

Newman and the Virtue of Philosophy

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Every curriculum needs an organizing principle, something that gives it shape and purpose. This claim can be understood in two ways. The first is as a statement of ontological fact whereby one notes that necessarily there is a starting point, an *archê*, by means of which a complex thing is made one. Second, it can be understood as a normative claim that provides the basis for the obligation to be good caretakers of the aims of genuine education by means of ensuring that we have given sufficient attention to the *archê* that ought to organize it. I am especially concerned with the latter, and within the context of the curriculum of a Catholic institution of higher education.

Where does one find such a thing? Is it something that Catholic universities had and then lost, or is it still preserved? Is it the preserve, then, of core curricula? Or, is there rather a more definite course of studies that prepares someone to articulate and hand it on? If so, to which field ought one to turn for that? Given the religious identity of a Catholic college, one might expect the discipline of theology to provide such a principle. Given the increasingly specialized nature of much academic philosophy, and the popular reputation of philosophers as obtuse and aloof, the last place one might think to look for it is philosophy.

Against this background, that Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman argues that philosophy supplies and is the proper caretaker of the organizational principle for general education in a university setting, and further that it is philosophy which justifies the role of theology within that curriculum, may seem paradoxical. Nevertheless, there are good reasons for thinking that Newman is right to turn to philosophy for this principle, given a proper understanding of what he takes philosophy to be. What he takes philosophy to be, at least in the sense relevant to this role of an organizing principle of university education, is neither a specialized discipline, nor the animating principle of a core curriculum—at least, not merely that. It is, I think, best understood as a virtue.

It is to Newman's *Idea of a University* that we turn to find this virtue articulated and its proper work defined. Like other works of lasting significance, the universal value of *The Idea of a University* necessarily emerges from its particularity, and in this case the particular challenges of establishing a Catholic university at a place and in a time which was in many respects indifferent, and sometimes even hostile, to that effort. Our own challenges are not exactly the same—though there are more similarities with Newman's circumstances than might at first meet the eye—but those challenges do not need to be the same to appreciate the idea of a university that Newman offers us, or the virtue of philosophy he describes therein. Toward a partial defense of the claim

that Newman's virtue of philosophy retains its relevance as an integrating principle within a Catholic university's curriculum,¹ I first consider some of the challenges to which philosophy is proposed as an answer, and then turn to a consideration of what Newman means by philosophy and how it relates to disciplines within a university, and especially to theology.

I.

The Archbishop of Armagh, Dr. Cullen, who was well connected in Rome and had received a mandate to make provisions for the establishment of a Catholic university in Ireland, had prevailed upon Newman in 1851 to serve as the new university's first rector, a post he would eventually hold from 1854–1858. The preparations for this position were fraught with many difficulties, not the least of which was the need to articulate the aims and principles of a specifically Catholic university in such a way as to win the full support of the Irish bishops and representatives of the state of Ireland. The nine discourses Newman delivered in 1852, which compose the first half of *The Idea of a University*, sought to do just that. These were followed in 1854 with ten lectures which sought to extend his 1852 discourses, and which have come to compose the second half of *The Idea of a University*.

One could well argue that a work written more than a hundred and fifty years ago and intended as a corrective to many of the pressing and particular troubles afflicting higher education in Newman's day would have little to say to us in our own day and age, especially when we consider university education as the thriving industry it seems to be. But does, in fact, university education thrive in our own times? The answer to that question depends on the standard applied to judge it, and it is to Newman that we can turn for a pointed critique of false success in university education and an eloquent defense of the true measure of educational health.

The central challenges Newman sees for Catholic university education are not unique to Catholic universities, but to university education in general. This becomes clear when in his introduction to *The Idea of a University* Newman reminds his audience of the changes that Protestant university education in the previous fifty years had undergone. These developments, by and large the result of attempts to overcome criticisms that university education was both useless and needlessly religiously partisan, resulted in a university education that stressed utility and downplayed the role of particular religious confession within a university curriculum. Newman's effort to outline the principles and aims of a Catholic university had, then, at the same time to seek to correct what he considered two of the more outstanding threats to university education. On the one hand, cultural opinion had moved in the direction of thinking the purpose of a university education primarily to be the development of particular skills and proficiencies by means of which a graduate can get along in what many today like to refer to as the "real world." Newman's observation is that the universities in his own day, so as not to be out of step with the times, bowed

before this judgment. On the other hand, public opinion had it that the peculiar beliefs and practices of any particular religion ought to have no hold on a university's curriculum. Private belief is well enough, but university education can and ought to be a secular affair.

