

# explore

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# explore

EXPLORING THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH,  
JUSTICE, AND THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE  
IN JESUIT, CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION



Andrew Johnson, *A Pondering Heart*, 2023.

ON THE COVER: Jen Norton, *Novato Sunrise*, 2020.

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# Contemplatives in Action

Introduction to Winter 2023 *explore*

BY AARON WILLIS

IN AN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION, A FUNDAMENTAL TENSION EXISTS BETWEEN IDEAS AND THEIR APPLICATION IN LIVED REALITY. This tension often shaped conversations across two separate faculty cohorts: one engaging with the “point” of Jesuit education and the other examining the nature of economic and labor justice across the Catholic intellectual tradition. During these conversations, faculty often struggled with statements about justice or educational values emanating from the Jesuit, Catholic tradition and how individuals and institutions, including our own, act in practice.

The essays that follow seek to tease out these tensions in a variety of ways. In the classroom, and beyond, the authors in the Fall 2023 issue of *explore* are working toward their own understanding of how we might put theory into practice. The aforementioned conversations often centered on how we might connect our actions with the theories of justice that animate our shared work in Catholic higher education and as citizens of the world. There is no simple or single answer, but what the essays in this issue make clear is that in conversations about our diverse experiences and understandings we can begin to see an array of possible actions.

For many, the Jesuit, Catholic university is exactly the place where these tensions should be explored and hopefully resolved. A thread that runs through the essays is the understanding that values or theories that don't represent or engage with lived realities will fail to hold relevance for individuals and institutions. Our claims of what it means to be inspired by the Catholic intellectual tradition and Ignatian values must be judged by the actions that shape, and emanate from, our campuses. For students, staff, and faculty the integrity of our institutions as

places committed to educating students capable of making the world a more just, humane, and sustainable place is dependent on a clear connection between our actions and our values.

Like any rich tradition, the Jesuit, Catholic tradition that underpins the mission of Santa Clara University often has areas of internal incoherence. Notions of justice and equity abound across texts inspired by the Catholic intellectual tradition, yet assumptions about gender roles and norms or the relationship between work and wisdom in the Bible can undermine claims of equity and justice. Yet for all its contradictions and failings, this tradition has a role to play in informing our practice. The image of contemplatives in action, a central one for the Jesuit tradition, shapes how we might think about theory and practice coming together. Diverse and sometimes contradictory ideas can open new avenues of understanding—this radical inquisitiveness can, for instance, create new perceptions about our relationship to the natural world. Yet, what is done with those new perceptions and knowledge is the measure of what has been learned. A critical aspect of Ignatian pedagogy is that after reflection and contemplation comes meaningful action.

To do this we might borrow imagery from Sally Vance-Trembath's essay: We should think less like a monarchical papacy making pronouncements and more as an institution focused on conciliatory ways of proceeding. Working with our students and each other through different lenses with different forms of communicating can help to bring Catholic social teaching to life. This dialogical approach creates a vision of theory and tradition deeply rooted in lived reality—one that allows for various means of exchanging ideas, and understands that what will




Courtesy of Santa Clara University

make our theories and values relevant outside of our bubble is how we collaborate and communicate to bring them into being.

A second thread throughout these essays is the related question of how we make the insights and ideas of the Ignatian tradition alive and accessible to our students. The authors in this issue make clear that we must create space for students, faculty, and staff

**“Diverse and sometimes contradictory ideas can open new avenues of understanding—this radical inquisitiveness can, for instance, create new perceptions about our relationship to the natural world.”**

to understand the Ignatian tradition in a way that allows them to draw on it as a lifelong resource that can meaningfully inform practice. Forming students to become contemplatives in action on and beyond campus requires that we are humble in our approach. Yet as educators we have to be confident in our role as catalysts to open up new perspectives for our students. If we are able to enhance their abilities to see reality in ways that combine their ideals with the subtleties and contradictions of reality, then their intellectual engagement with the world will develop habits of real transformative influence.

As several authors bring to our attention, one of the benefits of Ignatian pedagogy and the Catholic intellectual tradition is that they offer a framework and precedent for this ambitious vision of teaching and learning. As Ezinne Ofoegbu points out, an Ignatian educational framework encourages practices of critical reflection, dialogue, and solution development. The presence of these three characteristics inspires faculty, staff, and students toward actions, ideally geared toward justice, that put Ignatian values into practice. What all the essays that follow agree on is that the relevance of Jesuit education and the ideals within the Catholic intellectual tradition are measured by their influence on the lived reality of our students, our colleagues, and the wider world. Endless discussion of the values and their meaning will not advance and maintain the Catholic intellectual tradition or the Jesuit educational tradition. The living praxis of this tradition is the only thing that will sustain it as a force in the world. 



Joanne H. Lee

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Yesi Magdaleno-Solis, *Soñando para volar*, 2020.



# THE JESUIT EDUCATIONAL TRADITION

## A Personal View

BY PAUL A. SOUKUP, S.J.

DESPITE MY LONG ASSOCIATION WITH JESUIT EDUCATION IN PARTICULAR AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN GENERAL, I'VE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT I DON'T REALLY KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT—PROBABLY BECAUSE OF THAT LONG ASSOCIATION. I first met the Jesuits (and Jesuit education) when I turned 14, enrolling in a Jesuit high school; my undergraduate and master's degrees were in that tradition, with the only exception being my Ph.D. studies at a large state university. Like many of us, I never really thought about what surrounded me—a variation of the theme that fish don't notice water nor do we pay much attention to air. That's the world we take for granted, at least until something happens to get our attention.

So, what is this phenomenon we call the Jesuit or Ignatian educational tradition? Here's a rather personal account.

When Ignatius Loyola and his companions from the University of Paris decided to join together in a religious order in the 1530s, they called themselves the Friends of Jesus, a name that worked its way from Spanish to Latin and eventually to English as the Society of Jesus. (The nickname "Jesuits" came later.) Envisioning a different kind of religious order, they saw themselves as a kind of Renaissance jack-of-all-trades community, ready to do whatever work the Church asked, consistent with the ministry of the word of God and the helping of souls. They summed up their guiding principle for

choosing what to do in Ignatius' phrase as *ad majorem Dei gloriam* (for the greater glory of God). Given a choice between two good things, they would choose the one that led more to God's praise and service. Not only did this express their religious aspiration, it also summed up their decision-making—what they called a discernment process, since they echoed the biblical language of discerning God's will.

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## “JESUIT EDUCATION INCLUDED A SENSE OF FORMATION: TEACHERS HELPED FORM STUDENTS AS CITIZENS WHO WOULD SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES.”

By 1548, responding to requests from many of the local communities in which they worked for the Counter Reformation religious revival, they found themselves starting and running schools, an enterprise that led from Europe to Asia and the Americas, carried along by another request—to serve as missionaries in the European encounter with the wider world. Schools, they reasoned, praised God by serving as a lever to change society. But what kind of schools? By 1600, a group of Jesuits working to codify their plan of studies (or *ratio studiorum*) opted to follow the Paris model of education. That model specified the subjects of study and the methods of lecture and disputation that focused on clear thinking, oral disputation, and written presentation. They also stressed civic participation (as a way to serve one's neighbor) and learning the social graces needed to play a role in contemporary society (yes, dance and drama had places in the Jesuit curriculum). The residential schools were both classrooms and apprenticeship sites.

Their early model for schools differed from today's universities in several important aspects: They were largely colleges in the European sense (closer to today's high schools); they stressed rhetorical

education as well as practical subjects; well into the 20th century, they eschewed high decrees of specialization; they kept a door open to adaptation to local needs; and they originally aimed to educate seminarians, later expanding to children of the nobility or of townspeople (those likely to have an outsized influence on their communities). These origins incorporated elements that still play a role today. Jesuit education included a sense of formation: teachers helped form students as citizens who would serve their communities. Jesuit education taught students their model of discernment: to seek God's glory in what they did.

Those origins still influence what we do in the Jesuit and Ignatian educational institutions today. The idea of *cura personalis* (care for persons), for example, directly flows from the seminary principles of formation, including care for boarding students and children—unlike cathedral schools, almost all the Jesuit schools were residential establishments. Education built on bonds of friendship, between faculty as well as with students.

Those bonds of friendship subtly change the dynamic of teaching. Let me add an example from my own field. A longstanding “axiom” in communication studies holds that every communication exchange simultaneously expresses both some content and a relationship. Communication, by its very nature, brings people together, even in the simplest forms. For example, when a parent tells a child, “It's time for bed,” that parent is not simply making an observation about the hour of the evening, but also asserting a parental relationship—“I am your parent and I care for you; I know what is healthy for you; you need to obey me.” This somewhat sweeping example models all the rest. When I ask a clerk the price of an item, I ask both information and assert a relationship of client to salesperson. The same thing happens in schools. Whenever a teacher and student engage each other, they create a relationship, though one should guard against that relationship becoming one of unbalanced power. The Jesuit or Ignatian tradition seeks to moderate the power imbalance through personal engagement at all levels: intellectual, spiritual, emotional—the “education of the whole person”—through an interpersonal care for all the qualities of being human. The Jesuit or Ignatian tradition proposes education through relationships.

In the basics—subject matter expertise, for example—the Jesuit or Ignatian education tradition does not differ dramatically from other educational traditions. But it does differ in emphasis. Here are four components that seem to me where educational



practices are different from the U.S. mainstream: in their academic approach, in their personal component, in their community component, and in their social justice component. All of these flow out of an interpretation of the University of Paris experience filtered through generations of Jesuits and, more recently, through faculty and staff at Jesuit universities and high schools.

### The Academic

Education in the Jesuit and Ignatian tradition includes a clear focus on its goals. While in many ways the tradition resembles college curricula in other places and includes the culturally common components of education—critical thinking and reading, mathematics and science education, social sciences, languages, ethics, and so on—it adds something to that larger context. It has, as Neil Postman points out in his 1995 book *The End of Education*, a clear purpose. Postman explains this in his first chapter, “The Necessity of Gods,” which merits a long quotation:

To become a different person because of something you have learned—to appropriate an insight, a concept, a vision, so that your world is altered—that is a different matter. For that to happen, you need a reason. . . .

A reason, as I use the word here, is different from a motivation. Within the context of schooling, motivation refers to a temporary psychic event in which curiosity is aroused and attention is focused. I do not mean to disparage it. But it must not be confused with a reason for being in a classroom, for listening to a teacher, for taking an examination, for doing homework, for putting up with school even if you are not motivated. . . .

For school to make sense, the young, their parents, and their teachers must have a god to serve, or, even better, several gods. If they have none, school is pointless. Nietzsche’s famous aphorism is relevant here: “He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*.” This applies as much to learning as to living.

To put it simply, there is no surer way to bring an end to schooling than for it to have no end.

By a god to serve, I do not necessarily mean *the* God, who is supposed to have created the world and whose moral injunctions as presented in sacred texts

have given countless people a reason for living and, more to the point, a reason for learning. In the Western world, beginning in the thirteenth century and for five hundred years afterward, that God was sufficient justification for the founding of institutions of learning, from grammar schools, where children were taught to read the Bible, to great universities, where men were trained to be ministers of God. Even today, there are some schools in the West, and most in the Islamic world, whose central purpose is to serve and celebrate the glory of God. Wherever this is the case, there is no school problem, and certainly no school crisis. There may be some disputes over what subjects best promote piety, obedience, and faith; there may be students who are skeptical, even teachers who are nonbelievers. But at the core of such schools, there is a transcendent, spiritual idea that gives purpose and clarity to learning. Even the skeptics and nonbelievers know why they are there, what they are supposed to be learning, and why they are resistant to it.<sup>1</sup>

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“COMMUNICATION,  
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Because the Jesuit tradition emerges within that Western world where “God was sufficient justification for the founding of institutions of learning,” the academic parts of Jesuit or Ignatian education flow from a Christian vision of the world in which people love their neighbor, learn to put others’ needs before their own, recognize the differences between their motivations, and practice a kind of discernment. The roots of all this learning lie in a Christian humanism articulated in the Renaissance schools, particularly in 1530’s Paris, where Ignatius and his companions found a way to

blend faith and an understanding of the importance of humanity. The religious decision-making principle of the Jesuits runs implicitly through the educational tradition: Education should serve the “greater glory of God.” Not everyone connected with education in this Jesuit or Ignatian tradition needs to share the belief; but the tradition anchors common purpose of education.

No surprise, then, that faculty pay attention to things like a core curriculum. In schools that share a common end of education, it matters deeply that students learn more than what Postman calls the mechanics—the basic skills that must be taught. Instead, education also teaches how to live in a reflective, analytic, and humanly affirming way. The approach includes not only competence (as any education must) but as Santa Clara puts it, compassion and conscience as well.

The tradition draws on what those early Jesuits found especially helpful in their University of Paris

experience—the mode of education. This education featured disputation and debate: a 16th-century active education: not rote learning but framing arguments, matching the needs of hearers. For a preaching-minded community, this made their theology come alive in the Counter Reformation. While the world has changed dramatically, the idea that teaching should engage students with a purpose remains a solid commitment.

### **The Personal**

What the Jesuit and Ignatian tradition refers to as “the education of the whole person” reflects a concern that goes beyond the academic. The origins of Jesuit schooling in the 16th and 17th century meant that the students lived at the school, many of them enrolling as young teenagers, and the faculty had charge not only of an academic curriculum but also of the welfare of their students. They saw the students as preparing for life, not necessarily as academics



Brianna Roberto, *Wanderlust*, 2021.

or clerics, but as civic leaders. They taught an education for public life, including its public aspects, exemplified by Jesuit drama and other performance-type behavior as was expected in royal courts, courts of justice, and public charities. Beyond that, the schools also had to deal with the social and emotional and religious growth of their young charges. Such comprehensive education meant a preparation for personal and social engagement.

While we often see the notion of “education of the whole person” today as an emphasis on academics plus emotional growth plus physical health plus mental health, such a view divides integral aspects of human life too much from one another. Education of the whole person means precisely the whole person. Every aspect of human identity is inextricably connected to the other parts, and Jesuit schools have over the centuries wrestled with how that education should take place. Students do not separate what university organizational charts do: student life, athletics, social activities, clubs, politics, activist concerns, and majors and minors happen together. Jesuit schools today search for ways to put what national educational traditions had separated back together. Education of the whole person reflects an understanding of the unity of how people live in the world. But, often, following disciplinary specialization, education only implicitly recognizes the complexity of the student.

To do this well, universities should be small enough for faculty, staff, coaches, and students to know one another and to know what each other does. Those with leading roles in this educational tradition (coaches, staff, faculty) must themselves model that education of the whole person. Jesuit schools have produced a wonderful number of faculty, staff, and administrators who think creatively about how to educate the whole person. A number of Jesuit/Ignatian schools (both secondary and tertiary) have experimented with and established new models of education.

### **The Community**

One more recently articulated part of the education of the whole person emerged in the United States as community-based learning or service learning, which involves the students’ interacting with their communities. The idea of including outside activities into classroom learning goes back at least to John Dewey<sup>2</sup> and typically appears in things like internships.

To truly work from a Jesuit or Ignatian perspective, the idea of service learning begins in the education of the whole person. In this sense,

## “TO TRULY WORK FROM A JESUIT OR IGNATIAN PERSPECTIVE, THE IDEA OF SERVICE LEARNING BEGINS IN THE EDUCATION OF THE WHOLE PERSON.”

the “whole person” must include the community in which that person lives and studies. So, education becomes a function of that larger community. Service learning begins as an insertion into the local community, to give both students, faculty, and staff a better sense of the situation of the university.

By the 1990s, more and more colleges (often led by Jesuit colleges and universities) saw the value of connecting their students with their local communities. “The 1990 Community Service Act defines service learning as a method of learning in which students render needed services in their communities for academic credit, using and enhancing existing skills with time to ‘reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.’”<sup>3</sup>

Rock explains that this can occur in several ways: Bringing community into the classroom manifests typically in one of two ways, with lines between the two often blurred. The first is as place-based learning communities, in which cohorts of students are engaged with local community issues through a series of courses, using the community as laboratory and lens, and developing place attachment in the process ... The other is through community-engaged course work in which students work directly with community organizations to identify and develop solutions for those issues.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to this two-fold practice of community-based learning, Jesuit schools have

## “TO FOCUS ON THE FACT THAT THE STUDENTS ENTER THE COMMUNITY NOT TO DO SOMETHING FOR IT BUT TO LEARN FROM IT, JESUIT SCHOOL PROGRAMS TYPICALLY USE THE ‘COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING’ NAME.”

incorporated an awareness of two challenges arising from the Ignatian self-understanding: separating community-based learning from simple volunteer work and protecting the local community.

