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Gerard Mannion

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## ARTICLES

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# AGAINST EXPEDIENCY: THE ETHICS OF EDUCATION

GERARD MANNION

*Liverpool Hope University*

*This article suggests that church-linked universities and colleges can and should show that there is an alternative to the expediency and pseudo-utilitarian thinking which currently dominates higher education. Such institutions can and should serve as beacons of a virtuous approach to education which can show others a more positive way forward.*

*Theology and ethics—both disciplines mutually informing one another—hold the key to fostering and promoting a true culture of ministry both in the day-to-day existence of universities and colleges and in nurturing young minds to take that culture of ministry out into the wider community.*

This article explores issues in the philosophy and, effectively, theology of education, taking as its primary area of focus the present situation in the UK university sector. However, the issues here discussed have much relevance for higher education institutions in numerous other countries worldwide. Primarily, the article suggests that educational institutions which are linked to the Church—as well as those linked to other faith communities—can and should show that there is an alternative to the thinking which currently dominates higher education.

To help readers understand the context here, it should be borne in mind that almost all institutions of higher education in the UK, including most with a religious affiliation, are part of the government-funded national university system. However, through their foundations, their alternative sources of funding and in the shape and form of their governance structures, church-linked institutions have much leeway with regard to how far they imitate and emulate the practices and ethos prevalent in secular institutions within that same system. Note, also, that throughout we will be assuming at least some agreement upon what the term “ethics” means, namely, the ethos, values, and norms of particular communities, as well as being the technical term for how human beings go about shaping, debating, understanding, and employing such values and how they come to understand the relation of the truth with good and evil, right and wrong.

## **MISSION, MANAGEMENT, OR MUDDLE? EDUCATION, ETHICS, AND AN OLD DEBATE**

In the UK, as in many other countries, at no time in the past have we had more regulation and imposed uniformity and standardization in higher education. And yet at no time have standards in higher education been poorer in real terms, as opposed to perceptions encouraged by published reports and their spin-doctored interpretations. This raises some important questions: What is education for? In other words, what are we supposed to be doing here? Have we clearly identifiable aims and objectives with regard to our own day-to-day activities and on what grounds can we defend the right of any educational institute to exist?

The character and tone that linger around much of what passes for educational policy today gives great cause for concern. It is borne of a similar confusion about the nature and function of the educational process, its methods of procedure and, therefore, the nature and function of educational institutions themselves. Do we today have any true mission in education, or are we more concerned with effective management of staff and students in order to achieve the economic goals placed upon us by successive governments equally bereft of true vision? Or do we fall somewhere in between, trying to balance incompatible missionary aims with economic goals?

Such questions can be examined through exploring the links between education and ethics—above all through asking whether there is a moral dimension to education and, if so, in what it consists. So we begin by asking, what are the ethics of education (i.e., what is that moral dimension)? Then we shall turn to related questions about the moral aspects of the philosophy of education, and next ask what of education in morals, themselves (i.e., can and should we teach morality or ethics)? It will be suggested that theological educational initiatives can make a positive difference in leading the way, and theological education must be both valued and actively promoted in order that it may once again become an influential and core component of curricula in church-linked institutions. Finally, we shall consider how, if at all, these diverse considerations hang together.

### **ETHICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

But what has ethics to do with education? According to most definitions, the philosophy of education is deemed to be a subdivision of practical philosophy, in other words, a branch of ethics. It also relates to aspects of social and political philosophy. For example, many theorists believe education to be of vital importance to freedom and democracy. Witness how many revolutions

have ushered in greater educational provision and investment, from France to Ireland to Cuba. And, of course, many questions about education naturally fall into the spheres of epistemology and the philosophy of mind, as well as aesthetics.

But theologically speaking, the fundamental point is that there is a moral dimension to all that we do in education, including—perhaps especially—in higher education, and this is so whether we like it or not, or whether we are actually aware of it or not. We believe that four key terms encapsulate the moral dimension of education: values, virtues, character, and community. Theologically informed education has a key role to play in making this moral dimension a reality.

