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Matthew R. Petrussek

Loyola Marymount University, [matthew.petrusek@lmu.edu](mailto:matthew.petrusek@lmu.edu)

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# Dialoguing from a Fixed Point: How Aristotle and Pope Francis Illuminate the Promise — and Limits — of Inclusion in Catholic Higher Education

Matthew Richard Petrussek, Ph.D.

## Abstract

This article examines the meaning of the word *inclusion* as it relates to Catholic identity in higher education. Noting the widespread presence of this value in the mission statements of Catholic colleges, the article draws on insights from Aristotelian logic and Pope Francis's theology of encounter to argue that inclusion can only be defined as a *subordinate value* to the value of establishing and maintaining a fixed institutional identity that is both uniquely Catholic and non-negotiable. Distinguishing between the concepts of *procedural inclusion* and *substantive inclusion*, the article contends that Catholic colleges have good reason to embrace inclusion so long as they recognize that, from a philosophical and theological perspective, *exclusion* is the condition for the possibility of creating a welcoming academic community. The article concludes by demonstrating how this insight applies to two institutional expressions of Catholic identity, one from DePaul University in Chicago and the other from Benedictine College in Kansas.

The language of inclusiveness has emerged as near-obligatory in the institutional values of contemporary colleges and universities in the United States. Catholic colleges<sup>1</sup> are no exception. An examination of the mission and value statements of U.S. Catholic degree-granting institutions reveals that many Catholic schools, like their secular peers, locate some form of inclusion at the heart of their institutional identity.<sup>2</sup>

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Matthew Richard Petrussek is Assistant Professor of Theological Ethics at Loyola Marymount University.

<sup>1</sup> This article uses the word *college* to represent both colleges and universities. The differences between the two are not relevant for the sake of the argument.

<sup>2</sup> The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) maintains a website listing all degree-granting institutions of higher learning in the United States that

Indeed, even institutions that identify as theologically and culturally conservative, like the Franciscan University of Steubenville, promote a welcoming academic and social environment.<sup>3</sup> Inclusivity, in short, has achieved the status of moral obviousness in academia: It is difficult to imagine any institution claiming to be “against” it.

Yet there remain basic questions about what inclusivity means. This is especially the case for colleges that claim to be both *Catholic* and *inclusive*. This dual affirmation generates a foundational question: How does an institution form and maintain an identity, particularly a religious identity, while concurrently welcoming those who reject some foundational feature of that identity as normative? More specifically, how can a Catholic college coherently claim to be Catholic while intentionally including administrators, faculty, staff, and students who find some fundamental dimension of Catholic theological or moral teaching to be wrong?

This article seeks to clarify the understanding of inclusivity from a philosophical and theological perspective. This approach has a goal different from a practical take on the question. A number of recent articles in the *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, for example, have addressed the issue of inclusivity framed as how to make a Catholic college “work” in a pluralistic context.<sup>4</sup> Identifying how Catholic schools

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identify as Catholic, along with the website to each institution. A large sampling of the websites of the 247 institutions listed on the site reveal that the majority of Catholic colleges, universities, and seminaries contain references to diversity and/or inclusion in their mission statements, statements of core values, or similar foundational documents. The list of institutions, along with their websites, is accessible at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/higher-education/catholic-colleges-and-universities-in-the-united-states.cfm> (accessed August 31, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Franciscan University of Steubenville’s mission statement states, “Those who are not Catholic are welcome to partake in the full life of the University and are assured that the dignity of each individual and the right to free will decisions in matters of faith are respected” (see <https://www.franciscan.edu/about/mission-statement/>, accessed August 13, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> These articles include, for example, Maryellen Gilroy’s “Reflections on Recruitment for Mission and Catholic Identity: Lessons Learned” (*Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, 28:2, 2009, 101-114), and Joseph Ferrari and Patrick Janulis’s, “Embracing the Missions: Catholic and Non-Catholic Faculty and Staff Perceptions of Institutional Mission and School Sense of Community” (*Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, 28:2, 2009, 115-124). Both articles use case studies to identify strategies for how Catholic colleges can constructively engage the pluralism that *already exists* within Catholic colleges. In other words, they take pluralism to be a given and determine that inclusion is a good strategy for maintaining a well-functioning community. This article, in contrast, addresses the question of pluralism and inclusion from a philosophical and theological perspective, asking what should define the mission and institutional values

can maintain good relations among diverse constituencies (e.g., Catholic and non-Catholic students, faculty, staff, and alumni) while remaining competitive in an increasingly secular and pluralistic society is an important question. But it is not the question this article addresses.

Likewise, the question can be framed from a moral perspective, taking the form of asking whether Catholic colleges *should* embrace inclusivity, irrespective of how it may relate to administrative and financial issues. This, too, is important. Yet, while the article addresses the morality of inclusivity tangentially through the lens of Pope Francis’s conception of dialogue, it is more concerned with formulating a conceptual *definition* of inclusivity and then demonstrating how that definition informs the institutional identity of Catholic colleges.

Finally, the article does not establish what should define a Catholic college as “Catholic.” I cite some authors who do address that question, but only to advance a more basic argument — namely, that irrespective of what substantively defines any college as Catholic, Catholic colleges must embrace *at least one* institutional value that is both (a) uniquely Catholic and (b) non-negotiable. In other words, inclusivity can only be a coherent value in relation to an intentionally *fixed* and *exclusive* institutional identity, which means that a Catholic college can only coherently describe itself as inclusive if it can clearly articulate how its identity is *not* inclusive. The article will not develop a substantive account of what should constitute that identity, though it will note that it cannot be inclusivity itself.

The argument has three components. First, I draw on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* to identify a philosophical foundation for assessing inclusivity as it relates to institutional identity. I cite the three basic laws of logic in the *Metaphysics* — the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle — to argue that inclusivity, and specifically what I define as “substantive inclusivity,” must be understood as a *contingent* value, that is, as a value whose existence presupposes the existence of more foundational values.

Second, the article adds a theological dimension by drawing on Pope Francis’s theology of encounter. One of the hallmarks of Francis’s papacy has been to call the Church “out into the world,” not with the

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of a Catholic college qua Catholic college *independently* of any pluralism that may already exist within Catholic colleges. The argument builds upon a brief article I wrote for an online magazine on whether “inclusion” constitutes a coherent moral concept (see “Why It’s Impossible for Any Group to be Inclusive,” *The Federalist*, April 28, 2017, <http://thefederalist.com/2017/04/28/impossible-group-inclusive/>).

goal of proselytizing (which he famously called “solemn nonsense”), but rather to encounter those outside the Church in a spirit of dialogue. I argue that Catholic colleges should heed this call. However, I also emphasize that the theology of encounter identifies two necessary conditions for dialogue — (1) empathetic openness to the other, and (2) a fixed religious and moral identity — and clearly stipulates that the latter is a condition for the possibility of the former.

Third, I draw on these themes to engage two expressions of Catholic identity in higher education, one from DePaul University in Chicago and the other from Benedictine College in Kansas. Critically applying the criteria that emerge from Aristotle and Francis for defining inclusivity to their respective mission statements helps reveal how inclusivity can, and cannot, be coherently embraced by an institution. This comparison, I hope, will advance broader conversations about how Catholic colleges can constructively champion inclusion while remaining distinctively, cogently, and robustly Catholic.