Volunteer work, while valuable in itself, carries the subtle implication that volunteers approach others as people who need their help and that they (the students) possess a resource, an expertise, or even power that local people do not. Many of the discussions about “service learning” and even the label itself suggests this: The learners provide a service that the communities cannot provide for themselves. To focus on the fact that the students enter the community not to do something for it but to learn from it, Jesuit school programs typically use the “community-based learning” name. Here the emphasis lies on seeing community members as having knowledge, an understanding that community and students help each other, and acknowledging that both groups learn from each other. But this raises the second challenge: protecting the community. This is a need that arises from an understanding of the role of the community. The danger here is that the community, and often the marginalized parts of the community, end up serving the privileged student group. And so, a part of the education of the whole person must involve a growing understanding of oneself, one’s motives, one’s prejudices, one’s privilege.

Done well, this aspect of learning highlights something that St. Ignatius had clearly understood. Modeled on the Christian understanding of the incarnation, as expressed in the Christological hymn in the Letter to the Philippians that the redeemer emptied himself and took on all of human existence including its suffering, those who follow the Christian way must also set aside a privilege and temper their pride to understand themselves as called to service.

This emphasis, rooted in the approach to education, carries on after graduation, with alumni, individuals, and groups maintaining a focus on service.

### **Social Justice**

Both in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and in his letters, St. Ignatius of Loyola’s advice for choosing ministries included what we might call a preference for the multiplier effect—that is, choosing ministries that would glorify God, have the greatest effect on society, and go to those in the greatest need, that is, to those not already served by the Church or other groups. In the educational realm that meant, in effect, educating those individuals who had the potential to have a significant impact on others: typically these influencers included clergy, members of the nobility, and children of civic officials and successful business people.

Adjusted over time and in different circumstances, that changed dramatically in 1975 at the Thirty-Second General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (the highest policy-making or governing body of the Jesuits). Taking the lead from encyclicals of John XXIII and Paul VI and the Synods of Bishops in 1971 and 1974, the Congregation’s Decree 4<sup>5</sup> stated, “The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another” (#2). This focus on justice quickly became part of the educational work of the Jesuits, along with the focus of research, the content of education, and the selection of the student body. “From the point of view of [a] desire for the more universal good is perfectly compatible with the determination to serve the most afflicted for the sake of the Gospel” (GC 32, Decree 4, #41). Further, the Congregation understood “a commitment to

promote justice and to enter into solidarity with the voiceless and the powerless” (#42). It also noted that people needed to help each other “overcome the reluctance, fear and apathy which block us from truly comprehending the social, economic, and political problems which exist in our city or region or country, as well as on the international scene” (#43).

More formally, this legislative body of the Jesuits committed the Society of Jesus to several things that have an impact on education:


- Greater emphasis should be placed on the conscientization according to the Gospel of those who have the power to bring about social change, and a special place given to service of the poor and oppressed.
- We should pursue and intensify the work of formation in every sphere of education, while subjecting it at the same time to continual scrutiny. We must help prepare both young people and adults to live and labour for others and with others to build a more just world. Especially we should help form our Christian students in such a way that animated by a mature faith and personally devoted to Jesus Christ, they can find Him in others and having recognized Him there, they will serve Him in their neighbor. In this way we shall contribute to the formation of those who by a kind of multiplier effect will share in the process of educating the world itself. (#59).

With this, both the Jesuits and the Ignatian tradition of education recognized an obligation to promote justice and to provide greater access to education for poor students. This has taken many forms, from a commitment to socially engaged research and teaching (addressing the first goal) to increased scholarships and the founding of innovative colleges and high schools in the United States.

In Postman’s words, this emphasis becomes the end of education that, interpreted by those participating in Jesuit or Ignatian educational institutions, serves as the reason that makes education worthwhile.

## Conclusion

Several things stand out for me in my attempt to figure out what I take for granted. First, even if all of us involved in this educational tradition do not agree on all the parts, we agree on enough that students have a coherent experience. Second, people feel a freedom in the tradition to experiment with new ways to accomplish the goals; Jesuit schools have introduced a fair amount of new ideas into

the curriculum and into its pedagogy. Third, the language of “education of the whole person,” “discernment,” “service,” “community engagement,” “social justice” and so on may be new in the 400-plus years of the Jesuit or Ignatian tradition, but it clearly fits into that tradition. Fourth, the tradition has a recognition factor—it brings people together from different regions, countries, and cultures who teach in the Jesuit or Ignatian tradition, and they immediately understand each other and what they do. They also offer a hand of friendship to one another and look for ways to collaborate. Fifth, those emerging from Jesuit and Ignatian schools—alumni, faculty, administrators, staff, coaches—are generally a hopeful group. What we do matters. 



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media ecology, and religion and communication; he has published 14 books and numerous articles on these topics, most recently, *A Media Ecology of Theology: Communication Faith throughout the Christian Tradition* with Baylor University Press in 2022. He has served as chair of the communication department, as well as on the boards of trustees of the American Bible Society and Loyola University of New Orleans.

## NOTES

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# THE CHALLENGE OF AUTHORITY

Catholic Social Teaching in a Time of Shadow

BY SALLY VANCE-TREMBATH

EVERY TRADITION REQUIRES NARRATORS. CRAFTED WISDOM DEPENDS UPON EQUALLY CRAFTED TRANSLATION. AFTER HIS CONVERSION, IGNATIUS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ON A RELENTLESS MISSION TO BETTER UNDERSTAND GOD'S INTENTIONS. He readily embraced the Christian tradition's descriptions about God's character and presence. However, he applied his genius to figuring out the most effective, flexible, enduring, and repeatable way of integrating God's intentions into his own thinking and behavior. Because his own intense experience of God was through the doorway of his imagination, he inspected, explored, and analyzed that doorway so others might become more alert to this most robust connection with God. Indeed, Ignatius provides us with a most luminous explication of the claim from the Hebrew Bible that "God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26).

Ignatius went on to summarize his insights (at the request of his "companions") in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Like the Catholic social teaching tradition, this spiritual guide has become a significant text in the Catholic tradition. Ignatius continues to be recognized as a virtuoso among the numerous other spiritual guides in our tradition. Not so with the primary authorities for Catholic social teaching. Papal teaching no longer enjoys the degree of trust that the *Exercises* retain. Our students stand ready to engage

Irene Bronner, *A Little Light*, 2022.

# “THE MONARCHICAL PAPACY IS ONE WAVE OF SEEPING SHADOW THAT HOVERS OVER THE CATHOLIC TEACHING TRADITION. THERE IS A DIRECT LINE BETWEEN IT AND THE CURRENT DISTRUST OF AUTHORITY.”

Ignatius’ method in classroom through his emphasis on the search for knowledge and excellence. They embrace his method in athletic training and competition as well as in retreat programs and service projects. I find that he remains trustworthy. At least once a year I hear a student or a parent remark that they might not trust the Catholic Church anymore but they are committed to Jesuit education. What is a theologian who studies the Church to make of this situation? In the manner of Ignatius, let’s turn to an image; this one from literature.

We find ourselves like Gandalf and his hobbit companions: living during a time of shadow. Institutions and authorities have failed us. We may even feel abandoned. At the very least we are reluctant to trust Catholic authority figures. And for many of our students, the Catholic tradition is suspect or even an outdated relic. And the Catholic social tradition is strongly tied to the “father” of all Catholic authority figures: the pope. Papal authority has been especially dented by the institutional failures and abuses of this shadow season.

Indeed, your favorite pope can be read as a code these days. There are some Catholics who are rather vocal in their disapproval of Pope Francis. Pope John Paul II developed and privileged the emphasis on solidarity. That said, many Catholic women left the Church during his pontificate, and his treatment and selection of bishops has had enduring negative consequences. If you go further back to Pope Paul VI who wrote the encyclical condemning “artificial” contraception while allowing “natural” contraception instead, you will remember another wave of practicing Catholics who left over that teaching. Go one more step back in time, to Pius XII, the pope of World War II up to 1958, and you will find the full flowering of the pope as monarchical ruler. Pius famously said, if you have any question about Catholic teaching, look to me. He understood himself as the primary teacher and interpreter of

Catholic thought. With such different styles, what are we to make of papal teaching? It is no wonder Catholic social teaching seems underappreciated as saturated with papal teaching as it is.

I am highlighting the role of the pope because that goes directly to engaging Catholic social teaching. Across the centuries there have been two primary papal *styles*. During the first millennium, the style was not monarchical, it was collegial (a bit like a player-coach). The pope was one of the bishops who sometimes exercised authority in order to provide unity and stability and focused on his own local community: the Church in Rome. But as the bishop of Rome became more and more powerful as did the Roman emperor, a second style emerged. The monarchical papacy was established in 1073 by Gregory VII. Prior to that, the exercise of power by the pope was occasional and episodic. During the first thousand years of the institutional Catholic Church, the emphasis was on unity in the diversity of local bishops. Unless there was a specific need, the local bishop stabilized and led the local church. With Gregory VII the Church became an excessively centralized institution. And the papal office followed the pattern of kings and emperors. The monarchical papacy is one wave of seeping shadow that hovers over the Catholic teaching tradition. There is a direct line between it and the current distrust of authority. When I introduce the papacy to students, I frame the material with a formative moment from my own experience with authority.

When I was in eighth grade, we read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The brilliant Sisters of Humility who staffed my Catholic school used that text across the curriculum, before “across the curriculum” was a thing. We explored it during religion class, history, English, even math! I loved that book. I loved it so much that I requested a hard copy for my birthday, which fell at the end of the school year. When my mother went to the one bookstore in town to order



it, the man behind the counter thought she was kidding. It took more than a month for the book to arrive. While my mother and four siblings were all readers, it was my older brother, Alex, who was, and still is, the most avid reader. When I opened the package, my older sister teased me: “You have read that book so many times; what will be different about this copy? There are copies all over the house!”

Later that day when I was tucked in on the couch reading it, Alex sat down next to me. He was in his first year of college. The walls of his room were covered with drawings and clippings from magazines. The Who, The Beatles, and Cream, along with Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, poured from his bedroom at all hours. I had written a book report for the Brotherhood Book Club competition and he had proofread it for me that spring. What he said to me on that couch is a tiny piece of tradition: “You love Scout. I know that.” I just looked at him. I still love my brother, but back then I flat out adored him. I wanted to be like him. He went on, “I like her too; I like the way she describes her town and what happened there. She is what they call a ‘trustworthy narrator.’”

“What does that mean? There are narrators that I can’t trust? How would I know?” My 14-year-old mind was very disturbed and shaken by such an idea.

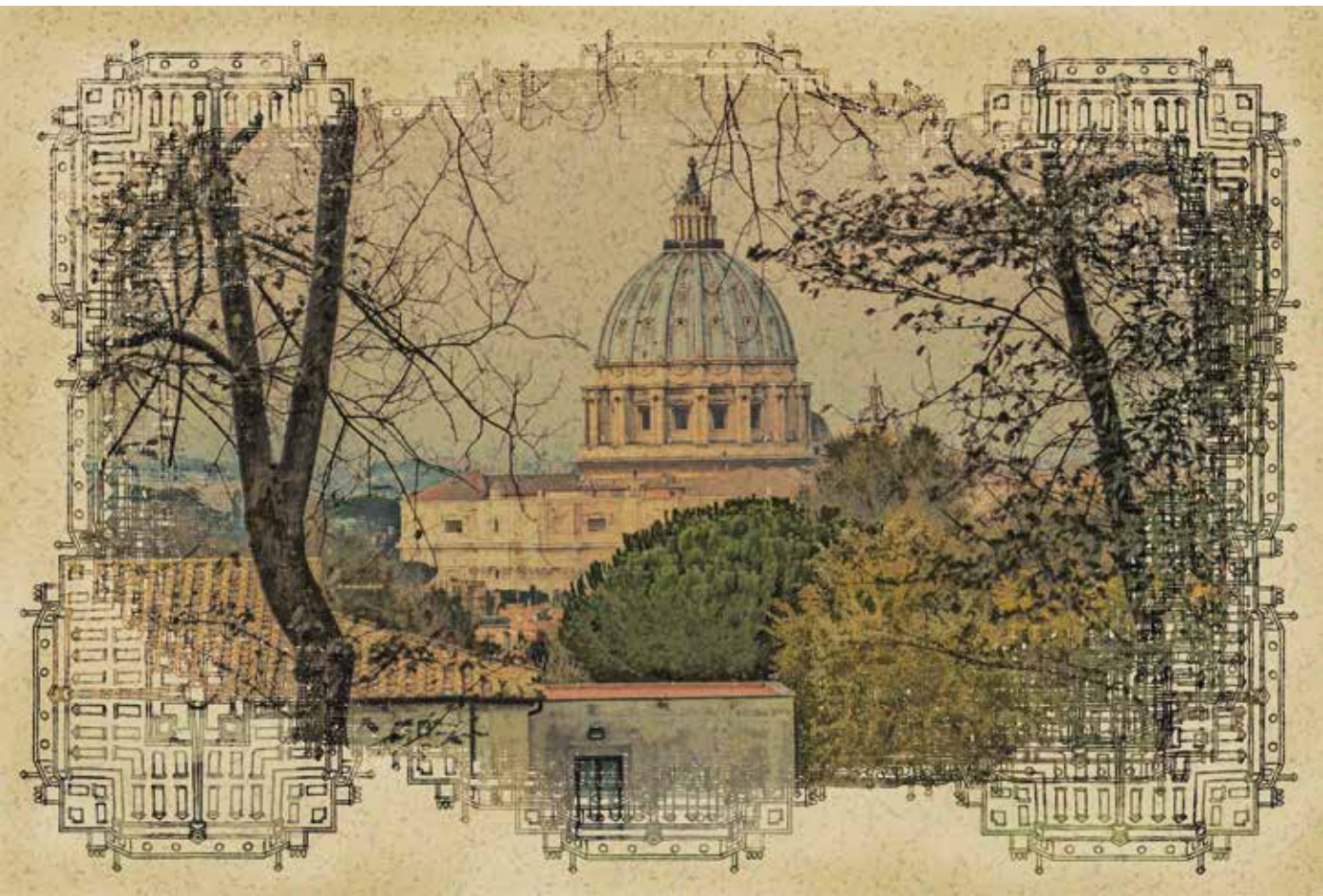
“*To Kill a Mockingbird* is a novel. Novels are a pretty recent invention, especially the narrator. When you go to college be sure to take a course on the novel. You will like it.” Then he handed me *Moll Flanders* by Daniel Defoe.

“Here, you can keep this copy.”

What!!!!??? I thought to myself. Novels are an invention? Scout isn’t just describing what happened? Harper Lee could have chosen a different narrator? Bob Ewell? Mr. Cunningham? What???

My brother introduced me to a new category of tradition that day: the novel as an invented art form. I think my brain actually vibrated. People could do such things? I knew Shakespeare had been developing and changing theater, because I went with my mother to the local park board summer productions. But the idea of *invention* was actually alarming.

Alex also validated my own participation in the tradition of reading. I had wanted that hard copy because I knew that in some way I would never be “done” reading that book. Alex knew how that felt.



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He gave me a way to *think* about why I loved that book so much. Now I wanted to learn about the people who invented the novel. Alex introduced me to the importance of the author; before Alex, the story was everything. By bringing in the author’s intentions, the author’s creativity, Alex welcomed me into the world of literature as a body of thought. And a body of thought, while it involves all kinds of details and data, requires a method—method is the oxygen for complex thinking and imagining. Ignatius saw this with brilliant clarity.