The most successful institutions are aware of this and prosper because and not in spite of their attention to ethical implications of the curriculum, both at the micro level (e.g., the lecture and seminar rooms) and the macro level (i.e., institutional and higher education in general). Because of this, educators ought to be less obsessed with the financial aspects of education which have, in recent years, come to the fore at the expense of the moral aspects of education.

Thus education is an end in itself and this is tied up with the ethical principles of character development, human dignity, and the notion of virtue. Why is this so? Think of all of the schools, colleges, and universities which offer mission statements which boast that they are institutions which are “dedicated to excellence in education” or even, just to “excellence.” Such a theme has a long history, long before the age of mission statements.

Aristotle believed that we should always focus upon excellence, upon fulfilling one’s task or purpose as well as possible. The Greek word for excellence is *arête* and in Latin that comes to us as *virtus*, from which we gain virtue. Hence, virtue means an excellence, a fulfillment of some particular thing or person.

Aristotle believed that the final goal of the human being was happiness, not in any utilitarian sense, but rather happiness viewed as a life of activity in accordance with reason. By this he meant that we would make what we did with our lives fit in with intellectual and deliberative virtues—simply put, scientific and practical excellence in harmony together. And he also articulated a theory about moral virtues, which he said were the rational controlling of our desires. But moral virtues were never forced upon one, they had to be followed by voluntary choice.

However, human beings, in Aristotle’s opinion, initially learned virtues through education, that is, through instruction and command. The more they practiced these virtues, the more they would come to see them as the right things to do and so would become habitual.

Aristotle, like Plato before him, believed education was crucial to self-development and self-comportment, as well as to the good and well-being of the society and all in it. So, too, was education perceived to be vital for the promotion of justice. And, of course, Aristotle's thinking was Christianized by thinkers such as Aquinas and became highly influential in Christian education throughout the centuries, not least of all in relation to the concept of formation.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre (1981) goes back to Aristotle's virtue theory and looks at different types of moral character, different types of the self, and different types of society.

MacIntyre stresses the teleological aspects of *arête* as overall excellence and goodness, rather than particular excellences and particular goods. MacIntyre and the after virtue debate is all about putting the self in a setting and having some notion of an overall end and purpose in life, rather than about rules and principles, or consequences and individual happiness. We suggest this all relates to the moral dimension to education.

Indeed, here we take the term values to embrace those other aspects of this moral dimension, in other words it envelops those virtues, aspects of character, and ideals of community that education can bring into being. Without going into the intricacies of value theory, this paper assumes that our processes of evaluation, in their moral context, should feed into our evaluative processes in education. In turn, such educational axiology can help shape and inform our moral axiology.

Thus the values we come to discern and seek to promote will, in turn, inform those virtues and characteristics we seek to enable students to develop. So, too, will those values fastened upon dictate whether or not, and the extent to which, we are successful in generating genuine and lasting community in our institutions and beyond. But, before we can unpack this moral dimension in more detail, we must first consider certain disagreements about the purpose of education.

## AGAINST INSTRUMENTALISM

In what he has to say about the nature and purpose of education, Peters (1965) challenges the need and accuracy of having grandiose goals and aims in education, stating that,

We have got the wrong picture of the way in which values must enter into education and this is what occasions the disillusioned muttering about the absence of agreed aims. But to bring out how we are misled we must look at the contexts where the means-end model is appropriate. (p. 45)

Peters suggests that many of the problems in late modern education stem from perceiving its purpose in a wrong-headed fashion and, above all, in misunderstanding the moral dimension of education: “Values are involved in education not so much as goals or end products, but as principles implicit in different manners of proceeding or producing” (1965, p. 47). In other words, Peters believes there is an enormous difference between aims and principles of procedure. In education, we talk about aims when what we really mean or at least what we really should be talking about are principles of procedure, which is to say that the problem is less one of coming up with fixed goals and objectives, as coming up with agreed ways of going about simply delivering education itself, and so what follows from this. The disputes about aims are really concerned with principles of procedure.

