New Blackfriars

DOI:10.1111/j.1741-2005.2010.01412.x

The Wonder of Newman's Education

Gerard Loughlin

Abstract

This article examines the place of wonder in Newman's account of university education. It pays particular attention to Newman's 'Rise and Progress of Universities' (1872) rather than to his better known *The Idea of a University* (1873). The article first introduces some ideas about wonders and wondering, as found in medieval thought and in Newman's writings, before proceeding to the wonder that was Newman's attempt to establish a university in Dublin, and that is his history (*historia*) of the university: a story (*fabula*) that is every bit as marvellous as any medieval tale. Newman's educational romance involves the islands of Britannia and Hibernia, and the cities of Athens, Rome and Dublin. The article also considers the place of personal encounter and the written word in Newman's idea and practice of education, before finally offering some brief reflections on the diversity of modern society and university education. The article closes by suggesting the necessity of wonder for the gaining of knowledge.

Keywords

John Henry Newman; education; university; wonder; miracles

Today we wonder at education: what it has been, what it will be and what it is for. Those who labour in universities wonder at these things in relation to the institutions in which they work, and, when they are not being amazed at what goes on in such places, they may find time to wonder about the very idea of a university itself. Wondering about the university was of course one of John Henry Newman's great undertakings, a wondering that he pursued in thought and deed, seeking to realise in Ireland the ideal he worked on throughout the 1850s; to build in Dublin's fair city the shadow of the form.

Wonders

Newman's beatification reminded many that the making of a saint requires the making of miracles — appropriate wonders, attributable to

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the importuning of the saint and beyond human capacity for explanation. Shortly after his ordination to the Catholic priesthood, Newman visited Naples, and toured some of the fifty places within ten miles of the centre where miracles of liquefaction were celebrated, though he missed out on the most famous, that of Saint Januarius (San Gennaro). Newman, as a new Catholic, tried hard to believe in such marvels.[1]

> [T]here is this remarkable fact, that liquefactions of blood are common at Naples — and unless it is irreverent to the Great Author of miracles to be obstinate in the inquiry, the question certainly rises whether there is something in the air. (Mind, I don't believe there is — and, speaking humbly and without having seen it, think it a true miracle — but I am arguing.)[2]

Newman's note to Henry Wilberforce (1807–1873) well captures both the credulity which many associate with medieval Catholicism, and which for many was the selfsame as that to which Newman had succumbed. But it also captures medieval incredulity to such tales. If the twelfth to fourteenth centuries saw a growing profusion of such marvellous stories it also saw the development of ever more sophisticated distinctions between wonders.[3] Augustine's lesson that things are causes of stupefaction to the extent that we don't understand their nature was well taken.[4] Wonders were always subject to actual or potential inquiry, explanation, dissolution. Nevertheless, though some thought this would prove true for all 'marvellousness of experiences and marvels',[5] most distinguished the yet to be explained (*mirabilia*) from those events that were necessarily beyond all explanation by natural means (*miracula*).

There were also those whose wonder (*admiratio*) was for the natural itself, as when Roger Bacon (1214–1294) marvelled at the complexity of the fly and thought magnets natural miracles (*miracula naturae*).[6] Moreover, if Thomas Aquinas found true miracles to be

[1] John Cornwall, *Newman's Unquiet Grave: The Reluctant Saint* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 102.

[2] Newman to Henry Wilberforce (17 September 1847) in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, edited by Charles Stephen Dessain *et al*, xxxii vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961–2008), vol. xii, pp. 121–122. Brackets in original.

[3] See Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Wonder' in *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), pp. 37–75. I am much indebted to this wonderful essay and book.

[4] See Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, edited and translated by R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Book XXI (pp. 1044–1106), especially chapters 4 and 8 (pp. 1048–1052, 1060–1064).

[5] Pseudo-Albert [the Great], *Liber de mirabilibus mundi*; cited in Bynum, 'Wonder', p. 50.

