

A Complex Mission: Integration of Catholic Social Tradition with Business Education¹

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Abstract

With business education becoming more prominent in Catholic universities, this paper presents the proposition that the key to a mission-driven business education at Catholic universities rests in a correct understanding of the Catholic social tradition as an exercise in practical wisdom. This paper argues this position in three stages by examining the current faculty situation in relationship to the Catholic social tradition and Catholic business education; exploring the challenges concerning the engagement between this tradition and business theory and practice in relationship to practical wisdom; and offering a curricular guide for a more mission-driven Catholic business education informed by the Catholic social tradition. The hope of this paper is to foster a vibrant and intellectually serious conversation on this most important and complex task of business education at a Catholic university.

In June 2008, the 7th International Conference on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education was held at the University of Notre Dame.² In the past, the conferences have focused on the relationship between the Catholic social tradition³ and a particular management

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¹ I am very grateful to Ernest Pierucci, John Fontana, Thomas Bausch, Robert Kennedy, Don Briel as well as many others who provided helpful suggestions on this essay. Thank you to the anonymous referee whose recommendations were particularly beneficial.

² Approximately 250 conference participants from 25 countries representing over 130 institutions attended the conference. They came from a wide variety of academic disciplines such as theology, finance, philosophy, accounting, psychology, marketing, engineering, and human resources. Participants included faculty, university presidents, deans of business schools, graduate students, as well as business leaders. See www.stthomas.edu/becu for conference papers.

³ Throughout this essay I use the phrase “Catholic social tradition” as the comprehensive term that captures the dynamic among Catholic social teaching, Catholic social thought, and Catholic social practice. This dynamic tradition includes a rich history of teachings, thought, and practice that helps us to see our social responsibilities in the

issue such as the purpose of business, spirituality of work, wealth creation and distribution, vocation of business, or corporate social responsibility. This year the conference turned its attention exclusively to the meaning of business education itself and to practical curricular models and ideas that can foster and deepen the mission and identity of a Catholic university. This essay will draw on the insights of this conference and the larger conversation on the mission and identity of Catholic universities. It will address the importance of the Catholic social tradition in providing a business education that is uniquely and distinctively Catholic.

In the last fifty years, the role of business education in Catholic universities has become significant. Of the nearly 200 Catholic universities (traditional four year programs with or without professional graduate programs) in the U.S., approximately 188 have some kind of business program, and for many schools, business is the largest professional degree program. As business education occupies an expanded role in Catholic colleges and universities, the future of Catholic higher education is inseparable from how its mission and identity is appropriated within its business schools and, reciprocally, how business schools impact the Catholic mission and identity of the university.

Key to this relationship between Catholic business education and the mission of its university is the role of Catholic social tradition. In this essay, I explore this role by:

1. Examining the current faculty situation in relationship to the Catholic social tradition and Catholic business education;
2. Exploring the challenges between the Catholic social tradition and business theory and practice in relationship to practical wisdom;
3. Offering a curricular guide for a more mission-driven Catholic business education informed by the Catholic social tradition.

I want to make it clear from the outset that this project of integrating the Catholic social tradition within business education is complex.

world. This tradition draws upon Scripture, the early church fathers, the Thomistic synthesis, the various theologians, philosophers, economists, political thinkers, and the countless witnesses throughout the ages. We need to remind ourselves that the Catholic social tradition did not begin in 1891, but brings us back to the Old Testament and draws upon everything in the life and thought of the church. The Catholic social tradition, therefore, is broader and older than the formal social teachings of the church. This tradition provides an intellectual framework and legacy informed by practice and experience from which the more recent (1891 to the present) social teachings draw.

Any attempt to underestimate this complexity will undermine the practical wisdom necessary to realize the rich potential of Catholic business education in the wider academy, and in business itself. This complexity has many dimensions, but it is important to highlight at least three.

The first complexity is the Catholic intellectual tradition, of which the Catholic social tradition plays an important role in its engagement with business. This tradition includes at least three elements: (1) it is a theological tradition that engages faith and reason, that seeks a unity of knowledge, and that challenges the modern split between religion and public life;⁴ (2) it is a moral tradition with a sophisticated practical reason and wisdom that locates the good in the changing situations and circumstances of business and develops moral insights within dynamic economic and political systems; (3) it is a philosophical tradition that has the capacity to dialogue with other religious and philosophical traditions to seek commonality, as well as translate its principles and insights in a publicly accessible and intelligible way.⁵

Second, there is the increasing complexity of managing and leading business institutions within a global environment and the growing specialization of various disciplines in business education. Third, there is the situational complexity of different Catholic universities around the world with their own unique cultures, histories, geographic locations, and their increasingly pluralistic environments.

In light of these three complexities and their interactions, providing a Catholic business education that effectively integrates the Catholic social tradition is a daunting task, and at times a burdensome one.

⁴ See “*Gaudium et spes*: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, 43 and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Economic Justice for All,” <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/EconomicJusticeforAll.pdf> 5 on the challenge of the divided life.

⁵ See Michael Perry, *Love and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 106. According to Perry, public intelligibility is “the habit of trying to elaborate one’s position in a manner intelligible or comprehensible to those who speak a different religious or moral language.” Public accessibility is “the habit of trying to defend one’s position in a manner neither sectarian nor authoritarian. ... A defense of a disputed position is sectarian if (and to the extent) it relies on experiences or premises that have little if any authority beyond the confines of one’s own moral or religious community. A defense is authoritarian if it relies on persons or institutions that have little if any authority beyond the confines of one’s own community.” For examples of how this is translated into business see Helen Alford O.P. and Michael Naughton, *Managing as if Faith Mattered: Christian Social Principles within the Modern Organization* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), chapter 1.

