Augustine versus Newman on the Relation between Sacred and Secular Science

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The aim of the present paper is to compare St. Augustine and Cardinal Newman on the nature of a Catholic education. The context of my remarks is the crisis in Catholic higher education which occasioned the much debated document, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. According to this document, Catholic universities should educate under the light of faith. It does not specify, however, exactly how the faith ought to function as the organizing principle of a Catholic university. In attempting to ascertain how *Ex Corde* envisions that a university be made Catholic, one must turn to St. Augustine and Cardinal Newman, the two authors most frequently cited in *Ex Corde* aside from previous papal statements and other Vatican documents on education. In reading *Ex Corde*, one finds that it treats the teaching of Augustine and Newman on Catholic education as generally compatible. This paper will show, however, that they importantly differ regarding the aim and scope of Catholic education. This will contribute to a more adequate understanding of *Ex Corde* and the current Pontificate's efforts to restore a true Catholic education.

The appeal to Augustine and Newman is not surprising: they present perhaps the two best known models for the integration of a Catholic education and a liberal education. St. Augustine's articulation of a program of Christian education in *On Christian Doctrine* is the first of its kind in the Latin West and it served as a model for the medieval university.[1] And Newman's *Idea of*

[1] For a discussion of how Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* served as a model for the medieval university see Eugene Kevane, *Augustine the Educator: A Study in the Fundamentals of Christian Formation* (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1964), especially pp. 137–41, 257–67, 369–70.

a University is perhaps *the* modern statement of how a university education rightly understood ought, nay must, be one that is Catholic. When one compares the program of studies outlined by St. Augustine and Cardinal Newman, however, one will find that they disagree regarding the purpose of studying the secular disciplines and the extent to which they ought to be included within a Catholic education. In *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine asserts that the secular sciences should be studied only to the extent that they are useful for the study of divinely revealed truth, i.e., as ancillary to theology, and warns against studying such disciplines for their own sake lest the charms of pagan culture impede the attainment of heavenly beatitude. Newman argues, on the other hand, that the two main branches of a liberal education—science and literature—are neither useful nor necessary for the study of theology; nevertheless, despite their worldly charms, he insists that a liberal education be pursued primarily for its own sake. A careful study of Newman, then, will show that his account rejects the view of St. Augustine and of his medieval followers that the secular sciences are to be understood as handmaidens of theology. One is forced to ask, then, whether Newman's break from the tradition enables him to better address the current crisis in Catholic higher education or whether the idea of a university he embraces contributes to the present problem.

AUGUSTINE'S *ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE*

Let me begin by examining Augustine's program of studies outlined in *On Christian Doctrine*. What sets Augustine apart from some of his contemporaries is his answer to a question that troubled many of the early Fathers, namely: How should one approach the classical culture of the Greeks and Romans? Should one simply reject philosophy and the liberal arts developed by the pagans as something profane or should one attempt to salvage what one can from classical culture? The answer of Tertullian—encapsulated by the famous question what does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?—is to reject the whole of pagan culture and learning. Now Augustine and many of the other Fathers take a different tack: their approach is to adopt whatever is serviceable to the faith in pagan culture and to reject the rest. As Augustine puts it, "[E]very good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is the Lord's."[2] Augustine argues that the secular sciences should not be shunned by the Christian but should be viewed like the gold

[2] All quotations from Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* are from *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958). Bk. II, chap. 18, no. 28.

and silver vessels that the Jews took with them when they fled Egypt. Just as the gold and silver were rightly appropriated by God's chosen people, so secular learning in truth belongs to Christ.[3] Now as I noted, Augustine was not alone in asserting that one ought to appropriate whatever is useful among pagan learning; we find a similar view in Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Basil, Gregory, Jerome, Ambrose and other early Fathers. Indeed, one even finds St. Paul appealing to pagan authors. What makes Augustine unique is his attempt to formulate a whole program of studies that incorporates pagan learning into a Christian education.[4]

How, then, does Augustine, organize his program of studies? For Augustine, the organizing principle is the end of Christian education, the knowledge of God attained through an understanding of the wisdom contained in Sacred Scripture. In appropriating the treasures found in the secular sciences, Augustine argues that only those disciplines that can be put to a higher use should be appropriated, viz., whichever are useful either for the discovery or teaching of the knowledge of the Scriptures. In light of this principle Augustine surveys the whole of pagan knowledge in Bk. II of *On Christian Doctrine*, identifying those disciplines that are useful for discovering and teaching the truth of the Scripture and those that are not.

