

LINKS TO A LOST INTERLOCUTOR: CREATIVE TENSION, SEXUAL INTELLIGENCE, AND THE STORY OF YOUNG ADULT MALE ROMAN CATHOLICS

Robert J. Parmach
Fordham University

Links to a Lost Interlocutor: Contextualizing the Problem

The 18-22 year-old young adult male Roman Catholic voices a pressing interrogative concern and tension with the Roman Catholic Church today: *How can the educational promise and breadth of my current stifled sexual voice and sexual ways of being and knowing be better heard, appreciated, and incorporated into the Roman Catholic Church as a fuller understanding and appropriation of human experience?* The point of this paper is to help frame, in broad strokes, some of the major issues that are at work in meaningfully responding to the above inquiry.

Many Roman Catholic young men consider themselves relegated to the back of the line, so to speak, when it comes to the Roman Catholic Church hearing, appreciating, and incorporating their sexual ways of understanding contemporary human experience within psycho-social, cultural, and sociological contexts of everyday living. They sense a palpable contradictory request. As young men, they feel they are encouraged to somehow develop physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, culturally, imaginatively, spiritually, morally, and religiously, but are not encouraged to allow these areas of growth to meaningfully co-exist with a fullness of their sexual ways of being in the world as Roman Catholics today. They feel they are struggling in an everyday battle between their ongoing sexual development and maturity and the ways in which the Roman Catholic Church views and attends to them as sexual beings. As a result, these young men consider themselves to be receiving mixed messages about the educational promise and breadth of their sexual voice and educational forms of sexual knowing. Many of them consider this issue to be a pressing concern and tension between their age group and the Roman Catholic Church nowadays. Thus, there is need to critically challenge it in order to re-fashion a better dialogical consonance between Roman Catholic young men and the Roman Catholic Church today as one that respects the richest sense of tradition for both.

Some consider the root of this concern and tension to be a catechetical one of differing doctrinal beliefs between these young men and the Church. Others think its root is the result of modernity racing into a more digitized and technological frontier, where yesterday's sustainable faith of patience and vision loses out to today's unquenchable insistence on immediate gratification and instantaneous knowledge in both religious and secular arenas. Still others root it as an example of arrogant young adult human nature regardless of historical time period: the rebellious tone of young adults 'seeking a cause' to unreflectively tackle and irrationally and unrealistically impose on the Roman Catholic Church.

While these three responses above warrant some investigative thought and house some key nuggets of wisdom, the sustaining root of the concern posed by these young men is not encapsulated by any one of these responses. It is more about the craving of parabolic forms of transformative education as a fuller understanding and appropriation of human experience, rather than a definitive doctrinal, technological, or similar understanding of a 'me *versus* them' dichotomy. What is important are the educational contours of a much needed dialogue that better speaks to this dissonance and embrace the richest sense of tradition for both sides instead of stifling, reducing, or privileging one side over the other. Roman Catholic young men want to be and *remain* part of the Roman Catholic Church today; they do not want to depart from it. The real issue is they want to be *fuller* partners in a Roman Catholic Church that listens better, appreciates more, and incorporates fully their sexual ways of being and knowing as a better understanding and appropriation of their total human experience as a valued conversant (interlocutor).

At this time, this interrogative concern and tension expressed by Roman Catholic young men has not been properly raised or adequately addressed in the scholarship. There is need to meaningfully *address*, carefully *name*, and *parabolically* promote a creative tension dialogue toward fuller sexual maturity between Roman Catholic young men and the Roman Catholic Church today. Not looking to derail themselves from the Church, these young men need to be properly addressed and reciprocally understood, instead of being definitively sidestepped or unilaterally answered. They are looking to re-surface and re-fashion the dialogical conditions and sensibilities for a better *interlocutor* (critical and sustainable conversant) for themselves and the Church. An interlocutor is a voice that disrupts the flow of the

conversation (Lat. *interloqui*: “to speak between; to interrupt”) and uses this intentional rupture in the dialogue to critically assess, reflect, and challenge in true Socratic form leading to real, relational, and relevant educational transformation of fuller human experience. It is necessary to find and *re-locate* this lost interlocutor as a much needed educational method and pedagogical process in better steering a richer sexual maturity dialogue between these young men and the Roman Catholic Church today. Such a dialogue must incorporate cognitive as well as practical human models of social behavior and interplay (hallmarking John Dewey’s understanding of meaningful education as the *laboratory* of life).