Method matters. The method that shapes papal teaching matters. Leo XIII who was pope from 1878 to 1903 inaugurated Catholic social teaching. He was a monarchical, imperial pope. By the time Leo came along Catholicism was very unified in its liturgy and spiritual practices. Catholic prayer forms and their capacity to transmit identity were global marketing campaigns long before Santa Clara had a business school.

Leo knew about power. But he also was the first pope to attempt engagement and reconciliation with the modern world. During a time of retrenchment, he decided that openness, with an embrace and respect for the intellectual life and for scholarship was the better approach. He transformed the rarely used “encyclical” form. With his *Rerum Novarum*,

he initiated the now very regular practice of papal encyclicals regarding social matters.

Now, let me pull that method thread again. Pope Leo XIII did indeed usher in the important work of engaging wider society directly. But he was still a bit of an “unreliable narrator” in that his was a monarchical papacy. One of the methodological features of that style is the use of deductive reasoning to formulate teaching. So even though he does begin the process of looking at the actual human situation during the industrial revolution, his primary analysis still used previously formulated ideas about human identity. That analysis was structured around philosophical terms that presupposed “the natural law” theory of the person and society. Those “natural law” categories contain features that are not compatible with modern insights such as developmental psychology and recognition of the influence and power of social and cultural institutions.

So *Rerum Novarum* was a start and a very important one. *To Kill a Mockingbird* prepared me for the rich challenge of *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, and eventually for the works of Toni Morrison. The method of the novel developed and expanded and engaged stories in more and more humane ways—ways that rejected predetermined ideas about human personhood. So did the method of Catholic social teaching.

There is a pope who approaches the trustworthy stature of St. Ignatius: John XXIII. Pope John was a very reliable narrator with regard to just about every nook and cranny of Catholic teaching, practice, and even governance. He changed the method for Catholic social teaching by both his own individual style *and* his own writings that are a part of the tradition. But his imprint is most significantly on display in the monumental *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, otherwise known as *Gaudium et spes* (Joy and hope). *Gaudium et spes* is monumental for several reasons, not the least of which is it is NOT an encyclical. It is a much “higher” level of teaching than an encyclical. A document of an ecumenical Council of the Church is the highest form of teaching in Catholicism. Teaching at that level supersedes all other teachings.


Beginning with Pope John XXIII, the Church shifted back to the previous style of the papacy. “In a period of less than five years he almost single-handedly transformed the Catholic Church from a clericalist, monarchical, unecumenical, and theologically rigid body to a community of radical equality in Christ—laity, religious, and clergy alike—open to dialogue and collaboration with other



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Christian and non-Christian communities, with nonbelievers, and with the world at large.”<sup>1</sup>

Pope John was the greatest pope of them all, full stop. He was pope from 1958 to 1963, and he called the Second Vatican Council. With the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, Catholic social teaching fully engaged the modern world. *Gaudium et spes* grounds its analysis in human experience. Its method is solidly inductive. That is, it begins by exploring the actual, concrete human situation with attention to those persons most directly involved in the situation. It does not begin with previously formulated ideas and “deduce” solutions from those ideas. Instead, it searches many and varied sources of critical reflection and established wisdom, with particular attention to the values in the Hebrew Bible and in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The new method that emerges in 1965 begins to shape Catholic social teaching in ways that are much more compatible with the modern world. Its inductive method is much better suited for fielding the challenging issues of our time because we have come to see that by beginning with a clear-eyed look at the actual situation, we will see things we have not seen before; we will hear voices we have not heard before. Its inductive method is more trustworthy and much more friendly to contemporary ways of generating and evaluating knowledge. Our students’ education depends upon the inductive method. They are at home in it.

So as we rebuild our trust in the institutional structures of the Church, what is Pope Francis’ method? Pope Francis follows the model of John XXIII. It surely makes sense to assume his formation in Ignatian spirituality matters here. We can trust him; he is a reliable narrator in our Catholic social tradition. 



#### **SALLY VANCE-TREMBATH**

was born and raised in Iowa. She earned her M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Notre Dame. She has worked in Catholic education all her professional life and has been particularly interested in the relationships among the Church,

Catholic universities and the wider society. During the Archbishop Hunthausen investigation by the Vatican, she served on his Pastoral Council. That experience was seminal in the formation of her work on the ecclesiology of Vatican II. Her first publication was in *Theological Studies* entitled “John Paul II’s *Ut Unum Sint* and the Conversation with Women” in 1999. She has been teaching at SCU since 2006.

#### **NOTES**

- 1 McBrien, Richard P., *Lives of the Popes* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1997), p. 367.

# PRACTICE CONFRONTING THEORY

BY BRIAN BUCKLEY

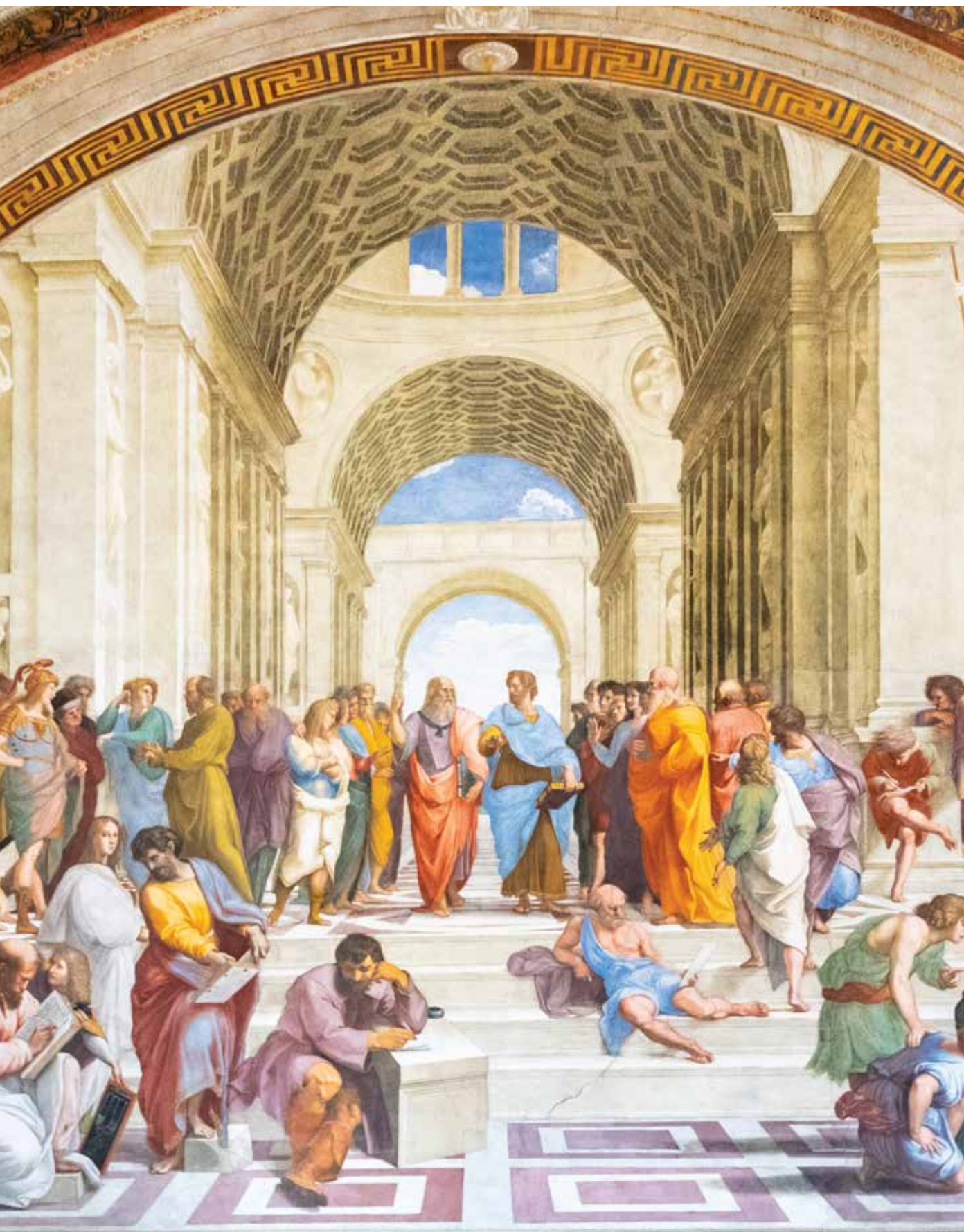
IN THE PAST YEAR, OUR GROUP READ A SERIES OF ARTICLES ABOUT VARIOUS ASPECTS OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING (CST) AND THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION (CIT). The content of the many pieces ranged from issues of race, gender, and the environment to the role of a Catholic university in a modern context. Despite the differing topics, styles, and aims in the pieces, there were a few overarching themes that I could discern. Of these, the most important, I believe, was the tension between theory and practice.

My field is philosophy and I teach in the areas of ethics, politics, law, and ancient through medieval history of philosophy. The first three, since the time of Aristotle, have been known as practical philosophy, and they are set against theoretical philosophy. The practical are those disciplines and emphases that are put into *action*, that take their end in *action*. So, a legal theory or ethical theory or political theory that is never seriously enacted is not practical; it is only theoretical. The point of any theory in practical philosophy is clear—it is to effect change through legislation, personal choices, or governance.

In teaching this material, I also emphasize the essential nature of *procedure* in philosophy—that it is just as important *how* we proceed in our reading, discussion, and engagement of ideas as the content of the ideas themselves. When approaching a certain course, I ask myself what I would like students to remember from that course—one, five, or even 10 years in the future. And while I would love for them to know Aristotle's examples of the ethical mean or Aquinas' bases for natural law or Cicero's reasons for supporting virtue and the common good in a republic, I do not have illusions that students will remember them. What I do think is always

reasonable, however, is for students to have learned a *way* of reasoning and reflecting. I often quote the Japanese poet Basho in this regard: "We seek not to follow in the footsteps of the old masters; we seek what they sought." So, if years in the future, a student can be as careful as Kant in her reasoning or as common sensical as Aristotle or as synthetic and open as Aquinas, then I believe my class will be worth a small portion of her undergraduate time and effort. Michael Buckley, a Jesuit philosopher and theologian, gives this open procedure an essential role in the Catholic university. In his chapter "The Catholic University as Pluralistic Forum," he asserts, "Discussion is the formalizing activity of the university, and the refusal to discuss is the destruction of its life. Each time a professor will not discuss with students, or students with one another, or professor with professor—something of the university dies."

It is with these professional emphases on theory informing practice and philosophical procedure that I read the CIT readings this year. Notably, from them I gained a great deal of knowledge and inspiration about practice challenging theory. What I mean by that is that in fields where practice is expected, and certainly CST numbers among them, under-applied theory will not be acceptable. It will be questioned openly. In such cases where theory argues or preaches in one direction and current practice on race, poverty, hierarchy, or moral theology in general does not match it, then theory must be directly challenged so that it truly informs practice. In a way, it must be reanimated to be meaningful. It must be confronted with a practice out of conformity with it. Since ancient times, there has been a particular distaste for those people who present one face to the world, then act differently. Such persons or institutions are "duplicitous" or "double" rather than whole, "integrated," and acting with "integrity." A person



or institution with integrity is the same in public and private, in today's dealings and tomorrow's. They do not argue for or support one thing but then do another. They do not preach that others must perform in accord with important standards while then excusing themselves from those same principles. I believe this is what Pope Benedict meant in his social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Love in Truth) when he said pointedly: "While the poor of the world continue knocking on the doors of the rich, the world of affluence runs the risk of no longer hearing those knocks, on account of a conscience that can no longer distinguish what is human. God reveals man to himself; reason and faith work hand in hand to demonstrate to us what is good, provided *we want to see it*; the natural law, in which creative Reason shines forth, reveals our greatness, but also our wretchedness insofar as *we fail to recognize* the call to moral truth" (emphases mine).

CIT is quite clear in its emphasis on practice in Church institutions and persons. To be Catholic in name means also to be Catholic in practice. The two are inseparable and whole. Theory means practice. Truth means action. In "Catholicity: Its Scope and Contents"—a chapter in John Haughey's *Where is Knowledge Going?*—he reminds us of the Church's history with wholeness. "The word *catholicity* etymologically promises a worldview that is universal ... The word connotes movement toward a universality or wholeness." There is a broad perspective celebrated in catholicity that argues against a confining and defining particularism. In its universality, the Church is meant to embrace a wholeness that does not exclude. While "universal" and "whole" have different meanings and connotations, taken together, they point toward a complete human integration. The Church is not for some. It is not for a certain time. Its universal breadth is meant to capture its inclusivity and its equality and therefore its justice.

Since the time of Aristotle, equality and justice have been joined. When two persons are considered morally and politically equal, then treating them differently is unjust. It is to deprive them of their due as equals. Because of this, a Church that is meant to be universal and whole should reasonably be seen as one intimately connected with the equal treatment through justice. This justice links with the dignity mentioned in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. "A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person. The person represents the ultimate end of society, by which it is ordered to the person ..." Equal dignity

invokes justice and justice is about action. So, the Church that has a moral theology or intellectual tradition that does not comport with its practice then undermines the ideal of being whole and universal. Without justice for all, some are treated differently, rather than in accord with a universal wholeness where none are treated differently. Justice therefore challenges the Church in terms of those on the margins who often are ignored—as not having a place at the table meant for all.

In a society that has been historically unjust, arguably no group in the United States has been further marginalized than our fellow Black citizens. The Church in America has recognized this problem, with the bishops issuing the pastoral letters "Brothers and Sisters to Us" in 1979 and "Open Wide Our Hearts" in 2018. In the former, the bishops proclaimed, with great clarity, "[L]et the Church proclaim to all that the sin of racism defiles the image of God and degrades the sacred dignity of humankind which has been revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation." And in the latter, "All of us are in need of personal, ongoing conversion. Our churches and our civic and social institutions are in need of ongoing reform." This moral theology, however, does not always comport with practice in Catholic institutions. M. Shawn Copeland notes that this is particularly true with regard to white privilege and the constant refusal by so many to reconsider their easy positions concerning such issues as color blindness. In "The Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender in Jesuit and Feminist Education," she reminds us that too often race is purposefully deemphasized and subtle aspects of racism "pass unnoticed. Thus racism as power, as structuring hierarchy, is erased and reduced to the actions of a few unsavory bigots whom some people of color are forced to endure." The liberation of Catholic institutions from racist and other marginalizing effects must then be sought by centering race and considering openly how institutional practices normalize white advantages. To do anything else means that practice fails to conform with the moral principles the bishops stated so clearly in both pastor letters. It would be to fail Black Americans in ways articulated clearly by Bryan Massingale in *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*: "The abstract and 'hypothetical' speculation all too characteristic of standard Western accounts of justice is simply inadequate to the task of sustaining—or even giving an adequate account of—this community's historic and passionate account of its realization."


As Fr. Buckley reminded us, the university is the perfect place for embracing the openness Copeland

# “EQUAL DIGNITY INVOKES JUSTICE AND JUSTICE IS ABOUT ACTION. SO, THE CHURCH THAT HAS A MORAL THEOLOGY OR INTELLECTUAL TRADITION THAT DOES NOT COMPORT WITH ITS PRACTICE THEN UNDERMINES THE IDEAL OF BEING WHOLE AND UNIVERSAL.”

and Massingale articulate. It is the role of a Catholic institution to provoke students to discover biases and otherwise reflect on given presuppositions that may prevent practice from matching with theory. Done well, this procedure is what a philosophy class achieves as it turns its students toward wonder. Bertrand Russell holds that this is a particular benefit from studying philosophy. He tells us in *The Value of Philosophy* that philosophy is liberating and anti-dogmatic because of its ties to open wonder. “Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free us from the tyranny of custom. Thus, while diminishing our feeling of certainty as to what things are, it greatly increases our knowledge as to what they may be; it removes the somewhat arrogant dogmatism of those who have never travelled into the region of liberating doubt, and it keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect.”

A Catholic social tradition that prides itself on the connections between faith and reason must allow the latter to mean *practical* reason. When the individual working in a Church institution makes decisions on behalf of students, employees, and the wider community, she must be open not only to hearing new ideas, but to allowing those ideas to provoke her into addressing potential disharmonies between what is said and what is done, what is preached and what is practiced, what is advertised and what in fact occurs, and what is held to be valued and what actually is rewarded. In a way then, if CIT is to be a living tradition that allows for growth, it must be open so that practice may confront theory. Procedurally, it must endeavor to make people non-complaisant and ever ready to revisit lack of

conformity between beneficial goals and ideals and everyday practice.

