixate on the needs of the Christian community itself but should be turned outward toward the needs of society as a whole. When Boyer said that to be truly human one must serve, his assumption was that this maxim is even more true of Christianity: to be truly Christian, one must serve. In his view, true Christian faith would necessarily lead to public service.

Boyer thought that Christians should not isolate their scholarship from the larger academy, nor should they be overly concerned with highlighting the distinctively Christian character of their work; that smacked too much of religious chauvinism. Instead, he suggested that Christian scholarship at its best should identify as much as possible with the constructive work of the academy and then be a leavening influence within that realm, directing the energies of the academy wherever possible in pathways that would more fully address the hopes, dreams, and deepest needs of humankind. Living in an age that had produced more violence and warfare than any other in history, Boyer was acutely attuned to the tragedy of death. As a person of faith, however, he was convinced that the real tragedy is not death itself. Everyone will eventually die; that is unavoidable. What is tragic is that people so often die with "commitments undefined, convictions undeclared, and service unfulfilled."[20] Boyer believed that the role of scholarship, whether Christian or not, is to help people discover a calling and purpose in life that draws them out of themselves and into constructive relationships with others.

What is truly helpful about Boyer's vision of Christian scholarship is not merely that it acknowledges the complex autobiographical and interpersonal dynamics that are involved but that it is so profoundly positive in nature. For too long too many Christian scholars have thought of the work they do either in defensive or aggressively apologetic terms. Boyer's vision is neither of these. Instead, what he presents to us is a model of Christian scholarship that is at once thoroughly confident and utterly humble. Boyer is thoroughly confident that this is God's world and that the core values of Christianity are in perfect agreement with the deep structures of the created order. He is simultaneously

utterly humble in that he thinks the same core values require Christians to put the needs of others ahead of their own. Following a Boyeresque approach, Christian scholarship would adopt a generally positive stance toward the academy as a whole. The goal would be neither to erect a hedge against the inroads of secularism nor to launch an attack on secular thinking. Instead, the ideal of Christian scholarship would be to walk alongside the mainstream academy, adding insights as appropriate and helping to make sure no one would ever forget that the deepest calling of the scholar, Christian or not, is to care for those who most need one's help.

Nancey Murphy's Postmodern Vision of Christian Scholarship

Nancey Murphy, professor of Christian philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary, points in a different direction. For her, the focus of Christian scholarship is not so much ethics (though ethics does play a significant role in her thinking) as epistemology, and the primary focus of her work has been the relationship of science with theology. Murphy calls herself a postmodern philosopher because she rejects the modernist notion that in order for any belief to be deemed "knowledge" it has to be formulated and defended solely on the basis of objective facts and impeccable logic, wholly removed from the personhood of the scholar. By contrast, her own form of postmodern epistemology recognizes the personal factors that saturate all forms of scholarship and acknowledges that the interconnections between faith and learning are rarely purely logical.[21]

Murphy develops her argument historically, tracing the rise of modern epistemology and then the postmodern turn toward epistemological holism. She argues that the modern paradigm of knowledge was linked to the metaphor of knowledge as a building: a large public building constructed on the solid foundation of incontestable, objective facts about the world. The superstructure of this building was erected on that empirical foundation using the crane of sound deductive reasoning. The goal was to produce a dwelling place for universal human knowledge that was absolutely firm and capable of withstanding all the howling gales of skepticism and doubt, a crystalline palace where, pure and untainted by any kind of subjective judgments at all, truth could be preserved for all time.

