Theology in the University

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Theology has no place in the university of the twenty-first century. She is out of place in such a place, a pre-enlightenment relic, an uncomfortable reminder of what the modern university was meant to abolish. As long ago as 1772, Baron d'Holbach, in *Le Bon Sens*, declared the 'science' of theology to be 'a continual insult to human reason',[i] and reason is the bedrock of the modern university, which is home to all true science. Theology is no science at all but a chimera of the imagination,[ii] an aberration in the place that banishes all such fantasies. Immanuel Kant, in his late satire, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), was less dismissive than d'Holbach, allowing theology her queenly place in the university, with even philosophy as a handmaid. But whether carrying '*her lady's torch before or her train behind*' he would not say.[iii]

D'Holbach's antipathy to religion is still with us more than two-hundred-and-fifty years later. Richard Dawkins still opposes science to religion, reason to faith.[iv] Though Dawkins, as the Charles Simonyi Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford, teaches in a university of medieval foundation, he rightly understands it as committed to the tenets of the modern research university, the idea of which came into being at the turn of the eighteenth century, and was given form in the University of Berlin (1810). Wilhelm von Humboldt is usually credited with establishing Berlin University, but he gave form to ideas that were generally abroad and had already affected the

universities of Halle (1694) and Göttingen (1737). These were the ideas of enlightened men like d'Holbach, but more importantly of Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schleiermacher. It is one of the ironies of this story that the man who would become the father of modern theology was himself responsible for securing the very institution that, while it was required to teach theology, was ideologically disposed to despise the theology it taught as at best unscientific and at worst superstition.[v] Yet Schleiermacher did secure theology a place in the research university, if at a price.

The price that theology paid was to become like its fellow disciplines, a scientific servant of the state. Theology became *wissenschaftliche Theologie* and its primary role was the preparation of pastors for service in the national church, 'tools of government' contracted to teach what the government wanted.[vi] Of course this arrangement was not unique. Church and state were also conjoined in England, with university theology serving the one through the other, providing clerics for the shepherding of the monarch's subjects.[vii] And theology had always considered herself a science, indeed the *regina scientiarum*. But as such she was an Aristotelian undertaking, working from axioms she had *received*.[viii] Modern science is an altogether different creature. Enlightenment *Wissenschaft* was answerable to nothing other than reason, which is 'by its nature free and admits of no command to hold something as true (no imperative "Believe!" but only a free *credo*).'[ix] Moreover, it sought to understand all things through understanding the 'principles and foundations of all knowledge.'[x] It sought a total, unified comprehension, an *encyclopaedic* science.[xi]

That which reason taught was at first less restricted than it later became. *Wissenschaft* included the social sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) along with the natural,

and could encompass any discipline that aspired to 'rigorous, systematic enquiry'.[xii] It was only as the nineteenth century progressed that the ambit of *Wissenschaft* was increasingly restricted to those 'hard' sciences that disdained tradition, being solely governed by reason and experience (repeatable experiment), and pretending to *Voraussetzungslosigkeit* (presuppositionlessness).[xiii] Many have pointed out that there is no thinking without presupposition, that reason requires some kind of faith in order to get a purchase on the world.[xiv] But this would be of little avail to theology in the modern university. Theology ceased to be a science when 'science' became an ideology.

Theology kept its place in the university, but only by becoming something other than it had been.[xv] As *Wissenschaft* it still served the church, but through a state organisation. It still answered to the church's faith, but as a science that sought to know the mind of God through a self-sufficient reason. It refused 'unfathomable mystery'. That last is Fichte at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who held that there was no place in the university for a science that could not understand and penetrate 'to its ultimate ground' that which it was given to think.[xvi] At the end of the century, Adolf von Harnack would welcome theology's separation from the church, as only thus enabled to 'contribute to the edifice of modern German science and culture.'[xvii] We may think that the scientific refiguration of theology has itself been refigured, or was weakened or never took hold in many universities. But for some that which university theology has become is so unlike what it was and should be that it has ceased to be theology at all. Most forcefully, Gavin D'Costa declares that university theology is a masquerade. 'Theology, properly understood, cannot be taught and practiced within the modern university.'[xviii] In this D'Costa agrees with the French *philosophes* and the German idealists.

In the light of this story it is instructive to turn from Prussia to Britain, and from Protestant to Catholic theology, and again consider John Henry Newman's adventures in the idea and practice of the university. For unlike those who think that theology has no place in the university, or at least in the modern university,[xix] Newman argued that there is no university where there is no theology.

Mixed Education

When Newman wrote on the university he treated of its 'essence'.[xx] But he also wrote about particular universities. He wrote about the university he loved, Oxford; about the university he detested, London; and about the university he was to bring into being in Dublin. He also had in mind the Catholic University of Louvain (1425; but closed in 1797 and reopened in 1834), in which he saw a model for Ireland's Catholic University, and with whose rector he was to correspond. It was in April 1851 that Dr Paul Cullen, Archbishop of Armagh, wrote to Newman seeking advice on the setting up of a Catholic university in Ireland, and invited him to Dublin to give a series of lectures 'against Mixed Education.'[xxi] Shortly afterwards Cullen met Newman and invited him to become the founding rector of the Catholic University of Ireland.[xxii] Newman accepted, but had to wait until 1854 for his formal installation as rector.[xxiii]

