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# The Scholarship of Integration

Michael Kunz

Those of us who, by grateful choice, teach at smaller Christian institutions of higher education do so with one clear understanding: our facility for conducting cutting-edge research is compromised. From the perspective of many of our peers who chose more traditional academic pathways, ours was a choice of, if not professional suicide, at least professional compromise. In our minds though, it is an avenue to pursue other tasks we value. Here we may teach a wide range of topics, we may interact closely with our students and our fellow faculty, we have opportunity to help shape the character of our program and our institution and here we may bring all that we are to our work—intellectual, personal and spiritual.

It therefore strikes a raw nerve when our professional worth is measured by a standard our teaching load inhibits, our institution can poorly support and toward which our passions and perhaps our gifts may not incline us. By the measure of peer-reviewed journal articles publishing original research, I am admittedly an academic failure. And I am not alone. Yet I have the confidence to believe that I and those like me are of more academic value than the traditional *vita* presents. It was with this conundrum in mind that Ernest Boyer called for an expanded understanding of the meaning of scholarship.<sup>1</sup>

Boyer argued that original research into a particular discipline is only one of several types of scholarly activity. He considered the breadth of endeavors faculty actually engage in, and the range of objectives called for by the missions of various types of institutions of higher education. What resulted was a four-fold classification of scholarship: discovery, integration, application and teaching. In Boyer's view, a truer measure of evaluating the contribution of faculty requires that scholarship be redefined to match the range of institutional missions, faculty gifts and actual faculty practice.

Boyer's challenge to reconsider the nature of scholarship generated a wealth of responses from academia. We also have been called to reflect upon the nature of our scholarship at Fresno Pacific University. How do we define scholarship? How should our scholarship be evaluated? Are there particular forms of scholarship for which, by mission or organization or gifting, we are better prepared to undertake?

## Characterizing the Scholarship of Integration

In Boyer's four-fold classification of scholarship, the second domain is that of integration. Boyer considered work at the boundaries of different disciplines to be integrative, especially as such work allows a larger context for understanding knowledge. Integrative scholarship is practiced when the academician places her own research, or the research of others, into larger intellectual patterns. Included in this domain is work that interprets knowledge to those outside the academic discipline. In simplified fashion, he considered the scholarship of discovery to address the question of, "What is to be known, what is yet to be found?" In contrast, the scholarship of integration addresses the question of, "What do the findings mean?"<sup>2</sup>

Glassick, Huber & Maeroff elaborated upon the aims and character of this type of scholarship:

Integration...involves faculty members in overcoming the isolation and fragmentation of the disciplines. The scholarship of integration makes connections within and between the disciplines, altering the contexts in which people view knowledge and offsetting the inclination to split knowledge into ever more esoteric

bits and pieces. Often, integrative scholarship educates non-specialists by giving meaning to isolated facts and putting them in perspective. The scholarship of integration is serious, disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on original research.<sup>3</sup>

In the quest of a simple, four-fold typology of scholarship, Boyer, Glassick and others appear to link two somewhat different endeavors into a single category. The first is inter-disciplinary research, which can be as arcane and technical as any disciplinary subject. The distinction between this type of activity and the scholarship of discovery is not marked, since many interdisciplinary fields congeal over time into accepted disciplines. The second is interpretive work, which makes more complex and technical knowledge understandable to non-specialists. The two may have a common goal; Boyer suggests that such endeavors “can lead the scholar from information to knowledge and, even, perhaps, to wisdom.”<sup>4</sup> The two can also be drawn together in works that interpret interdisciplinary discovery for general audiences. For our purposes, I will follow Boyer and consider both interdisciplinary and interpretive endeavors to fit within the domain of integration.

### **Delimiting and Assessing Integrative Scholarship**

In expanding the notion of scholarship beyond that of the disciplinary, peer-reviewed journal article, Boyer and others provide examples and lists<sup>5</sup> of the types of work that might be considered integrative scholarship. The range of potential activities is quite broad. Interdisciplinary articles, literature reviews, chapters and books written for academic audiences are included under the domain of integration. Since many of these will be peer-reviewed, there should be little controversy in considering them works of scholarship. Disciplinary literature and book reviews are also included here, presumably because they interpret a disciplinary field to its practitioners.

