Integrating Justice Education: A Whole-Campus Approach to Implementing Justice Education for Future Leaders

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Abstract

Neoliberalism affects the mission of Catholic higher education by redefining the very meaning of higher education; it dislocates education by commodifying its intrinsic value, emphasizing practical knowledge for economic use, demoralizing educators, and paralyzing administrators with red tape. To resist these challenges, this paper argues for a whole-campus approach to implementing justice education. It first addresses some of the challenges associated with the ongoing worldwide process of neoliberalism in Catholic higher education. Second, it examines the existing scholarship on justice education, including Catholic social teaching, paying particular attention to how the vision put forward in Pope John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* ("Mother and Teacher") would be an effective option for deepening and widening the teaching of justice, both as character development and community-engagement learning in practice. To extend this discussion to a broader community-based study, I will also include several examples of Catholic higher-education institutions and their applications in the education system.[1] Finally, this paper suggests pedagogical practices and a system-wide approach. These include the implications of justice in the classroom, in student life, and in academic administration. Focusing the paper on the formation of a just campus and society and championing those efforts of university educators—including faculty, staff, and administrators—affirms the telos of an integrated justice education, i.e., justice education aims at everyone involved in the educational experience becoming just.

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[1] Certainly, there are a variety of examples at various Catholic higher education institutions, but I limit myself to the Lasallian and the Jesuit higher education institutions drawn from my own personal and professional experiences.

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Introduction: Countering Neoliberalism in Catholic Higher Education

As members of a capitalist system, we encounter daily "commodity fetishism," in which goods take on more attributed value than they have intrinsic worth. This fetishization is often observed in universities, when commodifying education or marketization of the academics serves a self-preoccupied desire for greater power and profit (or "survival of the fittest"), even at the expense of their missions and civic values.[2] In particular, the rapid worldwide spread of "neoliberal-driven capitalism" in the 1990s, which has become the predominant economic paradigm, cannot be considered merely coincident with the increasing influences of materialism and economism in recent years on college campuses.

Catholic higher education has not been immune from neoliberalism's influences as commodifying education has rapidly accelerated throughout the world.[3] As Rob Jenkins, Cecilia Rikap, and Hugo Harari-Kermadec argue, both teachers and administrators have now adapted to the market-driven production process where precarious working conditions and a hyper-focus on individual performance further foster the environment of competition and downplay morality and its applications in the education system.[4] As a result, many schools have pursued a model of for-profit universities, prioritizing majors such as STEM over the liberal arts and humanities. In these competitive, atomized, privatized, and market-driven surroundings, although educational practices concerning ethics, morality, and character development still

[2] James Keenan, *University Ethics: How Colleges Can Build and Benefit from a Culture of Ethics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), ch. 10. Joel Suman and Keith Meador share a similar view as they discuss the unconscious dynamic which causes commodity fetishism, as well as how the same dynamic can be found in religious institutions, including educational sectors. See their book *Heal Thyself: Spirituality, Medicine, and the Distortion of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), ch. 3. For more recent scholarship, see Gerald J. Beyer, *Just Universities: Catholic Social Teaching Confronts Corporatized Higher Education* (New York: Fordham University, 2021).

[3] Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demon's: On the Political Theology of Late Capital* (Standford, CA: Standford University Press, 2018), 44. Also, see Keenan, *University Ethics*, 191–200.

[4] Rob Jenkins, "Straight Talk about Adjunctification", *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 15, 2014), online at https://www.chronicle.com/article/Straight-Talk-About/150881. Cecilia Rikap and Hugo Harari-Kermadec, "The Direct Subordination of Universities to the Accumulation of Capital," *Capital and Class 44*, no. 3 (2020): 371–400.

do exist, they often exist as isolated entities, disjointed from the standard curriculum. In my estimation, this *compartmentalized approach* neglects the inherent interconnectedness of character development, social justice, and just learning environments in our societal structure, signaling that these foundational principles should not exist in isolation within educational frameworks.

Certainly, with these challenges spurred by neoliberalism in higher education, creating just learning environments is complex. It requires a clear understanding of justice, as well as an awareness of injustice. However, understanding and awareness alone are insufficient. At Catholic higher educational institutions, intentional collaboration, education, and a (re-) commitment to each university's mission and religious charism are necessary, as are nurturing healthy relationships and the ability to address challenges and opportunities.[5] Hence, I argue that to develop a just society, Catholic higher-education systems must educate students by providing integrated learning opportunities to engage with the concept of justice. Justice education is more than simply fostering a personal virtue and should involve an appreciation of the social dimension of human life, as well as the pursuit of the establishment of a just society. At the university, fostering this virtue requires consistency throughout students' whole educational experience—therefore, justice education requires that instructors, staff, and administrators consistently manifest justice.

A Quest for Justice Education: Integrating Character Development and Social Justice Education into Catholic Social Teaching

Plainly, the students of today are the harbinger of our collective future, poised to shape the trajectory of society as leaders. At the heart of their societal responsibility lies the imperative to embrace and enact the principles of justice, an elemental force underpinning the well-being of our ever-evolving social fabric. Yet, the expectation for individuals to lead lives imbued with justice demands a nuanced introduction to this concept and meaningful opportunities to delve into its intricacies.

[5] David Kwon, "Catholic Social Teaching's Demand for Justice Education at Catholic Residential College," *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education 13*, no. 1 (2021): 39–45. This paper has been developed from the author's earlier work, a short article on character education in the context of Lasallian higher education, published by *AXIS*.

