Curriculum Theologiae

Response from the Rough Grounds of Asia

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https://doi.org/10.48604/ct.103

Submitted on: 2013-12-18
Posted on: 2013-12-18
(YYYY-MM-DD)

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND EXCELLENCE IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
Response from the Rough Grounds of Asia

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I would like to thank the previous speakers who have given their valuable insights on the themes assigned to us. My role here is to comment on some of the insights forwarded from a different angle. My comments would be drawn from the location and context known to me – my experiences as a theologian and educator, my own theological training and our small attempts in doing and teaching theology in the Philippines. I was also involved in an evaluation of selected theological institutes in the Philippines which was commissioned by the Institute of Missiology in 2011.[1] I am aware that I am speaking from a different context, but I also hope that this sharing of perspectives will foster collaborative mutuality toward excellence and contextualization of theological education in Asia.

My response is divided into four parts patterned after the assigned topics: orientation and goals, teaching methods, interdisciplinary concerns, and beneficiaries and agents of theological education. In the end, I hope to forward a framework for theological education which can hopefully ground all my comments.

1. Orientation and Goals

In his research on the different theological institutes in India, Fr. Leonard Fernando discovers that the orientation of different seminaries or theological schools depends much on the goals and priorities of each institution (training for diocesan priests, for the members of their own religious communities, ritual churches, "open institutes", etc.). What unites all these differences is twofold: they are all oriented to the mission ("for mission") in the Indian/Asian context and their methods are context-based ("in mission").[2]

Let me expand this reflection on the orientation of theological education from a different angle. When preparing for this conference, I explored some literature in theological education and I found that there was a dearth of studies from the Catholic side of the denominational divide.[3] Our

[1] Felix Wilfred and Daniel Franklin Pilario, "Evaluation of Selected Theological Institutions in the Philippines: Findings and Recommendations," Research Commissioned by MWI – Aachen, 3 March 2011.

[2] Leonard Fernando, "Orientation and Goals of Theological Formation in India/Asia Today," Lecture delivered in this conference.

[3] Some prominent sources are Patrick Carey and Earl Muller, *Theological Education in the Catholic Tradition: Contemporary Challenges* (New York: Crossroads, 1997); Katrina Schuth, *Seminaries, Theologates, and the Future of Church Ministry: An Analysis of Trends and Transitions* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999); Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, ed., *Theologie in III. Millenium – Quo Vadis Antworten de Theologen. Dokumentation einer Weltumfrage*

Protestant brethren (mainline churches and evangelicals) have been reflecting on this theme decades earlier.[4] Let me use some of their perspectives to help illuminate our present theme.

Models of Theological Education

Several authors (David Kelsey, Robert Banks and Brian Edgar) have developed four models of theological education in separate works: Athens (classical), Berlin (professional), Jerusalem (missiological) and Geneva (confessional). Let me spell out their descriptions and locate some of our theological institutions within these frames.

Athens – also called the 'classical' model – draws its inspiration from the Greek ideal of *paideia* which, according to David Kelsey,[5] was adopted by the early church. It is a program of inculcating the virtues (*arête*) and desirable habits aimed at achieving excellence of the soul. Theological education, in this context, does not mean *knowing about God* as *knowing God*. Academic learning is subordinated to faith formation and moral transformation. The theological training given in many of our many of formation houses and seminaries – as it was in monasteries ages ago – can be located within this model. On the one hand, this model bridges the often decried chasm between theology and spirituality; on the other hand, it may also lead to the creation of an uncritical theology used to support ideologically biased formation programs promoted by many religious groups bordering on the fanatical.

With the coming of the Enlightenment, the University of Berlin served as the new center of the scientific learning and research. In the Berlin model, training means disciplined critical inquiry. Theology and its classical texts needed to justify itself vis-à-vis the standard of the new modern science (*Wissenschaft*). Schleiermacher then argued that theology can be both a subject of critical inquiry as well as a field of study that can train "professionals" to minister to the church. Many theological faculties in the universities of Europe and United States – and a growing number of faculties of religious studies attached to universities in Asia and elsewhere – take their inspiration from this model. On the one hand, the experience of interdisciplinarity and critical thinking inherent in this model is helpful to theology as it asserts its much needed voice in the public sphere. On the other hand, theology in the context of this model can also become a detached academic undertaking sometimes disconnected from spirituality and real life – the cry of many post-liberals and radical orthodoxy proponents.