Peters (1965) offers as an example the classic dispute over whether education comes from the term *educere*, to lead out—and so, the purpose of education is the development or realization of individual potentialities. Or whether it comes from *educare*, “to train or mould according to some specification” (p. 48). In an earlier study, *Education as Initiation*, Peters (1964) explores this debate in greater detail.

Peters believes that there is no reason why we must have fixed and set aims for education at all. To try and perceive the purpose of education in, as we would phrase it, pseudo-utilitarian and crudely functionalist terms overlooks the real nature and hence value of education. As Peters (1965) goes on to state,

My guess is that most of the important things in education are passed on...by example and explanation. An attitude, a skill, is caught: sensitivity, a critical mind, respect for people and facts develop where an articulate and intelligent exponent is on the job. Yet the model of means to end is not remotely applicable to the transaction that is taking place. Values, of course, are involved in the transaction: if they were not it would not be called “education.” Yet they are not end-products or terminating points of the process. They reside both in the skills and cultural traditions that are passed on and in the procedure for passing them on. (p. 49)

And lest we feel that we are straying from our principal focus upon morality, we should remind ourselves that values are the very stuff of morals. Thus education cannot be delivered without some values being held and employed. Equally, education cannot be delivered without there being an ethical significance to what it actually is that is being delivered and how this is achieved.

Peters (1965) suggests that when people “wax lyrical” about their aims, the “crucial question” should always be “what procedures are to be adopted

in order to implement them. We then get down to moral brass tacks” (p. 47). Peters thinks that the presence of any obscure ends in educational discourse encourages

an instrumental way of looking at the problem of justification....The truth is much more that there is a quality of life embedded in the activities which constitute education, and that “self-realization” can be explicated only by reference to such activities. Thus if by “life” is meant what goes on outside schools and universities, there is an important sense in which “life” must be for the sake of education, not education for life. (p. 51)

Thus an instrumental concept of education is not a fully accurate notion of what education is at all. However, while we wish to avoid any grandiose perceptions of what education can and should achieve, we nonetheless do believe that we can still speak meaningfully of education’s value in bringing the individual and community to greater development and well-being and so speak of the values involved in so doing, while still taking heed of Peters’ warnings.

In fact, Peters’ injunction that self-realization be explicated in reference to the activities which constitute education itself, actually assists us in such a task. Indeed, we suggest that education itself actually serves as a shorthand term for those very activities which bring about the development, enhancement, and well-being of self and community alike.

The good life is about living in constant preparedness for education or, in more existentialist terms, in an openness to ever new engagements with being—for Christians, of course, the threefold God—and a readiness to push back the limits of our individual horizons. Thus, one could say that it is not so much that education is there to serve life but that one lives for education. A life without education, of any sort, would not really be any form of life we would readily recognize. What, then, if anything, can be said of the end of education?

## **EDUCATION—THE END?**

All of the foregoing might enable us to appreciate that education is an end in itself which requires no other strictly necessary justificatory arguments. Of course, education can, indeed, be the passport to many good and great things for the individual and communities alike, but this is because of, and not in spite of the fact that education is an end in itself.

The reason why education can be seen to be an end in itself is because it is so fundamentally bound up with the enhancement, development, and self-improvement of human beings and communities. As such education is said

to encapsulate that which develops and determines how each of us comes to understand and relate to the whole of being. It is thus that the concept of education, itself, can well serve as a shorthand term for all such human advancement. Education is fundamental to the development of the human person and community and is a key to the maintenance and expression of the inherent value of the human person, and hence of human dignity. We do not require a middle term to connect the two.