For decades, many Western educational philosophers and scholars, such as John Dewey, Alfie Kohn, and Nel Noddings, have encouraged relational engagement, whether called "progressive education," "social justice education," or "education for caring."[6] In that regard, justice education is not new, since it is widely known as an expression of the communities of care and respect that both administrators and teachers have historically encouraged in schools, including higher-education institutions. However, as education scholars Katherine Evans and Dorothy Vaandering point out, "New perspectives take time to root in culture. Though education provides significant hope, it also serves as means for social control, where students are taught to comply and to take up their place in an economy-driven world."[7] They continue, "policies and practices that continue to be most popular are those that industrialize schooling and undermine the well-being of individuals and their communities (e.g., zero tolerance, inequitable distribution of resources…)."[8]

To be clear, I do not propose that Catholic higher-education systems must overlook the reality of our economy-driven learning environments, nor that we must utterly resist a for-profit administrative approach in an era of global neoliberalism. Launching a new justice education program or even maintaining quality liberal arts education at Catholic universities can be a daunting process, especially in times of shrinking campus resources after the pandemic. It is no secret that many Catholic university administrators and teachers complain that they are overburdened with multiple commitments, trying to survive in a more competitive but less supportive environment. But it is possible to refocus Catholic higher-education missions and staff energy on engaging character development practices such as teaching students with care and respect, managing their justice education programs, and promoting a whole-campus approach to implementation—all of which can play a rejuvenating and empowering role that might increase morale and staff retention (and further student retention).

Providing meaningful justice learning opportunities implies that an educational community understands the fundamental terminology of justice, justice education, and social-justice education. But justice

[6] For details, see Perry L. Glanzer, "The Character to Seek Justice: Showing Fairness to Diverse Visions of Character Education," *The Phi Delta Kappan 79*, no. 6 (February 1998): 434–38.

[7] Katherine Evans and Dorothy Vaandering, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools* (New York: Good Books, 2016): 11–12.

[8] Ibid.

education is far from a conceptual endeavor. According to Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, the virtue of justice results from living within a just community, which is to say a setting that provides one with the opportunity to become a most truly human person, a *virtuous* person. Virtue is *acquired* through the repetition of virtuous acts, but because what is truly virtuous is only fully *known*, from within, by those who already possess the excellence in action that virtue gives (as only an excellent tennis player truly knows what excellence in tennis requires). Practically speaking, persons have the best chance of growing in virtue socially by surrounding themselves with other virtuous people and learning from them, so as to grow in *phronesis* (practical wisdom).[9] Thus, justice in action is both the origin and the aim of justice education. At the same time, a conceptual justice education is necessary to found such communities, as it paves the way for a rich understanding of right kinds of relationship needed to build a more just society, one that fosters both growth of individual virtue and the respect of the common good.[10] This vision of justice education has brought leaders of religious education and social ministry together to assess and strengthen community participation when putting their efforts into practice.

For instance, education of the impoverished has been one of the distinguished contributions of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, a Roman Catholic religious community founded by Saint John Baptist de La Salle (1651–1719) and eleven other men. In 1694, they took the vow of poverty "to keep together and by association gratuitous schools, wherever I may be, even if I were obliged to beg for alms and live by bread alone."[11] According to Gerald J. Beyer, a prolific writer on higher education and Christian ethicist, the present-day mission statement of the Brothers and their schools, including but not limited to LaSalle University, Manhattan College, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota,

[9] Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders and T. A. Sinclair (London: Penguin Books, 1981), 1323a21. In reality, virtue is acquired by performing virtuous acts, not by simply living in the vicinity of other virtuous persons. But it is only the truly virtuous person who knows what virtue is, from within, so living near a virtuous person helps to form one's judgment of what is a virtuous act.

[10] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1984), II-II, q.58. (Hereafter cited as *ST*).

[11] Brothers of the Christian Schools, *International Council for Lasallian Studies, The Lasallian Charism, trans.* Aidan Patrick Marron (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2006), online at http://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Lasallian-Studies-13.pdf. For more historical accounts, see Luke Salm, FSC, *The Work is Yours: The Life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, 2nd ed.* (Washington, D.C.: Christian Brothers Conference, 2007).

and other Lasallian higher-education institutions, as well as their K-12 schools across the world, all reflect this ideal.[12]

A similar vision has been shared in the Jesuit schools, as understood by their founder Saint Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), "who wanted love to be expressed not only in words but also in deeds," says Superior General of the Jesuits, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach: "Fostering the virtue of justice in people was not enough. Only a substantive justice can bring about the kinds of structural and attitudinal changes that are needed to uproot those sinful oppressive injustices that are a scandal against humanity and God."[13] Despite advances in technology that make eradicating poverty a real possibility, humans themselves remain self-centered. We often care more for ourselves than for creating just social structures, resisting the mutual self-giving we were created for. God created us not be alone in this world but to live in community with one another.[14] Substantive justice requires an action-oriented commitment particularly to the poor in the US higher education context, as US Jesuits have shown their painstaking attention to "the promotion of justice as part of the service of faith" since colonial times.[15] Kolvenbach emphasizes: "When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection."[16] On that account, Kolvenbach proposes that "the measure of Jesuit universities is not what our students do but who they become and the adult Christian responsibility they will exercise in [the] future toward their neighbor and their world."[17]

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[12] Beyer, *Just Universities*, 110. For details on the case studies of some Lasallian institutions, see Beyer's grant-funded research report, "Catholic Universities, Solidarity and the Right to Education for All: Two Case Studies in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia." Program for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society Report, *University of Pennsylvania* (April 2007). A similar educational vision can be found in other religious higher educational settings such as Jesuit education and Mercy higher education. See Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education," address at Santa Clara University, 6 Oct. 2000, online at http://www.scu.edu/ic/programs/ignatian-worldview/kolvenbach/; and Mary C. Sullivan, "Catherine McCauley and the Characteristics of Mercy Higher Education," online at http://www.mercyhighered.org/resources/ewExternalFiles/characteristics.pdf.

