

# A SELECTION OF VOICES ON THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION AND LAWRENCE CUNNINGHAM

**QUESTIONS:**<sup>1</sup> As we begin our seminar, we are always faced with a definitional issue—what do we mean by the Catholic Intellectual Tradition? As you read the following selection of voices as well as the essay by Lawrence Cunningham, how would you begin to define the Catholic Intellectual Tradition? What claims characterize this tradition? Do you find such claims compelling or problematic? What are the implications of such a tradition for the mission of the University of St. Thomas?

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## UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS' MISSION

Inspired by *Catholic intellectual tradition*, the University of St. Thomas educates students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely and work skillfully to advance the common good.

## CATHOLIC

WALTER ONG, S.J.<sup>2</sup>

“Catholic” is commonly said to mean “universal,” a term from the Latin *universalis*. The equation is not quite exact. If “universal” is the adequate meaning of “catholic” why did the Latin church, which in its vernacular language had the word *universalis*, not use this word but rather borrowed from Greek the term *katholikos* instead, speaking of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church” (to put it into English) instead of the “one, holy, universal and apostolic Church”? The etymological history of *universalis* is not in every detail clear; but it certainly involves the concepts of *unum*, “one,” and *vertere*, “turn.” It suggests using a compass to make a circle around a central point. It is an inclusive concept in the sense that the circle includes everything within it. But by the same token it also excludes everything outside it. *Universalis* contains a subtle note of negativity. *Katholikos* does not. It is more unequivocally positive. It means simply “through-the-whole” or “throughout-the-whole”—*kata* or *kath*, or through or throughout; *holos*, whole from the same Indo-European root as our English “whole.”

Perhaps *katholikos* was favored by the Latin (as well as by the Greek) church because it resonated so well with Jesus' parable in Mt. 13:33 (echoed in Lk. 13:21): “The reign of God is like yeast which a woman took and kneaded into three measures of flour. Eventually the whole

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<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of each essay or sets of essays, we pose a couple of questions for you to consider as you read the text. If they help, use them, but if they don't help, please feel free to craft your own.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Ong, “Yeast: A Parable for Catholic Higher Education,” *America*, (April 7, 1990): 348-363.

mass of dough began to rise." Yeast is a plant, a fungus, something that grows with no particular limits to its borders. If the mass of dough is added to, the yeast grows into the added portion. Understood as Catholics in terms of this parable, the Kingdom or the church is a limitless, growing reality, destined ultimately to be present everywhere and to affect everything, though by no means to convert everything into itself. Yeast acts on dough, but it does not convert all the dough into yeast, nor is it able to do so or meant to do so.

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If, however, yeast nourishes itself on the dough in which it is placed, it does not do so in such a way as to spoil the dough—not from the human point of view, certainly. It makes the dough more usable, more nourishing. It not only grows in what it feeds on, but it also improves what it feeds on and makes it possible for others to feed on it as well as on itself, the yeast. The Catholic Church is not out to confront and destroy the cultures it is set in or due to encounter, but to interpenetrate these cultures, and not only on its own terms, but interactively. Yeast grows in different sorts of dough—white, whole wheat, rye and so on, not converting one sort of these doughs into any of the others. Moreover, any dough with yeast growing in it can be added to a completely different batch of dough, and the yeast will act on the new batch in accord with the way the new batch is constituted (white dough, whole wheat, rye, whatever): The church transplanted from any given culture to a new culture can live in a way that fits that particular new culture without losing its own identity, just as in doing its work of leavening, yeast does not sacrifice its own identity but remains growing yeast.

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In a Catholic college or university, the yeast—the Kingdom in the sense of the Catholic faith—is constantly being brought into contact with new materials. These include materials in philosophy, the other humanities, the sciences and all the rest of developing human knowledge, as well as in its own special ways, theology itself.

Here there is no question of indoctrinating disciplines that are themselves separate from the faith, but of interacting with them as each requires—in patterns that have to be worked out over time, as the interacting takes place. The ferment of the yeast, the Kingdom in the sense of the church and the church's faith, will work in different ways, not all of which are by any means predictable now. At times it may have no immediate grounds for interacting at all. At times, new grounds will arise: Modern high technology has made ecology a new massive Catholic theological and practical pastoral problem, as it hardly was before.