(Frankfurt/Main, 2000); David Kwang-sun Suh, Annette Meutrath and Hyondok Choe, *Charting the Future of Theology and Theological Education in Asian Contexts* (London: ISPCK, 2004).

[4] Since 1957, the Protestant groups already started reflecting on theological education in Asia through ATEASEA (Association for Theological Education in South East Asia) under the leadership of some famous names: John Flemming, Kosuke Koyama, Emerito Nacpil, etc. Its publication, *Asia Journal of Theology,* dedicates a substantial number of articles to theological education. Cf. Choo Lak Yeow, *Time for Action: Theological Education for Asia Today* (Singapore: ATESEA, 1988). In the North American context, see Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity in Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

[5] David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993).

A third type is the Jerusalem model. Taking a cue from Tertullian's famous aphorism, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem", Robert Banks[6] looks to "Jerusalem" – from where the Christian faith issued forth – as a model for missiological or bent of theological education. If mission is the heart of the church, then missiology should be able to shape the way we do and teach theology. Theology is for the mission, for evangelization. In the Asian context, schools of theology and seminaries inspired by religious congregational charisms and their mission are good examples of this model. At least in the Philippines, the main schools of theology in the Manila area belong to this type. Banks traces the emergence of these small institutes outside the universities or mainstream diocesan seminaries – from some 'dissident' and peripheral spheres of the Christian traditions (e.g., Pentecostal independent churches, religious congregations independent of the bishops, etc.) outside dominant institutions. On the one hand, we rejoice that theological education in the Jerusalem model is seen beyond personal formation and academic exercise, and instead as a praxis-oriented education geared toward social transformation or conversion of 'pagans' – depending on how 'mission' is interpreted and reinterpreted by its proponents. On the other hand, its emphasis on mission as "spreading the Gospel to the whole world" is in danger of being co-opted by 'plantation ecclesiology and its expansionist programs.

The fourth model named the "Geneva model" is contributed by Brian Edgar[7] – a professor of the Fuller Theological Seminary (Geneva being the base of the World Council of Churches). In the Catholic context, this can also be renamed the "Rome" model. A recent attempt to assert the centrality of Rome, for instance, is found in an article of the most recent issue of *Communio*. One of its editors – Rémi Brague – argues that Rome is, in fact, "the driving force of the Western cultural adventure" as it reconciles both Athens and Jerusalem.[8] Geneva/Rome represents the confessional approach to theological education which entails an indoctrination of students into its own life, history (both its heroes and enemies) and learning the orthodox interpretations of its confessional texts. Without this model, there is no way to account for the many seminaries whose main orientation is to teach Roman theology for its future priests – nothing less, nothing more. To cite an example, a bishop once told a professor that he could teach in 'his' (the bishop's) seminary if he gave instruction only on the basics. When asked what those 'basics' might be, the bishop pointed to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. At least in the Philippine context, institutions of this type compose a majority of the institutions. On the one hand, this provides the necessary training in orthodoxy for future church ministers. On the other hand, theological education is seen as producing 'theological parrots' for the Magisterium whose work is nothing else but to cut, paste and combine phrases from Papal encyclicals and *L'Osservatore Romano*.

Uses of the Models Approach

[6] Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdsmans, 1993).

[7] Brian Edgar, "The Theology of Theological Education," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29, No. 3 (2005): 208-217.

[8] Rémi Brague, "Athens – Jerusalem – Rome," *Communio: International Catholic Review* XL, No. 1 (2013): 20-35.

What are the uses of the models approach? Like all theoretical constructs, the models are not mutually exclusive. One institution may follow the orientation of two or three models. Also, there can be more models than the ones presented. But using it as a heuristic device can hopefully provide us a framework with which to evaluate the orientation, goals and methods of theological education in Asia today.