Most scholars and teachers within Catholic universities have not been trained to deal with all of these dimensions. There is a temptation to despair. At the Notre Dame conference, for example, some participants wondered whether there really was anything uniquely Catholic about their universities. They questioned whether Catholic universities offering a generic emphasis on ethics, service learning, and spirituality, were assimilating into nondistinct and ultimately secular universities with an ethical and spiritual foundation of sand.⁶ Others wondered whether the emphasis on the particularities of being uniquely Catholic is too exclusive, too sectarian, or too preoccupied with internal ecclesial matters.⁷

As Catholic universities with business programs travel this road of being true to their mission, they need to be aware that there are ditches on both sides. Yet, as much as this search for a mission-driven business education is a burden, a powerful opportunity exists for Catholic business programs to give the wider academy what it currently lacks. One dimension of this opportunity is the unique possibility of providing a distinctive and important kind of business education that can humanize and provide greater solidarity in the global economy. A Catholic business education built upon a commitment to the Catholic social tradition can educate students to become leaders who can contribute to the common good and foster time honored virtues of professionals. A challenge of secular universities and their business schools is whether they can articulate a common ethical vision when, increasingly, they have no shared moral tradition as institutions besides a generic commitment

⁶ For an interesting case study on the problem of generic values see <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/12/15/santafe>. The College of Santa Fe, a Catholic Lasallian school, is currently negotiating with a secular New Mexico University to be acquired. The college is in serious financial trouble and will not be able to survive without a buyer. When asked about the relationship of its Catholic identity in such a sale to a secular university, Stuart Kirk, Santa Fe's president, responded, "There is nothing that is part of this school that is uniquely Catholic. . . . We certainly have a long history of Lasallian traditions, which are things like being student-centered and having community involvement, and I think if you looked at those you would assume any honorable school adheres to those traditions." A Catholic college or university that severs itself from its uniquely theological and ecclesial roots and reduces its mission to generic but important qualities such as student centered, community involvement, values-based, justice-oriented, etc. may have distinctive elements of a Catholic college, but it will not be, as Kirk points out, uniquely Catholic.

⁷ Institutions such as Ave Maria University, Christendom College, and Steubenville University were noted by some conference participants as those schools that were explicitly Catholic, models that they were hesitant to follow.

to academic excellence.⁸ While individual faculty at these institutions may argue for business ethics, management as a profession, corporate social responsibility, and the like, there is no institutional backing that supports and gives force to their claims.

Catholic business education (CBE) is a moral project and an important theological and ecclesial one, as well. If its moral code is not anchored by theological and ecclesial commitments, Catholic business education (CBE) will drift away from the moral leadership expected of a Catholic university.⁹ By drawing on moral, spiritual, and theological resources, business education in a Catholic university will help students to live out their vocation to become saints; they will be men and women who humanize the world for God's greater glory. While such theological and spiritual ends may not resonate within a secular academic environment, it is precisely such ends that will empower the Catholic university to resist corrupting influences that burden the modern business school such as: secularization, materialism, hyper-specialization, individualism, instrumentalism, and legalism.

Current Situation of Catholic Business Education: The Role of Faculty

There are many considerations with which to begin this section, but there is none more important than the following question: Do Catholic universities and their business programs have the faculty to offer a distinctive kind of mission-driven business education, informed and

⁸ There have been a series of books and articles re-evaluating and critiquing modern business education and its failure adequately to provide a moral formation. See Rakesh Khurana, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands: The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management as a Profession* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Samuel Gregg and James R. Stoner, Jr., eds., *Rethinking Business Management: Examining the Foundations of Business Education* (Princeton: Witherspoon Institute, 2008); Warren Bennis and James O'Toole, "How Business Schools Lost Their Way," *Harvard Business Review* 83 (May 2005): 96-104; Jeffrey Pfeffer and Christina T. Fong, "The End of Business Schools? Less Success than Meets the Eye," *Academy of Management Learning and Education* (2002), <http://www.aomonline.org/Publications/Articles/BSchools.asp>; Sumantra Ghoshal, "Bad Management Theories are Destroying Good Management Practices," *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 4(1) (2005): 75-91; "MBAs and Ethics," <http://www.capital-flow-analysis.com/investment-essays/mba.html>.

⁹ For a convincing argument and series of case studies on this point see James T. Burtchaeil, *The Dying of the Light* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998), see especially pp. 819-851.

animated by the Catholic social tradition? There are many positive reasons to answer affirmatively. Let me identify four of them:

- **Interdisciplinary:** Because most Catholic universities are not research universities there tends to be more openness to interdisciplinary engagement within their business schools. Catholic universities have strong departments in philosophy, theology, and literature, which provide the conditions for fruitful conversations between business and liberal education.
- **Business Ethics:** Catholic business schools have been leaders in developing the discipline of business ethics and in helping the business community to see ethics as integral to running a business.¹⁰
- **Spirituality:** The language of vocation, calling, and spirituality has become increasingly incorporated into the curriculum and research of business faculty. The recent series of Lilly grants on vocation has contributed in this area. Many faculty of Catholic universities have participated in the Management, Spirituality, and Religion interest groups within the Academy of Management as well.¹¹
- **Institutional Mission:** Faculty within Catholic business schools understand the importance of institutional mission and identity better than some of their liberal education colleagues. There is a strong belief that students should engage the Catholic social tradition with business issues.¹²

At least two factors limit the positive influence of these tendencies within Catholic universities. First, several of the positive movements reflect the commitments of individuals rather than institutional strategies

¹⁰ There are several Catholic higher education networks fostering business ethics research and teaching. See the work of the Colleagues in Jesuit Business Education <http://globaljesuitbusinesseducation.org/cjbe/index.php>, and the Annual International Vincentian Business Ethics as well as Catholic Social Thought and Management Education conferences <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/default.html>. Many Catholic universities have made serious resource commitments to business ethics. For example, the University of St. Thomas (Minnesota) has the largest business ethics department in the US.