The lectures that inaugurated the new venture were given on successive Mondays in May and early June 1852. The last five were not delivered but published as pamphlets, as were the first five, with all of them bound into a book in the following year—though it

bore the previous year's date—and published as *Discourses on the Scope of University Education* (1852). The lectures were written during a period of considerable strain for Newman, not only because of the university undertaking but also because of Newman's imminent trial for libel. He was accused of defaming Giacinto Achilli (b.1803)—an ex-Dominican Don Juan, whose supposed confinement by the Inquisition was presented to the English public as the suffering of a Protestant hero at the hands of the old Roman enemy, that was again astir with the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in November 1850.[xxiv] Newman feared that his 'Irish engagement would be completely disarranged by a year's imprisonment.'[xxv] In the event the trial did not come to court until late June, after Newman had delivered the first five of his lectures, but then he had to wait until November to be found guilty. However, after failing to secure a retrial, he was only fined a hundred pounds; the press generally conceded him the moral victory.[xxvi] But it was throughout this latter period that he was working on the *Discourses*; the 'most painful of all' his books to write.[xxvii] Tellingly it was dedicated to those who through their 'prayers and penances … stubborn efforts … [and] munificent alms' had 'broken for him the stress of a great anxiety.'

It is thus a testament to Newman's facility that his discourses on the university are so beguiling. For many, the idea of a university is Newman's idea. It is one he subsequently enlarged as he sought to make the idea a reality. In 1859 he published a further ten *Lectures and Essays on University Subjects*, and it was these he added to the earlier discourses—though with the original fifth and appendix of historical examples removed—to produce *The Idea of a University* in 1873.[xxviii] But by then Newman had ceased to be the rector of the Catholic University in Dublin. He had come to feel that he

lacked the support of both the Irish and English hierarchies. The University was 'abused in Ireland for being English, and neglected in England for being Irish.'[xxix] In April 1857 Newman signalled his intention to resign, and did so on November 12th, 1858. But the idea of the university remained even if its shadow faded.[xxx]

Newman had been invited to lecture against 'mixed education'; not against the mixing of the sexes, but against the mixing of Catholic and Protestant men.[xxxi] Newman had to address this issue, even if his own interest—and that of later readers—was in the university considered 'in the *abstract* and in its idea.'[xxxii] Thus Newman writes sometimes of the 'university' and sometimes of the 'Catholic university', and sometimes the distinction is lost to view.[xxxiii] There is a tension between Newman's interest in the essence of the university, and the demands of the context in which he explored that essence. He was required to champion the idea of a Catholic university against the background of the Queen's Colleges, which had been conceived by Robert Peel, and established by 1849 in Belfast, Cork and Galway.[xxxiv] They were state funded and open to all. They answered to what Newman saw as the temptation of the Catholic but 'liberal' statesman. 'Since his schools cannot have *one* faith, he determines, as the best choice left to him, that they shall have *none*.'[xxxv] And in Ireland many lay Catholics and some clerics—including until his death in February 1852 the Archbishop of Dublin, Daniel Murray[xxxvi]—were in favour of the Queen's Colleges, since what the 'respectable' laity wanted for their sons was an education that would fit them for professional life,[xxxvii] while many nationalists hoped that the Queen's Colleges would foster a united Irish culture.

Newman of course was not opposed to partisan education, having as an Anglican defended Oxford's right to exclude Dissenters when their admittance had been proposed

in 1834. But now he was to favour a Catholic partisanship. This he did by arguing for the necessity of theology in any university worth the name, and so the necessity for a Catholic university, since Catholic theology in a 'mixed' university was unthinkable. Newman worried about the reception of his argument, but reported the success of his first lecture,[xxxviii] and his pleasant surprise with the 'great cleverness of the Irish', which far surpassed anything he had seen elsewhere. 'The very ticket-taker in the room followed my arguments, and gave an analysis of the discourse afterwards.'[xxxix]

Newman began his argument by defining a university as a place for '*teaching* universal *knowledge*.'[xl] Many would be unhappy with this definition, which seems to suppose a grasp of universal knowledge that is now, if not already in Newman's day, impossible; and which seems to exclude research, and so – today – resource. The first concern is easily met, for Newman did not suppose it possible for any one person to gain universal knowledge. Nor did he suppose that it was possible for any one university to teach it, but allowed that universal knowledge might have to be pursued across a range of institutions, and so the lack of a particular subject might not signal a disaster for the university.

But Newman does not allow that a university—a real university—would give up on the *idea* of teaching universal knowledge. Thus if a university lacked some departments, it would understand itself to be but a partial realisation of the true university, in which 'all branches of knowledge were presupposed or implied, *and none omitted on principle*.'

Newman's seeming denial of research in the university is more curious, for surely all real universities are 'research universities', as exemplified by the University of Berlin?

But for Newman, the object of the university is the 'diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement.' If the object of the university is 'scientific and philosophical discovery,' why should it have students?[xli] Newman's idea of the researcher is somewhat arcane, since he imagines a secluded individual, free from the distractions of society, living in a cave or tower, or wandering among trees.[xlii] No doubt many professors aspire to such an idyll, and wish for nothing more than to be left alone with their laptop and books, but it hardly matches to the requirements of most modern research, especially in the social and physical sciences. Nor does it really match with either Newman's imagined university or the actual Catholic University of Ireland, as it functioned under Newman's leadership. For in Newman's university the student is to breathe a 'pure and clear atmosphere of thought', which is produced through the 'assemblage of learned men', who, 'zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relation of their respective subjects of investigation.'[xliii] It is unlikely that such men would not engage in research. And so it proved in the realization of Newman's idea, when, for example, the University's journal, *Atlantis*, began to publish scientific research in 1858. Indeed, Newman's idea of the university became so capacious that he likened it to the ordered multitudes of the Roman empire, a vast 'sphere of philosophy *and research*.'[xliv]

