



**INTEGRATION, LEARNING AND SPIRITUAL VALUES:  
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN'S ROMANTICISM AND THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY**

by

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## Paper Abstract

### Integration, Learning and Spiritual Values: John Henry Newman's Romanticism and The Idea of a University

John Henry Newman, a philosopher and Catholic Cardinal, wrote The Idea of a University (1852) to address the rift between secular knowledge and theological knowledge in a rapidly changing, modern 19th century society. With the coming of the scientific advancements of the 21st century and the problems hindering domestic and world peace, educational critics are re-evaluating our educational philosophy and policies. American philosopher Bruce Wilshire's The Moral Collapse of the University gives a philosophical analysis of the problems in the University which sees University structure and purpose as a manifestation of Cartesian dualism, the separation of mind/body relations. Newman's Idea addresses this Cartesian split.

The Idea of a University proposes a "universal education" as an integration of knowledge. Called "The Circle of The Sciences," curriculum would include the study of humanities, sciences and religious knowledge together. His notion of "The Integrative Habit of Mind" through the general study of philosophy, as well as the sciences, and the "apprehension of unity" validate the nature of the mind itself. Newman's A Grammar of Assent (1870) explains this nature of the mind as the integration of heart (feeling, intuition), intellect (reason, logic) and will. Characteristic of Romanticism, Newman sees the unity of these parts as creating the whole person. Hence, "the Circle of the Sciences" creates a complete or "universal education" and leads to the fulfillment of community.

In an age which experiences the lack of moral integrity, community and successful purposes in higher education, Newman's The Idea of a University can stimulate discussion of solutions based on a philosophical understanding. The ongoing debate about multiculturalism and the study of Western Classics or "The Great Books" can be illuminated by considering Newman's thought.

This paper presents Newman's argument for integration of mind and curriculum as a philosophical outgrowth of Romanticism. Along with reference to 20th century educational criticism, the paper discusses present interdisciplinary study in both secular and Catholic American Higher education.

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John Henry Newman's Idea of A University (1852) challenges the problem of Cartesian dualism in an increasingly modern 19th century age with a Romanticist vision of a "universal education." Newman, a philosopher and Catholic Cardinal, attempts to repair the rift between theology and secular knowledge which was a departure from the medieval university's integration of science with the "queen of sciences", theology. Hence, 19th c. liberalism sought to separate theology from university education and foster an enlightenment mode modeled on reason alone and the secularization of knowledge. Concerned with the idea of a "universal education" and the possibilities in a Democratic future, Newman integrates classical and spiritual values into the context of secular, scientific learning.

Newman, whose life spanned almost an entire century (1801-1890), was original, visionary and controversial in his conflict-ridden 19th century society. I propose that several key points found in his "universal education" are important to the topic of values in the University today: "The Circle of the Sciences" as a curriculum approach, the "Integrative Habit of Mind" in learning and the apprehension of unity as a spiritual value. Moreover, Newman's vision conceives the wholeness of the person as an essential aim in education. For our contemporary universities today which reflect this 19th century secularization of knowledge, Newman asks, "How do we teach values in the secular university without assuming the role of the church?"

Scientific knowledge in our modern era challenges spiritual and moral values. Pluralism and secularism tend to minimize the integration of spiritual and moral values into the public sector. Thus, theological values are often rendered as privatistic and ineffectual in the transformation of our social institutions. Unlike the 19th century, our contemporary age has one more century to learn from. We have seen the failures of atheistic communism to create economic success, moral integrity and freedom for human potential. We have also seen the failures of Democratic Capitalism to provide successful leadership, social continuity, responsibility and solutions to social problems. At the turn of the 21st century, we find a devastating increase of social problems and lack of moral integrity in a highly advanced technological society. The larger problem at hand is attaining world peace in an international global community.

Since Allen Bloom's The Closing of The American Mind attacked the problems of the 20th century American University, a proliferation of books and articles now address these problems. These include: Page Smith's Killing The Spirit, Ronald Nash's The Closing of the American Heart, Derek Bok's Universities and the Future of America, Bruce Wilshire's The Moral Collapse of the University and Charles Sykes' ProfScam: Professors and The Demise of Higher Education. It is Bruce Wilshire's The Moral Collapse of the University that identifies the Cartesian dualism in mind-body relations reflected in the university structure and lack of moral purpose today. His book is a philosophical analysis which continues the discussion Newman started a century ago.

According to Wilshire, the university manifests the dualism of mind/body separation in it's lack of moral vision and the forms of knowledge and organizational structure which do not adequately relate to the essence and purpose of the individual, nor to knowledge.

