Taproots: The Ratio Studium at 400

Paul Shore
2. Prelection of a Poet.

a) After giving a clear and somewhat full theme of the poem, take a verse and, preserving and of syntax, state its meaning in different words necessary to do this twice in order to render it:

Thus: Arma virumque cano. Troiae qui prim
propose to trace in verse the fortunes of wa

Or: “I shall begin to recount the ev’n
who...”

Yet the Ratio was far more than a curriculum guide or managerial handbook. Its tremendous influence on the development of education can be attributed to both the organization it provided to the hundreds of schools that the Jesuits established worldwide, and to the vision of the teacher embodied in the document. In an era when the typical schoolmaster was often a feared tyrant or an untrained novice, the Jesuit instructor described in the Ratio was committed to motivating students in positive ways, and appreciating their individual characteristics. He was to be informative, articulate, and flexible, encouraging classroom competition while emphasizing social courtesy. There was even a provision, unheard of in its day, for students to provide “feedback” to their teachers after their lectures.

Some elements of the Ratio remind us of the distance between ourselves and an age long past. Students were enjoined not to attend public executions. Swords were banned from class. Mastery of the classical languages and of Hebrew—a goal many of us still strive for and admire—was central to the educational scheme. But many of the core values outlined in the Ratio are still directly relevant to the concerns of today’s educators. There is, of course, a great value placed on the development of the “whole student,” especially on his spiritual growth. The document’s emphasis on unity of procedure was intended to ensure standards of educational quality adaptable to widely differing locations and greatly varying circumstances. The Ratio, moreover, required great skill from the instructor, who had to go beyond merely lecturing on topics, and offer deeper analysis. Jesuit schools operating under the Ratio placed an emphasis on critical reading and on understanding and wielding the persuasive power of language. The notion of a conceptually unified...

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curriculum, central to the Ratio, is likewise echoed in
our present day debates about the unity of the under-
graduate core curriculum. One element that seems
especially foreign to those of us steeped in late twen-
tieth-century ideas of academic freedom was the censor-
ship imposed on teachers and students alike. Yet this
censorship must be balanced against the basically opti-
mistic and positive view of human experience which
the Jesuits who implemented the Ratio sought to
impart to their students.

Saint Louis University is planning to mark the
anniversary of the Ratio with a series of events designed
to speak to all segments of the university community and
other interested parties. In the coming months

seminars, conversations, and brown-bag lunches will be
held where members of the community can come and par-
ticipate in discussions on various aspects of the heritage of
the Ratio. The University is also inviting internationally rec-
ognized authorities on Jesuit education to speak at celebra-
tions concluding the anniversary year.

The Ratio Studiorum may be considered a product of its
eighteenth-century context, a response to the educational needs which the first
few generations of Jesuits saw around them. But it is much
more than that. It is a point of departure for an exami-
nation of our identity as teachers and educational leaders in
the next millennium. The celebration of its anniversary pro-
vides a valuable opportunity to continue that examination.

B. Sample Prelections for the Class of

1. Sample Prelections for the Class of

TABROOTS

2. Sample Prelections for the Class of

Roots

3. Sample Prelections for the Class of

Rhetoric

a) The precept should be explained in like p

of Rhetoric.

b) Each precept should be explained in like p

reason beneath each definition may be invest

does Soarez define Rhetoric at the very outset

cause as Cicero says, every reasonable invest

with a definition, so that the point of discu

understood. If there is some word whose e

for the understanding of a precept, let it be

the precept by tropes and schemata.

c) If points arise which are not easily

either clarify them at once or pass over the

the class that they will be treated at great

Such an instance is the definition of art

which the author wishes to make use of

Rhetoric an art? Afterward

similar p

http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol15/iss1/10
Jesuit Education 21

Conference on The Future of Jesuit Higher Education

WHAT IS THIS?

Jesuit Education 21 (JE21) is a five-day, dynamically interactive conference to address a variety of issues critical to the vitality of the Jesuit tradition and vision for education in the coming decades.

WHO ARE INVITED?

All persons, Jesuit and lay, involved in Jesuit higher education.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

JE21 hopes to spark a series of detailed conversations first broached by Loyola Press’ new book, Promise Renewed: Jesuit Higher Education for a New Millennium. The conversation will include everyone from more than 70 leading experts and discussants on a wide array of topics, to people grappling daily with these issues in America’s Jesuit colleges and universities.

WHAT ARE THE TOPICS?

Too many to list here, JE21 will examine broad topics such as Jesuit education and social justice, secularization, popular culture, spirituality and campus life, as well as more detailed subjects including Jesuit higher education and the role of business and economics, administration, theology and philosophy.

WHEN AND WHERE IS IT?

Friday, June 25TH through Tuesday, June 29TH, 1999
Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Registration by April 30TH  $50
Registration by May 21ST  $65
REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS MAY 21ST 1999
Campus accommodations  $25 per night

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

To receive a full brochure and registration packet, visit the conference website at www.sju.edu/JHE21 or leave your full name, mailing address, e-mail address and phone number in the conference voice mail box at 610-660-3381.