And such dignity is in no one's gift—the inherent dignity of each and every human person being the fundamental principle of Roman Catholic social ethics. In other words, there is something inherently of a moral nature in education. But this is overlooked and suppressed when we view education in terms of a means-end process. For such noble ideals mentioned here are not the ends which the means of education bring about but rather the end (*telos*—the goal/direction) of education itself entails these very things; education simply is self and communitarian enhancement and well-being. If all this sounds a little abstract, we will try and unpack exactly what this means in what follows.

We must beware of the postmodern temptation of absolute relativism (i.e., to think that morality, personal or social, is none of the business of the educator or the educational institution). For education goes on in an interest and/or value-laden context. Ignore morality and other concerns will take over, such as pure self-interest, financial acquisition, and raw expediency, all tending toward at best a moral vacuum, at worst, ethical nihilism. To ignore the moral dimension of education harms not just the educational charge, but also the institution, wider community, and, naturally educators themselves as they too become aloof to moral concerns as the game of moral musical chairs ends in all falling on their backsides.

## **DISCERNING THE MORAL DIMENSION OF EDUCATION**

Maritain (1965) wrote that “the right of the child to be educated requires that the educator shall have moral authority over him, and this authority is nothing else than the duty of the adult to the freedom of the youth” (p. 88). Maritain can aid us in further unpacking what we mean by this moral dimension to education and, in particular, on how educational practitioners and institutions may deliver on such a duty to the freedom of their charges. In other words, on how to ensure the core educational values which are inherent to the moral dimension of education are actually realized. Maritain identifies certain “fundamental dispositions” which are central to such a task:



Assuredly, the primary rule is to foster those fundamental dispositions which enable the principal agent to grow in the life of the mind. It is clear, in this connection, that the task of the teacher is above all one of liberation. To liberate the good energies is the best way of repressing the bad ones....The second fundamental norm is to center attention on the inner depths of personality and its pre-conscious spiritual dynamism, in other words, to lay stress on inwardness and the internalization of the educational influence....Far beneath the apparent surface of explicit concepts and judgments, of words and expressed resolutions or movements of the will, are the sources of knowledge and poetry, of love and truly human desires, hidden in the spiritual darkness of the intimate vitality of the soul. Before being formed and expressed in concepts and judgments, intellectual knowledge is at first a beginning of insight, still unformulated, which proceeds from the impact of the illuminating activity of the intellect on the world of images and emotions and which is but a humble and trembling movement, yet invaluable, toward an intelligible content to be grasped....Here it is not a question of techniques, nor of a training of the subconscious. It is rather a question of liberating the vital pre-conscious sources of the spirit's activity. (pp. 88-89)

Maritain goes on to state that the educator is fundamentally engaged less with putting in than in bringing out, and thus we see two further tasks identified. Namely, that education's aim should be to unify as opposed to spreading out, "it must strive to foster internal unity in man" and, fourth and finally, teaching must liberate rather than burden intelligence, "in other words, that teaching result in the freeing of the mind through the mastery of reason over things learned" (pp. 88-89). Maritain goes on to demand that careful attention is given to the manner in which education is delivered and received:

What is learned should never be passively or mechanically received, as dead information which weighs down and dulls the mind. It must rather be transformed through understanding into the very life of the mind, and thus strengthen the latter, as wood thrown into fire and transformed into flame makes the fire stronger. (pp. 90-91)

And this leads us into a further debate of major importance to our considerations, namely, concerning what sort of education we should offer at all. It is a debate which cuts to the very heart of clashes over contemporary government thinking on higher education, as well as embracing a plethora of issues from lecture and seminar room practice, teaching styles and methods, to differences in study skills and student motives and application.

