



# Integrating the Liberal and Practical Arts

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*Catholic colleges and universities should integrate liberal and practical education. John Henry Newman and Josef Pieper attempt, unsuccessfully, to distinguish the liberal and practical arts in terms of being ends in themselves versus having ends beyond themselves. Jacques Maritain, instead, advocates making all education liberal. The purpose of liberal education is to enable students to understand reality, so they can pursue happiness correctly. The purpose of practical education is to teach students how to earn a living virtuously. These purposes should not be separated. Students need courses that integrate a liberal arts discipline and a practical arts discipline within a single course.*

## INTRODUCTION

In order to provide professional education, including business education, that is truly Catholic, a Catholic academic institution must integrate the liberal and practical arts.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, at a time when many Catholic colleges and universities are experiencing an increase of student interest in professional education relative to interest in liberal education, integrating the two is a more constructive strategy than arguing about which of the two should take a back seat to the other.

The distinction between the liberal and practical arts goes back to classical antiquity. The liberal arts were the skills of free men, who did not have to earn their bread by performing servile work. The practical arts were the skills required to perform work for economic gain or to serve free men. And the virtuous life was understood as the life of an excellent free man, not as the life of a successful craftsman, merchant, servant or slave.

The problem of the relationship between the liberal and practical arts is not a new one. Aristotle notes that there was disagreement in his day about whether education should be more morally edifying or more practically useful.<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas assumes the distinction when he writes that there is no species of the virtue of prudence corresponding to the work of tradesmen and craftsmen.<sup>3</sup>

This essay will briefly consider how Bl. John Henry Newman, Josef Pieper and Jacques Maritain understood the relationship between liberal and practical education. It will then offer a proposal for integrating the two.

## JOHN HENRY NEWMAN AND THE OBJECTS OF A UNIVERSITY

Although the liberal and practical arts were originally distinguished according to the classes of persons who learned them in the ancient world, they have also been distinguished according to their respective ends. Discourse V of John Henry Newman's *Idea of a University* is entitled "Knowledge its Own End." Newman opens this discourse by affirming that "all Knowledge is a whole and the separate Sciences parts of one,"<sup>4</sup> but then argues for a sharp distinction between liberal and practical education. On one hand, all branches of learning have the attainment of truth as their common end:

All branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator. Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance each other. This consideration, if well-founded, must be taken into account, not only as regards the attainment of truth, which is their common end, but as regards the influence which they exercise upon those whose education consists in the study of them.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, liberal knowledge has no end other than itself:

I am asked what is the end of University Education, and of the Liberal or Philosophical Knowledge which I conceive it to impart: I answer, that what I have already said has been sufficient to show that it has a very tangible, real, and sufficient end, though the end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself. Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward.<sup>6</sup>

Newman also makes the distinction between the liberal and non-liberal with reference to the "gentleman," similarly to the classical distinction between the arts of the free man and those of the tradesman, servant or slave:

It is common to speak of "*liberal* knowledge," of the "*liberal* arts and studies," and of a "*liberal* education," as the especial characteristic or property of a University and of a gentleman; what is really meant by the word? Now, first, in its grammatical sense it is opposed to *servile*; and by "servile work" is understood, as our catechisms inform us,

bodily labour, mechanical employment, and the like, in which the mind has little or no part.<sup>7</sup>

Newman quickly acknowledges, however, that the professions and business require intellectual activity and that some liberal activities do not:

We contrast a liberal education with a commercial education or a professional; yet no one can deny that commerce and the professions afford scope for the highest and most diversified powers of mind.... Manly games, or games of skill, or military prowess, though bodily, are, it seems, accounted liberal; on the other hand, what is merely professional, though highly intellectual, nay, though liberal in comparison of trade and manual labour, is not simply called liberal, and mercantile occupations are not liberal at all.<sup>8</sup>

Newman then returns to his primary way of distinguishing liberal and non-liberal knowledge, according to whether a branch of knowledge does or does not have an end other than itself:

That alone is liberal knowledge, which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be *informed* (as it is called) by any end, or absorbed into any art, in order duly to present itself to our contemplation. The most ordinary pursuits have this specific character, if they are self-sufficient and complete; the highest lose it, when they minister to something beyond them.<sup>9</sup>

