



## CHRISTIAN INSPIRATION AND THE IDENTITY OF THE UNIVERSITY AS AN INSTITUTION<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** In this presentation, I argue that the history of universities is entirely germane to assessing what their role should be at the outset of the twenty-first century. Challenged as we are on all sides by cataclysmic changes in technology and economic demands that increasingly pressure us to become institutions aimed solely at variable utilitarian ends, we need to remember the ‘philosophical’ aspect of a university, as opposed to a technical education, and emphasize the importance of education in perfecting human intellects in our deliberations about the future of universities.

**KEYWORDS:** christian inspiration, identity of the university, liberal education

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It is my great honor and pleasure to speak to you today regarding the topic of the University as an institution and its relation to Christianity. But I do so at a time fraught with difficulties and challenges for universities and their life. Perhaps at no time since the reconstitution of universities in the nineteenth century has the role of universities been perceived as such a problem both by university members themselves, whether administration, faculty, or students, and the societies that universities serve. Much of the pressure to reform, to revamp, to discard, and, in any event, to pass beyond the received cultural inheritance of universities is coming from the seemingly cataclysmic changes, largely economic and technological, wrought in the past forty years: economic globalization, initially forwarded by improved transportation, but now overwhelming us on all sides through computer communication; widespread and ever-changing computer technology, itself representing a change of the very medium in which we work and one whose total impact is still undetermined; and the demand for entirely new and unprecedented professional skills along with a concomitant decline in demand for traditional skills and professions. As if this were not enough, we must add to this registry of challenges social changes both associated with these economic and technological developments and ones that simply reflect the impact of forces at work in political and social life throughout the history of modernity: the breakdown of families; the growth of individualism with its dialectical opposition of the individual to the group rather than the traditional picture of the individual within the horizon of the common good; the nigh-on universal attitude that human beings are only worth whatever they are capable of contributing to the economic development of society (or the bottom line of corporations); and the alienation felt nearly everywhere by young people as they try to make their way toward maturity, feeling little guidance from either the more traditional thinking embodied in their elders or the advice spewed forth by the most recent writings of journalistic commentators.

Little wonder in Europe, South America, and North America we hear calls for the reform of universities with emphasis to make them more relevant or up to date in the courses they offer and the skills they inculcate. But this call for reform is usually given in a kind of cultural and historical vacuum, appealing to universities to create programs and curricula that will serve as a panacea to society's problems, but with little understanding of the historical origins, or essential nature, of universities and the education they offer. Hence, the appeals for reform often are accompanied by a 'hidden agenda', i.e., a sense of what universities ought to do or what direction they should take in the context of the present challenges and problems. Usually, though not always, this 'hidden agenda' is conceived along the lines of 'reforming' universities so as to make of them places where the latest skills and technologies can be learned with the goal of placing students in high-paying jobs shortly after their graduation. Even a term such as 'life-long learning', a term coined to speak of reading and continuing to learn throughout one's life from the great writings of the past, has taken on the narrow and utilitarian meaning of keeping up with the latest computer programs and their new sets of commands.

To provide some context for our discussion of this pressing situation, I shall present my remarks in three parts: first, a brief historical review of the origin of universities with some articulation, thanks to that historical review, of the difference between universities and other types of schools of higher studies; second, an outline of how Newman in particular conceives of a university education and what is the essential difference between a university and a non-university education; third and finally, the role of the Church and the University in promoting a Catholic university education. The

themes treated so masterfully by *Ex corde Ecclesiae* will, of course, figure in the final part, but they will also be present at critical junctures in the other two parts.