The Idea of a University was intended, amongst other things, to serve as antidote to these changes in university education which Newman considers motivated by popular sentiment rather than considered reflection. Two key claims, the defense of which extends through much of the *The Idea of a University*, are meant as direct rejoinders to the interconnected challenges of instrumentalizing and secularizing university education.

First, Newman contends that any knowledge worthy of its name is its own end,² and its value is not and should not be judged by its utility.³ Second, Newman contends that theology is not only just as much a science as any other discipline, though it is that, but that this discipline has a particularly vital role to play in a university curriculum.⁴

Newman contends that the exaltation of useful knowledge and the abandonment of particular religious confessions within a university's curriculum give birth to two additional challenges to genuine university education.⁵ The first is what we might call the balkanization of the disciplines within a university curriculum.⁶ The second is the loss of a sense of the distinction between the mere possession of knowledge on the one hand and genuine learning on the other.⁷ Without a way to recognize the unity of the different sciences, and indeed without even a will to see them unified, standards external to the central life of the university soon make their way into the driver's seat of university practices. Pressures are put on professors to prove to outside adjudicators that they are imparting useful knowledge to their students, and students begin to learn that what is really important about their university efforts is the passing of tests, the completion of courses for credit, and the establishment of a respectable GPA. I think Newman's concern on these points is best seen as one of emphasis: when external measures for assessment take a primary rather than secondary or even tertiary position, then an untoward focus given to hoop-jumping of various sorts results in but the temporary mastery of parts of subjects without the development of those lasting habits of mind that are proper to liberal ideals of learning.

None of these four challenges are unique to Newman's day. If anything, and as Alasdair MacIntyre has recently argued in the latter chapters of *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition*, their prevalence in university education has become far more steadfast. What has made possible the unchecked growth of these dangers is the failure to recognize them as perils at all. In point of fact, what Newman regarded as signs of decay are today often lauded as achievements. In Newman's day, as in ours, there are many voices holding out utility as a primary measure of university success—such as when placement records are held to be of primary importance, or when one reads the latest volley of objections to studying the liberal arts. There are many voices celebrating the marginalization or complete cessation of theological studies within a university education—even to the point of academics arguing that

religious universities should not be accredited.⁸ And there are many voices facilitating the stress on specialization and equal footing given to the many disciplines composing today's "multiversities" and welcoming with open arms external measures of educational efficacy with little or no attention given to the preservation of a unifying vision of education and the cultivation of proper habits of mind.⁹ More often than not, these challenges do not come piecemeal, but rather are championed by the same individuals in a collective effort. Whether the developments are for good or ill all depends, as recent graduates of our universities will be quick to tell you, on your own particular perspective.

This state of affairs points to a fifth challenge facing those who intend to take seriously Newman's diagnosis: by means of what standards do we attempt to persuade those most in need of convincing that the challenges enumerated by Newman and facing us today are indeed challenges? With so much ground already lost for the traditional ideals of liberal education, it can be hard to find a foothold when discussing educative goals with contemporary academics and administrators, and harder still when defending those ideals to parents of university students who want to see a good return on their investment of tuition dollars.

Although these challenges are not unique to Catholic universities, Catholic universities have a unique role to play in the effort to meet them. This role, which is best seen as a responsibility, falls to the Catholic university because of the tradition it can draw from and the magisterial direction it receives. What these two sources of inimitable wealth provide are the means required to address the five challenges enumerated above. Newman exhorts Catholic universities to be what they once were: the standard bearers for what it means to be a university at all. Catholic universities possess a unique power to embody fully the idea of a university, but too often they have degenerated into parochial and ghettoized simulacra of secular universities. Our aim as Catholic institutions ought not to become the Catholic Harvard of the North, South, East, or West, for we have something different, other, and indeed better to offer than can be found at a secular institution. Of course, we ought to strive to be outstanding institutions of research and instruction, but we must also strive to be outstanding institutions of character and faith formation. Moreover, we have in fact good reason to think that these two goals, that of excellence in academics on the one hand and excellence in character and faith formation on the other, contrary to the prevailing sentiments of a half century ago, are not merely not opposed to each other, but in fact are complementary. Although there have indeed been and still are many Catholic institutions that are weak in one or the other area, the complete idea of a Catholic university fully incorporates both goals.