[13] Kolvenbach, "Service of Faith."

[14] Philippians 2:3–4, NRSV. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981): n. 6, 9, 30, 37.

[15] David J. Collins, *The Jesuits in the United States: A Concise History* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2023), 195.

[16] Kolvenbach, "Service of Faith."

[17] Ibid.

While this Aristotelian-Thomistic vision of justice education founds Catholic social teaching (hereafter CST)[18] and has long been a hallmark of many Catholic higher-education institutions, the complexity of justice in the contemporary higher educational context signals a need for integrated learning opportunities of justice education. As discussed earlier, this complexity significantly correlates with the impact of neoliberalism in the higher-education system, namely the surge of compartmentalized moral education approaches in an industrialized higher education with its competitive, atomized, privatized, and market-driven surroundings. As a result, many faculty and staff members face difficulty in defining fundamental concepts in justice education. While some traditional educators may readily appreciate that all types of justice (e.g., criminal justice, racial justice, gender justice, global health justice, environmental justice, technological justice) fall under the social-justice or human-rights umbrella, a branch of justice that attempts to articulate just elements of society such as distribution of resources, economics, and opportunities, many progressive thinkers and practitioners in the field of education have responded to the complexities of justice and social justice attributing to the particular concept of social-justice education, meaning to liberation from all forms of social oppressions.[19] Hence, Lauren Bialystok points out that social-justice education has become not only ubiquitous but also "the apple pie of contemporary education."[20] The problem with this, as identified by Bialystok, is that it is too complicated for educators, whether traditional or progressive, to apply the concept of justice to educational systems that should satisfy a wide range of stakeholders such as students, parents, administrators, donors, local communities, and governments, primarily due to a multiplicity of definitions and approaches of social justice education exist in the current literature, including, but not limited to, "'full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs' (Bell, 1997, 3) and 'a disposition toward recognizing and eradicating all forms of oppression and differential treatment' (Murrell, 2006, 81)."[21]

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[18] Catholic social teaching refers to a range of literature produced by popes, bishops, and other Church leaders that addresses social issues and challenges from a Christian faith perspective. CST seeks to offer ways in which Catholics and other people of goodwill should attend to those challenges by laying down principles grounded in or compatible with the Christian tradition that should inform social practice and way of life.

[19] Lauren Bialystok, "Politics Without 'Brainwashing': A Philosophical Defense of Social Justice Education." *Curriculum Inquiry, 44*, no. 3. (June 2014): 415.

[20] Bialystok, "Politics," 416.

[21] Ibid., 418.

I would argue, however, that the reality of difficulty in defining concepts such as justice and social-justice education only makes them more relevant for educational systems, teachers, and students to explore for the betterment of society. Justice education, in such a fragmented world, cannot be taught in a purely conceptual way. When Pope John XXIII argues in his encyclical letter, *Mater et Magistra,* for character development and social-justice education together, he points to the responsibility of society to provide *integrated learning opportunities for justice education*. Pope John argues that students must "be given more assistance, and more free time in which to complete their vocational training as well as to carry out more fittingly their cultural, moral, and religious education."[22] Providing students with a justice education is essential to their *whole* education, as persons destined to assume an active role in the cultural, moral, and religious framework of society.[23] Pope John writes, "It is of the utmost importance that parents exercise their right and obligation toward the younger generation by securing for their children a sound cultural and religious formation."[24] This exhortation to parents applies also to all individuals involved in providing integrated opportunities for justice education—including teachers and coaches and their colleagues in other professions such as university administrators and staff—as they too, have a responsibility to the next generation. This responsibility requires everyone to examine their own experiences and understanding of justice, so that "besides profiting personally from their own day-to-day experience in this field, [they] can also help the social education of the rising generation by giving it the benefit of the experiences they have gained."[25]

In her Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) Talk, Sydney Chaffee of Dorchester, Massachusetts (the 2017 National Teacher of the Year awarded by the Council of Chief State School Officers) states, "social justice should be a part of the mission of every school and every teacher in America, if we want 'liberty and justice for all' to be more than a slogan . . . because schools are crucial places for children to become active citizens and to learn the skills and the tools that they need to change the world."[26] This quotation furthers the argument that schools

[22] John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961), n. 94.

[23] For details, see Deirdra Grode, "Teaching Social Justice," *Education Update* 51, no. 10 (October 2009).

[24] John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra,* n. 195.

[25] Ibid., n. 233.

[26] Marianne Fitzgerald et al., "School Libraries and Social Justice Education," in *Knowledge Quest* 48*,* no. 3 (January 2020), 2.

exist to provide students with more than the opportunity to gain practical knowledge for economic use. Social-justice education is integral to the growth-oriented vision of the Catholic education such as character development and virtue formation, as highlighted by moral theologian James Keenan, "in as much as that vision is who we ought to become, then the key insight is that we should always aim to grow. . . . Without growth, we cannot become more moral."[27]

This perspective emphasizes that the ultimate goal of lifelong education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge but the continuous development of moral character. For example, social justice, as a guiding principle, ensures that the educational environment actively fosters this growth by challenging injustices and inequities and promoting justice and inclusivity. Likewise, Catholic higher-education institutions can be transformational places that nurture the development of citizens and active members of society; schools become dynamic spaces that encourage students to evolve not only academically but also ethically, cultivating a sense of responsibility and empathy essential for creating a just and harmonious society. In order for that transformation to take place, Catholic higher-education institutions must (re-) adopt a whole-campus approach to implement justice education for students and present these future leaders with integrated, yet diverse, learning opportunities to understand their role in society and the concept of justice.