Three Exploratory Interrogatives

There seems to be a growing lack of a creative tension-based hermeneutical methodology in the current religious education literature on enhancing a more realistic and creative understanding of sexual maturity for the 18-22 year-old young adult male Roman Catholic and the Roman Catholic Church today. A reconceptualization is in order. As such, three main exploratory interrogatives come to mind.

(1) Whether we might gain better theoretical and practical “traction” by exploring and privileging the points of tension creatively in order to elucidate a more pointed dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Roman Catholic young men today regarding a working response to their voiced concern? (2) Whether we might develop a more realistic understanding of the context and contours of masculinity within which these Roman Catholic young men live and develop today as sexual beings by investigating the frameworks by which they operate in their psycho-social, cultural, and sociological lives? (3) Whether we might enrich our current understanding of *cognitive* based sex education combined with a human modeling of *educating by imitation* of lived practices as sexual education in order to work towards a fuller understanding of sexual maturity for Roman Catholic young men today? The terms *intelligence* and *sexual intelligence* need some unpacking below.

Getting a Handle on “Intelligence”

The word “intelligence” is a vague, sticky term. It is understood by some to mean raw empirical knowledge and by others to mean combined apprehension of various thoughts. Some use the word to

mean something metaphysical as distinguished from physical, corporal matter. Many consider intelligence to mean a mental multi-tasking ability that gets verified by a numerical score. In this last consideration, intelligence is understood as a non-negotiable scientific designation that is verifiable by empirical intelligence quotient (IQ) testing alone. That is, a person's intelligence is determined from an ability or disability to accomplish a codified set of prescribed cognitive tasks that are posed to the testing subject (person), where the resultant data is recorded and analyzed within rationally defined evaluative parameters.

The person is understood to be a cognitive subject. This *test* subject is intentionally stripped from his complexity and richness as a full human being and knower for the purpose of designating him within a cognitively limited domain represented and understood by graphs and pie charts. In this model, narrowing the test subject is the aim, not expansion. In both term and subsequent understanding, *intelligence* is viewed as synonymous with *IQ* score. For many people, the two words simply refer to and univocally mean the same thing, just as the words *yes* and *affirmative* do.

Such IQ exam questions come to mind: (1) Is the subject able to find the missing sequential number in a given mathematical series? (2) Is the subject able to properly identify the figure that best represents a corresponding verbal statement? (3) How long does it take for the subject to realize the correct answer is “(e) none of the above” given intentionally confusing and misleading data about x bags of apples, y pounds of pineapples, and z grams of sugar as part of an algebraic problem to be solved?

In privileging this cognitive arena where a person's intelligence is understood as synonymous with an IQ score, the level of IQ now becomes equated to a person's level of maturity. That is, Intelligence = IQ score = Level of maturity. To be 'more' intelligent means having a higher IQ score and possessing a higher level (ability) of human maturity. To be 'less' intelligent means having a lower IQ score and possessing a lower level (disability) of human maturity. The meaning of intelligence as a cognitive arena alone got all imprecisely caught up in what is understood as a person's maturity. For this author, the problem is **not** that intelligence = level of maturity. This study actually asserts that relationship. Rather, the problem is that the intermediary, IQ, is imprecisely equated to mean both intelligence and level of

maturity when it should really only refer to a cognitive component of one's overall human intelligence. And this imprecision all stems from a restricting of intelligence to mean cognitive IQ alone. The intermediary, IQ, is the real troublemaker.

What is missing is a reconceptualized understanding of intelligence. This researcher considers *intelligence* to be the fuller understanding and appropriation of the totality of human experience as mature. The customarily accepted framing of intelligence was restricted to the cognitive domain alone and somehow also conflated to mean *IQ score, reason, and maturity* (Moran 1974). Thus, we face the need for a reconceptualization of the term *intelligence* and then specifically, *sexual intelligence*, in order to creatively work through the specific concern and tension posed by Roman Catholic young men today regarding their stifled state of sexual maturity and being in the world.