To accomplish this task Augustine makes a somewhat elaborate division of the whole of pagan culture and learning in order to determine what is serviceable to the faith, and what ought to be rejected as dangerous or lacking in utility. He begins by distinguishing between knowledge of things that are instituted by men, on the one hand, and knowledge of those things that are "firmly established or divinely ordained."[5] In other words, knowledge of things that are merely conventional is to be distinguished from knowledge of those things that are not merely conventional but are what they are by nature, or nature's God. Knowledge of things instituted by man is then divided into superstitious and non-superstitious knowledge.

Superstitious knowledge includes knowledge of the making and worshipping of idols, knowledge pertaining to the worship of any creature as if it were God, knowledge of charms, amulets and other cures condemned by the medical art, and consultations and arrangements concerning signs and leagues with devils, e.g., magical arts. Also are included the arts of divination, such as

[3] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 40, no. 60.

[4] On the unique position of Augustine in regards to the adoption of pagan learning, see Donald A. Gallagher, "St. Augustine and Christian Humanism," in *Some Philosophers on Education*, ed. Donald A. Gallagher (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1956).

[5] Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, Bk. II, chap. 18, no. 29.

astrology and the books of haruspices and augurs. Superstitious knowledge is wholly rejected by Augustine not only because these disciplines are what he calls "nullities," i.e., knowledge pertaining to things that are false or empty, but also because all such practices lead, in the end, to fellowship with demons.

As for the non-superstitious knowledge of humanly instituted things, Augustine divides this into the knowledge of things pertaining to what is useful or necessary and knowledge pertaining to superfluity or luxury. Those things that are necessary or useful include such things as weights and measures, money, and bodily dress and ornaments used for the sake of distinguishing sex or rank.[6] Of particular utility for the study of Scripture is knowledge of the various languages employed in Scripture which are especially valuable for discovering the meanings of names and other words that arise in Sacred Scripture. Those human institutions that are superfluous or luxurious include pictures and statues, and "the thousands of imagined fables and falsehoods by whose lies men are delighted."[7] Now all of those human institutions that are useful or necessary are, according to Augustine, to be learned and adopted. As for those things made by man that are superfluous, they should be rejected or dismissed. Note that Augustine here puts aside nearly all of what we would call the fine arts. And, in addition, he appears to exclude nearly the whole of classic literature.

So much for knowledge of things made or invented by human beings, let us now turn to the other main branch of heathen learning, knowledge of those things that are not humanly instituted. The first thing Augustine includes in

[6] Although Augustine does not mention knowledge of moral and political institutions in his catalogue of the sciences in Book II, in Book III he makes clear that knowledge of these things is of the utmost necessity in interpreting Scripture since it is needed to determine whether a passage is to be taken literally or figuratively. His rule that whatever is contrary to virtuous behavior should be taken figuratively presupposes a thorough knowledge of human laws and customs since men are inclined to estimate sins "on the basis of their own customs, so that they consider a man to be culpable in accordance with the way men are reprimanded and condemned ordinarily in their own place and time" (Bk. III, chap. 10, no. 15). They ought, instead, to attend to what is proper to a particular time and place: "Careful attention is therefore to be paid to what is proper to places, times, and persons lest we condemn the shameful too hastily" (Bk. III, chap. 12, no. 19). The practice of polygamy in the Old Testament, for example, ought not to be condemned since this custom proceeded from the necessity for a sufficient number of children (Bk. III, chap. 12, no. 20). Augustine notes, however, that while the interpreter of Scripture must be familiar with the various laws and customs that differ from one place and time to the next, he must also be able to distinguish those things that are merely human institutions and those things that are naturally just (Bk. III, chap. 14, no. 22).

[7] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 25, no. 39.

this division is knowledge of history, which he asserts is not humanly instituted since "those things which are past and cannot be revoked belong to the order of time, whose creator and administrator is God."[8] Augustine approves of this knowledge because it is very useful for the study of Scripture, especially for refuting certain false assertions pertaining to things found in Scripture, e.g., those who claim that the sayings of Christ were taken from the books of Plato.

Having spoken of things past, Augustine turns to the knowledge of things that are present. "To this class," Augustine says, "belong things that have been written about the location of places, or the nature of animals, trees, plants, stones, or other objects."[9] Knowledge of natural things is very useful because Scripture uses natural things as signs of those things that are invisible. It is tempting to describe the knowledge Augustine speaks of as natural science, but this is much too broad. Augustine is not talking about the systematic investigation of the causes and principles of natural things; rather, he is talking primarily about the specific properties of the various species of animal, vegetable and mineral acquired by means of simple observation. This is what we would call natural history. Indeed, Augustine will later assert that the labor expended in discovering knowledge of natural things might be dispensed with "if [a] capable person could be persuaded to undertake the task for the sake of his brethren, to collect in order and write down singly explanations of whatever unfamiliar geographical locations, animals, herbs and trees, stones, and metals are mentioned in the Scripture."[10] The knowledge of nature useful for the study of Scripture can be obtained by means of an encyclopedia of natural history with entries corresponding to Scripture.