### **The Opacity of Inclusion as It Relates to Diversity**

To begin, it is important to establish basic contours to the concept of inclusivity. Indeed, the first question is how one can speak about inclusion without also addressing diversity, given how frequently the two terms appear in tandem. Boston College’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion provides these two helpful definitions:

Diversity refers to the range of human differences that include the primary or internal dimension such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, physical and mental ability and sexual orientation; and the secondary or external dimension such as thought styles, religion, nationality, socio-economic status, belief systems, military experience and education.

Inclusion involves the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement of our diversity, where each person is valued, respected and supported for his or her distinctive skills, experiences and perspectives, to create a working and learning environment where everyone has an opportunity to experience personal fulfillment and participate fully in creating a successful and thriving Boston College. It is a means of creating value from the differences of all members of our community, in order to leverage talent and foster both individual and organizational excellence.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See the website of the Boston College Office of Diversity and Inclusion, <http://www.bc.edu/offices/diversity/diversity-and-inclusion-statement.html> (accessed August 20, 2017).

Note here that diversity and inclusion are not synonyms. *Diversity* refers to the empirical existence of “difference,” and, in particular, two kinds of difference: those that we might call “inherent” (i.e., those features of a human being over which the individual has no control), and those that we might call “acquired” (i.e., those features of a human being that, at least in some respect, the individual is free to choose in relation to constructing her or his identity). Boston College uses the language of “primary/internal” and “secondary/external” to make this distinction.

*Inclusion*, on the other hand, is the disposition an institution takes toward diversity and how it chooses to respond to it. In this instance, Boston College specifically links inclusion to diversity by suggesting that the morally correct response to the existence of both kinds of diversity is to *include* them into Boston College’s community. Put analogically, Boston College is claiming that *include* is to *diversity* as *incorporate* is to *difference* or *encompass* is to *dissimilarity*: In each case, the *include* in the definition is used as a transitive verb in relation to that which is different.

Yet it is also apparent that the definitions contain potential contradictions. For example, the definition of *inclusion* stipulates that it is the *intrinsically* right response to take in relation to diverse individuals qua diverse individuals (e.g., “where each person is valued, respected and supported for his or her distinctive skills, experiences and perspectives...”). At the same time, the definitions indicate that inclusion is also an *instrumental* value (e.g., “It is a means of creating value from the differences of all members of our community...”). In other words, Boston College is claiming that inclusion is both (a) good in and of itself, and also (b) good for creating a “successful and thriving” college.

It is not clear, however, how these two claims relate to each other. In order to make both coherently, Boston College must be willing to claim that inclusion will always lead to the creation of a successful and thriving college. But is that the case? Does embracing difference qua difference *necessarily* lead to “success” and “thriving” in a university community? Are there some differences that, if embraced, might actually harm the community? And, if so, does that mean that the university should, in some cases, *not be* inclusive in order to protect the good of its own institutional identity? And, if that is the case, doesn’t that mean that inclusion is not, after all, an intrinsic good, but rather only an instrumental good?

This line of questioning highlights the unfortunate lack of precision that exists within many colleges' appeals to inclusion and diversity, which we see paradigmatically represented in Boston College's definitions. Both diversity and inclusion are usually identified as good in and of themselves (i.e., being different is good and including those who are different is good), as well as instrumentally good (i.e., being different and including those who are different will always lead to the good of the university) without a systematic explanation and defense of the principles governing how, more broadly, sameness should be related to difference in institutional identity, and why including difference into sameness will, from an empirical perspective, necessarily lead to the university's flourishing.

It is therefore important to identify a more conceptually rigorous definition of the terms. This article focuses on defining *inclusion* in particular, not because diversity is unimportant but rather because, as suggested in the definitions above, inclusion concerns the question of how colleges should act *in relation* to diversity. Diversity, in other words, is an empirical phenomenon; the question that colleges face with regard to the formation and maintenance of their institutional identity is how they should *respond* to diversity, a question that falls squarely into the realm of how to define and apply *inclusion*.

### **Procedural Inclusion vs. Substantive Inclusion**

So what, more basically, is inclusion? First, the concept of inclusion necessarily implies the existence of a community that is defined by "sameness" in some fundamental respect. We could call this collection of similar individuals within the community *insiders*; they are already inside the community by virtue of sharing some essential attribute or set of attributes that unites them as a community. Defined as such, any community that seeks to include others would consequently imply that there also exist individuals and groups who are *outsiders* — that is, individuals or groups who possess an attribute or set of attributes that differs from those who are within the community. If this were not the case, if there were no distinction between insiders and outsiders as it relates to the identity of a community, then everyone would already, de facto, be *in* the community, and the whole idea of "inclusion" would be moot. The distinction between *insider* and *outsider* is therefore inherent to the conception of inclusion itself.

Here, however, it is crucial to distinguish between what we could call (a) *procedural inclusion* and (b) *substantive inclusion*. Procedural inclusion, on the one hand, takes place when a community seeks to

include individuals or groups who already share some foundational characteristic of the community's identity but who are outside the group because of external obstacles. So, for example, a Catholic college that recruits Catholics in poor and underserved areas may be said to be practicing the value of inclusion, but only in a procedural sense: The college is only seeking to remove obstacles that prevent individuals who otherwise share the characteristics of the college's Catholic identity from joining the community. Their separation or distance from the community is, in other words, accidental; it does not have anything to do with the essential identity of the group itself.<sup>6</sup>

Substantive inclusion, on the other hand, takes place when a community seeks to include individuals or groups who *do not* share the defining attributes of the community's identity. A Catholic college recruiting students or faculty who belong to atheist or pro-choice groups would serve as an example of this kind of inclusion. Here the barriers to membership in the community are not structural (or not only structural). They are substantive — that is, those outside the community are outside the community because they *disagree* with one or more of the fundamental characteristics that define the community as a community. Unlike procedural inclusion, substantive inclusion seeks to integrate those who have *essential*, rather than accidental, differences into the community.

It is particularly important to maintain this distinction in the context of defining the identity of a Catholic college. The debate about inclusion is not primarily, if at all, about procedural inclusion. There may be financial and administrative concerns about *how* to include those who are outside the community because of external obstacles, but there is no evidence that Catholic colleges are concerned about *whether* to include them. Procedural inclusion can also easily embrace the “primal” or “internal” forms of diversity, as seen in the Boston College definition above: There is no philosophical or theological reason for *not* including Catholics of any race, sex, or ethnicity into a Catholic college from a procedural perspective because these characteristics, whatever they

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<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that procedural inclusion is unimportant or that Catholic colleges should not pursue it. Indeed, one could argue that ensuring that Catholics who belong to marginal groups culturally, economically, ethnically, racially, etc. have access to Catholic education should be a priority for Catholic institutions of higher learning. Yet while this kind of inclusion could change *significant* aspects of the institutional identity of a Catholic college (including, potentially, cultural, ethnic, and racial changes), it would still not change the *essential* identity of the institution as “Catholic.” Substantive inclusion, in contrast, could change that essential identity.



specifically may be, are not essential to the identity of being Catholic. The debate about substantive inclusion, in contrast, invites not only the question of *how* to include those who are outsiders, but also the question of *whether* and, equally important, *why* to include them; for intentionally including individuals who disagree with some fundamental feature of the community's identity raises profound questions about the definition of the community's identity itself.