## I. Historical Origin as a Sign of the Nature of Universities

Speaking in broad terms, the university as an institution is a curious creature. If we turn to Antiquity, we find schools of grammar and rhetoric, schools of law, and schools of philosophy among the institutions of higher learning. Do we find universities? The closest we seem to come to universities are geographical locations —both Alexandria and Rome at different points of time are candidates—, but, despite the presence in these places of several schools of higher learning, there is no central organizational nexus for such schools; they are not part of some larger social whole. Although the pattern of having higher studies in particular subjects is continued even after the breakup of the world of late Antiquity into the successor polities of Byzantium and the Islamic Caliphate, we do not find universities (with the possible exception of the schools of Constantinople): there are schools of philosophy, schools of Christian wisdom teaching philosophy, schools of rhetoric, and madras teaching Koranic sciences with elements of grammar, rhetoric, and (eventually) logic. In the Latin West, whether we turn to the so-called Barbarian kingdoms of the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Merovingians or to the latter Carolingian Empire, we find schools: court schools teaching grammar, literature, philosophy in the form that it was then known, and theology; monastic schools teaching grammar and literature along with the rudiments of theology; cathedral schools teaching grammar and elementary theology; and town schools teaching the grammar, rhetoric, and some forms of literature. None of these are universities. Once again, it is not necessarily the level of the studies that matters; there is no social whole or institutional nexus to which they belong. They are not what universities will be when they do come into being: *studia generalia*.<sup>3</sup>

Were we to continue our historical survey further, we would, of course, come to certain monastic, cathedral, and, in some cases, town schools that would lead institutionally to what are the first universities; in places such as Oxford, town grammar schools and schools of law would play a part; at Paris, the monastic schools and the cathedral schools would have key roles. Viewed more broadly, both the Church through its Papal oversight and its ordinaries in the various dioceses as well as the Emperor took interest in these nascent universities, fostering them in various ways. But this social history of the universities is not so much our concern. Our concern is with the institutional idea and ideal. Where does that come from and what does it tell us about universities?

We may gain some insight into this by paying attention to works on education produced in the West. In the Western Church, the father of this oft-neglected tradition of educational classics is St. Augustine and his chief work on the subject the *De doctrina christiana*. Augustine's world is the failing world of late antiquity, and his main concern is to advise Christian parents and caregivers about how to have their youngsters educated without their being corrupted by the schools of the period. Though Augustine fervently hopes that there will be Christian schools established someday, he is living in a world where parents had to send their children to pagan schools at every

<sup>3</sup> For a brief sketch of the early history of the medieval universities and their manners of instruction, see my "Scholasticism" in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jorge J.E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 55-64.

level of instruction, while both parents and adults received their religious training from the local clergy.<sup>4</sup> In this context, Augustine recommendations are notably broad-minded: he favors allowing young people to study most of the classical curriculum, exempting only astrology, divination, and certain of the fine arts (since these last were often used to portray in appealing ways the pagan deities).<sup>5</sup> The attitude towards all arts and sciences that Augustine encourages Christians to adopt is to welcome truth wherever it may be found<sup>6</sup> (spoiling the Egyptians) —even the views of pagan philosophers if they be true — , but not to seek eternal blessedness in learning nor to believe that learning is the goal of human life. Instead, Christians should see all their educational pursuits as leading to the study of higher things by way of higher signs; the signs of Sacred Scripture are the means of entering into the still higher realities of the mysteries of the faith and the life of the Trinity. If there are some things one merely uses (*utendae*), others one both enjoys and uses (*fruendae et utendae*), and still another one merely enjoys (*fruenda*) as the end of all things,<sup>7</sup> intellectual and moral virtues are clearly to be placed into the intermediate category since they are good in themselves, but clearly subordinate to the end of life with God that is the sole object to be enjoyed without qualification. Hence, Augustine's implied recommendation at the level of higher education is to study the range of the human arts and sciences so as to develop the moral and intellectual virtues, but nonetheless consider these not as the end for the sake of which all things are done in human life and in which all pursuits find their fulfillment; rather they are, however rewarding and worthy of attention in their own right, goods open to and useful to the Christian in his or her search after God.

