A Philosophical Habit of Mind: Newman and the University

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Introduction

The Victorian scholar George Malcolm Young claimed that if he could preserve only two books on education, they would be Aristotle’s *Ethics* and John Henry Newman’s *Idea of a University*. He claimed that the “the rest might, with no loss to humanity and possibly some advantage, be pulped.”

In his letters, Newman reveals that this work of his was his most difficult to write. And of all the discourses on university education that Newman wrote—which would later be collected and published together as *The Idea of a University*—it was what later became the fifth discourse that caused him the most anxiety and sleep loss. In that discourse, he was attempting to explain that the goal of a university education is the cultivation of the intellect. Seeking a second opinion, he asked an Oratorian confere of his to look at it. The confere strongly criticized it on the grounds that it failed to attribute a religious end to a university education. Upon confronting this criticism, Newman could just picture the very same coming from the Irish episcopate: “Here we’ve invited an eminent English Churchman,” they might say, “to establish a *Catholic University* here in Ireland over
against the secular Queen’s universities, those ‘godless colleges,’ the ones that exclude theology on principle—and he’s telling us that the goal of this Catholic university is not religious, but secular; not moral, but intellectual?!”

Newman’s solution was to draft an introduction that would clarify his position so as both to appease the Irish bishops who brought him to Ireland, and to stay true to his idea of a university, which was neither a seminary, nor a finishing school or technical school, but a place for the communication and pursuit of universal knowledge for its own sake. In that introduction, he clarified that the direct end of a university is intellectual; the indirect end religious.

In what follows, I will treat both the direct and the indirect end of the university. I hope, however, to do more than simply present these ends of Newman’s university. I will argue that the indirect end of the university—the moral and religious formation of the students—is not simply superadded to the direct, intellectual, end of the university, but is integral to that intellectual pursuit. To understand this intellectual goal of the university, it might be helpful to consider first what the ideal graduate of Newman’s university does not look like.

**Two Intellectual Pitfalls**

For Newman, any education that is unbalanced risks promoting two highly undesirable intellectual characteristics. The first is what he calls “viewiness.” Viewiness is essentially a kind of superficial knowledge about everything without connecting the dots between subject-areas, without tracing what is known to higher causes or principles, and without any particular attention to accuracy of detail. It is all breadth and no depth. The person who succumbs to “viewiness” is the “one who is full of ‘views’ on all subjects of philosophy, on all matters of the day.” Newman continues, “It is almost thought a disgrace not to have a view at a moment’s notice on any question from the Personal Advent to the Cholera or Mesmerism.” The viewy one is not so much a person who has views (which is in itself not a bad thing) but someone...
who holds them in a rash, half-informed, and unserious way. The best illustration of this is offered by Newman himself in his description of the character Sheffield in *Loss and Gain*: “That is, he [Sheffield] was ‘viewy,’ in a bad sense of the word. He was not satisfied intellectually with things as they are; he was critical, impatient to reduce things to system, pushed principles too far, was fond of argument, partly from pleasure in the exercise, partly because he was perplexed, though he did not lay anything very much to heart.”

A variation on viewiness reappears in Newman’s addresses on “University Subjects,” where Newman describes what he calls the “inaccurate student.” The inaccurate student is one who seems to know something about a great many things, but those things are flawed, or superficial, and when tried, wanting; when pushed, found unstable. The “inaccurate student” is “viewy” insofar as he finds it hard to focus on one idea or to pay attention to details in reading. Those with an inaccurate mind might be pleasant in conversation and comment on a given topic with flare here and there, but due to intellectual sloth, they will lack “consistency, steadiness, or perseverance.” On a practical level, says Newman, among other things, “They will not be able to make a telling speech, or to write a good letter. . . . They cannot state an argument or a question . . . or give sensible and appropriate advice under difficulties.”

And such a juvenile habit—viewiness or inaccuracy—is exacerbated, observes Newman, by the nineteenth century’s cultural obsession with periodical literature: the more frequently things have to be published, the more young people are demanded to offer a “view” on this, that, or the other. It promotes in them what Newman calls a “reckless originality of thought.” The Victorian could not imagine a twenty-four-hour news cycle, nor could he fathom how vacuous much of the “round table” discussions are on television; he did not know what Twitter or a meme is, or what it means to be “woke.” But Newman nevertheless sees the danger posed to intellectual formation by the demands of a culture’s voracious appetite for media. This obsession with having views on things is, according to Newman,
owing in great measure to the necessities of periodical literature, now so much in request. Every quarter of a year, every month, every day, there must be a supply, for the gratification of the public, of new and luminous theories on the subjects of religion, foreign politics, home politics, civil economy, finance, trade, agriculture, emigration . . . etc. . . . the journalist lies under the stern obligation of extemporizing his lucid views, leading ideas, and nutshell truths for the breakfast table.\textsuperscript{11}

Viewy or inaccurate persons cannot draw a connection between their opinions on a certain matter, and the deeper principles upon which they are based. They might not know what the principles are, or they may have none. They might be very certain about a given position but fall flat when under sustained critique. And with secularism’s sidelining of once-respected institutions that provided a common framework of intellectual “givens,” once, long ago, taken for granted, the viewy persons are hopelessly thrown back on themselves to establish these principles. According to Newman, “They can give no better guarantee for the philosophical truth of their principles than their popularity at the moment, and their happy conformity in ethical character to the age which admires them.”\textsuperscript{12} In other words, viewiness is beholden to a culture that constantly clamors for views and input, and avails of a kind of pop-philosophy that assures the reader or listener that what is being said is “informed” and “thoughtful.” In this context, viewiness goes hand in hand with inaccuracy; the demand for constant input means we have no time for—no stomach for—and consequently, no capacity for—attention to detail and nuance.\textsuperscript{13}

Now the opposite of “viewiness,” for Newman, is the second educational risk for a university: namely, bringing forth the “man of one idea.”\textsuperscript{14} The “man of one idea” or man of one science, is one whose specialization or “major” becomes the sole vantage point for viewing reality. The major interest of the man of one idea becomes the interpretative key for everything. Its principles become “the measure
of all things.” The principle might be “all material being is made up of atoms;” or “a free market allocates goods and resources most efficiently;” or “we ought to pursue social justice.” These might be true, but on their own become incredibly misleading. Persons of one idea are incapable of seeing reality from a different perspective. Whatever they say, though in its own place true, is, to quote Newman, “sure to become but a great bubble, and to burst.” More nefariously, when in discourse with those who lack a wider perspective than they, “they persuade the world of what is false by urging upon it what is true.” That is to say, the world is easily deceived by them, for what they say is not false and actually boasts of great success, usually corroborated by technological and medical progress whose impressiveness is its own justification.