¹¹ See <http://group.aomonline.org/msr/> for further background. For background on the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* see <http://www.jmsr.com/volume-four.html>.

¹² The problem, however, was that only a minority of the business faculty felt they were familiar enough with the tradition to actually do it, and theology faculty, who tend to have more familiarity in Catholic social thought, are usually not interested in connecting it with business. See Michael Naughton, et al, "Mission and Identity in Catholic Business Schools," *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* (Summer 1996): 29-48.

of Catholic business schools. As a matter of mission, policy, or strategy, few schools of business in Catholic universities engage their courses with questions and issues within the Catholic social tradition and, in particular, a Catholic vision of the person and the just society. Individual professors may do so as a matter of personal choice, but few schools have taken the particular tradition on which their university was founded and strategically engaged this tradition with the business curriculum.

Second, movements toward interdisciplinary work, ethics, and spirituality are not always consistent with Catholic teaching. Students may receive a fine technical education as well as enlightenment rationalistic ethics and, at times, generic spiritual insights. But they often do not receive an education that applies the Catholic intellectual, social, and spiritual tradition to the challenges of business management.

There are several underlying problems within Catholic universities and their business programs. These concern hiring patterns and the lack of faculty development programs on mission. The majority of business faculty, Catholic or otherwise, come to Catholic business schools with the little formation in literature, history, philosophy, and theology required to give them a distinctively disciplined perspective on their own scholarly pursuits. A growing number of faculty members have no experience in Catholic education. They often lack knowledge of the Catholic social tradition and, increasingly, many have no experience of any kind of liberal education. More and more faculty in Catholic business schools have a purely technical education, embark on a Ph.D. program that ignores moral and spiritual questions, and reduce their research interests to empirical, quantitative, and so-called nonnormative questions.¹³ Once they arrive at Catholic business schools, little progress is made in understanding the meaning of a mission-driven Catholic business education.

Because of this, leaders within Catholic business schools have not recognized the full dimension of mission drift within their schools. While often optimistic and confident about their schools, if leaders fail adequately to grasp the gap between operation and aspiration, it is doubtful whether the religious mission of Catholic business schools will survive, let alone thrive.¹⁴ This doubt stems both from the understated

¹³ See Warren Bennis and James O'Toole, "How Business Schools Lost Their Way," *Harvard Business Review* 83 (May 2005): 96-104.

¹⁴ See Melanie Morey and John J. Piderit, S.J., *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), chapter 12.

character of Catholic mission and leaders' lack of understanding of the Catholic intellectual and social tradition.

Despite these obstacles, faculty from Catholic business schools and programs can make a significant contribution to the fulfillment of a robust, differentiated business education. If Catholic business schools can keep themselves from being hijacked by an instrumental rationality that attempts to escape moral agency, and resist abdicating their custodial role of mission to theology and philosophy, then they can play an important role in advancing the mission and identity of Catholic universities.

Faculty within liberal education departments, especially theology and philosophy, play a crucial role in how they interact with business faculty and how they engage questions of work and business. Unfortunately, there is a divide in many Catholic universities between liberal and business faculty that makes it difficult to provide a more integrated education for business students. Philosophy and theology faculty often operate with a Platonic/Aristotelian bias against work and, in particular, business.¹⁵ They also have little interest in understanding the work of their business colleagues. While philosophy faculty have engaged with business ethics, although the relationship has been an uneasy one, theologians have tended to ignore the question of business, either focusing on the question of Catholic social thought abstractly and theoretically or focusing on its socio-political implications.¹⁶

This strained relationship creates a fragmented education for students. While Catholic universities provide a significant liberal education foundation for the student, too often integration is left up to the

¹⁵ This bias and hostility toward business education is not consistent with a Catholic view of education that fosters a unity of knowledge. In articulating a Catholic understanding of the role of business education, Don Briel explains, for example, that someone like John Henry Newman “did not argue that a university ought not teach particular knowledge but rather that applied disciplines in themselves are not the end of a university education. He used the examples of law and medicine but we can easily extend the case to business education. Newman’s central concern was that professional schools, whether medicine or law, or in our own day, business, must participate in the university’s principal end, which is the teaching of universal knowledge as its own end, and so Newman contrasts the educational philosophy of autonomous professional schools existing independently of a university and those schools which are integrated into the university’s broader curriculum and mission.” <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/facdevelop/mecu/papers/briel.pdf>, 3.

¹⁶ Business faculty often see liberal education as too theoretical and abstract and, because of their more pragmatic and utilitarian outlook, are not well versed in the liberal disciplines and their relationship to Catholic business education.

students. When a gulf between liberal and business education occurs, students get the impression that they are receiving two types of education: one that makes them more human and one that makes them more money. They are uncertain about how the two fit together.