[6] *The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon*, translated by R. B. Burke, 2 vols (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1928), pt. 1, ch. 10 (vol. 1, p. 24); pt. 6, ch. 12 (vol. 2, pp. 630–631); cited in Bynum, 'Wonder', p. 50.

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those events that had God as their first and only cause, it followed that all other events — which were the result of secondary as well as primary causation — also partook in the miracle of being caused by God. It is with something of this latter sense that Newman could propose the rise and progress of Christianity as a testimony to its truth, and, as we shall see, the rise and progress of the university is hardly less miraculous, a wonder causing astonishment.

Newman's last university sermon, preached in 1843 to a packed congregation at St Mary's Church, Oxford, on the Feast of the Purification, was on 'The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine'.[7] It was an early attempt to outline his thinking on change in Christian thought and practice, with an approach that would come to fruition in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) and which, as a topic, came to dominate nineteenth-century Christian thought in the West.[8] And what better example of such development than Christian thinking about Mary, the mother of Jesus, who, briefly mentioned in the gospels, had become the Mother of God in Catholic tradition, immaculately conceived and bodily assumed into heaven. It is thus with her that Newman begins, noting that she became the pattern of faith through accepting God's word without question. 'Blessed is she that believed,' as Elisabeth declared (Luke 1.45). But while others wondered at the angels who announced the birth of Mary's child, or at that child himself, when, aged twelve, he was found 'amid the doctors' in the Temple, Mary 'pondered' these things 'in her heart' (Luke 2.51).[9] And it is this pondering that makes Mary not only the pattern of faith, but also of reason.

> Thus St. Mary is our pattern of Faith, both in the reception and in the study of Divine Truth. She does not think it enough to accept, she dwells upon it; not enough to possess, she uses it; not enough to assent, she developes [sic] it; not enough to submit the Reason, she reasons upon it; not indeed reasoning first, and believing afterwards, with Zacharias, yet first believing without reasoning, next from love and reverence, reasoning after believing. And thus she symbolizes to us, not only the faith of the unlearned, but of the doctors of the Church also, who have to investigate, and weigh, and define, as well as to profess the Gospel; to draw the line between truth and heresy; to anticipate or remedy the various aberrations of wrong reason; to

[7] Newman, 'The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine' (Sermon XV, 1843) in *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 and 1843*, edited by James David Earnest and Gerard Tracey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006 [1872]), pp. 211–235. For an account of the occasion see J. C. Shairp, *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1868), pp. 278–279.

[8] See further Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: The Idea of Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

[9] Newman, 'The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine', p. 211.

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> combat pride and recklessness with their own arms; and thus to triumph over the sophist and the innovator.[10]

Mary accepts, possesses, assents and submits to truth. But she also dwells, uses, develops and reasons upon it. She first believes, but then reasons about her belief, and does so out of love and reverence for the truth in which she believes. In this she becomes a doctor of the church, and her studiousness consists in her ability to ponder on the wonders of what God has done.

Newman does not make 'wonder' a subject of reflection; he more usually describes as 'wonderful' that which occasions wonder, which here are those deeds of God—the arrival and ministry of Jesus—which amaze all, both unlettered and learned, and which demand the reflections of the latter. Mary's pondering is that process by which the church — through her theologians — makes explicit what is at first only implicit, that methodizing by which, as Newman had put it in an earlier sermon, the faith is committed to 'the keeping of science'.[11]

Thus theology begins with the occasion of wonder, and insofar as theology is a concern of the university so also is the wonder with which theology begins, and which theology must preserve if it is not to lose its submission to that which calls it forth and by which it is reciprocally possessed. But what of the university's other concerns, with the subjects that are, day to day, more determinative of its substance, whether we think of these as the classical *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric and logic) and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) — which always preceded theology, law and medicine — or the social and physical sciences of the modern university? Are these also founded in the occasion of wonder?