The man of one idea is also simply tedious and, in the long run, an incredibly boring conversation partner. I say “in the long run” because the astrophysicist might dazzle someone at table with all sorts of incredible information that would fascinate anyone who is at all curious about the universe. But over a longer period of time, if this astrophysicist is a man of one idea, he will inevitably sound tiresome when confronted with different subject matters.

The man of one idea and the viewy man are two types, two extremes that Newman seeks to avoid. One ought to seek accuracy without hyperspecialization and universal knowledge without superficiality. It seems, then, that we are at risk of spreading the butter either too thin or too thick, for, as Newman says, “a thorough knowledge of one science and a superficial acquaintance with many, are not the same thing” and that “a smattering of a hundred things or a memory for detail, is not a philosophical or comprehensive view.”

I argue, however, that it is not Newman’s main aim to spread the perfect amount of cognitive butter perfectly evenly over the entire surface of knowable reality. It is not about the student knowing a medium amount of knowledge about all subjects. His solution is, rather, to develop a habit of mind he calls philosophical. It is a
much more manageable goal, but one for which only a university is particularly fit.

Newman’s Ideal: A Philosophical Habit of Mind

For Newman, the university is a “school of universal learning,” and its end is to develop and perfect the intellect. The intellect is made for knowledge and so university education is not simply to impart such knowledge but also to capacitate the intellect to acquire knowledge in the future. To that end, one needs to develop a habit that capacitates one for learning in different situations, when confronting different questions, when confronted with different kinds of evidence and different methods. Such a capacity is a virtue, or what Newman calls a habit of mind, and this virtue that attends to bearings of different kinds of knowledge, Newman calls “philosophical”: a “philosophical habit of mind.”

We can break down this phrase, starting with “habit of mind” first and then the qualifier, “philosophical.”

Aristotelians—especially those familiar with the *Nicomachean Ethics*—will be best equipped to understand what Newman means by a “habit of mind.” The phrase “habit of mind” and equivalents are dotted throughout Newman’s entire corpus, beginning already in his earliest sermons as an Anglican fellow at Oriel. A “habit of mind” can also be referred to as an “intellectual habit,” a “frame of mind,” and a certain “temper.” By considering his usage of “habit of mind,” we can infer some things about what Newman means by it.

First, for Newman, a “habit” is essentially the same as Aristotelian virtue. It is a stable disposition that inclines the person to act in a certain way. An intellectual habit, or habit of mind, is, for Newman, a habit that disposes the mind to infer and judge in a certain way.

All habits, including intellectual ones, grow and become more stable, permanent, and continuous. It might fail on occasion, but the inclination still perdures. By contrast, a one-off exhibition of a certain kind of behavior does not make it a habit. A habit endures. It
is abiding. Its stability and steadiness give the mind a certain “property,” “character,” or “temper.”

Second, a habit of mind is dynamic in the sense that it moves the mind in a certain direction. That is to say, the habit disposes the mind to judge one way rather than another, and such successive judgments of one kind or another propel the mind forward in one direction or another. Hence, Newman sometimes uses the word “course” interchangeably with “habit,” “course” here meaning a path or a route to be taken: there is a “religious course of mind” or a secular one.

Third, habits of mind, like other habits, are not taught, but formed and cultivated over long periods of time. This cultivation can be pursued conscientiously, as it is done in the university. But elsewhere, Newman also admits that habits of mind can be formed to a great extent by external circumstances, such as how one is raised, what one is taught, and what one is exposed to as a child. The implication is that students coming to university are not blank slates.

The student who goes off to university already has an intellectual habit, but it is the university’s task to refine it or recalibrate it. As Newman writes, “The bodily eye, the organ for apprehending material objects, is provided by nature; the eye of the mind, of which the object is truth, is the work of discipline and habit.”

Fourth, habits of mind entail the regular belief of certain principles. A habit of mind disposes the individual to think this way or that way by virtue of some prior, deeply ingrained principles to which he or she assents. Such principles, for Newman, are capable of being put into a proposition: for example, “That which is necessary for salvation is to be found in scripture alone.” To use Newman’s own example, sola scriptura is a principle of what he calls the Protestant habit of mind. But such a principle, for Newman, can only be exercised alongside another more prior principle of private judgment. Hence, the Protestant habit of mind exercises itself according to at least these two principles—sola scriptura and private judgment. Of course, as with any habit of mind, more principles could be enumerated.

And entailed in this fourth point is the fifth and obvious point:
namely, that depending on the principles assented to, one begins to cultivate a certain kind of habit of mind. So Newman speaks not only of a Protestant, but of all sorts of habits of mind, including a Christian habit of mind, a religious habit of mind, a secular habit of mind, and an experimental habit of mind among others. Religious faith, for Newman, is a habit of mind, as is methodical doubt. One can have as well a “despondent, or liberalistic, or sceptical habit of mind.” If it seems difficult to distinguish between kinds of habit of mind on the one hand and simple character traits on the other, this is because they are closely related. Habits—including intellectual habits—determine the kind of person who possesses them. To be hyperbolic for a moment, one could say with Ovid that “mind is the man.”

One’s intellectual habits give the human person a horizon or a worldview, a frame of reference, a ruling idea, an attitude, a mental disposition, a vision, if you will, of reality according to particular principles and presuppositions. So it is, for example, that a Christian habit of mind inclines the individual to associate the visible world with the invisible. Thus habituated, the Christian might confront the same phenomena as the secularist but interpret them very differently. For example, a serious Christian who is aware of a past sin or disobedience and is confronted with its negative consequences is capacitated to see in it a kind of divine chastisement or judgment. The one possessed of a secular habit of mind, quite obviously, would not only refuse to interpret events in this way, but would be incapable of doing so. He has not the disposition for it because contrary principles underlie his habit of mind.