In order to clarify the stakes of the question, imagine a Catholic college that intentionally seeks to practice the value of substantive inclusion. The principle that governs the college's actions would be something like this: A Catholic college that seeks to be inclusive must deliberately include those who disagree with some fundamental aspect of what otherwise defines the community as a Catholic college. To say it is inclusive, in other words, the college must demonstrate that it is intentionally inviting *principled non-Catholics* to join the college community precisely *because* they are principled non-Catholics; if the college does not know if the invitees are principled non-Catholics (either because the college does not ask or because the invitees hide their real identity) then the college cannot say it is "being inclusive." Inclusion requires knowledge of the others' substantive difference from the community, otherwise the inclusion is only procedural or otherwise unintended, in which case the college could not claim (and much less celebrate) that it is being inclusive.

Let us assume, moreover, that the Catholic college we have in mind is not only embracing the value of substantive inclusion, but also seeking to demonstrate that inclusion is its *most important* institutional value. In that case, it would be committed to abiding by the following principle: A Catholic college that seeks to demonstrate its commitment to inclusivity as its highest value must seek to include all principled non-Catholics into its community, with the goal of total inclusion of *all* principled non-Catholics.

### **Inclusion Distilled through Aristotelian Logic**

"Seeking to include all" may make substantive inclusion sound like a morally praiseworthy goal for a Catholic college, echoing the warm words of a now popular hymn, "All Are Welcome."<sup>7</sup> However, there is

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<sup>7</sup>The lyrics and music to the hymn, "All Are Welcome" by Marty Haugen are available at [http://hymnary.org/text/let\\_us\\_build\\_a\\_house\\_where\\_love\\_can\\_dwe](http://hymnary.org/text/let_us_build_a_house_where_love_can_dwe) (accessed August 31, 2017).

good reason to question whether it is a *coherent* goal. To see why, it is helpful to consult the three basic laws of logic as they appear in Aristotle's classic text, the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle's discussion of the nature and application of logical laws is rich and complex, but three principles in particular are important for assessing the meaning and use of inclusion: the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle. I will cite each of the three laws, as Aristotle formulates them, below:

1. **The Law of Identity:** “[This] is at least obviously true, that the word ‘be’ or ‘not be’ has a definite meaning, so that not everything will be ‘so and not so’...[If] man [sic] has one meaning, let this be ‘two-footed’ animal; by having one meaning I understand this: if ‘man’ means ‘X,’ then if ‘A’ is a man ‘X’ will be what being a ‘man’ means for him...[F]or [anything] not to have one meaning is to have no meaning, and if words have no meaning our reasoning with one another, and, indeed, with ourselves, has been annihilated; for it is impossible to think of anything if we do not think of one thing.”<sup>8</sup>
2. **The Law of Non-Contradiction:** “[It] is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be...this is the most indisputable of all principles.”<sup>9</sup>
3. **The Law of the Excluded Middle:** “[There] cannot be an intermediate between contradictories, but of one subject we must either affirm or deny any one predicate. This is clear...if we define what the true and false are. To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true.”<sup>10</sup>

These three laws have emerged as the “classic laws of thought” because it is impossible to think about anything at all in their absence: If no object can be said to have a fixed conceptual identity (a violation of the law of identity), or if the same object can also be its conceptual opposite at the same time in the same way (a violation of the law of non-contradiction), or if we are able to claim that something that exists can

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<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* in *The Works of Aristotle Vol I.*, trans. W.D. Ross, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1980), 525, 1006a-1006b.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 525, 1006a.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 531, 1011b. It is important to note that while Aristotle identifies these three laws as quoted above, he does not, respectively, use the terms “Law of Identity,” “Law of Non-Contradiction,” and “Law of the Excluded Middle” to describe them. These terms were applied by later philosophers. See, for example, the entries for “Law of Identity,” “Law of Non-Contradiction,” and “Law of the Excluded Middle” in Ted Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

exist as both true and false at the same time in the same way (a violation of the law of the excluded middle), then, as Aristotle puts it, our reasoning with ourselves and others would be “annihilated.”

These laws are important to keep in mind when engaged in any kind of discourse, but they are especially important for assessing the question of how inclusion relates to institutional identity. Indeed, they are necessary to define *Catholic college* itself. First, to speak coherently about a Catholic college, we must recognize that the term *Catholic college* must possess a fixed meaning; or, in Aristotle’s language, we must recognize that to talk about a *Catholic college* is to talk about *one* thing (the law of identity). Second, we must recognize that we cannot say that a Catholic college is both a *Catholic college* and a *non-Catholic college* at the same time (the law of non-contradiction). Finally, we must recognize that a given institution either is a *Catholic college* or it is not a *Catholic college* (the law of the excluded middle).

To be sure, the laws of logic do *not* tell us what does or should substantively define a Catholic college as such. However, they *do* make the parameters of any potential definition clear: In short, whatever defines a Catholic college, it (a) must possess at least one attribute that makes it uniquely a Catholic college,<sup>11</sup> (b) cannot be a non-Catholic college at the same time (that is, it cannot possess any attribute that contradicts the attribute that uniquely defines the college as Catholic), and (c) must either be a Catholic college or not. The rules of logic, in other words, remind us that there can be no compromise when it comes to defining the essential identity of a Catholic college, or any other institution or community.

Given these parameters, what would it therefore mean for a Catholic college to say that it embraces substantive inclusion, especially

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that claiming that a Catholic college must be uniquely Catholic does not mean that all Catholic colleges must have the exact same Catholic identity. As I will recognize in greater depth below, there is authentic diversity within Catholicism and that diversity can be expressed in different ways in the institutional identities of Catholic colleges. Yet whatever diversity exists within Catholicism itself, it all, ultimately, must be *contained* within a unity that is “Catholicism.” In other words, different Catholic colleges can coherently choose *different* institutional identities from within the different identities that already exist within the faith (e.g., Jesuit, Franciscan, Marymount, Benedictine, Dominican, lay, etc.), but only if they can also articulate how those identities are also the *same* in terms of being an expression of Catholicism. In short, one can coherently claim, “This is a Catholic college, but not a Jesuit one”; however, it would be *incoherent* to claim, “This is a Jesuit college, but not a Catholic one.”

inclusion as a *supreme* value? In sum, there are two reasons why the value of “total inclusion” would be problematic. First, as indicated above, for a Catholic college to say that it wants to include principled non-Catholics, it must *be* a Catholic college in the first place — that is, it must first *exist* as a distinct community defined by at least one essential Catholic attribute and not contradicted by any other essential attribute. If it is not a Catholic college in this sense, then there is no *there* there, no community that could invite *non*-Catholics to join in the first place. *This means, in short, that exclusion is the condition for the possibility of inclusion.* The three laws of logic lead us to the necessary conclusion, that is, that the whole concept of a “community” itself (without defining community as “everything in existence”) *depends* upon establishing a *coherent, fixed* identity that, by definition, necessarily *excludes* other possible identities. It would therefore be incoherent for a Catholic college that cannot identify how it is (1) distinctively a Catholic college (and therefore no other kind of community or institution)<sup>12</sup> and (2) a distinctively Catholic college that has a non-negotiable identity (and therefore a stable community, by definition) to claim that it is seeking to be substantively inclusive.<sup>13</sup>

Second, and related, the laws of logic also impose constraints on the *practice* of substantive inclusion in the following way: A Catholic college cannot coherently include those who would fundamentally alter

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<sup>12</sup> It is also important to keep in mind that, however a Catholic college chooses to define itself (see footnote above), its definition as *Catholic* must be justified as being uniquely Catholic. It is not sufficient, from a definitional perspective, to say, “What makes our institution Catholic is that it promotes social justice” or “What makes our institution Catholic is that it is informed by faith” or “What makes our institution Catholic is that we believe in human dignity and the value of serving others.” Many institutions promote social justice, are informed by some conception of faith, and believe in the value of human dignity and serving others. A Catholic institution must demonstrate how its particular expression of these values (or others) are uniquely *Catholic*. Otherwise, it is not clear why the institution can be coherently called *Catholic*.