Aristotle would have us think so, as Caroline Walker Bynum reminds us, and she argues for wonder as the source and goal of historical study. It is the first step to knowledge. As a teacher she wants to 'astonish and be astonished',[12] and Newman would seem to imply something similar when he relates the science of theology — whose first step is wonder — to the other university sciences. For he tells us that, just as with theology, the principles of 'philosophy,

[10] Newman, 'The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine', pp. 211–212.

[11] Newman, 'Implicit and Explicit Reason' (Sermon XIII, 1840) in *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 and 1843*, edited by James David Earnest and Gerard Tracey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006 [1872]), 173–189 (p. 212).

[12] Bynum, 'Wonder', pp. 40–41 and 74–75. 'All men began to philosophize from wonder whether it is really so, as with spontaneous natural wonders, such as those of the changes of the sun or the incommensurability of the diameter (for everybody thinks that this is amazing, if something cannot be measured exactly).' Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, translated by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin Books, 1998), Book Alpha 2 (p. 10).

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physics, ethics, politics' all admit of 'implicit reception and explicit statement'; a given nature that — like revelation — prompts and requires gradual unfolding in the understanding.[13] The implication is clear. All sciences begin in wonder at some aspects of the world and develop into systematic reflections upon them through the operation of reason, serving those impressions that, in the case of religion, are held in faith, as indeed also in the other sciences.[14]

But for Newman the university itself is a work of wonder. He will find 'points of resemblance between the propagation of Christian truth and the revival of letters' in the eighth-century under Charlemagne (742–814).[15] He will note that the 'rise and spread of Christianity' is a 'miraculous fact' and imply the same for the revival of letters and the birth of the medieval university, insofar 'as a work of man can resemble a work of God.'[16] The foundations of Europe's 'intellectual greatness' are a work of wonder,[17] and Newman will imply the same for the Catholic University of Ireland: a marvel that was said to be impossible.[18]

Dubliners

Newman's reflections on the wonder of education, and university education in particular, came out of his own education at Oxford, as student and then as tutor, and out of his expulsion from that life consequent upon his conversion to Rome. But they also came out of his engagement with the establishment of a Catholic university in Dublin. Indeed, the arrival of the Dublin project gave Newman's Catholic ministry a purpose that it might not otherwise have had. It enabled him to think — as John Cornwall puts it — 'that his vocation would be the education of Catholics rather than the conversion of Anglicans.'[19]

But Newman's writing on the university would educate many more than just Catholics. Newman's most widely known work, after the *Apologia*, is probably *The Idea of a University*, read far beyond

[13] Newman, 'The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine', pp. 220–21.

[14] Newman insisted that something like faith was at the base of all knowledge. '[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*, 8 vols (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1891), vol. 1, 190–202 (p. 193). 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, 2004), 25–52 (pp. 33–34, 50–52).

[15] John Henry Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities' in *Historical Sketches*, 3 vols (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909 [1872]), vol. 3, 1–251 (p. 166).

[16] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 164.

[17] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 163.

[18] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 47.

[19] Cornwall, *Newman's Unquiet Grave*, p. 125.

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the church wherever people turn to pondering the nature of higher education. In his book on the ends of the university, Stanley Fish gives the last word to Jacques Derrida, but only after noting that Newman anticipated everything that Fish wants to say on the subject.[20] Fish takes from Newman the idea that university education has no end beyond itself.

It was at Dublin, in May and June 1852, that Newman gave the lectures that would become his celebrated book. Only five lectures were given, but ten were written, and they were published as pamphlets before being bound together and presented as *Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education*. The book bore the date of 1852 but appeared in the following year.[21] These lectures were the effective start of Newman's campaign to establish the Catholic University of Ireland that Dr Paul Cullen (1803–1878), Archbishop of Armagh, had invited him to attempt. Newman was not formally installed as rector until 1854, and already by then may have been doubting the future of the institution from which he eventually resigned in 1858. But though the task of running the university — of dealing with Dr Cullen — proved beyond Newman's endurance, thinking about what a university should be did not. In 1859 he published a collection of *Lectures and Essays on University Subjects*, and it was these that he latter added to an edited version of his earlier book to produce *The Idea of a University* in 1873.

