

# Dialogue I

## Southern Discomfort: A Second Response to Richard Martinez

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Dr. Richard Martinez (2004, pp. 14-17), in his gracious response to my rejoinder to his article (2004, pp. 7-13), gives us insight into the important relationship between the content of what we teach as well as the method we use to teach it. First, I comment on specific points related to content. Then I comment on the issue of pedagogy.

Martinez states that he believes it is important for our students to consider whether the idea of “calling” applies to individuals and/or to firms/corporations. This is a provocative statement. If corporations are merely instruments through which individual vocations are fulfilled, then is “corporate social responsibility” an oxymoron? If, on the other hand, corporations are thought of as a community of individuals, then these communities can have a calling. For instance, Collins and

Porras (1994, p. 8) remind us that a visionary company is guided by a “core ideology — core values and a sense of purpose beyond just making money” and that a “crucial variable” is “how deeply [a company] believes its ideology and how consistently it lives, breathes, and expresses it in all that it does.” It might be helpful to think of the legal concept of corporation as an instrument and the corporation itself as a community of like-minded individuals who have a strong sense of purpose or even a calling.

In terms of social responsibility, Martinez makes another provocative statement. He suggests that we “consider with students whether it is possible to transform the supply side of the market without first working to transform the demand side, as in the desires of individuals within the culture” (2004, p. 16). This is an important

consideration, one that seems to have garnered some discussion in academia. For instance, Carpenter, Glazer, and Nakamoto (2001, p. 103) claim that competitive advantage is created through “market-driving strategies” — “rather than giving customers what they want, competitive strategies are increasingly designed to help buyers learn what they want.” Corporations, in other words, might be responsible for both supply and demand.

Finally, Martinez asks how discomfort brought on by radical viewpoints in certain areas of management might play in the Christian classroom. This is an extremely important question, because it gets at the issue of teaching method and purpose. What are we trying to accomplish in the classroom? How might our teaching method enhance this? For this I turn to a philosopher I pretend to understand, as made evident by the source of this quotation, discussing a teacher I need to understand better (Palmer, 1996, p. 25).

*According to Kierkegaard, Jesus’s [sic] method of communicating is unbalancing. It destabilizes the smug complacency that stands between*

*the individual and the truth. Jesus’s [sic] method was essential to His goal. What Jesus “teaches” cannot be taught in some other more objective manner. The listener is forced to confront the full paradoxical power of “the lesson” and, in doing so, is forced to confront himself or herself. So it was with old Socrates, too.*

For me, Martinez drives home the point that pedagogy is as important as content, for pedagogy drives content into our hearts. He reminds us that as teachers we need to create some discomfort in our students. Presenting radical viewpoints, as I did, is likely not always the best way. But any way that gets us and our students to question our assumptions may be a good way. I applaud Martinez for getting me to question my assumptions about strategic management and teaching.

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