A Pedagogical Practice: Implications for Classroom Settings and Beyond

The current justice education literature on integral learning opportunities, both for advancing whole education and preparing for the future of society, is practically reflected in *Mater et Magistra* in two ways: (i) engaging and experiencing justice education; and (ii) pairing academic learning with character and social-justice education.

Providing justice learning opportunities starts with the teachers who provide those learning opportunities. Teachers must acknowledge and accept their role and responsibility as role models who provide opportunities for their students to explore justice. Since justice and other topics associated with moral education are complex, students "look to

[27] James Keenan, "Virtue Ethics and Sexual Ethics," in *Virtue: Readings in Moral Theology*, no. 16, ed. Charles Curran and Lisa Fullam (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 120.

the adults in their lives—parents, teachers, coaches, and relatives—to help them decide what to do."[28] In the most beneficial justice-oriented learning opportunities, teachers act as guides for their students. They use their knowledge, beliefs, values, and experience to guide students toward the students' own understanding of justice. Through reflection, teachers realize that there is not one universal definition of justice, so they cannot teach as if there were. Although students are ready to explore these concepts, even from a young age,[29] "they need adult mentors to help them translate their ideas into action. With guidance, they can go from passive spectators to activists, focusing their energy on solutions."[30] To effectively present learning opportunities to explore justice, teachers must acknowledge their role as a guide rather than an imparter of knowledge. Teachers can use their knowledge to help guide but should do so in a way that enables students to develop their own knowledge. If teachers want to educate their students as people, teachers must educate their students to think for themselves.[31]

With this preliminary proposition in mind and when presenting learning opportunities to explore justice, the teacher must guide students through experiences. Experience and engagement turn the *theory* of justice education into the *practice* of justice education. Pope John XXIII states, "It is not enough to merely formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality."[32] While the Pope speaks of beliefs and values in a religious context, the idea of translating ideas to reality remains true

[28] Laurel Schmidt, "Stirring Up Justice," *Educational Leadership* 66, no. 8 (May 2009): 33.

[29] Some educators and psychologists believe justice and other elements of moral and character education are too abstract and complex for young students to explore; they think these are concepts that will come later in life with more experience. See Grode, "Teaching Social Justice." However, young students themselves challenge that belief. Martin Luther King Jr. once wrote of a five-year-old who asked, "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?" Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," para 12. Even as young as five years old, children's minds ask these questions. Laurel Schmidt, the renowned educator, echoes this when she writes, "Active, inquisitive citizenship can begin when learners are young. They should act out early and often, until championing worthy causes becomes a habit they can't break." Habits, whether academic, social, emotional, or moral, can and should develop in youth. For details on this position, see Schmidt, "Stirring Up Justice": 32-36; and Erin L. Papa, "Bilingual Education for All in Rhode Island: Assuring the Inclusion of Minoritized Language." NECTFL Review, no. 86, November 2020: 45–61.

[30] Schmidt, "Stirring Up Justice," 33.

[31] Kwon, "Demand for Justice," 42-44. This section is developed from the author's earlier work through AXIS.

[32] John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra,* n. 226.

in the educational context. Educational institutions and teachers cannot achieve a quality, whole-student education by just writing guidelines, approaches, or theories. Engaging and experiencing justice requires learning opportunities that are more than passive assignments. Aristotle writes, "Hence knowing about virtue is not enough, but we must also try to possess and exercise virtue."[33] Justice education provides students with the ability to "exercise" virtue because "we become just by doing," according to Aristotle.[34] When students engage in their learning, it becomes more meaningful and effective. Pope John XXIII writes, "formal instruction, to be successful, must be supplemented by the students' active co-operation in their own training. They must gain an experimental knowledge of the subject, and that by their own positive action."[35] Teachers should want their instruction and guidance to last a lifetime and they should take measures to make sure it does.

Teachers looking to provide integrated learning opportunities for their students to engage with justice can study and adapt established educational models, theories, and practices. One possible challenge with justice education is providing learning opportunities that go beyond surface-level, background information on a topic.[36] To practically provide justice education, teachers must weave justice into the learning opportunities they regularly present to their students. Plainly, pairing academic learning with character and moral education provides the students with a more realistic education.[37] They should not be taught

[33] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publisher, 1999), 1179b4.

[34] Ibid., 1103b1, 1181a10.

[35] John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra,* n. 231.

[36] For details, see Bree Picower, "Using Their Words: Six Elements of Social Justice Curriculum Design for the Elementary Classroom," *International Journal of Multicultural Education 14*, no. 1 (2012): 1–17. Although Picower's work originally targets K-12 education, it also reasonably applies to higher education.

[37] Of course, Catholic colleges often face a practical challenge such as how justice education could lay groundwork for or mediate Catholic Social Teaching or faith-based character education to a pluralist environment. Accordingly, justice education needs to develop in a comprehensive and consistent manner, as Derek Bok notes, "Precisely because its community is so diverse, set in a society so divided and confused over its values, a university that pays little attention to moral development may find that many of its students grow bewildered, convinced that ethical dilemmas are simply matters of personal opinions beyond external judgment or careful analysis. Nothing could be more unfortunate or more unnecessary." Derek Bok, *Universities and the Future of America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 100. Above all, some values enjoy widespread support among students (and their parents) and faculty members, but I nevertheless argue that their consensus, while important, is an insufficient reason for incorporating

to think of these concepts separately. They will need to use all their knowledge, academic, social, emotional, and moral, to make decisions.[38] If educational systems do not guide students to adopt these thinking habits, students may have a difficult time bringing all their experiences together in the future. Hence, teachers should exhibit positive expectations to ensure that integrated justice education is possible. For example, in one such venture, classroom teachers paired with their school librarians to explore the concept of justice in texts. The educators describe the learning opportunity as "a list of books with a social-justice theme was curated for students. Each student engaged in finding the book that was right for them and then collaborated with a small group of students to engage in book discussions and activities."[39] To complete the learning opportunity, "students collaborated to create a final project that shared the social-justice themes in their chosen books."[40] Such learning opportunities provide an example of integrated teaching that calls students to engage with the material in a way that made the material relevant and meaningful to them without sacrificing deep learning.

