

BOOK REVIEWS



Kathleen A. Cahalan, Edward Foley, and Gordon S. Mikoski, eds., *Integrating Work in Theological Education* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 251 pp.

Whenever I reflect on my experience in theological education and formation for ministry over the past five decades, I invariably come, sooner or later, to repent my contribution to the fragmentation of disciplines in practical theology and lament the consequent failure to facilitate the integration of ministry disciplines in students. As a result of that disintegration, as Kathleen Cahalan observes in the introduction to *Integrating Work in Theological Education*, “We have left it to the students to connect the dots between study, calling and ministry” (p. 2). Integration is seldom a simple task. The authors and editors of this useful volume are to be commended for using the verb form ‘integrating’ rather than the noun ‘integration’ in order to keep the focus on process more than outcomes. Rightly, fragmentation is presented as the enemy of integration; making whole what is disconnected or broken is integrating work.

The book is divided into four parts covering three arenas in which the work of integrating may or may not occur—schools, curriculums, courses—and concludes with a critical evaluation of theological frameworks for reflecting on the work of integrating. In each of the first three sections, relevant case studies about integrating work in particular contexts are followed by a brief chapter that pulls together insights from reflecting on the case studies. Although theological schools, their curriculums and courses, are the primary context for examining integrating work, abundant insights in

Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry

ISSN 2325-2847 (print)* ISSN 2325-2855 (online)

* © Copyright 2018 *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry*
All Rights Reserved

this volume are relevant to supervision and formation in parallel settings such as hospitals and churches.

Because schools (as well as congregations and CPE learning centers) are communities of practice, environment matters. Using the connections among formal, semiformal, and informal education patterns as an organizing framework, Edward Foley proposes that the entire 'landscape' of an institution (beyond bricks and mortar) should be attended to as a "rich and fluid environment for untold forms of learning and formation" (p. 29). Congregations and hospitals, as well as seminaries, are all ecosystems that teach and form students and teachers/supervisors in semiformal and informal ways. We have sometimes referred to the values and beliefs displayed on bulletin boards or embodied in administrative decisions as the 'hidden curriculum' of a school or learning center. Open space fosters informal learning. If, however, space is limited, how it is allocated teaches.

Integrating curricular work happens in three ways: integrating the knowledge of distinct disciplines, integrating theory and practice, and an integrating process aimed at an 'engaged self' that combines embodied values and ministerial competence with practical wisdom and the capacity to make good judgments. Two case studies of contextual education in the book highlight the complexity of an 'integrative learning community' that, in David Jenkins's words, "values experience, practices and skills, social analysis, theological reflection, and maturing self-awareness" (p. 116). David Rylaarsdam's observation about fashioning an integrating curriculum seems particularly consistent with the expectations of clinical pastoral education: "Faculty members [i.e., CPE supervisors] need to do their own integrating work in order to foster it in the curriculum and pedagogy of a school" (p. 101). This section would have been enriched by critical reflection on clinical pastoral education as both a context and a process that aims at connecting beliefs, practices, and the person to form ministers "who are knowledgeable, skillful, moral, and competent practitioners" (Kathleen Cahalan, p. 207).

Because of the changing landscapes of theological education and the required formulation of measurable outcomes, seminary faculty are increasingly attentive to course design (and redesign). Gordon Mikoski makes an observation about the centrality of learning contracts already well known to field education and clinical pastoral education supervisors: "Making such connections at the course level works most effectively if students see themselves as in charge of their own learning as emerging ministerial leaders"

BOOK REVIEWS

(p. 131). A concluding insight by Mikoski is a wise reminder to anyone engaged in education for ministry. When done well, integrating work is destabilizing. "Perhaps all courses that foster integrating work have to manage the work of disintegration to some degree" (p. 189). This destabilizing dimension of integrated learning is the reason why learning environments need to be loving communities.

Reforming theological education and formation for ministry into an integrating whole is a daunting task. Theological disciplines are often tribal, resisting integrating activity in order to preserve their particular 'parts.' Trust among the parts of the whole is necessary for integrating to occur. All the parts are regarded as having equal value, making possible an easy flow among the parts. As such, integrating is not simply a technique to be acquired, a skill to polish, or even a strategizing ability to nourish but a reflective ability that considers how to act well and be well in every particular circumstance or context.

The integrating frameworks that conclude this volume presume a Christian theological perspective. However, practical wisdom, which Cahalan identifies as central in integrating work, is not specific to Christianity. Practical wisdom is, for her, the most comprehensive expression of integrative knowledge because it "encompasses the full dimensions of human being, knowing, and acting" (p. 206). I hope there are supervisors in clinical pastoral education who will read this rich volume and offer yet another integrating framework that is both inclusive of differing religious perspectives and deeply engaged in preparing chaplains who embody practical wisdom.

Herbert Anderson
Editor Emeritus, *Reflective Practice*
Sonoma, California