<sup>13</sup> As noted above, Catholicism is an internally diverse religion and practiced in many different ways in many different places. Some of the diversity is structural, for example, taking the form of Eastern liturgical traditions that remain in communion with Rome; much of it is less formal, as we see, for example, in the form of different devotional practices in relation to different saints and images of the Virgin the world over. Notwithstanding this diversity, however, there still is *a* Catholicism that is represented by, if nothing else, the sacraments, apostolic succession, and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Catechism. To claim otherwise, to say that “Catholicism is so diverse that we cannot speak univocally of *a* Catholicism” is to contradict the self-understanding of practicing Catholics themselves—including, of course, the pope, bishops, and the College of Cardinals.

its identity as a Catholic college. If, for example, a Catholic college were to include atheists who seek to redefine the Catholic college into an atheist institution of higher learning, the logic of “total inclusion” would, taken by itself, then compel the formerly Catholic and now atheist institution to include the now-excluded Catholics into the atheist community, who, upon making the institution Catholic again, would then have to include the atheists again — and round and round the inclusion wheel would go, never settling on a fixed identity. “Total inclusion,” in other words, cannot be a morally praiseworthy ideal because it cannot be a coherent ideal at all.

The value of inclusion must, therefore, not only be understood as a *subordinate* value to the value of having and maintaining a fixed institutional identity; its implementation, even as a subordinate value, must also operate within the parameters of the three logical laws, which, taken together, demonstrate that including those who would seek to alter the fundamental identity of the Catholic college is not only incoherent from a strategic perspective (i.e., including anti-Catholics is not a good way to ensure the flourishing of a Catholic college qua Catholic college). It is also substantively incoherent: Put most colloquially, you cannot be an inclusive Catholic college if you no longer exist as a Catholic college. Recognizing this common-sense point neither violates the value of inclusion nor creates an unwelcoming atmosphere. Much to the contrary, it upholds the condition for the possibility of being inclusive and welcoming itself.

### **Pope Francis on the Goodness of Dialogue**

It is crucial to recognize, however, that the laws of logic do not entail the conclusion that substantive inclusion itself is necessarily incoherent or that Catholic colleges should not be inclusive. In other words, so long as it does not violate their essential identity, Catholic colleges *can* embrace substantive inclusion as one of their values.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, insofar

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<sup>14</sup> There is also no restriction on what may potentially be taught at the Catholic college. The question of inclusion concerns *institutional identity* — that is, what values the institution takes to be normative, including the value of inclusion itself. Of course a Catholic college can teach courses on atheism, Islam, Judaism, evolution devoid of any conception of God, Marxism, and cultural relativism, among many other topics, without any threat to its institutional coherence. If, however, the Catholic college were to include the *normativity* of the plurality of truth as part of its institutional identity (that is, the claim that all truth is subjective or that all truth is perspectival), it *would* be acting incoherently by essentially making the following institutional claim: “Our mission as a Catholic college recognizes that our institutional identity is essentially arbitrary

as they are defined as both “Catholic” and “college,” there is good reason to think that they *should* be inclusive. One of the most prominent themes of Pope Francis’s papacy, for example, has been to dialogue with those who are fundamentally different from, and outside of, the Church in what Francis has called a “culture of encounter.” As he explained in Brazil in 2013,

[We need] dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. The only way for individuals, families, and societies to grow, the only way for the life of peoples to progress, is via the culture of encounter, a culture in which all have something good to give and a culture in which all can receive something good in return. Others always have something to give me, if we know how to approach them in a spirit of openness and without prejudice. This open spirit, without prejudice, I would describe as “social humility,” which is what favors dialogue. Only in this way can understanding grow between cultures and religions, mutual esteem without needless preconceptions, in a climate that is respectful of the rights of everyone. Today, we either take the risk of dialogue, we risk the culture of encounter, or we all fall.<sup>15</sup>

Although the audience comprised fellow Church leaders, there is no doubt that Francis intended the message to reach all Catholics and Catholic institutions, including Catholic institutions of higher learning.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the observation that “others always have something to

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(because we do not believe it to be objectively true) and, as a Catholic institution that embraces plurality, we invite you to join our community, which does not, in fact, exist in any philosophical or theological sense.”

<sup>15</sup> Pope Francis, “Meeting with Brazil’s Leaders of Society” (Rio di Janeiro, July 27, 2013, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130727\\_gmg-classes-dirigente-rio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130727_gmg-classes-dirigente-rio.html), accessed August 31, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Pope Francis directly, if briefly, connects his conception of dialogue to Catholic colleges in *Evangelii Gaudium*, writing, “A theology – and not simply a pastoral theology – which is in dialogue with other sciences and human experiences is most important for our discernment on how best to bring the Gospel message to different cultural contexts and groups... Universities are outstanding environments for articulating and developing this evangelizing commitment in an interdisciplinary and integrated way” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, para. 133-134).

Pope Francis also directly addresses the importance of dialogue in Catholic colleges in his 2015 address to the Congregation for Catholic Higher Education, stating: “The first aspect of concern [for Catholic colleges is] the *importance of dialogue in education*... Catholic schools and universities are attended by many non-Christian students as well as non-believers. Catholic educational institutions offer everyone an education aimed at the integral development of the person that responds to [the] right of all people to have access to knowledge and understanding. But they are equally called to offer to all the Christian message — respecting fully the freedom of all and the proper methods of each specific scholastic environment — namely that Jesus Christ is the meaning of life, of the cosmos and of history” (Pope Francis, “Address of Francis to Participants in the Plenary Session of the Congregation for Catholic Higher Education,” <https://w2.vatican.va>).

give” is particularly important within the context of a college. Whatever else defines a college, it is (or at least should be) a place where one encounters a *diversity* of ideas and ways of life. Encountering this kind of diversity — particularly, in Francis’s words, “without prejudice” and with “social humility” — is an essential feature of being able to critically evaluate different conceptions of reality and different conceptions of the good (and different methodologies for determining the answers to these questions) in order to identify the truth.

In other words, Catholic colleges have good reason, *qua Catholic colleges*, to embrace substantive inclusion understood as engaging individuals *in community* who represent principled *difference* from Catholicism. Who better, for example, to teach a Jewish understanding of God and the good than a faithful Jew, or Muslim understanding of God and the good than a faithful Muslim, or an atheistic understanding of the absence of God and the good than a committed atheist? This certainly does not mean that only a Jew can teach Judaism, a Muslim, Islam, and an atheist, atheism (or, a Catholic, Catholicism, for that matter). But it is to recognize that ideas not only shape individuals; individuals shape ideas, and it matters profoundly, from a pedagogical perspective, that one is able to encounter substantive difference *in the flesh*. As Pope Francis suggests, moreover, this kind of encounter is the only path leading toward mutual growth as diverse humans inhabiting diverse cultures with diverse ideas. We must *encounter* each other in dialogue under the foundational presupposition that the deliberate engagement of diversity will lead to a richer understanding of the truth.