From this it follows that if philosophy and theology seek to improve human souls, they thereby cease to be “liberal.” Newman responds to the objection that non-liberal and liberal knowledge should be distinguished in terms of terrestrial and celestial ends, “that all knowledge is cultivated either for secular objects or for eternal.”<sup>10</sup> He notes the truth that liberal knowledge is not the same thing as virtuous conduct: “Did Philosophy support Cicero under the disfavour of the fickle populace, or nerve Seneca to oppose an imperial tyrant?”<sup>11</sup> Then, in continuing his argument that the purpose of liberal education is not “to make men better,”<sup>12</sup> Newman returns to the concept of the gentleman:

Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another; good sense is not conscience, refinement is not humility, nor is largeness and justness of view faith. Philosophy, however enlightened, however profound, gives no command over the passions, no influential motives, no vivifying principles. Liberal Education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life;—these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University.<sup>13</sup>

It is true that knowledge and virtue are not identical. Thus, the Catholic intellectual tradition recognizes the existence of continence and incontinence as states lying between virtue and vice. But, while there can be knowledge without moral virtue, there can be no moral virtue without knowledge. No one can acquire the moral virtues without acquiring the intellectual virtue of prudence, because they are connected. Knowledge of how one should act is a necessary condition, though not a sufficient condition, for possession of a virtuous character. In defending his thesis that liberal education has no end other than itself, Newman turns the distinction between intellectual and moral virtues into an unfortunate disconnection between cultivation of the intellect and cultivation of virtue.

In making the case that one can acquire the qualities of a gentleman without becoming virtuous or holy, Newman affirms that liberal knowledge does, indeed, have an end other than itself: attaining the qualities of a gentleman (which differ from those of a moral hero or a saint). He then states that liberal education does have an end other than liberal knowledge: "Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence."<sup>14</sup> But this is different from maintaining that the end of liberal knowledge is liberal knowledge. Newman's position is not really that knowledge is its own end, but rather that the end of liberal education is the cultivation of the virtues of the intellect. In another passage, he lists some of the particular virtues that result from liberal education: "A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom."<sup>15</sup>

When it comes to praising Aristotle, Newman lets out all the stops: "While the world lasts, will Aristotle's doctrine on these matters last, for he is the oracle of nature and of truth."<sup>16</sup> And Newman cites Aristotle to support his own argument:

All that I have been now saying is summed up in a few characteristic words of the great Philosopher. "Of possessions," he says, "those rather are useful, which bear fruit; those *liberal*, which tend to enjoyment. By fruitful, I mean, which yield revenue; by enjoyable, where *nothing accrues of consequence beyond the using*."<sup>17</sup>

Yet Aristotle writes in his treatise on moral philosophy that "the present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge like the others (for we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry would have been of no use)."<sup>18</sup> In order to reconcile his argument with Aristotle's, Newman would have to exclude moral philosophy from liberal education. Furthermore, even in

the passage of Aristotle that Newman cites, “liberal possessions” tend to something, just not something useful.

Newman also cites Cicero to support his argument that liberal knowledge has no end other than itself:

Hence it is that Cicero, in enumerating the various heads of mental excellence, lays down the pursuit of Knowledge for its own sake, as the first of them. “This pertains most of all to human nature,” he says, “for we are all of us drawn to the pursuit of Knowledge; in which to excel we consider excellent, whereas to mistake, to err, to be ignorant, to be deceived, is both an evil and a disgrace.”<sup>19</sup>

But Cicero’s primary concern here is moral excellence, not mental excellence. What Newman calls “the various heads of mental excellence” are in fact the four cardinal virtues:

All that is morally right rises from some one of four sources: it is concerned either (1) with the full perception and intelligent development of the true; or (2) with the conservation of organized society, with rendering to every man his due, and with the faithful discharge of obligations assumed; or (3) with the greatness and strength of a noble and invincible spirit; or (4) with the orderliness and moderation of everything that is said and done, wherein consist temperance and self-control.<sup>20</sup>

Cicero includes within the first of these four sources of all that is morally right both wisdom and prudence; that is, he adopts Plato’s classification of the four most important virtues, but also Aristotle’s distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom. And Cicero does not understand prudence as “the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.” Within his discussion of the first of “the four divisions which we have made of the essential idea of moral goodness,” Cicero writes:

To be drawn by study away from active life is contrary to moral duty. For the whole glory of virtue is in activity; activity, however, may often be interrupted, and many opportunities for returning to study are opened. Besides, the working of the mind, which is never at rest, can keep us busy in the pursuit of knowledge even without conscious effort on our part. Moreover, all our thought and mental activity will be devoted either to planning for things that are morally right and that conduce to a good and happy life, or to the pursuits of science and learning.<sup>21</sup>

This is not the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, but rather the pursuit of theoretical and practical knowledge for the sake of living a better life.