Unlike the religious or Christian habit of mind versus the secular or skeptical, other habits of mind are not necessarily contradictory and can coexist, one with another. Hence, when Newman applies the distinction between real and notional assent to matters of religion, he distinguishes between a religious habit of mind and a theological one. The religiously habituated approach their objects devotionally through impressions on the imagination. The theologically habituated mind can approach the same object, but with a host of
abstractions and inferences underlying it. The one with a theological habit of mind assents to God’s being and attributes as a theological truth; the one with a religious habit of mind assents to the same reality as a fact. These two habits, for Newman, not only coexist but are dependent on each other. They are, in Newman’s words, “two concurring and coincident courses of thought.” And this is possible because the principles belonging to the religious and theological habits of mind, though perhaps different, are not antagonistic.

This same coincidence and concurrence can take place between the philosophical habit of mind on the one hand, to which all students ought to aspire, and a more particular habit of mind pertaining to one’s specific course of study (that is, one’s “major” to use the American jargon), so long as that specific habit of mind does not work on principles contrary to the philosophical.

So if a habit of mind is an intellectual virtue, a stable disposition of the mind that inclines the person to think and judge in a certain way, according to certain principles, which propels that same person in a definite intellectual direction, then what is a “philosophical habit of mind?” It is, to put it very simply, the acquired ability of interpreting and making judgments about reality as one complex but coherent whole or, in Newman’s words, the “philosophical contemplation of the field of Knowledge as a whole.”

While Newman’s *Idea of a University* is perhaps most well known for its defense of the liberal arts, its repudiation of a utilitarian view of the academy, and its argument for the rightful and indeed natural inclusion of theology in an institution that pursues universal knowledge, perhaps the most important philosophical presupposition underlying all of this is Newman’s claim that reality is one. While more will be said about this philosophical principle below, what is important to note now is the correlate: namely, that the intellect can approach that one reality not through an intuitive vision but only piecemeal and, hence, only through individual disciplines or branches of knowledge and further, “that these branches are not isolated and independent one of another, but form together a whole or system.”
or a circle of knowledge. Excluding one branch “is likely to lead to distortion, imbalance, and misrepresentation, either by omission or exaggeration of key perspectives.”

So it is that, while Newman’s inclusion of theology at the university has garnered perhaps the most scholarly attention and controversy, it is actually his inclusion and understanding of the role of philosophy, or what he calls the “science of sciences,” that gets to the crux of what he understands a university to be. Philosophy, for Newman, examines the scope and limits of each subject by relating them ultimately to one single, coherent reality or being in its height, depth, length, and breadth.

He writes:

> the comprehension of the bearings of one science on another, and the use of each to each, and the location and limitation and adjustment and due appreciation of them all, one with another, this belongs, I conceive, to a sort of science distinct from all of them, and in some sense a science of sciences, which is my own conception of what is meant by Philosophy, in the true sense of the word, and of a philosophical habit of mind, and which in these Discourses I shall call by that name.

The philosophical habit of mind, then, is about seeing things as part of this whole or system. He also calls this a “form of Universal Knowledge.” It might come as a relief that universal knowledge, for Newman, is not tantamount to knowing everything about all things. Newman is not expecting everyone to be a renaissance man, or an expert in all fields. He is simply claiming that the exactness and trustworthiness of the knowledge that each distinct discipline conveys is proportional to the extent to which we are trained to locate each discipline in its rightful place. Universal knowledge, for Newman, is “the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence.” If you know where a puzzle piece belongs in a
puzzle, you have a better, more exact and trustworthy idea of what is depicted on that piece when you examine it individually.

Newman also calls this habit of mind “the perfection or virtue of the intellect by the name of philosophy, philosophical knowledge, enlargement of mind, or illumination.” He also calls it a certain kind of “comprehensiveness.” The philosophical person is the one who can discriminate “between truth and falsehood,” sift “out the grains of truth from the mass,” and arrange “things according to their real value.”

“Such a power,” Newman writes, “is the result of a scientific formation of mind; it is an acquired faculty of judgment, of clear-sightedness, of sagacity, of wisdom, of philosophical reach of mind, and of intellectual self-possession and repose.” Elsewhere, Newman refers to it as a “philosophical condition of mind.” Newman’s use of the word “condition” coheres well with his other analogies for the university. One’s physical condition is helped by the doctor or hospital; one’s material condition is enhanced by work, or the almshouse; one’s spiritual condition is the remit of the Church; and one’s intellectual condition is developed by the university.

To achieve this, the university must provide a forum for the representatives of all the sciences.

Though [the students] cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. . . . They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other . . . [The well-formed student] apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. . . . A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what in a former Discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a University.
For Newman, different methods in disciplines supply different habits of mind.\textsuperscript{55} The coexistence of different but noncontradictory habits of mind is crucial for understanding what Newman is seeking to cultivate at the university. The historian might be using moral proof and reasoning from antecedent probability; the geometer would reason more deductively. The English student might be developing a more liberal habit of mind, the engineer a more experimental one. The challenge of the university is to develop a philosophical habit in all students, while letting the more particular intellectual habits flourish as well.

It is not that Newman expects every student to be a major in all subjects. He simply believes that the English major, for example, will benefit from not only knowing that a School of Engineering exists, but also from talking to engineering students, living with them, and taking courses in other subjects, especially philosophy. Because the university does not in principle exclude any branch of knowledge, it alone—in contrast to the polytechnic, or other third level institutions that exclude a subject on principle—can offer that locus of intellectual exchange necessary to develop a philosophical habit of mind.

Contrary to the undisciplined viewy graduate on the one hand and the narrow-minded specialist on the other, the philosophically habituated knows that each method in its own sphere is good; he knows one method is not adequate to all inquiries.\textsuperscript{56} And so the philosophically habituated knows, further, that she has to be nimble enough to oscillate between the various methods and exercises of mind in order to enjoy some kind of vision of the whole. Her mental functions have to work together, like a symphony orchestra, in “concert” to use Newman’s expression. The philosophically habituated mind, then, is able to assemble, correct, and combine pieces of knowledge “by the employment, concentration, and” — and here I stress Newman’s own words—“joint action of many faculties and exercises of mind. Such a union and concert of the intellectual powers, such an enlargement and development, such a comprehensiveness, is necessarily a matter of training.”\textsuperscript{57} The university is the training ground.
The word “idea” is significant in Newman’s corpus. We can recall, for example, that in Newman’s *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Christianity itself is an “idea” which, like other great ideas—such as democracy, Judaism, Gnosticism, and Protestantism—develops in history. An “idea” for Newman, is something that seizes the imagination and mobilizes men. For Newman, all institutions are animated by an idea: “Ideas are the life of institutions.” If the “leading idea” of Christianity, for Newman, is the Incarnation, the leading idea of a university, the idea that animates the institution, is unity.