Francis has also made it clear that such engagement need not be premised on the goal that the other should be “converted.” In a now famous interview that he gave to an Italian atheist journalist, Eugenio Scalfari, at the commencement of his papacy, Francis unequivocally declared that proselytizing is “solemn nonsense.”<sup>17</sup> A Catholic institution of higher learning, in other words, need not seek the conversion of *difference*

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va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/february/documents/papa-francesco\_20140213\_congregazione-educazione-cattolica.html [accessed August 30, 2017]). These words confirm that Francis’s conception of dialogue *presumes* the existence of a fixed Catholic identity in Catholic colleges, a point expanded upon below.

<sup>17</sup>The full transcript of the interview is available in English in the article, “The Pope: How the Church Will Change” (*La Repubblica*, October 1, 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/cultura/2013/10/01/news/pope\\_s\\_conversation\\_with\\_scalfari\\_english-67643118/](http://www.repubblica.it/cultura/2013/10/01/news/pope_s_conversation_with_scalfari_english-67643118/), retrieved August 28, 2017). Francis’s mix of candidness and openness to the other is also present in his long friendship with the Jewish biophysicist and rabbi, Abraham Skorka. See, for example, Jorge Mario Bergoglio and Abraham Skorka, *On Heaven and*

*into sameness* to engage in, or benefit from, dialogue. In fact, it is precisely as *other* — as a principled non-Catholic — that the other can offer a unique gift, namely, a vision of existence from a substantively different perspective. In this light, the practice of substantive inclusion would not only be a tangential benefit for a Catholic college, but also would help the Catholic college serve its basic role by providing a structured forum in which sameness can dialogue with difference. It is also this kind of encounter, Francis argues, that leads the Church outside itself, into the other and, eventually, back to the divine. As he writes,

We must not be a church closed in on herself, which watches her navel, a self-referential church, who looks at herself and is unable to transcend. Twofold transcendence is important: toward God and toward one's neighbor...And when I come out of myself, I meet God and I meet others. How do you meet others? From a distance or up close? You must meet them up close, closeness... transcendence and closeness... be near. Do not be afraid of anything. Be close... It's about closeness to a culture, closeness to the people, to their way of thinking, their sorrow, their resentments.<sup>18</sup>

These words are specifically about the Church, but there is no reason why they cannot, indeed should not, apply to the Catholic college, as well.

### **Pope Francis on the Necessary Conditions for Dialogue**

Francis is clear, however, that the dialogue that constitutes the culture of the encounter is not without constraints. Dialogue is possible only if two fundamental conditions are in place:

Dialogue is so important, but to dialogue two things are necessary: one's identity as a starting point and empathy towards other. If I am not sure of my identity and I go to speak, I end up bartering my faith. You cannot dialogue without starting from your own identity, and empathy, which is *a priori* not condemning. Every man, every woman has something of their own to give us; every man, every woman has their own story, their own situation and we have to listen to it.... Start from your own identity in order to dialogue, but a dialogue is not doing apologetics, although sometimes you must do so... Dialogue is a human thing. It is hearts and souls that dialogue... Do not be afraid to dialogue with anyone.<sup>19</sup>

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*Earth: Pope Francis on Family, Faith, and the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Image Books, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis, *With the Smell of the Sheep*, ed. Giuseppe Merola (New York: Orbis Books, 2017), 59-60.

<sup>19</sup> *With the Smell of the Sheep*, 61.



It is crucial to note here that Francis recognizes a *hierarchical* relationship between identity and empathetic openness in dialogue. The former, he makes clear, is the condition for the possibility of the latter, and for two reasons. First is the threat of “bartering” one’s identity: To dialogue with the other without confidence in one’s faith is to risk losing that faith altogether. Francis affirms here that that trade — giving up one’s most fundamental theological and moral beliefs in exchange for conversing with the other — is never justified. Second, and more foundationally, Francis’s recognition that “you can’t dialogue without starting from your own identity” points not only to the *can’t* in terms of *should not* because of the risk of bartering faith, but also to the logical conditions that define what it means for a *Catholic* to engage a *non-Catholic* — to wit, to speak as a Catholic with a non-Catholic, one must *be* a Catholic in the first place, which necessarily implies substantive, principled difference with the other. Indeed, this is the only way one can be open to the other in “empathy,” which Francis identifies as the second condition of dialogue: Empathetic openness implies that there already exists *a firm identity*, a distinct “I” that can experience a dialogical connection to the “you.” This does not mean that the “I” is *sui generis* or otherwise ontologically or morally independent of the other; it is only to recognize that the “I” in dialogical engagement has chosen to *be* a Catholic presumably because she or he believes Catholicism to be *true*. It would thus be contradictory for the Catholic to presume any different starting point in encountering the other than the truth of her or his own Catholic identity.<sup>20</sup>

This conception of the conditions for the possibility of dialogue may sound abstract, but Francis has provided at least one concrete instance of what such dialogue can look like. In the same interview in which he proclaims that proselytism is solemn nonsense, he has the following exchange with Scalfari:

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<sup>20</sup> The only alternative to starting from this fixed identity would be for the Catholic to claim something like, “I am Catholic, but that doesn’t mean anything with regard to my identity” (a violation of the law of identity), or “I don’t believe in the Catholicism I believe in” (a violation of the law of non-contradiction), or “I am a Catholic and I believe all beliefs are true” (a violation of the law of the excluded middle). These rules, of course, apply not only to Catholics, but also to *anyone* with *any kind of identity*. Even someone who says, “I identify only as a human” presumably believes that her or his distinct understanding of what it means to be human is *true*, and so it would be incoherent for her or him to engage a Catholic from anything other than that starting point. This is the insight behind Francis’s insistence that we all must start from our own identity. We all *should* do so because we cannot, at least coherently, *not* do so.

**Scalfari:** Do you feel touched by grace?

**Francis:** No one can know that. Grace is not a part of consciousness; it is the amount of light in our souls, not knowledge nor reason. Even you, without knowing it, could be touched by grace

**Scalfari:** Without faith? A non-believer?

**Francis:** Grace regards the soul.

**Scalfari:** I do not believe in the soul.

**Francis:** You do not believe it but you have one.

**Scalfari:** Your Holiness, you said that you have no intention to convert me, and I do not think you would succeed.

**Francis:** We cannot know that, but I don't have such an intention.<sup>21</sup>

There are two remarkable responses here. Note, in the first place, that Francis, the pontiff of the Catholic Church, has welcomed an interview with a professed atheist. He is conversing with someone who foundationally rejects everything the pope stands for from a theological and, insofar as theology serves as the warrant for Catholic understandings of the good, moral point of view. This is, in short, precisely the kind of encounter that Francis has in mind for the Church. Second, Francis has made clear that he has no intention of changing the “other” in the interview by seeking his conversion to Catholicism. The conversation is just that: a conversation. Its goal is understanding, not persuasion, and within these parameters the two can and do encounter each other as equals.