More controversial in many academic settings is the inclusion of popular writing as legitimate works of scholarship. This includes a wide range of written work, such as books, articles, textbooks and reviews. The venues for such writing include local newspapers, national magazines or university publications. The commonality among this diversity is that it interprets disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspectives to a wider audience.

Boyer and Glassick et al. also include activities associated with the development of curriculum under the heading of integration, perhaps because it performs the task of placing the discipline in context. Related to this category are activities such as the design of new courses and the development of curricula and instructional materials. The development of other media of communication such as software, videos and television programs has also been listed within the scholarship of integration.<sup>6</sup>

Moving beyond published works, integrative scholarship might include the development of cross-disciplinary seminars,<sup>7</sup> lectures given to local audiences or talks given on radio or television.<sup>8</sup> Even involvement in judging competitions and expert testimony have been proposed to fall within the purview of integrative scholarship.<sup>9</sup>

Given this plethora of suggested activities, how should the boundaries of legitimate integrative scholarship be drawn? One common benchmark for any scholarly work is that it must be public, and it must be capable of evaluation by some form of peer review.<sup>10</sup> Others add the additional requirement that scholarly work be in a form capable of being used by other academics.<sup>11</sup> Glassick et al. maintain that all works of scholarship must meet six demonstrable, qualitative standards: clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation

and reflective critique.<sup>12</sup> More specific to integrative scholarship, criteria for evaluation might include the advancement of public discourse, presentation of creative insights and clarification of issues and relationships.<sup>13</sup>

Once the criteria for scholarship are met, there is the second issue of the domain to which any particular work belongs. Academic interdisciplinary work could legitimately be considered the scholarship of discovery. Activities associated with curriculum design and instruction might fit more comfortably within the scholarship of teaching.

Documentation of such a wide range of activities for peer review would certainly present challenges to the scholar and to those responsible for review. A portfolio of scholarly work would be necessary, and might require a variety of forms of documentation, such as papers, reports, websites, software and videos.<sup>14</sup> Reflective essays might introduce each scholarly work.<sup>15</sup> Finding appropriate evaluators of the work might also be time-consuming and challenging. Boyer suggests that popular writing be evaluated by others who practice that form of scholarship,<sup>16</sup> yet the disciplinary content would still require evaluation by disciplinary peers. Glassick et al. suggest that each particular project might require the evaluation of different specialists, clients, collaborators and beneficiaries of the scholarship.<sup>17</sup> Given the potentially great amount of time and effort required to document and adequately review this form of scholarship, it is easy to understand why a tally of peer-reviewed journal articles is the standard form of assessing scholarship in most academic settings. Such a diversity of possible approaches to assessment provides the potential for considerable disagreement regarding the quality of work. Glassick et al. quote a senior professor with experience in promotion and tenure committee work: "In the end, faculty must believe that they will be treated fairly. It's far more important to have a climate of trust than well-defined standards, as important as they may be."<sup>18</sup>

### **Scholarship of Integration and the *FPU Idea***

The *Fresno Pacific Idea* statement occupies a central place in the mission of our university. If the scholarship of integration can be justified as an activity important to our work here, it should not only be compatible with the *Idea*, but flow from it organically. It is not difficult to find such connections to the scholarship of integration, for the language of integration is not new to Fresno Pacific. Boyer's suggestion that integrative scholarship leads from information to knowledge to wisdom correlates to the affirmation found in the *Idea* that "wisdom grows out of the commitment to the Christian faith and to the integrative perspective of the liberal arts." Indeed, each of the major sections of the *Idea* can be related to the themes that arise out of the scholarship of integration.

The *Idea* promotes FPU as a community of learners. This provides both a philosophical and a pragmatic rationale for inter-disciplinary scholarship. The *Idea* section on community contends that wisdom arises from "dialogue and discourse between people who have different experiences and perspectives..." Interdisciplinary dialogue and discourse is understood to promote wisdom. From the pragmatic point of view, most intellectual dialogue between faculty in a small institution will be interdisciplinary, almost by necessity. Departments of two or three faculty per discipline offer little scope for extensive discussion, but schools organized around different student populations encourage interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning, and thus provides a stimulus to interdisciplinary thinking.