As Whitehead so adroitly pointed out, it is a seventeenth-century (particularly Cartesian) conception of knowledge-and of the knower and the world known- which largely determines the structure of the twentieth century university. (Wilshire, 37)

The German university tradition emphasized the creation of knowledge over teaching. Likewise, as Ralph Stein, Vice-President of SUNY at Buffalo and reviewer of Wilshire's book, observes,

The modern university is a 'knowledge-factory' in which knowledge can only be gained by applying the scientific method of experimentation...A further consequence of the Cartesian separation of mind and body is that the body has come to be interpreted by the modern university as the scientific approach to the physical world and the mind has come to mean the humanities, including philosophy. (Stein, 264)

Newman asserts that the purpose of education is to integrate secular and spiritual knowledge in creating the wholeness of the person. The manifestation of this mind/body unity or wholeness is the creation of whole and good communities.

Although provocative to the 20th century relativistic mind, Newman's Idea stimulates our thinking about how this relationship of internal spiritual values and secular education can develop. In a contemporary, Postmodern society which often tries to ignore the experience and validation of Absolute Values in education, Newman affirms their essentiality in The Idea and most articulately defends them in his famous work A Grammar of Assent (1870).

There is no qualitative break between our knowledge of God and other kinds of knowledge.

Since God is the most concrete and determinate of beings, knowledge of Him must be real apprehension--intelligent acceptance through personal, concrete experience.

Assent does not depend on inference, and inference is not always of the formal sort described by logicians.

The right to assent to religious truths comes from personal involvement in the concrete situations in which God manifests himself.

To disregard this oneness of knowledge is, as Newman says, to disengage the human being into a false division of labor.

I wish the intellect to range with the utmost freedom, and religion to enjoy an equal freedom; but what I am stipulating is that they should be found in one and the same place, and exemplified in the same persons...It will not satisfy me, what satisfies so many, to have two independent systems, intellectual and religious, going at once side by side, by a sort of division of labour, and only accidentally brought together. It will not satisfy me if religion is here, and science there, and young men converse with science all day, and lodge with religion in the evening...I want the intellectual layman to be religious, and the devout ecclesiastic to be intellectual.

Thus, Newman's response was to show the integration of all knowledge.

Newman's idea of a universal education proposed that the curriculum be modelled after what he called "The Circle of the Sciences." The word "circle" expresses the influence from Romantic epistemology, that is, the interest in "wholeness" or organicism and the Coleridgean notion that the whole consists of complementary subjective and objective parts. His "Circle of The Sciences" proposes that the sciences, humanities and theology be taught in one curriculum. Students learn the methodologies and limitation of these areas and consider the possible unification of knowledge among all three. In the "Idea", he states,

All knowledge forms one whole, because its subject-matter is one: for the universe in its length and breadth is so intimately knit together...the comprehension of the bearings of one science on another, and the use of each to each... belongs to a sort of science distinct from all of them, which is my own conception of what is meant by Philosophy...and the philosophic habit of mind." (Newman, IOU, 38)

Newman uses the word Philosophy in the most general sense as the overall knowledge of all things and the knowledge of relations between all things. He also refers to this philosophic habit of mind as the "integrative habit of mind." The "Integrative Habit of Mind" perceives the unity of things as essential to their origin, nature and interrelationships with each other.

We have seen a strong trend toward interdisciplinary studies in numerous university curriculum during the past twenty years. Wilshire's analysis is that the rigid division of departments is also a product of Cartesian thinking. "The departmental structure leads one to erroneously believe that knowledge is organized in discrete units." (Stein, 264) Arguments against interdisciplinary research to "defend turf" and boundaries between disciplines cannot outweigh the evidence that "the greatest discoveries are occurring through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary efforts. In the words of Erich Block of the National Science Foundation, the great advancements in sciences are occurring at the 'intersection of the disciplines.'" (Stein, 264)

Some critics of Newman defend the particularistic function of universities and reject the notion of a universal education.

But it is now inconceivable that an independent and over-reaching cultural authority can rest in our universities. They are now so completely a part of a democratic, post-literate, materialist society such as Newman can hardly have dreamt of, that we cannot imagine them standing back from the society in which



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they are so closely involved, so as to exercise a distinct cultural role. (Roberts, 212)

His title itself now suggests a view of university education which is so specific as to be ultimately cramping. It is difficult now to accept the truths he believed universal and the proposals he thought of universal efficacy... (Roberts, 217)

A widespread fact of most Universities today, particularistic as they may be, is the result that we have not produced a highly ethical group of graduates. Since we do not yet live in an ideal society with ideal families, university education involves people who are becoming people of higher values and character. Thus, the university has an important role to play in the communication of values. Yet, how does the function of the university differ from that of the church?