One way of looking at the data of Fr. Fernando's survey is to evaluate the institutions' direction through the lenses of the aforementioned models. First, the models help us see that the diversity of orientation can show the plurality with which the Christian mystery is approached in our contexts. Such plurality is good news to theological education. Second, the models approach can also help us locate the different theological institutions in the social space at one time. Through it, we can also understand institutional dynamics at play. For instance, there is an inherent affinity between the Roman (confessional) and Athens (classical) models. The confessional model has always used personal formation to inculcate its institutional *habitus* in its adherents. But we also notice that there are contrasting orientations which can create tensions between the Roman and the Berlin models or between the Athens and the Jerusalem models. To cite a concrete example, the bishops who uphold the Roman model look with suspicion at those schools of theology which are inspired by the critical stance of the Berlin model. Consequently, they can place such institutions on a "watch list" and will not send any seminarian, religious or priest to study there. On the other hand, some institutions inspired by the service and mission orientation of the Jerusalem model consider the emphasis on personal transformation of the Athens model as quite narcissistic and inward-looking. The analysis of theological institutions from the perspective of these models can help us understand better the relationship between and among these institutions.

The Rough Grounds: A Fifth Model?

Beyond these four models, I can sense a neglected locus that needs to be asserted if we want theology to become salutary. While several aspects are taken care of by the different models (Athens – moral formation; Berlin – intellectual formation; Jerusalem – apostolic formation; Rome – institutional formation), these directions are, however, largely about the internal concerns of institutions and members. They are merely concerned with the church's own reproduction: with the inculcation of its truth in bodies and minds (Athens and Berlin) or the spread of itself in space and time (Rome and Jerusalem). The 'other', who is supposed to be the subject of God's revelation and theology, is absent. In the context of the four models, theology becomes the concern of the self and not of the 'other'.

If theology is an expression of God's salvific will for the world, that 'world' should not only be an object of theology. It should also be its subject. To appropriate Stephen Bevans's famous image, theological educators are not only 'pearl merchants' who go to the ends to the earth to sell the valuable stone; they should also be 'treasure hunters' who needs to realize that the precious gem is already in the grounds they are treading on.[9]

[9] Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, New York Orbis Books, 2002).

Especially in the context of Asia, the poor are not only the objects of theological education; they are also its subjects. Their everyday world should be the locus of our theologizing and the starting point of theological education. It is their context and their needs that determine our content and methodologies. The concerns that Fr. Fernando suggested for exploration at the end of his talk can be decided on from the perspective of this locus –advancement of local theologies, dialogue with local cultures, the use of local language, relationship with other religions, globalization, etc. – all social forces that deeply affect the poor and can be keenly felt in their everyday lives. The "rough grounds" of the poor determine the questions we ask, the interpretative lens we choose and, ultimately, the content and methods of our theologies. For lack of a better word, let me call this the "rough grounds" model.

In the context of our work in the Philippines, we call this by the tagline "doing theology from the margins".[10] To begin at the margins—to listen to the stories of the poor, to feel their questions and dreams—is an indispensable starting point of our doing and teaching theology if we want this enterprise to be liberative. I have argued elsewhere how our 'seeing' reconfigures the content of our 'judging' and our 'acting' in a more technical manner.[11] Let me just illustrate my point here with a classroom example. I have been teaching theology of grace for several years now. In the first three meetings of each semester, I do not hold classes but assign an activity. I ask the students to talk with simple ordinary people from the margins (street dwellers, dumpsite scavengers, HIV/AIDS victims, etc.) and explore with them what is 'grace' as experienced in their lives. One student interviewed a prostituted woman and her answer hit him quite deeply: "For me, God's grace is when he sends me three costumers tonight." With that and other responses from the rough grounds, there is no way we can discuss in the usual manner the treatises of grace in Augustine or Aquinas. Here, our 'seeing' decenters our 'judging' (and consequently, our 'acting'). Our social analysis deconstructs our theological contents and methods.

2. Teaching Methods

In terms of teaching methods, each model has its own preference. The methods mentioned by Prof. Pushpa Joseph[12] can generally be assigned to the models as their possible dominant approach. The lecture method of banking education is preferred by proponents of Berlin and Geneva/Rome models. The practitioners of Athens model are more at home with the master-apprentice approach where the teacher is the revered 'guru' who can show his students the way to virtue and enlightenment. The Jerusalem model where the teacher is a seasoned evangelist might also be seen as a 'sales and advertising expert', and so forth.

[10] "Doing theology from the margins" is the motto that captures the theological programs of St. Vincent School of Theology, Adamson University, Manila, Philippines.