Newman’s thesis that there is a distinction between liberal and practical knowledge is correct. He is mistaken, however, in understanding the

distinction in terms of knowledge that has an end beyond itself and knowledge that is its own end. Some branches of liberal knowledge have as an end beyond themselves helping persons and communities to become more excellent. Newman's recognition that all branches of knowledge are connected is more significant than his efforts to distinguish liberal and practical knowledge.

### JOSEF PIEPER AND THE USEFULNESS OF THE LIBERAL ARTS

Josef Pieper defends the thesis that the liberal arts "include all forms of human activity which are an end in themselves; the servile arts are those which have an end beyond themselves, and more precisely an end which consists in a utilitarian result attainable in practice, a practicable result."<sup>22</sup> The precisification is significant. It suggests that the liberal arts could have an end beyond themselves that is something other than a practicable result.

Pieper cites approvingly a passage in Newman's "Knowledge its Own End" that aligns with his thesis:

I know well [that knowledge] may resolve itself into an art, and terminate in a mechanical process, and in tangible fruit; but it also may fall back upon that Reason which informs it, and resolve itself into Philosophy. In one case it is called Useful Knowledge, in the other Liberal.<sup>23</sup>

This articulation of the distinction leaves open a third possibility: resolving into something that is neither an art with tangible fruit nor philosophy. Perhaps there could exist knowledge terminating in non-tangible fruit.

Pieper also provides a sentence from Thomas Aquinas's *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* to support his thesis: "Only those arts are called liberal or free which are concerned with knowledge; those which are concerned with utilitarian ends that are attained through activity, however, are called servile."<sup>24</sup> This sentence is part of Thomas's commentary on the following sentence of Aristotle: "But just as we say that a man is free who exists for himself and not for another, in a similar fashion [metaphysics] is the only free science, because it alone exists for itself."<sup>25</sup> But Thomas's full comment on this sentence of Aristotle includes a statement that it is susceptible to two interpretations. The sentence that Pieper cites occurs within one of these alternative interpretations provided by Thomas:

Here [Aristotle] proves the second attribute, namely, that wisdom is free; and he uses the following argument: that man is properly said to be free who does not exist for someone else but for himself. For slaves exist for their masters, work for them, and acquire for them whatever they acquire. But free men exist for themselves inasmuch as

they acquire things for themselves and work for themselves. But only this science exists for itself; and therefore among all the sciences only this science is free.

Now we must note that this can be understood in two ways. In one way, the expression “only this” may indicate *every speculative science* as a class. And then it is true that only this class of science is sought for itself. Hence, only those arts which are directed to knowing are called free [or liberal] arts, whereas those which are directed to some useful end attained by action are called mechanical or servile arts.

Understood in another way, the expression may specifically indicate this philosophy or wisdom which deals with the *highest causes*; for the final cause is also one of the highest causes, as was stated above. Therefore this science must consider the highest and universal end of all things. And in this way all the other sciences are subordinated to it as an end. Hence only this science exists in the highest degree for itself.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, the sentence of St. Thomas that Pieper cites is not understood by Thomas himself as an unambiguous criterion for distinguishing the liberal from the servile arts. Thomas understands his sentence as one possible interpretation of a sentence of Aristotle, which may distinguish the liberal from the servile arts, but may distinguish metaphysics from other branches of philosophy.