Modern epistemology found one of its purest expressions in the philosophy of logical positivism, which asserted that scientific claims were meaningful only if they were expressed in ways that could be either confirmed or falsified by empirical observation. Once such claims had been tested and the real facts of the matter had been ascertained, then scientists could construct theories out of those building blocks of pure facts on the basis of rigorous mathematical reasoning. In this scheme of things, the discipline of physics, the hardest of all the supposedly "hard sciences," became the model for human knowledge

in general. While logical positivism had little if anything to do with religion, a very similar understanding of knowledge was emerging within Christian academic circles at the same time. In the premodern world, Christian faith had been based largely on tradition understood in the sense of authoritative beliefs handed down carefully, but somewhat flexibly, from generation to generation. But this notion of tradition had been criticized by Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century, pilloried by the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, and finally cast aside entirely by the end of the nineteenth century. In the resultant vacuum, Christians felt they had to construct a new epistemological foundation for their historic beliefs, and many theologians concluded that faith, like science, needed to be based as much as possible on indisputable facts and sound logic alone. These developments obviously took different trajectories in the Protestant and Catholic worlds, but the overall pattern was similar.

The reconstruction of faith generated by this modern fact-logic definition of knowledge took two rather different forms. Some Christian theologians (i.e., liberals) appealed to the supposedly indubitable facts of Christian experience and built their theologies logically from that foundation; other theologians (i.e., fundamentalists) based their logical restatements of faith on the supposedly absolute and error-free body of propositional truths found in the Bible or church tradition. The divide between these two orientations of theology was never absolute, for many theologians tried to weave these two strands together, but the bipolar divide between modernists and fundamentalists did describe an important tension nonetheless. These contrasting ideals of how Christians could and should reconstruct their faith to be more compatible with modern ways of knowing were in some senses diametrically opposed to each other. In terms of their underlying method, however, they were nearly identical. Modernists and fundamentalists both assumed that truth was a function of facts, logic, and nothing else, and Murphy thinks both approaches were dreadfully wrong in the way they redefined the nature of Christian faith and the task of Christian theology.

Murphy says that as neat and seemingly solid as modern epistemology appeared at first glance, what it actually produced was a shaky house of knowledge positioned on slender stilts of data and logic rather than a durable dwelling situated firmly on the ground of truth. With time, both science and theology had to acknowledge how flimsy modernist epistemology was, and both fields made adjustments. Within science—partly as a result of the development of quantum physics, partly as a result of Thomas Kuhn's analysis of the history of scientific revolutions, and partly as a result of the simple progression of generations—logical positivism was slowly jettisoned. Ludwig Wittgenstein, often taken to be one of the chief architects of the positivist platform, eventually changed his mind as well, turning away from pure logic to the analysis of how language functioned in different contexts. Scientific theories, even in the "hard" sciences, came to be understood as useful, predictive *models* of how the

world behaved; they were no longer considered precise blueprints of what was actually going on in reality. Thus contemporary physics actually posits that at least at the subatomic level it is impossible for us ever to know what is "really going on." The very act of observing certain kinds of data changes that data. Contemporary scientists have thus come to believe that the world is stranger and more wonderful than logical positivism could ever understand.

In the religious realm a similar development took place but with perhaps a bit more tension and contention in the process. That is, just as theologians of the right and left were getting comfortable with their new styles of theology based on the supposedly universal structure of human experience or the objective truth of the biblical text, other discoveries in the realm of scholarship began to dissolve that seemingly solid ground out from underneath their feet. On the liberal side of things, the supposedly universal character of human religious experience came under severe attack. The more closely scholars looked at religious experience—indeed, the more closely they looked at human experiences of any kind—the more those experiences seemed like interpretations of reality rather than simple perceptions of experiential fact. At the very same time, the notion that the Bible could be considered a repository of divinely attested propositional truths was coming apart as scholars of both the right and left rediscovered the literary character of the biblical text—it was neither a science textbook nor a philosophical treatise. The understanding of tradition underwent a similar rethinking. The Second Vatican Council, in particular, opened the possibility of seeing tradition in a more lively manner, not as static truth but as evolving insight. As a result of these changes, the nature of theology has been altered in the past few decades as much as science.