Over the years, I often reflect on one of the best, most discomfiting writings of the recent Church. In 2005, Pope Benedict XVI decided to write his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, on love. In it, he said that it was not enough to go through the motions to love one’s neighbor. More fundamentally, it meant seeing them as a person. In his words, I see not only the overall emphasis in CST concerning equal human dignity, but a reminder to reflect openly, whether our practice is always in conformity with the theories of love the Church preaches throughout its social teachings. “Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend. Going beyond exterior appearances, I perceive in others an interior desire for a sign of love, of concern. This I can offer them not only through the organizations intended for such purposes, accepting it perhaps as a political necessity. Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love which they crave.” 



**BRIAN BUCKLEY** earned three academic degrees from Jesuit universities (Seattle U., Gonzaga, and Loyola Chicago) and has taught at Santa Clara University in the philosophy department since 2007. In his time at SCU, he has also been the director of Prelaw Advising and coordinator of the College of Arts and Sciences 2016 Salon. His teaching and research focus on respect for persons, the common good, politics, the rule of law, and law.



Mako Watanabe, *Shouganai*, 2023.



# BUT THEY MAINTAIN THE FABRIC OF THE WORLD

(SIR 38:34)

## Wisdom and the Dignity of Work in the Book of Sirach

BY JAMES NATI

EACH YEAR, I TEACH A COURSE TITLED WISDOM IN ANCIENT ISRAEL, ONE OF THE FOUNDATIONAL COURSES FOR OUR MASTER OF DIVINITY STUDENTS AT JST. THE COURSE COVERS FIVE OF THE WISDOM BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON: PROVERBS, JOB, ECCLESIASTES, SIRACH, AND THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON (OR BOOK OF WISDOM). In working through these texts, students encounter a range of questions that figure prominently across the corpus: What exactly is wisdom? Who is capable of attaining it? How does one attain it? What rewards does it grant? What does it mean to live wisely? How do the various books of the Old Testament answer these questions differently, and why? We study these books in roughly chronological order according to the time period in which they were composed, paying attention to the social and economic forces that might have shaped the authors of each.

As we progress through the course and move from book to book, students are asked to zoom out and make connections across the books, interrogating why there seem to be different emphases—contradictions even—within just this small section of the canon. One of the issues that I like to highlight in this regard is that the books seem to have a variety of answers to the question, “Who can be wise?” The

book of Proverbs, for instance, emphasizes at many points wisdom’s wide accessibility, even its presence in the most public of spaces: “Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks” (Prov 1:20–21). Even more pointed is the book’s assertion that wisdom was present with God at the creation of the world (“When he established the heavens, I was there” [8:27]), and, in one passage at least, wisdom seems to have partaken in the act of ordering the cosmos: “[W]hen he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker” (8:29–30). For Proverbs, the world itself is in this way chock full of wisdom; one needs only to go out and get it (“[T] hose who seek me diligently find me” [8:17]). The Wisdom of Solomon, written a few centuries later, expands upon this theme of wisdom’s presence at creation, stating even more explicitly that the created world is saturated with wisdom: “For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things” (Wis 7:24). For these authors, wisdom seems to be available to everyone, and the longer one lives and encounters wisdom in the world, the wiser one becomes.

Juxtaposed with these views, however, is a strong thread of skepticism about the accessibility of wisdom in other books. Job, for example, questions directly whether experience in the world really

# “THESE VARIOUS VIEWS ABOUT THE ACCESSIBILITY OF UNDERSTANDING, ABOUT WHO—IF ANYONE—IS ABLE TO BECOME WISE, ARE THUS SITUATED IN PARTICULAR SOCIO-HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES.”

*does* correlate with the accumulation of wisdom: “Is wisdom with the aged, and understanding in length of days?” (Job 12:12). Job does not deny that wisdom exists, but the book emphasizes the human incapacity to grasp it over its ubiquity: “Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air” (Job 28:20–21). Neither is Ecclesiastes very optimistic about humanity’s ability to attain wisdom: “When I applied my mind to know wisdom . . . then I saw all the work of God, that no one can find out what is happening under the sun. However much they may toil in seeking, they will not find it out; even though those who are wise claim to know, they cannot find it out.”

More than simply acknowledging that these different views are to be found in the Old Testament, I ask my students to understand these views as various expressions of lived experience. All theology is, after all, the product of particular circumstances, or, as we say at JST, all theology is done *in context*. The book of Proverbs, for example, seems to have been the product of elite groups of sages who held positions of power, or at the very least were quite proximate to power. These sages’ ability to navigate the politics of the royal court sometimes shows itself in ways that might strike us as unsavory. “A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of those who

give it,” these authors tell us, “wherever they turn they prosper” (Prov 17:8). Much of the wisdom accumulated in the book, moreover, is clearly meant to be applied only by those with a particular level of access to this royal court: “When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you have a big appetite” (Prov 23:1–2). On the other hand, Job and Ecclesiastes, with their less-than-rosy views about whether wisdom is even attainable, were written sometime after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the forced migration of some of the population to Babylon. This defining moment in the history of Israel caused a rupture in how the authors of these books thought about the relationship between actions and consequences, and thus we might understand their epistemological skepticism against the background of this collective trauma. These various views about the accessibility of understanding, about who—if anyone—is able to become wise, are thus situated in particular socio-historical circumstances.

While it can be quite difficult in some cases to pin down a specific historical situation for the composition of a biblical book, scholars are quite confident about when, where, and by whom the book of Sirach was written. The Greek version of the book begins with a prologue written by the author’s grandson, who states that he translated his grandfather’s book from Hebrew into Greek sometime around the year 132 BCE. This fact, combined with a reference to the High Priest Simon (50:1) and the author’s recording of his name and location (50:27), allows us to know with some certainty that the book was written in Hebrew in Jerusalem by a man named Jesus ben Sira around the year 180 BCE. This man was a scribe who seems to have run his own school in Jerusalem (51:23), two facts which, by definition, mark him as elite. His strong support of the temple priesthood—the primary economic institution of the time—likewise points to his relatively high socioeconomic status.

Biblical scholars have not been shy about highlighting what seems to be the quite elitist nature of this wisdom book. Leo Perdue notes that “Ben Sira was clearly an elitist due to his personal wealth, education, literary prowess, and profession of teaching male students of aristocratic Jewish families.”<sup>1</sup> Beyond being merely an intellectual posture, this elitism and proximity to the temple hierarchy offered material benefits, as “the temple became the economic center for Jerusalem and Judah and received sacrifices, gifts, and the temple tax. Indeed, it may have been at the center of a banking

system for the colonial economy.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus ben Sira, the author of the book bearing his name, thus sat comfortably among the upper echelon of society in 2nd-century BCE Judah. This background profile on the book’s author is crucial for understanding some of the claims put forward in the book itself, since, as mentioned above, all theology arises from particular contexts. The context in this case is among the power-brokers of the temple aristocracy, the economic hub of the region at the time.

I always begin our unit on the book of Sirach with a short lecture that covers these details, one that gives my students some insight into who this author was. It is quite unique to have so much information about an individual author in the Old Testament, and it allows us to paint a detailed picture of the circumstances to which this author was speaking. And, as I do with the other books that we study, I ask my students to interrogate how Jesus ben Sira approaches the question, “Who is wisdom for?” One of the best passages with which to probe this question is Sir 38:24–39:11, one that tends to offer a challenge for many of my students.

The passage begins with a somewhat troubling claim: “A scribe’s wisdom is in the opportunity for leisure, and he who does less business, it is he who will become wise” (38:24). The author here seems to be saying that one’s acquisition of wisdom is dependent upon their financial stability. Leisure time, quite a rarity in the ancient world especially, is a necessary condition for one to become wise. While Proverbs, as I noted above, certainly reflected an elite stance, it emphasizes at various points that wisdom is available through different routes, through accumulated experience of different kinds. Sirach, in this passage that praises the scribal elite, cites leisure time as the precondition for the acquisition of wisdom, thus implying in this verse that those whose lives are burdened with manual labor are destined to foolishness. The implicit becomes more explicit as the passage continues:

How can one become wise who handles the plow, and who glories in the shaft of a goad, who drives oxen and is occupied with their work, and whose talk is about bulls? ... So it is with every artisan and master artisan who labors by night as well as by day ... So it is with the smith, sitting by the anvil, intent on his iron-work ...

So it is with the potter sitting at his work and turning the wheel with his feet ... All these rely on their hands, and all are skillful in their own work. Without them no city can be inhabited, and wherever they live, they will not go hungry. Yet they are not sought out for the council of the people ... they cannot expound discipline or judgment, and they are not found among the rulers. But they maintain the fabric of the world, and their concern is for the exercise of their trade. How different the one who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High!

(Sir 38:25–34)

When teaching this passage, I provoke my students to think about a few issues. The most glaring one, of course, is the question of whether or not the author is correct: Can those who do manual labor become wise? My students overwhelmingly answer this question in the affirmative, thus pushing back against the author of the book. This past spring, a Jesuit student in class recounted his own marveling at the wisdom of his grandmother, a woman who worked for years as a homemaker and craftsperson, never having had the opportunity to pursue either higher education or, really, leisure time. This woman offered a living counterexample for this student to the seemingly harsh view put forward in the book of Sirach.

Beyond simply constituting a kind of snobbery on the part of an intellectual, this passage is reflective of a fundamental and problematic class division in



Berkeley Hoerr, *Fish Monger*, 2017.

# “THE PROBLEM WITH MANUAL LABOR, IN OTHER WORDS, IS NOT THAT IT DOES NOT CULTIVATE WISDOM IN ITSELF, BUT RATHER THAT THIS WORK IS UNDERVALUED AND EXPLOITED, AND SOCIETY DOES NOT ALLOW THESE WORKERS EVEN A SMALL AMOUNT OF LEISURE TIME THAT WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR WISDOM ACQUISITION.”

the ancient society from which it comes. As Samuel Adams writes of the first centuries BCE in Israel/Palestine, “In a stratified economy, with difficult farming conditions and a succession of foreign rulers, wealth and poverty concerns pervaded every aspect of life.”<sup>3</sup> Financial precarity was the norm, with most people relying on agricultural yield for their livelihood. Against this backdrop, the book’s claim about farmers and craftspeople being destined to a life without wisdom packs an even more troubling punch. Adams notes this passage from Sirach in particular, writing that “the sage’s question points to inequality and classism among the more elite sectors ... the biblical texts and extracanonical evidence from this period often reveal a scribal or priestly bias, removed from the daily situations of families who lacked literacy skills and financial resources to codify their perspectives.”<sup>4</sup> We thus encounter in this passage an elite and financially comfortable author musing about the inability of poor folks to acquire wisdom, what is for this author the *sine qua non* of a life well lived.

The author’s view here is morally off-putting, to say the least, and it thus offers an opportunity for my students to “read against the grain”: the adoption of a hermeneutical stance of resistance, in which we reject the claims of the author and side instead with those whom the author denigrates. I tend to present this view in a general way, relying on the assumption that students in the class will see the same problems that I see. As I progressed through this past year’s Bannan Forum seminar on the Catholic intellectual tradition, however, I was moved by our readings and discussions around the tradition’s emphasis on the dignity of work, and it struck me that this might

provide a more robust way to teach this passage in the future.

The dignity of work is a large theme in the tradition, and it seems to have quite a bit of purchase in our current moment of increasing income inequality. The theme has been around as long as the Church has been concerned with labor in the modern world, going back to *Rerum Novarum* at the end of 19th century. I was most compelled, however, by the explication of the theme as it relates to the subjective and objective dimensions of work in John Paul II’s *Laborem Exercens*. The subjective dimension of work points simply to “the fact that the one who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject, that is to say a subject that decides about himself [sic]” (*LE*, 6). The objective dimension refers to work in the more colloquial sense of the various activities that people engage in toward the production of goods and services (*LE*, 5). One of the most important—if not *the* central—claim(s) of the encyclical is that the dignity of work is “to be sought primarily in the subjective dimension, not in the objective one” (*LE*, 6; cf. *LE*, 7). Or, as Patricia Lamoureux puts it, “work is for the person, not the person for work.”<sup>5</sup> It is through work itself, moreover, independent of what is being performed or produced, that one “*achieves fulfillment* as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes ‘more a human being’” (*LE*, 9). The encyclical thus places a strong emphasis upon, in Lamoureux’s words, “the integral connection between the person’s self-realization and human labor.”<sup>6</sup> *Laborem Exercens* does not use the word “wisdom,” but the language of “fulfilment” and “self realization”—not to mention the central theme of “co-creation” throughout the document—certainly

brings us close. Work in this way exerts a formative pressure on the worker, one that “the pope associates with the development of virtue in the Thomistic sense.”<sup>7</sup>

As I reread Sirach 38 with these ideas in mind, it seems that the CIT opens up a few avenues for encountering this text more critically. First, it allows me to be more precise in my indictment of the author’s view of laborers. Rather than being simply off-putting or elitist, the author seems to be ignorant of the possibility that work can indeed foster self-realization. One “whose talk is about bulls” (Sir 38:25) may indeed be fulfilled spiritually through that very talk. As the encyclical suggests, work done well regardless of the object of the work itself can lead to the development of virtue, and, we might suggest, the acquisition of wisdom. Relatedly, it seems that the author is guilty of elevating the objective dimension of work alone. The passage as a whole, to be fair, does not castigate manual laborers. As we saw above, it even notes their utility. The problem, though, is that the importance of their work is given in solely objective terms: “Without them no city can be inhabited” (38:32); “they maintain the fabric of the world” (38:34). These people’s work is good, necessary even, for it allows the world—the rest of us—to function comfortably. The nature of this work, however, prohibits these subjects from acquiring wisdom, and thus the only positive aspects of this work for Sirach is what it produces.

The second avenue I see for encountering this text with the CIT is an entirely different reading altogether. Instead of reading against the grain and resisting this elitist author, we might take his words as a descriptive indictment against overwork rather than a prescriptive claim about the nature of different kinds of work. The problem with manual labor, in other words, is not that it does not cultivate wisdom in itself, but rather that this work is undervalued and exploited, and society does not allow these workers even a small amount of leisure time that would be necessary for wisdom acquisition. In favor of this reading is the emphasis in the passage upon the lack of rest that these workers are afforded: “every artisan and master artisan who labors by night as well as by day ... [the painter’s] sleeplessness is to complete the work” (38:27); “[the smith’s] sleeplessness is to decorate upon completion” (38:28); “[the potter] always lies down in anxiety about his work ... and his sleeplessness is about cleaning the kiln” (38:29–30). Sirach, on this reading, is not making a normative claim about the foolishness of laborers, but is instead lamenting the reality of a stratified economy in which agricultural workers and craftspeople need to work

long days in order to make ends meet.

This reading is at home in the context of the *Laborem Exercens*, which, while emphasizing the importance of work as “co-creation,” notes that this implies rest as well. Humankind “ought to imitate God both in working and also in resting, since God himself wished to present his own creative activity under the form of *work and rest*” (LE, 25). As Lamoureux describes it, “leisure is a safeguard against becoming completely bound up in work and neglecting to give thanks and praise to God for the gift of life.”<sup>8</sup> Rest, or “the opportunity for leisure” in Sirach’s words, is indeed necessary to become wise, and it is a societal shortcoming that it was not afforded to laborers in the author’s time.

Whether we take a hermeneutical stance in opposition to this elite author and uplift the subjective dimension of the work of farmers and craftspeople or, on the other hand, read this passage as an indictment of the conditions of labor in his own time, the CIT has offered me an avenue for exploring more deeply this troubling biblical text, and I look forward to incorporating the dignity of work into the course this year. [e](#)



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#### NOTES

- 1 Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus*, p. 273.
- 2 Ibid. p. 276.
- 3 Adams, *Social and Economic Life*, p. 1.
- 4 Ibid., p. 65.
- 5 Lamoureux, “Commentary on *Laborem exercens* (*On Human Work*),” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, Himes, ed., p. 389.
- 6 Ibid., p. 394.
- 7 Ibid., p. 404.
- 8 Ibid., p. 403.