In addition, Newman published a series of 'immethodical' thoughts on the history and nature of the university in the *Catholic University Gazette*. Starting in 1854, this small weekly publication was edited by Newman for a year, before it was taken over by Robert Ornsby.[22] It was intended as a record of 'University proceedings', providing 'a medium of intelligence' — as Newman put it — between the University's governing body and its members. It would also provide strangers with a 'phantasia' of the University's life, and 'indoctrinate the Irish in the idea of a University'.[23]

Newman's attempts at indoctrination were published anonymously and in the face of what Newman presents as a general opinion that the

[20] Stanley Fish, *Save the World on Your Own Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 177. For a comparison of Newman and Derrida on the university see 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), pp. 113–131.

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

[22] Wilfred Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman based on his Private Journals and Correspondence*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), vol. I, pp. 348–49.

[23] Quoted in Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, vol. 1, p. 348.

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undertaking of a Catholic university is 'too noble, too desirable, to be possible.'[24] This despondency was born not so much of argument as of imagination, and so must be countered by representations rather than by reasoning, by 'description and statement, concerning the nature, the character, the work, the peculiarities of a University'.[25] Newman does not pretend a systematic argument, but the winsome description of an idea, and not just the idea of a university, but a university in Ireland, though not — it may be noted — a university *of* Ireland. Newman was charged with setting up a Catholic university, one which would be an alternative to the secular Queen's Colleges established in Belfast, Cork and Galway.[26] 'I had gone to Ireland', Newman wrote, 'on the express understanding that it was an English as well as an Irish University, and the Irish had done all in their power to make it an Irish University, and nothing else.'[27]

But since the university was in Ireland, it is with regard to Ireland that Newman made his case, and one which he made all the more forcibly when he republished the articles, first as *The Office and Work of Universities* (1856) and then as the 'Rise and Progress of Universities' in the third volume of his *Historical Sketches*, which appeared in 1872. This latter volume provided a more historical and a more romantic view of Newman's idea of the university than *The Idea of a University* itself, which was published in the following year. It is more historical because it details — though with few dates and hardly any references — the rise of university education, as Newman saw it, from Athens to Dublin. It is more romantic because it makes Dublin — the Irish people — the central focus of the history: Athens reborn in Dublin. It is indeed a wonderful tale.[28]

Islands

Newman, in the 'Rise and Progress of Universities', paints a picture of Roman civilization overthrown. A 'black cloud of inexhaustible barbarian populations' befell and destroyed the 'noblest earthly power that ever was.'[29] Then only the once despised Galileans housed and lodged 'the scattered remnants of that old world's wisdom', and

[24] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 3.

[25] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 4.

[26] The decision to set these up was made in 1845, with the degree awarding body — the Queen's University of Ireland — established in 1850.

[27] Newman quoted in Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, vol. 1, p. 383.

[28] For a not entirely appreciative account of Newman as romantic — as the gothic hero of his own life — see Valerie Pitt, 'Demythologising Newman' in *John Henry Newman: Reason, Rhetoric and Romanticism*, edited by David Nicholls and Fergus Kerr OP (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), pp. 13–27.

[29] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 110.