Getting a Handle on "Sexual Intelligence"

Howard Gardner's theoretical framework of multiple intelligences falls under the rubric of a mental, cognitive constructivist school, as does Jean Piaget (Gardner 1985; Piaget 2001). This study, however, would investigate whether (and, if so, to what degree) young adult male Roman Catholics today seek to better understand and appropriate their sexual intelligence as a corporal choreography of cultivated life forms that extend beyond the cognitive arena alone. These forms of sexual intelligence hallmark a social interplay of human relationships that emerge as the result of an intentionally subversive parabolic pedagogy of both cognitive sex education and 'education by imitation' as modeled human life practices of sexual knowing and maturing. It is a fluid type methodology (Kaveny 2004). The focus includes a modeling *in deed* as an alternative paradigm of Roman Catholic young men working through various types of human relationships.

Working to surface and better tap into the patterns of life that are sexually educative by the use of parabolic forms of education is what links this study's methodology of emergent sexual intelligence to what the Church calls *didache* (teaching), *diakonia* (service), and *koinonia* (community). Its orientation is a modeling of reciprocal lifelong teaching and learning that highlights both cognitive and lived patterns of life that can be sexually educative within the richest aspects of the Roman Catholic Church today as a

real, relational, and relevant understanding of the totality of human experience to live and live abundantly (Lynch 1990).

Roman Catholic young men and the Roman Catholic Church need to explore this reconceptualized sense of intelligence if a meaningful link of real, relational, and relevant creative dialogue is to develop. These young men need reassurance that their sexual voice and sexual ways of being in the world will be better heard, appreciated, and incorporated into the Roman Catholic Church today as an intelligence of fuller understanding and appropriation of the totality of human experience. Their interlaced development physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, culturally, imaginatively, spiritually, morally, and religiously needs to be counted and re-fashioned into full sexual ways of being, knowing, and living in the world as Roman Catholics today.

To best reflect the totality of human experience, this sense of *intelligence* needs to get linked with its coexisting inter-relational developmental areas. Thus, there needs to be a physical intelligence, emotional intelligence, psychological intelligence, social intelligence, cultural intelligence, imaginative intelligence, spiritual intelligence, moral intelligence, and religious intelligence. An embodied *sexual intelligence* is sought where these interlaced developmental areas are incorporated into an integrated balance of rational and ‘more than rational’ rhythmic interactions to work toward fuller understanding and appropriation of sexual maturity.

Just as the sense of *intelligence* needs to link up with the above developmental areas so, too, does the sense of *sexual intelligence*. There needs to be a fully operative creative wrestling with sexual intelligence. Thus, there needs to be an **emotional** *sexual* intelligence, **psychological** *sexual* intelligence, **social** *sexual* intelligence, et al. Each has a working part in the overall sexual maturity of these young men. Each has a working part in the educational promise of the current stifled sexual voice and sexual ways of being and knowing in the world. Each needs to be better heard, appreciated, and incorporated into the Roman Catholic Church today as a fuller understanding and appropriation of the totality of human experience for Roman Catholic young men today.

Getting a Handle on Moran's Goal of Intelligence

For Gabriel Moran, the goal of intelligence is “to understand life rather than oppose it, not to suppress spontaneity but to enlarge it...to accept into [one's] life more than [one] can rationally manipulate...perceiving, symbolizing, understanding, and directing experience...a transcending of reason which is possible only by discipline and communion...” (1970). The researcher's use of intelligence privileges moving beyond the traditional sequestering (and later divinizing) of intelligence as solely rational and restricting its legitimacy to the cognitive alone. Reason “is an inner component of intelligence” (Moran 1970) that needs fashioning alongside the more-than-rational avenues.

Moran recalls John Dewey's sense of intelligence as interlaced with experience and as learning in the laboratory of life. It is the more than rational. It is “the matrix of relationships, the ‘active-passive affair’ between persons, within persons and between person and nonpersonal environment” that arise from human forms of restructured learning environments as the rhythmic “play of rational and nonrational forces” (1974). So, too, emotional elements are housed within this sense of intelligence, as is the rational. Reason is contained within the intelligent human being, not equated or reduced to it. A person is intelligent, not insofar as he can cognitively operate alone, but rather as far as he can understand, for this involves both actuality and potentiality as a fullness of human experience.