Challenges between the Catholic Social Tradition and Business Theory and Practice: The Importance of Practical Wisdom

The Catholic social tradition and its ability to foster practical wisdom is key to overcoming this kind of fragmentation in a student's education. It is a religious and moral tradition that seeks the integration of the person: contemplative and active, body and soul, individual and social, and physical and spiritual. However, if a dean or most faculty of a Catholic business school were asked to identify Catholic characteristics of their curriculum, they would say little about Catholic social tradition and practical wisdom. Instead, one would hear the following:¹⁷

- Business Ethics: We teach not just techniques and skills, but values and ethics.
- Corporate Social Responsibility: We focus on stakeholders not just shareholders.¹⁸
- Service Learning: We offer service learning, especially opportunities to serve the poor in our community.

If deans were then asked what makes these activities Catholic, their answers, for the most part, would be more assertions than argument. One might take a further step and ask whether there is tension between business ethics/corporate social responsibility/service learning as articulated by those in the academy and the Catholic social tradition.¹⁹ This question might end the conversation, but it should reveal

¹⁷ See Joseph Phillips and Teresa Ling, "Mission Statements—Do They Matter?" <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/Finalpapers/PhillipsLing-Fianlpap1.pdf> and Stephen Porth et al, "Business Education at Catholic Universities: Current Status and Future Directions," <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/Finalpapers/PorthMcCallDiangeloF.pdf>.

¹⁸ See Helen Alford, O.P., "Stakeholder Theory," which compares and contrasts stakeholder theory and Catholic social thought, <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/thegoodcompany/Finalpapers/Alford%2007.10.06%209.00.pdf>.

¹⁹ For an excellent essay on the tensions as well as commonalities between mainstream understandings of corporate social responsibility and Catholic social thought see Helen Alford, et al, "Philosophical Underpinnings and Basic Concepts for a Dialogue

the temptation of leaders to equate a generic understanding of ethics with the particular Catholic mission of the university.

There is a danger of falling into the following logical fallacy. Because ethics and values are elements of being Catholic, business schools that are committed to ethics and values must be Catholic.²⁰ The problem here is that while Catholic business schools may focus on ethics and values, what makes them uniquely Catholic is the underlying understanding of these terms. All schools teach some form of ethics and values. The crucial question is what kind. This fails to comprehend the unique vision of the Catholic social tradition and implies that other universities are not ethical or values-based.

When my university began to explore the possibility of starting a new law school, it initially argued that its distinctive mission would be characterized as a “values-based law school.” This evoked scorn from the other law schools in the area and the sardonic response: “So we are values-less law schools?” This exchange showed that the words “values-based” or “ethics-based” add little to the discussion of mission, as every institution values something. To say that the distinctive quality of a Catholic business school is values or ethics is to say little. One needs to take the step of defining whose ethics, and what tradition. If a Catholic business school is to take ethics and values seriously in regard to its mission, a logical place for it to explore is its own Catholic moral, intellectual, and social tradition. In so doing, it will recognize the importance of the Scriptures, natural law, the cardinal and theological virtues, as well as the nature of a profession or a practice. There will be differences as well as similarities with utilitarianism, deontology, consequentialism, and other ethical systems.

The Catholic social tradition is not always portrayed in the most accessible and useful manner by its proponents, especially as it relates to business. One needs to be sympathetic with deans and business faculty who find little help to envision the role of this tradition, especially the articulation of its social principles within business education. Too often the content of this tradition is perceived in terms of extrinsic moral constraints, rather than an understanding of the intrinsic character of

between CST and CSR on the ‘Good Company’” <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/thegoodcompany/Papers/00POSITION.Paper.Fou.pdf>.

²⁰ William George, “‘Social Justice’: A Faulty Default Marker for Catholic Identity?” unpublished.

capital, property, labor, technology, contracts, communities, and the like.²¹

The process of this extrinsicism with faculty, especially as it relates to Catholic social principles, usually goes something like this:

- Theologians and philosophers articulate a list of principles, such as human dignity, common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity, which are described universally as having no explicit connection to business.
- Business faculty look at the principles with a certain sense of good will, but are unclear about their relationship to business. As one faculty member responded, “The principles look innocuous enough, who can be against them?”
- Theologians and philosophers, however, see more difficulty between the principles and business practice than do their business colleagues. They insinuate that businesses, as presently constituted, are not living up to these principles. Their critiques verge on prophetic denunciations, yet often fail to apply the principles to the specific technical complications of business.
- Business faculty get defensive and respond that such theologians and philosophers, and the church in general, do not understand business and the way markets work. Yet business faculty continue to describe their discipline only in empirical, quantitative, and technical terms, failing to engage their discipline with the demands of justice.
- The unproductive impasse continues where theologians and philosophers fail to understand the demands of business, and business faculty fail to take seriously the social vision of Catholicism.

There are many exceptions to this scenario, but it is difficult for disciplines such as theology, philosophy, and business to communicate with each other. The lack of a common understanding of the Catholic social tradition, however, is more serious than just specialized disciplines talking past each other. Such misunderstandings result in the failure of the Catholic university to fulfill its mission as future business leaders are denied a moral and spiritual vision of organizational life. If a business education in a Catholic university is to be mission-driven, it is imperative that the faculty understand the significance of Catholic social tradition for business.²²

²¹ See Michael Buckley, “The Catholic University and the Promise Inherent in Its Identity” in *Catholic Universities in Church and Society*, ed. John Langan, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1993).