## **DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE- EDUCATION AND TRAINING-EDUCATION**

By now, it will be apparent that we are making a cumulative case for resisting the quasi-utilitarian mindset which currently dictates educational policy, resource-allocation, governance, and management. As Maritain (1965) continues, in a statement which is most pertinent to our own considerations in the present educational climate, “too often contemporary education has deemed it suitable to substitute training-value for knowledge-value—in other words, mental gymnastics for truth, and being in fine fettle for wisdom” (p. 92). Indeed, today the situation is worse still, as if the development and advancement of human individuals and societies could be measured in no other than crude financial terms, as opposed to taking wider note of cultural, social, moral, as well as aesthetic factors and, indeed, of more deep-rooted economic indicators.

The knowledge which is “of most worth”—I don’t mean which has the most practical value, I mean which makes the mind penetrate into those things which are the richest in truth and intelligibility—such knowledge affords by itself the best mental training, for it is by grasping the object and having itself seized and vitalized by truth that the human mind gains both its strength and its freedom. It is not by the gymnastics of the faculties, it is by truth that it is set free, when truth is really known, that is, vitally assimilated by the insatiable activity which is rooted in the depths of the self. (p. 91)

Not that any of this degrades or undervalues training of any sort. We simply wish to distinguish between what is instrumental training and what is genuinely the education and development of character. Although all such thinking might fly in the face of current policymaking in the UK, it is far from old fashioned or outdated. As Maritain states,

The opposition between knowledge-value and training-value comes from an ignorance of what knowledge is, from the assumption that knowledge is a cramming of materials into a bag, and not the most vital action by means of which things are spiritualized in order to become one with the spirit. (p. 91)

It is vital that we are not ashamed to proclaim and to celebrate the fact that we are not engaged in a production line but much more in the art of nurture. Hence, as opposed to allowing economic and industrial language, concepts, and metaphors to shape our thinking, it would be more appropriate to employ horticultural, organic, and even biological metaphors. For example, rekindling our understanding of the term seminar in its original usage, we are engaged in character development and, much like the sculptor, we often

work, when engaged in knowledge-education, in a process of ablation, removing obstacles and what is peripheral to allow what is noble, beautiful, and sublime to come to the surface. Here the words of Turner (2002) bring home what such a process might entail:

We teachers may aspire to nothing less, and can hope to achieve no more than this “reminding” that our desire has but an infinite horizon, a horizon whose infinity discloses in us an infinite capacity for it. This unknowable horizon, this unseeable light, which surrounds and governs our learning, is no predetermined boundary at which our knowledge must stop, some point of finality which could extinguish the desire to know. It is an enticement, a seduction, a sort of *ecstasis* of mind, which draws the mind out of itself into that infinity of space which is its own natural object, its “home”—in that sense, the place it already knows. In the meantime, therefore, the human mind has no place of rest, but only a place of restlessness, of one single unsatisfiable passion: the desire to know. Such a place is what we continue to call a “university.” (p. 135)

And yet what are educators faced with from the current regime in the UK? A radical further marketization of education itself, with drastic consequences for the very possibility of successful knowledge-education being achievable in the future at all.

The pseudo-utilitarians miss the anthropological point of education. The economic whims of a temporary government administration should never be allowed to inflict monumental changes upon what is, after all, of the most vital importance to the good of every one of us. It seems that Maritain (1965) was also aware of the creeping prevalence of expedient thinking in his own day. The following quotation could almost be directly addressed to the musings of contemporary British government ministers over their beloved and oft-mentioned knowledge economy,

We have forgotten that science and knowledge are not a self-sufficient set of notions, existing for their own sakes, abstracted and separate from man. Science and knowledge don't exist in books, they do exist in minds, they are vital and internal energies and must develop therefore according to the inner spiritual structure of the mind in which they have their being. (p. 94)

Again, we here see links to the fundamental importance of education to character development, the ablation of what stands in the way of becoming and being fully human and hence the moral imperative that lies at that aforementioned heart of education.