Much did the Middle Ages learn from the writings of St. Augustine: many of their ideas about government and society as well as the relationship between man and God are based on his writings. In the area of education, moreover, their indebtedness was especially profound. The *De doctrina christiana* inspired an entire series of medieval works on education beginning with Boethius and Cassiodorus and continuing to the close of the Middle Ages. In these works, the precise recommendations for subjects of study were gradually changed in response to the increasing Christianization of Western society; no longer were the fine arts of the theater and painting so much a problem since, by the time of the High Middle Ages, those arts were being properly employed to express the mysteries of the faith and the drama of salvation. Thus by the time we reach a twelfth-century writer such as Hugh of St. Victor, we find him recommending not only some of the fine arts for inclusion within a properly Christian education, but also that students ponder the ways that the lower, mechanical arts fit into the hierarchy of human pursuits and point to the manifold character of divine wisdom.<sup>8</sup> The panoply of practical human undertakings must be seen both as serving the end of relieving human misery and as playing a positive role indirectly in the attainment of the human good.

Yet all of these changes in the range of subjects recommended for study were also paralleled by, indeed sometimes caused by, corresponding changes in the institutional

<sup>4</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1967), 259-269 and Henry I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, tr. George Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 424-438.

<sup>5</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II c. 25-39.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II c. 40.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* I c. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon*, II c. 20-27, tr. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 74-79.

setting for instruction.<sup>9</sup> In the course of time, there developed, from these types of schools, that *schola scholarum*, the university, wherein the ideal of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* could at last be realized in practice: to have all knowledge, human and divine, placed at the service of Christ since as truth it belongs to, and is from, Him who is the Truth.

If the present account is even approximately correct, the University does not arise incidentally in the Latin West and then equally by chance spread itself elsewhere by colonization and imitation; rather the ideal behind the University is precisely to study the entire range of subjects so as to order them in their mutual relations and coordinate them with the higher Wisdom revealed in Sacred Scripture and Church tradition. This means that there is a profoundly Augustinian outlook involved in the very notion of the University, an ideal that requires all major subjects, including theology and, yes, even theology in its revealed sense.

We may see this point confirmed if we study the crisis befalling the University of Paris at the end of the thirteenth century. The integral Aristotelianism of figures such as Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia represents not only the revival of a more ancient approach to the philosophy of Aristotle, but also the practice of prescinding from any higher discourse based on revealed theology. Such an ideal of a university is remarkably similar to that found in modernity, albeit the modern version is based upon Cartesian, and not Aristotelian, rationalism. Among others, St. Bonaventure responds to this crisis in both his earlier inaugural *principium*, the so-called *De reductione artium ad theologiam* and his *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*.<sup>10</sup> St. Bonaventure is, in this regard, a spokesperson for the type of the school that is the pinnacle of nearly a millennium of educational development and a lasting contribution to human society: a university—not merely a philosophical or a medical or a rhetorical or a legal school such as flourished in antiquity or the early Middle Ages—in which the full range of human arts and sciences find their place.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (Garden City, N. Y.: Image Books, 1958), 181-198; Phillipe Wolff, *L'Éveil intellectuel de l'Europe* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971), 155-199.

<sup>10</sup> On Bonaventure's *De reductione artium*, see Joshua Benson, "Bonaventure's *De reductione artium ad theologiam* and Its Early Reception as an Inaugural Sermon," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2011), 7-24.