²² See Maura Donahue and Kelly Johnson, “Lost in Translation . . . or in Cultural Differences,” where they examine what this “thinking together” between business and lib-

Catholic social principles within business need to be placed within the larger vision of the Catholic social tradition as a form of practical wisdom. Alasdair MacIntyre explains that a moral tradition is “an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition.”²³ The Catholic social tradition, at its best, expresses itself through an ongoing interplay between authoritative teachers (Catholic social teachings), insightful scholars (Catholic social thought), and effective practitioners (Catholic social practice). It is a dynamic interaction within the church.²⁴

The articulation of the Catholic social principles, then, is the result of a socially embodied argument of teaching, thought, and practice, which brought these principles into their current form. Lest these principles fall into a static, abstract, and ultimately irrelevant form, they need to be developed as a form of practical wisdom that both enriches the end that is pursued and that engages the means that are necessary to express such ends. I shall highlight the ends/means relationship of this tradition as an expression of practical wisdom.

First, Catholic social principles have developed out of a rich Catholic intellectual tradition that engages the ends of business. The principles point toward a vision of the human person and human flourishing in the business community. Drawing upon Scripture, as well as theological and philosophical reflections on the presence of grace and sinfulness within human experience, the Church has developed a language of principles, which orient us toward human fulfillment in everyday life.

The Catholic social principles clearly define our end in human action. They are signposts that point toward authentic humanity. They contribute to deep social and spiritual understanding of business by being clear on the social and spiritual understanding of the person, work,

eral education faculty can look like <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/Finalpapers/donahuejohnsonfinalp.pdf>.

²³ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 222.

²⁴ Br. Ray Fitz explains that the tradition is an exercise of practical wisdom “on important social questions by the Catholic community in dialogue with others and as well as a *set of basic principles* that have resulted from this reasoning and are used to guide and shape this reasoning in the future.” See “Developing Capacity for Integrating the Catholic Social Tradition with Business Education,” <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/Finalpapers/Fitzfinalpaper.pdf>; see also Steve Miles, et al, “Educating Practically Wise Professionals: The Role of the Catholic Social Tradition in Catholic Universities,” *Journal for Catholic Social Thought* (Fall 2007): 437-457.

the firm, property, community, and so forth.²⁵ The principles provide criteria of judgment that create a detachment from the impatience of expediency, from the pressure of the system, from the weight of the technical instruments of productivity, and from the desires of self-interest.²⁶ These principles nourish the best inclinations already present within us, nurturing and fortifying our social and moral character so as to accomplish good within business.²⁷

Second, concerning the means, Catholic social principles need to be engaged in the practical concerns of our world today. This endeavor requires a lot of thought, for which Catholic universities and especially Catholic business schools are particularly well suited. To date, this part of the Catholic social tradition, what can be called Catholic social thought, is underdeveloped in relationship to business. Popes, bishops, and councils have spoken and continue to speak. Businesspeople, unionists, and a variety of organizations have responded out of their various and concrete concerns. Yet, the Catholic university—the place where the “Church does her thinking”—and the business schools which have come to prominence within the contemporary Catholic university, have been relatively silent on issues which would seem to be peculiarly theirs.²⁸

To develop this part of Catholic social thought, Catholic universities and their business schools need to be more intentional in developing a form of practical reasoning that engages both the ends worth pursuing in business and the means most likely to achieve those goals. (Catholic social principles articulate what ends bring into being real human goods and what means most efficiently and effectively achieve the goals without harming other goods along the way.) For example, there is a body of knowledge that is believed necessary to accept to

²⁵ For one expression of what a description of these principles looks like in relationship to business, see <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/becu/Z0.CBE.Highly.Princi.pdf>.

²⁶ I am grateful to Ernest Pierucci for this insight. At the University of St. Thomas, the Opus College of Business describes its vision as “educating highly principled global business leaders.”

²⁷ See Joseph Ratzinger’s discussion of *anamnesis* and its role in remembering the good that is within us “Conscience and Truth,” <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZCONS.HTM>.

²⁸ Quoted in Richard McBrien, “What Is a Catholic University?” *The Challenge and Promise of Catholic University*, ed. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 156. There are of course notable exceptions to this silence but it seems a fact that Catholic business schools as a whole have failed to develop Catholic social thought in light of their institutional significance.

practice business. Managing organizations takes a great deal of skill and technique. Business education, just like any other profession, must teach skills that are proper to itself: reading a balance sheet, calculating cost of capital, providing statistical analysis, targeting and segmenting markets, managing group dynamics, generating creative thinking, initiating problem-solving techniques, mediating conflicts, and so forth. Such skills provide the *matter* of professional competence that has an important role in business education. Without such knowledge and skills in finance, marketing, accounting, economics, and so forth, students would not only be unprepared for their job markets, but they would be unprepared to live as moral agents so that others can live better. A curriculum cannot promote a more just world without introducing students to the skills and knowledge necessary to function in their respective disciplines.

However, especially in light of recent business scandals, most people agree that skills are not enough for a student's education. Universities and their business schools have been accused of producing highly skilled barbarians. Technical education is never just technical because it is people who perform the action. Techniques and skills always have an intrinsic moral or immoral quality when people are involved. Education requires a moral vision to guide use of skills. While the skills provide the matter of business, they do not provide the *soul* of its professionalism. Skills and techniques are a necessary but insufficient dimension to business education.

If business education is to be a form of practical reasoning and wisdom, then it must also engage students in ordering their skills and techniques toward the common good and human development. If business education fails to engage students in this process, it would be like law schools teaching their students all about the techniques of trying a case but nothing about justice, or medical schools teaching their students all about human anatomy but nothing about care.