Also included among knowledge of present facts is the knowledge of the stars, viz., astronomy. Now although Augustine is careful to distinguish between astronomy and astrology, he nonetheless rejects it as useless or unprofitable: "Knowledge of this kind in itself, although it is not alloyed with any superstition, is of very little use in the treatment of the Divine Scriptures and even impedes it through fruitless study.[11] The stars are rarely mentioned in Scripture, Augustine notes, and "since it [viz., astronomy] is associated with the most pernicious error of vain prediction it is more appropriate and virtuous to condemn it."[12]

[8] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 28, no. 44. It is unclear whether Augustine means to suggest that certain human institutions, once they are safely in the past, become legitimate subjects of study (e.g., the various forms of idolatry found in the ancient world).

[9] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 29, no. 45.

[10] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 39, no. 59.

[11] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 29, no. 46

[12] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 29, no. 46.

Augustine then turns to the manual arts such as the art of housebuilding, medicine, and agriculture. One might at first be surprised to find Augustine classifying the manual arts among knowledge of those things not instituted by men. I think the reason why Augustine does this is that these arts are found in virtually every culture and to that extent they do not exist merely by convention, as do weights and measures, style of dress and the fine arts, shoemaking, housebuilding and medicine, but rather are found in every culture and follow the same basic principles. But what does Augustine say about these arts? They can be useful for the study of Scripture, he says, but they need not be incorporated into a program of studies since the knowledge of them we acquire through the ordinary course of life is sufficient to understand the meaning of Scripture when it employs images based upon them.

Having dealt with the knowledge of corporeal things that are not instituted by men, Augustine deals with the knowledge of those things that cannot be understood or attained by means of the senses but only by reason. Included in this class are the science of reasoning and mathematics. Knowledge of mathematics is of great utility because numbers are frequently employed as signs of spiritual things in Sacred Scripture. As in the case of the knowledge of natural things, however, we should not be led to believe that Augustine is here calling for a thorough study of arithmetic and geometry, since the knowledge useful for the study of Scripture might easily be satisfied if, as in the case of natural objects, someone were to collect together and explain the meaning behind the various numbers that are mentioned in Holy Scripture. As for the science of reasoning, Augustine indicates that its utility surpasses all of the other pagan disciplines. Indeed, he asserts that the knowledge of reasoning is "interwoven throughout the text of Scripture like so many nerves" and "is of more use to the reader in solving and explaining ambiguities . . . than in clarifying unknown signs."[13] Unlike the knowledge of numbers, then, the knowledge of reasoning required for the study of Scripture cannot be attained by simply collecting together the rules of logic.

There is another science closely related to logic that Augustine says is useful, viz., rhetoric. It is useful not so much for the discovery of the wisdom contained in the Scriptures, as it is for teaching the truth to others. Augustine does not recommend that one study the rules of rhetoric, however; rather, one should learn the art of rhetoric by reading and studying the speeches of eloquent men.[14] Now we might be tempted to take this remark as a recommendation to study classic literature, e.g., the speeches of Cicero or the works of

[13] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 39, no. 59.
[14] See ibid., Bk. IV, chap. 3, no. 5.

Virgil. By this means we can apparently save the study of literature that Augustine appeared to dismiss as useless luxury. Yet, we ought to note that Augustine draws the bulk of his examples of the art of rhetoric either from Scripture itself or from the writings and sermons of noted Christian teachers such as St. Ambrose and St. Cyprian. Indeed, Augustine argues that Sacred Scripture possesses its own peculiar kind of eloquence that befits the seriousness of its subject matter and the divine authority with which it speaks.[15] It is perhaps also worth noting that Augustine waxes eloquent about the dangers of pagan eloquence in other places, e.g., the *Confessions*.

Lastly Augustine speaks of the utility of philosophy. "If those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonists, have said things which are indeed true and are well accommodated to our faith, they should not be feared," Augustine notes, "rather, what they have said should be taken from them as from unjust possessors and converted to our use."[16]

Let us summarize Augustine's program for a Christian education. Broadly speaking, for Augustine a Christian education is one in which theology orders all the other disciplines by directing them to itself. Only those disciplines should be contained in a Christian education which contribute either to the discovery of the wisdom contained in Sacred Scripture or to the teaching of what has been discovered to others. Pagan learning and culture is never to be pursued for its own sake; it is to be pursued only as ancillary to sacred theology.[17]

Now before we turn to Newman we ought to locate the reason why Augustine is so adamant in rigorously excluding the study of the secular sciences as

[15] See ibid., Bk. IV, chap. 6, nos. 9–10.