## **EDUCATION IN MORALITY**

Let us immediately dispel any fears that attention to the moral dimension of education might lead to a prescriptive syllabus which actually stifles human freedom and development. On the contrary, the moral dimension of education actually leads toward true freedom and enhances personal and communitarian development. And nowhere is this more the case than in relation to education in morality itself. Moral education is carried out not by telling people what to think or instructing them that *x* is right, whereas *y* is wrong, but rather to enable them to think and, eventually, to think ethically (i.e., to be able to assess, in a rational and informed way, moral dilemmas) and to reach a morally worthy conclusion. Maritain (1965) speaks of the education of the will or character building and this ties in with what we have said concerning the virtues and about the role of education in the development and well-being of the individual and society in general. As Maritain states,

Whereas the educational system of schools and colleges succeeds as a rule in equipping man's intellect for knowledge, it seems to be missing its main achievement, the equipping of man's will.... Teaching's domain is the domain of truth—[both] speculative as well as practical truth. (p. 97)

Maritain further speaks of the need for “pre-moral training, a point which deals not with morality strictly speaking, but with the preparation and first tilling of the soil thereof” (p. 98). We thus come to understand more fully the true nature and highest aspirations of the educational process.

What is most important in the upbringing of man, that is, the uprightness of will and the attainment of spiritual freedom, as well as the achievement of a sound relationship with society, is truly the main objective of education in its broadest sense. (p. 98)

Maritain acknowledges that direct action upon the will (i.e., telling people what they ought to do or not do) is not the concern or task of the educational institution, but rather to exert an indirect influence through what it prepares its charges to do and to be able to think, to grasp, and to do.

## **THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH AND INTEGRITY**

Let us begin to draw all of the foregoing considerations together. In doing so, one will see that the importance of truth and integrity in education has been an underlying concern throughout. The moral implications of education need not be a burden, but educators certainly need to be aware of these ethical

dimensions of education. Those very dimensions are what make education worthwhile, exciting, and challenging. In a theological context, of course, there is a fundamental linkage between the notion of truth and our understanding of God.

It is not a question of teaching what to think but how to think and, above all else, to think. It is not the educator's task to instruct their charges on how to fall into line, but rather to enable them to see that it is often far better not to follow the crowd. Maritain (1965) echoes such sentiments in his assertion that the function of the teacher is to prepare "a human mind to think for itself" (p. 97). And so, unpacked, this means that we ought always to be mindful of the moral implications of the job, what once was called the vocation of educator.

In all, expediency has no place in true education and if it becomes the prime motive for all we do then we had better call what we are engaged in something else—training or big baby-sitting—for it is certainly not genuine education. The words of Turner (2002), while professor of divinity at Cambridge University, resonate here:

When we look into the state of our universities today, do we not seem to be under enormous pressures to bother with only such questions as have answers useful to our paymasters?...But there is a danger within all this that we will reverse the traffic between question and answer so as to permit only such questions to be asked as we already possess predetermined methodologies for answering, cutting the agenda of questions down to the shape and size of our given routines for answering them. (pp. 135-136)

Is all this a hopelessly romantic vision? We think not, because we can point to numerous examples of institutions that strive to take the moral dimension of education seriously in their mission and management and thrive all the more precisely because they do so. Consider Amherst College, a prestigious and highly successful institution. Peter R. Pouncey, president of Amherst College from 1984 to 1994, gives us his vision of what his own institution is all about:

A university or a liberal arts college, quite apart from any religious affiliations, is pledged to a special faith of its own. It believes first that men and women can live together in a community where they teach and learn from each other....A good college seeks not merely a coterie of the like-minded, to reinforce convictions already formed, but seeks out every vein of talent and opinion from every possible background, so that from the ferment of ideas freely exchanged it can advance to new conclusions. Those who teach and those who learn and those who support both with their work are thus bound together in a common endeavor.

or, with each other and with all those similarly engaged. (Amherst College, 2005, ¶3)