From its beginning, Catholic teaching has learned by contact with what is not itself and even what is opposed to itself. For example, St. Augustine and many others learned from pagan rhetoric, the most pervasive of all branches of learning in the West as well as in the Middle East over centuries. St. Thomas Aquinas learned from the pagan Aristotle—and met massive resistance for his use of this pagan author, who, moreover, was mediated to the Latin West through Muslims, Arabs and others. In our own day, Catholic teaching has learned from certain kinds of existentialism and especially from personalist philosophy. One of personalism's most ardent proponents was Jewish, Martin Buber, whose book *I and Thou* is a cardinal personalist text. Personalism has had its effects on Catholic teaching—notably in the writings and talks of Pope John Paul II. The yeast of the Kingdom has been expanding through vast new batches of dough over the centuries and will continue to do so even more radically in our computer and information age and in other ages to come.

Catholic intellectual life is central to Catholic identity. It is fundamental to the life of the church, big *C* and little *c*, cathedral and congregation—to its continued vitality and to the church's missions in this culture. This is not a narrow ecclesiastical tradition, but a broad and infinitely useful one. *Commonweal* [a Catholic magazine of which she was editor] has fostered and questioned that tradition. Our writers and readers reflect that affection and that criticism. They are university people and journalists, book editors, lawyers, physicians, scientists, politicians; they are bishops, clergy and ordinary Catholics, who in their daily lives practice and depend upon the kind of thinking, reasoning, reflection that make up the Catholic intellectual tradition. Furthermore, this tradition is also explored and appreciated by writers and readers who are Methodists, Episcopalians, Orthodox as well as Catholics, and not only by Christians—Jews, secular humanists, those lapsed from every religion known to humankind.

This tradition is carried on, pursued, criticized, developed, wrestled with by people from many different backgrounds. The way they think and write, read and reflect very frequently rests on their education in American Catholic colleges and universities. So along with the preservation of knowledge, the scholarly work of retrieval, the building up of bodies of knowledge and the education of the young, your schools are central to the practice of the Catholic intellectual life. Colleges and universities cannot claim to be Catholic if this tradition is not part of its core understanding; this tradition cannot survive if Catholic colleges and universities do not renew it, maintain it, nourish it, support it and pass it on.

In the last several decades, Catholicism in the United States has become more charismatic, more Pentecostal, more experiential, open to both old and new currents of spirituality and mediation; it absorbs individualistic and congregational attitudes from American religion generally. But Catholicism is also and always has been a church with a brain, with a mind. So as important as these new manifestations may be, it is essential to the church, to its mission in the world, to the lives of ordinary people that there be a vigorous and Catholic intellectual life.

Yes, carrying on this tradition is an enormous challenge. You have to overcome bigotry and bias, including especially the prejudices Catholics themselves have against their own tradition. A Catholic intellectual is not an oxymoron. You do not have to be a Jesuit to be a Catholic intellectual. Yes, Catholicism and Catholic ideas have a checkered history. What institution, tradition, idea does not? From Plato to Foucault, from nominalism to deconstructionism, if human ideas have consequences, we can be sure some of them are bad. We have our fair share.

Many people, perhaps some of you, consider that the Catholic intellectual tradition is singular in its intellectual repression and oppression, its narrowness and dogmatism. Well, I say go read a history book! Some of you may be skeptical that the adjective *Catholic* adds anything to an institution or discipline except the judicial authority of ecclesiastical officials. I disagree. For 2,000 years Christians have struggled in multifarious ways with everything from body and soul to kingship and regicide, from usury to voluntary poverty, and today still struggle with everything from medical decision making to political theory, from child care to spiritual counsel, from race to gender. It is this tradition that pressed through the centuries - and reminds us in the

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<sup>3</sup> Margaret Steinfels, "The Catholic Intellectual Tradition," *Origins CNS documentary service* (August 24, 1995).

Gulf War, in Bosnia - the idea of civilian immunity. The distinction between ordinary and extraordinary care of the sick and the dying remains a viable one because this tradition teaches it.

It is a deep and rich tradition; it is a tradition worthy of our attention and study. If this tradition does not have a place in Catholic colleges and universities, what is that you are doing? What tradition has a better claim?