<sup>11</sup> Bonaventure, *De reductione artium ad theologiam* n. 4-6 (OO V, 320b-322a); Bonaventure, *Collationes de decem praeceptis* coll. 2 n. 25 (OO V, 514b); Bonaventure, *Collationes de donis Spiritus Sancti* coll. 4 n. 12 (OO V, 475b-476a); and Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* coll. 5 n. 22; n. 33 (OO V, 357b; 359b). Bonaventure, In III Sent. d. 31, art. 2 q. 3 ad 2 (OO III 687a-b): "Ad illud quod obicitur de Hugone, quod scientiae inventae sunt propter indigentiam; dicendum, quod Hugo non assignat totam causam, sed tantum assignat causam, quae movit homines secundum statum praesentis vitae ad inventionem scientiae. Quamvis enim homines moti fuerint propter indigentias amovendas, huiusmodi habitus magis ordinari habent ad intelligentias nostras perficiendas; quod quidem non tantum competit statui viae, sed etiam patriae." See also Bonaventure, In II Sent. d. 7 pars 2 art. 1 q. 1 fund. 4 (OO 190a-b): "Item, peccatum non est contra actum, sed contra ordinem actus: ergo non est contra cognitionem simpliciter, sed contra cognitionem ordinatam in finem: si ergo cognitio speculativa, quantum est de se, non dicit cognitionem ordinatam in finem, patet, quod per peccatum non debet depravari."; Bonaventura, In I Sent. proemium q. 3 conc. (OO 13 a): "Respondeo: Ad intelligentiam praedictorum notandum est, quod perfectibile a scientia est intellectus noster. Hunc autem contingit considerare tripliciter, scilicet in se, vel prout extenditur ad affectum, vel prout extenditur ad opus. Extenditur autem intellectus per modum dictantis et regulantis. Secundum hunc triplicem statum, quia errare potest, habet triplicem habitum directivum. Nam si consideremus intellectum in se, sic est proprie speculativus et perficitur ab habitu, qui est contemplationis gratia, qui dicitur scientia speculativa."

## II. Newman's *Idea* and University Education

Newman tells us at the outset of *The Idea of a University* that moral education as well as the advancement of knowledge fall outside the scope of a university as he conceives its function; moral training he associates with a seminary or school, whereas the advancement of knowledge he consigns to academies and institutes of learning.<sup>12</sup> His ideal is that of providing a 'philosophical' education in which individuals learn to think carefully and critically about the facts they learn and their learning is, in some profound sense, for its own sake.<sup>13</sup> A note here is in order regarding the term 'philosophical'; what Newman means is a certain disposition of understanding parts and wholes as intelligible in terms of their principles, a habit of mind he often calls 'pushing things up to their first principles'.<sup>14</sup> This habit of mind is to be found in an exemplary fashion in philosophy in the narrower sense that designates studies such as ethics, metaphysics and so forth, but it is not delimited to philosophy alone. And this habit of mind is precisely what a university education provides.

How are we to conceive of this university education? To answer this question, we need to call to mind the overall structure of Newman's argument in *The Idea of a University*. After the preface and Discourse I in which he points out that the philosophy of education is based on principles discernible by natural reason and that such principles can serve as a guide for both believers and non-believers alike, Newman proceeds to develop his main argument in three stages: 1) in Discourses II, III, and IV he deals with theology and its relation to the various sciences comprising the circle of knowledge; 2) in Discourses V, VI, and VII he shows that the intrinsic value of education, as well as its usefulness, consists in the perfection of the intellect; and 3) in Discourses VIII and IX he examines the relation of knowledge to the faculty of reason in the concrete and the duties of the Church towards reason and knowledge in the concrete.

Though we shall have something to learn from each of the stages of Newman's argument, let us postpone examining the third stage until the final part of our remarks and focus our attention for the moment on the first two. Turning to the first, we should observe that Newman argues from the very conception of a university, as an educational institution in which all the arts and sciences are taught, for the inclusion of theology within a university education.<sup>15</sup> Consistent with his insistence that the principles of education are ones pertaining to natural reason, Newman usually means by 'theology' the theology that human reason can learn from created things as disclosed in ordinary experience. But, at times, he does also argue for the inclusion of revealed theology and, in doing so, Newman is subscribing to the same fundamental ideal of the university, ultimately inspired by Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, that is shared by the medieval universities.

Furthermore, Newman argues not only that the absence of theology from the range of subjects taught at a university is inconsistent with the notion of a university as a place of

<sup>12</sup> John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Preface, 3; 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse V sec. 5-10, 83-91.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination* (NewHaven/London: Yale University Press, 1992), 22-31. Newman, *The Idea of the University*, Discourse VII sec. 5, 116.