Most faculty in Catholic business education, then, would agree upon the importance of providing a moral education for students. Moving into the moral realm raises many important questions. Prominent among these is in which ethical tradition students are formed. Many finance classes, for example, indoctrinate their students with a strong dose of economic utilitarianism, and many international marketing classes frame ethical questions simply in a dogmatic relativism. Most faculty would agree that these ethical traditions are inadequate for a Catholic business education. Moral and ethical education in business

raises larger theological and philosophical questions, which, if not addressed, will lead to the eventual instrumentalization of the moral. Catholic business education needs to be clear and intentional about the kind of theological and philosophical foundations that situate business within the whole of life. It must address the fundamental questions of meaning, truth, goodness, and beauty as they relate to the questions of knowledge, work, property, capital, firms, law, and so forth.

Within the Catholic moral tradition, practical wisdom is the premier cardinal virtue for business professionals and their educators. Practical wisdom integrates moral ends that are articulated by the principles and their moral and spiritual foundation with the proper means of business. It enables the student to apply the broad and general truths of faith and reason to the concrete details of one's work within business.²⁹ None other than a practically wise person can be just, since to will the end of justice demands that one is able to recognize and will the proper means to attain such an end. The entrepreneur who wants to pay his employees a just wage must find means to make it happen.

Curriculum Guide: Discovery, Applied, and Integration

What does this practical wisdom look like in the curriculum of a Catholic university? Recognizing that the curriculum can and will be structured in various ways, I find Ernest Boyer's categorization for research a helpful way to understand the curriculum of a Catholic university and in particular of a Catholic business education. Courses at a college or university can fit within three broad categories: *discovery*, *application*, and *integration*. While all courses should exhibit all three characteristics, each will have its own particular emphasis. These categories support each other and thus strengthen the integration of the Catholic social tradition within the curriculum.³⁰

²⁹ Aquinas argues that knowledge of universal moral truths is not sufficient by itself to enable the person to act well. See Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, Ralph McInerny, trans., (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), Art. 6, ad 1; see also Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. II-II.47.

³⁰ See E.L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Princeton NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990). I am indebted to the insights of Ernest Pierucci for the following section.

*Discovery: Liberal Education*³¹

Because practical wisdom is based on good ends, and because liberal education explores the fundamental meaning of the person through an encounter with creation which informs our end, a liberal education serves as an excellent foundation to a Catholic business education. A liberal education should cultivate the capacity (both natural and grace-given) of the student to wonder and understand herself as a person who is a free and intelligent subject with the capacity to know the true, the good, and the beautiful. Liberal education should be ordered to giving students opportunities to experience their own subjectivity—to discover themselves as knowing the truth and contemplating what that means in terms of their relationship with creation, other human beings, and God.

In many respects, this vision of liberal education, the soil in which business education can take root, is the most challenging curricular dimension of an authentic Catholic business education. Too many Catholic universities have lost sight of a liberal education that provides an experience of wonder at the being of things. Instead liberal education has become “a prescribed number of units in a prescribed distribution of disciplines” that provide a multicultural tourism of discrete and specialized forms of knowledge that are unconnected from each other.³² Without

³¹ Throughout this essay I use liberal education rather than liberal arts (grammar, logic, rhetoric, etc.), because it tends to be more accurate in today’s universities and more congruent with a Catholic understanding of the unity of knowledge. In his essay, “The Study of Business as a Liberal Art? Toward an Aristotelian Reconstruction,” Wolfgang Grassl points out that the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching no longer uses the term “liberal arts” and instead uses the term “liberal education.” He argues that Catholic universities should do the same. He explains that “‘liberal arts’ as a historical term must be distinguished from liberal education as a model of education that is timeless . . . Newman built on this idea when he claimed that no subjects are by their nature excluded from the academy, for it is its goal that defines liberal learning, not its subject matter. Some of the preeminent members of the Catholic intellectual tradition—Dawson, Maritain, Pieper, or MacIntyre—have all cherished liberal education because it best fits a Christian anthropology and a Catholic culture. The goal must be knowledge and understanding for its own sake. But then accounting and marketing can be taught liberally while history and English, if merely training archivists or journalists, can be taught in a ‘servile’ manner. If directed towards the acquisition of knowledge, business administration can be a subject of liberal learning, particularly if it is well integrated into the edifice of all human knowledge.” <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/Finalpapers/Grasslfinalpaper.pdf>, 11.

³² See Ernest Pierucci, “Restoring the Broken Image: The Centrality of the Subjective Dimension of Labor and Liberal Education in Catholic Business Education,” <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/becu/SUMMARYBOOKcopywithM.pdf>. See also John Henry Newman’s Discourse 6 “Knowledge Viewed in Relation to Learning”

an understanding of liberal education based on a unity of knowledge and faith and reason, achieving a moral and spiritual education within business becomes less likely.³³

A liberal education that can escape today's disciplinary fragmentation can open the student both to the truth expressed in the principles of the Catholic social tradition and to the desirability of a loving response to that truth.³⁴ A liberal education, especially one in our highly technical and global economy, ought to pose to the student the priority of the human over the technical.³⁵ Yves Simon explained that the person "is often dragged, by the sheer heaviness of his techniques, where he does not want to go," where he becomes "crushed by the weight of his

where he critiques the notion of liberal education as "a place for acquiring a great deal of knowledge on a great many subjects." He argues that a liberal education is the "enlargement of mind" not by quantity, but by "the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence" John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), Discourse 6. While Newman does not use the term, he is describing an interdisciplinary education that assumes a unity of knowledge in contrast to a multidisciplinary education that is seemingly agnostic to any transcendent ordering principle of knowledge.