## INTELLECTUAL

**MICHAEL BUCKLEY, S.J.**<sup>4</sup>

To understand the genius and the unique academic promise of the Catholic university . . . one cannot make the relationship between knowledge and faith, nature and supernature, “secular” and “sacred,” extrinsic to one another, two distinct entities related to one another additionally or influentially. The fundamental proposition of the Catholic university is that the religious and the academic are intrinsically related. What does that mean?

Any movement toward meaning and truth is inchoatively religious. This obviously does not suggest that quantum mechanics or geography is religion. It does mean that the dynamism inherent in all inquiry and knowledge, if not inhibited, is toward ultimacy, toward a completion in which an issue or its resolution finds place in a universe that makes final sense, i.e., in the self-disclosure of God—the truth of the finite. At the same time, the tendencies of faith are inescapably toward the academic. This obviously does not suggest that all serious religion is scholarship. It does mean that the dynamism inherent in faith—if not inhibited—is toward its own understanding, toward its own self-possession in knowledge. If allowed their full development, the religious intrinsically involves the academic, and the academic intrinsically involves the religious—granted that this development is de facto always imperfectly realized at best or even seriously frustrated.

To grasp the character or promise of the Catholic university, one must understand this unique institution as an organic fulfillment of the two drives for knowledge out of which it issues: the drive of inquiry toward an ultimacy or that comprehensive meaning which is the object of religion; the drive of Christian faith—i.e., of living within the self-giving of God in Christ and in the Spirit—toward the appropriation of this comprehensive experience in understanding. The inherent integrity of the comprehensive faith-experience moving toward intelligence and of finite intelligence moving toward completion, this mutual entailment, is what a Catholic university must affirm and embody, however halting and imperfect its attempts. It is no accident that historically the university issued out of the church.

The Catholic university is to realize this intrinsic relationship of culture and Gospel in the ways in which it is a university: in research and instruction and the conversations that give a peculiar mark to its spirit; in service and symbols and collective life and the richness of an ecumenical Catholic culture; in the intellectual growth of its students and faculty and in the sharing of the diversity of the traditions out of which they come; in the passion for a just society that must

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Buckley, “The Catholic University and Its Inherent Promise,” *America* (May 29, 1993): 14(3).

characterize its graduates and that will in turn measure the religious and humane quality of their education.

The university is Catholic in its deliberate determination to render the church and the broader world this unique service: to be an intellectual community where in utter academic freedom the variant lines of Catholic tradition and thought can intersect with all of the traditions and convictions that constitute contemporary culture and move toward a reflective unity between world culture and the self-revelation of God.

This inherent unity bespeaks the promise of the Catholic university: to allow the dynamism native to each to reach its completion in the other. Rather than truncate the dynamism of knowing through interdicting the religious dimension of life or isolating the religious from the academic, the Catholic university has the resources and the charge to integrate them by allowing each its full development.

This seems to me to constitute the major challenge for contemporary Catholic universities: to become what they are, to realize their identity, to allow what is prescriptive discourse to become descriptive. In this identity is their great promise; in this promise is their identity.

### **JOHN HENRY NEWMAN<sup>5</sup>**

All knowledge is a whole and the separate Sciences parts of one...I have said that all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator. Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance each other.

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There is no enlargement [of mind], unless there be a comparison of ideas one 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 acquirements, gravitates. And therefore a truly great intellect, and recognized to be such by the common opinion of mankind, such as the intellect of Aristotle, or of St. Thomas, or of Newton, or of Goethe . . . is one which 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, not only of thing, but also of their mutual and true relations; knowledge, not merely considered as acquirement, but as philosophy.

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[True education entails] “the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, determining their mutual dependence. . . . Possessed of this real illumination, the mind

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<sup>5</sup> John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), VI, 6.

never views any part of the extended subject-matter of Knowledge without recollecting that it is but a part . . . It makes every thing in some sort lead to every thing else.”

### JACQUES MARITAIN<sup>6</sup>

Education, in its final and highest achievements, tends to develop the contemplative capacity of the human mind. It does so neither in order to have the mind come to a stop in the act of knowing and contemplating, nor in order to make knowledge and contemplation subservient to action, but in order that once man has reached a stage where the harmony of his inner energies has been brought to full completion, his action on the world and on the human community, and his creative power at the service of his fellow-men, may overflow from his contemplative contact with reality - both with the visible and invisible realities in the midst of which he lives and moves.