If such sentiments were sincere and have been allowed to inform the day-to-day management and administration of Amherst, then such terms indicate that this institution has openly declared itself to be against instrumentalism. Similarly, here is Julian Gibbs, president of Amherst from 1979 to 1983,

Our tradition is not one of mere survival, and we do not relish the notion of administering the college in such fashion that only the very well-to-do can benefit from association with it. Our traditional goals have stood the test of time, and we must seek by every reasonable means to sustain them. They are to provide the very best faculty [i.e., lecturing staff], resources, and learning atmosphere that can be attained and at the same time make it possible for the best qualified students to attend Amherst, irrespective of their financial circumstances. (Amherst College, 2005, ¶4)

Such declarations show the importance of a sense of community, above else, to the economic as well as educational success of a college. Because smart people like to be part of genuine, as opposed to nominal, communities, any institution which neglects its spirit of community, neglects its own very future. Those involved in higher education and government today, of all days, would do well to ponder these words from a successful institution which actually appears to mean what it says.

Today there is too much talk of the market in education. Yet such principles and forces are as inapplicable to something like education as they are to healthcare. If you want a decent public service, then you do not expect it either to pay for itself or to make a profit. The commodification of education is in the ascendancy, but it is not too late to reverse this process. Ethically speaking, we have an obligation to do all in our power to do so. But, even in the age of the self, each and every one of your own best interests are served far better by solidarity than capitulation for short-term gain or a quiet life.

The market—how its meaning has changed. The *agora* was once not simply a place for trade, but the open space of the community, a center for dialogue, exchanges of all manner, and also for cultural, intellectual, and sporting activities. Such a pity we can only see the term market in crude terms of naked expediency and financial meaning, today. The term *agora* simply meant a place of gathering, or in other words, a community-oriented concept which happened to have as one of its many functions, the place where the community performed its trade.

Is it true that we have no other future than to accept that all of us have become slaves to this new god of the market?

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Let us draw some conclusions from what we have been considering, this case against instrumentalism and pseudo-utilitarianism in education (i.e., against expediency) and how all of this relates to the moral task of education. Education and hence educators—including, and in some respects especially those in managerial and administrative roles—are not the masters of their charges who dictate what must be learned and assimilated and digested. Nor, even, are we the producers/providers of services and products as if education is a commodity simply to be taken away in a lengthy handout and practically futile booklet, as if handing over some physical encapsulation of worthwhile knowledge could thereby pass it on to our charges in much the same way that a virus might be transmitted.

Instead, we are all shepherds of the being of the young minds and lives which, if we are true to our profession, we seek to liberate. Recall the task of ablation. What that ablation seeks to uncover is nothing less than the relation between the individual and the truth.

The discipline which finds itself most at home with such thinking and such language is, of course, theology, which has been so concerned with values, virtues, character, and community in many diverse and different ways over the years. Theology should once again take a lead and the churches must push it to the forefront of their mission-delivery in universities and colleges of higher education, for it is one of the most practically relevant and personally—as well as community—developing disciplines that we have in education. And, in particular for today, the importance of laity in relation to theological education must be asserted anew—both as educators and those seeking education. For such people hold the key to the future of ministry and hence the delivery of the Gospel in our times and for the foreseeable future to come. The churches should support all ventures that encourage the full participation of the laity in theological education as much as they possibly can.

Theology and with it ethics—both disciplines mutually informing one another—hold the key to fostering and promoting a true culture of ministry, of service, both in the day-to-day existence of our universities and colleges and to nurturing young minds, young spirits to take that culture of ministry out into the wider community. If those scholars who speak of the Church as a “school of virtue” are correct, then life truly is for education.

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*Gerard Mannion is director of The Centre for the Study of Contemporary Ecclesiology and Associate Professor of Ecclesiology and Ethics in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Liverpool Hope University. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Dr. Gerard Mannion, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Liverpool Hope University, Hope Park, Liverpool, Merseyside, L25 9JD, UK.*