Many teachers assume character development and social-justice education present an extraneous, additional requirement, on top of the already demanding curriculum they feel the pressure to address. Instead, justice education can and should be integrated into the subject-matter curriculum established for teachers and students. In this way, the university's justice education can maintain rigorous and practical educational standards and content goals, while enhancing students' practical growth as they engage with those standards in an integrated-yet-multiple approach.[41]

Seattle University's inclusive pedagogy workshops and curriculum development programs funded by the Mellon Foundation can be a good example. Selected faculty have an opportunity to create new courses or revise their courses around the topic of race, racialization, and resistance

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particular values into the curriculum. Instead, I argue, the values incorporated into a university's curriculum must somehow enhance its academic mission. For a similar argument, see Ivor A. Pritchard, *Good Education: The Virtues of Learning* (Macon: Judd Publishing, 1999).

[38] Rebecca Bauer and Helen Westmoreland, "What is Whole Child Education?" The Center for Family Engagement: A National PTA Initiative. (2019): 1. For a similar argument yet in the context of higher education, see Bok, *Universities and the Future of America*; and James Keenan, *University Ethics*.

[39] Fitzgerald, et al., "School Libraries," 5.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Schmidt, "Stirring Up Justice," 36.

in the United States. With both financial and pedagogical support across disciplines, the updated courses become integral to the overall curricular revision of the faculty's departments and the university's core course programs. Of additional benefit is the way these opportunities are fully supported by the university leaders and staff, through proactive and constructive involvement such as workshops led by the Racial and Economic Injustice Provost Fellows working group, the Ignatian Pedagogy Series organized by the Center for Faculty Development, workshops directed by the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Leadership Committee on Intersectionality and Justice, as well as integrated character development and social-justice education curricular retreat projects, all of which can further serve the curricular audit tool and mapping tool.

Furthermore, drawing on my own teaching experiences with Seattle University's Mellon project on the subject of racial justice and its intersectionality in environment, development, and sustainable peace across disciplines, I must note that integrating justice education with subject-matter education contextualizes the concept of justice for students so they can apply it to their current and future experiences in more practical ways.[42] Here one of the practical implications in class is that when education systems provide learning opportunities for students to explore justice, they are not only forming just people but also persons with a truly personal prudence. Justice education could be unjust if it imposes upon students one way of thinking, without developing their capacity to judge rightly for themselves.[43] This distinction presents a realistic, potential issue for justice education. Picower makes the observation that "all teaching is political (Freire, 1993), not just teaching that comes from a social-justice perspective. Good teaching, regardless of its ideological lens, should provide students with multiple perspectives about historical events, allowing them to draw their own conclusions based on evidence (Burstein & Hutton, 2005)."[44] The end goal of justice education is thus not to form students to think one way on one issue or in one domain, but to form them to have the virtue of prudence, or the ability to not only judge between virtuous and vicious

[42] Applying the concept of justice to each student's college experience is fundamental to Seattle University's Mellon project: "The project focuses on undergraduate students so they can engage in courses throughout their college experience that allow them to deeper explore these complex topics and ideas more with the aid of faculty." Sean Campbell, *The Spectator* (May 10, 2023), online at https://seattlespectator.com/2023/05/10/seattle-u-receives-grant-to-improve-upon-racially-diverse-curriculum/.

[43] Bialystok, "Politics," 413–14.

[44] Picower, "Using Their Words," 9.

actions but also enrich that ability by addressing diverse situations in mature, virtuous ways.[45]

If teachers are not fully aware of their responsibility and the impact their teaching has on students, specifically in the context of the future of society, they may fall into the practice of unconscious bias while approaching character development and social-justice education. For example, one teacher took their class "to the streets with signs and an oversized papier-mâché oil pipeline to protest the laying of an actual pipeline in Western Canada."[46] While this teacher made their students aware of a real-life, relevant topic related to justice and allowed them to actively engage in the topic, the teacher left no room for individual thinking on the concept of justice. This teacher taught one understanding of justice instead of guiding students in the formation of just judgment. The difference between "guiding" students in the formation of *phronesis* and "teaching" them one's personal views separates justice education that will establish a just society and one that will establish a polarized society. However, with awareness and planning, teachers can stay on the side of guiding students to become well-rounded thinkers.

Teachers can and should approach justice education as encouraging engagement in learning opportunities, as opposed to only presenting already established beliefs and values. Bialystok states, "There is a critical difference between teaching students to think about the world in such a way that may motivate independent political involvement, and requiring students to defend or oppose particular political parties or policies."[47] While recognizing the pertinence of the pipeline issue addressed by the other teacher, she suggests an alternate approach, one that leads the students to personal reflection rather than employing them in political protest:

> [A lesson] drawing attention to the negative impacts of the pipeline, such as its effects on the environment and on aboriginal communities, is entirely justified by such laws as the Environmental Protection Act (1999) and recent social

[45] According to Aristotle, this prudence requires: (i) a general conception of what is just or unjust, which he relates to the conditions for human flourishing; (ii) the ability to perceive, in light of that general conception, what is required in terms of feeling, choice, and action in a particular circumstance; (iii) the ability to deliberate well or think things through clearly; and (iv) the ability to act on that deliberation. This prudence cannot be taught but requires experience of life and virtue. For details, see Michael Lacewing, *Philosophy for AS and A Level: Epistemology and Moral Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2017): 288-92.