That knowledge we call wisdom, which penetrates and embraces things with the deepest, most universal, and most united insights. Such a knowledge, which lives not only by supreme science, but also by human and spiritual experience, is over and above any field of specialization, for it has to do with realities which permeate each and every being and with aspirations which call to the very nature and freedom of man. It is in itself the highest value for the human mind. Education and teaching can only achieve their internal unity if the manifold parts of their whole work are organized and quickened by a vision of wisdom as the supreme goal, so as progressively to make youth capable of sharing to some degree in the intellectual and moral fruits of wisdom

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At each stage education should be guided by the vision of the appropriate mental world of comprehensive or ‘symphonic’ universality. And this vision should be communicated in some way to the ones who are taught, in order to make them realize the vital interest of their task and to give them inspiration and energy.

To say that a man is a person is to say that in the depth of his being he is more a whole than a part and more independent than servile. It is this mystery of our nature which religious thought designates when it says that the person is the image of God. A person possesses absolute dignity because he is in direct relationship with the realm of being, truth, goodness, and beauty, and with God, and it is only with these that he can arrive at his complete fulfillment. His spiritual fatherland consists of the entire order of things which have absolute value, and which reflect, in some manner, a divine Absolute superior to the whole world and which have a power of attraction toward this Absolute.

Truth—which does not depend on us but on what is—truth is not a set of ready-made formulas to be passively recorded, so as to have the mind closed and enclosed by them. Truth is an infinite realm—as infinite as being—whose wholeness transcends infinitely our powers of perception, and each fragment of which must be grasped through vital and purified internal activity. This conquest of being, this progressive attainment of new truths, or the progressive realization of the ever-growing and ever-renewed significance of truths already attained, opens and enlarges our

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<sup>6</sup> The following texts are taken from: Jacques Maritain, *The Education of Man: The Educational Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, eds. Donald Gallagher and Idella Gallagher (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962): 54 and Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943): 8-9.

mind and life, and really situates them in freedom and autonomy. And speaking of will and love rather than knowledge, no one is freer, or more independent, than the one who gives himself for a cause or a real being worthy of the gift.

### **WENDELL BERRY<sup>7</sup>**

The modern university has grown, not according to any unifying principle, like an expanding universe, but according to the principle of miscellaneous accretion, like a furniture storage business.”

### **DON BRIEL<sup>8</sup>**

Several years ago both in a widely publicized lecture delivered at Georgetown University and later at a meeting of Chicago area scholars, Cardinal George argued that a university without a unifying vision is simply a high-class trade school. Many seemed puzzled by this remark, assuming that he was referring to a general erosion of university standards that put higher education at the level of vocational training. But as he later pointed out, high-class trade schools are "very important institutions," and he did not hesitate to list Harvard and Yale among them. But he went on to add that "if they have lost.... any kind of truly integrating vision, then in fact they are there to serve an individual sense of mission, an individual purpose, and the demands of individual disciplines which are left un-integrated, except in the desire of students themselves and the academic vocation of those who feel accountable to their discipline...." The classical ideal of university education presupposed that its ultimate goal was to train students to see things whole. In contrast, the trade school was marked by a new emphasis on the university as a mere "carrier of disciplines." As such, it simply presides over a set of disciplinary guilds, each anxious to protect its autonomy and increase its relative influence.

Perhaps the only remaining obstacle to this emerging trade school model were the classical claims that objective truth was knowable and that there are complex and coherent intellectual traditions through which one might engage that truth more fully. Of course, he had in mind the intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church.

It may be useful to reconsider the specific character of the older model of university the loss of which Cardinal George lamented, and especially useful to reconsider it in its Catholic expression, for many Catholic academics have recently argued that the university is essentially secular both in its operation and in its end and that its Catholic character merely adds a value rather than changes its essential character. Cardinal Newman's reflections on university education continue to be useful to us here. Over a century ago, the increasing specialization of university studies and professional life, the new model of the university as a carrier of disciplines, seemed to him highly problematic. In *The Idea of a University*, he insisted that society as a whole required something more than specialized competence and narrow interests, even though they might increasingly provide the means for material and intellectual advancement. "For if we are defined solely by this narrow specialization," he wrote, "it is the common failing of human nature, to be impressed with petty views and interests, to underrate the importance of all in which we are not concerned, and to carry our partial notions into areas where

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<sup>7</sup> Wendell Berry, "The Loss of the University," *Home Economics* (New York: North Point Press, 1987): 76.