Newman imagines that knowledge is advanced through the work of institutions that may be connected with universities, as subordinate 'congregations', but need not be. Such independent or semi-independent institutions contemplate science, not students.[xlv] The object of the university, on the other hand, is to take students and turn them into

'something or other', to mould their characters, form their habits, educate their hearts through educating their minds.[xlvi] The university imparts knowledge, not just for its own sake, but also in order to create a 'culture of the intellect'.[xlvii]

Newman did not foresee a time of mass education in Britain, when there would be more university students studying theology and religious studies than were studying across all subjects in his day, and when more than half of them would be women. Newman's students were to become 'gentlemen', shorthand for cultivated minds. Newman was concerned with the strengthening, knitting together and toning of boys' intellects; [xlviii] turning youth into men of 'good sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candour, self-command, and steadiness of view, … entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and of taking up with aptitude any science or profession.'[xlix] Equipped with these transferable skills, a gentleman would be able to withstand the 'random theories and imposing sophistries and dashing paradoxes' of modern culture, promulgated, in Newman's day, by the 'periodical literature'.[l] If we allow that such skills are not the preserve of gentlemen alone, then Newman's vision can still speak to our condition. His university is a place where universal knowledge is taught in order to create subjects with the skills of divination and discernment, the ability to reason and judge, in short, to exercise the ancient virtue of prudence (*prudentia*), that is still necessary for combating contemporary sophistries and seeking out truth.[li]

Theology in Its Place

That the university should make some pretence to universal knowledge would seem implicit in its name, Newman suggests, even though its name is more properly derived not from the cosmos but from the corporate body of scholars and students in which the cosmos is known. But it is a nice conceit, as Newman more or less admits.[lii] The university is to be that place in which the universe is thought, and given this aspiration it follows that theology must be one of its subjects, since theology, for Newman, is a branch of knowledge. There can be no pruning of the university tree. Thus Newman asks if it is 'logically consistent in a seat of learning to call itself a University and to exclude Theology from the number of its studies?'[liii] Newman of course was aware that there were such universities in his day, as in ours.[liv] But for Newman, a university without theology is either trading under a false name or assuming that the 'province of Religion is very barren of real knowledge'.[lv]

This of course is the assumption of all who have opposed university theology, from d'Holbach to Dawkins. Newman was also aware of a practical atheism amongst intellectuals, which he ascribed to a growing tendency to view religion as a matter of sentiment rather than reason, a tendency that began with the Protestant Reformation and was in his day promulgated by the 'Liberal or Latitudinarian'. When such a tendency prevails it is as unreasonable 'to demand for Religion a chair in a University, as to demand one for fine feeling, sense of honour, patriotism, gratitude, maternal affection, or good companionship, proposals which would be simply unmeaning.'[lvi] Newman had a profound, ironic insight into theology's plight, its reduction to mere opinion in a sceptical

climate.[lvii] Dawkins is hardly more eloquent than Newman in describing the (supposed) futility of pursuing the divine: 'A small insect, a wasp or a fly, is unable to make his way through the pane of glass; and his very failure is the occasion of greater violence in his struggle than before.'[lviii]

Newman was well aware that the object of theological knowledge is of a different order from those of other sciences,[lix] and that the way to such knowledge differs in part from the ways of those other sciences, but he was in no doubt that theology is knowledge, and so demands its place in the university that teaches universal knowledge. And the object of universal knowledge is truth, which Newman glosses as 'facts and their relations, which stand towards each other pretty much as subjects and predicates in logic'. These facts include everything, from 'the internal mysteries of the Divine Essence down to our own sensations and consciousness, … from the most glorious seraph to the vilest and most noxious of reptiles.' And all these facts hang together, forming 'one large system or complex fact', and it is the knowledge of this truth, which the human mind seeks to contemplate. We cannot take in this single fact as a whole, but must traverse it slowly, short-sightedly, by means of our sciences, which give us 'partial views or abstractions', which sometimes look to the horizon, and sometimes focus on the ground beneath our feet. Moreover, the sciences show us things by showing us their relations, and so they never tell us everything that may be told, nor escape the medium of their telling.[lx]

The labour of knowledge is divided among the sciences, and when 'certain sciences are away' we have a 'defective apprehension' of the truth.[lxi] All sciences are needed for the seeking of truth, in the university where it is sought. Thus Newman's view

is of a unified existence, of creation in relation to its creator, which must be studied by us—as particular, limited creatures—through a myriad of interrelated sciences: a truly interdisciplinary labour for the truth. And this common labour includes the co-dependence of theology on other disciplines, through which in part it learns its own proper object through their learning of the world that the creator has made and makes to be.[lxii] On Newman's account, theology does not appear as the 'queen of the sciences', but as the first amongst equals, for the truth that is to be known in theology is a fundamental condition for all knowledge.[lxiii] When Newman does invoke the idea of a ruling science, an architectonic 'science of sciences', he gives it the name of philosophy.[lxiv] This philosophy is not so much a body of knowledge, distinct from other sciences, as the caste of mind by which those sciences are apprehended and thus united. It is 'an intellectual … grasp of many things brought together in one.'[lxv] It is not the unity of a general theory of everything, but of a community. Indeed, it is the university as such, in its universal scope and *idea*. '[I]t is the home, it is the mansion-house, of the goodly family of Sciences, sisters all, and sisterly in their mutual dispositions.'[lxvi]