Every Catholic college and university has then a gem of great price: the means for making a thorough defense for the point and purpose of a liberal arts education. Catholic colleges and universities also employ enough educators still connected to the Catholic intellectual tradition to pull such an education off well. But it will take some focused and protracted effort to reeducate

ourselves sufficiently in this tradition, and thus we find a sixth challenge facing Catholic universities: that of being true to their vocation.

II.

It is, then, from within the context of thinking through the aims and principles of a specifically Catholic university that Newman seeks to redress the problems of university education in general, and it is to philosophy that he turns to make his case.

Straightaway, however, most readers cannot help but call to mind objections to the recourse to philosophy, for the discipline of philosophy has itself over the last one hundred and fifty years been, in large measure through its own fault, marginalized in university education. What I am referring to is that tendency in academic philosophy to focus exclusively on special problems, and to do so in an obscure and jargon-filled way that is inaccessible to non-specialist observers. Many of the problems dealt with in this manner, and one can readily find examples on both analytic and continental sides, are those that are rightly seen as leftovers from the other sciences. Add to this the philosophical penchant for disputativeness, and these days philosophers can often seem like dogs fighting over scraps.

There are, of course, special problems left to philosophy, and there are good reasons to deal with these problems in the manner of specialists, but a difficulty arises when this problem-solving approach to philosophy is identified and defended as the sole purpose of philosophical reasoning: namely, we lose sight of philosophy herself. Instead, we find philosophy of mind, and philosophy of love; philosophy of language, and philosophy of history; philosophy of religion, and philosophy of biology; philosophy of mathematics, and philosophy of aesthetics. Philosophy of this, and philosophy of that. These are all, at least in some ways, well and good, and Newman himself in contexts other than *The Idea of a University* swims deeply within some of these subdisciplines.¹⁰ We find also the main branches of philosophy we typically identify with university education, I mean ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. These major areas of philosophical inquiry, as well as their subdisciplines, must nevertheless be subject to a still broader sense of philosophy identified by Newman. This is philosophy herself, an inquiry into one's whole way of life—the sort of inquiry which, as Pierre Hadot has reminded us so well,¹¹ everyone took philosophy to be from the time of Socrates through at least the patristic period and which survived under different names through the medieval period; the sort of comprehensive inquiry which Aristotle in the introduction to his *Parts of Animals* tells us is requisite to our becoming generally well-educated, clear-thinking adults.¹²

It is precisely this broadest and classical sense of philosophy that Newman both invokes and builds his case upon in *The Idea of a University*. He defines it in Discourse III as follows:

[T]he 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.¹³

Philosophy in the sense just defined is described as the science of sciences. What does Newman mean by that? It is important to observe that Newman is using science in the classical sense of *scientia*, in which any legitimate discipline the inquiries of which result in knowledge can be called scientific. This broad meaning, as opposed to the narrow one more familiar to us as a byword for “natural science,” encapsulates the varieties of precision and methodological principles which are pertinent to disciplines as diverse as literature and mathematics. A second way in which we might misunderstand the phrase “science of sciences” is if we take it in the sense of “paradigmatic,” such as can happen when a champion of a particular discipline—physics, for example—contends that this discipline is the best possible example of what it means to be a science. Newman does not, in fact, argue that other sciences should model themselves on philosophy. If we are thinking of “science” in the narrow sense, then it can make little sense to speak of a science of sciences, and if we take science of sciences in a paradigmatic sense, then we might think Newman to be engaged in blustering on behalf of a favored discipline. But what sense then can really be made of describing philosophy as a science of sciences?