[16] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 40, no. 60.

[17] One should note that although Augustine recommends the study of the secular sciences only to the extent that they can immediately be brought to bear upon the interpretation of Scripture, a brief glance at his writings, including those that come after *De Doctrina Christiana*, make clear that he does not confine the study of Scripture to biblical exegesis in the narrow sense of the term. Interpretation of Scripture for Augustine includes not only line-by-line commentaries, but also the systematic investigation of doctrines found in the Scriptures, and the discussion of disputed questions arising from the study of Scripture. Thus, the systematic study of God by means of divinely revealed principles that characterizes, for example, the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas is in fundamental agreement with Augustine's understanding of theology. The continuity between Augustine and the theology of the Middle Ages is perhaps most evident, however, from the fact that in the Middle Ages the masters of theology were know as *magistri in sacra pagina*. Indeed, the principal duty of St. Thomas himself at the University of Paris consisted in lecturing directly upon the pages of Sacred Scripture. And although we find a much broader study of the secular sciences in the medieval university, these sciences were understood as subservient to theology. Hence, although St. Thomas recommends a study of nearly all of the secular sciences, he justifies this on the grounds that it is useful or necessary for the study of theology: "[A]ll the other sciences are so to speak ancillary and propaedeutic in its coming into being" (*Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, q. 2, a. 4, ad 7).

an end in itself. The reason is found in Bk. I of *On Christian Doctrine*, where Augustine explains that God alone is to be enjoyed, i.e., pursued as something good in itself; everything else should be used for the sake of God, otherwise it will impede our journey towards, or deflect us altogether from, our true end. Augustine makes the point very elegantly using the image of the wanderer:

> Suppose we were wanderers who could not live in blessedness except at home, miserable in our wandering and desiring to end it and to return to our native country. We would need vehicles for land and sea which could be used to help us to reach our homeland, which is to be enjoyed. But if the amenities of the journey and the motion of the vehicles itself delighted us, and we were led to enjoy those things which we should use, we should not wish to end our journey quickly, and, entangled in a perverse sweetness, we should be alienated from our country, whose sweetness would make us blessed. Thus in this mortal life, wandering from God, if we wish to return to our native country where we can be blessed we should use this world and not enjoy it, so that the "invisible things" of God "being understood by the things that are made" may be seen, that is, so that by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual.[18]

Thus we should never take delight in the secular sciences for their own sake since this impedes our ability to arrive at our true end; rather, they should be pursued only to the extent that they contribute to an understanding of God. It is with this thought in mind that Augustine asserts that Christian students, especially those who are intellectually gifted, should be warned against thinking that we can attain the end by means of the secular sciences themselves: "[S]tudious and intelligent youths who fear God and seek the blessed life might be helpfully admonished that they should not pursue those studies which are taught outside of the Church of Christ as though they might lead to the blessed life."[19] Unless the secular sciences are completed by sacred theology, the knowledge they provide can make us neither wise nor happy.[20] Indeed, Augustine even suggests that when men take delight in the secular sci-

[18] *De Doctrina Christiana*, Bk. I, chap. 4, no. 4.

[19] Ibid., Bk. II, chap. 38, no. 58.

[20] This is a noticeable change from Augustine's view of the liberal arts when composing earlier works such as the *De Ordine* where Augustine speaks as if we can attain the happy life by means of the liberal arts and describes the conversion to Christ as almost synonymous with the conversion to philosophy. This change prompted Augustine to note in his *Retractions* (1. 3. 2) that he attributed too much to the liberal arts in the *De Ordine*. For a discussion of the change in Augustine's view of the liberal arts from his earlier writings to *On Christian Doctrine*, see Frederick Van Fleteren, "St. Augustine, Neoplatonism, and the Liberal Arts: The Background to *De Doctrina Christiana*" in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*, eds. Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

ences they are not delighting in the truth so much as they are taking delight in themselves and their own learning.[21] When divorced from the Truth that is Christ, the secular sciences culminate in pride and vanity not *gaudium de veritate*. This is why Augustine concludes his program of education in Bk. II of *On Christian Doctrine* by warning us against the dangers of pride: "When the student of Holy Scripture, having been instructed in this way, begins to approach his text, he should always bear in mind the apostolic saying 'Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies.'"[22]

NEWMAN'S *IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY*

Having outlined Augustine's program of Christian education in *On Christian Doctrine*, let me now turn to Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University*.[23] In the Discourses that make up the *Idea* Newman argues for the compatibility of a liberal education and Catholic education. According to Newman, a university cannot claim to fulfill its mission if it does not include Catholic theology within the university curriculum: "[A] University cannot exist externally to the Catholic pale, for it cannot teach universal knowledge if it does not teach Catholic theology."[24] Indeed, Newman argues not only that theology must be included within the university, but also that it makes an important contribution to the unity and integrity of the liberal arts curriculum.