> Not Science only, not Literature only, not Theology only, neither abstract knowledge simply nor experimental, neither moral nor material, neither metaphysical nor historical, but 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.[lxvii]

But today the university seems a less sisterly place, and even when more sororal, theology is the one sister with whom the others are less willing to play. The 'Liberal or Latitudinarian' view prevails, and theology is seen as at best 'fine feeling' and so unreasonable in its demand for a university place.[lxviii] Of course theology has responded by becoming less the learning of God and more the learning of the learning of God, the history of the texts, beliefs and practices of those who thereby learn God. 'Religious studies' was precisely developed in order to offer a social-scientific approach to religion that would be acceptable in the modern university. And Newman allowed for just such an approach, for teaching about religion as a 'branch of knowledge'.[lxix] This would be an historical rather than doctrinal study, providing the Catholic who was not reading theology with a knowledge of his faith sufficient to 'keep up a conversation' with educated Protestants.[lxx] By extension this is a 'religious studies' that would today fit any student with a knowledge of religious peoples, and the problems attendant upon their study. But of course Newman also argued for theology proper, for 'natural' and 'revealed' theology:[lxxi] the 'science of God'.[lxxii]

Yet Newman does little to defend his claim that theology is knowledge. He thinks it sufficient to note that unbelief rests upon a 'mere assumption', that philosophy has yet to show the unattainability of 'religious truth', and that the *onus probandi* lies with those who think otherwise.[lxxiii] Newman's argument for theology in a Catholic university is uncontroversial, but he presses to an argument for theology in the university as such,[lxxiv] and for this to have its full force in a world grown wary if not weary of religion, we have to press for the university as that place which seeks to ask the question of the universe *without limit*.[lxxv] Christian faith—as indeed other faiths—presses to this question even

though it seemingly already has an answer in God, for 'God' is more the name of a question than of an answer. 'God' is a name for the final incomprehensibility of the universe, for the mystery of existence as such, when recognized as such;[lxxvi] and that this mystery comes to us, and for us, in Jesus, is the venture of the 'research project' named 'church'. To exclude the rigorous thinking of this venture from the university would be to exclude a tradition of knowledge from the very place that aspires—or should aspire—to think the totality of the given.[lxxvii]

The University without an Idea

Today universities are very different from those that Newman knew and imagined. Today they are more likely to teach 'Shakespeare and Milton' than 'Virgil and Horace'.[lxxviii] Today they admit women and are urged to be engines of social mobility. But in other ways they are surprisingly similar. They still train up people for the government and judiciary, the clubs that rule a country. And remarkably nearly all are examples of what was once London University's prerogative, the university as 'bazaar, or pantechnicon',[lxxix] enticing students with the variety and mix of its wares. Today's university no longer offers a unified education, for there is little consensus as to what this might entail, little sense of a shared culture for which it might fit people. Today universities offer vocational courses, but little or no sense of vocation, of being *called* to a way of life, let alone a way of life for others, and through others for God. Today

universities seek merely to meet the tastes of their customers and the whims of their paymasters. Today the university lies in ruins.

This at least is the view of Bill Readings, who argues that the university of excellence has replaced that of culture—Newman's university—and that of reason, from which Newman's idea emerged.[lxxx] The university of excellence is the university without an idea, since it pursues only excellence rather than any excellent thing. Excellence as such is a null category, and so answers to the interests of global capital, which turns all it touches into the means of its own acceleration. The university of culture served the interests of the state, inculcating a national culture that it both formed and reflected. But with the decline of the nation-state and the rise of transnational corporations and multiculturalism there is little by way of any agreed culture to reproduce,[lxxxi] and the civilization that Newman linked with the West is now utterly mercantile.[lxxxii] For Newman the university exists to form discerning minds, and the study by which this is done is not as important as its doing, though Newman favoured the arts, the classics, since their efficacy for the 'real and proper cultivation of the mind' is shown by 'long experience' while that of the 'experimental sciences' is yet to be proved.[lxxxiii] But now no university aspires to cultivate its students, but to make them as flexible as the market requires, by fitting them with the requisite skills for the 'knowledge economy'. The university tempts with the promise of increased earnings, and is itself judged by its contribution to the flourishing of the market. Research is judged by its profitability. Capital is now the universal that the university serves.

Stanley Fish agrees with Readings' analysis, but unlike Readings he welcomes the university of excellence.[lxxxiv] For all ideas can flourish in the university without an idea,

and as an administrator, Fish's role is to see that they flourish excellently. But beyond that he has no preferences, no idea as to what the university is for. His motto: 'Have skills, Will Travel.'[lxxxv] And in such a context, theology no longer has to justify itself. It just has to do what it does excellently.[lxxxvi] The enlightenment project is vanquished in the university without an idea. For all truths (and falsehoods) may be spoken when truth has no value, and only money matters.[lxxxvii] But this then is the objection that Stanley Hauerwas raises against Fish's blithe acceptance of the postmodern condition: that he elides the university's complicity in producing subjects for the modern state and corporate interest.[lxxxviii] The university without an idea becomes a university without questioning.