Murphy, along with a host of other postmodern thinkers, believes that modern canons of factual indubitability and mathematical rationality never did ring true to how people actually thought, and the dissolution of modern epistemology has accordingly been a good thing. Its passing means we can once again examine the untidy and complicated ways that human beings have always reflected on God, the world, and themselves without embarrassment or apology. In this more realistic understanding of epistemology, it is possible to admit what we all already know: our ideas and values are connected to each other in complicated webs of relation and reference that have as much to do with our autobiographies as with pure logic. Following terminology first developed by Willard Quine, Murphy says we instinctively and unavoidably think holistically. We do not believe any given truth about the world because of its own self-evident facticity; instead we believe certain assertions about the world with differing degrees of intensity based on how well they fit into the total network of other related ideas that we (and the communities in which we live) also hold to be true. We develop and refine our beliefs on the basis of their connection with the broader patterns of belief and practice that characterize our community's life.

In this interrelated understanding of human knowing, Murphy argues, "there are no indubitable (unrevisable) beliefs";[22] instead what we find are complex connections that go in many different directions at once. She says some of these connections do take the form of strict logical implication, but others are more probabilistic in nature. Our webs of belief are complex and to some degree unpredictable, but what holds them together is their general sense of coherence with each other rather than their individual certainty. As Murphy puts it, we test our ideas about the world on the basis of how well "each belief is supported by its ties to its neighboring beliefs, and ultimately, to the whole"[23] and not by the canons of strict logic alone.

This inner dialogue of belief—our own individual musings on what we believe and why—is always situated within a parallel "outer" context of conversation with others. We develop our beliefs on the basis of our interactions with those whom we hold dear, with those whom we value as personal or institutional authorities, with those with whom we routinely disagree, and with a host of strangers who cross our paths at irregular intervals. Our thinking is socially embedded in those overlapping networks of tradition, connection, and contention, and we need constantly to evaluate and reevaluate how our own ideas and beliefs stack up against the views of others with whom we come in contact.

The integration model discussed in the first chapter of this book argues that the best way to engage in this task of evaluating other ideas and views is by comparing the worldviews that underlie those beliefs. But Murphy says that approach, as appealing as it might appear at first glance, is simply not an option. It is impossible to compare worldviews with that kind of objectivity. To do so would require us to step outside our own worldviews onto some kind of neutral viewing platform from which we could see all worldviews in equal detail with no predispositions one way or another. But human beings cannot step outside themselves in that way. Borrowing Quine's image of worldviews as ships on the sea, Murphy says bluntly that "we cannot walk on water; we cannot jump ship to examine [our own worldview] from the outside and compare it to all the other ships at sea. We cannot judge them all from the outside on the basis of some universal standards."[24] Instead, she says, the best we can do is to engage in a series of ad hoc analyses of the potential connections or conflicts that might exist between some of our ideas and some of the ideas of others. Then, if we see something that attracts us or repulses us in the views of the other, the most we can do is make small adjustments to our thinking here and there. Returning to Quine's nautical imagery, Murphy argues that the only way we can alter our beliefs is the same way we would repair a ship at sail: a little at a time. Murphy explains: "We cannot rebuild the whole thing at once—we can only make small repairs here and there, keeping the rest intact in order to keep ourselves afloat."[25] Granted, sometimes more dramatic changes do take place. People "jump ship," as it were, and swim over to board another boat.

These kinds of conversions are relatively rare, however, and often they involve more continuities of thought and conviction than appear at first glance.

What does this mean for our understanding of Christian scholarship? According to Murphy, the interactions between faith and learning will be many, and they will often point in different directions at the same time. Sometimes the views of faith and learning will conflict; sometimes they will confirm each other; and more often than not those interactions will be of an oblique nature that produces neither confirmation nor conflict but something else—curiosity, deepened insight, humility regarding one's claims of knowledge, slight modification, the admission of ambiguity, or just plain wonder. Like Wuthnow, she senses that Christian scholarship may have more to do with the questions one feels compelled to ask than the answers one provides.

But it is not just the interactions of faith and learning that produce these kinds of responses. This also happens within the world of learning itself when people with differing views interact, and it happens within the realm of faith when persons steeped in different theological traditions converse seriously with each other. Complex relations exist between persons who represent different schools of thought within the sciences. Complex relations also exist between persons from different Christian (or other religious) traditions. And very complex relations emerge when people representing different and sometimes conflicting traditions of theology dialogue with people representing different and sometimes conflicting academic schools of thought—especially given the fact that the persons of faith involved in such conversations also possess certain academic convictions and that the academicians almost surely possess certain religious beliefs or spiritual convictions.