Perhaps thinking about what Newman does *not* mean by philosophy will help. Newman makes it clear that what philosophy does not entail is a mandate to prescribe to the other disciplines how they are supposed to go about their business. It is not the task of the philosopher to tell the biologist, chemist, mathematician, or historian, how to do his or her job. The successful performance of each of these respective jobs, however, contributes parts to the whole of wisdom, and it is the task of philosophy as the science of sciences to bear witness to that whole of which all the sciences contribute in their particular ways. It is because each of the other disciplines are a part of philosophy in this broad sense that, historically, degrees granted in these other disciplines were considered degrees in one or another concentrated area of philosophy. We still today retain the vestiges of that older order of things. Consider that our mathematicians, biologists, historians, political scientists, psychologists, and physicists with terminal degrees all have doctorates in philosophy.

Though philosophy as the science of sciences does not perform the task of telling particular specialists in other disciplines how to go about their business, it does have the job of making sure each of them stick to its own business and does not meddle in the business of others. Positively,

this is a matter of making sure that each legitimate discipline is given, in the words of Newman, its “due appreciation.” Negatively, it is a matter of employing categorical distinctions which determine, in the words of Newman, “the location and limitation and adjustment” proper to each science. Philosophy does this by means of thinking through the subject-matter, aim, and methodology proper to each of the disciplines; that done, it can ensure that no discipline begins to dictate to another. Biologists, qua biologists, have no business telling historians how to do their work; and psychologists, qua psychologists, have no business telling chemists how to do theirs. Nevertheless, historians have much to learn from biologists, and chemists have much to learn from psychologists, and vice-versa in each case. But how does such learning take place? It is through the mediation of that common language, that common science, that science of sciences, philosophy herself.

But once again, what exactly is this science of sciences which Newman describes, and how does one acquire it? Recall that in the quotation above Newman characterizes philosophy as a science of sciences on the one hand, and a habit of mind on the other. What sort of relationship can there be between a science and a habit? Quite a bit, as it turns out, but some recovery of the language of virtue is needed to appreciate Newman’s point.

We are familiar with the description of moral habits as virtues, but Newman is working from a tradition that also sees the possession of different bodies of knowledge, whether of a theoretical or technical sort, as perfections of a person and so as virtues. This tradition is rightfully still our own, grounded as it is in an Aristotelian framework of ethical reflection which continues to structure discourse in the Catholic intellectual tradition, and there are a number of reasons to bring it more to the foreground, not the least of which is that it provides us a means by which to make sense of the overarching *telos* of university education. Philosophy as Newman describes it is an intellectual virtue in the Aristotelian sense, but one that is unlike other intellectual virtues insofar as its acquisition requires substantial immersion in many fields of human inquiry rather than the mastery of just one. Its acquisition also requires weighing the distinctive subject matter and methodology of each of those various fields against the others with an eye to the whole.

This virtue is the result of persistently asking how all things hang together. As with other virtues, it is not simply the result of diligence and native talent, for it is interdependent on the other virtues, the moral no less than the intellectual, and the theological virtues as well if it is to be fully nurtured and best exercised. Its development in students on Catholic campuses requires not only outstanding courses in special disciplines and a core that works to animate and synthesize the life of the mind, but a comprehensive campus culture that encourages living righteously and deepening a genuine friendship with God. The sort of integrative principle that the virtue of philosophy is in a Catholic university curriculum is just one feature of the integrated whole that Newman envisions for university studies, as he explains in his sermon “Intellect, the Instrument of Religious Training,” preached in 1856 before the Catholic University of Ireland:

It will not satisfy me, what satisfies so many, to have two independent systems, intellectual and religious, going at once side by side, by a sort of division of labor, and only accidentally brought together. It will not satisfy me, if religion is here, and science there, and young men converse with science all day and lodge with religion in the evening. It is not touching the evil, to which these remarks have been directed, if young men eat and drink and sleep in one place, and think in another: I want the same roof to contain both the intellectual and the 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 laymen to be a religious, and the devout ecclesiastic to be intellectual.¹⁴

The Catholic intellectual tradition never was, and never can be, merely an intellectual affair.