As Richard Liddy observes, St. Augustine's spiritual conversion was preceded by an intellectual conversion or transformation. Newman asserts that the "circle of the sciences", the interdisciplinary study of the sciences, humanities and religious spheres, prepares the mind to understand the reality of God. As Newman says, the apprehension of unity is in itself a religious activity. Even St. Augustine proposed this collaboration of secular and theological education into one curriculum for this same reason. In De Doctrina Christiana, Augustine says that spiritual knowledge gives purpose and perspective to education. Also, he insists that the liberal arts and "technologies" are needed for the completion of a unified education. Like this Augustinian conception, Newman's idea is that the cultivation of mind or illumination of mind results from the mind's perception of the relations between the disciplines of knowledge.

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Newman defines the "perfection or virtue of intellect by the name of philosophy, philosophical knowledge, enlargement of mind or illumination." (Vargish, 135) His view of the philosophical habit of mind explains that knowledge is an end in itself, although not the only end. Basic to the acquiring of knowledge is the understanding of relationships. So the "enlargement of mind" is the result

of a comparison of ideas with another, as they come before the mind, and a systematizing of them. We feel our minds to be growing and expanding then, when we not only learn, but refer what we learn to what we know already. It is not the mere addition to our knowledge that is the illumination; but the locomotion, the movement onwards, of that mental centre, to which both what we know, and what we are learning, the accumulating mass of our acquisitions, gravitates. And therefore a truly great intellect...takes a connected view of old and new, past and present, far and near, and which has an insight into the influence of all these one on another; without which there is no whole, and no centre. It possesses the knowledge of things, but of their mutual and true relations; knowledge, not merely considered as acquirement, but as philosophy. (Newman, IOU, 101)

Newman refers to this philosophy as the "science of sciences" and "that Architectonic Science of Philosophy, whatever it be."

(Culler, 183)

In The Imperial Intellect: A Study of Newman's Educational Ideal, A. Dwight Culler says,

It is evident that the conception of this science came to him in a rather tentative way and never was fully or explicitly developed... (it involved) some means of determining how much of the world is spirit and how much matter and what the relations are between them... a synthesis of knowledge. (Culler, 187)

The role of Romanticism enters the discussion here. As Barfield defines Romanticism in Romanticism Comes of Age, the Romantic sought philosophical knowledge of truth, specifically an epistemological understanding of the unity of subject and object relations in reality. Romanticism was, in fact, a mediation

between religious and secular knowledge. In general, Romantics aspired to this vision of unity and, in reaction to the narrowness of orthodox religious terminology, sought to describe absolute values in terms of naturalistic principles. The faith-oriented language of religious dogma drove the Romantics into a deep search for a more rational reconciliation of reason with faith. The Romantics strove to correlate naturalistic principles with timeless universals. Likewise, overly rationalistic knowledge, a product of the Enlightenment, drove the Romantic to articulate the role of intuition, feeling, imagination and memory in truth. Although Romanticism was generally known as a literary movement, Romantic concerns transcended the lines of disciplines and concerned philosophers, theologians, scientists and literatis alike as they conceived of the origin and nature of things.

Similar to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's philosophy of Romanticism, Newman's Romanticism mediates religious truth with reason. For both Coleridge and Newman, spirit was subject and matter was object. Both saw the mind as an expression of the wholeness of the person. The mind was the map through which to understand nature. Upon reading Coleridge, Newman expressed, "how much I thought mine, is to be found there." (Beer, 199) Coleridge's idea of unity especially inspired Newman as a deep human aspiration and it was thus Coleridge's unity of polarities which Newman said "instilled a higher philosophy into inquiring minds." (Beer, 199)

How to create this mind/body unity which Newman and Wilshire's The Moral Collapse of the University decry the absence of in

today's institutions is both an internal and external goal. Externally, the circle of the sciences fosters interdisciplinary knowledge in curriculum structure and purpose. That is to say, no subject in itself contains all knowledge, the integration of the sciences together creates universal knowledge. Also, within the individual mind itself, integration of heart, will and intellect is needed as an internal goal. Reason and religion both could "minister to Faith." (Kerr, 384) When the heart, will and intellect function in a state of integration, Newman's vision of the whole person is complete.

Newman's famous work A Grammar of Assent validates the experience of spiritual and religious knowledge. Here, Newman discusses how the mind comes to believe and formulate truth. He states that the mind encompasses more than just logic and reason alone, it embraces the dimensions of concrete and sensible experience.