[46] Bialystok, "Politics," 432.

[47] Ibid., 430.

> activism surrounding aboriginal rights in Canada, particularly if accompanied by critique of the political bias in media and government discussions of the issue, such as recent television ads promoting the tar sands.[48]

This approach offers a learning opportunity asking students to synthesize multiple perspectives, critically think about the information presented in the context of their personal experiences and make an individual decision.

When teachers are aware of their role and responsibility, they can better guide their students toward thinking about justice in the most just way possible. Likewise, when students are exposed to the concept of justice early in life, educational systems help create a just present *and* future because the study of justice, freedom, equality, equity, diversity, tolerance, and integrity supports students in making ethical and just decisions on a day-to-day basis in their classrooms and in the larger community.[49] Educational professionals need not even separate social-justice education from simply justice education or moral and character education, as if bringing justice to society were somehow a separate subject from becoming just persons in society. Character and moral education asks students to engage, act, and think, much like they will be asked to do as independent members of society. Imagine the just society of the future if education systems not only provided students with knowledge but guided them in how to think, act, and lead with that knowledge.

A System-wide Approach: Implications for Student's Life and Academic Administration

While the preceding shows that teachers must manifest justice in order to foster justice education, this section presents a broader implication for administrators and staff as well as students, on that could be called a whole-campus approach to justice education. This holistic vision of justice education implementation is imbued in *Mater et Magistra*. To be clear, the encyclical's concern was not so much with external critiques of higher-education administration and leadership, but with an internal reflection and exhortation of the Church's own stance on

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[48] Ibid., 432.

[49] For details, see Pritchard, *Good Education*. Also, for more on the practical implications of CST's everyday character development in education, see Carol Cimino, et al., *Integrating the Social Teaching of the Church into Catholic Schools: Conversations in Excellence* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2000).

social questions during the 1960s (e.g., human dignity, subsidiarity, and solidarity). Nonetheless, the pope's conclusions on the latter (i.e., integral learning efforts to achieve social progress and justice education) had ramifications for the present-day CST attitudes on the former. In particular, the holistic vision of justice education imbued in *Mater et Magistra* relies on a theological understanding of the human person. CST scholar Kenneth Himes notes that since the nature of God is three persons, and since the foundational Catholic intellectual tradition necessarily begins with the understanding of the nature of the human person as *imago Dei*, CST is based on the moral imperative of *human sociality* as well as *human dignity*: "Human beings are not meant to live in isolation but are meant to live in community with one another."[50] As the basis of CST's fundamental proposal—one of inhaling hope in order to exhale justice (Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25)—these two claims drive moral judgments about what is good in society and thus what has to be taught in life.[51]

Essentially, CST's claim of human nature is also characterized in the undergraduate student in a distinctive way. Undergraduate students tend to be younger and are still working out an individual understanding of identity as well as the identities of others around them. Relationships and basic expectations for the dynamics within those relationships are imbricated with an understanding of human nature and identity. As Himes put it, understandings of "human sociality" and "human dignity" are practical factors determining how people relate to one another that are continuously being worked out in the minds of college students, and their social context influences the outcome of this process. CST provides an ideal framework for students to work out their appreciation of the social dimension of human life, one consistent with its application and moral judgments surrounding society and politics. For example, CST maintains that the individual must be able to fully engage in society and that "injustice is done to persons when they are effectively marginalized from community."[52] From this perspective, social justice "governs all social relationships,"

[50] Kenneth Himes, *101 Questions & Answers on Catholic Social Teaching* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), 27.

[51] Ibid., 28. While various Judeo-Christian traditions have explored what is the image of God imprinted in human persons, this paper engages the social implications of the *imago Dei* in CST. For details, see Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 57.

[52] Himes, *101 Questions,* 44–45.

incorporating the aforementioned imperative that an individual be able to fully engage.[53]

Virtue ethicist Paul Wadell works through different forms of justice demonstrating that individuals have a responsibility for helping to maintain social justice and that justice is both personal and social. Wadell explains that society can be construed as a network of relationships which imply moral duty: "We owe something to others (and they owe something to us) because our lives are always enmeshed in relationships that carry inescapable moral demands."[54] Wadell identifies the three forms of justice that exist among individuals, and between the individual and larger society: commutative, distributive, and social (or contributive) justice.[55] These different forms of justice, especially the latter two, demonstrate that justice must be served by each person and by the larger society. According to Wadell, *commutative* justice means fairness and balance in the sense that everyone is treated more or less the same. In other words, this justice demands respect for the equal human dignity of all persons in economic transactions, contracts, or promises: "what we owe other persons and what they owe us."[56] Just like commutative justice, *distributive* justice attends to equality and fairness, but it is distinguished from commutative justice due to its fundamental characteristic: needs-based justice. As he further explains, distributive justice regards the *duties of society* as it "protects the common good by insisting that all persons have a right to some share in the basic goods and services of a society."[57] Conversely and also importantly, *social* (or contributive) justice regards the *duties of individuals* as "it focuses on the responsibility every member of society has to contribute to the common good and to work to create a more just society." Wadell explains that these two forms of justice—distributive and social—"are closely connected because social justice

[53] Ibid., 48, 49.

[54] Paul Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 240.

[55] Wadell, *Happiness,* 241–46.

[56] Ibid., 242.