³³ The core of a liberal education within a Catholic undergraduate university will most likely, although not necessarily, be expressed through the disciplines of theology, philosophy, history, and literature. Again, for the most part, these four disciplines should serve as an essential core of a student's liberal education. This does not mean that the sciences, social sciences, and the fine arts do not have a role in liberal education—they do, and an important role—but these disciplines will have greater difficulty conveying the relationship of faith and reason and the unity of knowledge that is at the heart of a Catholic understanding of liberal education. Theology, philosophy, history, and literature have both the intellectual capacity in which to engage the pressing concerns of our larger culture, as well as the emotional imagination of seeing and experiencing with depth the human condition in both its glory and its corruption.

³⁴ See Wolfgang Grassl's insightful essay, where he explains that the unity of knowledge is deeply entrenched in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. "However, differently from the neopositivist variant, unity is not grounded in a common methodology of research but in a common ontology, i.e. in seeing reality as a structured and emergent whole that is in principle accessible to the human mind. No consilience needs to be brought about, contrary to recent suggestions (Wilson 1999), where there is a natural continuity within a hierarchical order (*ordo rerum* and *integritas*). Not only are the functional disciplines of business unified in their material object; they are continuous with, and emergent from, other sciences. The style of thought of the CIT applies equally to all fields of knowledge (*integratio*). In this perspective, then, management studies are naturally integrated into a university." <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/Finalpapers/Grasslfinalpaper.pdf>, 5.

³⁵ Yves Simon, *Practical Knowledge* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991), 155.

ideas, his systems, his experiences, his erudition, his constructs, his methods, and his postulations.”³⁶ A liberal or humanistic education within our technological, secular, and materialistic culture must encourage within the student a moral rationality and spiritual imagination that protects the person from the ever increasing instrumental rationality of our culture. A series of disconnected courses of disciplinary introductions will not aid the student in this task.

A liberal education must provide, as John Henry Newman explains, “a knowledge worth possessing for what it is, and not merely for what it does.” It must help the student to discern that “though the useful is not always good, the good is always useful.” It must instill in students “the invaluable *habit of pushing things up to their first principles*.”³⁷ A liberal education, as Josef Pieper has argued, should create a realm of time that is not instrumentalized to that of utility or work, not so that education can escape work, but so that it can understand its proper role in a well-ordered life. A liberal education should help students learn that they are more important for what they are than for what they have, and at the heart of their being is their need for community and a spirit of poverty.³⁸

Applied: Business Courses

Business courses, unlike liberal education courses, focus primarily on the practical and technical matters of a particular field of study. And yet it is precisely in the study of the practice of business that opportunities to explore the ethical and spiritual implications of business will arise. While business faculty rarely see themselves as experts in philosophical and theological matters, they need not see themselves as mere technicians who do not need to introduce ethical, social, and spiritual ideas. Applied courses will often deal with ethical and spiritual matters in more subtle, inductive, and experiential ways. One does not expect a

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), see Discourse 7.

³⁸ Concerning this dimension of a spirit of poverty, Yves Simon poses the following question: “Can any general principles direct our effort to resolve . . . the conflict between the weight of our instruments and the law of instrumentality? The spirit of poverty supplies the answer. In the relation of the human to the technical, we keep our sentiments under control insofar as we remain free from attachment to things inferior to man.” This is why Simon argues that “a program of humanistic studies should not exclude the masterpieces of mystical literature” (Simon, *Practical Knowledge*, 155).

full-blown theoretical discussion on the difference between a Thomistic and utilitarian understanding of the common good in a marketing or finance course. But, failing to bring up the common good at the point in the class when the theory of the firm is discussed in finance, strategy, or law misses an opportunity for curricular integration, and avoids the practical questions businesspeople ask themselves: “What is the social meaning of the firm?” A curriculum within a departmental structure will always have certain tensions; the failure to recognize the tensions undermines not only a coherent curriculum, but also every attempt to educate the whole person.

All disciplines within business provide opportunities to engage specific concerns within the Catholic social tradition. A comprehensive list cannot be explored here but the following are important issues that business students at Catholic universities should encounter in their business courses.

- **Finance:** In the financial theory of the firm, what are the tensions between property understood privately, versus property understood socially? Is the financial theory of the firm the legal standard for proper operation of a corporation? If not, how can managers think of different theories of the firm, especially one informed by the Catholic social tradition?³⁹ Since Catholic social tradition claims that investing is a moral act, what investment strategies have a moral quality to them, e.g., social investing, diversification, or the like?⁴⁰
- **Marketing:** How does one understand the purpose of marketing in light of the Catholic social tradition, especially the meaning of language and truth telling?⁴¹ How does one teach consumer behavior without falling into consumerism?
- **Accounting:** With the focus on the information needs of capital providers that constrains accounting’s potential to serve other affected parties (such as employees and the broader social community), how does accounting keep its professional stature? With the capital decision

³⁹ For further resources on these questions see <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/curriculum/finance.html>. See also S.A. Cortright and Michael Naughton, eds., *Rethinking the Business of Business: Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ For creative curricular projects on this question, see Adrian Cowan, “Student Managed Portfolios in an Environment of Faith,” <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/becu/SUMMARYBOOKcopywithM.pdf>.