In his original fifth discourse, not published in *The Idea of a University*, Newman makes much ado about an “idea” animating an institution. He adopts Aristotle’s teaching that the rational soul is not only the animator, but also the form of the human body. The “idea” of unity—or the unity of knowledge—not only gives life to the university but makes it what it is. Like a soul that not only animates a foot or hand, but renders that foot or hand a *limb* or a part of a living body, so too the idea of unity not only catalyzes the pursuit of knowledge but renders this or that individual subject discipline a *branch* of knowledge or part of a whole. The idea or principle that unites all the disciplines into a unified endeavor, that “imparts to each a dignity by giving it a meaning,” which “moulds, inspires, individualizes a whole,” is the idea that “all branches of knowledge are one whole.”

This idea—let us call it the unity of knowledge—assumes a host of other presuppositions or more foundational principles which Newman took for granted (even if many today do not). They are, then, by implication, the necessary principles for developing a philosophical habit of mind. These would include, but are not limited to:

1. Reality is intelligible.
2. The intellect is made for reality, and capable of knowledge of the whole.
3. Truth does not contradict truth because . . .
4. There is a Truth that transcends all truths, a Being that transcends all beings, a foundational ground for all knowledge that unifies it because it is the cause of it.

5. This first cause is author both of a reality that is intelligible, and of human subjects who are intelligent. In other words, God underlies both reality and the humans who come to know it, for God is, in the words of one Newman commentator, “the Source and Guarantor of universal knowledge and of its coherent intelligible unity, the philosophical ground of knowledge.”

6. God is also the divine author of our natures, including those laws governing how it is that our human nature comes to know. That we reason one way in morals and another way in physics is under God’s providence—discursive proof here, moral proof there. The variety is as God designed it. It is in the nature of things.

7. The world is on a providential course, pregnant with the meaning intended for it by its creator.

The list could be filled out more, but this is simply an indication of all the principles involved and presupposed when Newman says that “knowledge is one.”

Just as sola scriptura is one principle among many of the Protestant habit of mind, the philosophical habit of mind works according to its own. One who conducts theological investigations according to sola scriptura will arrive at radically different conclusions to one who does not. Similarly, one who works according to these enumerated principles of a philosophical habit will think, learn, and judge differently than one who does not. When confronted with the infinitely disparate kinds of phenomena, whether physical, emotional, cultural, and so forth, the myriad of truths—biological, chemical, ethical—the one with the philosophical habit of mind is able to integrate them into one whole; he or she is able to see how one thing impacts another thing, how one informs another, how
apparently disparate things are able to coexist and cohere in a unified whole.

The philosophically habituated is on the lookout for ways to harmonize the truths of faith and reason. The philosophically habituated, when confronted with new knowledge, new information, new evidence, new discoveries, is able to appropriate that new knowledge not passively but actively, in such a way that he situates it coherently in a larger vision of reality.

When the political economist moves beyond an analysis of the market and the efficient allocation of goods and begins talking about the substance of the pursuit of happiness, the intellectual radar of the philosophically habituated will go off. The same goes with the physician, who might be competent to tell you what to do to be healthy, but does not have the right, in Newman’s view, to say that bodily health is the *summum bonum* or that the good life is beyond reach without such health. The philosophically habituated can tell at what point Richard Dawkins’s biology stops being biology and trespasses into the philosophical. But being able to do so depends on drawing students’ attention to these key principles enumerated above.

There is no doubt that Newman’s man of philosophical habit, like Aristotle’s perfect orator, is an ideal, and seems an unachievable aspiration. At times, Newman speaks almost hyperbolically about him. The man of philosophical habit is Newman’s ideal graduand, as Culler points out, like Plato’s ideal ruler or Aristotle’s ideal orator. It is, in the concrete, only partially and imperfectly realizable. But this ought not discourage the educator.

What is essential to developing that habit is eminently achievable, though, admittedly, a work of a lifetime that has to begin sometime. What is essential is adhering to those fundamental philosophical principles enumerated above and getting into the habit of viewing and investigating reality according to these principles.

Newman was in many ways a realist (not only philosophically but also in the colloquial sense). While he had high ideals, he knew that here below we work with what we can. For many (those who
are already working, for example) a full-time university education is impossible. That is why Newman initiated the night lectures for the workers of Dublin—open to men and women. He could thereby initiate a process of enlarging their minds too. While a philosophical habit of mind in full bloom cannot be democratized, Newman sought to expose its main contours—that is, its principles in action—even to the general public. Though a man of high ideals, Newman was thoroughly practical and did what he could to prompt and cultivate this philosophical habit wherever and however he could.

Now we turn to the indirect end of Newman’s university, the moral and religious end.

**Newman’s Beau Ideal: Sagacity and Sanctity**

Newman’s famous portrait of the gentleman has caused not a little consternation among readers of Newman. Newman’s *laudatio* of the gentleman seems like a solid endorsement, and yet he is quite clear that the intellectual qualities of the refined gentleman can be used for ill. A philosophically habituated gentleman who does not take seriously his moral and religious duties can be dangerously crooked. And what is more, Newman is quite clear that intellectual training bears no relationship to moral improvement. For Newman, trying to tackle the giant moral deficits of human passion and pride with knowledge and reason is like quarrying “granite rock with razors,” or mooring a “vessel with a thread of silk.”

For Newman, the university’s direct end is the cultivation of the intellect. Its indirect end, however, includes attention to the holistic formation—moral and spiritual—of the human person. A Catholic university has the indirect end of serving the Church in this way. In a parallel fashion, we can say with Angelo Bottone that, although the intellectual pursuit suffices for the *esse* of the university, for its integrity, perfection, or *bene esse*, the moral-spiritual pursuit is necessary.

The complementarity between the intellectual pursuit on the one
hand and religious, moral, and spiritual formation on the other is embodied in Newman’s ideal constellation of a university that lives within its constituent colleges or houses of residence. The university and its professors, for Newman, embody progress, dynamism, bustling creativity, and confronts the world in all the challenges it poses. The college and its tutors, on the other hand, are dedicated to catechesis, discipline, the formation of good habits, moral character, and the fine-tuning of intellectual habits.\textsuperscript{75}

Newman has the students matriculated not only into a university, but into a routine that cultivates self-discipline and virtue (embodied in the college or residence hall). There is a wake time and a study time. He provides for the students’ spiritual discipline and edification by, on the one hand, scheduling in daily morning Mass, and also scheduling notable speakers to preach at his university church.

