

## Closing Thoughts: Some Directions

While the final step of the Whiteheads is a pastoral response, their method concerns the need to make a ministerial decision. I'm not in a decision making position here, thus I will not make a pastoral response, but I will offer some directions about that.

### The Nature of Directions

In the sense of power and authority, these directions may be considered as "a voice of one that cries in the desert" (John 1:23). But, in another sense these directions can be considered as a kind of ethical imperative: a task to help people to live a better life.<sup>558</sup> This imperative would seem to be directed to those audiences that have authority in determining criteria for an ideal public open space. These audiences need power, courage and creativity. Their power might be found in intellectual, financial and political fields. Their courage must be in league with faith and a passion for humanity. Their creativity can be activated in their ways of using imagination, technology and strategies for interrelating with others in pluralism and diversity.

These directions only will be effective if they can give a kind of assurance to the people who will use the public open space so that they can have a better life. Credibility of the directions is important. Thus the matter of direction must be especially for the benefit of the people, the users of public open space.

Dealing with public open space means dealing with a service offered to and by the people. The people with their free will may choose to utilize, perceive and give meaning to the space or not. Mutual relationship or interaction between space and people is important. Maybe we can

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<sup>558</sup> Cf. "...an 'authentic' architecture, responsive to the *genius loci*, an architecture that can contribute to a sense of community." Nicolas Ray, ed. *Architecture and its Ethical Dilemmas*. (London and New York: Taylor & Francis 2005), 136.

consider it as a kind of "covenant" (Exodus, 34:10). In a covenant, there should be a kind of agreement, a dialogue, a mutual understanding and relationship. Thus the use of space involves the exercise of human free will and responsibility. The paradise and exercise of free will in the Book of Genesis can become a metaphor for this. "God planted a garden in Eden... and there God put the human being God had fashioned... Yahweh God took the human being and settled that human being in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it" ( Genesis 2:8,15). They could have stayed and enjoyed life in the garden, but they freely made a choice, and had to leave the garden.

Thus the nature of these directions is that of an openness to the basic needs of people, assuring them an opportunity for a better life and freedom to love and play. Edward Collins Vacek speaks well of love and play.

We are not only liberated from evil; we are liberated for life. Among the many aspects of life, one frequently neglected aspect is the way freedom often manifests itself in enjoyment, delight and playfulness. Admittedly, the biblical God is not very playful. And Christianity has unfortunately given little encouragement to pleasure and play; often it has frowned on such activity; only rarely has it given a theological justification for it.<sup>559</sup>

We can live in the sheer joy of spontaneous expressiveness; we can and should (if an oxymoron is permitted) live playfully. We can and should indulge in some of life's pleasures. In short we can live with the freedom of children.<sup>560</sup>

## Some Directions

- Public open space must be created consistent with its purpose: to make a contribution to the common good. This purpose can be achieved through space, landscaping,

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<sup>559</sup> Edward Collins Vacek S.J., *Love, Human, and Divine, The Heart of Christian Ethics*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press., 1994), 100.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

architecture, social behavior and human activities, especially play, and through an awareness of its meaning for humanity.

- Public open space should be as open as possible.
- This openness can be achieved through:
  - free admittance
  - easy access (especially for disabled people)
  - taking into account the pluralism and diversity of the multitude of people who will utilize or perceive the facilities of the park
  - avoiding possibilities of private domination of the space
- Since public open space potentially allows for both conflict and complementarity, its use needs to be facilitated by social controls and security.
- In a public open space, landscaping and architecture should create an enclosure, taking into account human scale and proximity.
- Creating a public open space is an opportunity to create a healthy ecological system, so a proportional natural and green area should be provided.
- The spirit of openness is the spirit of hospitality. The city as the host should welcome its citizens without any discrimination of their social, political and economical status.
- Public open space should invite people to participate, thus creating an interaction between space and the people who utilize and perceive it. It is people, both individually and in groups, exercising both their free will and their responsibility, who appreciate and give meaning to the space.
- Public open space should provide opportunity for the stimulation of human awareness of both limitation and transcendence, of self and environment, of cosmos, nature, and culture. This awareness can be achieved through the involvement of the senses, imagination,

ideas, and love. Awareness does not need to always be rational. Awareness can be experiential, as in enjoyment, contemplation, or playfulness.

- Public open space should make possible social interaction, co-presence, talking or playing together physically or emotionally.
- Public open space should be a comfortable place which creates an atmosphere of pleasure, enjoyment, leisure, joy, happiness and playfulness.
- Public open space should be a place where people can enjoy their freedom in performing rituals, meditating, contemplating, resting, and relaxing. It should be a place where people can experience freedom.
- Public open space which involves sculpture or gardening should give special attention to the elements of aesthetics, beauty, unity and harmony.
- Public open space should be a place where people may experience safety in an ethical sense, without disturbing or being disturbed by others, and in a physical sense, without being endangered by the park's facilities.
- Public open space should give special attention to "compassionate" elements, such as drinking fountains and restrooms.
- Public open space should transform people through its art, giving awareness of possibilities, newness, alternatives, and even hope for the future. It can be a pleasant experience in the present that becomes a memorable deposit for the future.
- Public open space should offer ways for people to find and give meaning to the space. To find and give meaning, people need to appreciate the concept behind the existence of the space. To find and give meaning is to qualify how the space, through its own features and human behavior, is to be used and maintained.

- In a cultural context, public open space can become an expression of the courage to change, adapt, and be flexible, so it is not to be a space fixed and static in the face of the fluidity of time. Public open space should express the uniqueness of local culture, tradition and values.

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