<sup>8</sup> Don Briel, "Rethinking the Catholic Intellectual Tradition," given September 15, 2005 at St. Mary's University in Moraga, California.

they are inapplicable, to act in short, as so many unconnected units displacing and repelling one another." But this common human failing is now in large measure institutionalized in our colleges and universities and helps to explain the tendency to describe students as educational consumers. The loss of a common, integrating vision is not without its consequences for the individual as well as for society at large.

Similarly, Christopher Dawson had warned that if we were to avoid a basic conformity imposed by modern secular culture it would be "necessary to view the cultural situation as a whole and to see the Christian way of life not as a number of isolated precepts imposed by ecclesiastical authority but as a cosmos of spiritual relations embracing heaven and earth and uniting the order of social and moral life with the order of divine grace." It is in this sense that David Schindler insists that the modern Catholic university's fundamental mission is to participate in the Second Vatican Council's universal call to holiness. "As a university," he argued, "the Catholic university must carry out this fundamental mission in specific reference to the intelligence."

### **SIMONE WEIL<sup>9</sup>**

We do not obtain the most precious gifts by going in search of them but by waiting for them. Man cannot discover them by his own powers, and if he sets out to seek for them he will find in their place counterfeits of which he will be unable to discern the falsity.

The solution of a geometry problem does not in itself constitute a precious gift, but the same law applies to it because it is the image of something precious. Being a little fragment of particular truth, it is a pure image of the unique, eternal, and living Truth, the very Truth that once in a human voice declared: "I am the Truth."

The intelligence can only be led by desire. For there to be desire, there must be pleasure and joy in the work. The intelligence grows and bears fruit in joy. The joy of learning is as indispensable in study as breathing is in running. Where it is lacking there are no real students, but only poor caricatures of apprentices who, at the end of their apprenticeship, will not even have a trade.

It is the part played by joy in our studies that makes of them a preparation for spiritual life, for desire directed toward God is the only power capable of raising the soul.

### **T.S. ELIOT**

Where is the *wisdom* we have lost in our *knowledge*.  
Where is the *knowledge* we have lost in our *information*.

## **TRADITION**

### **G.K. CHESTERTON<sup>10</sup>**

Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those

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<sup>9</sup> Simone Weil, excerpted from *Waiting for God* (Harper Perennial, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: Image Day, 1990), 14.

who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death.

### ALASDAIR MACINTYRE<sup>11</sup>

So when an institution--a university, say, or a farm, or a hospital--is the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices, its common life will be partly, but in a centrally important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine is. Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict.

What the Catholic faith confronts today in American higher education and indeed in American education more generally is not primarily some range of alternative beliefs about the order of things, but rather a belief that there is no such thing as the order of things of which there could be a unified, if complex understanding, or even a movement towards such an understanding. There is on this contemporary view nothing to understanding except what is supplied by the specialized professionalized disciplines and subdisciplines. Higher education has become a set of assorted and heterogeneous specialized enquiries into a set of introductions to these enquiries together with a teaching of the basic skills necessary for initiation into them, something to be got through in order to advance beyond it into the specialized disciplines. The undergraduate major, when taught by those whose training has led them to presuppose this view – for it is often taken for granted, rather than explicitly stated – becomes increasingly no more than a prologue to graduate school, even for those who will never go to graduate school. And graduate school becomes a place where narrowness of mind is inculcated as a condition for success within each particular discipline in terms defined by its senior practitioners.

All explanation is in consequence treated as if context-bound and as if there is no such thing as an integrated and integrative understanding. It is one of the ironies of contemporary academic life that some of those who are most contemptuously dismissive of postmodern theses and diagnoses behave in the practice of their own professionalized disciplines as if those theses and diagnoses were in some measure true, as if there were no context-independent standards of judgment. And the effect has been a fragmentation of the university. How far particular universities have progressed towards this fragmented condition differs from case to case. But that the major research universities of this country have steadily approximated it more and more closely is undeniable.