There is a sense in which Newman envisaged a university without an idea, but never one without questioning. Newman said that if he had to choose between a university that awarded degrees for knowledge gained and a university that simply brought 'young men together for three or four years', he would choose the latter; the university that 'did nothing'.[lxxxix] For such a university—as Oxford showed—better produces men of natural virtue, business acumen and cultivated taste; it better produces men who can 'subdue the earth' and 'domineer over Catholics'.[xc] This is a university that reproduces a culture through association; but in the ideal university—in Dublin rather than Oxford—the culture reproduced is also one of questioning, of learning to see and say things as they are, 'of discriminating between truth and falsehood, … of arranging things according to their real value, and … of building up ideas.'[xci] In this Newman is as much a father to the university of culture as he is to the university envisaged by thinkers as different as Bill Readings and Alasdair MacIntyre.

Readings' vision of the university is bleak, since for him the national cultures (English or Irish) that Newman's universities reproduced are no more, or fast disappearing, and there is no possibility of giving 'culture back its reason', of retrieving the *Wissenschaft* that was to unify a people through totalising its knowledge.[xcii] We necessarily live amongst the ruins of the past, and so the university becomes the question of those ruins, the place where culture and the university itself are in question, where 'we' are in question.[xciii] The university becomes a 'dissensual community', where traditions of enquiry are pursued beside one another, in dialogue with one another, but without the illusion of 'transparent communication', of an identity already achieved.[xciv] The university is not an 'ideal speech situation'. Unlike Newman, Readings will not say that the university pursues truth (though he would have it pursue the truth of our dissensus), but his blunt assertion that the business of the university is 'evaluation, judgement and self-questioning'[xcv] recalls Newman's cultivation of discernment. Moreover Readings' understanding of people has a religious ring to it, as he himself notes.[xcvi] People, for Readings, are given as singularities within networks of infinite obligation, to the extent that they are even responsible for the acts of their forebears.[xcvii] This gives Readings' university a decidedly 'ethical atmosphere',[xcviii] and seems to suggest that even a university of dissensus might constitute a kind of culture.

Alasdair MacIntyre has a similarly bleak view of our condition, and a surprisingly similar account of the university as a place of learned disagreement. For MacIntyre the university is 'where conceptions of and standards of rational justification are elaborated, put to work in the detailed practices of enquiry, and themselves rationally evaluated, so that only from the university can the wider society learn how to conduct its own debates,

practical or theoretical, in a rationally defensible way.' And for this the university must be a place 'where rival and antagonistic views of rational justification … are afforded the opportunity both to develop their own enquiries, in practice and in the articulation of the theory of that practice, and to conduct their intellectual and moral warfare.'[xcix] MacIntyre is no doubt happier than Readings to imagine that the 'intellectual and moral warfare' he envisages might issue in some kind of dialectical progress, but both are agreed that there is no unified culture for the university to reproduce, that it must reproduce disunity, and that this might be an ethical endeavour.[c]

Newman imagined a university in pursuit of universal knowledge. This was not the universality of the enlightenment, which resides in the knowing subject who would comprehend all things encyclopaedically, but of an older tradition that looked to know the universe, and through the universe, the universe's creator, who alone has universal knowledge. The unity of all resides in that which is sought, not in those who seek, who can only participate in a 'science' that always exceeds them. This tradition is an affront to human pride, but not a denial of reason. Indeed faith demands reason because it holds that we are given to know by that which we would know: reason is given in the gift of our being. At the same time this tradition is contested, but that contestation must be staged and elaborated in the university that would not foreclose on the question, but pursue universal knowledge, harbour all traditions of enquiry, and be a community of dissensus. In this way theology proves to be the measure of a liberal education in the university without an idea other than to ask *the question* (of the universe). And a truly Catholic university is but a more intense realization of this, since its asking of the question is not

framed by the subject of a universal reason but by the mystery of the universe that is *given* for our learning.

Notes

[i] Baron d'Holbach, *Good Sense*, translated by Anna Knoop (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004 [1878]), p. 13; cited in Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 2.

[ii] D'Holbach, *Good Sense*, p. 14.

[iii] Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798) in *Religion and Rational Theology*, edited by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 233-327 (p.255). Kant of course looked for the day when the last would be first, when philosophy as 'the lower faculty would be the higher' (p. 261).

[iv] See Richard Dawkins, *The God Illusion*, second edition (London: Black Swan, 2007 [2006]). For a French equivalent in the tradition of d'Holbach see Michel Onfray, *In Defence of Atheism: The Case Against Christianity, Judaism and Islam* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2007 [2005]).

[v] See Hans Frei, *Types of Theology*, edited by George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 101. Schleiermacher secured the (medieval) fourfold division of the university into the ('higher') faculties of theology, law and medicine, and the ('lower') faculty of philosophy (formerly arts, which traditionally encompassed grammar, rhetoric and logic, together with geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music).

[vi] Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, p. 248.

[vii] The arrangement was however less direct than in the Prussian system. Clergy did not have to pass a state examination in order to pastor their flocks.

[viii] See further Gerard Loughlin, 'The Basis and Authority of Doctrine' in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, edited by Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 41-64 (pp. 57-9).

[ix] Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, p. 249.

[x] Friedrich Schleiermacher quoted in Howard, *Protestant Theology*, p. 28.

[xi] On the enlightenment project of the encyclopaedia see further Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (London: Duckworth, 1990).

[xii] Howard, *Protestant Theology*, p.28. Howard, on whom I rely at this point, offers an enlightening overview of the history of *Wissenschaft* in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (pp. 28-35).

[xiii] W. G. Ward, writing in 1867, was one of the first English writers to use 'science' in the limited sense that is now commonplace: 'as expressing physical and experimental science, to the exclusion of theological and metaphysical'. Ward cited from *The Dublin Review* in the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of 'science' (sense 5).