[57] Ibid. Pope John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (n. 65) offered what is now considered the classic definition of common good; the common good is "the sum total of those conditions of social living whereby [human beings] are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection." This definition shows that the common good is a comprehensive concept that broadly encompasses all the other moral and social concepts such as human dignity, human sociality, commutative justice, distributive justice, social justice, and moral and character education.

makes distributive justice possible."[58] While the university as a social institution has a responsibility to each student to promote the common good, each person within the university has a personal obligation, imposed by social justice, to support the community. For Wadell, this "justice is both an abiding quality of character and a principle of action. It is, more precisely, a virtue because a person of justice is habitually attuned to the needs of others and characteristically responsive to their good."[59]

Although everyone in the university community is bound by this social justice, university leaders and administrators and staff are also bound by justice in a distinctive way since they are proactively charged with the high and grave duty, by virtue of their role, with determining the common good. Hence, leaders and administrators are arguably more responsible for attending to the demands of distributive justice than others. As leaders and members of society, university leaders have a moral and practical duty to both distributive and social justice. Leaders should exhibit this awareness of their obligations to others given the unique nature of their relationship to others in society.[60] The imperatives of justice are a consequence of "the deep connections that exist between us and everything else that lives."[61] Since those connections are broader and of a unique nature for leaders, they have a special call to "recognize the obligations and responsibilities those bonds create."[62] As discussed earlier, the example of Seattle University's inclusive pedagogy workshops and curriculum development programs funded by Mellon Foundation (e.g., the Racial and Economic Injustice Provost

[58] Ibid., 245. Wadell interchangeably uses social justice with contributive justice. I keep the term *social justice* for the sake of consistency through the paper although Himes' understanding of social justice seems broader than Wadell's understanding of social justice limited to that of contributive justice.

[59] Ibid., 240.

[60] James Keenan suggests that "fiefdoms [are] a perfect description of the university, inasmuch as both are deeply rooted in the medieval world. Moreover, structural fiefdoms, like universities, are not related horizontally, except at the top." For example, he observes that "Plant managers, cafeteria workers, student affairs' deans, financial aid officers, admissions boards, custodial workers, trustee members, campus ministers, university police, and librarians each have their own definable domain and their members know mostly what happens within that domain. Rarely are there occasions to go beyond one's domain. . . . The university might think of itself as a community, but it's a thin one at best. . . . The university's structure is very clear in its vertical direction; each cluster knows without a doubt who answers to whom in the upwardly oriented structure of unilateral accountability." Keenan, *University Ethics*, 63; and for details of his account on the "fiefdoms" in the American university landscape, see Ibid., 64–68.

[61] Wadell, 239–40.

[62] Ibid.

Fellows working group, the CAS Leadership Committee on Intersectionality and Justice) illustrates how university administrators and staff, especially the leaders, should acknowledge their role as contributors to society by attending to how the benefits of society are justly distributed.

Plainly, university leaders and administrative staff must also possess virtues to act fairly, and to effectively attend to social justice, or the common good and well-being of people, in the university community.[63] In particular, these leaders need cardinal virtues such as justice and prudence. Keenan, in his account of the cardinal virtues, argues that prudence is the necessary guide for justice. He explains that "prudence discerns and sets the standards for the pursuit of the end and therein helps us to articulate the norms of moral action."[64] Acting rightly is acting justly, but to determine what it is to act rightly, prudence is necessary.

A good example of how discerning the demands of integrated justice education in the context of university community relationships actively requires an education in virtue is provided in the *Saint Mary's University of Minnesota 2021-2022 Student Handbook and University Policies.*[65] In the student handbook, the university professes to take as the basis for its policies *the Lasallian mission of fostering a virtue-guided space for everyone's integrated learning experiences.*[66]

[63] To be clear, there are other virtues that need to be considered in practice. For example, Pritchard offers four specific virtues to the end of moral education—friendship, honesty, courage, and justice—as he notes that they "are the primary virtues whose exercise strengthens education." See Pritchard, *Good Education*, 74. Cf. William J. Merriman, "De Le Salle's 'Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher': Still Relevant Today?" *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education 10,* no. 2 (2020) published by Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.

[64] James Keenan, *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 111–12.

[65] The student handbook and its relevant information were discussed by Gabriel Bickerstaff, a graduate of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, in his term paper, "Catholic Social Teaching's Demand for Just Leadership at Residential Undergraduate University" (Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, May 9, 2021).

[66] For example, through the student handbook's statement of purpose, the office of Student Affairs claims to promote a definition of justice for the individual in society according to Pope John XXIII's CST (as presented in *Mater et Magistra*), or its broadly conceived Lasallian mission of fostering a virtue-guided space for integrated learning experience. The handbook states: "The purpose of the student affairs area of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota is to embody the Lasallian charism by proactively inviting and welcoming students and other members of the university community to full participation in the caring, nurturing, and holistic environment which distinguishes this residential university." *2021–2022 Student Handbook,* 30. Here, the university acknowledges that being "residential" creates a sort of society and assumes moral responsibility to pursue justice for the people who make up that society.

The policies—which profess a basis in social philosophy paralleling or stemming from CST, along with the virtues of prudence and justice—are determined by university leadership, since "the large number of individuals sharing the campus makes it incumbent upon university officials to delineate boundaries and to establish limits for the common good."[67] In particular, the student handbook identifies the responsibility of student affairs administration: "The vice president for student affairs and their designee are responsible for establishing, implementing, and articulating the university's philosophy on student conduct and limits of the community."[68] In a general statement on conduct, the handbook establishes the expectation that everyone in the community act justly or, as Wadell would say, "in right relationship."[69] The handbook notes, "All members of the university community are expected to deal with each other with respect and consideration."[70] Hence, through its expectations and assumed duty to ascertain and uphold justice, the university's leadership implies a claim to the virtue of justice and the prudence required to discern and actualize it.