⁴¹ See Ray MacKenzie’s discussion between Augustine’s notion of language and advertising “Selling Dreams: Catholicism and the Business Communicator,” <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/facdevelop/mecu/papers/mackenzie.pdf>.

making focus and the related utilitarian values that are deeply embedded in accounting's self-image, how can accounting render visible the legitimate claims of marginalized parties?⁴²

- **Human Resources:** What constitutes a just wage in a modern market economy? How can human resource professionals design compensation systems that both meet principles within the Catholic social tradition and compete within the current market system? How does one fire or lay off someone in a humane and ethical way?

Courses such as business ethics, economics, strategy, organizational behavior, and information technology offer additional possibilities for raising important philosophical and theological dimensions of their disciplines in which the Catholic social tradition can be explicitly or implicitly incorporated.

Integration: Bridge Courses

It might seem that if these discovery and applied courses are taught well, integrating courses in the curriculum would be unnecessary. However, most universities are struggling with what I call the “along side approach,” where liberal education and business programs have created, to an extent, two kinds of education rather than one. Because of the departmentalized structure of universities and the specialized training of faculty, the division of the curriculum has caused a fault line in a student's education. Not only does this cause intellectual fragmentation, but it also causes problems for the practitioner. In a letter on the problem of the “along side approach” that I received from Clarence Walton, a Catholic pioneer in business ethics in the U.S., he stated: “A CEO cannot manage effectively if his own view is departmentalized.” A university that departmentalizes knowledge in an overly strict and rigid fashion creates for students a false outlook of the organizations for which they will work.

Integrating courses are by their nature interdisciplinary and foster middle level thinking. They forge explicit linkages between theory and practice, contemplation and practice, and faith and work by synthesizing philosophical/theological insights and business theory and practice. While these elements ought to pervade the curriculum, a certain number of courses ought to have these integrating experiences

⁴² See Brian Shapiro, “Theological Perspectives on the Objective and Subjective Dimensions of the Good Accountant,” <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/conferences/becu/becu/SUMMARYBOOKcopywithM.pdf>.

as their prime concern. A set of integrating courses can serve as signature courses for the university. For the business student, this kind of integrating experience can be manifested in various ways. I propose three:

- **An Undergraduate University Capstone Course on Faith and Business:** While some students take capstone courses within their major, the course proposed here would provide a capstone experience for students' whole education by relating their liberal education and, in particular, theology to their business major. It would seek to provide an interdisciplinary engagement of organizational thought and theological resources so students can begin to participate in a powerful integrating experience of liberal and professional education. The course would also seek to apply philosophical and theological knowledge to business issues and problems by helping the student to think through first principles of human action in relation to organizational policies and practices.⁴³
- **A Graduate Spirituality and Work Course:** The way that the Catholic social tradition is handled on the graduate level of business will be different than on the undergraduate level. One of the interesting developments within the business academy has been the gradual acceptance of engaging business and spirituality. Spirituality of work courses have gained greater acceptability in business schools. They offer a creative way to engage questions of integration within an MBA program, especially if they avoid any approach that divorces religion and spirituality.⁴⁴
- **A Graduate Great Books Course:** Ken Goodpaster has developed an intensive one-week, three-credit graduate business course based on the world-renowned Aspen Institute Executive Seminar. It uses selected writings of great classic and contemporary thinkers and includes both secular and religious voices on such universal human concerns as justice, rights, liberty, equality, power, leadership, democracy, and community and its relationship to business. Readings include selections from Scripture, Pope John Paul II, Martin Luther King, and Malcom X, as well as from Plato, Aristotle, Harriet Mill, John Locke, Milton Friedman, Aldo Leopold, and Virginia Woolfe. This unique mix of religious and secular texts, along with a seminar format, provides an intensive, focused discussion with peers on the

⁴³ For an example of such a course see <http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/curriculum/Syllabi/CS340.Entrepreneurship.2001.final.pdf>.

⁴⁴ For one expression of this course see <http://www.contemplativemind.org/programs/academic/syllabi/delbecq.pdf>.

enduring ideas of civilization, the problems and opportunities of today, and the issues to be faced in the years ahead.⁴⁵

These types of courses send students into the world with a deeper sense of vocation, which helps them to situate the meaning of business within a larger moral and spiritual reality.

Conclusion

The actualization of this mission of a Catholic business education is not only complex, but current problems of careerism, consumerism, secularism, religious indifferentism, relativism, postmodernism, specialization of disciplines, financial pressures of students and universities, the corporatization of the university, and distorted notions of pluralism, freedom, and work may make it seem impossible. These pressures create significant obstacles to a “higher synthesis of knowledge.”⁴⁶ They isolate faith from work, separate virtue from technique, careerize vocation, and marginalize the social character of business.

To think that Catholic business education is an easy task is naïve and dangerous. It will take boldness and courage as well as a sophistication and prudence that many of us have not quite mastered. It will also take a great deal of honesty and humility to recognize our current gaps between mission aspiration and operational reality.

The intent of this essay is to foster a serious conversation on this most important and complex task of business education at a Catholic university. My experience is that not enough has been done in this area. There has been much discussion on the state and nature of Catholic universities, but business education has largely been absent from this conversation. This is unfortunate in light of the significance of business education at Catholic universities. I am hopeful that with the creative work currently being done, further work in this area will renew the mission and identity of Catholic universities.

⁴⁵ See <http://www.stthomas.edu/business/about/ethics/greatbooks.html>.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1990), 16.