

The difference between students at Barrytown College and students at secular private and public institutions

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“I have also endeavored for this campus to be a place where students can develop deep personal faith and authentic spiritual communication with the spirit of God.”
Sun Myung Moon



This past Fall Semester, I taught “Principles of Economics” at Barrytown College. I previously taught at four different colleges here in Upstate New York. The difference between students at Barrytown College and students at these more secular private and public institutions is fascinating.

Sad to say, many Millennial students I’ve taught in the last 14 year have been hard-boiled, apathetic, defeatist, and cynical. Why the pessimism? A significant number are the product of “helicopter parents” who endowed this generation with feelings of special privilege and a strong sense of entitlement.

For many members of the previously cocooned and sheltered Millennial generation these early great expectations have remained unfulfilled. For example, according to The New York Times, in 2012, one in two

of new college graduates in the U.S, were still either unemployed or underemployed. In 2010, the youth unemployment rate in the U.S. reached 19.1 percent.

This is the highest level since this statistic started being gathered in 1948. In the end, many Millennials have been disappointed by their families, the sluggish economy, and by society. Many Millennials are beaten down, disappointed, pessimistic, and defeated.

In contrast, as a group, Barrytown College students tend to be optimistic and happy (i.e., not hard-boiled, apathetic, defeatist, and cynical). For many students Principles of Economics is not a spellbinding subject. Despite this, Barrytown students were open-minded, receptive, and respectful.

As their teacher, I admire their willingness to enter the strange new world of economic theory. They actually did their readings in advance of each class! And they were interested to participate in the discussions. They tackled the subject with enthusiasm and gusto. Students like this remind me why I wanted to teach!

What a breath of fresh air! I’ve noticed that Barrytown College students often work as a team, and support each other in their life together here on campus. It is both refreshing and a real blessing for me as a professor to study and learn with them. These students have restored my faith in the potential of Higher Education to forge a new generation of spiritually centered as well as academically grounded world citizens.

One of the problems with the discipline of economics is that over the past 200 years secular economists have severed the link between morals and ethics with economic theory and practice. Power politics, econometric models, and a cadre of soulless MBA grads armed with the tool of double-entry bookkeeping have crowded-out morality and human compassion. Sadly, in the current brutal economic environment, there is no room for benevolent managers such as Charles Dickens' beloved A Christmas Carol (1843) character Mr. Fezziwig! This displacement of morality explains many of the profound economic difficulties and dislocations that the world is currently experiencing.

Beginning with Adam Smith (1723-1790), the discipline of economics was originally a function of moral philosophy. Adam Smith's masterful book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) is an Enlightenment attempt to ground the practical world of human relationships in the Golden Rule with its famous concept of "the Impartial Spectator [i.e., the 'still small voice' that reminds individuals to do the right thing]," must be coupled with the concept of "the Invisible Hand" from Adam Smith's most famous book *The Wealth of Nations* (1776).

In the end, "the Impartial Spectator" and "the Invisible Hand" work together—two sides of the same coin—to create social justice and prosperity for the greatest number in a free economy. For Theists [those that hold to the concept of a Creator and Divine Lawgiver] God must play a central role in all Social Science.

Atheistical economic systems of the Marxist, Maoist, and Socialist varieties are oppressive, poverty inducing, and ultimately anti-human. At the same time, Capitalism—stripped of Godism, e.g., the thought of Objectivist novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand (1905-1982)—while dynamic and efficient, is also a serious potential threat to humanity. The Divine must be the foundational premise for a sound and just economic system.

At Barrytown College—unlike most secular colleges and universities—we are free to discuss how God provides the foundation for all human actions; this includes the realm of economics. It is thrilling to see our Principles of Economics class students freely giving testimony of their own faith as we worked toward a mutual understanding of how God must be central in all aspects of human life.

In the end, Barrytown College provides a unique collegiate opportunity and a nurturing environment to form and test a worldview that places God and family at the center of a well-lived life. I am looking forward to the upcoming Spring Semester!

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