<sup>15</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse II sec. 1, 25: "As to the range of University teaching, certainly the very name of University is inconsistent with restrictions of any kind. Whatever was the original of the adoption of that term, which unknown, I am only putting on it its popular, its recognized sense, when I say that a University should teach universal knowledge."

universal knowledge, but also that lack of theological teaching will hamper the communication and development of the other intellectual disciplines. On what grounds? First, the absence of any serious, major subject of inquiry in a university setting proves deleterious to other sciences by not allowing for the proper competition and rivalry between disciplines that, functioning as a corrective, improves the quality of each. Second, theology's subject matter is so universal in scope and so fundamental to the range of phenomena that constitute the world that theology's absence in the university curriculum will leave the remaining disciplines radically incomplete and, through causing a vacuum, encourage them, from their own relatively meagre and insufficient resources, to fashion *simulacra* of theology's more telling and complete explanations.<sup>16</sup> These observations about the tendency of other disciplines to craft 'master explanations' or narratives in the absence of at least a philosophical theology based in metaphysics should remind us of similar remarks in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in which he describes how other sciences apart from metaphysics study a part of being, while he also observes that there is a drive in the human soul to know the ultimate 'why'.<sup>17</sup>

I must emphasize the importance of Newman's second reason for claiming that the absence of theology is so damaging to a university's educational system. Newman is not simply relying here on the notion that theology's subject is distinct from those of the other sciences; he is explicitly appealing to the priority of theology as a form of intellectual inquiry over the other sciences:

I cannot understand at all how, supposing it [viz, theology] to be true, it can fail, considered as knowledge, to exert a powerful influence on philosophy, literature, and every intellectual creation or discovery whatever. ... It meets us with a profession and a proffer of the highest truths to which the human mind is capable; it embraces a range of subjects the most diversified and distant from each other. What science will not find on part or other of its province traversed by its path? What results of philosophic speculation are unquestionable, if they have been gained without inquiry as to what Theology had to say to them?<sup>18</sup>

In a word, implied in Newman's treatment of theology in *The Idea of a University* is his conviction that the sciences are arranged in hierarchical order with theology being at the height of intellectual inquiry, owing to the supreme dignity and universality of its subject matter. Hence, we see that, despite not treating the theme as extensively, Newman does subscribe, just as much as his medieval predecessors, to a hierarchy of intellectual disciplines within the scheme of higher education.

If we return to the second stage of Newman's overall argument —this is the one that so many writers on a university education in the twentieth century tended to appropriate since it does not make any appeals to the need for theology or even a hierarchy among branches of knowledge—, we should clarify in our own minds what precisely Newman is claiming about the nature of a liberal education and the range of university studies. He is certainly not denying that a university education is useful to its possessor; it is indeed, but primarily and principally because it is in the first instance the good and perfection of the intellect. His point in emphasizing that the aim of a university education is a liberal education is just to help us grasp, in the face of the utilitarianism so rampant in modern life more generally, that there is a perfection of the intellect as such and that this is its intrinsic good. To put the point as clearly as possible, he

<sup>16</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse III sec.2-4, 42-45; Discourse IV sec. 14, 74-75.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV 1, 1003a20-25; *Metaphysics* I 1, 980a21-26; c. 2, 982b11-27.

<sup>18</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse III sec. 8, 55.

devotes an entire section of Discourse VII to it, in the midst of which is an extraordinarily long sentence that instantiates *in actu exercito* the very excellence he is attempting to describe:

And so as regards intellectual culture, I am far from denying utility in [a] large sense as the end of Education, when I lay it down, that the culture of the intellect is a good in itself and its own end; I do not exclude from the idea of intellectual culture what it cannot but be, from the very nature of things; I only deny that we must be able to point out, before we have any right to call it useful, some art, or business, or profession, or trade, or work, as resulting from it and as its real and complete end. ...

As the body may be sacrificed to some manual or other toil..., so may the intellect be devoted to some specific profession and I do not call this the *culture* of the intellect. Again, as some member or organ of the body may be inordinately used and developed, so may memory, or imagination, or the reasoning faculty; and this again is not intellectual culture. On the other hand, as the body may be tended, cherished, and exercised with a simple view to its general health, so may the intellect be generally exercised in order to its perfect state; and this *is* its cultivation.