[11] Cf. Daniel Franklin Pilario, *Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis: Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005).

[12] Pushpa Joseph, "Theological Formation Today: Methods, Resources and Tools," Lecture delivered in this conference.

Let me forward some comments from the ground. While it is true that there is a challenge to look for methods that integrate academic training with spiritual growth and formational needs (Athens model), there is also a need to strengthen critical thinking skills, systematization and theorizing among our students (Berlin model). Being used to absorbing digital bytes and fragmentary concepts in Facebook, the youth at least in my experience find it difficult to do critical analysis and synthesis, to ask questions and ask them well, or to put other positions into question including one's own. My experience with young students – regardless of academic level (baccalaureate, Master's or doctorate) – tells me that few can synthesize an author's point from the readings or put such point into question. Those trained in the institutional model (Geneva/Rome) are afraid to ask questions or put things into critical perspective; those following the missionary model (Jerusalem) are in a hurry to apply concepts to the field. It is sad but true: sustained critical theoretical discourse is a rare phenomenon in the classroom in our times. However, my concern for critical thinking is not only related to academic learning. As it is necessary in the classrooms, it is more crucial in grassroots communities where poor people are left at the mercy of corrupt and manipulative politicians, fanatical religious leaders or ruthless consumer advertising. From this situation in the rough grounds, critical thinking is the first necessary arsenal in their discernment process toward survival.[13]

Beyond the above methods, my proposed model from the "rough grounds" finds affinity with Sr. Pushpa's 'wisdom approach' to theological education – a contextual theology that moves from pedagogy to andragogy, from acquiring knowledge to attaining wisdom. In this radical feminist democratic methodology, students are empowered to do critical thinking by challenging their's presuppositions and by taking a point of view other than their own. This proposal for a new method leads us to my next point: interdisciplinary reflexivity.

3. Interdisciplinary Concerns

I agree with Prof. Patrick when he favors "hermeneutic mutuality" between theology and the social sciences.[14] This means that as theologians, we respect the autonomy of other sciences as we also see the need for interdisciplinary communication with them. However, this is quite an ideal which barely happens on the ground.

The Models and Interdisciplinarity

In my experience in the Philippines, many seminaries and theological institutes do not care about interdisciplinary collaboration at all. The classical courses being taught are too 'dogmatic' and the methods are too traditional so as to take the social sciences on board. The 'complete

[13] Paulo Freiri and Antonio Faundez, *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989).

[14] Patrick G, "How is Theological Formation Done Today? Is there and Integration with Other Disciplines?" Lecture delivered in this conference.

exclusion' type in Richard Roberts's categorization is strongly present in seminaries following the Geneva/Roman model. At the moment, I do not really know if there are schools and theologians that can be charged with capitulation to the social sciences. I think theology can be faulted for not relating with social sciences than for over-familiarity with the field.

At best, the most advance phase of interdisciplinarity can be seen in theology's instrumentalist view of social sciences. Some theologians or institutions utilize other sciences for theological purposes in the classical sense of *ancilla theologiae*. In my observation, the schools inspired by the Athens model employ the help of psychology and human development sciences for the formation of their students; the Berlin model institutes have an extensive use of philosophy and history in its critical theologizing; and, the Jerusalem model institutions try to use social sciences and management theories in their search for new ways of evangelizing. But most of these attempts at interdisciplinarity are one-sided, instrumentalist and unidirectional.

The preferred "hermeneutic mutuality" is not happening on the ground due to many factors. Let me bring out some practical ones. First, theology and its attendant ecclesiastical institutions seemingly find it hard to let go of its role as the "queen of the sciences". A queen can only talk to her subjects and *ancillae* in a condescending manner, that is, if ever she decides to talk with them at all. This patronizing attitude vis-à-vis other disciplines is still prevalent in many church institutions today.

The second reason comes from the side of the social sciences themselves. In a secular university today, theology has lost its once coveted place. In the view of the other sciences, the queen has already lost its crown. Contemporary science, influenced as it is by dominant positivist paradigms, considers 'objectivity' as a scientific ideal. If theology is seen to be either subjective or sectarian (rightly or wrongly), who then is interested in interdisciplinary conversation with someone who could not talk on the same wave length? We can thus ask: "For whose interest is interdisciplinarity?"