For Moran, religious education must concern itself with an ongoing necessary paradox: vigilant resistance to definitive limits and borders, while working to better shape such limits and borders in order to usher forth fuller human understanding and development. The researcher's use of sexual intelligence hallmarks Moran's sense of pushing the boundaries of thought and operative human models of imitative lived practices. This study calls for a sexual intelligence that opens the once selective category of religious education proper to now include both cognitive and modeled human behavior and practices that resist “the fatigue of reason and its tendency to settle down and declare the system complete” (1974).

Though the present researcher ultimately privileges Moran's sense of intelligence as the full incorporation of bodily ways of being and knowing in the world, this study is also in rich conversation with Howard Gardner's work on the theory of multiple intelligences with respect to bodily kinesthetic

intelligence (Gardner 1983, 1993). Drawn from a cognitive constructivist school, Gardner's presentation of the areas of linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and bodily-kinesthetic is helpful to explore alongside Moran's presentation of the developmental areas of physical, emotional, psychological, social, cultural, moral, religious, and imaginative intelligence (Moran 1983).

It is also important to highlight that the present researcher's meaning of intelligence will be worked out in the context of human inter-relatedness. To draw from Mary Elizabeth Moore's sense of 'traditioning' as a relational process of passing on the customs, values, wisdom, and rituals of a people, we are intelligent insofar as we develop and understand within the context of others (1983). For the present study, this is crucial for the full incorporation of bodily ways of being and knowing in the world with others. The research will also attend to the age-related dimension of intelligence which in this particular study will attend to a higher emphasis on the propensity to question of the young adult male age group under view (Parks 2000).

Some Further Nuances

For the purpose of this study, it is important to distinguish between what the researcher terms *sex* education and *sexual* education. *Sex* education consists of a cognitive focus alone: an informational, health textbook type dissemination of key facts, statistics, and data that are an important part (not the whole) of one's overall sexual maturity. A necessary type of education for young adult males, sex education begins and ends with the cognitive domain. Some traditional examples of *sex* education are: studying the laws of genetics and chromosomal behavior on brain development, examining one's dietary needs for proper muscle growth, learning about sexual intercourse and reproduction, and knowing what physical and psychological changes occur in boys and girls during puberty.

Sexual education goes beyond the cognitive fact-oriented domain of sex education, and it concerns an education by imitation approach of corporal models of sexual life forms that are educative by lived example. It hallmarks the 'rational and more than rational' sensibilities of sexual knowing, being, and maturing in the world with others in real and sustainable ways. These sensibilities educationally emerge as a result of privileging subversive friction-filled parabolic forms of education. These forms serve as a

framework towards what this researcher calls a mature sexual intelligence by which the tensions existing between these young men and the Roman Catholic Church regarding what is understood as a fully lived sexual maturity and intelligence are explored in creative ways to showcase the consonance and richness of both groups (Moran 1997, 1974, 1970; Heidegger 1962; Crossan 1988).

Sexual education is not limited to biological, anatomical, physiological, and cognitive data alone. Sexual intelligence is an extension of these and a synthesis of both sex education and sexual education for the purpose of privileging the ‘educating by doing’ models of fostering sexual maturity for these young men within the richest aspects of the Roman Catholic faith tradition. It is the researcher’s position that sex education’s cognitive arena becomes enriched with education by imitation sexual education in order to be directed toward a mature fashioning of *sexual intelligence*.

Roman Catholic young men need a cognitive sex education that is supplemented by sexual education as a modeling mechanism. Such exploratory questions come to mind as: (1) Does the Roman Catholic Church design unyielding patriarchal patterns lacking sexually intelligent sensibilities over other models? (2) How can the Roman Catholic Church better develop pointed human lived models of sexual intelligence and maturity of young men as ways of knowing and being in the world with others? (3) What particular methodological and pedagogical shifts might help foster a greater and more mature sexual intelligence for these young men and the Roman Catholic Church today?

Organizing Root Metaphor

The organizing root metaphor that will guide this study is that of the necessary tension in the links of a chain working to accomplish a task.