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One danger for . . . alumni, whether Catholics or otherwise, is that they fall victim to an increasingly salient feature of our society, perhaps of all societies in the condition of advanced modernity. I call this feature compartmentalization. A compartmentalized society has two distinctive characteristics. Each of the separate spheres of activity through which individuals pass in the course of a day or a week or a month has its own distinctive culture, its own modes of relationship, its own specific norms. And in each of these spheres individuals can function effectively only by presenting themselves in and through whatever roles they occupy in this or that particular sphere. So as individuals pass from home and family to workplace to school to leisure-time activities and to political or religious associations, they become adroit in leaving

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<sup>11</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 221 and “Catholic Universities: dangers, hopes, choices.”

behind the roles, norms and attitudes appropriate to the sphere that they have just left and assuming those of the sphere that they are about to enter. They present themselves through their roles as one kind of person in the home, another in the workplace, a third in the social club. And so in extreme cases the individual is nearly, if not quite, dissolved into the set of roles that she or he plays.

A second distinctive characteristic of social compartmentalization reinforces these same effects. There is increasingly nowhere within compartmentalized societies in which individuals are invited in a practically effective way to view their lives as a whole, to evaluate themselves and those qualities that belong to them as individuals, the virtues and the vices, rather than those that belong to them as successful or unsuccessful role-players. In the past a variety of institutions, both religious and secular, have provide milieus within which individuals and groups were able to stand back from their everyday lives and judge themselves critically by a standard of human goodness external to and independent of those of the various spheres of activity in which they were engaged. And it was one of the works of the Catholic faith, and more specially of Catholic education, to provide within just such milieus an integrative vision of the human and natural orders, as well as the supernatural order, one that could inform not only education, but the subsequent lives of the educated, by providing them with a standard for identifying and criticizing the inadequacies of the social orders that they inhabited. Why is it of the first importance that Catholic schools, colleges and universities should still provide such milieus?

It is not only because we need to provide our students with an alternative to narrowly restrictive understanding of the values of social life that compartmentalization imposes. Its also because of the values that dominate so much of the life of the secular world that those students are preparing to enter, values that have already influence them before they enter upon their college education. Howard R. Greene has listed what his survey of 4,000 undergraduates showed to be the goals shared by students in public and private colleges: “making a good deal of money, being in a position of personal power, marrying the right person, having good friends, using the educational advantages that they received” (*The Select* New York: HarperCollings, 1998, p. 202). And Greene provides elsewhere in his book abundant evidence of the extent to which an undergraduate education is viewed as primarily and perhaps even sometimes nor more than a means to further professional training that will provide the basis for achieving these goals.

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Compartmentalization is sometimes so pervasive a phenomenon that we may not notice its negative effects. Those effects, I have suggested, include an uncritical attitude towards the norms and values of each particular compartmentalized area, arising form an inability to bring to bear what has been learned in each such area of one’s life upon the activities of other areas. So the classroom may be treated as a place for a rigorous testing of ideas, while conversation outside the classroom remains mindless and philistine. So the chapel may be treated as the place where the significance of one’s life is disclosed, while this disclosure is for the most part ignored in other areas of the university’s life. So the modes of athletic activity may proceed without regard to anything that happens in classroom or chapel. And to the extent that student social life is thus compartmentalized, no reform of the curriculum that aims to provide an integrative education is likely to be successful.

**MICHAEL KEATING**

Whatever the benefits of the modern educational project stemming from eighteenth and nineteenth century liberal thought, one serious wound at least has been sustained: namely, the isolation of the rational mind both from (1) spiritual sources of intellectual life and (2) the will, the place of rational intention. The traditional (pre-enlightenment) understanding was that ultimately one could not think well if one did not believe properly, nor could one think well if one did not act in accordance with true moral principles. These understandings have been largely set aside in the modern university, which has been seen, to its own and everyone's hurt, as the place where the intellect goes its way apart from spiritual or moral concerns.