Nevertheless, the Catholic intellectual tradition is an intellectual affair, and we could use to flesh out still further the content of Newman's programmatic reflections on the virtue of philosophy. What sort of language does this science employ, and what is its methodology? Though he is not usually regarded as a peripatetic, at least not in the narrow sense of being an interpreter of Aristotle's texts, Newman endorses Aristotle as supplying a sort of universal language by means of which we might profitably pursue the acquisition of the science of sciences:

While the world lasts, will Aristotle's doctrine on these matters last, for he is the oracle of nature and of truth. While we are men, we cannot help, to a great extent, being Aristotelians, for the great Master does but analyze the thoughts, feelings, views, and opinions of human kind. He has told us the meaning of our own words and ideas, before we were born. In many subject-matters, to think correctly, is to think like Aristotle; and we are his disciples whether we will or not, though we may not know it.¹⁵

This view of Aristotle as the shaper of a common and familiar language by means of which to make sense of the world, our experiences, and ourselves, may not fit with the typical undergraduate's efforts at reading a work of Aristotle's for the first time. It is, as many of us know so well, hard going. But, at least in my experiences of reading and teaching works of Aristotle, once one has surmounted the difficulties of wrestling with Aristotle's unfamiliar modes of expression, one can begin to make sense of him precisely because of a certain familiarity in thought. That is, we do often discover ourselves already to be thinking like Aristotle, even if it is not our intention to think according to the mind of Aristotle. That at least is one reason why his relevance remains. Another is that, even if we stopped teaching any works of Aristotle in our

universities, we could not avoid the echoes of those works. The language of change, substance, accident, categories, act, potency, abstraction, the virtues and vices, the nature of the soul and its relationship to the body, the division of sciences, scientific taxonomy, and indeed, the very forms of argumentation all owe their origins to Aristotle. This common language of academic life is what I think Newman is pointing to in recommending to us Aristotle, and the universality of that language is meant by him to be a complement of the universality of the virtue of philosophy.

The virtue of philosophy is universal first and foremost because it belongs to each person generally and no person exclusively. The intellectual virtue of philosophy does not belong to any discipline in particular, not even to academic philosophy, but rather to each and every participant in university education, and it is precisely the acquisition of this philosophical habit of mind that marks what it is to be liberally educated. The acquisition of this virtue is, it seems then, in large measure tantamount to the aim of a Catholic liberal arts education, for this aim recognizes that knowledge, in whatever subject, is always an intellectual excellence, and so an end in itself which at the same time enriches all other knowledge.¹⁶ It would be a profound misinterpretation to see in these words of Newman, or anywhere else in his defense of philosophy as the science of sciences, an attempt to stifle or downplay the significance, potency, and rich goods that are to be found in any of the particular disciplines. Nothing could be further from Newman's intentions. He has a deep respect for the learning to be had by each of the sciences, and argues for each to have its home within university education. The point, rather, is that without the common language that philosophy provides, there can neither be a university nor the distinct disciplines that compose one. What one would have, instead, would be at best a collection of disconnected investigations, a mere heap of discrete bits of learning.

Indeed, Newman wants to see each of the special sciences, including theology, to thrive as the distinct disciplines they are. That is only possible, however, if their practitioners are not one-dimensional researchers who can only see the world through their own discipline's glasses. If professors are to help shape this virtue in their students, they will need in some significant manner to possess it themselves. By means of this virtue, not only do educators achieve a deep appreciation for other disciplines, but this virtue also enables its possessors to see with greater clarity what makes their own discipline distinctive and worthy of a lifetime of focused inquiry.

III.

Where, it ought to be asked particularly of Catholic colleges and universities, does theology find its role vis-à-vis the virtue of philosophy? Acknowledging both the importance of the division of the sciences, as well as their unity when brought into relation to each other, necessarily presupposes that the universe itself is unified. It is in this sense that the university is a reflection

of the universe as a whole, for it embodies within itself inquiry into each of the subjects available to us through the universe as it manifests itself both in parts and as a whole.