In Discourses II–IV of the *Idea of a University*, Newman proposes three distinct reasons for including theology within the university curriculum and these three arguments suggest, in turn, three ways in which theology might exert a curricular influence within the university. In Discourse II Newman argues that theology ought to be included among the subjects of university teaching: 1) because a university cannot claim to teach universal knowledge if it excludes the science of theology; 2) since each of the various sciences are partial and incomplete, and become distorted when studied in isolation

[21] See *On Christian Doctrine,* Bk. II, chap. 38, no. 57, along with Bk. II, chap. 13, no. 20. For an excellent discussion of how the problem of pride factors into Augustine's treatment of the secular sciences in *On Christian Doctrine* see John C. Cavadini, "The Sweetness of the Word: Salvation and Rhetoric in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture.*

[22] *De Doctrina Christiana*, Bk. II, chap. 41, no. 62.

[23] Much of what is said in the following discussion concerning Newman's view of the relation between theology and the secular disciplines is treated more fully in John Goyette and William Mathie, "The Idea of a Catholic University: Newman on the Role of Theology in a Liberal Education," *Maritain Studies* 16 (2000): pp. 71–91.

[24] All references to Newman in this essay are taken from *The Idea of a University*, ed. Martin J. Svalgic (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), p. 163.

from all the rest, theology is needed to supplement or complete the view of the whole afforded by the secular sciences; and 3) since each science has a natural tendency to exceed its proper limits (a tendency, that is, to make claims that are not only partial and incomplete but altogether false), the inclusion of theology is necessary to prevent the other sciences from usurping the territory that rightly belongs only to theology.

Although Newman makes a powerful case for the presence of theology within the curriculum, emphasizing the need for theology to complete the secular sciences and to prevent them from going beyond their proper bounds, he rejects the notion that the secular sciences should be pursued for the sake of theology.[25] While he speaks of theology as the highest and most important science, he does not claim that the secular sciences should be seen as subservient to theology. In fact, he mostly avoids speaking about the sciences in a manner that suggests that they are hierarchically ordered.[26] Newman prefers instead to speak of "the circle of the sciences," an image that highlights the mutual influence of one science upon another. Thus, while Newman insists that theology is needed to complete the secular sciences, he also maintains that the secular sciences are needed to complete theology. Moreover, to the extent that the circle of the sciences is in need of an organizing principle, this role is filled not by theology, but by philosophy:

> [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,

[25] Newman occasionally speaks about theology in a way that seems to imply that it operates as a final cause. He asserts, for example, that all of the other sciences, when pursued to their furthest extent, converge upon the study of God: "[A]ll 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" (ibid., p. 38). Despite the suggestion in the above passage that all of the other sciences are ultimately ordered towards theology, Newman makes clear in other places, notably Discourse IX, that the secular disciplines, especially literature and natural science, tend to diverge from the science of theology.

[26] In one passage in Discourse III Newman asserts that the sciences are ordered the way that the art of bridle-making is subordinate to the art of strategy, a description that suggests that the various sciences form a hierarchical structure. Despite occasional remarks of this kind, however, he much more frequently speaks about the sciences in a manner that eschews the notion of their being hierarchically related to one another.

> 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 a philosophical habit of mind, and which in these Discourses I shall call by that name.[27]