There are two ways of apprehending a truth: we may grasp it in a merely 'notional' sense, or we may grasp it as 'reality.' The former is the work of the intellect. It involves naming, comparing, distinguishing, and classifying. It reduces real things to notions or concepts, to symbols and linguistic signs. The latter way is the work of sensation, imagination and memory. Only through these do we have experience of the concrete, singular thing. And the more experience we have, the more real our apprehension. (Newman, 667)

This analysis of truth and the source of belief in experience: sensation, imagination and memory- gives a fresh alternative to positivist materialistic views of truth. A Grammar of Assent validates the heart or intuitional dimension of the religious experience itself as equal in importance to reason which is based on abstraction or principles alone.

That the university has tended to falsely separate these realms of spiritual and secular knowledge is, as contemporary literary critic Owen Barfield also discusses in Saving The Appearances: A Study in Idolatry, a product of viewing science as "alpha-knowledge" or the knowledge of objects and phenomena as external to humans, separate from the human mind itself. Hence, modern humans have become alienated from nature, their surroundings, and ultimately, from themselves. Similar to Newman's "integrative habit of mind", through the cultivation of what Barfield calls "Beta-knowledge" or the discovery of the original relationship of the mind to objects- nature, etc., both internal and external harmony will result--harmony of mind/body and harmony of humankind to nature and society.

The gist of Barfield's Romanticism Comes of Age is that Romanticism would "come of age" when the Romantic impulse for unity was developed with a spiritual science. The Coleridgean organicism of wholeness as the unity of polarity will be fulfilled through process thinking and connecting to the Divine in the future evolution of humankind. Humankind will learn to unite mind/body, heart/head, science/religion, intuitive/analytic modes of thinking and East/West in the coming age.

As Newman says, the "integrative habit of mind" perceives the unity of things as essential to their origin, nature and interrelationships with each other. As previously stated, Newman says, this apprehension of unity is a religious activity itself. Therefore, he says, even without church training, the participation in "The Circle of The Sciences" and learning philosophy and

integration as "habit and discipline" bring a secular person closer to understanding the work of the creator himself. Yet, Newman is not altogether satisfied with the cultivation of the mind alone and the creation of what he calls "gentlemanly conduct."

Cultivation of Mind...contributes much to remove from our path the temptation to many lesser forms of moral obliquity though it does not itself touch the greater wounds of human nature, it does a good deal for these lesser defects. (Newman, TEN, 196)

We can teach higher values in the university, but salvation comes, Newman says, only by choosing the religious path as one's own, not as an academic exercise. As Newman pointed out, the university can help teach self-respect, discipline, unity, modesty, community etc., but the making of truly humble, heroic and saint-like persons is the result of deeply learning the religious life.

Barfield's suggestion for the perfection of virtue is that the Romantic inclination for unity be joined with a spiritual science. How do both Newman's and Barfield's notions co-exist in a pluralistic, secular university setting? Newman's Idea states that the "Circle of The Sciences" would include the study of the sciences, the humanities and religious knowledge. Religious knowledge can embrace the study of religion in general. Newman's Catholic theology would be included and the pursuit of relational bridges between areas of religious knowledge would be sought. As Frithjon Schuon's The Transcendent Unity of Religions suggests, the differing cultural, external or exoteric realms of religion would be studied along with the understanding of the esoteric, or internal similarities of religions. The romantic impulse for unity, as both Newman and Barfield refer to it, comes through the

experience of the individual. Thus, the process of purifying the mind's perception is similar to all faiths. The need to overcome negative passions- prejudices, hatred, sloth etc. is the aim of all religions (Catholicism, Protentantism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Islam, etc.). Transcending the ego-mind and reaching the true self is a process of healing the wounds of the past. This integration of mind/body centered on goodness can be a universal quest. Whatever the process involved, the point is to reach the goal- Forgive, Love, Unite- these are the last words of T.S. Eliot's famous poem, "The Waste Land."

Salvation is the primary goal of the church. However, for Newman, seeking truth in university education means seeking truth through "universal education" or all spheres of knowledge together. Through the "Integrative Habit of Mind" intellectual transformation is but part of the process of spiritual transformation itself. The derivation of the word religion is religio, or "to bind together."

Connectedness in curriculum is not a substitute for bonding in human relations. As Page Smith points out in Killing The Spirit: Higher Education in America, the existence of real community in many institutions of higher learning in America is minimal. Newman's model for the university also emphasized the leadership of professors and students in creating a more caring and related community. At the same time, the enhancement of interpersonal and intercultural relationships is sometimes an indirect result of interdisciplinary emphasis in "The Circle of The Sciences." As both Newman and Wilshire emphasize, the creation of knowledge and

the wholeness of the person must also be intimately connected to the goal of creating excellence in teaching and a whole, humane community life.