He provides for wholesome recreation by purchasing for the students a billiard table so that they can bypass the more questionable, if not entirely debauched, establishments for entertainment. (To Bishop Cullen the billiard table was a scandal; Newman thought himself strict when he bought the table on condition that there be no betting or gambling.)

Academically, Newman’s idea of the tutor is one who attends to the intellectual and moral development of about a dozen students. He or she is not simply an academic assistant but is also a kind of resident assistant. The personal presence of such a tutor is key to the holistic formation of students because he embodies what Newman elsewhere describes as the organ which “has ever been” what “nature prescribes in all education,” namely, “the personal presence of a teacher. . . . It is the living voice, the breathing form, the expressive countenance, which preaches, which catechises.”\textsuperscript{76}

For Newman, something like distance learning and studying, at least as a norm, is unthinkable.\textsuperscript{77} The personal presence of the teacher is paramount, for it is only through personal contact that one can transmit key intangibles, like intellectual habits.

By way of illustration, just recently, a professor of physics at
Southeastern Louisiana University wrote an article with the indicative title: “The Traditional Lecture Is Dead. I Would Know—I’m a Professor,” in which he argued that the traditional lecture, though serviceable for centuries, was now outdated, and that it would be better for a physics lecturer to simply screen episodes of the 1980s show _The Mechanical Universe_ and pause it whenever a question arose.⁷⁸ His justification is that the episodes are inevitably more engaging and interesting than a traditional lecturer reading notes with PowerPoint slides in the background on the same subject. This article, thankfully, garnered a response from a professor of virology at the University of Columbia, whose article bore another indicative title, which ran: “The Traditional Lecture is Not Dead. I Would Know—I’m a Professor.”⁷⁹ In his response the professor pushed back, saying he shows no videos in class, but rather talks to students about his knowledge of viruses that he has gained from over thirty years of research. His highly popular classes on viruses he attributes to his personal touch: in his words, “to walk around the room, without notes, look them in the eye, and muster all my passion and love for the field and send it their way.”⁸⁰

This teacher of virology highlights for us what Newman knew so well: namely, that instructors are not simply dispensers of information. If they were, then, indeed, one could just read books or, better, watch videos to get that information. But books and videos do not teach intellectual virtue. Only an instructor can by his or her example. In his University Sermons, Newman enumerates some of those “habits of mind” which the Bible enjoins on any learner and which a good instructor embodies: earnestness and seriousness in seeking the truth,⁸¹ as well as modesty, patience, caution, fairness in discussion, the willingness to suspend judgment or be ignorant for a time, and the willingness to share the fruits of one's research, and not be rivalrous about its dissemination.⁸² According to Newman, these qualities are not only learned from the tutor or professor, but also from one’s peers. One not only learns, but observes how others learn, takes note of how others ask questions, and scrutinizes how
others converse. The community, in a sense, learns and pursues this together inside and outside the classroom.\textsuperscript{83}

The point is that for Newman, the university is a locus for cultivating the intellectual life \textit{and} the spiritual and moral life. He wants his students to excel not only in sagacity, but also in sanctity. After the pattern of a medieval ideal, the university is “to fit men for this world while it trained them for another,”\textsuperscript{84} and such fitness and training obviously requires something more than intellectual prowess. He wants, as he phrased it in a different context, “clear heads and holy hearts.”\textsuperscript{85} He continues, “I want the same roof to contain both the intellectual and moral discipline. Devotion is not a sort of finish given to the sciences; nor is science a sort of feather in the cap, if I may so express myself, an ornament and set-off to devotion. I want the intellectual layman to be religious, and the devout ecclesiastic to be intellectual.”\textsuperscript{86}

If one reads Newman’s sermons preached in the university church, one observes the following: namely, that a university rector is using the different liturgical feast days or gospel passages as occasions for reminding his students—nay, drilling into his students—that, while it is indeed a privilege for the students to be studying and pursuing knowledge, this very knowledge will not get them any closer to holiness,\textsuperscript{87} and that it is much more important to be a saint than a scholar.

Given this, however, we are at risk of an inaccurate, or at the very least impoverished, view of what exactly a Catholic university is for Newman. Given what I have just said, it might be understood—wrongly!—that all real universities\textsuperscript{88} are essentially the same—the academics are on a par—but the Catholic ones are better equipped for religious edification and the cultivation of moral virtue.

Such a view, I argue, though not false, is impoverished. To the contrary, a Catholic university makes a difference not only in the arena of the “extra-curriculars” of morals and religion, but also precisely within academics. And it is not because Catholic universities include theology and others do not (although this too is relevant). It is not
even the ease with which Catholic universities include quite happily theology, philosophy, and the liberal arts. The question, then arises, “What difference does a Catholic university make?”

**What is the Difference a Catholic University Makes?**

The difference a Catholic university makes, at least for Newman, I would argue, has to do with how the moral, existential, and personal development of an individual is related to his or her intellectual life. With respect to the habit of mind that pursues knowledge, the difference a Catholic university makes is that it alone has the capacity to help students adhere to those first principles necessary for the cultivation of a philosophical habit of mind in a way that is not only notional but also real.

The difference between the notional and the real lies in the latter’s experiential and existential depth. Whereas the notional is abstract and, hence, accessible to all, the real is experiential. In principle, any university can cultivate a notional assent to these principles. And with them, a student can begin amassing knowledge with a philosophical habit. But my argument is this: it is a Catholic university that is in a privileged position to foster those experiences necessary for a real assent to the principles underlying a philosophical habit of mind.

Let us briefly recall some of these principles: namely, that reality is knowable or intelligible; that this same reality is one, or, in Newman’s words, that “all Knowledge is a whole and the separate Sciences parts of one;” that this reality has a first cause and a last one; that everything in this reality—including the intelligent subjects who make inquiry into it—is therefore connected to this first and final cause.

A notional assent, for example, to the propositions that “reality is one” and that “reality has a first cause” can be made based on a metaphysical analysis. A student might intuit it, might believe because he has been taught it, and finally, after some reading and thinking,
might own it notionally: *everything that is*, shares its existence with the source of all existence, the *ipsum esse subsistens*.