But that does not mean that Francis's openness to Scalfari implies that he agrees with, or is open to, Scalfari's atheism. Francis does not say, “It is just my point of view that you have a soul,” or “You have your opinion about the soul and I have mine and they are both valid because we believe them.” Rather, he essentially says to Scalfari, “You are wrong — not only about the existence of the soul, but also about being able to know whether you could be converted.” In the dialogue with someone who represents a position profoundly different from Catholicism, in other words, Francis is listening and responding from his own principled, *fixed* identity.

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<sup>21</sup> “The Pope: How the Church Will Change,” *La Repubblica*.

## The Catholic College as a Community of Dialogue

This model of dialogue provides essential insights for how Catholic colleges can frame their own understandings of what it means to be inclusive. As rooted in a theological tradition that welcomes and promotes encounter with difference, a Catholic college can coherently identify substantive inclusion as part of its institutional values on the grounds that it seeks to be a place where Catholicism can be *in* the world, with the goal not only of providing its students a forum for engaging diverse points of view, but also of being a place that fosters mutual understanding.<sup>22</sup>

But, as both Pope Francis and the basic rules of logic make clear, it must do so as a *Catholic* college, as an institution with a fixed and uncompromising identity as a *Catholic* college; as an institution that invites diverse points of view *and* is capable of making normative distinctions among those points of view in terms of affirming its institutional values; as an institution, that is, that can say both “Welcome!” to those who are substantively different *and* “We disagree with you.”<sup>23</sup> Affirming the latter

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<sup>22</sup> Joseph Curran has also recently argued that Pope Francis’s conception of dialogue can serve as a useful model for Catholic colleges to understand their distinctive role in society. He writes, “Catholic colleges and universities following Francis’s example would treat the learning environment as a place for advancing knowledge through shared intellectual inquiry and not simply a place where information is passed from teacher to student” (Joseph Curran, *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* [34:2, 2015, 135-149], 143). I agree with this application of Pope Francis’s insights to the question of how Catholic colleges should define themselves. However, Curran’s article overlooks Francis’s other comments on dialogue that relate to the *necessary conditions* for dialogue to take place and, in particular, how one of those conditions *must be* “starting from one’s identity” as a Catholic. I believe that this dimension of Francis’s theology of encounter and dialogue is just as important to highlight as its empathetic openness to the other, especially in the context of explaining how it can serve as a guide for Catholic higher education.

<sup>23</sup> Two relatively recent articles have argued that Catholic colleges should be places where both Catholics *and* non-Catholics feel free to affirm and explore their identities in dialogue. Joseph T. Kelley argues, for example, “The contemporary Catholic college should be a place where Christians can freely explore their faith and philosophy, theology, and science in the context of a community of faith...[It] should also be a place where persons of other philosophical persuasions or religious commitments can, as full members of the academic community, follow their search for truth in ways that remain faithful to their best selves” (Joseph. T. Kelley, “Dynamic Diversity in a Catholic College Augustinian College,” *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* [29:1, 2010, 19-37]), 33. Cara Anthony makes a similar argument, contending, “Catholic universities do not need protection as much as they need resilience. Instead of sheltering Catholic intellectual discourse from disruptive or disturbing voices, we should be nourishing and

statement may make some presidents, deans, and boards of trustees uncomfortable, but there is no other coherent option: To be a Catholic institution of higher learning, a Catholic institution of higher learning must be a Catholic institution of higher learning.<sup>24</sup> That means it must recognize that the beliefs and values that it embraces precisely as a Catholic college are *superior* to competing beliefs and values. Recognizing this is not a matter of being unwelcoming to those who disagree with Catholicism. It is a matter of being a coherent institution *qua* institution.<sup>25</sup>

There is one more important implication. As noted above, Boston College's definitions of diversity and inclusion imply that inclusion is both an intrinsic good and instrumental good, meaning that being inclusive is both good independently of its consequences and because of its consequences. As Aristotle and Pope Francis help illuminate, however, that is a misguided position. To say that inclusion is good in and of itself is to say that an institution should (a) include every kind of difference

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cultivating a lively intellectual, moral, and spiritual life that has no fear of engagement with any dialogue partner who seeks a genuine exchange of ideas" (Cara Anthony, "Newman's *Idea of a University: A Resource for Identity and Inclusion*," *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* [31:1, 2012, 23-37], 36). I enthusiastically agree with both of these statements. What this article seeks to add, however, is that having a firm Catholic identity and engaging with dialogue with the other should not — indeed cannot — be understood as two co-equal values as they relate to a Catholic college's institutional identity. Rather, having a firm and clearly articulated Catholic identity is the condition for the possibility of engaging in dialogue with principled non-Catholics in the first place.

<sup>24</sup> Bernard Brady has argued that among Catholic institutions more broadly — e.g., hospitals, charities, missions, the institutional Church itself — Catholic *colleges* must clearly distinguish themselves as colleges. He writes, for example, "[A]t times a Catholic college may do things in classrooms or in public — for example, show movies, present lectures, or hold discussions of controversial topics — that may not be appropriate within the contexts of other types of Catholic institutions" (Bernard Brady, "On the Meaning of the 'Catholic Intellectual Tradition,'" *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* [32:2, 2013, 189-205], 191). This is an important point to keep in mind when defining the identity of a Catholic college; Catholic colleges must be defined as uniquely *Catholic* but they also must, in relation to other Catholic institutions, be defined as uniquely *colleges*, as well.

<sup>25</sup> The same would hold, of course, for a Muslim college, Jewish college, Hindu college, or secular college. Depending on how they choose to structure their institutional identity, these colleges could coherently welcome Catholics into their midst, but coherence would also demand that they stay, *qua* Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, or secular institutions: "We warmly welcome you here, but we cannot embrace your beliefs and values as an institution because we believe that our own beliefs and values are superior by virtue of being a more authentic expression of the truth." Catholics in non-Catholic institutions should not call this position "unwelcoming" or "un-inclusive." They should call it commonsensical.

qua difference, and (b) include every kind of difference qua difference *no matter what the consequences*. Yet it should be clear that to include all difference qua difference, including difference that would fundamentally alter the identity of an institution (like hiring administrators or faculty who are antagonistic to Catholicism — “antagonistic” here meaning they intend to change the Catholic identity of the institution<sup>26</sup>) is incoherent from the standpoint of what defines institutional identity. That means, in other words, that substantive inclusion must ultimately be understood *only* as an instrumental value,<sup>27</sup> which is to say, inclusion is good, and should be pursued, only insofar as it leads to the affirmation and flourishing of the identity of a Catholic college qua Catholic college. The converse implication of this principle is that inclusion is bad and to be avoided, if it leads to the abolition or diminishment of the distinctive identity of a Catholic college qua Catholic college. We are not free, from a rational perspective, to split the difference between these two options.