Pieper goes on to point out that something can be useful, without having a utilitarian end:

There is no need to waste words showing that not everything is useless which cannot be brought under the definition of the useful. And it is by no means unimportant for a nation and for the realization of the “common good”, that a place should be made for activity which is not “useful work” in the sense of being utilitarian.... “It is necessary for the perfection of human society”, Aquinas writes, “that there should be men who devote their lives to contemplation”—*nota bene*, necessary not only for the good of the individual who so devotes himself, but for the good of human society.<sup>27</sup>

So, Pieper’s position is that the liberal arts, including philosophy, have no end beyond themselves, but also that philosophy is useful when it comes to perfecting human society and promoting the good of both philosophers themselves and the communities to which they belong. So, the real difference between the practical and liberal arts is not that some are ends in themselves and others have ends beyond themselves, but rather that they are useful in different ways. The practical arts help us achieve tangible results and contribute to what Pieper calls the “common need,”<sup>28</sup>

in contradistinction to the common good. The liberal arts are not useful in that sense, but are useful in promoting the common good.

### JACQUES MARITAIN AND LIBERAL EDUCATION FOR ALL

I am discussing Jacques Maritain after Josef Pieper, even though Maritain (1882–1973) was born two decades before Pieper (1904–1997) and Maritain’s *Education at the Crossroads* (1943) was published before Pieper’s *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (1948) and *The Philosophical Act* (1949). Pieper’s understanding of liberal education is closer to Newman’s than is Maritain’s. And the two works of Pieper contain no citation of Maritain.

One striking contrast between Pieper and Maritain can be seen in their respective comments on “intellectual work.” For Pieper, “intellectual work” is a problematic concept, because philosophy, “the symbol for all the *artes liberales*,”<sup>29</sup> is essentially different from work. Maritain, in contrast, is concerned to minimize the distinction between manual and intellectual work:

In one case (manual work) bodily activity plays the part of a (secondary) “principal agent” activated by the mind, and in the other case (intellectual work) the part of a merely “instrumental agent” moved by the mind. So both are, like man, made of flesh and spirit; manual work and intellectual work are equally human in the truest sense and directed toward helping man to achieve freedom.<sup>30</sup>

Maritain cites Newman’s statement that a university “is a place of *teaching universal knowledge*”<sup>31</sup> to support his own call for “an integral education for an integral humanism.”<sup>32</sup> He does not offer an explicit criterion for distinguishing the liberal arts from other arts. He is more concerned with expanding the scope of the liberal arts and with extending liberal education to all students, including students of business.

Maritain understands the liberal arts to be “free” in two senses. The first is the traditional understanding, in terms of social classes. The second sense, which is the more important one for Maritain, is that they are the arts that liberate us. They are

those intellectual disciplines which not only, as the ancients saw it, fit the condition of free man in opposition to servile activities, but which, more profoundly, equip man to become actually free in his mind and judgment, as well as in his internal mastery of the pressures of his environment, of fate or misfortune, and of himself and his own deficiencies.<sup>33</sup>

Although Maritain cites Newman on the universality of university education, his vision of liberal education for all stands in contrast to Newman's aristocratic belief that liberal education makes the gentleman. Maritain is concerned with educating the citizens (both male and female) of a democracy in which nearly everyone must perform some kind of manual or intellectual work: "The utilitarian aspect of education—which enables the youth to get a job and make a living—must surely not be disregarded, for the children of man are not made for aristocratic leisure."<sup>34</sup>

Maritain understands "the final end of education" to be "the fulfillment of man as a human person."<sup>35</sup> He also defines the aim of liberal education in terms of human improvement: "Education directed toward wisdom, centered on the humanities, aiming to develop in people the capacity to think correctly and to enjoy truth and beauty, is education for freedom, or liberal education."<sup>36</sup>

Maritain's emphasis is on making all education liberal, not on clarifying a distinction between liberal education and other education. In one passage, he makes a quadripartite classification of academic disciplines. The first order includes administrative sciences, commerce and finance, among others. Economics belongs to the second order of disciplines, together with medicine, law, politics, education, etc. To the third order belong "the liberal arts proper," including mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, biology, anthropology, psychology, archaeology, history, languages, philology, music, fine arts, etc. The fourth order includes philosophy, theology and the history of religions.<sup>37</sup> Taken at face value, this classification excludes philosophy and theology from "the liberal arts proper." But Maritain's primary concern is with the unity of knowledge, not with a precise taxonomy of the liberal and non-liberal arts.