In short, interactions between faith and learning are at best complex, convoluted, and unpredictable, already connected with each other in a host of ways. Undoubtedly there are ways that faith and learning might conflict, but the explorations of how faith and learning are related within the realm of Christian scholarship will involve much more than that. Edward B. Davis explores some of that complicated terrain in the accompanying essay, which focuses on the history of science. As for Murphy herself, she says "yes, there are conflicts between religion and science, but they are only a small part of a much more complicated story."[26] In that more complicated story, Murphy argues that the traffic between theology and science—the traffic between faith and learning in general—has to go both ways. "We sometimes have to correct our theology as science advances. . . . But sometimes theology must correct science."[27]

Murphy views all knowledge as essentially communal. Each community, whether theological or disciplinary, moves together toward an articulation of its standpoints. Individuals have a role to play in this process, but scholarship is never a purely individual enterprise. Murphy, for example, has been quite blunt about her own convictions, saying that she works explicitly out of an Anabaptist or radical Reformation perspective, but her work also reflects a host

of Catholic convictions she obviously imbibed in the process of growing up Catholic. While affirming particularity, then, Murphy's epistemology allows for and even requires a certain ecumenical sensitivity and commitment. As Christians and as scholars we necessarily work out of our own particular (and sometimes hybrid) traditions, but in another sense we all—at least, at our best—work to benefit the whole church and the whole world.

In making this last assertion, Murphy's vision of Christian scholarship bends toward the Boyeresque. Ethics, understood as concern for the other—as service—becomes a necessary part of the equation. Murphy argues that it has become a commonplace of contemporary thought to assume that one's social location determines one's vision of the world. This position, which derives from Nietzschean philosophy, Marxist political thought, and liberationist theology, was given blunt expression by Michel Foucault when he claimed that "knowledge" was really much more a function of one's ability to impose one's will on others than it was a picture of the way things actually were. Murphy rejects Foucault's description of knowledge as nothing but cognitivized self-interest; however, she accepts that "it would be naive to suppose that knowledge is not subject to the taint of powerful self-interest." Thus she concludes that self-renunciation—the rejection of self-interest and the caring embrace of the other—is "not only the key to ethics . . . [but] it is also the key to knowledge." She writes: "Renunciation of the will to power is a prerequisite for seeking truth."[28]

Murphy is not, of course, unique in making this point. Many Christian writers and theologians have said the same thing. One of the most articulate statements comes from the short commentary on the Nicene Creed entitled *The School of Charity* (1934) by the Anglican scholar Evelyn Underhill, whose scholarly work focused on religious mysticism. She wrote:

> We are Christians; and so we accept, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the Christian account of [God's] character. God is Love, or rather Charity; generous, out-flowing, self-giving love. . . . To enter the Divine order then, achieve the full life for which we are made, means entering an existence which only has meaning as the channel and expression of an infinite, self-spending love. This is not piety. It is not altruism. It is the clue to our human condition. . . . This means that the true demand of religion will never be a demand for correct behavior or correct belief; but for generosity, as a controlling factor in every relation.[29]

For people like Murphy, Boyer, and Underhill, Christian scholarship can never be reduced to "the life of the mind" alone. Instead knowledge, faith, and morality mingle and cohere in the context of our entire lives as scholars. This is not a normative ideal but a mere fact of life. Epistemology and ethics are inseparably linked. Murphy and Boyer are not saying that Christian scholars

ought to be more careful to live up to their own highest values; they are not ranting against hypocrisy. What they are saying is that the way we think and the way we live are intimately connected to each other. In that sense, Christian scholarship is not so much something one does as an expression of who one is. To repeat the words of Robert Wuthnow, Christian scholarship is ultimately a matter of living the questions; it is never a matter of thought alone.