The *Idea* also sketches a vision of the university as a prophetic voice, speaking of "an integrative, Christian ethic and perspective" capable of critiquing current culture and issues. Embedded in the concept of the prophetic is the notion that the prophet speaks with an enhanced perspective informed by an encounter with God.

This suggests that faculty make use of both the disciplinary and theological perspectives to address contemporary issues.

It is easy to view such scholarly critique of culture flowing from the Christian university outward toward secular society. This is not, however, the only possible outcome of prophetic critique. Prophets spoke to those outside of the community of faith, but more frequently prophesied to those within the community. From an Anabaptist perspective, much of American religious culture is a syncretism of Christian and non-Christian values and beliefs. Insights from academic disciplines can also provide a prophetic voice capable of critiquing contemporary religious culture.

Talk of integrating faith and learning is common in Christian higher education, and is part of our own *FPU Idea* statement. A third characterization of Fresno Pacific University in the *Idea* is that of a Christian university in which the liberal arts provide a context for the “integration of faith, learning, and action...” Such integration may take different forms in the different academic disciplines; the connections between faith and a particular discipline may seem quite evident, while such connections may be less apparent with other academic disciplines.

It seems that the language of integration and the goal of wisdom that may come through integrative study provides a cogent rationale for pursuing the scholarship of integration at Fresno Pacific. And while teaching has traditionally been the primary task of faculty, the integrative task of interpreting disciplines to broader audiences shares much in common with the act of classroom instruction, which interprets a discipline to a particular student audience.

### **Cautionary Notes on the Scholarship of Integration**

While the connection between the *FPU Idea* and integration is apparent, there are two reasons to approach this form of scholarship with caution. First, there is a significant leap required to move from interdisciplinary instruction and discussion to public, inter-disciplinary scholarship. Interdisciplinary forays require most faculty to venture outside the bounds of their academic training. Some of our faculty have received the benefit of broad, interdisciplinary graduate programs, but most academics are trained within a much narrower disciplinary focus. Teaching at a small university such as our own requires most faculty members to become knowledgeable over a wide range of topics within a broader discipline. Keeping abreast of diverse sub-disciplines requires tremendous effort not required of faculty at larger institutions, where the teaching assignments are more focused. To extend the scope of competence to interdisciplinary topics requires even greater effort, and if the foray into the field involves public, scholarly work, the level of understanding must be even greater than that required to instruct competently.

All faculty are familiar with the errors, misunderstandings and ignorance sometimes displayed by academics who venture outside their discipline. But lest the fear of repeating such mistakes prevents us from expanding the scope of our interests, I do believe that collegial interaction at FPU provides us with a better foundation for inter-disciplinary exploration than can be found at most institutions.

A second caution relates to the particular goal of scholarly integration. The term “integration” in the field of science and religion has a specific meaning. Many practitioners embrace this approach, but there are legitimate reasons for a critical evaluation of this enterprise.

Over the past forty years, one of the most influential writers on the relationship between science and religion has been Ian Barbour. He categorized four diverse models by which science and religion may interact.<sup>19</sup> They are commonly perceived in the public mind to be in “conflict”; witness the cultural phenomenon of

debates regarding creation and evolution. But in academic practice, the desire to avoid such unpleasanties leads toward an “isolation” of science and religion. There are definite advantages to such an approach. A discipline can be explored in more depth this way, facilitating the disciplinary model of scholarship. Barbour gives “integration” as a third mode of interaction. By this he means a systematic joining of the two into a seamless whole. The fourth model is that of “dialog,” in which the disciplines maintain their separate identity, but speak to some common issue and inform each other in ways that enrich both fields.

The search for a specifically Christian or theistic form of science can be viewed as an attempt to integrate science and religion. The endeavor to integrate two such diverse fields is perhaps a noble one, but historic and contemporary examples of such integration expose the pitfalls of such approaches. When particular scientific theories or paradigms are integrated into Christian theology, then any challenge to these scientific ideas also becomes a challenge to religious belief. Examples of the resulting conflict can be seen in the stories of Galileo and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Catholic Church, Darwin’s challenge to the 19<sup>th</sup> century British apologetics of natural theology and the contemporary fusion of biblical literalism and creation science.