The third reason is more practical. If there were well-meaning theologians and institutions willing to seriously incorporate other sciences into theological discourse, most of these institutions are not financially capable to fund interdisciplinary researches nor can they employ resident scholars from different fields. If there are 'generous souls' from other sciences who would like to do some 'teaching apostolate' in our schools of theology and seminaries, they only teach their own scientific specializations (sociology, history, psychology, etc.) without establishing interdisciplinary dialogue at all. It is not their fault. Just as theologians are not familiar with the terrains of other sciences to be able to speak about them more or less confidently, so do the scientists from other fields. In short, interdisciplinarity becomes challenging because we are locked up in our own disciplinary specializations. Even as we want to, we do not know how – and the "we" refers to the specialists from all sides: theologians and other scientists.

Scientific Reflexivity

This brings me to my next point: the need for 'scientific reflexivity'. The lack of interdisciplinary discourse impoverishes the church and theology (as already expressed many

times). But my concern is deeper than that. The neglect of reflexivity is detrimental to science and the pursuit of truth itself. If we consider theology as science and theologians as engaged in scientific pursuits, then reflexivity is crucial to their jobs.

The French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, thinks that the way to scientific knowledge is plagued by many *scholastic illusions*.[15] In ordinary parlance, the journey to theological knowledge for instance is hindered by many blind spots coming from different sources: (a) biases based on one's personal location; (b) prejudices coming from the structure of one's scientific specialization; and (c) biases caused by being part of the intellectual field itself. Bourdieu proposes to counter these biases to knowledge through scientific reflexivity. Reflexivity (*re-flectere*) means the capacity of science to 'return unto itself' and make itself the subject of its own reflection. In short, it is the ability to put oneself and one's discourse into question. But, in Bourdieu, reflexivity presupposes several levels.

In the first level, there are prejudices that proceed from my social location like class, gender, race, etc. To be reflexive about it is to be conscious of this location and to articulate it from the start of one's reflection – like what Sartre does when he writes: "I am a bourgeois intellectual. I am a slimy rat."[16] Objectifying and articulating one's personal location are now commonly practiced in many feminist and postcolonial discourses: "I am a male, middle class, white intellectual", etc.

The second set of biases more difficult to objectify comes from one's belonging to a specific scientific field, e.g., theology, sociology, history, law, medicine, philosophy etc. It is in this level that interdisciplinary reflexivity is necessary. Experts tend to be entrenched in their own paradigms without the benefit of critique from those outside their own specializations. An everyday example is the proliferation of scientific jargon only understandable among people in the same fields. Academic conferences, annual conventions or festschrifts also tend to become venues for mutual admiration societies to praise each other's works and scratch each other's backs. Interdisciplinary reflexivity challenges these self-enclosed universes of specialized fields to transgress disciplinary boundaries, let go of their esoteric and arcane languages, and bring forth new knowledges.

However, there is still a deeper scholastic illusion: those biases coming from our being members of the academic world itself – the '*skhole'* – these universes of leisure to endlessly discuss things without real life and death stakes in our statements and conclusions. There are many things that we value in the academe which are foreign to real lives of our communities. The way we perceive things in the leisure of the classrooms is not the way people think on the ground. The view of the game-analyst is not the same as that of the player in the middle of the game. As Bourdieu writes, "Science has time which is not that of practice."[17] In this level, reflexivity means to establish a structured relationship between the world of science and world of practice, between our theological reflections and the people's ordinary lives on the rough grounds. While conversation among sciences can be described as *horizontal interdisciplinarity* (crossing of disciplinary

[15] Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (London: Polity Press, 2000).

[16] Cited in P. Bourdieu and L. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 194.

[17] P. Bourdieu, *Outline of the Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 9.

boundaries), I propose a conversation between scientists/theoreticians and the non-specialists. There is a need of what one author calls *vertical interdisciplinarity* in order to bridge the world of experts and the public.[18]

In the theological context, theologians (and our students) should be in organic interaction with the ordinary person in the pew, the grassroots communities and their concrete praxis. There should be a way where the people on the ground can register their critique of our theological production. This refers us back my proposed "rough grounds" model and the concept of grace of that prostituted woman. While it is true that the Magisterium specifies the limits of our theological discourses, it is still the people from the ground that help us check the validity, relevance, effectiveness and real life consequences of our theological conclusions. For in many instances, both the Magisterium and the theologians are totally detached from the people's praxis. John Henry Newman had long reminded us about *sensus fidelium* and Aloysius Pieris already talked about the Third Magisterium.[19] This brings me to my last point.