This theory can be assessed through a closer look at how university leadership acts on practical, everyday matters of living in a community—for example, peace and harmony within a residence hall. The handbook articulates where school leadership has identified as concerning justice things as simple as noise and how it affects the common good: "You share close quarters with many people in a residence hall. . . . Residents should always be able to sleep and study in their rooms without interference from their community. . . . Stereos, radios, computers, and televisions are approved in individual rooms, provided they are played at an acceptable volume."[71] This is just one practical example of the university's endeavor to fulfill its role and duty as a social institution. As established earlier, preservation of the common good is its primary duty—yet, another part of this is personal freedom, which needs to be responsibly engaged in the common good.[72] Personal freedom—in

[67] *Student Handbook*, 3.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Wadell, *Happiness*, 240.
[70] *Student Handbook*, 18.
[71] Ibid., 22.
[72] Himes identifies the balance that CST strikes between freedom and concern for all (or "the common good"), noting that both are important and one cannot come at the expense of the other. This balance of freedom and common good is important in dynamics at an undergraduate residential university. As a private institution with some level of autonomous jurisdiction over the lives and activities of undergraduate students, the residential university can be characterized as something akin to a state. Although they

this case, the autonomy to use sound-producing technology—is not an absolute, but is to be responsibly put in constructive dialogue with the duty to ensure that others can pursue their own well-being.[73]

Discerning justice requires prudence, which the university leadership assumes it possesses in making just judgments as articulated in the handbook. This begs the question of how a failure of virtue in institutional leaders and administrators may vitiate a call to virtue in the bodies that they lead. We fail in teaching justice when we treat it as a set of principles that an individual might teach even while the communities or institutions to which those individuals belong violate those principles without objection. The fact that there is no concrete metric to measure virtues (or traits like social justice) makes it more difficult to assess the success of university administrations in maintaining and instilling virtuous traits and actions in their university communities. This lack of quantifiable data may make virtue education less commodifiable but does not make it less important.

Conclusion

Justice education requires that everyone involved in the educational experience be just. Thus, integrated justice education addresses teachers, administrators, and staff, as well as students. This paper has discussed how, if they wish to contribute to the formation of a just society, higher-education systems must educate students by providing integrated learning opportunities for them to engage with the concept of justice. In the light of CST, fostering the virtue of justice in practice requires a whole-campus approach to implement justice education. That is, justice education requires that everyone involved in education—staff and administrators, as well as instructors— manifest justice, by developing strategies for promoting ethical reasoning and character development among their students.

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might not be identical, Himes's synopsis of CST in regard to government institutions or states can similarly apply to the residential university, since it bears the same duties: "Perhaps nothing is so clearly expressed in CST as the claim that the state's purpose is to protect and promote the common good." For details, see Himes, *101 Questions,* 31–44, 40.

[73] This is a problematic, and not particularly Catholic, perspective on personal freedom. Do what you want as long as it doesn't disturb others. Not only does this deprive freedom of its positive measure (the pursuit of our God-given end), but it opens to the door to many of the modern forms of oppression that limit freedom of religion or expression when the common good is defined as a society where no one professes to have objective standards of right and wrong beyond what is legal.

As Aristotle wisely commented, in matters of moral education, the goal is not speculation or learning for its own sake but practice, and it is practice which is truly educative.[74] Indeed, many Catholic higher-education institutions promote this education as a means of fostering a virtue-guided space for integrated learning opportunities—by offering illustrations for how virtues can be introduced into, and ultimately enrich, the university's curriculum, as well as through making a consistent effort to enhance the university's educational potential for serving the common good and social justice in practice.

The incorporation of social justice into school learning opportunities is paramount for fostering an inclusive and equitable educational environment. Forging a culture of integrated justice education in Catholic universities requires not only addressing questions of justice in the wider society, but also, and more immediately, facing the real challenges of building community—a good that depends on both an abiding quality of character and a principle of action on campus. Social justice serves as a guiding principle that actively challenges systemic injustices within educational settings. By creating an environment that questions and confronts oppressive attitudes and behaviors, schools become agents of change in dismantling ingrained prejudices and biases. This not only enhances the overall educational experience, but also contributes to the development of socially conscious and empathetic individuals—namely, that of truly virtuous future leaders.

In an era of global neoliberalism—especially in a competing and market-driven, yet diverse and interconnected world—exposure to a variety of viewpoints is essential for preparing students to navigate complex societal issues. By acknowledging and incorporating diverse perspectives, schools empower students to think critically and to appreciate the richness that different backgrounds bring to the learning environment. This approach not only broadens students' horizons but also cultivates a sense of respect for differing opinions, fostering a culture of open-mindedness and intellectual curiosity. Furthermore, the emphasis on community-building across social identity groups addresses the need for belonging and representation within educational spaces. Social identity groups encompass a range of factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and more. Fostering a sense of community among these diverse groups creates a supportive atmosphere where every student feels valued and understood. This inclusivity contributes to

[74] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1179b4.

a positive and collaborative learning environment, where students are more likely to engage actively with their education and develop a sense of collective responsibility.

In essence, the importance of social justice and character education in integrating learning opportunities cannot be overstated. It requires a comprehensive, sustainable, and place-based commitment (to the neighborhoods adjacent to the campus) embedded in the school's mission, resource allocation structures, policies, and procedures. The proactive examination of leadership impact ensures a responsive and evolving approach; meanwhile, serving as a model for emulation positions the school as a catalyst for positive change within the broader educational landscape. Ultimately, the integration of social-justice principles and character education is not just a goal but a transformative journey that shapes the educational experience, fostering a truly inclusive and equitable learning environment.