# Pluralistic Presentations of Ignatian Goods

Cultivating Deeper Engagement with Jesuit Mission

BY MADELINE AHMED CRONIN

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION? WHAT IS THE DISTINCTIVE PURPOSE OF JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION? Furthermore, in the midst of an ongoing fight for racial justice, sharpening inequality, and the moral crises created by the corporatization of the university (to name just a few facets of our current context), how can we best present this mission to our students? These are some of the questions that animated our seminar on the Jesuit and Catholic intellectual traditions.

Perhaps because we were so taken with the question of the distinct mission and purpose of Jesuit education, a piece that inspired substantial reaction—ire even—was Agnes Callard’s “The Real College Scandal.” I suspect that an underlying concern animating many criticisms was the way in which she sometimes appeared to conflate her own account of the value of being ensconced in the university with the point of the university more generally. In doing so she quite intentionally downplays the social justice objectives, the formation of citizens, and oppressive social structures that might lend shape to the university. For instance, she dismissively concludes, “if I had to measure the worth of my classes in my students’ subsequent civic virtue or life satisfaction, I couldn’t afford to lose touch with most of them after graduation.”<sup>1</sup> While she is right that these elements

“I WOULD WHOLEHEARTEDLY AGREE A COLLEGE IS A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS. THE PROBLEM IS THAT A JESUIT UNIVERSITY MUST HAVE A RICHER ACCOUNT OF ITS PURPOSE IF IT IS TO SUCCESSFULLY ADDRESS OUR STUDENTS AND THE PLURAL LENSES THROUGH WHICH THEY MIGHT CONSIDER THE PURPOSE OF THEIR EDUCATION.”

of university mission are not easily quantified or even tracked, this difficulty does not diminish the aim itself. Instead of dealing with these lofty purposes, she wants to narrow our focus on the real goal of the university, to make “the highest intellectual goods” possible through a community of learners—a community not of autodidacts but what she calls “heterodidacts.” I would wholeheartedly agree a college is a community of learners. The problem is that a Jesuit university must have a richer account of its purpose if it is to successfully address our students and the plural lenses through which they might consider the purpose of their education.

It is precisely because I found Callard’s description of a community of learners so compelling, that I was frustrated by the limits she seems to place on this objective. Callard gives an ingenious insider view into the hidden collaborative elements of classroom discussion. She describes herself preparing to teach a part of Aristotle with which she is unfamiliar, cramming secondary literature minutes before arriving to class with half-formed conclusions. Only then does she use the confused facial expressions of students to refine her own understanding. It was an account of teaching that I found riveting and deeply true. This is why I was so disappointed by Callard’s failure to articulate how this kind of learning experience might benefit students outside the confines of the university. For instance, she laments, “[i]f I had left the university after college, I believe the intellectual life I occasionally glimpsed as an undergraduate would have faded into a nostalgic memory.” No doubt, building an intellectual life outside of the

university is often self-charted territory. Reading Aristotle demands discussion partners, and discussion partners can be hard to come by in a world that demands so much of workers and that is so rich in distractions. It is hard. However, emphasizing these barriers without indicating a substantive concern for how these undergraduate experiences will be successfully translated into the future lives of students seems callous. Furthermore, such a treatment of the university as the unique home of the highest intellectual goods perpetuates the marginalization of a history of intellectual communities not approved by the university. In doing so it also fails to sufficiently recognize the barriers to intellectual goods embedded in the walls of the university itself. How can we elevate the goods without recognizing the real way in which racism, classism, sexism, ableism, and so many other oppressions often impede the accessibility of the university and therefore the claim that it is strictly rich soil for cultivating intellectual goods?

#### **Egalitarian Access to Ignatian Goods?**

I share Callard’s enthusiasm for the liberal arts (though not her underqualified endorsement of the university). However, her desire to define the university as the unique space within which to achieve the highest intellectual aims dis-incentivizes students to engage with these goods in the first place. Why would my students want to spend a lot of time and effort cultivating intellectual habits that will have no place in their lives after college? If we limit our account of what the university’s purpose is too much, if we tell our students, as Callard does that, “[t]his is what universities are for: reading



Aristotle together”—even to make a point—we abbreviate far too much. We introduce them to a depth of consideration and intellectual life with the dangling assumption that these are university-specific practices. We are opening a rarified door only to promise it will be shut in their faces soon afterward. This does not strike me as a very appealing enterprise to most undergraduates. Furthermore, narrowing the purpose of college in this way will disproportionately impact students facing existing barriers to the kinds of humanistic education Callard seems to be defending. As Roosevelt Montás points out in his recent book, *Rescuing Socrates: How the Great Books Changed My Life and Why They Matter for a New Generation*, families who have historically had access to liberal education, wealthy and white families, will continue to see its value and to pay for it, even if they are not all transformed by it. While those who have no experience with “doing the liberal arts” or with its relevance for their future lives will have no reason to seek such a purpose out.<sup>2</sup> What is this purpose? Montás argues that a meaningful core curriculum ought to offer guidance in fundamental questions about truth, justice, and beauty—questions that aid students in defining not only “how to make a living, but what living is for.”<sup>3</sup> This will allow the liberal arts to remain a luxury “reinforcing social privilege.”<sup>4</sup> As Montás argues, the liberal arts have a dual capacity: to subvert hierarchies, but also to reinforce them if access is limited.

These questions about liberal education make me wonder whether some of the same dynamics apply to a distinctly Jesuit education. The value of the liberal tradition, Montás argues, is that it presents thinkers who engage in a sustained consideration of life’s enduring questions. Presented in a vigorous way, in a community of teachers and learners, students ought to gain tools for this lifelong pursuit. However, he worries whether liberal arts universities are often failing to present a liberal tradition in a coherent way. For instance, are these texts part of a core—a contested and contestable core but a core nonetheless—which offer students a distinct pathway to discerning meaning in their own lives? Or are they more likely to emerge as a chance encounter in a “pick your own adventure” core? I wonder if the same question should also be asked about the way in which a Jesuit mission is presented? Could our students present a coherent account of what their Jesuit education is for (even if they disagree with parts of this mission)? Do they read any common Ignatian texts? How is this mission specifically elaborated in their core in a way that they can explain? Indeed, one of the most striking moments for me during

our seminar was that—though I attended a Jesuit university as an undergraduate and have worked at Santa Clara for seven years—I don’t believe I have read a text about the history of the Jesuits. This experience—this realization—was quite shocking. It was like finally seeing a band live that you had only ever heard recordings of. It was a realization that my access to the Jesuit mission has often been an oral tradition passed on via university speeches. This is not to diminish the value of those speeches. Nor is it to argue that Jesuit universities are failing to convey their mission. It is to wonder whether there are more ways we could ensure that Santa Clara students—regardless of their major—partake in a core curriculum in which they could expect to actually read Ignatian texts (as one among the humanistic traditions to which they deserve an invitation)?

Expanding access to a robustly defined “Ignatian core” in a truly inclusive way, though, seems to present substantial challenges. For instance, in the analogy to liberal arts, we might resist such a core because it implies a fixed list of books dominated by white land-owning men. Conceived as a constant over time, such a tradition will be characterized by hegemonic perspectives and impenetrable. Yet, the presence of such a rigid notion of tradition should not be grounds for rejecting the idea of a tradition altogether. Doing so reinforces the assumption that these texts do not belong to students, especially students from marginalized groups. It also further obscures the ways in which these traditions were themselves contested. It fails to acknowledge that, in the midst of their often very flawed arguments, these texts also make vital headway. Montás points toward the absurdity of such assumptions through his own example; “[my] being a brown immigrant from the Dominican Republic does not make the Constitution less relevant to me than it is to my wife, a white woman born in rural Michigan. She is no closer to and no further from Homer and Socrates than I am or than our two-year-old son will grow up to be.”<sup>5</sup> This makes me wonder how a Jesuit mission can also be better presented as plural, contested, and as deeply relevant to students from diverse starting points.

### **A Non-Ideal Presentation of Jesuit Ideals**

How might Montás’ argument apply to the idea of a Jesuit tradition? For instance, if we engage students in a core of Ignatian texts, how do we plan to address the history of Jesuit and Catholic contributions to colonial oppression and genocide? What about the various exclusions within this tradition, of women from the priesthood for example? Of GLBTQ+ people? Given barriers like this, how do we avoid

a kind of false universalism in presenting a Jesuit mission as speaking uniformly “to everyone?” I would argue that confronting these limitations directly is ultimately a more accessible and hence inviting presentation. Better to address the places we have historically and continue to fall short, then to confuse our students by suggesting that the institution is a city on a hill. If we take the city on a hill approach, then we will automatically lose students who already know otherwise. We also risk undermining the faith that students have in the pursuit of justice altogether

if it is only later that they discover the instances of hypocrisy in our own backyard. For these reasons, presenting the fullness of that tradition—including where it needed or needs revision—seems to be a more honest, and consequently a more compelling way to present it to our students.

Though this richness does not always lend itself to the succinct forms of PR campaigns, or mission statements, a core part of presenting ourselves as a university distinctly oriented toward justice must also demonstrate some of the failures and struggle



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# “IT IS NOT EASY TO BE A UNIVERSITY COMMITTED TO JUSTICE WHEN THE PREDOMINANT MODEL OF A UNIVERSITY IS THE NEOLIBERAL MODEL, BUT THIS IS WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO.”

involved in that pursuit. For instance, I see the efforts of Students for GU272 (recently renamed Hoyas Advocating for Slavery Accountability) as a model worth substantial attention. These students partnered with the descendants of former slaves—sold by Georgetown at a time of financial insolvency—to advocate for reparations. In fact, according to a report from the ACLU, in April 2020, two-thirds of the student body voted to increase tuition by \$27.20 each semester to “honor those whose lives financed the college’s continued existence.”<sup>6</sup> In response, the university has made promises and some progress, but the board rejected the student proposal to raise funds directly from tuition. Instead, they have proposed a separate fundraising effort. Furthermore, according to the *Georgetown Voice*, “in an interview in January of 2022, Georgetown President John DeGioia said funds had been raised and would be distributed by the end of the current semester. Descendants and activists say they have not been.”<sup>7</sup> It is not an easy task delivering on the kinds of ideals Jesuit universities put forth, but these students are modeling that path. University boards and leadership would do well to promptly and substantively follow their lead.

Taking Georgetown as an example, it seems to me we have an obligation to listen carefully and follow students who are demonstrating exactly the kind of leadership we articulate as our mission. If we are too quick to report progress in these areas, but fail to transparently address our failures as well, then we substantially undermine our integrity with students. Including the formation of “citizens for others” in our mission gives us a weighty responsibility to model this in our own backyard. How can we expect students to continue to believe in these Ignatian ideals if it is only upon closer inspection that we reveal ourselves to fall short? To give just one example in our own SCU backyard, we currently await a response from the board of trustees to the “SCU Just

Employment Policy” proposed by the Student Senate. This policy is modeled on a similar policy advocated for by students and adopted at Georgetown. It includes measures to ensure workers’ rights including a living wage for all employees—contractors and “auxiliary workers” included. These are areas that SCU continues to have significant work to do. For instance, the University agreed to sign a revised long-term contract with Bon Appétit restaurant company exempting workers from existing minimum wage and benefits requirements for SCU employees. This was against the advocacy of students at the time. We owe it to students to be responsive to their proposals and to report fully on both our successes *and failures* in these areas. It is not easy to be a university committed to justice when the predominant model of a university is the neoliberal model, but this is what we are trying to do.

Many would argue that openly tangling with a “pluralistic form” is fundamental to the undertaking of a Jesuit mission. For instance, “The Catholic University as Pluralistic Form” by Michael Buckley, S.J. reveals the historical reckoning of Jesuit universities with the demands of academic freedom and a distinctly Catholic mission. Another especially compelling example from our seminar—a reading that I believe could easily feature in a Jesuit core—was John O’Malley’s presentation of the Jesuit mission in historical context. O’Malley emphasizes the way in which the Jesuits have, from the beginning, confronted the tensions between worldly and spiritual demands. For instance, he argues that it was only by accident that the Jesuits ended up in education. In his account, education presented itself to the Jesuits as the best path to serving the common good. In seeking to serve this common good they were interested in educating future pastors, those who could not afford an education otherwise, as well as future civic officials who might “fill important posts to everybody’s profit and advantage.”<sup>8</sup> In this

# “TO GIVE JUST ONE EXAMPLE, WE MIGHT UNDERSCORE THE WAY A JESUIT EDUCATION MIGHT EMPOWER STUDENTS TO OVERCOME THE IMPEDIMENTS TO DEEP REFLECTION POSED BY A HIGHLY MATERIALISTIC AND ACTIVELY DISTRACTING SOCIETY.”

context, O’Malley argues that the order did seek to care for the spiritual well-being of their students, but also saw themselves as attending to “the well-being of the earthly city.”<sup>9</sup> These goals have not always been easy to reconcile. For instance, O’Malley admits “there is no doubt that over the course of the years and then of the centuries most of the schools tended” toward “catering to the rich.”<sup>10</sup> Given the continued prevalence of this tendency—the extent to which Santa Clara is out of reach for so many students—it is clear that these paradoxes remain a key impediment to the satisfaction of a Jesuit mission. As O’Malley acknowledges, the history of the order is not one of linear progression toward these goals. Yet, it seems helpful to consider the way in which, at its beginnings, the order sought to take on a project that they understood as addressing sometimes opposed goods. They were invested in confronting worldly concerns directly and did not see the goal of professional advancement as unable to be married to the spiritual and intellectual goals of education.


Another facet of Jesuit pedagogy that strikes me as especially well-suited to presenting a pluralistic tradition is the emphasis it places on context. On this model, we are obligated to meet students where they are at—in consideration of their personal and professional starting points and needs. There are of course many other pedagogical models that place a similar emphasis on student-centered learning. Yet, it seems helpful to bring together this emphasis on context with the more distinct spiritual and moral aims that a Jesuit mission emphasizes. On this basis, we are obligated to not only tell students that it is valuable to read Ignatius or study theoretical physics, instead we have at least two foregrounding tasks. First, we must consider why this education

is likely to already present itself as valuable to students in their existing contexts. Second, we must take seriously the points of friction between our students and the tradition. For example, it is easy enough to promote Ignatian pedagogy by drawing on current endorsements of “soft skills” and the way in which these are professionally relevant. Empathy and depth of reflection are increasingly recognized as professionally relevant skills across many fields. However, this can also make it easy to slip into selling students on a Jesuit education as a kind of niche brand from which they will get all the prestige of a top university with the flare of a Jesuit culture. In conforming too closely to existing categories we risk watering down what is actually of distinct value in a Jesuit mission. To avoid this kind of surface engagement therefore, we should be confronting much more directly the tensions that students themselves are quite familiar with. To give just one example, we might underscore the way a Jesuit education might empower students to overcome the impediments to deep reflection posed by a highly materialistic and actively distracting society.

## **Life of the Mind in Context: A Realistic Ideal**

In response to Callard’s characterization of the point of the university, the Ignatian tradition presents the university as about much more than a community of readers. This mission also claims to spiritually and morally form future citizens. It claims to be much more than Callard would have it. Yet, following Charles Mills’s approach to the liberal tradition, it is precisely because of these more expansive ideal aims that a Jesuit education demands a foundational engagement with the non-ideal elements of its own tradition. It ought to be framed as both less and

more ideal. What does this entail? Mills envisions a notion of liberal theory that has an initial non-ideal phase, a phase that must address and ameliorate certain historical injustices before it is even possible to theorize the pursuit of future just social orders.<sup>11</sup> I wonder if we could think about an Ignatian tradition in a similar way, as having a history that contains serious injustices with institutions that continue to reflect and perpetuate many hegemonic structures and injustices. We could then operate on the assumption that addressing these injustices in our own institution and tradition is a foundation to better articulate and then live out our mission.