That Newman is opposed to the inclusion of the secular sciences on the grounds that they are useful or necessary for the study of theology becomes especially clear in the case of science and literature. These disciplines are not only unnecessary for the study of theology, they even exhibit a marked tendency to be hostile to theology.[28] One might think that the truths of science, by which he means modern natural science, might be useful for establishing the existence of God or defending other truths of theology, but Newman is very much opposed to this use of science. He does not deny that certain conclusions about God can be drawn from natural science, but he claims that the theological speculation that grows out of natural science does more harm than good to theology. In Discourse II he argues that "physical theology," the drawing of theological inferences from scientific truth, arrives at the notion of a God responsible for the laws of nature, but this notion of God differs from, and even tends to be in opposition to, a God that exercises particular providence and who is, therefore, capable of revealing himself to man. The God of the natural scientist is a God "who keeps the world in order, who acts in it, but only in the way of general Providence, who acts towards us but only through what are called laws of Nature, who is more certain not to act at all than to act independent of those laws. . . ."[29] Moreover, Newman argues in Discourse IX that although physical science may give us a sense of God's power, wisdom and goodness, it does not point to God as the author of the moral law, nor does it indicate God's mercy and the economy of salvation. This is because the physical sciences are mostly concerned with the heavens and the earth, those parts of the whole that exist "before the introduction of moral evil in the world."[30] "[T]he Catholic Church," however, "is the instrument of a remedial dispensation to meet that introduction."[31] Science, therefore, is blind or indifferent to those aspects of God with which Revelation is primarily concerned.

But what of literature which, according to Newman, "stands related to man as Science to Nature"? Does literature, as the study of man, contribute to

[27] Ibid., p. 38.

[28] Newman discusses the hostility of natural science and literature at length in Discourse IX.

[29] Ibid., p. 38.

[30] Ibid., p. 171.

[31] Ibid.

the understanding of Revelation and the remedial dispensation of the Church? According to Newman, it cannot. If science ignores moral evil, literature suffers from the opposite tendency "of recognizing and understanding it too well."[32] "[W]hile Nature physical remains fixed in its laws, Nature moral and social has a will of its own, is self-governed, and never remains any long while in that state from which it started into action. Man will never continue in a mere state of innocence; he is sure to sin, and his literature will be the expression of his sin, and this whether he be heathen or Christian."[33] Literature, then, is "the science or history, partly and at best of the natural man, partly of man in rebellion."[34] Nor does Newman think that the dangers of literature can be remedied by a Christian literature. "[I]f Literature is to be made a study of human nature, you cannot have a Christian Literature. It is a contradiction in terms to attempt a sinless Literature of sinful man. . . . Such is man: put him aside, keep him before you; but whatever you do, do not take him for what he is not, for something more divine and sacred, for man regenerate."[35] According to Newman, literature cannot contribute to the subject of theology because it necessarily studies the nature of fallen man, not the nature of man in the state of his original innocence or as regenerated by grace. Nor is it possible to view literature as a helpful propaedeutic to theology by portraying the nature of fallen man as fallen and in need of grace. According to Newman, literature portrays fallen human nature not in all of its ugliness and despair as can be seen, for example, in the daily newspapers, but in a manner that is captivating and seducing, hence the remark that it knows moral evil "too well."

Newman denies, then, that science and literature, which for him are the two main branches of liberal education, are either useful or necessary in explicating the faith. Why, then, does the Church take an interest in these secular disciplines? According to Newman, the Church takes an interest in these disciplines because they are essential elements of a liberal education. And the Church desires that its members receive a liberal education so that they may be better fit for the world and more capable members of society since an educated mind possesses "the faculty of entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and of taking up with aptitude any science or profession."[36] The educated Catholic, because he is more capable of filling his respective post in life, will be a better representative of the faith simply because

[32] Ibid., p. 174.
[33] Ibid., p. 173.
[34] Ibid., p. 174.
[35] Ibid. pp. 174–75.
[36] Ibid., p. xliv.

he appears more credible to his otherwise worldly auditors. But not only does a liberal education enable a man to appear respectable in the eyes of the world, it also enables him to better understand and defend the faith. It does so by enlarging the mind of the student, enabling him to think more clearly and consistently and to express his own views in a manner that is coherent and persuasive. Indeed, Newman notes that if a university education enables a man to understand and defend his opinions more energetically even if he be in error, how much more will it aid the defense of truth?

> Men who fancy they see what is not are more energetic, and make their way better, than those who see nothing; and so the undoubting infidel, the fanatic, the heresiarch, are able to do much, while the mere hereditary Christian, who has never realized the truths which he holds, is unable to do any thing. But, if consistency of view can add so much strength even to error, what may it not be expected to furnish to the dignity, the energy, and the influence of Truth![37]

According to Newman, the uneducated Christian fails in some sense to realize the truths which he holds because he lacks a consistency of view: he fails to fully grasp the principles he holds and the conclusions that follow from these principles.[38] The development of the mind that results from a university education, then, indirectly aids one's understanding of the faith as well as any other subject to which one applies the mind.