In another passage, Maritain notes the traditional liberal-servile distinction, but then adds that "in our age genuine liberal education should cover both of the two fields."<sup>38</sup> In yet another passage, he contrasts liberal and "popular" education, bemoaning "an invidious opposition between a so-called popular education, preparing for manual vocations, and liberal education." He then tells the reader: "In a somewhat distant future *liberal* education, on the contrary, will permeate the whole of education, whether young people are prepared for manual or for intellectual vocations. In other words popular education must become liberal, and liberal education must become popular."<sup>39</sup>

Newman and Pieper attempt, unsuccessfully, to make a sharp distinction between the liberal and practical arts. Maritain seeks to minimize the distinction, in order to achieve what he sometimes calls making liberal education available to all and sometimes calls making all education lib-

eral. Maritain believes that all students should participate in liberating education.

### **REFORMULATING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE LIBERAL AND PRACTICAL ARTS**

Originally, the practical arts were the skills of those who labored for money or for other persons and the liberal arts were the skills of those who did not. But that distinction, based in the social classes of ancient Greece and Rome, does not provide us with a satisfactory criterion for distinguishing branches of learning, according to which the practical arts are those that serve ends other than themselves and the liberal arts are those that do not. The liberal arts serve ends other than themselves, though ends different from those that the practical arts serve.

I propose distinguishing the liberal and practical arts in terms of their respective purposes. All human persons desire happiness. We can attain true happiness only by living virtuous lives, which necessarily involves promoting the good of other persons and the common good. The purpose of liberal education is to liberate us from wrong ways of pursuing happiness by understanding reality, including non-material reality and the reality of who we are, so that we can know how to pursue happiness rightly. That does not mean that the student should always have in mind, while studying medieval Italian poetry or the periodic table of the chemical elements: “I am learning this in order to attain my happiness.” But if we step back and ask ourselves—Why is studying the liberal arts a good thing to do? What is the telos of liberal education?—the answer should be that it helps us understand how to attain what every person desires: true happiness.

Since few persons have inherited so much wealth that they do not need to work, most of us must pursue happiness while working. But we must earn our bread virtuously, in a manner that benefits not only ourselves, but also our neighbors and the communities to which we belong. The purpose of the practical arts is to teach us how to do this, in one profession or another.

The two activities—living a good life and earning a living—must not be separated. All professional education, including business education, should teach that money and material wealth must be understood as means to ends more important than money and material wealth. Just as the purpose of medicine is to promote the health of the community and the purpose of law is to promote the justice of the community, the purpose of business is to provide the goods and services that the community’s members need in order to live virtuous lives. To earn a living viciously is to fail to attain what everyone desires. Knowledge is unified because reality

is unified. And the two kinds of education, liberal and practical, are not so different from one another. Both have ends beyond themselves, though the ends are of different kinds.

What do we mean when we talk about pursuing knowledge “for its own sake” or say that knowledge is “its own end”? We mean pursuing knowledge not as a means to some end such as making money, entering a profession, becoming famous, or attaining tenure. James V. Schall, S.J. tells us that when a “liberal” discipline is undertaken “for its own sake,” “the purpose of the knowledge gained is not to ‘do’ anything with it.”<sup>40</sup> But all human actions aim at some good, real or apparent. When knowledge is pursued “for its own sake”, it is pursued for the sake of some person or persons. Maritain reminds us that “science and knowledge don’t exist in books, they do exist in minds.”<sup>41</sup> Pursuing knowledge “for its own sake” is accompanied by the pleasure of increasing one’s knowledge, of actualizing one’s potential, of becoming more virtuous. It contributes to the pursuer’s personal excellence.

A passage in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, immediately preceding the sentence discussed above in the section on Pieper, helps to clarify what it means to pursue liberal knowledge “for its own sake”:

That [metaphysics] is not a practical science is evident from those who first philosophized. For it is because of wonder that men both now and formerly began to philosophize, wondering at first about less important matters, and then progressing little by little, they raised questions about more important ones, such as the phases of the moon and the courses of the sun and the stars and the generation of the universe. But one who raises questions and wonders seems to be ignorant. Hence the philosopher is also to some extent a lover of myth, for myths are composed of wonders. If they philosophized, then, in order to escape from ignorance, they evidently pursued their studies for the sake of knowledge and not for any utility.