This phenomenon is not restricted to science and religion. For example, much of conservative American Christianity integrates capitalist economics with the Gospel, while Third World liberation theologies at times uncritically embraced Marxism. If the methods and purposes of two disciplines share little in common, a forced marriage may do more damage than good. If such overarching, interdisciplinary integration is attempted, its conclusions should be held loosely and tentatively.

An alternative approach is that of interdisciplinary dialog. It does not allow disciplines to develop in a vacuum, ignorant of the advances made in other fields, yet it recognizes with humility that we may not be wise enough to discern all of the connections between two disparate fields. An example of such dialog can be seen in the quest to understand the nature of humanity, which is both a theological and a scientific undertaking.

A complete, systematic integration that claims to understand what it means to be human may be beyond our capabilities. A theology of human nature is a religious endeavor, with religious concepts such as sin, the flesh, free will, the fall and redemption. I cannot imagine that these concepts could be developed in a manner that engages the contemporary world without information provided by modern understandings of genetics, psychology and other disciplines. Conversely, there are socio-biological models of human behavior that suffer from the lack of engagement with the reality of religious experience, and its transforming power in the lives of many.

Such interdisciplinary dialog may indeed bring about the transformation from information to wisdom that Boyer claims for this domain, and it supports the *FPU Idea*’s affirmation that a Christian, liberal arts community provides an environment that leads to wisdom.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this article is to clarify the nature of the scholarship of integration, and to discern its relationship to our work here at Fresno Pacific. In conclusion, it may be useful to summarize some of the important issues, and to formulate a definition that can serve as a starting point for discussion.

1. The scholarship of integration emphasizes meaning and understanding, in contrast to the emphasis on new knowledge characteristic of the scholarship of discovery.
2. Two somewhat distinct categories are considered scholarship of integration: interdisciplinary work and interpreting disciplinary knowledge to wider audiences.
3. Assessing this type of scholarship may be challenging and time-consuming.
4. The *FPU Idea* statement lends support to the goals of integrative scholarship.
5. Competent interdisciplinary scholarship is a challenging undertaking.
6. Seamless integration of disparate disciplines has its pitfalls, but interdisciplinary dialog is essential to many important issues.

If our own understanding of the scholarship of integration requires a definition that integrates the unique characteristics of Fresno Pacific University's mission, then I offer the following as a proposal:

The scholarship of integration promotes a greater understanding of academic disciplines through interdisciplinary dialog and through communication in non-academic settings. It supports the *FPU Idea* by promoting wisdom that comes through broadened perspectives, and serves both the church and society. It involves public work amenable to peer evaluation.

## Notes

- 1 Boyer, Ernest L. *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (New Jersey, 1990).
- 2 Boyer, 18-21.
- 3 Glassick, Charles, Mary T. Huber, & Gene I. Maeroff. *Scholarship Assessed*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 9.
- 4 Boyer, 20.
- 5 For example, Braxton, John M., William Luckey, & Patricia Helland. *Institutionalizing a Broader View of Scholarship Through Boyer's Four Domains*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 143-145.
- 6 Boyer, 36. Glassick et al., 11.
- 7 Boyer, 36.
- 8 Braxton et al., 143-144.
- 9 Glassick et al., 11.
- 10 Glassick et al., 16.
- 11 Schulman, L.S., & P. Hutchings. *About the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Pew scholars national fellowship program*. (Menlo Park: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1998). Quoted in Braxton et al., 90.
- 12 Glassick et al., 25.
- 13 Boyer, 35-36.
- 14 Braxton et al., 94.
- 15 Glassick et al., 48.
- 16 Boyer, 35.
- 17 Glassick et al., 48.
- 18 Glassick et al., 50.
- 19 Ian Barbour. *Religion and Science: historical and contemporary issues*. (New York: Harper-Collins, 1997), 77-105. . . . Ian Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: enemies, strangers, or partners?* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2000), 7-38.