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tamed, without force of arms, the 'savage destroyer'. 'Not a man in Europe now, who talks bravely against the Church, but owes it to the Church, that he can talk at all.'[30] And where was the home of such salvaged wisdom? It was of course the islands of Britain and Ireland, unregarded places that would yet be 'the storehouse of the past and the birthplace of the future.'[31]

Alasdair MacIntyre — at the end of *After Virtue* (1981) — recalls the Benedictines as having formed new kinds of community for the sustenance of 'morality and civility' throughout the ages of 'barbarism and darkness'.[32] But it was the English Benedictine in particular, who — according to Newman — did this 'amid the deep pagan woods of Germany and round about'. There he 'plied his axe and drove his plough, planted his rude dwelling and raised his rustic altar upon the ruins of idolatry, and then settling down as a colonist upon the soil, began to sing his chants and to copy his old volumes, and thus to lay the slow but sure foundations of the new civilization.'[33]

MacIntyre ends *After Virtue* by looking for 'another — doubtless very different — St. Benedict', who will preserve what is necessary for the founding of a new civilization after the dark ages that are already upon us.[34] But this trope was already Newman's in the nineteenth-century, except that he could already see the light of what was to come. Moreover, Newman makes the papacy the instigator of Europe's saving by the doughty monks of Benedict's rule. For it is the 'instinctive sagacity of Popes' that when troubled with the future of the human race, they look not to the great places of the earth — such as the city of Alexandria — but to the small, disregarded places.

> The weak and contemptible things of this world are destined to bring to nought [sic] and to confound the strong and noble. High up in the North, above the continent of Europe, lay two sister islands, ample in size, happy in soil and climate, and beautiful in the face of the country. . . . In those days the larger of the two was called Britannia, the lesser Hibernia.[35]

It was to these 'Isles of the North' that Gregory the Great (circa 540–604) looked when he needed a 'refuge in the evil day'.[36] It was to them that he sent his missionaries so that there they could

[30] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 109.
[31] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 124.
[32] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, second edition (London: Duckworth, 1985 [1981]), p. 263.
[33] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 128.
[34] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 263.
[35] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 123.
[36] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 135.

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establish those continuing cultures of civility from which Europe could be rechristianized once its night terrors had passed. And now, in Newman's own day, and with that same instinctive sagacity as shown by his predecessors, the Holy Father — Pope Pius IX — has 'put His finger upon Ireland, and selected her soil as the seat of a great Catholic University, to spread religion, science, and learning, wherever the English language is spoken'.[37] And Newman sees that English will be spoken everywhere; 'already it has become the speech of a hundred marts of commerce, scattered over the East, and, even where not the mother tongue, it is at least the medium of intercourse between nations.'[38]

> I see an age of transition, the breaking up of the old and the coming in of the new; an old system shattered some sixty years ago, and a new state of things scarcely in its rudiments as yet, to be settled perhaps some centuries after our time.[39]

Here as elsewhere one cannot but be impressed by Newman's prescience. One might flinch at his seeming blindness to the brutality by which the 'most noble of earthly powers' had extended and maintained its reach through the destruction and enslavement of peoples, but Newman saw with acuity the effects that were to come with the advances of modernity, first in Europe and then in Europe's colonies. In the *Apologia* he notes that 'things are tending, — with far greater rapidity than in that old time from the circumstance of the age, — to atheism in one shape or another . . . not only Europe, but every government and every civilization through the world, which is under the influence of the European mind!'[40] Newman sees a world in which the creator is no longer reflected in the creation; a prospect as distressing as looking in the glass and not seeing one's face.[41]

However, there were some things that Newman did not foresee. When he wrote on the wisdom of popes he had not foreseen the failure of the university enterprise, or rather the failure of the English and Irish hierarchies to support him in the undertaking. His early confidence in papal sagacity came to be tempered by reflections on something like papal ignorance. 'I was,' he ruefully wrote, 'a poor innocent as regard things in Ireland when I went there, and did not care to think about it, for I relied on the word of the Pope, but from the event I am led to think it not rash to say that I knew as much about Ireland as he did.' Newman had lost his

[37] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 148.
[38] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 148.
[39] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 147.
[40] John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, edited by Ian Ker (London: Penguin Books, 1994 [1864]), p. 218.
[41] Newman, *Apologia*, p. 216.