An expanded Newman model would solve the debate over the study of Western Classics. The study of classics or "The Great Books" program has been under fire by the emergence of multiculturalists who honor African, Asian, South American and third-world literature but not the Western heritage of Greek and Roman classics, British, European and American literature. Instead of pitting one continent or culture against another, a "universal education" would include representative texts from the heritage of all cultures - Graeco-Roman and Chinese alike. Comparative literature then would invite seeing the similarities and differences between perspectives.

Numerous universities have increased interdisciplinary courses and departments in the last twenty years or so (1970's- 1990's). Universities such as my own, Drew University, a Methodist-affiliated university in Madison, New Jersey, has fostered the learning of the humanities, sciences and religious disciplines into one college curriculum. At the graduate level, theology is an integral part of graduate curriculum. Courses on religion and science, religion and society, and 19th century interdisciplinary studies are encouraged. Several large secular universities such as Columbia University in New York City have an interdisciplinary humanities major for undergraduates. Rutgers University in New Jersey has recently added interdisciplinary studies to both undergraduate and graduate curriculum. Wilshire, who is a philosopher from Rutgers, suggests that interdisciplinary "think-



tanks" be a part of the university structure. Penn State University recently started an interdisciplinary Ph.D. program.

Due to the influence of Newman on many Catholic Institutions in America, numerous Catholic colleges and universities have interdisciplinary programs modelled after Newman's Idea. Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution, "On Catholic Universities," (August 15, 1990), mentions Newman. "Newman observes that a university 'professes to assign to each study which it receives its proper place and its just boundaries; to define the rights, to establish the mutual relations and to effect the intercommunion of one and all.'" (40) Many of these universities, such as Notre Dame University in Indiana, do not claim to follow Newman's model in their mission statement. However, Notre Dame's mission statement contains a quote from Newman about the false "division of labor" between the intellectual and religious knowledges. Marist College, a Jesuit college in Poughkeepsie, New York, has an interdisciplinary "Science of Man" curriculum for the undergraduate which implicitly resembles the Newman model. The President of St. Peter's College in New Jersey, Rev. Daniel Degnan, laments that St. Peter's College has not yet followed the Newman Model. Degnan writes in his paper, "The Third Era of Catholic Higher Education,"

Imaginative methods are needed if Newman's vision is to be maintained. For example, inter-disciplinary institutes or "college" might be founded, to which faculty would be invited to devote part of their energies and time. A Thomas More college might invite faculty and students to relate their disciplines to issues of justice. A Teresa of Avila college might relate literature, the sciences, history to religious symbolism and experience. An Einstein college might explore questions of science, technology and society; a Michelangelo college might relate other disciplines to the arts. (Degnan, 10)

In Seton Hall University, another Catholic institution, Father Richard Liddy comments that Catholic institutions have the added problem of losing their Catholicism while pursuing secular disciplines. Liddy, a Newman scholar, draws upon the works of Bernard Lonergan, to support Newman's Idea for the future of Catholic Universities. Providence College in Rhode Island is one of the few Catholic colleges which explicitly follows Newman's model and states so. Vice-President, Peter Quigley, decidedly commented that Providence College "followed the Newman model." The mission statement includes these ideas which echo Newman.

Its main objective is the intellectual development of its students through the disciplines of the sciences and humanities, equipping them to become productive and responsible citizens of a democratic society.  
...the College promotes the pursuit of sound scholarship and the principles of the Judeo-Christian heritage through the unique Catholic tradition of the Dominican order.(6)

As President Daniel Degnan of St. Peter's College writes, "Catholic universities and colleges have achieved much of Newman's idea. Yet, if a deep current runs counter to these aims, as I think it does, the need is for vision from presidents, faculties, trustees."  
(Degnan, 10)

In our pluralistic age, we need to understand all cultural heritages. Our urban and rural environments suffer from cultural ignorance and misunderstandings. On the global level, we seek to establish world peace and cooperation. In an age when educational philosophy is sought to solve the problems of our educational systems, Newman's Idea, along with the centennial revival of Newman thought, can act as a provocateur and goal-setter for our present and future re-evaluation of Higher Education. Newman's thinking on

"The Circle of The Sciences" is most relevant to the coming century when the process of global communication becomes more advanced. The access to Western and Eastern cultures will be shared. Knowledge of all disciplines, cultures and religions will be burgeoning. The journey inward to understand consciousness will be everdeepened. At the turn of this 21st century, the apprehension of unity and the Integrative Habit of Mind will be essential to the accomplishment of World Peace.

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