Consider the links of a chain. The utility of a chain lies in its taut links. There is tension **in** the link because tension **is** precisely the link itself. Necessary tension brings the links together to accomplish work. Handling tension is a realistic and necessary thing with which to grapple. Yet, tension can be a highly negative and debilitating force that produces manifest and/or latent undercurrents yielding

destructive links and a stifled dialogue of the human story. Re-appropriating this tension *creatively* is a positive art form that helps bridge conversational gaps instead of constructing impenetrable divisions.

One particular form of tension through which young adult male Roman Catholics grapple is what this study calls *sexual intelligence* – the fuller understanding and appropriation of the totality of sexual maturity. This is the pressing need to foster a meaningful and creative parabolic pedagogy of sexual ways of knowing, understanding, and appropriating the totality of human experience in the world with others that speaks to this age group and the Roman Catholic Church in real and sustainable ways. The true meaning of education is interactive engagement with the world, not abstraction from it (Dewey). As such, this approach of re-appropriating the tension creatively would be sought in order to help link these young men to the best and richest aspects of the Roman Catholic Church regarding an educationally interactive sexual intelligence and sexual maturity (Moran 1997, 1974, 1970; Clark 1993).

Gameplan

In order to do so, the researcher will investigate five main avenues. First, in order to uncover the tension links that lie beneath Roman Catholic young men and the Roman Catholic Church regarding sexual ways of knowing and being in the world, the study will paint a portrait of today's Roman Catholic young man. The meaning and manifestation of the maleness and masculinity of the contemporary young adult male Roman Catholic will be explored within the categories of the *purpose*, *power*, and *public consciousness* of their lives. Second, employing the same categories of *purpose*, *power*, and *public consciousness*, the study will investigate the emergent theological tensions that exist between the official Roman Catholic magisterial teachings regarding sexual ways of being and that of contemporary theological scholarship. Third, in order to gather a fuller understanding and appreciation of the richness of both sides, a subversive creative tension parabolic pedagogy will attempt to develop clearer links between official Church teachings and that of the lived experience of these young men. Also investigated will be the current ways in which the sexual wisdom of the tradition can be made accessible today. The

hope is for the human pedagogue to creatively steer a more realistic dialogue of positive creative tension between Roman Catholic young men and the Roman Catholic Church today regarding sexual intelligence.

Fourth, the study will explore the ways by which we might enrich our current understanding of the sexual intelligence of Roman Catholic young men. This will be done by creatively instigating the practice of sexual modeling with respect to what possible patterns of life behaviors and practices as an *education by imitation* model might be sexually educative in personal and communal interactions. Fifth, the study will explore the educational framework and curricular implications of privileging a dual creative tension methodology: (1) exploring a significant way to engage in “to teach the conversation” so as to allow cognitive sexual maturity; (2) exploring an “education by imitation” modeling of possible patterns of life behaviors and practices so as to allow *meta*-cognitive forms of sexual maturity. This is done for the purpose of exploring a more critical and sustainable sexually educative and mature sexual intelligence as a fuller understanding and appropriation of the totality of human experience for Roman Catholic young men and the Roman Catholic Church today.

Overall Significance of the Study

The overall significance of the study is to meaningfully add to the body of religious education scholarship that currently exists regarding a critical hermeneutical understanding of the present stifled state of sexual intelligence for the 18-22 year-old young adult male Roman Catholic and the Roman Catholic Church today. The study also seeks to better name and articulate the creative points of tension that exist between Roman Catholic young men and the Roman Catholic Church than has been done in the scholarship to date. This is all for the purpose of setting the stage to open up the conversation so that positive creative tension, critical insights, and a restored consonance between Roman Catholic young men and the Roman Catholic Church today might better emerge for the betterment of both.

Another hope is to meaningfully reiterate the important task of pushing the boundaries and limitations of rational categories so as not to prevent possibilities of fuller human understanding and experiential learning and development. The totality of human experience is not restricted to cognitive arenas alone.

The 'hermeneutic turn' that this study privileges is important since it will work to better name and nuance the rational and 'more than rational' ways of knowing and being in the world as sexual, corporal human beings with others as a modeling of educative life patterns that gain greater usage when creatively interlaced with cognitive arenas (psychological sexual intelligence, imaginative sexual intelligence, moral sexual intelligence, et al.).

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