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earlier belief 'that what the Pope determined was the very measure, or the very policy, expedient for the Church at the time when he determined'.[42]

The 'Rise and Progress of Universities' contains all the central aspects of Newman's idea of the university. The university is first and foremost a place for teaching universal knowledge, a 'school of universal learning'. It is, if you like, a place where the universe is taught. But it is also a place where the universe — the universality of men — gathers to be taught. Newman repeatedly insists on what would now be called the internationalization of the university: 'the assemblage of strangers from all parts in one spot.'[43] But he does not insist on gender equality. The assembled strangers are all men. Women appear in Newman's university as cooks or laundresses, but never as students or teachers.[44]

The university is a place for the making of gentlemen through the learning of the universe and, more importantly, through consorting with other gentlemen. For only thus does one acquire 'the carriage, gait, address, gestures, voice; the ease, the self-possession, the courtesy, the power of conversing, the talent of not offending; the lofty principle, the delicacy of thought, the happiness of expression, the taste and propriety, the generosity and forbearance, the candour and consideration, the openness of hand' that are bound together in 'the unity of an individual character' through mixing in 'high society'.[45] These qualities are not acquired through the reading of books or the attending of lectures. They are the fruit of living with others in the university's colleges and halls of residence. It is not the role of the university to instil such virtues. They are acquired through living with others within the ambit of the university, but the university as such is only concerned with the training of the intellect, not with the habits of the heart.

Newman's distinction between knowledge and morality, the one taught through university and the other through virtuous company, through habitation in colleges and halls, ironically but necessarily implied that a Catholic university was not strictly needed for the education of Catholic men, whose spiritual formation could be met

[42] Newman quoted in Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, vol. 1, p. 388.

[43] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 6.

[44] As early as the 1830s some women attended lectures at the University of London, but examinations were not opened to women until 1878. Women began to attend Oxford University in the last decades of the nineteenth-century, when halls of residence were established for them, but they had to wait until 1920 to become full members of the University.

[45] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 10. *The Idea of a University* lays greater stress than 'The Rise and Progress of Universities' on the learned ability of gentlemen to discern truth from falsehood; the virtue of discrimination necessary for withstanding sophistry, as much needed now as in Newman's day.

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through institutions other than the university, whose task was the training of their intellects rather than the soundness of their souls. Thus in 1864, and after his resignation from Dublin, we find Newman perfectly willing to establish an oratory at Oxford and a possible hall of residence for those attending the university. But the bishops did not support the project and Newman could only despair at their 'dreadful jealousy of the laity' which led them to oppose Catholic youths going to Oxford.[46]

The 'Rise and Progress of Universities' — unlike *The Idea of a University* — pays little attention to the university as a place for the teaching of theology.[47] It is not something for which Newman has to argue in what is largely an historical account of universities where the teaching of theology was not dubious. But in the 'Rise and Progress' we do find a repeated insistence on the university as inherently attractive, as a place that draws people to it. It is a supply that creates its own demand.

> In all times there have been Universities; and in all times they have flourished by means of [the] profession of teaching and [the] desire of learning. They have needed nothing else but this for their existence. There has been a demand, and there has been a supply; and there has been the supply necessarily before the demand, though not before the need. This is how the University, in every age, has made progress. Teachers have set up their tent, and opened their school, and students and disciples have flocked around them, in spite of the want of every advantage, or even of the presence of every conceivable discouragement.[48]

As students once flocked to Athens, so now they will flock to the city of Dublin, which in time will become the centre of the world. Looking into the future Newman sees:

> Thither, as to a sacred soil, the home of their fathers, and the fountain head of their Christianity, students are flocking from East, West, and South, from America and Australia and India, from Egypt and Asia Minor, with the ease and rapidity of a locomotion not yet discovered, and last, though not least, from England,—all speaking one tongue, all owning one faith, all eager for one large true wisdom; and thence, when their stay is over, going back again to carry over all the earth 'peace to men of good will.'[49]

[46] Newman to Thomas Allies (30 November 1864), *Letters and Diaries*, vol. xxi, p. 327.