But a real assent to this, looks quite different. The oneness of reality is not apprehended in an abstract way the extension of which is universal, but in an imaginative, existential way that is personal. *I'm a finite being who is confronted in my conscience with Being itself. It is not just about reality as such, but rather about this world that I inhabit. It is not just about the first cause, but rather about my God, the creator of heaven and earth, the creator of me, of my intellectual powers, and of the reality that he wants me to know. It is not just about the final cause, but rather about God’s plan for me, for this world I inhabit, and for my brothers and sisters who inhabit it with me. It is not just about the intelligibility of being as such, but rather about this thing and that thing which confronts me being knowable, and that I, as a knowing subject confronted with that being, have a duty to know.*

The Catholic imagination in this regard is privileged. All might in principle be capable of understanding the connection, for example, between contingent being and self-subsistent being. But through a Catholic’s faith in Jesus Christ—the Logos, the wisdom through whom all things were made, and who has become flesh—through faith in Christ, the Catholic is able to know and even experience this in a whole new way. The same philosophical principles can, for the Catholic, be adhered to through a vital religious imagination. 92

At a Catholic university, a biology major who hears a lecture on genetics can also sing the words of Psalm 139; at a Catholic university, the architecture student can contemplate the tower of Babel and its consequences; and all students, whether in physics or English literature, have the opportunity to cultivate a real apprehension of the world’s finitude and fallenness, beginning with one’s self in an examination of conscience. 93

What I am arguing then, is that the same components of a Catholic culture or ethos on campus—such as regularly available liturgy, spiritual direction and mentorship, opportunities for service and charity, living arrangements conducive to the development of virtue,
and fruitful recreational activities—all of these components that are typically seen as responsible for the moral and spiritual development of students also imbue the academic pursuit of a university by cultivating a personal, real adhesion to a worldview of one with a philosophical habit of mind.

And the second, more simple way in which a Catholic university makes a difference within academics, is that its patron, the Catholic Church, boasts of a long lineage of those with a philosophical habit of mind that can serve as an example and inspiration to today’s students. Of course Aquinas or Pascal or Newman can be read at a non-Catholic university. But at a Catholic university, they are read as part of one’s own patrimony. At a Catholic university, these great thinkers are part of a tradition, a heritage of which the contemporary student has a part and, ideally, takes ownership, immersing herself in the pursuit of knowledge and cultivating the intellect that God gave her.

To conclude, then, what I have argued here is that what is distinctive about a Catholic university, according to Newman, is not the spiritual and moral resources that are sprinkled on top of an already complete intellectual formation. Rather, these spiritual and moral resources play an integral part in academic excellence, in avoiding the pitfalls of “viewiness” and monomania, and in the pursuit of a philosophical habit of mind. This is the case not simply because moral and spiritual development provides the concrete discipline necessary to pursue study and avoid the distractions to which many young people are susceptible (although they do provide that). Rather, the moral and spiritual character formation that has Jesus Christ as its foundational point of reference fosters a vital, imaginative, or real assent to a worldview that is the prerequisite for practicing a philosophical habit. Perhaps that is why Newman’s Catholic University of Ireland followed Louvain in taking as its logo the sedes sapientiae. The university is a seat of wisdom. A Catholic university’s students know that this wisdom has become flesh, and so they perceive, and indeed experience, an unprecedented connection between the
visible and the invisible. For the community of Catholic scholars, the chasm between astrophysics and English literature is not so large if one knows that the far larger chasm between the created and uncreated has already been connected by wisdom itself.

Notes


2. While there were exceptions, the majority of the Irish episcopate opposed the Queen’s Universities, and the “godless” epithet was bandied about consistently. Colin Barr attributes the phrase to the Tory Sir Robert Inglis (1786–1855), while Justin Biel attributes the expression to Thomas Arnold (1795–1842), though the latter used it first to describe University College London. See both Colin Barr, Paul Cullen, John Henry Newman, and the Catholic University of Ireland, 1845–1865 (Leominster: Gracewing, 2003), 27, and Justin Biel, “Maynooth, the ‘Godless colleges’ and liberal imperial thought in the 1840’s,” Irish Historical Studies 42 (2018): 26–49, 26.

3. Newman anticipates the criticism that a liberal arts education, eschewing as it does a professional and utilitarian specialization, is inclined towards knowing little about a variety of things. Newman’s criticism of viewiness is meant to highlight the distinction between this intellectual impoverishment on the one hand and the philosophical habit of mind that he is promoting.

4. Newman, Idea, xviii: “Some one, however, will perhaps object that I am but advocating that spurious philosophism, which shows itself in what, for want of a word, I may call ‘viewiness,’ when I speak so much of the formation, and consequent grasp, of the intellect. It may be said that the theory of University Education, which I have been delineating, if acted upon, would teach youths nothing soundly or thoroughly, and would dismiss them with nothing better than brilliant general views about all things whatever.” Unless otherwise noted, all references to Newman’s works are from the uniform Longmans edition, using the standard abbreviations from Joseph Rickaby’s Index to the Works of John Henry Cardinal Newman (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914).


7. Newman, Idea, 331–80. It is worth noting that for Newman, being literate is not a prerequisite for remedying this “haziness of intellectual vision.” For Newman all men are born with a certain intellectual vision of the world that is hazy and dim. He likens all of us, in our uneducated state, to an infant whose first encounter with the world is one of a medley of rays of light, behind which lies a reality that the infant is unable to decipher. The infant encounters reality as more of a kaleidoscope of different hues. It takes time and development for the infant to start unifying the impressions into distinct things. So it is with our intellectual vision. Without it being
trained, it sees reality in a hazy way. Unlike one’s sense of vision, which develops
naturally with a healthy eye, optical nerve, and brain, one’s intellectual vision, for it
to develop, requires exercise, like any muscle. It needs to be trained in order for it
to see things accurately. Young people, and the uneducated generally, struggle to see
the world accurately. To extend the parallel: “To a short-sighted person, colours run
together and intermix, outlines disappear, blues and reds and yellows become russets
or browns, the lamps or candles of an illumination spread into an unmeaning glare,
or dissolve into a milky way. He takes up an eye-glass, and the mist clears up; every
image stands out distinct, and the rays of light all back upon their centres” (Idea, 333).
The illiterate, according to Newman, can remedy their intellectual inaccuracy, and
the literate can still fall prey to it.