And what has happened bears witness to this; for when nearly all the things necessary for life, leisure and learning were acquired, this kind of prudence began to be sought. It is evident, then, that we do not seek this knowledge for the sake of any other necessity.<sup>42</sup>

The early philosophers did not pursue their studies in order to secure the material necessities of their lives. They pursued their studies in order to escape from ignorance. In doing so, they actualized their potential to become more virtuous. They benefited from the study of philosophy, not by becoming wealthier, but by becoming more excellent persons.

Pieper argues that “philosophical inquiry” and “the world of work” are “incommensurable.”<sup>43</sup> His point is that philosophy ceases to be philosophy

when it is employed as a means to some political or economic end. But that does not mean that liberal and practical education are incommensurable. If the subject matters of the liberal arts and professional disciplines were incommensurable, Catholic professionals would have to live divided, compartmentalized lives, as in the tragic tale of the following rhymed verse: “Mr. Business went to Mass,/He never missed a Sunday;/But Mr. Business went to hell/For what he did on Monday.”<sup>44</sup> But liberal and professional education are, in fact, commensurable. The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace makes the point that it is not necessary to live a compartmentalized life: “When [business leaders] integrate the gifts of the spiritual life, the virtues and ethical social principles into their life and work, they may overcome the divided life.”<sup>45</sup>

Liberal education is about acquiring the intellectual, moral and theological virtues, about becoming excellent by living excellently. Professional education, including business education, is about promoting the common good by providing the goods and services that we need in order to live virtuous lives.<sup>46</sup> These two branches of education should form an integral whole. Because the study of how to live a good life and the study of how to earn a living are commensurable, it is possible to become virtuous through one’s work. St. John Paul II makes this point with his distinction between the objective and subjective meanings of work, the significance of work for the external world and its significance for the worker.<sup>47</sup>

## INTEGRATION COURSES

Integrating the liberal and practical arts requires more than merely liberal arts students taking practical courses and students in professional programs taking liberal arts courses. It also requires more than students majoring in both a liberal discipline and a practical discipline. A student could double-major in theology and accounting, for example, without any inkling of how the two are related. What is needed are courses that integrate a liberal arts discipline and a professional discipline within a single course.

Many such courses are possible. Most pairings of a liberal arts discipline and a practical arts discipline could yield such an integration course. Maritain offers the example of integrating history and the natural sciences: “The history of sciences is the genuine instrument through which the physical sciences can be integrated in the humanities and their humanistic value brought out in full light.”<sup>48</sup> Although this example does not integrate the liberal and practical arts, since history and the natural sciences are all liberal arts disciplines, a course devoted to the history of engineering or medicine would integrate one of the liberal arts with one of the professions.

Anne Colby and co-authors make the point in terms of business and the liberal arts: “Business and liberal learning must be woven together to prepare students for their professional roles and work and also to prepare them for lives of social contribution and personal fulfillment. In this sense, we propose an integrative vision.”<sup>49</sup> This interweaving needs to take place within courses, not between courses. Little is accomplished by requiring business students to take a course in Catholic business ethics that simply contradicts what they have been taught in their business courses.

Space does not permit presenting a suggested curriculum for a Catholic university or college that integrates the liberal and practical arts in the manner I am advocating. Furthermore, creating such a curriculum is a task for a team of Catholic scholars from different academic disciplines, not for any individual. Nevertheless, a short list of possible integration courses may serve to suggest what such a curriculum could look like: A political science and education course could explore relationships between the goals of governance and those of education, as well as the relative responsibilities of governments and families for the education of children. A psychology and law course might help students understand the relationship between the concepts of mental illness and moral depravity in explaining criminal behavior. A history and engineering course would have the potential to expand students’ appreciation of the relationship between engineering and social progress. A literature and business course could offer students a better vision of the temptations and opportunities of a life in business, and the consequences of wrong and right decisions. A theology and medicine course might contribute to students’ understanding of the purpose of the medical profession and the role of the theological virtues in the life of a Catholic physician.

There should be no contradiction between what students are taught concerning success in a career and what they are taught concerning the purpose of a human life. To offer students a contradictory education is to deny the unity of truth. The traditional understanding of the unity of truth has been replaced in the modern university by a multiplicity of academic departments and disciplines, each with a high degree of autonomy. While we should respect the true differences between various sciences and various methods of attaining knowledge, we must not lose sight of the fact that truth in one discipline cannot contradict truth in another.