Again, as health ought to precede labour of the body, and as a man in health can do what an unhealthy mind cannot do, and as of this health, the properties are strength, energy, agility, graceful carriage and action, manual dexterity, and endurance of fatigue, so in like manner general culture of mind is the best aid to professional and scientific study, and educated men can do what illiterate cannot; and the man who has learned to think and to reason and to compare and to discriminate and to analyze, who has refined his taste, and formed his judgment, and sharpened his mental vision, will not indeed at once be a lawyer, or a pleader, or an orator, or a statesman, or a physician, or a good landlord, or a man of business, or a soldier, or an engineer, or a chemist, or a geologist, or an antiquarian, but he will be placed in that state of intellect in which he can take up any one of the sciences or callings I have referred to, or any other for which he has a taste or special talent, with an ease, a grace, a versatility, and a success, to which another is a stranger.<sup>19</sup>

The notion of knowledge being its own end, contained in these and other justly famous passages of *The Idea of a University* has, I think, two salient characteristics: 1) the activity of pursuing knowledge and acquiring it does not derive its goodness from any results forthcoming, but has its goodness in its own right, because knowledge, especially 'philosophical' knowledge, perfects the power of the intellect; 2) given the very nature of things, the attainment of a state of knowledge by the intellect has beneficial results for human society and its activities. Notice that the first is simply the positive statement recognizing that there is a state of health for the intellect and making no further claim; no order is stated between the perfection of the intellect and the highest good.

### III: Catholic Universities' Education

If this 'philosophical' education, this perfection of the intellect, is what is the ideal and aim of a university education, what does the adjective 'Catholic' add in the term 'Catholic university'? This is, of course, the topic and theme of *Ex corde ecclesiae*, the Apostolic Constitution given on the Feast of the Assumption, 15 August 1990.

<sup>19</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse VII sec. 6, 117-118. The last sentence is 203 words long, a masterful demonstration of Newman's command of the English language.



According to that Constitution, the four Catholic features added to the general conception of a university are: Christian inspiration of the community; continuing reflection upon our ever-growing rational knowledge in the light of revelation; fidelity to the Gospel message as taught by the Church; and institutional commitment to serving the people of God and the wider human community along their way toward their Ultimate End.

Unsurprisingly, this statement of what 'Catholic' adds to the term 'University' accords quite well with Newman's own attitude as expressed in the final part of his *Idea of the University*; after all, the Pope quotes both Augustine and Newman in the very section of the Constitution that contains the four earmarks of a Catholic University.

Still, the difficulties that Newman addresses in his final section of the *Idea* are different from the generic ones that the Constitution targets. In particular, the Constitution does not cope with hostility toward, or reluctance to acknowledge, the excellence of a Catholic University. But that is just what Newman's discussion has in mind; for it is here that Newman introduces the necessary cautions that one must exercise in dealing with academic life in the concrete. In the first of the two discourses developing this final stage, having so lifted up the cultivation of the intellect for its own sake, he proceeds to warn against what he terms the "Religion of Philosophy", a tendency he finds in abundance in the work of Lord Shaftesbury. Such an approach to human life, in effect, cuts off human beings from any other end than the cultivation of the intellect. Newman finds it objectionable because it takes what is true partially and makes of it the entire story; in presenting the true, but incomplete, as the entirely true and sufficient, the Religion of Philosophy makes the statements of truth it does contain "perverted and false."<sup>20</sup> Likewise, in the final section, he warns those governing Catholic universities against two potentially errant tendencies: first, to have theology taught as just another subject without enlivening the intellectual and moral lives of the university's members; second, against proscribing authors or subjects that are secular in such a way as to cripple the pursuit of a legitimate discipline. On balance, institutionally speaking, the Church is to assist the University by steadying the University in the execution of its function; from the viewpoint of the individual, a Catholic university education helps us by allowing us to "perfect our nature, not by undoing it, but by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims higher than its own."<sup>21</sup>