8. Ibid., 341.
9. Ibid., 342. The full quotation: “They will not be able to make a telling speech, or to
write a good letter, or to fling in debate a smart antagonist, unless so far as, now and
then, mother-wit supplies a sudden capacity, which cannot be ordinarily counted
on. They cannot state an argument or a question, or take a clear survey of a whole
transaction, or give sensible and appropriate advice under difficulties, or do any of
those things which inspire confidence and gain influence, which raise a man in life,
and make him useful to his religion or his country.”
10. Ibid., xxi.
11. Ibid., xx.
12. Ibid., xxii.
13. It is to avoid the pitfalls of viewiness and inaccuracy that Newman defends tedious
disciplines like grammar, composition, and translation. In grammar, one gets into
the habit of an accurate grasp of the meaning of sentences, the meanings of words
and their assembly. In composition, Latin or otherwise, one attends not only to accu-
cracy of diction and syntax, but also idiom. In doing so, one learns not to cling to
books and formulae, but to use them. Accuracy of mind helps one resist the advances
of distortion, haziness, fogginess, and ambiguity of undefined catchphrases such as
“freedom,” “tolerance,” “progress,” “the Gospel,” and “mercy.” Accuracy of mind, as
trained to attend to detail, disposes the mind to seek out content, seek out the crux
of some idea, and the impact it has on others (e.g., What does it mean to be truly and
consistently pro-life? What is the content of the Gospel? What is true progress? What
exactly is of value in “tolerance?”).
15. Ibid., 83.
16. Ibid., 94. See also the quotation by Edward Copleston about the political economist,
quoted by Newman: “While he thus contributes more effectually to the accumula-
tion of national wealth, he becomes himself more and more degraded as a rational
being. In proportion as his sphere of action is narrowed his mental powers and habits
become contracted; and he resembles a subordinate part of some powerful machin-
ery” (Idea, 168).
17. Ibid., 78. Cf. Idea, 94: “I only say that, though they speak truth, they do not speak the whole truth; that they speak a narrow truth, and think it a broad truth.”
18. Ibid., 399–400: “You can hardly persuade some men to talk about any thing but their own pursuit; they refer the whole world to their own centre, and measure all matters by their own rule, like the fisherman in the drama, whose eulogy on his deceased lord was, that ‘he was so fond of fish.’”
19. I think, when all is said and done, Newman would err on the side of multum non multa.
28. Newman, Ifc., 225. “Habit of mind,” for Newman, is also used to describe a particular and stable state of mental activity, as when he contrasts certitude with certainty. Certainty, for Newman, is attributable to propositions, which can be more or less probable or, indeed, certain. Certitude, however, is for Newman, a “habit of mind,” the subject’s state of adhesion to a given proposition, even if that same proposition does not compel the same quality of adhesion in another man. (Newman, Apo., 21; see also Newman, GA, 210–20.)
36. Newman, GA, 377. Methodological doubt is also a “habit of mind”—an ultimately incoherent one to be sure, for whoever alleges universal doubt must also doubt it.
38. Ovid, Metamorphoses, trans. Various (London: J. F. Dove, 1826), Bk. 13, line 567. In context (565–68): “What gain’st thou, brutal man, if I confess / Thy strength superior, when thy wit is less? / Mind is the man; I claim my whole desert / From the mind’s vigour, and th’immortal part.”
39. Newman, Ess., 2, 246: “It is also their prominent aspect, and such as is likely to arrest the attention of the general reader, as well as of those whose habit of mind it is to associate the visible world with the invisible.” In a Lenten sermon on fasting, Newman encourages his listeners to “aim at the consistent habit of mind, of looking towards God, and rejoicing in the glory which shall be revealed” (PS, 6, 38). Newman is describing one aspect of the Christian habit of mind that consistently has God
in view and is thereby able to dedicate all of one’s actions—whatever they may be, whether fasting or feasting.


42. Newman, Idea, 180. There is an interesting take on this by Culler, as relayed to us by John Sullivan: “Culler makes a distinction [on page 181 of his book, quoting Idea, 50] that Newman does not clearly express, between the unified view of reality to be developed in the student and the need for some disciplinary organ that enables scholars to be discriminating among the diverse forms of knowledge as to their respective methods, purposes, and interrelationships. The former is the educational goal envisaged by Newman as the gradual and always incomplete outcome of all the processes of teaching, personal reflection, and community life, an informed and integrated ‘view.’ The latter is a philosophic habit of mind.” (John Sullivan, “Newman’s Circle of Knowledge and Curriculum Wholeness in The Idea of a University,” in Receptions of Newman, eds. Frederick D. Aquino and Benjamin J. King (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 95–113, 102. This quotation from Newman supports Culler’s distinction: “Thus to draw many things into one, is its [the university’s] special function; and it learns to do it, not by rules reducible to writing, but by sagacity, wisdom, and forbearance, acting upon a profound insight into the subject-matter of knowledge, and by a vigilant repression of aggression or bigotry in any quarter” (Idea, 457–58). But the “sagacity, wisdom, and forbearance,” as well as the “repression of aggression or bigotry” is a habit of mind that can only function on the supposition that knowledge consists of a unity. My argument here contrasts slightly with Culler’s argument, at least as presented by Sullivan. While I think there is room to distinguish between the intellectual virtue and the fruits that the virtue yields, I believe a unified view of reality is not only an end, but also a first principle. Newman begins with it, rather than seeking to establish it or inculcate it.


44. Ibid., 214.


47. Ibid., 214.

48. Ibid., 137. Later, Newman echoes this again in Idea, 461: “He aims at no complete catalogue, or interpretation of the subjects of knowledge, but a following out, as far as man can, what in its fulness is mysterious and unfathomable.”

49. Ibid., 125.

50. Ibid., 151. Cf. 103: “that special Philosophy, which I have made to consist in a comprehensive view of truth in all its branches, of the relations of science to science, of their mutual bearing, and their respective values.”

51. Ibid., 152.

52. Ibid., 218.

53. Ibid., 125.
This pattern of contrary or rivalrous interests butting heads is not exclusive to Newman’s understanding of the university. This also happens with the Church, whose three offices in Christ are united but “here below” run into each other through conflicting priorities and concerns.

For example, Newman, *Apo.*, 357, where Newman distinguishes between the philosophical and experimental.

Newman, *Dev.*, 112–15. For example, in scripture, one passage is proof enough; not so in experimental sciences.

Newman, *Idea*, 151. (My emphasis.)


Ibid., 249–50. One could also say: for Newman, the university’s “idea” is unity.