A Catholic university sees the pursuit of intellectual excellence as possible only when both spiritual and moral excellence are pursued at the same time. This is an intellectual, not a devotional, principle. When the founders of the University of Oxford chose the first line of Psalm 37 as their motto, *Dominus Illuminatio Mea*, they were making an epistemological claim: that faith enlightens the intellect and cannot be divorced from the pursuit of intellectual excellence. When Plato and the ancient philosophers connected the pursuit of knowledge to a way of life, to a conversion to philosophy and initiation into a fraternity of wisdom-seekers, they were claiming that intellectual light was available only to those whose moral compass was correct. The same view shows up in the Medieval idea that the proper university student was the cleric, one who was (in theory) living a virtuous life free of worldly entanglements. A Catholic university is an attempt to re-integrate these aspects of intellectual formation: pursuit of knowledge, lively faith, and moral uprightness, in a configuration that works well for the modern student.

### **Thomas Babington Macaulay<sup>12</sup>**

There is not, and there never was on this earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic church. The history of that Church joins together the two great ages of human civilization. No other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when camelopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. The proudest royal houses are but of yesterday, when compared with the line of the Supreme Pontiffs. That line we trace back in an unbroken series, from the Pope who crowned Napoleon in the nineteenth century to the Pope who crowned Pepin in the eighth; and far beyond the time of Pepin the august dynasty extends, till it is lost in the twilight of fable. The republic of Venice came next in antiquity. But the republic of Venice was modern when compared with the Papacy; and the republic of Venice is gone, and the Papacy remains. The Papacy remains, not in decay, not a mere antique, but full of life and youthful vigour. The Catholic Church is still sending forth to the farthest ends of the world missionaries as zealous as those who landed in Kent with Augustine, and still confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila. The number of her children is greater than in any former age. Her acquisitions in the New World have more than compensated for what she has lost in the Old. Her spiritual ascendancy extends over the vast countries which lie between the plains of the Missouri and Cape Horn, countries which, a century hence, may not improbably contain a population as large as that which now inhabits Europe. The members of her communion are certainly not fewer than a hundred and fifty millions; and it will be difficult to show that all other Christian sects united amount to a hundred and twenty millions. Nor do we see any sign which indicates that the term of her long dominion is approaching. She saw the commencement of all governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in

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<sup>12</sup> Macaulay was an Anglican intellectual who wrote this in 1840.

the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain, before the Frank had passed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigour when some traveler from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruin of St. Paul's.

## INTRODUCTION TO LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM

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### FAITH AND REASON LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM<sup>13</sup>

“The delicate balance of reason and faith rests in the conviction that humans have some instinctive capacity to know God, a God who is closer to us than we are to ourselves.”

James J. Walsh, given Notre Dame's highest honor (the Laetare Medal) in 1916, is best remembered, if he is remembered at all, for his book, *The Thirteenth, The Greatest of Centuries*. In that book, published in 1907, Walsh challenged the fashionable intellectual opinion of the time, defending “The Dark Ages” as a period in which artistic, intellectual, philosophical and literary impulses coalesced into an energetic, harmonious whole producing the great Gothic cathedrals as well as their intellectual counterpart, the *Summa* of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Walsh, a physician-turned-author, was reacting to a popular volume (*The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* by Jacob Burckhardt), which depicted the “rebirth” of culture in Italy in the late 14th and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries as a flower blooming in the arid desert of the medieval darkness. Walsh's rather flamboyant book anticipated by some decades the so-called Catholic revival in which all culture would point beyond itself to God — if one could only construct a living intellectual tradition that would do fair justice to reason and faith, not only in abstract thought, but also in the production of everything from art to politics.

Half a century ago a good number of journals, school curricula and social movements were based on this premise. But today that vision, if not destroyed, exists only as a tattered vision for a nostalgic remnant, or an artificial construct to shore up those Catholics who feel themselves singed by what Walter Lipman called the “acids of modernity.”

The lack of a coherent vision of the Catholic intellectual life, despite the attempts of Pope John Paul II to articulate one in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, swirls around the debates about what constitutes a Catholic university today. That issue, inspired in part by the papal document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and the regulations about its implementation in this country, has triggered intense debates in the arena of Catholic education...

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<sup>13</sup> Cunningham, Lawrence. “Faith and Reason.” *Notre Dame Magazine* (Spring 2000): 29-31. Used with permission.