Presenting these non-ideal ideals addresses many of the holes created by Callard’s limitations on the purpose of a university. For instance, there is a great deal of truth in Callard’s view that intellectual treasures are not well supported by the demands of worldly affairs. We should be honest about this. Furthermore, in an oppressive society many of these burdens will be unevenly distributed. Our students will get busy with the demands of work and caregiving in uneven ways. They are likely to experience ample pulls on their attention—the shine of prestige, the distortions of racism, the co-optation of critical projects by status quo institutions, the demands of earning and spending. In these instances, Callard is right that it is easy for the joys of intellectual life to simply “fade away” as the rest of life takes over. However, it is also crucial that—at the outset—we are teaching students to practice and cultivate a rich life of the mind in a way that arms them to integrate this (however differently) into their lives after graduation. We should be forthcoming about the barriers to intellectual life, but also about facets of life most conducive to its flourishing, and about the role community can play in its preservation. It will be easier to read in reading groups; foster this among your friends, family, or in your place of work. Write things for your communal publications; make a podcast; host a poetry potluck. As bell hooks so convincingly argues in *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, your community will be stronger if it develops a robust account of theory.<sup>12</sup> Making time for reading, for meditation or prayer, even as the easily all-consuming jobs of parenting, working, and living take hold: These are just a few examples of ways in which we can contextualize the purpose and meaning of a Jesuit education not only for the present, but also for the future lives of our students. 



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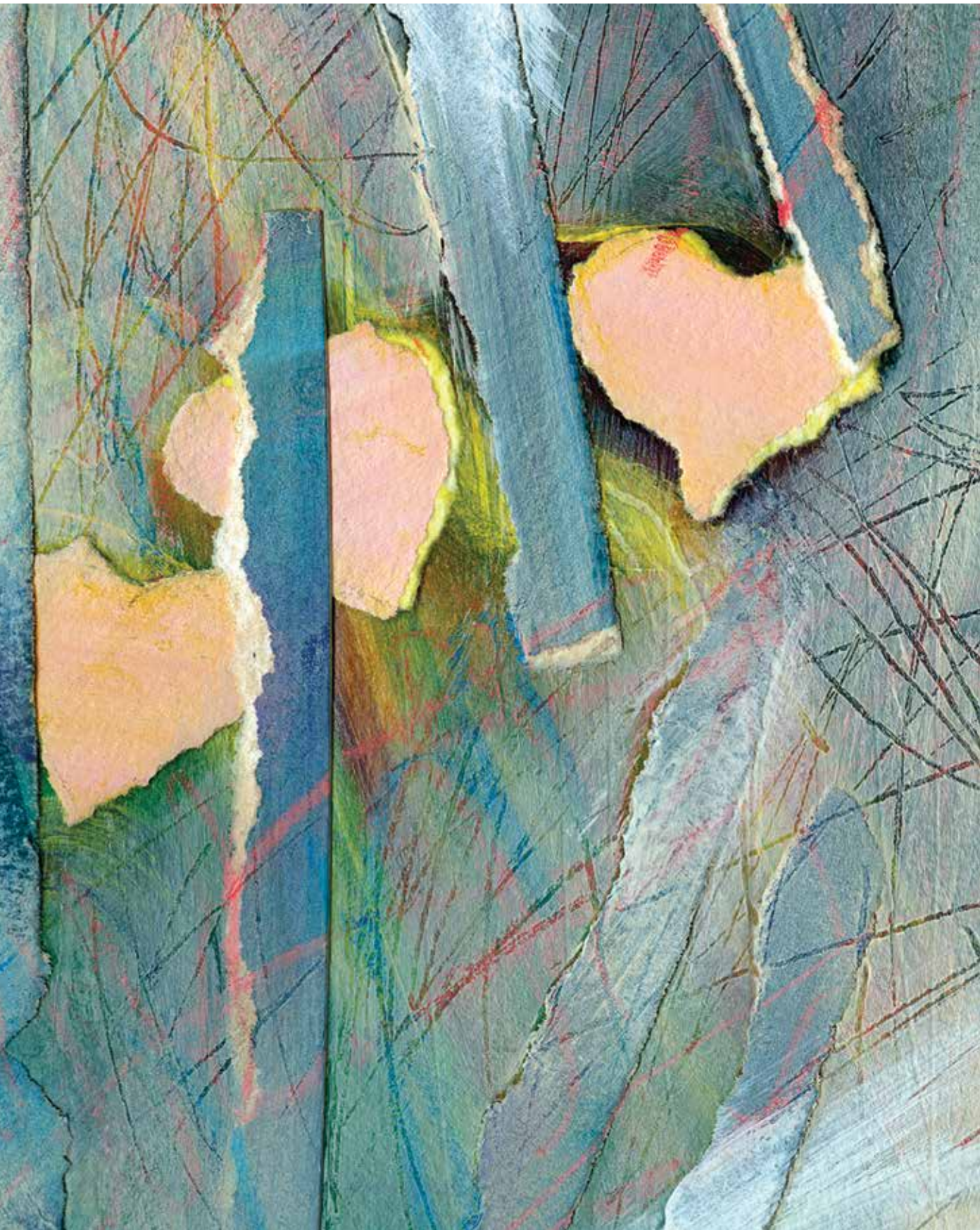
# WHAT IMPACT DO I WANT MY WORK TO HAVE?

BY EZINNE D. OFOEGBU

AS A HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER, I OFTEN ASK MYSELF, “WHAT IMPACT DO I WANT MY WORK TO HAVE?” THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS I CAN ANSWER THIS QUESTION, AND MY FAVORITE APPROACH IS TO REFLECT ON COLLEGIATE HISTORY. In 2023, most institutions recognize that they occupy land that was stolen from Native and Indigenous people. Some institutions, particularly in southern states, acknowledge their historical connections to the enslavement of African people (e.g., slave labor, engaging in the slave trade). Even at SCU, the Mission Church serves as a forever symbol of our campus’ connection to Indigenous people and Spanish colonization. All this history is directly tied to contemporary issues in higher education, particularly issues of college access for students of color, first-generation students, low-income students, and the mistreatment of students, staff, and faculty of color at historically white institutions. Nonetheless, the Jesuit’s relationship to social justice and reflection is one that stays with me as a teacher-scholar and as a human being who navigates multiple forms of marginalization myself. Because of our history and the tensions that exist within this history, I think SCU’s connection to the Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT) is even more significant.

So, I return to this question: “What impact do I want my work to have?” My work is rooted in this history, namely the fact that many universities were built with the intent to exclude people who look like me, and these spaces continue to be hostile, unsupportive environments for Black people and other people of color. My scholarship, which is rooted in my orientation as a social justice-minded scholar, unapologetically examines the lives of students like me: students who look like me, students who share a similar background or identity as me, students who attend colleges and universities that were built to exclude them. My teaching practice serves the purpose of preparing scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to serve diverse communities of students and advancing social justice in higher education. As such, this work is inherently informed by the Jesuit values as I understand them.





Jen Norton, *Breaking Barriers*, 2007.

There are several Jesuit values and traditions that very much resonate with me and how I approach my teaching and relationships with my students. For example, in the article titled *The Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender in Jesuit and Feminist Education: Finding Transcendent Meaning in the Concrete* by M. Shawn Copeland, Copeland explored the intersections of Jesuit and feminist pedagogy. Copeland wrote that Jesuit and feminist pedagogy must do the following things: 1) Do more than reproduce students who will sustain current cultural contexts 2) Address the presence and persistence of racism (other *isms*) in society and educational contexts 3) Foster critical analysis of white privilege. These are pedagogical techniques I attempt to model in my classroom. I teach teachers, education practitioners, and leaders who are tasked with leading and supporting the most diverse populations of students in K–12 and higher education settings. In my college student development theory course, for example, I ask students to reflect on their positionalities and how these positionalities inform how they see the world and support students. I ask them to reflect on their positionalities often—as

they engage in class discussion, as they complete case studies, as they complete course assignments, etc. Creating space for students to grapple with their own experiences of oppression as well as privilege is necessary to acknowledge it and work against these larger structures of social and systemic injustice. This self-work guides the development of strategies to support students with similar positionalities, as well as students whose educational institutions were built to intentionally exclude. To echo Copeland, a Jesuit university is the place where such questions and reflection should take place. As members of the SCU community, we have a responsibility to ask and attempt to answer critical questions that impact our lives, the lives of our students and communities, and society. I say all this to say, Jesuit pedagogy requires an acknowledgement of intersecting forms of privilege and oppression, the sociocultural context that undergirds our society's social problems, and our individual and collective moral and ethical responsibility to work toward solutions.

Something that continues to resonate with me about the CIT is the emphasis on critical reflection, dialogue, and the aspiration to address social problems. I would argue that every college classroom should be a space for reflection, dialogue, and solution development, regardless of institutional type (e.g., public, private, two-year, four-year, religious, secular, HBCUs, HSIs etc.). I think the difference between SCU and other institutions is that this mission has a name (i.e., Catholic intellectual tradition). At SCU, there is a framework and precedent in place for guided reflection, dialogue, and solution development. There is an expectation that faculty and student affairs practitioners are creating spaces for the values of CIT to be enacted. While I don't think there are structural methods of accountability to ensure these espoused values are enacted, outside of maybe course evaluations, I am confident our scholar-practitioners are enacting these values in a manner that is relevant to the student populations they serve and the disciplines they teach in. I am thankful for communal spaces in which we can talk about how the values of CIT can be enacted in our work, and discuss the triumphs, rewards, and challenges of incorporating these values in our curriculum.

Furthermore, I wonder how the CIT framework can be used to tackle some




Ricardo Cortez, *1-800-JOQUIN*, 2015, Sculpture



# “I AM THANKFUL FOR COMMUNAL SPACES IN WHICH WE CAN TALK ABOUT HOW THE VALUES OF CIT CAN BE ENACTED IN OUR WORK, AND DISCUSS THE TRIUMPHS, REWARDS, AND CHALLENGES OF INCORPORATING THESE VALUES IN OUR CURRICULUM.”

of the larger issues that plague higher education (e.g., access, affordability). How can this framework be used in policy development, for example? One of our colleagues mentioned the potential future of affirmative action in college admissions and how the recent policy reversal presents an opportunity for SCU to be an innovator in creating policy workarounds for ensuring the continued diversification of college campuses. I responded to this comment by mentioning SCU is not currently doing the best job of ensuring class diversity on our campus, highlighting that affirmative action is an intersectional issue, and intersecting forms of diversity need to be addressed. Nonetheless, I left the conversation wondering, how might the future of affirmative action be different if Supreme Court justices and policymakers were well versed on the guiding principles of reflection, dialogue, and solution development? Imagine what educational equity would look like if practical and policy development required critical reflection and acknowledgement of our positionalities, dialogue about how these positionalities inform our opinions, and solution development that centers the positionalities that are amongst the most marginalized and ignored in our society? The values of the CIT are accessible for all, and there is a need to communicate that accessibility.

So again, I return to this question: “What impact do I want my work to have?” I want the impact of my work to be that all students can attend college without fear of being “microaggressed,” stereotyped, or harmed by their peers, staff, or faculty on their campuses. I want the impact of my work to be that staff and faculty are prepared to support and nurture the cultural wealth that all students bring into their classrooms and welcome the perspectives

they bring to their assignments and projects. I want the impact of my work to be that staff and administrators can use my research to design and sustain retention efforts that are informed by the experiences of all students and alumni, rather than numbers that do not always tell the full story. I want the impact of my work to be that school leaders are responsive to issues of racism and all other *isms* on their campus and across the country, in ways that center their campus community’s mental health and wellness. This impact is not possible without critical reflection, dialogue, and solution development. Jesuit pedagogy is a tool we can rely on to realize such impacts in our classrooms. If we make a big enough impact, our students, regardless of their religious background or affiliation, will pass the CIT and Jesuit values along to their colleagues in various professional settings, their families and friends, and eventually the young people in their lives. 



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focuses on Black women and girls, immigrant-origin students, and issues of equity and social justice in higher education. Her work is rooted in the desire to center historically marginalized students in college environments that continue to exclude, “other,” and deny the cultural wealth that exists within these student populations. Ofoegbu is an alumna of San Diego State University and the University of Southern California.

# How Can Venture Capital Funding Still Be So Sexist?

BY LAURA L. ELLINGSON

IN A WORLD POST #MeToo, MOST PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION ARE RELICS OF THE PAST. We hope that universities, businesses, and other organizations have eradicated inequities based on gender bias, including sexism's intersections with racism, ableism, heteronormativity, and other structural oppressions.

I teach courses on gender, sexuality, and communication at SCU, having earned a graduate certificate in women's studies along with my Ph.D. in communication. And over and over again, I am asked by students, faculty, parents, and even strangers at parties—how can sexism still be affecting the workplace in 2023? Didn't Title IX and civil rights legislation take care of that? What about #MeToo and Time's Up? And can't any gender disparities be explained by the larger percentage of men applying for venture capital funding?

The brief answer to all these questions is that workplace gender bias persists and is even expanding in some ways, despite efforts to eliminate bias and promote equity. In this essay, I look at the persistence of workplace gender bias and inequities in the context of the Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT) by focusing on venture capital funding for

startups. I draw on cutting-edge research on venture capital (VC) funding conducted by my colleague, Maya Ackerman, assistant professor of engineering at SCU and an entrepreneur/startup co-founder, to illustrate the tenacity of sexism in sustaining economic injustice. I briefly summarize Ackerman's research, explain how implicit gender bias plays out in everyday communication in workplaces, and highlight a couple of innovative strategies for recognizing and valuing the complementarity of gendered perspectives in organizations.

Ackerman, along with leadership expert Bonita Banducci, a business consultant and longtime lecturer who teaches gender and engineering at SCU, and I were featured recently in an event sponsored by SCU's Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship. Together with Executive Director Brigit Helms, we unpacked gender bias in *Funding Women Entrepreneurs: From Bias to Bonus*.<sup>1</sup> Promoting awareness of insidious ways in which sexism and its intersecting oppressions persist is a critical step.

Ackerman, Banducci, and I are committed to the mission of our Jesuit institution to promote social justice through our teaching and research. At the intersection of theology, politics, and economics, CIT highlights the dignity of workers and the welfare of communities, reflecting a focus on human rights commensurate with the UN's Universal

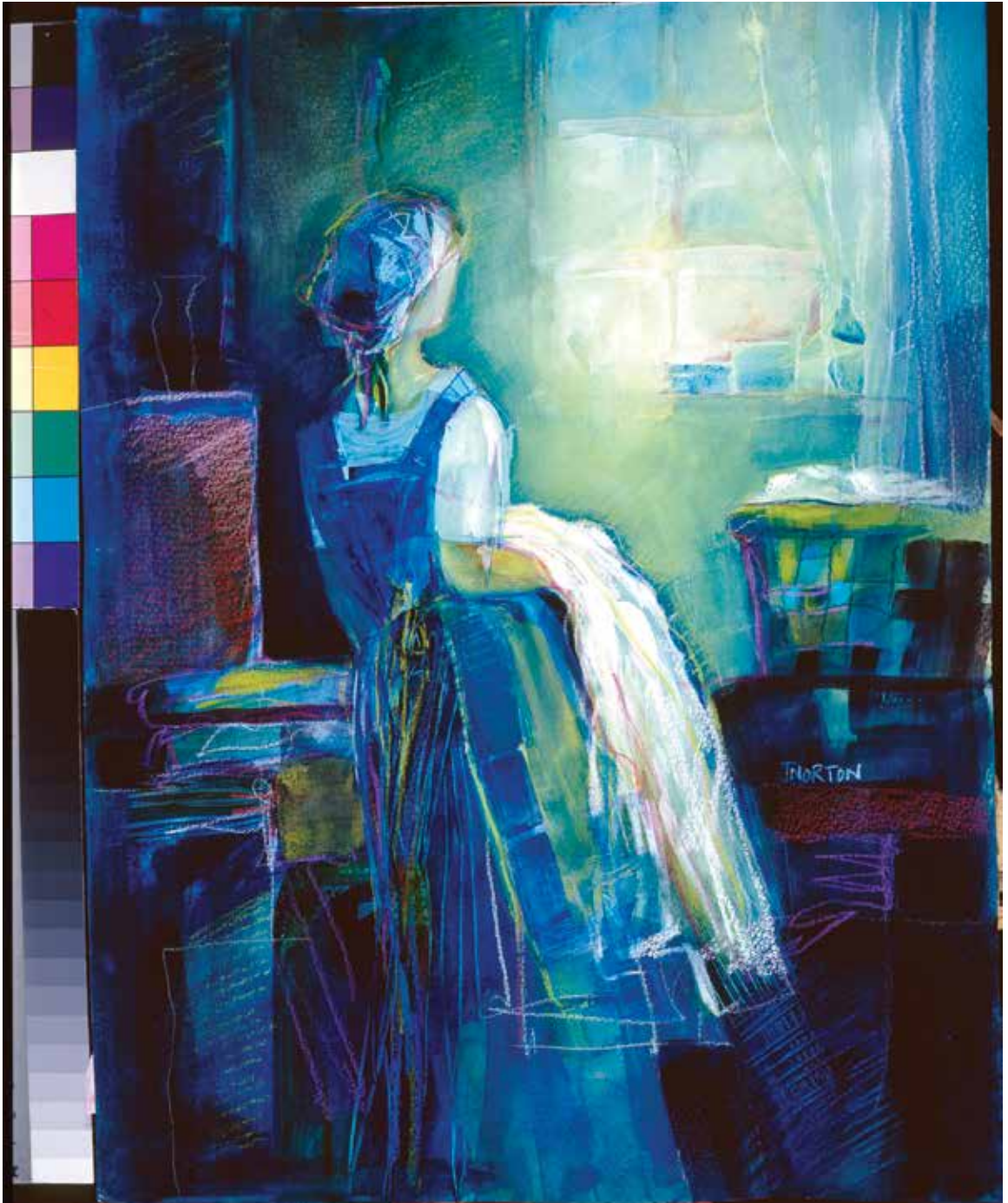
Jazzy Benes, *Mirror, Mirror*, 2021.



Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>2</sup> Attending to the intersection of racism with sexism is a critical point of connection between Jesuit and feminist theologies in promoting social and economic justice.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, acknowledging ways in which globalization, corporate colonialization of developing nations, and exploitative practices construct global migration and employment trends is vital to understanding economic injustice within any country or region.<sup>4</sup>

CIT embodies “a radically inclusive” approach to economic justice, which promotes the dismantling of structural inequities such as sexism and racism that limit opportunities for fair economic participation.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, Pope Francis’ teachings continue to reinforce traditional gender roles within families, and “by tightly intertwining femininity and care work, rather than highlighting this work as part of the domestic vocation of every person, the papal



Jen Norton, *Bigger Dreams*, 2007.

# “DOMESTIC LABOR AND POWER DISPARITIES, AND THE TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES THAT THEY PROMOTE, UNDERLIE PERSISTENT GENDER DISPARITIES IN WORKPLACES.”

approach risks complicity in the very problems—the disvaluing of women’s contributions, and the socioeconomic exploitation of the work of the home—it seeks to ameliorate.”<sup>6</sup> Firmly entrenched within heteronormative frameworks for making and sustaining families, Pope Francis recently publicly derided couples who choose not to have children, saying that such a choice “diminishes us, takes away our humanity.”<sup>7</sup> Given that the majority of childcare and housekeeping continues to be done by women in heterosexual relationships—a disparity vastly exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic<sup>8</sup>—the Pope’s zeal for children-rearing places a disparate demand on women’s bodies, minds, and career aspirations, including people who do not identify as women but are able to sustain pregnancy, such as some transgender and nonbinary people. The disproportionate burden he reinforces only worsens women’s inequality at home and work.

Domestic labor and power disparities, and the traditional gender roles that they promote, underlie persistent gender disparities in workplaces. Ackerman’s research revealed some painful, persistent truths about gender and VC firms.<sup>9</sup> Venture capital is necessary for successful startups, and yet funding of women-led startups decreased from a mere 2.7% in 2019 to 1.8% in 2020. Moreover, her analyses of over 48,000 companies on Crunchbase reveal:

The presence of a female founder on the team actually increases the amount of funds raised, but only when the company is led by a male CEO. On the other hand, companies led by female CEOs consistently raise substantially less funds than firms led by male CEOs. Silicon Valley was one of few geographies identified where the presence of a non-CEO female founder correlates with lower funding outcomes than male-only teams, suggesting a higher than usual gender bias in the San Francisco Bay Area.<sup>10</sup>

This evidence establishes beyond a doubt that bias persists and cannot be explained away as coincidental, nor the result of women being less competent. In fact, Ackerman and her team found that being male is the most important factor that predicts fundraising success, beating out such competency factors as having attended a top university and the number of prior exits by founders.

As a communication scholar, my contribution to this critical conversation on gender and economic justice centers on explaining how gender disparities are enacted through everyday communication practices in workplaces, including VC firms. First, I will cover a few principles of communication, then turn to gendered styles of communication.

Communication includes both verbal communication (that is, language) and nonverbal communication, which is everything else that constitutes the messages we send and receive, including communication cues that people often take for granted. Nonverbal cues include tone, pitch, and rate of speech; gestures, posture, and body movements; facial expressions; appearance, including body size and shape, height, hair, and skin color; clothing, jewelry, and accessories; grooming (hair style, makeup, facial hair removal); and personal belongings such as briefcases, smart phones, laptops, and pens.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, research indicates that at least 65% of meaning in verbal interactions derives from nonverbal cues.

All communication has two levels: content and relationship. The content level consists of explicit information or ideas. The relationship level indicates the standing of the relationship between speakers. That is, it is impossible to communicate with another person without implicitly communicating about your own identity and how your role(s) relate(s) to the other person’s identity and roles, and this is accomplished primarily through nonverbal cues. So, if a supervisor asks her employee—“Can you please assemble the team in the conference room?”—

## “BECAUSE GENDER BIAS REMAINS LARGELY UNCONSCIOUS, IT IS INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT TO REMEDY, EVEN WHEN ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE RELEVANT TRAINING.”

her smile, easy tone of voice, and eye contact communicate respect and collegiality, while the request also functions as an implicit order, indicating a substantial power differential.

People are socialized into communication norms for their culture, including gender, which are traditionally thought of as masculine or feminine styles. This binary is a false one, as all people enact masculine and feminine nonverbal cues, displaying some degree of androgynous communication. It is more accurate to think of masculine and feminine styles as existing along a continuum. Masculine communication styles maintain status, assert power, compete, and foster independence, while feminine styles emphasize relationships and connection.<sup>12</sup> Women, more than men, use a greater variety of facial expressions, are more likely to smile at others, express affiliative and appeasing styles, provide active listening cues such as nodding and making affirmative sounds (*mmmhmm, uh huh*), speak more softly, use tentative speech cues such as hedging or adding tag questions at the end of sentences, use fluid gestures, and endeavor to take up less space. Men, more than women, use fewer facial expressions, listen without displaying active listening cues, take up more space with their bodies, and use assertive and aggressive communication styles, such as interrupting others, changing the conversational topic, and speaking loudly and firmly. Cross-cultural research demonstrates that gendered communication styles are not innate but are learned through social interaction.<sup>13</sup> These expectations for communication persist and form the basis of gender stereotypes.

Because masculine communication norms constitute the norms for workplace communication, women face a catch-22, or double bind, between femininity and competence.<sup>14</sup> That is, they need to communicate in feminine ways to be found likable and approachable by others, yet those displays of femininity often cause them to be viewed as professionally incompetent. Yet when women adopt masculine communication styles to enhance their

perceived competence, they tend to be judged as aggressive, unlikable, and not collegial.

Extensive research documents this double-bind dynamic in the hypermasculine VC culture, in which implicit and explicit sexism abounds and largely goes unchallenged.<sup>15</sup> Scant representation of women C-suite positions—for example, 8.8% of CEOs in Fortune 500 companies are women—means fewer role models and mentors who can show other women how to manage this tension and embody powerful leadership roles successfully.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, workplace gender bias is worse for women of color and women with disabilities.<sup>17</sup> Because gender bias remains largely unconscious, it is incredibly difficult to remedy, even when organizations provide relevant training.<sup>18</sup>


Research makes clear that sexism is enacted through spoken and mediated speech (e.g., email) and a host of gendered nonverbal communication cues during workplace interactions. Gendered expectations are normative and thus invisible. If a small set of communication behaviors promoted gender bias, we potentially could isolate and change them. However, gender norms are deeply entrenched in all communication norms.

So, what to do? I offer two ideas for next steps.

We can teach organizations about the benefits of fostering ways of thinking and communicating that are traditionally associated with femininity and are often misinterpreted as incompetence. Lecturer Bonita Banducci teaches and does training for organizations on how to think of gender (and other marginalized identities) not as biases but as bonuses. That is, she highlights the relational competencies that have been invisible, unarticulated, undervalued, and associated with feminine communication styles, including the ways in which systems thinking (as contrasted with individualistic reasoning) helps organizations succeed. Banducci complements the masculine “firefighter” who jumps in to solve problems in a crisis with the feminine “fire preventer” who heads off crises with high-context thinking and

communicating. Fire prevention is far less dramatic and thus less likely to be noticed and rewarded; moreover, such efforts may be seen as troublemaking because more complex solutions can take more time and cross onto other people's turf. Banducci also teaches that playing "devil's advocate" when considering a colleague's idea—a decidedly masculine practice of pointing out all the arguments against a proposal—can be complemented by playing "angel's advocate"—a relational approach to engaging with colleagues that may yield even better results. Reframing undervalued feminine communication strategies as relational and systems competencies may enable organizations to recognize their value and reward them.

Second, we can simply heighten awareness of gendered communication styles, without trying to change them. Helping people to make sense of others' patterns of communicating—which are not just gendered, but vary according to race, age cohort, religion, and a host of other factors—can be a powerful tool for motivating people to be more curious about and open to others' communication styles and perspectives.

Gendered economic injustice is too complex a problem to be easily solved. Yet communication will necessarily be part of any efforts for positive change, so appreciating gendered communication differences can be a vital step toward greater equity. 



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# How Beauty Can Inspire a Sense of Duty

Reflections on *Laudato Si*

BY ALEKSANDAR ZECEVIC

FOR SOME TIME NOW, I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON A SEQUEL TO MY 2018 BOOK *THE BEAUTY OF NATURE AND THE NATURE OF BEAUTY*, which focused on interdisciplinary aesthetics. One of the topics that I was planning to explore was the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, following the ancient idea that the true, the good, and the beautiful represent fundamental attributes of being (and must therefore be connected on some level). This turned out to be quite a challenge, however, because ethics and aesthetics differ in several important ways. One of them has to do with the way we make judgments—it is by no means clear, for example, whether claims about beauty can ever be universal, given that they inevitably involve a subjective component. Moral judgments, on the other hand, have to be completely objective in order to be binding for everyone who accepts a certain set of ethical norms.

I joined the reading group on the Catholic intellectual tradition with these questions in the back of my mind, hoping that our conversations might offer some new ideas and insights. They most certainly did, but not in the way I expected. Toward the end of the spring quarter, we discussed the two latest papal encyclicals, *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*, mainly from the perspective of social justice. In reading these two documents, I discovered that they have a common thread that allows for a natural connection between ethics, aesthetics, and theology, especially in the context of the current environmental crisis. In what follows, I would like to briefly outline how such a connection can be made, and why I think it might be conducive to the moral and spiritual formation of our students.

# “PERHAPS THE MOST OBVIOUS REASON FOR CHANGING OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD NATURE IS THE EXISTENTIAL THREAT THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS POSES TO HUMANITY.”

## **The Inadequacies of Technology**

There is broad agreement in the scientific community that technology alone cannot reverse climate change or undo the damage that humans have done to the environment. For this to be possible (even theoretically), it is also necessary to make some fundamental changes in the way people behave, and ensure that these changes are permanent.

The fact that technology and human behavior must act in a coordinated manner in order to achieve this goal implies that we need experts who possess *both* technical knowledge *and* an understanding of what motivates people to make sacrifices for the greater good. Pope Francis recognizes this need in *Laudato Si*, in his discussion of how technological progress is understood in contemporary society:

There is a tendency to believe that every increase in power means an increase of progress itself ... as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power. ... We have certain superficial mechanisms, but we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint.

I believe that Jesuit universities are uniquely positioned to produce individuals who can competently address this challenge, because they value broad interdisciplinarity and do not shy away from embedding it into their curricula. The question, however, is how these diverse areas of human inquiry can be combined in a coherent manner, and how such “integrated” knowledge can be used to form our students into individuals who genuinely care about the environment.

Having given this question a good deal of thought, I arrived at the conclusion that Ignatian spirituality provides a natural starting point for such a project, because it explicitly embraces the idea of

*finding God in all things*. In the remainder of this essay, I will try to explain why I believe this to be the case.

## **Changing Our Attitude Toward Nature**

Perhaps the most obvious reason for changing our attitude toward nature is the existential threat that the environmental crisis poses to humanity. The fear that this threat instills in us is a powerful motivating factor, but it is unclear whether this is sufficient to permanently alter our habits (particularly if significant sacrifices are involved). Given that fear is an inherently unpleasant feeling, sooner or later our psychological defense mechanisms kick in, and other things move to the forefront of our attention. It seems to me, therefore, that we should look for motivating factors that are more “positive” and follow naturally from our fundamental beliefs and values.

One such possibility is related to the belief that nature is beautiful and is consequently worth preserving (much like a great work of art). Such a view was widespread in the 18th and 19th centuries, and figures prominently in the writings of early American naturalists as well (John Muir and Henry David Thoreau are typical examples.) To me, this approach has a definite intuitive appeal, but in order for it to be practical, one has to establish that *everything* in nature can actually be characterized as beautiful. This is undoubtedly a tall order, because it is easy to admire the grace of an antelope or the rugged peaks of the Alps, but it is by no means obvious how one can extend this attitude to mosquitoes or cockroaches.

Some have argued that scientific knowledge can help us circumvent this problem. Environmentalist philosopher Allen Carlson maintains, for example, that

All of nature necessarily reveals the natural order. Although it may be easier to perceive

and understand in some cases more than in others, it is yet present in every case and can be appreciated once our awareness and understanding of the forces which produce it is adequately developed. In this sense, all nature is equally appreciable.

Even if we accept Carlson's approach (which is known as "positive aesthetics"), however, the question remains whether such arguments can give rise to a *moral obligation* to preserve nature. Some authors, such as Yuriko Saito, believe that they can:

As John Dewey reminds us, the moral function of art is 'to remove prejudice, do away with the scales that prevent the eye from seeing' ... Appreciating art on its own terms helps us cultivate this moral capacity of recognizing and understanding the other's reality through sympathetic imagination. Perhaps we can derive

an equivalent moral criterion for the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature.

While I don't necessarily disagree with Saito's line of reasoning, it seems to me that the transition from "beauty to duty" is not as straightforward as she suggests. As much as I enjoy philosophical discourse, I seriously doubt that arguments of this sort can persuade large numbers of people to permanently modify their behavior. We are ultimately emotional creatures, and any appeal for fundamental changes must resonate with us on a level that is deeper, and is not purely rational. This is where religion comes into the picture.

### **The Theological Perspective**

Before we consider how a theological perspective can help improve our attitudes toward nature, it might be helpful to briefly discuss the opposite view. Perhaps



Berkeley Hoerr, *Regrowth*, 2022.

# “INDEED, THOSE WHO TRULY SEE REFLECTIONS OF DIVINE BEAUTY IN ALL THINGS CAN NEVER CONDONE THE DESTRUCTION OF NATURE, BECAUSE THIS WOULD GO AGAINST THEIR CORE BELIEFS.”

the most explicit statement of this outlook is Lynn White’s highly influential paper *The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis*, which he concludes with the following words:

The greatest spiritual revolutionary in Western history, Saint Francis, proposed what he thought was an alternative Christian view of nature and man’s relation to it; he tried to substitute the idea of the equality of all creatures, including man, for the idea of man’s limitless rule of creation. He failed. Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious.

If we combine this paragraph with the well-known passage from Genesis 1, which claims that humans should have “dominion” over the earth, it would appear that Christianity has a lot of explaining to do.