According to Culler, Newman dropped the original Discourse 5 (1852) because it was redundant. See Arthur Dwight Culler, *The Imperial Intellect: A Study of Newman’s Educational Ideal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955), 316. According to Ian Ker, he dropped it because in it he might have been at odds with—or at the very least positioned himself in a way different from—the pope’s idea of a university as stated in his Brief of 1854 to the Irish bishops, according to which, at least as Newman interprets it, all the disciplines are meant to go forward “in the most strict league with religion.” See Ker’s introduction to Newman’s *Idea of a University* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), xxxiv–xxxv.


Ibid., 260.


For example, Newman, *My Campaign in Ireland*, 259: “All knowledge whatever, is taken into account in a University, as being the special seat of that large Philosophy, which embraces and locates truth of every kind, and every method of attaining it.”


Newman, *Idea*, 461: “If he [the one with an imperial intellect] has one cardinal maxim in his philosophy, it is, that truth cannot be contrary to truth; if he has a second, it is, that truth often seems contrary to truth; and, if a third, it is the practical conclusion, that we must be patient with such appearances, and not be hasty to pronounce them to be really of a more formidable character.”

Ibid., 179.

Ibid., 87–88.

Ibid., 113: “Not to know the relative disposition of things is the state of slaves or children; to have mapped out the Universe is the boast, or at least the ambition, of Philosophy.”
70. Culler, *The Imperial Intellect*, 189.

71. And one cannot be indifferent to the content of these principles. Newman describes, for example, a habit of mind that arose from the Reformation’s *sola scriptura* principle. A debilitating “intellectual habit,” says Newman, arose from controversy and argument. Is this or that doctrine contained in Scripture? Intellectual gifts such as “argumentative subtilty, critical acumen, knowledge of the languages,” important as they are, rose to an undue importance: instead of the Church, these intellectual gifts became the arbiters of Christian truth. And one who was trained according to this *sola scriptura* principle eventually became a “proud-hearted intellectualist” with a “cold, hard, and unimpassioned temper.” Newman’s observation here is crucial for our understanding of the university. Newman would be the first to praise intellectual gifts; he has founded a university to develop and train them! But he observes that these gifts, when developed under a false principle, lead astray. The one whose intellectual habit comes about along the lines of *sola scriptura* in particular, or from controversy generally, expects proof where none is possible, or closes himself off to other indications, evidences, and kinds of argument that might be open to others. There are any number of false principles according to which intellectual gifts can be developed and a habit of mind forged.


73. Ibid., 459–60: “It is ministerial to the Catholic Church, first, because truth of any kind can but minister to truth; and next, still more, because Nature ever will pay homage to Grace, and Reason cannot but illustrate and defend Revelation; and thirdly, because the Church has a sovereign authority, and, when she speaks *ex cathedra*, must be obeyed. But this is the remote end of a University; its immediate end (with which alone we have here to do) is to secure the due disposition, according to one sovereign order, and the cultivation in that order, of all the provinces and methods of thought which the human intellect has created.”


76. Ibid., 3, 14.

77. This text was written before most institutions were forced to deliver variations of online learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Through that experience, ever more sophisticated online learning techniques have come to reveal real opportunities for pedagogical outreach that are consonant with the variety of ways in which Newman tried to accommodate, for example, the student living off campus or even the curious nonmatriculated auditor of lectures, who was working full time but nevertheless had a desire to learn. For example, see David Deavel, “Is Online University Education Possible?” *The Imaginative Conservative* (May 6, 2020). Acknowledging some of these benefits, I still believe that normalizing online learning runs counter to Newman’s pedagogical ideal ultimately because it obstructs the personal encounter on which is built any community, especially a community of learners, an *universitas*. 


Ibid. Cf. Newman, *HS*, 3, 9: “The general principles of any study you may learn by books at home; but the detail, the colour, the tone, the air, the life which makes it live in us, you must catch all these from those in whom it lives already.”


Ibid., 8–10. Also page 9: “To be dispassionate and cautious, to be fair in discussion, to give to each phenomenon which nature successively presents its due weight, candidly to admit those which militate against our own theory, to be willing to be ignorant for a time, to submit to difficulties, and patiently and meekly proceed, waiting for farther light.”

Newman, *HS*, 3, 12. John Sullivan’s comment here is on target: “I suggest that his curriculum vision rests on an assumption that is not automatically accepted by many university educators: it depends on an understanding that community is central to the nature of a university” (Sullivan, “Newman’s Circle of Knowledge,” 96).

Ibid., 152. See also *Idea*, 177: “If then a practical end must be assigned to a University course, I say it is that of training good members of society. Its art is the art of social life, and its end is fitness for the world.”

Newman, *VM*, 1, lxxv.


He explicitly distances himself from the opinion that the utility of liberal knowledge is moral betterment in the Discourses. See Newman, *Idea*, 120.

By “real” or “true” university, I mean any institution that has the unity of knowledge as its animating principle. Any other kind of institution will be antagonistic to this kind of institution, even if others refer to it with the name “university”. “And hence two Universities, so called, may almost concur in the lecture-papers they put out and their prospectus for the year, that is, in their skeleton, as man and certain brute creatures resemble one another, and yet, viewed as living and working institutions, not as preparations in an anatomical school, may be simply antagonistic.” Newman, *My Campaign in Ireland*, 257.

To the secular pedagogue who seeks to instil intellectual virtue, this point has to be reckoned with nevertheless. *De facto*, Catholic universities are the ones with a consciousness about the oneness of reality that is robust enough to withstand the secular view of things. Is there a nondenominational university that is committed to perfecting the intellect through the cultivation of a philosophical habit of mind that presupposes the oneness of reality? The ones so committed are Catholic, or at least confessionally Christian.


Ibid.: “I have said that all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the
subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator."

92. And so it is that a Catholic university's faculty members, presuming that they are Catholic, need not all be armchair philosophers and theologians in their free time. But they have to have appropriated certain truths, not necessarily with a notional assent, but a real one. They do not have to be able to explain how one arrives at the existence of God and his attributes, but they have to know God is one, good, and omnipotent. They do not have to be able to demonstrate discursively how God is the first cause and the last cause, but they have to know God to be creator and end of the world. An instructor who approaches his or her subject with these foundations is an invaluable witness to the philosophical habit.

93. Psalm 139:13–14: “For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well” (RSV).

94. Newman, HS, 3, 16: “It is a seat of wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of the faith, an Alma Mater of the rising generation.”