4. Beneficiaries and Agents

The proposals and insights of Prof. Chennattu on the beneficiaries of theological education are courageous and enlightening.[20] Let me focus on one: the theological formation of lay people. If there is anyone in the church who is marginalized in terms of theological education, it is the lay people. After school catechesis, there is nothing that looks like a systematic theological formation in the lives of lay people except the Sunday homilies or those given by ecclesial movements for those who care to join. Parishes with theological formation programs are a rare phenomenon. In the context of labor diaspora, many Christians from the Third World become automatic witnesses to the faith in the receiving countries in the First World. Without theological formation, all that they bring with them are their unwavering faith and their un-reflected practices from childhood.

I am proposing two things. First, there is a need to encourage and support more lay people – particularly lay women – to be professionally trained as teachers of theology and to be employed within the ecclesial structures (e.g., as professors in theology, consultants in doctrinal matters, commission members of bishops' conferences or diocesan boards, etc.). While fewer and fewer clergy want to dedicate their lives to the teaching of theology and seminary formation, there seems to be a general resistance among the hierarchy to lay people professionally trained in theology. In the Asian context, not a few bishops hesitate to employ professionally trained lay theologians in

[18] Julie Thompson Klein, "Prospects for Transdisciplinarity," *Futures* 36 (2004): 512-526. Cf. Agnes Brazal and Daniel Franklin Pilario, "Disciplines, Interdisciplinarity and Theology," *Hapág: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Theological Research* 4 (2007): 5-25.

[19] Cf. Aloysius Pieris, "Interreligious Dialogue and Theology of Religions: An Asian Paradigm," *Horizons* 20 (1993): 106-14; idem, *Prophetic Humour in Buddhism and Christianity: Doing Interreligious Studies in Reverential Mode* (Colombo, 2005).

[20] Rekha Chennattu, "Theological Formation Today: Who are the Beneficiaries – Priests, Religious, Lay People?" Lecture delivered in the conference.

their seminaries. If it is done at all, the salary structure being offered cannot sustain their everyday needs or they are made to teach courses other than theology.

Second, I suggest that parishes and dioceses institute systematic theological education programs in their respective levels. I am not only talking about lay professionals as its participants. I am also referring to BEC leaders, catechists, community facilitators, etc. I think that theological formation of lay people should not be limited to 'catechetical instruction', token lectures and occasional devotional seminars as is often done in many areas. I think that lay people in grassroots communities are capable of critical and systematic theological formation *in a language and method appropriate to their availability, concerns and location*. In our experience, we have observed that lay people do thirst for serious theological reflection. While seminarians and young religious take theology as requirement for ordination or the vows, lay people do theology as part of their search for personal meaning hoping that a deeper knowledge of the faith can resolve the many painful questions engendered by the roughness of everyday life. In the context of many lay people in the Third World, theological studies are at all not academic; it is about life-and-death situations. Beyond the usual theological classics and magisterial texts, the poor people's painful and hopeful questions provide a new and fertile starting point to do theology and teach it from the "rough grounds". In the end, the lay people should not only be considered as beneficiaries of theological education but its agents as well; not only its objects but also its subjects. In fact, I would like to think that the future of theology and theological education lies within their deep questions of survival, salvation and well-being which, if you come to think of it, are the original *locus theologicus* of Jesus himself.

To sum up my main point, let me bring in a favorite quote from a favorite philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. In his *Philosophical Investigations*, he wrote: "We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so, in a certain sense, the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground!"[21]

Wittgenstein was critiquing the world of philosophy in general and logic in particular. But the same words also apply to us. Most often theology and the way we teach it are situated in sanitized ideal worlds. And also because of that, our treatises and discourses do not strike the ordinary person as being relevant to his or her everyday struggles for survival. Frictionless but also meaningless. If theology is to be meaningful, however, it should help people walk, live and survive.

So back to the rough grounds!

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[21] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), § 107.