

THESES ON JEANNOT ON THE SUBJECT OF JESUIT CATHOLIC IDENTITY

David H. Calhoun, Philosophy, Gonzaga University

These basic theses on the question of Jesuit Catholic identity in higher education were formulated in response to conversations with my philosophy department colleague Tom Jeannot. For an example of Dr Jeannot's reflections on this subject, see the text of his January 2014 presentation to the Gonzaga Socratic Club (http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/faculty/calhoun/socratic/Jeannot_CatholicandJesuit.pdf).

- I. A robust contemporary conception of Jesuit Catholic identity is necessarily pluralist.
- II. At the same time, a conception of Jesuit Catholic identity necessarily presumes the centrality of the *question* of Jesuit Catholic identity, and thereby indirectly requires a set of assumptions that ground the question of Jesuit Catholic identity.
- III. The conditions for the viability of the question of Jesuit Catholic identity therefore set boundary conditions on the practical pluralism of a Jesuit Catholic institution; put another way, Thesis II limits Thesis I.
- IV. If the boundary conditions limiting pluralism are not recognized, honored, and conserved, an institution committed to Jesuit Catholic identity will reach a point at which a majority of those constituting the institution will no longer regard the question of Jesuit Catholic identity as viable, and the institution will, in a de facto sense, have abandoned Jesuit Catholic identity.
- V. In a pluralist institution, any attempt to articulate the boundary conditions specified in Thesis III will themselves be subject to dispute, as will the factual question of whether the institution has successfully observed or abandoned those boundary conditions.
- VI. At the same time, the boundary conditions cannot be so minimalist as to include institutions with recognizably different institutional identities (thus a commitment to diversity or social justice that one might find at public universities or private secular universities is insufficient to definitively characterize a Jesuit Catholic humanist university).
- VII. The pluralism of a Jesuit Catholic institution must therefore be a bounded pluralism; it must be limited in some way, perhaps by composition of the individuals who collectively make up the institution (e.g., a requirement such as that promoted by *Ex Corde Ecclesia*, that some particular percentage of the faculty be composed of practicing Catholics), perhaps by a form of faculty / staff recruitment in which sympathy to the question of Jesuit Catholic identity is made a central expectation, perhaps in some other way.
- VIII. To claim that an unbounded pluralism is sufficient to maintain Jesuit Catholic identity, or to appeal to a boundary condition that does not distinctively capture Jesuit Catholic identity (such as those mentioned in Thesis VI), necessarily involves optimistic naiveté, self-deception, or some other form of inauthenticity.
- IX. The inauthenticity of attempting to maintain Jesuit Catholic identity by simply affirming unbounded pluralism must be addressed in one of two ways: (1) affirmatively maintaining the viability of the question of Jesuit Catholic identity, or (2) decisively abandoning the institutional rhetoric of Jesuit Catholic identity in both internally and externally made claims.