[xiv] '[A]lmost all we do, every day of our lives, is on trust, i.e. faith.' John Henry Newman, 'Religious Faith Rational' in *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1997), 123-30 (p. 125). See further Gerard Loughlin, '"To Live and Die upon a Dogma": Newman and Post/modern Faith' in *Newman and Faith*, edited by Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2004), 25-52 (pp. 33-4, 50-2).

[xv] With Kant religion became a mode of morality, an expression of the duties that reason dictates. 'A rational theologian … is one *versed in reason* with regard to faith, which is based on inner laws that can be developed from every human being's own reason' (Kant, *Conflict*, p. 262).

[xvi] Wilhelm Gottlieb Fichte, 'Deduced Scheme for an Academy to be Established in Berlin' in *Educational Theory of J. G. Fichte*, edited by G. H. Turnbull (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926), pp. 170-259; quoted in Frei, *Types*, p. 105.

[xvii] Adolf von Harnack, 'Über die Bedeutung der theologischen Fakultäten', *Preussische Jahrbücher* 175 (March 1919) 362-74; quoted in Howard, *Protestant Theology*, p. 15.

[xviii] Gavin D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy, and Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 1 & 20. D'Costa admits that his assertion prompts an 'uncomfortable' (p.5) question as to the status of his own theologizing, but he forgoes a comfortable answer.

[xix] The problem may not be uniquely modern, since D'Costa—drawing on the work of Jean Leclercq and Prudence Allen—argues that the rot set in when theology moved from the monastery to the university in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Theology was divided from worship, and from other knowledge, which was itself divided into the faculties of the university. See D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square*, pp. 10-11.

[xx] John Henry Newman, *Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education Addressed to the Catholics of Dublin* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1852), Preface, p. v.

[xxi] Newman cited in Fergal McGrath SJ, *Newman's University: Idea and Reality* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1951), p. 104.

[xxii] A written invitation was sent in November. See McGrath, *Newman's University*, p. 123.

[xxiii] Newman was installed on June 4th, 1854. See McGrath, *Newman's University*, pp. 313-15.

[xxiv] Newman had supposedly libelled Achilli in the fifth of his lectures 'On the Present Position of Catholics in England', delivered in Birmingham on July 5th, 1851.

[xxv] Newman to James Hope Scott, 25 November 1851; *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, edited by Charles Stephen Dessain and Vincent Ferrer Blehl SJ (London: Nelson, 1963), vol. XIV, p. 436.

[xxvi] The Achilli affair was just a little unseemly, with Newman dispatching the devoted Miss Maria Giberne to the continent to round up as many as possible of the women whom Achilli had debauched so that they might testify in Newman's defence. See further Wilfred Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman Based on His Private Journals and Correspondence*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912), vol. 1, ch. 10; and Sheridan Gilley, *Newman and his Age* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990), pp. 269-74.

[xxvii] Newman to Sr Mary Imelda Poole, 22 October 1852; *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, edited by Charles Stephen Dessain and Vincent Ferrer Blehl SJ (London: Nelson, 1964), vol. XV, p. 183.

[xxviii] Newman may have cancelled the original fifth lecture because some thought that, in the words of Cardinal Wiseman, it treated theology as 'one class of science, which must be restrained of trenching on the right of other sciences' (Wiseman cited in McGrath, *Newman's University*, p. 174.) The excised appendix was replaced with a series of historical essays illustrating the idea of a university. These were first published in the *Gazette* during 1854 and then in 1856 as a book, *Office and Work of Universities*, and republished as 'Rise and Progress of Universities' in the third volume of Newman's *Historical Sketches* (1872).

[xxix] Newman, *Letters and Diaries*, XVIII, p. 228; cited in Gilley, p. 291. Wilfred Ward believed that Newman had formed the idea that the University was 'doomed to failure' from as early as February 1854, four months before his formal installation as rector. Ward, *Life*, vol. 1, p. 355.

[xxx] Of course the university continued after Newman's leaving. But 1879 saw the establishment of the Royal University of Ireland, an examining body for its constituent colleges, which came to include University College (1882), the successor to the Catholic University's University House. This would survive until the creation of the National University of Ireland in 1908, which had colleges in Dublin, Cork and Galway. See further McGrath, *Newman's University*, ch. 20.

[xxxi] While a number of women attended Newman's lecture, he seems to have taken some delight in failing to acknowledge their presence. 'There were a number of ladies, and I *fancied* a slight sensation in the room, when I said, not Ladies and Gentlemen, but Gentlemen.' Newman to Ambrose St John, 11 May 1852; *Letters and Diaries*, XV, p. 84.

[xxxii] From Newman's introduction to the pamphlet version of Discourse VI, and which survives in some copies of the 1852 book. See McGrath, *Newman's University*, p. 173.

[xxxiii] See McGrath, *Newman's University*, pp. 170-2.

[xxxiv] The parliamentary bill for their establishment was introduced in 1845. See further McGrath, *Newman's University*, ch. 2.

[xxxv] Newman, *Discourses*, II, p. 38.

[xxxvi] Cullen succeeded Murray as Archbishop of Dublin.