But, is this presupposition of the unity of the universe a justifiable one? Certainly pagan philosophers as diverse as Pythagoras, Parmenides, and Heraclitus, not to mention Plato and Aristotle, each had insights into a universe which is a cosmos, an order, and not a chaos. However, none of these thinkers could explain why our universe *must* be a cosmos. We have to turn to theology to be able to speak with the conviction of Newman in Discourse V:

I lay it down that all knowledge forms one whole, because its subject-matter is one; for the universe in its length and breadth is so intimately knit together, that we cannot separate off portion from portion, and operation from operation, except by a mental abstraction; and then again, as to its Creator, though He of course in His own Being is infinitely separate from it, and Theology has its departments towards which human knowledge has no relations, yet He has so implicated Himself with it, and taken it into His very bosom, by His presence in it, His providence over it, His impressions upon it, and His influences through it, that we cannot truly or fully contemplate it without in some main aspects contemplating Him.¹⁷

To catch a glimpse of the unity of the universe is to catch sight of, albeit in a refracted manner, the unified source of that universe. The Greeks suspected as much. Jews and Christians know as much.

Without question, then, the discipline of theology holds an elevated significance for Newman. All the same, Newman provides a *philosophical* defense of the legitimate status of theology as a science within a university. Like each of the other sciences, theology has its distinctive object and methodology, and this goes for both natural and sacred theology. Newman argues, moreover, that given the preeminent importance of its subject-matter, theology as a discipline ought to have a prominent place within a university's course of studies. To be sure, philosophy's governance of theology is a methodological and procedural one. It cannot boast of reaching deeper than theology, but without philosophy, theology could never plumb the depths. Moreover, and this touches on that interdependence of the two disciplines that John Paul II elaborates on in *Fides et Ratio*, philosophy cannot do her work if she does not drink deeply and continuously from the flask of theology. This is so, as the last quotation attests, because it is only through theology that philosophy is invigorated, indeed is enthused in that Platonic sense of *enthousiazein*, with that vision of the unity of all things which makes possible its own role as the science of sciences.

Deprived of this dependence on theology, philosophy swiftly degenerates into what Newman characterizes as the religion of philosophy. It is fitting to bear in mind his warning on this score, a warning that needs to be heeded in order to keep the science of sciences in her own proper place. The dangers of this religion of philosophy are evident wherever philosophy is taken to provide the

chief means by which humanity is to achieve its purpose. Newman argues that pride, arrogance, a Gnostic cast of mind, esotericism, and sophistry all rear their ugly heads when philosophy is not tethered to faith. What is missed by the so-called religion of philosophy is the interdependence of this virtue on the others. Philosophy unwoven with the other virtues may look and sound like the genuine article, but is in fact a sham.

The decline and decadence of the religion of philosophy is perhaps most evident in the area of moral philosophy, as Newman remarks in Discourse VIII:

Under the shadow indeed of the Church, and in its due development, Philosophy does service to the cause of morality; but, when it is strong enough to have a will of its own, and is lifted up with an idea of its own importance, and attempts to form a theory, and to lay down a principle, and to carry out a system of ethics, and undertakes the moral education of the man, then it does but abet evils to which at first it seemed instinctively opposed.¹⁹

It is, I would submit, Elizabeth Anscombe who best names the consequences of a philosophical ethics divorced from faith when in her 1958 essay “Modern Moral Philosophy” she argues that what characterizes all the varieties of what she calls modern moral philosophy is a vulgar and shallow consequentialism.²⁰

It is wise, then, for us to bear Newman’s warning in mind: philosophy fed by theology can be the science of sciences, whereas philosophy divorced from theology can be a seed of corruption within university education and indeed culture at large. Plato, from whom we receive the very word “theology,” and his student Aristotle glimpsed something of Newman’s warning in their polemics against the sophists and in their shared conviction that what justifies the whole order of things and human inquiry into it is a divine principle, even a divine being. So much the more should those beneficiaries of the fullness of revelation and the gift of faith bear Newman’s warning in mind.

IV.

Newman’s efforts at envisioning what precisely the order and purpose of university education is endows philosophy with a responsibility the discharging of which seems too heavy for any discipline to bear. That’s because it is. To appreciate Newman’s vision we have to remind ourselves more than once that the intellectual virtue of philosophy as the science of sciences is not the possession of any special discipline, or even all disciplines considered together. This is why I think it best to speak of “the virtue of philosophy,” rather than just “philosophy,” when it is the virtue that is meant and not the discipline. The virtue of philosophy is a perfection of the well

educated person. By means of it we can recognize that, to quote Newman in Discourse VII, “though the useful is not always good, the good is always useful,”²¹ and so it is not the utility of knowledge that makes knowledge good, but rather the goodness of knowledge itself that makes it useful. Virtues make their possessors good and make their work done well, and the virtue of philosophy is no exception. The possession and proper exercise of this virtue would seem them a matter of the first importance for all those involved in Catholic higher education.