[47] For a discussion of Newman on theology in the university see Gerard Loughlin, 'Theology in the University' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, edited by Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 221–40.

[48] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 51.

[49] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 32.

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Cities

In December 1832, Newman accompanied Hurrell Froude (1803–1836) and Froude's father on a journey to the Mediterranean. After stops in Gibraltar and Malta they eventually arrived at Patras in Greece, and that was as close as Newman ever got to Athens. The journey was to have been made across land, but it was considered too unsafe, with bandits roaming throughout a kingdom that had only just come into being.[50] A boat could not be found to take them, and the idea of travelling through Turkey was also ruled out. The birth of modern Greece denied Newman sight of its ancient university. 'Not Athens, but Rome, was Newman's lifelong destination', remarks Geoffrey Faber on this disappointment.[51] But it is with Athens, and not Rome, that Newman identifies in the 'Rise and Progress of Universities'.

While Newman thinks that the university achieves its perfection in its development rather than at its origin,[52] he nevertheless presents Athens as the original fount and remaining ideal, the *idea* itself, with all other universities but pale shadows. Newman's presentation of Athens is itself divided between idea and actuality. He begins with a fantasy Athens but then offers a more mundane view. Ancient Athens was that one spot where strangers from all lands gathered to pursue universal truth.

> Hither, then, as to a sort of ideal land, where all archetypes of the great and the fair were found in substantial being, and all departments of truth explored, and all diversities of intellectual power exhibited, where taste and philosophy were majestically enthroned as in a royal court, where there was no sovereignty but that of mind, and no nobility but that of genius, where professors were rulers, and princes did homage, hither flocked continually from the very corners of the *orbis terrarum*, the many-tongued generation, just rising, or just risen into manhood, in order to gain wisdom.[53]

But then Newman imagines the actual state of classical Athens, with houses 'small and mean', streets 'crooked and narrow', with 'upper stories projected over the roadway', which was in turn obstructed by 'staircases, balustrades, and doors that opened outwards'; a roadway that 'was jolting to carriages, and all but impassable', and

[50] Otto of Bavaria (1815–1867) became Otho, King of Greece, in 1832, under the Convention of London drawn up by the 'great powers': Britain, France and Russia. It was Otho who made Athens the capital of Greece, where the University of Athens was established in 1837.

[51] Geoffrey Faber, *Oxford Apostles: A Character Study of the Oxford Movement* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 283.

[52] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 2.

[53] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 18.

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'traversed by drains, as freely as any Turkish town now.'[54] It was to such decrepitude that a 'freshman' might come, seeking accommodation and wisdom, but finding himself 'plied by the hangers-on of professor this, or sophist that, each of whom wishes the fame or the profit of having a housefull [sic].'[55]

Newman describes something more like a medieval than an ancient city, but it is the ideal rather than the actual city he wants his readers to see and love: the city that could be, the city that Dublin will be. Athens is a state of being entirely devoted to intellect; it is the life that must animate any university worthy of the name. Yet there are also dangers, for 'in Athens genius and voluptuousness ever went hand in hand'.[56] This is the 'hitch' in the Athenian soul. 'She was of far too fine and dainty a nature for the wear and tear of life; — she needed to be "of sterner stuff", if she was to aspire to the charge of the young and inexperienced.' The 'terrors of the Law' needed to be added to the 'persuasives of the Beautiful'. And the name for the Law is Rome. 'Such', Newman writes, 'is the history of society: it begins in the poet, and ends in the policeman.'[57]

In the 'Rise and Progress of Universities' Newman suggests a remarkable set of contrasts between qualities that are identified by cities and their cultures, by nations and their habits, and by religious orders and their talents. Newman's most abstract terms for the difference are 'influence' and 'discipline', and they mark the difference between the university and the college, the one nurturing intellect and the other virtue. Athens is the 'pattern school for the Professorial system', which is the university as such, the spirit of learning. But it needs — Newman argues — the rule of morality, and that is supplied by the legions of empire.[58] Newman also maps these contrasts onto the difference between Irish and English, though as befits his belief that influence and discipline require one another he finds between the two nations a certain complementarity, born of a shared goal.