For Newman, then, the secular disciplines contained within a Catholic university are pursued as part of a general cultivation of the mind, not because they are necessary or useful for the study of theology. But this is not the only respect in which Newman differs from Augustine. Whereas Augustine cautions against taking delight in classical culture as something that will impede the journey to our native country, Newman argues in Discourses V–VII that liberal education, by its very nature, is knowledge pursued for its own sake. He notes that the meaning of the term "liberal" in liberal education indicates that it is to be contrasted with what is "servile." In the first instance, "servile" refers to any kind of bodily labor or mechanical employment, as opposed to activities involving mind or intelligence. Newman points out, however, that not every bodily activity is regarded as servile since military contests and certain games of skill are regarded as liberal. Similarly, not every

[37] Ibid., p. xliv.

[38] In light of the hostility of science and literature articulated in Discourse IX, Newman may also be suggesting that the Christian who lacks a liberal education, having never studied science and literature, is unaware of how the truths of the faith stand in relation to the world presented by science and literature. It may be that the study of science and literature is necessary if one is to fully grasp the mysterious and miraculous nature of faith.

work of intelligence is regarded as liberal since the practice of many arts serves some further end, e.g., medicine has traditionally been regarded as servile since its end is health. What is "liberal," then, is what is not in the service of another. What is "servile," on the other hand, is for the sake of another. Liberal education, then, aims at intellectual cultivation not because it is useful but because it is intrinsically satisfying.

But what kind of knowledge is pursued for its own sake? According to Newman, the universal knowledge that a university claims to impart is the kind of knowledge that is intrinsically desirable. This knowledge does not consist, however, in the superficial knowledge of a great many subjects. Such an education, according to Newman, is little more than "a sort of passive reception of scraps and details."[39] Universal knowledge is an enlargement of the mind that is only attained when one seizes and unites a multitude of diverse facts and stamps them with a single form:

> The enlargement consists, not merely in the passive reception into the mind of a number of ideas hitherto unknown to it, but in the mind's energetic and simultaneous action upon and towards and among those new ideas, which are rushing upon it. It is the action of a formative power, reducing to order and meaning the matter of our acquirements; it is a making the objects of our knowledge subjectively our own, or, to use a familiar word, it is a digestion of what we receive, into the substance of our previous state of thought; and without this no enlargement is said to follow. There is no enlargement, unless there be a comparison of ideas one with another, as they come before the mind, and a systematizing of them.[40]

The enlargement of mind that is the goal of liberal education is what Newman calls "philosophy" or "a philosophic habit of mind." According to Newman, it is this form of knowledge that is "sufficient for itself, apart from every external and ulterior object."[41] However useful this knowledge may be, it is first and foremost something good in itself. And in his discussion of liberal education in Discourses V–VIII, he reminds us that "we are inquiring, not what the object of a Liberal Education is worth, nor what use the Church makes of it, but what it is in itself."[42] Although Newman grants that a university education is useful and that its utility motivates the Church to found Catholic colleges and universities, he argues that it should, nay must, be pursued primarily, or initially, as something good in itself.

Newman is not naïve, however, about the dangers that Augustine warns us

[39] Ibid., p. 111.
[40] Ibid., p. 101.
[41] Ibid., p. 84.
[42] Ibid., pp. 92–93.

of in *On Christian Doctrine*. In the Ninth Discourse he points out that "Liberal Knowledge has a special tendency, not necessary or rightful, but a tendency in fact, when cultivated by beings such as we are, to impress us with a mere philosophical theory of life and conduct, in the place of Revelation."[43] Indeed, Newman goes on to indicate that the pursuit of liberal knowledge within the university will inevitably do harm to sacred theology:

> Knowledge, viewed as knowledge, exerts a subtle influence in throwing us back on ourselves, and making us our own centre, and our minds the measure of all things. This then is the tendency of that Liberal Education, of which a University is the school, viz., to view Revealed Religion from an aspect of its own,—to fuse and recast it,—to tune it, as it were, to a different key, and to reset its harmonies,— to circumscribe it by a circle which unwarrantably amputates here, and unduly develops there; and all under the notion, conscious or unconscious, that the human intellect, self-educated and self-supported, is more true and perfect in its ideas and judgments than that of Prophets and Apostles, to whom the sights and sounds of Heaven were immediately conveyed. A sense of propriety, order, consistency, and completeness gives birth to a rebellious stirring against miracle and mystery, against the severe and the terrible.[44]

It is precisely the fact that liberal knowledge, or philosophy, consists in the active power of seizing and uniting diverse facts and stamping them, in some sense, with our own form, that is responsible for the danger liberal education poses to the faith. In the end, Newman's analysis appears to agree with Augustine's suggestion that taking delight in the secular sciences inevitably leads to pride: "Knowledge, viewed as knowledge, exerts a subtle influence in throwing us back on ourselves, and making us our own centre, and our minds the measure of all things."[45] But whereas Augustine attempts to remedy this problem by admonishing us not to take delight in the secular sciences for their own sake and to study them only insofar as they aid us in the pursuit of sacred theology, Newman makes no attempt to discourage the pursuit of liberal knowledge for its own sake, nor does he attempt to exclude those sciences that do not appear to contribute to theology.