NOTES

1. Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity in the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on the Challenges Ahead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 203. Wuthnow is a Protestant, but the Catholic sociologist Andrew Greeley says much the same thing. Greeley suggests that religious "worldviews are not propositional paragraphs that can be explicated and critiqued in discursive fashion. Rather they are, in their origins and in their primal power, tenacious and durable narrative symbols that take possession of the imagination early in the socialization process and provide patterns which shape the rest of life." *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 133.

2. Wuthnow, *Christianity in the Twenty-First Century*, 209. This insight is not necessarily foreign to those who affirm the integration model, but it is only infrequently incorporated into their theoretical reflections on the nature of Christian scholarship. One exception to this general rule is Nicholas Wolterstorff. His sensitivity to this issue, like that of many other people, is rooted in the experience of personal suffering and loss. See his "The Grace that Shaped My Life," in *Finding God at Harvard*, edited by Kelly Monroe (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 149–58. Agonizing over the death of his son, Wolterstorff said his Reformed faith "had always encouraged [him] to live with unanswered questions" and had also taught him that "life eternal doesn't depend on getting all the questions answered; God is often as much behind the questions as behind the answers. But never had the unanswered questions been so painful" (157). See also his deeply touching *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987).

3. David Hollenbach, "The Catholic University under the Sign of the Cross: Christian Humanism in a Broken World," in *Finding God in All Things*, edited by Michael J. Himes and Stephen J. Pope (New York: Crossroads, 1996), 283.

4. Martin E. Marty, *The One and the Many: America's Struggle for the Common Good* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22–23.

5. George Dennis O'Brien, *The Idea of a Catholic University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 59.

6. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–3.

7. O'Brien, *The Idea of a Catholic University*, 203.

8. Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practice* (Louisville, Ky.: Geneva Press, 1999), 137.

9. Ernest L. Boyer, "A College of Quality" (originally presented in January 1988), in Ernest L. Boyer, *Selected Speeches 1979–1995* (Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1997), 60.

10. Boyer, "Lifelong Learning in the Arts" (originally presented in April 1994), in *Selected Speeches*, 134.

11. Boyer, "The Basic School" (originally presented in April 1995), in *Selected Speeches*, 25.

12. Boyer, "Making Connections" (originally presented in March 1993), in *Selected Speeches*, 10.

13. Boyer, "A College of Quality" (originally presented in January 1988), in *Selected Speeches*, 66.

14. Boyer, "Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation" (originally presented in February 1993), in *Selected Speeches*, 12.

15. Boyer, "Teaching about Religion in Public Schools" (originally presented in November 1991), in *Selected Speeches*, 125.

16. Boyer, "Teaching about Religion in Public Schools," in *Selected Speeches*, 119.

17. On Boyer's fourfold analysis of scholarship, including the scholarship of discovery, see Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990). See also Ernest L. Boyer, "The Scholarship of Engagement," *Journal of Public Service and Outreach* 11, 1 (spring 1996), 11–20.

18. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, 22.

19. Ernest L. Boyer, "Reflections on a Church-Related Higher Education," *Cresset* (Valparaiso University) 57 (June 1994), 3.

20. Boyer, "Making Connections," 116.

21. See Nancey Murphy, *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996); *Reconciling Theology and Science: A Radical Reformation Perspective* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 1997). See also Nancey Murphy and George F. R. Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) and Nancey Murphy, "Postmodern Apologetics or Why Theologians *Must* Pay Attention to Science," in *Religion and Science: History, Method, Dialogue*, edited by W. Mark Richardson and Wesley J. Wildman (New York: Routledge, 1996).

22. Murphy, "Postmodern Apologetics," 107.

23. Murphy, "Postmodern Apologetics," 108.

24. Murphy, "Postmodern Apologetics," 109.

25. Murphy, "Postmodern Apologetics," 109.

26. Murphy, *Reconciling Theology and Science*, 9.

27. Murphy, *Reconciling Theology and Science*, 4.

28. Murphy and Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe*, 139.

29. Evelyn Underhill, *The School of Charity* (1934; Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse, 1991), 11.