Where does all of this leave us in our current predicament in which we are under constant pressure to modify the structure of University education so to make it more accommodating to contemporary economic and social life? Newman's situation is not quite the same as our own, though it is in some respects parallel and hence instructive. In his world, the call of utilitarian accommodation meant eliminating Latin and Greek in favor of French and German, displacing the study of classical history with modern history, and focusing intellectual attention upon the emerging social sciences as opposed to philosophy and classics. In our world, the same utilitarian mentality wants to make of the university a place of learning skills relevant to contemporary computer technology and a narrow range of sciences directly bearing upon economically profitable applications. In both his situation and ours, we need to restate the importance of educating university students for that perfection of the intellect that is an intrinsic good, not merely a skill of temporary economic value. To quote Newman's own words

<sup>20</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse VIII sec. 8, 140.

<sup>21</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse V sec. 10, 91

on this point, we need to remember and remind others, whether university administrators, politicians, or businessmen, that the "useful is not always good, but the good is always useful."<sup>22</sup>

But I would be remiss in my duties toward the Catholic university tradition, did I not mention some particular concerns and patterns of conduct that compromise the ability of our tradition to continue and flourish.

First, at least in the United States, there are far too many members of the episcopacy, provincial ministers, and other leaders of religious orders who seem to think that Catholic universities are not part of their pastoral concern. Hence, they tend to allow those universities falling under their care to become increasingly secularized without much thought for how that may impact the souls of the faithful, whether in their own diocese or more generally. What is especially disheartening is that some of these same bishops and religious leaders share the assumption of the secular reformers to the effect that education is inherently utilitarian in nature.

Second, there is a challenge to Catholic universities that is more broadly cultural/historical and it has to do with the preservation of and continued engagement with the vast literature in which Catholic culture in the West finds its expression. It would not be too much to suggest that we are in precarious position here in the early twenty-first century; our situation is more or less analogous to that of Boethius in the sixth century. We are seeing a major linguistic shift. Practically every text needs to be translated into English if it is to have any widespread cultural impact (that English is becoming the equivalent of what Latin did for the Middle Ages is regrettably, even lamentably, true). This puts considerable pressure upon us to render the most important texts of our tradition into the new *lingua Franca*. But are we even able to do so? The decline of Latinity that has characterized much of Catholic intellectual culture over the past half century now is not simply a problem for hopeless pedants who edit medieval texts (such as myself); it poses, after the manner of the loss of the knowledge of Greek in Boethius's world, a real impediment to cultural continuity even within the Western Catholic tradition. If we add to this, the change from the medium of print to that of electronic media, there is even more to be concerned about, though there is, to be sure, some ground for hope as well.

As to more particular applications within universities, I would suggest the following. More than Newman could even imagine in the midst of the nineteenth century, knowledge has become specialized and fragmented. The degree of specialization has led to a real breakdown of communication within institutions of higher education and made recognition of basic principles of forming and re-forming *curricula* even more difficult to articulate. Furthermore, the Enlightenment's full effect on intellectual life has become much clearer since Newman's time. On the one hand, intellectual disciplines that imitate or mimic the so-called hard sciences, particularly physics, are thought to be worthy of the most respect; on the other, disciplines have no order among themselves save perhaps in relation to their utility, ever variable, for society. What Newman (and Bonaventure before him) can remind us of, in terms of their similarities, is that there is a set of overarching principles, not merely ephemeral, that can guide our deliberations about academic life and *curricula*. Indeed, perhaps Bonaventure's theme of the journey and its implicit priority of the narrative structure to the analytic structure may be of particular value to us; we need a model for connecting the elements in the curriculum that is not simply a statement of their formal objects and that keeps in mind the souls of

<sup>22</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse VII sec. 5, 117.

the students who are the subjects of a university education. In a similar vein, our social lives are much less integrated and much more splintered than were the social lives of human beings in Newman's and Bonaventure's times. Perhaps Bonaventure's idea of a moral component to education, even higher education, is not out of place as an antidote to the moral indifference and confusion so common in our own heterogeneous society.

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