Where then is the remedy to be found? Given the dangers that a university education poses to the faith not only because of the hostile tendencies of science and literature but also, and perhaps more importantly, the dangers inherent in the pursuit of liberal knowledge for its own sake, Newman does not look to the presence of theology within the curriculum as a sufficient guarantee that a university be Catholic:

[43] Ibid., p. 165.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., p. 165.

> [I]t is no sufficient security for the Catholicity of a University, even that the whole of Catholic theology should be professed in it, unless the Church breathes her own pure and unearthly spirit into it, and fashions and moulds its organization, and watches over its teaching, and knits together its pupils, and superintends its action.[46]

What is needed to insure the Catholicity of the university is an extra-curricular influence, the pure and unearthly spirit of the Church. Newman does not articulate precisely how this is to be accomplished but he suggests that the Church confront the dangers inherent in liberal learning in the same way which St. Philip Neri confronted the dangers of the Renaissance, "an age as traitorous to the interests of Catholicism as any that preceded it, or can follow it."[47] How does St. Philip face the dangers presented by the discovery of classic literature and art, which Newman compares to an enchantress luring "the great and the gifted" into an abyss? According to Newman, it is "not with argument, not with science, not with protests and warnings, not by the recluse or the preacher, but by means of the great counter-fascination of purity and truth."[48] It was St. Philip's personal charm, albeit an otherworldly charm, that was able to counteract the charms of the newly discovered classics of science and literature. The key to St. Philip's charm was due in large part, however, to the fact that he did not appeal to doctrine and authority, but Christian charity and humility:

> [H]e preferred to yield to the stream, and direct the current, which he could not stop, of science, literature, art, and fashion, and to sweeten and to sanctify what God had made very good and man had spoilt. And so he contemplated as the idea of his mission, not the propagation of the faith, nor the exposition of doctrine, nor the catechetical schools; whatever was exact and systematic pleased him not; he put from him monastic rule and authoritative speech, as David refused the armour of his king. No; he would be but an ordinary individual priest as others: and his weapons should be but unaffected humility and unpretending love.[49]

In attempting to breathe the Church's pure and unearthly spirit into the university, Newman suggests that the Church should imitate St. Philip in putting aside the exposition of doctrine and authoritative speech. In the case of the university this would seem to mean that the Church emphasize the extra-curricular, non-doctrinal elements of faith, e.g., the administration of the sacraments, in its attempt to safeguard the identity of the Catholic university.[50]

[46] Ibid., p. 164.
[47] Ibid., p. 178.
[48] Ibid., p. 179.
[49] Ibid.
[50] It is perhaps not accidental that Newman's description of the Church's presence within the university seems to roughly correspond to the modern day Newman Center.

Having outlined the positions of Newman and Augustine on the nature of Catholic education, space does not permit me to attempt a resolution of the tension between Newman and Augustine. Let me end, therefore, with a question. To what extent is the present crisis in Catholic higher education a result of the break with the organizing principle of Augustine's program of studies in *On Christian Doctrine*, viz., that the secular sciences should be pursued not for their own sake, but for the sake of theology? Or, to phrase the question another way, to what extent does Newman's *Idea of a University* represent the solution to the current crisis by placing the needed emphasis upon the extra-curricular influence of the Church, and to what extent is the idea of liberal learning it defends responsible for the current crisis by abandoning the model of Augustine? How one answers this question will depend upon how one answers a series of further questions of which I will mention just a few. It will depend, firstly, upon whether one concurs with Newman's rather dark assessment of the deep-seated hostility of science and literature to theology, an hostility that appears to stand in the way of a university curriculum ordered towards theology as queen of the sciences. If one does concur with Newman's opinion regarding the hostility of literature and science, other questions arise. Is the need to appear credible in the eyes of the world a compelling reason to study disciplines that may be hostile to sacred theology? Could Catholics, for example, be considered competent and respected critics of modern natural science if science was not numbered among the disciplines taken seriously at a Catholic university? And if science ought to be studied with some seriousness within the Catholic university, is it possible to study it adequately without pursuing it, at least in part, as an end in itself? I do not pretend to have answers to these questions, but whether we incline towards the model of Augustine or Newman, we ought not to take lightly the important differences between them regarding the aim and scope of a Catholic university.