### Conclusion: Two Brief Test Cases

This article began by addressing how mission and value statements relate to inclusion. I want to end by engaging two mission statements that reflect the insights gleaned from Aristotle and Francis. The first comes from DePaul University. In a 2009 article titled, “Engagement with Pluralism: A New Way of Understanding and Fostering a Catholic Culture within a Catholic University,” three DePaul professors seek to define their university’s mission according to the value of pluralism

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<sup>26</sup> Active resistance is not the only potential threat to the identity of a Catholic college; it can also take the form of a passive disinterest in preserving or advancing the college’s mission. While overt resistance to the “Catholicity” of a Catholic college may undermine its identity more quickly and palpably, including large numbers of individuals who are apathetic about the institution’s identity will ultimately have the same effect. This, in part, is the concern motivating St. John Paul II’s insistence in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* that “the number of non-Catholic teachers should not be allowed to constitute a majority within the institution, which is and must remain Catholic” (*Ex corde Ecclesiae*, part 2, para. 4, available at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_15081990\\_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html) [accessed September 11, 2017]). It should also be noted that simply hiring and admitting individuals who identify as Catholics does not guarantee that they will support the college’s mission.

<sup>27</sup> It is important to note that while we cannot say that inclusion is intrinsically good, we could coherently say that the *disposition* to be inclusive is intrinsically good. In other words, we could say it is *always* good for a Catholic college to be substantively inclusive when doing so does not alter its fundamental identity.

(and the inclusion of pluralism) itself.<sup>28</sup> The authors set up their argument by rejecting the four models that Melanie Morey and John Piderit, SJ, develop in their influential book, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis*,<sup>29</sup> to diagnose and respond to different formulations of “Catholicity” in Catholic colleges. As the article points out, the goal of *Culture in Crisis* is to identify strategies for Catholic colleges to distinguish themselves culturally *as* Catholic colleges in contradistinction to secular and other non-Catholic institutions of higher learning. The authors of the article, however, find this goal objectionable on the grounds that it fails to recognize the goodness of embracing pluralism both within Catholicism generally and within Catholic colleges in particular. They write,

[Understanding] Catholicism as a pluralistic tradition should be seen as a strength, not a weakness... [M]odernity renders religious boundaries increasingly porous. Even mainstream believers with close ties to religious institutions lead spiritual lives that are fluid and eclectic. Only small minorities find homes for themselves within tightly structured boundaries. Therefore, a tradition that is itself richly diverse is more likely to meet the needs of today’s spiritual seekers.<sup>30</sup>

The authors build on this observation to promote what they call an “Engagement Model” of Catholic higher education. This model, they write, “affirms the *de facto* internal pluralism of most Catholic

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<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that the three authors do not necessarily represent how the administration of DePaul University has understood, or currently understands, its mission as a Catholic, Vincentian institution of higher learning. The authors report in the abstract that the article is a result of university-sponsored workshops on the meaning of DePaul’s Catholic identity. The authors are not, in other words, directly speaking on behalf of the university about its Catholic identity. It is also significant to note that two of the authors have held significant administrative positions in DePaul (Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Assistant Vice President for Mission and Values, respectively), and two of the authors were members of DePaul’s Religious Studies department at the time of the article’s publication. The third author was acting as Executive Director of the Ignatian Spirituality Project. See Charles Strain, James Halstead, and Thomas Drexler, “Engagement with Pluralism: A New Way of Understanding and Fostering Catholic Culture within Catholic Universities,” *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 28:2, 2009, 169-186.

<sup>29</sup> See Melanie M. Morey and John Piderit, SJ, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Morey and Piderit develop four models of Catholic colleges in chapter three — (1) Catholic Immersion, (2) Catholic Persuasion, (3) Catholic Diaspora, and (4) Catholic Cohort — and provide strategies for how colleges in each category can (re)affirm their Catholic identity.

<sup>30</sup> Strain, Halstead, and Drexler, “Engagement with Pluralism,” 173.

universities as a positive condition for truly transformative learning.”<sup>31</sup> The article does not, unfortunately, specify what defines “transformative learning” or what such learning should transform individuals *into*, but it suggests that the *good* of transformative learning is pluralism itself.

The authors quote one student’s description of DePaul’s Catholic identity and appear to endorse its viewpoint as normative: “Because DePaul aspires to be fully pluralistic as well as fully Catholic, we engage in joyful conversation with those in our midst who espouse alternative viewpoints.”<sup>32</sup> Such a statement may sound like it is echoing the sentiment espoused by Pope Francis that Catholics should engage the other as other in the spirit of dialogue. However, the authors of the article make it clear that their interpretation of what it means to be “fully Catholic” *is* to be “fully pluralistic”; that is, the authors collapse the distinction between “Catholicism” and “pluralism” in relation to institutional identity, with the goal of advancing the argument that Catholic institutions should be defined according to the category of “pluralism” itself. This implies that the right understanding of Catholic identity is that it should have multiple identities and that those multiple identities must always remain fluid. The authors establish the normativity of this position by quoting a Buddhist monk:

“Do not cling to any ideology — even Buddhist ones,” argues the Vietnamese monk and international peace activist, Thick Nhat Hanh. Catholic universities could well adopt and adapt such a motto in formulating their Catholic identity.<sup>33</sup>

The claim that what should define Catholic identity is the principled rejection of having a fixed identity at all raises the question, How do you give any substantive content to the identity of an institution that is defined as not having an identity? The answer, the authors propose, is that the members of the institution *choose to define the identity however they want*, and the warrant for the content of their choice is the fact that it was chosen. In other words, the authors endorse a majoritarian and volitional definition of Catholic identity that can change as the members of the institution see fit. That may sound like an uncharitable interpretation of the article’s position, but it precisely what the authors claim in the form of favorably quoting a DePaul faculty member’s observation about how a Catholic college should define itself:

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

DePaul is only Catholic, in my mind, because it is a fully pluralistic community which has embraced a particular set of values which are consonant with aspects of the Catholic tradition. We've not chosen those beliefs *because* they are Catholic but rather because we have chosen them.<sup>34</sup>

The authors of the article call this point of view “sophisticated.”

Aristotle and Pope Francis would disagree. Indeed, what their insights illuminate is that the authors' position on Catholic identity in this article is incoherent. Let us set aside the problematic claim that a Catholic college should define its identity according to what “today's spiritual seekers are looking for,” which appears to endorse the idea that the institutional identity of a Catholic college should be defined by what is perceived to be the “majority” understanding of religion in society at any given point. The problem runs deeper than that. In short, the authors' vision of pluralism and inclusion violates the three most basic rules of logic. Claiming that a Catholic college should be “fully pluralistic,” for example, is tantamount to saying that what should define the Catholic college is difference itself. That implies, in turn, that Catholicism in relation to the institution's identity can mean *anything*, which, Aristotle might remind us, means that Catholic identity means nothing at all — a violation of the law of identity. Second, to claim that the Catholic college is *both* “fully pluralistic” *and* “fully Catholic” is to say that the Catholic college is both Catholic and non-Catholic at the same time in the same way; it is saying, in other words, that an institutional identity can embrace both *total* sameness (a fixed definition of Catholicism) and *total* difference (a fixed definition of pluralism qua pluralism). It is hard to think of a clearer example of a violation of the law of non-contradiction. Finally, and related, locating the foundation of the institution's identity in the *choice* of those who are within the institution (that is, endorsing the view that what makes an institution Catholic is that some people in the institution *choose to call* it Catholic, even if it embraces values that do not have uniquely Catholic content) provides the grounds for violating the law of the excluded middle. Using the authors' reasoning, every member of the DePaul community could, for example, reject the divinity of Christ, the real presence in the Eucharist, and the inherent value of all human life from conception through natural death, and still boldly claim that it is Catholic because it has *other* values that it *chooses* to call “consonant with the Catholic tradition” even though they are not distinctively Catholic values. That would mean, in other

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 185, authors' emphasis.



words, that the Catholicity of the institution could be both false and true at the same time by virtue of communal decree — something the law of the excluded middle would frown upon.