Reading *Laudato Si* helped me recognize, however, that such simplistic views grossly misinterpret the Christian tradition and its teachings. This encyclical explicitly recognizes the intrinsic value of creation as a whole, and advocates a symbiotic relationship between humans and the natural world. It also sees the practice of “finding God in all things” as a key element in establishing such a relationship. If this becomes our habitual way of looking at the world, every individual and every natural form (whether living or inanimate) will become worthy of our care and attention.

Pope Francis makes this point early in *Laudato Si*, quoting the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I (who, by the way, is known as the “green” patriarch because of his longstanding concern for the environment):

It is our humble conviction that the divine and human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God’s creation.

Pope Francis then goes on to say: “Saint Francis, faithful to the Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his goodness.

Although the pope refers to divine goodness in this particular instance, he subsequently turns to the notion of divine beauty in his remarks about the intrinsic value of the natural world:

Encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature. This is especially clear in the spirituality of the Christian East. Beauty, which in the East is one of the best loved names expressing divine harmony ... appears everywhere; in the shape of a church, in the sounds, in the colors, in the scents.

In this way, he makes a powerful case for our obligation toward the environment, which stems directly from the foundations of Christian faith. Indeed, those who truly see reflections of divine beauty in all things can never condone the destruction of nature, because this would go against their core beliefs.

Personally, I find this idea very appealing, but being an engineer by training, I cannot help wondering about its practicality. It is by no means obvious, for example, how one should go about “finding God in all things”. Nor is it clear whether this path open to everyone, or is reserved only for mystics.

In searching for answers to these questions, I did what most academics do—I started reading whatever I could find on the subject. In the process I came across a number of interesting texts, some of which came from non-Catholic traditions. I discovered (among other things) that “finding God

in all things” was a prominent theme among Greek theologians of the first millennium, and that their views on this subject were remarkably consistent with those espoused by Jesuits. What I found particularly interesting in this context was that St. Francis was by no means alone in his belief that every living being is worthy of our love and attention (which is what Lynn White appears to suggest in his essay). The seventh-century theologian St. Isaac the Syrian, for example, teaches us in his *Ascetic Homilies* to:

Love all of God’s creation, both the whole of it and every grain of sand. . . . Love animals, love plants, love each thing. If you love each thing, you will perceive the mystery of God in things.

Perhaps the most comprehensive theological treatment of this subject in Eastern Orthodox literature can be found in the writings of St. Maximus the Confessor, who maintained that seeing a reflection of divine beauty in all of creation is a critical first step on the path toward a spiritual union with God. He cautioned, however, that perceiving nature in this way requires extensive preparation, which starts with a purification of the soul. This entails (among other things) the practice of *humility*, which, according to him, “prevents us from foolishly growing confident in our own strength and wisdom.”

I must confess that discovering the writings of St. Maximus pleased my “inner engineer” greatly, since he attempted to systematically explain both *why* we can find God in all things, and *how* this might be accomplished. I found his emphasis on humility particularly appealing, because I believe that something similar applies to scientists as well.

When I discuss this topic with my students (and yes, we do such things in the School of Engineering), I like to begin with a light-hearted statement that is commonly referred to as the “physicist’s prayer”:

“Lord, grant me humility, and by humility, I mean the following . . . ”


I then contrast it to the words of Bertrand Russell (my favorite atheist thinker), who closed his *History of Western Philosophy* with the words:

Man, formerly too humble, begins to think of himself as almost God. . . . In all this, I feel a grave danger, the danger of what might be called cosmic impiety. . . . I am persuaded that this intoxication is the greatest danger of our time.

Although I very much doubt that this was his intent, Russell implicitly reinforces the theological claim that the environmental crisis cannot be properly addressed unless we undergo a radical transformation, and change how we perceive nature.

Indeed, once we recognize that our understanding of universe is inherently limited (which modern science clearly affirms), it begins to make sense to speak of a “cosmic mystery,” which represents those aspects of reality that lie beyond human comprehension. At that point, we can perhaps rediscover the wisdom of the early Church fathers, who believed that nature can tell us something about this mystery, if we know how to look.

We may, of course, disagree about the character of this “invisible reality” (or “mystery”, if you prefer), but the fact remains that those who see it in a religious light are no less rational than those who see it as “cold and impersonal.” We can say this with confidence, because any claim that we make about the true nature of this mystery is an “undecidable proposition,” which we are entitled to accept or reject with *equal* logical justification.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of which position we take in this debate, however, we must acknowledge that the intricate organization and beauty of nature inspire a certain sense of awe and wonder in us. If we additionally recognize that everything in nature is connected, and that these connections are often subtle and imperceptible, we will begin to value *all* aspects for the physical world, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant. This, to me, is how we can start to see God (or “the unfathomable mystery of nature” for those who are more secularly inclined) in all things. Once we do that, it becomes much easier to adopt habits that are conducive to the preservation of the environment. 



**ALEKSANDAR ZECEVIC** is a professor of electrical engineering at Santa Clara University, and the associate co-dean for Mission, Culture and Inclusion. His technical research interests include the control of complex systems, graph theoretic algorithms, electric power systems,

nonlinear dynamics, and quantum computing. Over the past 20 years, Zecevic has also done a considerable amount of work in the area of science and religion. His two books: *Truth, Beauty and the Limits of Knowledge* and *The Unknowable and the Counterintuitive* are devoted to this topic. His most recent project has been a trilogy on interdisciplinary aesthetics.

#### NOTES

1. Those who find this argument unconvincing are welcome to read up on Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorems, or the difference between Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometries.

# Listening for the Power of a Jesuit Education

BY ALISON M. BENDERS

“THE REAL MEASURE OF OUR JESUIT UNIVERSITIES LIES IN WHO OUR STUDENTS BECOME ... AND THE ADULT CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY THEY WILL EXERCISE IN THE FUTURE TOWARDS THEIR NEIGHBOR AND THEIR WORLD.”

—Superior General Hans Peter Kolvenbach, S.J.  
(Santa Clara lecture, 2000)

One Sunday, at the 10 a.m. community Mass in the Mission Church, a Latin American immigrant couple introduced their family to me and proudly shared that their son had just started his first year at Santa Clara University. The father had attended a Jesuit high school in his home country, so the parents were justifiably pleased that their son had started here. While I heard in their voices deep confidence in the value of a Jesuit education for their son, I also listened deeply for the substance of their confidence. In similar conversations with alumni, I sometimes probe further: “What memories or thoughts come to mind when you say ‘a Jesuit education’? What was meaningful about your time at SCU?” These questions are field research for the Division of Mission and Ministry, because the division is charged with fostering and celebrating SCU’s Jesuit, Catholic mission.

After spending a year in Ignatian reflection and dialogue, the faculty authors in this volume also offer their perspectives on the power of a Jesuit education. I hear three broad areas of consensus in their essays. First, a Jesuit education is directed toward a common, social good beyond the individual, aimed at building up the community. St. Ignatius understood the fundamental purpose of our human lives in their universal, eternal context as serving God and serving all God’s people. This

fundamental purpose thus must also be the purpose of all our works. When the Jesuit mission becomes authentically expressed in Jesuit higher education, universities as Jesuit apostolates advance the *projecto social*, or social project. Education at Jesuit institutions must be directed to educating citizens who will “build a more humane, just, and sustainable world” as SCU’s vision states.

Second, we can frame Jesuit education as a form of communication, which to be effective must attend to content and relationship. In addition to academic disciplines that may be components of any university, a humanistic core and Ignatian values are the distinguishing content of a Jesuit curriculum. This content enables us to identify and explore the important dimensions of being human and living in community. In academic and cocurricular programs, the university conveys the contours of a just, equitable society. Moreover, the humanistic core, with all its dimensions, becomes deeper and richer, more available and compelling, when it is built upon the foundations of the Catholic intellectual tradition and Catholic social teaching.

But content, whether concrete, instrumental, or theoretical is not enough. This is the third and most essential moment of consensus among the faculty authors. Rather, the power of a Jesuit education consists in the integral formation of the human




Keith Sutter

beings who learn, work, and live together on campus. Through human relationships, particularly friendship and mentoring, one generation shapes the character of the next, and a community practices how to live together according to the values they profess.

Several of the essays cautioned about a fundamental lack of integrity between an intellectualized vision of the *projecto social* and its practice on our campus. This is the call to move from theory to practice. For SCU's graduates to become citizens of a more humane, just, and sustainable global community, their intellect and character must be integrally developed, *cura personalis*. This formative care includes direct person-to-person experiences of diverse people and situations; skill in practices of dialogue, reflection, and discernment; safe and supportive structures that enable them to practice new ways of relating; and models, whether personal or organizational, that demonstrate the authentic integration of a social vision with everyday life. They must practice the skills for building a just world.

As I listened to the voices of faculty, I felt their hope for SCU's embodiment of Jesuit values on campus and beyond. Their reflections call me, and all readers I hope, to meet the challenges they identified. Ignatius' admonition to serve God can be expressed in our day as caring for humanity's common good and common home. This is the *why* of Jesuit education of which the authors write. Content and

formation are the *way* of Jesuit education, which the faculty authors so prophetically preach and model.

The power of a Jesuit education lies in neither its distinctive content nor its innovative educational experiences. The power of a Jesuit education comes from our practically developed self-understanding as a people united in a common, social project. This *projecto social* nurtures the value of all people and of the earth we inhabit. Driving toward this goal, a Jesuit education integrates the minds and hearts of students, forming them with "competence, conscience, and compassion" so that they may live together companionably and peacefully. Let us all commit to the project of hope we recognize as a Jesuit education. 



**ALISON M. BENDERS** is vice president for the division of mission and ministry at Santa Clara University. Prior to this role, she served for seven years as the associate dean of the Jesuit School of Theology at SCU, where her teaching and writing

focused on racial justice and reconciliation. Next month Liturgical Press will release her book: *America's Original Sin: A Pilgrimage of Race and Grace*, which is a reflective immersion into our nation's history of racial injustice through personal and theological lenses.

# IGNATIAN CENTER PROGRAMS

## IGNATIAN FORMATION

THE IGNATIAN CENTER AND SCU FACULTY AND STAFF

Ignatian Formation provides ways for faculty and staff to deepen their understanding of SCU's Jesuit Catholic mission, make it their own, and discover Ignatian spirituality.

“ I am deeply appreciative of the fact that I work for an institution that values employee spiritual wellness. The faculty & staff retreat was a great start to my journey here at SCU, and I feel more connected to the community as a result.”

—PARTICIPANT, FACULTY & STAFF IGNATIAN RETREAT

1,196 PROGRAMMING PARTICIPANTS

### IGNATIAN 101

New this academic year, a four session series introduced new staff to the distinctive dimensions of SCU's Jesuit, Catholic mission and character. Two cohorts built community while learning about and illuminating the Ignatian tradition in their work. Out of all participants, 85% reported significant growth in their understanding of Ignatian spirituality and Jesuit values.

## BANNAN FORUM

THE IGNATIAN CENTER IN DIALOGUE

The **Bannan Forum** delivers thought-provoking conversations that catalyze scholarship, reflection, and collaboration on contemporary issues of justice, religion, culture, and society.

“ I now see, even more than before, the importance of modeling compassion before our students, whether it is with myself, them, or others.”

—STAFF PARTICIPANT



11K+ VIEWS OF ONLINE EXPLORE JOURNAL



# STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS

## THE IGNATIAN CENTER AND OUR STUDENTS

Opportunities are available for students to strengthen their **leadership abilities**, engage in vocational discernment, and deepen their understanding of social justice issues while at SCU.

“ I believe that frequent contemplation and awareness of my actions, including remaining open to insecurity and conflict, can improve the work I complete and establish an increased amount of genuine listening and advocacy for clients and their needs. ”

—CLAIRE MURPHY '22,  
JEAN DONOVAN FELLOWSHIP '20

The Jean Donovan and Ignatian Fellowships offer undergraduate students a community-based experience rooted in the Ignatian Center's mission of a Faith that does Justice. Fellows work with organizations in communities with little access to wealth, power, and privilege in the U.S. and internationally. Fellows deepen their understanding of solidarity and vocation through pre- and post-experience gatherings that engage students in reflective practices informed by Ignatian spirituality.

50 IGNATIAN CENTER STUDENT FELLOWS

# IMMERSIONS

## THE IGNATIAN CENTER IN THE WORLD

**Immersion experiences**, both local and global, are designed to help participants see the world with new eyes, to recognize the unjust suffering of marginalized communities and individuals, and to allow those experiences to inform their vocational discernment.

“ My passion for social justice was reignited by the immersion. I feel more confident in my knowledge about issues surrounding immigration and border life. This experience was eye-opening and deeply impacted me. You grow compassion, and anger even, toward the injustices happening at the border. It better prepares you to make a difference in the future. ”

—STUDENT PARTICIPANT, 2021 SAN DIEGO IMMERSION



100% STUDENTS AGREE IMMERSIONS HELPED THEM UNDERSTAND ISSUES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

# IGNATIAN CENTER PROGRAMS

## THRIVING NEIGHBORS

### THE IGNATIAN CENTER AND OUR NEIGHBORS

**Thriving Neighbors** is a community-engaged learning program that links Santa Clara University with the five predominantly Latino neighborhoods that make up the Greater Washington community in San Jose.

Thriving Neighbors promotes collaboration between SCU (students and faculty), local agencies, and Latino communities in San Jose to create a more equitable and inclusive society:

- Foster education for K–12 Latino students, with a focus on STEM and leadership
- Co-create, execute, and evaluate programs to increase capacity development
- Offer SCU students the opportunity to put their expertise and knowledge into practice



**250** TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

**5** COMMUNITY LEADERS TRAINED IN WELLNESS STRATEGIES

**100%** HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ACCEPTED TO COLLEGE

**31** SCU STUDENTS SERVED AS TUTORS, MENTORS, OR RESEARCHERS



“ Thriving Neighbors has been a part of the reason that my goal of going to college is becoming reality. Although SCU doesn’t offer the major or a program to help my goal of becoming a physical therapist, I thank them for helping me grow as a student as well as a person. ”

JOSE, HIGH SCHOOL MENTORING PROGRAM, 2023

# ARRUPE ENGAGEMENT

THE IGNATIAN CENTER IN THE COMMUNITY

**Arrupe Engagement** expands the classroom walls by providing real-world opportunities to work with nonprofits, underscoring our commitment to the common good, universal human dignity, justice, and solidarity with marginalized communities.



“I did not expect to be as moved as I was by the professors and the differently abled students at College of Adaptive Arts. I looked forward to every Monday and Tuesday evening since I had the opportunity to share in their learning experience. At one point during the quarter, my own anxiety and worry diminished simply through volunteering and being surrounded by such bright and enthusiastic individuals.”

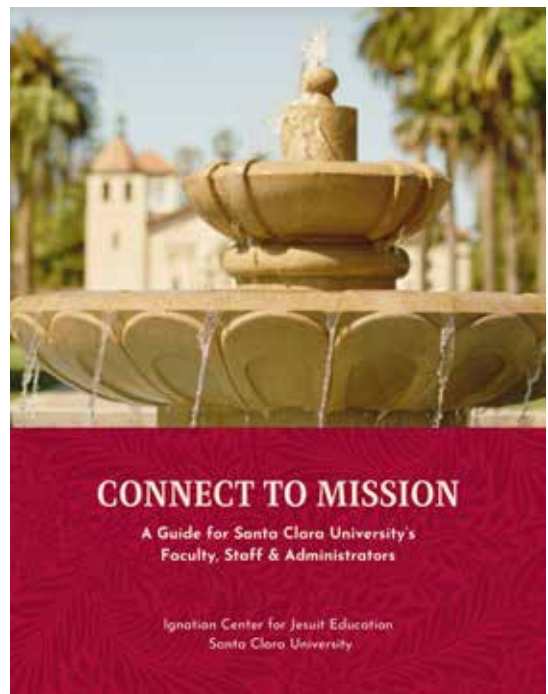
—STUDENT PARTICIPANT, ARRUPE ENGAGEMENT

# CONNECT TO MISSION

This year the Ignatian Center created a tool that accompanies persons of all faith traditions and human ideals in encountering, exploring, and engaging Santa Clara’s Jesuit, Catholic mission.



Scan here to learn more about our Connect to Mission guide online.





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[www.scu.edu/explore](http://www.scu.edu/explore)

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