J. Andrew Morris and Steven J. Maranville argue that “business education must be infused with the principles of liberal education and liberal education must be open to engage business education.”<sup>50</sup> They maintain that one way in which “academia might successfully integrate liberal arts with business instruction” is “business education as liberal learning.”

which “explores several ways in which narrowly defined functional courses can be cross-departmentalized to encourage greater cooperation and interaction between business educators and other members of the university community.”<sup>51</sup> These authors give several examples of possible courses integrating business and one of the humanities disciplines.

Wolfgang Grassl agrees with Morris and Maranville that “the debate about the role of business education in a Catholic university rightly focuses on its integration into the curriculum,” but argues that “integration of business into a ‘liberal arts’ education is unwarranted,” because “there are grave difficulties for any consistent definition of the ‘liberal arts’ by virtue of what is studied or taught.”<sup>52</sup> Grassl notes that most contemporary educators do not understand the “liberal arts” as the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, logic) and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music), and that there is disagreement today concerning precisely which academic disciplines belong to the liberal arts. While all of that is true, the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ identification of “the humanities, sciences, and social sciences”<sup>53</sup> as the liberal arts disciplines can be taken as a rough approximation of how most contemporary American educators understand the scope of the liberal arts. Although Grassl believes the term “liberal arts” has no home in contemporary American Catholic education, he accepts “liberal education”: The ‘liberal arts’ as a historical term must be distinguished from liberal education as a model of education that is timeless.<sup>54</sup> He adds, “If directed towards the acquisition of knowledge, business administration can be a subject of liberal learning, particularly if it is well integrated into the edifice of all human knowledge.”<sup>55</sup> And Grassl goes on to argue that, within the Catholic intellectual tradition, there is no need to integrate business with other disciplines, because they were never separated:

Within the conception of the academic enterprise as developed by the [Catholic intellectual tradition], the question of integrating the study of business into the “liberal arts” does not even arise. On the contrary, business administration has its own place, with multiple relations to other disciplines in an intellectual endeavor that serves a single purpose.<sup>56</sup>

The differences between Grassl’s argument and mine are not deep. He advises abandoning the term “liberal arts,” because its historical meanings have no relevance to today’s curriculum debates. I have tried to salvage it because of its wide use today within “liberal arts colleges” and universities that are trying to decide what to do when their most popular major is business. Grassl believes we do not need to integrate the liberal arts and business, because within the Catholic intellectual tradition they are

not separated. I am calling for integration of the liberal and practical arts, including business, because business and professional education in most Catholic colleges and universities has little or nothing to do with the Catholic intellectual tradition. But we agree that there should be no separation of liberal and practical education.

Integrating the liberal and practical arts presents administrative challenges. It can be accomplished more easily in a small college than in a large university, where liberal and practical disciplines belong to separate colleges. It may be difficult to motivate faculty members to develop integration courses, when the profession rewards narrow specialization. Meeting these challenges requires strong leadership on the part of Catholic college and university administrators. It also requires recruiting faculty who understand the place of their disciplines within the Catholic intellectual tradition. In some cases, it may involve team-teaching by faculty members in administratively separate departments.

### CONCLUSION

John Henry Newman and Josef Pieper are correct in noting a distinction between the liberal and practical arts. But this distinction should not be understood as a separation. As Newman tells us, “All knowledge forms one whole, because its subject-matter is one.”<sup>57</sup> Liberal and practical education are both useful, though in different ways. As Thomas Aquinas tells us, “Among all human pursuits, the pursuit of wisdom is more perfect, more noble, more useful, and more full of joy.”<sup>58</sup> And while Jacques Maritain is less precise than Newman and Pieper in distinguishing the liberal and practical arts, he makes a significant contribution by stressing that education should be integral. Liberal education and professional education should be understood as parts of a single whole. When they are, Catholic colleges and universities can explain to their students how to integrate a virtuous life with a life of success in one of the professions.

### Notes

1. I am translating the traditional term “*artes serviles*” as “practical arts,” because that sounds less offensive than “servile arts.” But, if we understand business as “service,” then “servile arts” may not sound so bad.

2. Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), VIII, ii.

3. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London, 1911; rev. ed. 1920), IIa IIæ, q. 50, a. 4.

4. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University: Defined and Illustrated* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1852), 99.
5. *Ibid.*, 99–100.
6. *Ibid.*, 102–03.
7. *Ibid.*, 106.
8. *Ibid.*, 107–08.
9. *Ibid.*, 108.
10. *Ibid.*, 115.
11. *Ibid.*, 116.
12. *Ibid.*, 120.
13. *Ibid.*, 120–21.
14. *Ibid.*, 121.
15. *Ibid.*, 101.
16. *Ibid.*, 109.
17. *Ibid.*, 109. Newman cites Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, 5.
18. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), II, 2.
19. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 104. Newman cites Cicero, *De Officiis*, I, vi.
20. Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (London: W. Heinemann, 1938), I, v.
21. *Ibid.*, I, vi.
22. Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture and The Philosophical Act*, trans. Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 37–38.
23. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 112; as cited by Pieper, *Leisure*, 37.
24. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, I, 3; as cited by Pieper, *Leisure*, 37.
25. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 3; in Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, trans. John P. Rowan, Vol. I (Chicago: Regnery, 1961), 22.
26. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, 24–25. This English translation of Aquinas’s sentence differs slightly from that found in the English translation of Pieper’s book. The words “mechanical or” are in the Latin text: “Unde et illae solae artes liberales dicuntur, quae ad sciendum ordinantur: illae vero quae ordinantur ad aliquam utilitatem per actionem habendam, dicuntur mechanicae sive serviles.”
27. Pieper, *Leisure*, 40–41.
28. *Ibid.*, 78.
29. *Ibid.*, 38.
30. Jacques Maritain, *The Education of Man: The Educational Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, ed. Donald and Idella Gallagher (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1962), 149–50.
31. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ix; cited by Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1943), 76.
32. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 88.

33. Maritain, *The Education of Man*, 84–85.
34. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 10.
35. *Ibid.*, 18.
36. Maritain, *The Education of Man*, 69.
37. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 77–78.
38. Maritain, *The Education of Man*, 130–31.
39. *Ibid.*, 150.
40. James V. Schall, S.J., “What Are the Liberal Arts?,” in *A Student’s Guide to the Liberal Arts*, ed. Wilburn T. Stancil (Kansas City, Mo.: Rockhurst University Press, 2003), 4–5.
41. Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 59.
42. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 3.
43. Pieper, *Leisure*, 87.
44. Attributed to “Ed Willock, editor of the long-defunct Catholic monthly *Integrity*,” by William J. Byron, *Faith-Based Reflections on American Life* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2010), 64.
45. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*, 4th ed. (November 2014), 3.
46. It might be objected that I have failed to understand the distinction between the practical and liberal arts. According to this objection, the distinction should be understood in terms of the difference between goods that are purely instrumental and goods that are both instrumental and ultimate. What makes the second category of goods not merely instrumental but also ultimate is that they would be worth pursuing, even if they were not instrumental. Studying financial management is practical, because we would not study it if there were no organizations requiring financial managers. Studying Latin grammar is liberal because, in addition to being useful, it also enriches the soul. I do not believe, however, that this way of making the distinction between the practical and liberal arts is more satisfactory than the way I have distinguished them. We would not study Latin grammar if there were no Latin-language texts to be read. And studying the principles of financial management is no less capable of enriching the soul than studying the principles of Latin grammar.
47. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, September 14, 1981, 5–6.
48. Maritain, *The Education of Man*, 71.
49. Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich, William M. Sullivan, and Jonathan R. Dolle, *Rethinking Undergraduate Business Education: Liberal Learning for the Profession* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 2.
50. J. Andrew Morris and Steven J. Maranville, “‘We’re Not the Bad Guys’: An Argument for Consilience between Business Schools and the Liberal Arts,” *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management* 1(1) (1999): 48.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Wolfgang Grassl, “The Study of Business as a Liberal Art? Toward an Aristotelian Reconstruction,” *The Catholic Social Science Review* 14 (2009): 193, 205.

53. Association of American Colleges and Universities, “What Is a 21st Century Liberal Education?” available at <https://www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education>; accessed December 31, 2016.
54. Grassl, “The Study of Business as a Liberal Art?,” 207.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., 209.
57. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 50.
58. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book One: *God*, trans. Anton C. Pegis, F.R.S.C. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), I, 2.