[xxxvii] In a letter of April 16th, 1852, Robert Ornsby provided Newman with an assessment of 'Dublin Catholic society.' '[It] may be distributed into four classes: 1. the clergy; 2. Society properly so called; 3. the citizen class; 4. the poor. The second class, which I call "Society" consists of two sets: a few families of true distinction … a very limited number of whom indeed are for the University, and the rest is the Castle set; the other division is more numerous, and makes up the bulk of Catholic society in the place, barristers, solicitors, employés, people who have made their futures. … There is no traditional knowledge of matters perfectly familiar in English society, even among those who do pretend to learning. … They don't feel the deficiencies that would strike English society; the same words, "education," "university," and the like, don't convey to their minds the same ideas that they convey to ours. … The citizen class are men still in business. The clergy mix with them more than with the rest of society. They are very deficient in education, and of course about as remote from understanding such questions as the University as anything that could be conceived. But … I am sure the generosity of this class is beyond all praise. And of the poor the same may be said.' Ornsby cited in McGrath, *Newman's University*, pp. 143-47.

[xxxviii] Newman to Ambrose St John, 11 May 1852; *Letters and Diaries*, XV, pp. 83-4.

[xxxix] Newman to Nicholas Darnell, 16 May 1852; *Letters and Diaries*, XV, p. 88.

[xl] Newman, *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated (I) in Nine Discourses Delivered to the Catholics of Dublin (II) in Occasional Lectures and Essays Addressed to the Members of the Catholic University* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1891 [1873]), Preface, p. ix; Newman's emphases.

[xli] Newman, *Idea*, Preface, p. ix.

[xlii] Newman, *Idea*, Preface, p. xiii.

[xliii] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse V.1, p. 101.

[xliv] Newman, *Idea*, Lecture VIII.2, p. 459; emphasis added.

[xlv] Newman, *Idea*, Preface, p. xii.

[xlvi] Newman, *Idea*, Preface, p. xiv.

[xlvii] Newman, *Idea*, Preface, p. xv. While Newman made much of the distinction between liberal and useful knowledge—insisting that the university is concerned with the

former rather than the latter, with knowledge apprehended as beautiful rather than as powerful (Newman, *Idea*, Discourse IX.2, p. 217)—he nevertheless found that liberal knowledge has utility in fitting men for society. The art of the university is 'the art of social life, and its end is fitness for the world.' Newman, *Idea*, Discourse VII.10, p. 177.

[xlviii] Newman, *Idea*, Preface, p. xvi.

[xlix] Newman, *Idea*, Preface, p. xviii; see also Newman's masterly description of the fruits of a university education at the conclusion of Discourse VII (p. 178). It may be noted that while these fruits are caste as virtues, Newman did not think it was the duty of the university *as such* to teach moral virtue. The university teaches universal knowledge. It is the associations necessary for this teaching—the colleges and fraternities of the university—that inculcate moral virtue, especially when graced with common worship (as in the University of Ireland).

[l] Newman, *Idea*, Preface, p. xx.

[li] In this Newman agrees with Thomas Jefferson, for whom education in general, and the university in particular, is necessary for defending democracy; for giving 'every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business', of course, but also for knowing 'his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains; to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candour, and judgment; and, in general, to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed.' Thomas Jefferson, 'Report of the Commission for the University of Virginia (4 August 1818)' in *Writings* (New York: The Library of America), 457-73 (p. 459). So, similarly, Newman taught that the university 'is a place to fit men of the world for the world.' Newman, *Idea*, Discourse IX.8, p. 232.

[lii] 'As to the meaning of the word ['university'], authors are divided in opinion; some explaining it of a universality of studies, others of students. As, however, it is the variety of its schools which brings students from all parts, and the variety of its members which demands so many subjects of teaching, it does not matter much how we settle the *derivation* of the word.' Newman, *Discourses*, Appendix, p. 381.

[liii] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse II.1, p. 21.

[liv] Thomas Jefferson's academy of American virtue—the University of Virginia at Charlottesville—had been founded in 1819 without a professor of theology. The American Constitution granted equality and freedom to all religious sects, and this precluded preferring any one of them with a professorship. But there was to be a Professor of Ethics who could teach the basic doctrines of deism, 'common to all sects': the existence and rule of a supreme being. (Jefferson, 'Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia', p. 467). Closer to home, and of more concern to Newman, London University had been founded in 1826 with no denominational tests, and no teaching of theology.

[lv] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse II.1, p. 21.

[lvi] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse II.4, p. 29.

[lvii] Newman, *Idea*, Lecture V.3, p. 388.

[lviii] Newman, *Idea*, Lecture V.4, p. 389. And no one is more astute than Newman in observing that when Christianity is believed to be the 'bane of true knowledge' there arises a 'feeling, not merely of contempt, but of absolute hatred, towards the Catholic theologian and the dogmatic teacher' (pp. 389, 390).

[lix] 'Theology teaches … a doctrine … so mysterious as in its fullness to lie beyond any system, and in particular aspects to be simply external to nature, and to seem in parts even to be irreconcilable with itself, the imagination being unable to embrace what the reason determines.' Newman, *Idea*, Discourse III.7, p. 63.

[lx] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse III.2, pp. 45-6.

[lxi] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse III.2, p. 47.

[lxii] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse III.4, pp. 50-1.

[lxiii] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse III.10, p. 69-70. 'Theology is one branch of knowledge, and Secular Sciences are other branches. Theology is the highest indeed, and widest, but it does not interfere with the real freedom of any secular science in its own particular department.' Newman, *Discourses*, V, pp. 152-3.

[lxiv] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse III.4, p. 51.

[lxv] Newman, *Discourses*, V, p. 144.

[lxvi] Newman, *Discourses*, V, p. 140.

[lxvii] Newman, *Discourses*, V, p. 153.

[lxviii] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse II.4, p. 29.