My reflections on Newman’s conception of philosophy insofar as it is central to his vision of university education have focused on a paradigmatic description of the virtue of philosophy. As with other virtues, anyone’s possession of the virtue of philosophy can be more or less complete, and I take it as a safe assumption that no reader of this essay is in perfect possession of it. I hope that I have, at least, gone some way in making the case that it is a virtue we should admire and strive to possess more fully. I at least am convinced that, the greater the extent to which we as academics and administrators embody and communicate this virtue of philosophy, the closer we will be to making real the idea of a university.

Notes

1. In the discussion that followed the presentation of this paper at the conference, “The Idea of a Catholic College: Charism, Curricula, Community,” at King’s College, several interlocutors suggested that “philosophy” can no longer be separated from the discipline-specific manner in which it is typically discussed. If that is the case, and I do not say that it is, then we would still need the virtue that Newman describes to integrate a curriculum, but just under a different name.
2. Though the defense of that claim is concentrated in Discourses V and VII.
3. In my experience, this is a claim that those formed in the Franciscan tradition, particularly that part of the tradition in which St. Bonaventure is regarded as a paradigm, struggle with in Newman’s approach (consider, for instance, Vision III, Discussion 7, in Bonaventure 1934). Inspired by Bonaventure, they ask: “Does not all knowledge point to God? How then can knowledge be valuable for its own sake?” The presupposition seems to be that the language of “for its own sake” is exclusionary on the one hand and leads to self-centered efforts at knowing on the other. In our own core discussions over the last decade and a half, disagreements over whether knowledge can ever be for its own sake have proven to be of critical importance for moving forward with our new core curriculum, which was approved by majority faculty vote in 2012, and which is more extensive and more integrated than our previous core.

4. On these points, Newman 1927, Discourses II, III, and VIII, are especially important.
5. For an incisive reflection on Newman's *Idea of a University*, as well some challenges facing university education today, including some of the challenges canvassed here, see MacIntyre 2009, especially chapters 16–19.
6. To which especially Newman 1927, Discourses III and IV, are responses.
7. To which especially Newman 1927, Discourse VI, is a response.
8. See for instance Conn 2014. Conn targets Wheaton College in particular, which is an evangelical college in Illinois with a reputation for outstanding undergraduate education. See Jones 2014 for a response to Conn.
9. It is Clark Kerr, first chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, who coined the term “multiversity,” in a series of lectures at Harvard, and later published in Kerr 1963.
10. Most notably, in Newman 1979, which wrestles with empiricism, the limits of logic, and the need for a speculative equivalent to Aristotle's practical intellectual virtue of *phronêsis*, which Newman calls the “illative sense.”
11. See especially Hadot 2004, as well as Hadot 1995.
12. “Every study and investigation, the humblest and the noblest alike, seems to admit of two kinds of proficiency; one of which may be properly called educated knowledge of the subject, while the other is a kind of acquaintance with it. For an educated man should be able to form a fair judgement as to the goodness or badness of an exposition. To be educated is in fact to be able to do this; and the man of general education we take to be such. It will, however, of course, be understood that we only ascribe universal education to one who in his own individual person is thus able to judge nearly all branches of knowledge, and not to one who has a like ability merely in some special subject. For it is possible for a man to have this competence in some one branch of knowledge.” Aristotle 1984, I.1, 639^a1–12.
13. Newman 1927, Discourse III, chapter 4, 68.
14. Newman 1904, 13.
15. Newman 1927, Discourse V, chapter 5, 127.
16. *Ibid.*, Discourse V, chapter 2, 121.
17. *Ibid.*, Discourse V, chapter 4, 67–68.

18. That is, “to be inspired by a god,” and so to be drawn out of oneself in ecstasy as the highpoint of philosophical inquiry, as Socrates describes in his second speech in *Phaedrus*. See also Pieper 1999.
19. Newman 1927, Discourse VIII, chapter 8, 221.
20. Anscombe 1958.
21. Newman 1927, Discourse VII, chapter 5, 184.

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