Although the article was written before Francis's papacy, it is also clear that its authors are violating Francis's own understanding of what it means to encounter the other as a Catholic institution, despite their championing of "dialogue" and "engagement." As noted, the authors celebrate the *rejection* of "fixed boundaries" in defining Catholicism and it is upon this rejection that they build their case for the goodness of dialogue. While they caution against what they define as a "whirlpool" model of Catholic identity, which appears to mean an unwillingness to have a conversation about Catholic identity at all, they also reject what they call the "sharp rocks" model of identity.<sup>35</sup> The "model of engagement," in the authors' eyes, is a compromise between these two extremes. Francis may agree that the rocks of identity do not necessarily need to be sharp. But, given his argument about the condition for the possibility of dialogue, he would likely maintain that *they do have to be rocks*. It is impossible to build bridges to the other, he might remind the authors, if the foundation to one's own identity is built on sand.

In sum, the authors of the article on DePaul's Catholic identity have constructed a conception of identity that not only violates "Catholicism" qua "Catholicism"; it violates the condition for the possibility of establishing and maintaining the *identity of anything*. If the authors are accurately depicting DePaul's institutional identity, they are depicting something that cannot be defined as an *inclusive* Catholic community because it cannot be defined either as "Catholic" or "community" at all.

There are alternatives. Benedictine College in Kansas states the following on its website under "Mission and Values":

As a Catholic college, Benedictine College is committed to those beliefs and natural principles that form the framework of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and it is committed further to those specific matters of faith of the Roman Catholic tradition, as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and handed down in the teachings of the Church. The college embraces students and faculty from all faiths who accept its goals, seeking in its members a personal commitment to the ideals and principles of a spiritual life and the expression of these in worship and action.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>36</sup> The mission statement of Benedictine College is available at <https://www.benedictine.edu/about/core/mission/index> (accessed August 31, 2017).

Even a quick read demonstrates that this mission statement meets the most basic criteria of institutional identity as it relates to a Catholic college: (a) it identifies what is *uniquely Catholic* about the institution (the college is Judeo-Christian, Catholic, and Benedictine and specifically identifies with the teachings of the Catholic Church, which have their origin in Jesus Christ), and (b) it clearly signals that its identity as a Catholic college is not open to being diverse or pluralistic itself by stating, “The college embraces students and faculty from all faiths *who accept its goals*, seeking in its members a personal commitment to the ideals and principles of a spiritual life and the expression of these in worship and action” (emphasis added). With these words, Benedictine is simultaneously affirming that it is an *inclusive* community (“the college embraces students and faculty from all faiths...”) that is also *a* community (“...who accept its goals...”). The Catholic college welcomes *all*, in other words, and “all” can potentially include substantive and substantial pluralism. But it cannot include *full* pluralism because, the mission statement recognizes, preserving its identity as a Catholic college necessarily implies that it only welcome those into the community who accept the community’s distinctively Catholic educational identity.

While this approach to Catholic identity in higher education is not the only one,<sup>37</sup> it is, at the very least, coherent. It meets the most basic

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<sup>37</sup>Richard Rymarz has recently argued, for example, that what he describes as “faithful presence” should be the defining characteristic of Catholic colleges. Rejecting what he calls the “relevance model” of Catholic education (i.e., Catholic colleges seeking to define themselves according to what is culturally important at the moment) on the grounds that that model has failed both to affirm Catholic identity and to attract students, he writes, “The ‘faithful presence’ model changes Catholic universities’ and colleges’ focus away from concentration on cultural integration, as typified by ‘relevance to’ models, towards a [model that emphasizes] engagement with culture, but one that arises out of a sense of what the college has to offer that is both transformative and germane to the [Catholic] tradition” (Richard Rymarz, “Faithful Presence: A Conceptual Model for Catholic Higher Education,” *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* [30:2, 2011, 309-324], 324).

Daniel Lowery offers an alternative model, but also stresses the importance of a Catholic college having both (a) a fixed, unified identity, and (b) an identity that is substantively different from secular colleges. Drawing insights from the theology of Karl Rahner and distinguishing between what he calls “nominal Catholicism” and “dogmatic Catholicism,” he writes, “Rahner understood that... we live in a world of multiple belief systems. For this reason, ‘dialogue’ is required... we are called to engage students in the context of their espoused and emerging belief systems... Nevertheless we should assert our belief that the Catholic response to the existential question is preferable to all other response” (Daniel Lowery, “Catholic Higher Education as Mission,” *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* [31:1, 2012, 83-117], 113). Note that Rymarz and Lowery have different substantive visions of what should define Catholic education, yet both recognize, in their

philosophical and theological requirements for defining a Catholic college as a Catholic college and, for that reason, can serve as a model for discussing how the value of inclusion can relate to Catholic identity.<sup>38</sup> Catholicism is, indeed, a diverse faith and can (and does) embrace many different expressions, which in turn can influence the creation of different kinds of Catholic identities, including identities of Catholic colleges. There is good reason to celebrate that. There is also good reason to celebrate the opening of Catholic educational communities to principled non-Catholics in the spirit of dialogue, mutual understanding, and the formation of students who can constructively engage a pluralistic world. Catholic colleges, in other words, have many good reasons to open their doors to substantive difference — so long as they never forget that every open door needs a wall to hold it up.

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own way, that the identity of a Catholic college must be uniquely Catholic and must, from an institutional perspective, be considered as non-negotiable precisely because that identity is taken to be *true* — or, in Lowery's language, "preferable to all other responses."

<sup>38</sup> As a concluding note, it is important to keep in mind that, whatever specific criteria any Catholic college chooses to employ to define its Catholic identity, it is not at liberty to "invent" it. Catholicism, like any system of beliefs, has contested areas, but it is disingenuous to claim that there is nothing fixed or uncontested in the faith. Identifying the specific features of Catholicism that ought to determine the Catholicity of any college goes beyond the scope of this argument, but some basic resources quickly come to mind: the Trinity; the unity of faith and reason; the unity of the good, true, and beautiful; the affirmation of the intrinsic relationship between morality and eternal human flourishing (sanctification and salvation); Christ as *logos* and redeemer; the incarnation; the Eucharist; Our Lady; the communion of saints; the existence of sin (and not just ignorance or mental illness); grace; sacramentality; the irreducibly individual character of every soul; the dignity of every human life; the magisterium; even the foundational features of the Church being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic — these and many more features of the faith are *clear* (which is not to say that they are not mysteries; they are — clear mysteries), and so can serve as a constellation of lodestars for any Catholic college discerning how to define and express its distinctive identity. It is also important to note that different institutions can determine the different "thresholds" of substantive inclusion that are appropriate for their specific function and character. Seminaries, for example, will understandably have lower thresholds than large, internationally renowned institutions like Georgetown University, Boston College, or the University of Notre Dame. Whatever the result of any deliberation about identity, however, it is important to keep at least one biblical passage close at hand during the process: "And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your soul?" (Mark 8:36).