[lxix] Newman, *Idea*, Lecture IV.2, p. 374.

[lxx] Newman, *Idea*, Lecture IV.3, p. 375.

[lxxi] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse II, p. 26. Newman claims that the case for teaching revealed theology is stronger than that for natural because it includes historical as well as metaphysical facts.

[lxxii] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse III.7, p. 61. 'I speak of one idea unfolded in its just proportions, carried out upon an intelligible method, and issuing in necessary and immutable results; understood indeed at one time and place better than at another, held here and there with more or less of inconsistency, but still, after all, in all times and places, where it is found, the evolution, not of half-a-dozen ideas, but of one' (*Idea*, Discourse III.8, p. 67).

[lxxiii] Newman, *Idea*, Lecture V.4, p. 390. Today some of Newman's arguments will seem to beg the question, as when he argues (*Idea*, II.6, pp. 33-5) that 'human science leads to belief in a Supreme Being' (*Idea*, II.7, p. 35).

[lxxiv] Newman makes it clear that his argument is for theology in the university before it is an argument for Catholic theology in a Catholic university. See *Idea*, Discourse III.7, p. 60. But there is an implicit argument (or assertion) that a real university is a Catholic one, since only Catholicism fully comprehends the 'Religious Truth' that is for Newman 'a condition of general knowledge' (*Idea*, Discourse III.10, p. 70). The world is not really known until it is known as created and redeemed. For a robust ('in your face') version of this argument see John Milbank, 'The Conflict of the Faculties: Theology and the Economy of the Sciences' in *Faithfulness and Fortitude: In Conversation with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, edited by Mark Thiessen Nation and Samuel Wells (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000).

[lxxv] The idea of the university as a place of unrestricted questioning derives from Jacques Derrida. For an account of the consonance between this and Newman's idea see further Gerard Loughlin, 'The University Without Question: John Henry Newman and Jacques Derrida on Faith in the University' in *The Idea of a Christian University: Essays*

on Theology and Higher Education, edited by Jeff Astley, Leslie Francis, John Sullivan and Andrew Walker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004), 113-31 (pp. 126-31).

[lxxvi] On recognizing the question of the mystery of the world see further Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[lxxvii] Equally of course the university should also make room for other religious traditions that think the mystery of the universe, most obviously in the western context the Judaic and Islamic, but not excluding the Asian and East Asian as well. For lack of space I restrict myself to Newman's concern with Catholicism.

[lxxviii] Compare Newman, *Idea*, Lecture I.4, p. 260. 'Even to this day Shakespeare and Milton are not studied in our course of education; but the poems of Virgil and Horace … were in schoolboys' satchels not much more than a hundred years after they were written.'

[lxxix] See Newman, *Discourses*, V, p. 139.

[lxxx] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[lxxxi] For Readings the rise of 'cultural studies' is a sure sign of culture's demise. Anything and everything is the subject of cultural studies and so there is no one thing—culture—that it studies. See Readings, *University in Ruins*, ch. 7.

[lxxxii] My use of the definite article is misleading because for Newman there is really only one civilization and it is western. No other civilization—neither the 'Hindoo' nor the 'morose' Chinese—has a legitimate claim on the name, since they are but 'outlying portions'—'fragmentary, unsociable, solitary'—of the 'grand central formation'. Newman, *Idea*, Lecture I.2, p. 252.

[lxxxiii] Newman, *Idea*, Lecture I.5, pp. 262-3.

[lxxxiv] Stanley Fish, 'Take This Job and Do It: Administering the University without an Idea', *Critical Inquiry*, 31 (2005) 271-85 (p. 279). See further Stanley Fish, *Political Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

[lxxxv] Fish, 'Take This Job and Do It', p. 280.

[lxxxvi] Fish, 'Take This Job and Do It', pp. 281-2.

[lxxxvii] The point is almost Newman's when he writes that the 'great advantage of an age in which unbelief speaks out' is that 'Faith can speak out too; that, if falsehood assails Truth, Truth can assail falsehood' (*Idea*, Lecture V.1, p. 382).

[lxxxviii] Stanley Hauerwas, *The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 82-8.

[lxxxix] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse VI, p. 145.

[xc] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse VI, p. 146.

[xci] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse VII.1, p. 152.

[xcii] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, p.122.

[xciii] Readings' analysis is resonant with Jean-François Lyotard's account of the postmodern condition, as a time when grand narratives have collapsed and smaller stories proliferate, with none gaining universal legitimacy. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984 [1979]); and Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1991).

[xciv] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, pp. 127, 180-93.

[xcv] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, p. 133.

[xcvi] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, p. 188.

[xcvii] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, p. 186.

[xcviii] Newman, *Idea*, Discourse VI.9, p. 147. The 'ethical atmosphere' of Readings' university is that of Emmanuel Levinas.

[xcix] MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions*, p. 222. MacIntyre finds a realization of this ideal university in thirteenth-century Paris, when 'Augustinians and Aristotelians each conducted their own systematic enquiries while at the same time engaging in systematic controversy' (*Three Rival Versions*, p. 232). It was thus not a place where knowledge simply fractured (see note 19 above) but where that fracturing became a tradition of enquiry.

[c] It may be noted that MacIntyre imagines different traditions of enquiry developing in different universities, so that the contest between them would take place not in any one university but in meta-university 'forums in which the debate between

rival types of enquiry was afforded rhetorical expression' (p. 234). But this is to imagine the university either grown synonymous with society or its collapse, since no one place would be the university of dissensus that Readings and MacIntyre look for.