> Distinct, nay antagonistic, in character and talent, the one nation and the other, Irish and English, the one more resembling the Greek, the

[54] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 39. For Newman's more extended views on Turkey and the Turks see his 'Lectures on the History of the Turks, in their Relation to Europe' in *Historical Sketches*, vol. 2, pp. 1–238. The lectures were originally delivered in 1854 at the Catholic Institute in Liverpool. Hostile to 'Mohammedanism' and dismissive of Orthodoxy — with Newman opposing British foreign policy and supporting Russia against Turkey — the lectures may throw interesting light on the views of Pope Benedict XVI (Newman's beatifier) on Turkey in relation to Europe. On the lectures see further Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [1988]), pp. 402–404.

[55] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 38.

[56] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 85.

[57] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 77.

[58] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 87.

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> other the Roman, open from the first perhaps to jealousies as well as rivalries, they consecrated their respective gifts to the Almighty Giver, and, labouring together for the same great end, they obliterated whatever there was of human infirmity in their mutual intercourse by the merit of their common achievements.[59]

Newman also maps the difference of influence and discipline onto the religious orders of the church. 'I have ever thought I could trace a certain resemblance between Athens, as contrasted with Rome, and the Oratory of St. Philip, as viewed in contrast with the Religious Orders.'[60] Newman's heart is with the Athenian before the Roman, and — for his Dublin readers — with the Irish rather than the English. Athens does not systematize or constrain, but is fertile in schools rather than military successes, a place open to the world, attracting people to her through her love of learning and their 'love of philosophy.'[61]

> [I]t was the absence of rule, it was the action of personality, the intercourse of soul with soul, the play of mind upon mind, it was an admirable spontaneous force, which kept the schools of Athens going, and made the pulses of foreign intellects keep time with hers.[62]

In Athens, heart spoke to heart, and Athens was 'the wonder of the world'.[63]

Souls

Newman had been appointed as a tutor at Oriel College, Oxford, in 1826.[64] But by 1828 he had been relieved of his duties, his reform of the tutorial system being less welcomed by the newly appointed Provost, Edward Hawkins (1789–1882),[65] — whom Newman had helped to elect — than by his predecessor, Edward Copleston.

[59] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 128.
[60] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 86.
[61] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 87.
[62] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 88.
[63] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 86. Athens, in Newman's text, is feminine, and this might tempt one to see a gendered contrast between influence and discipline. But Rome — discipline — is also gendered as feminine ('Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 87), so one cannot simply align Athens/Ireland/Oratorians/freedom/voluptuousness with the feminine.
[64] As a result Newman resigned his curacy of St Clement's Church, Oxford, which he had taken up in May 1824. Newman had been appointed to an Oriel Fellowship in 1822, ordained as deacon in June 1824 and priested in May 1825.
[65] 'I can say with a full heart that I love him, and have never ceased to love him; and I thus preface what otherwise might sound rude, that in the course of the many years in which we were together afterwards, he provoked me very much from time to time, though I am perfectly certain that I have provoked him a great deal more.' Newman, *Apologia*, p. 28.

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Newman had sought to introduce smaller classes for academically gifted and studiously inclined students, leaving the rest to be taught in larger groups. Newman, at the time, saw the tutor's role as pastoral as well as academic, as someone who would court and nurture not only the intellect of the young, but also their 'spiritual good'.[66] But those not so favoured, those more interested in drinking and boxing than in books and prayers, were those whose present and future patronage was essential to the flourishing of the college, and it was these that Hawkins sought to save from the neglect risked by Newman's more paternal but selective approach. (Hawkins advocated a separation of teaching and pastoral duties that would later become Newman's own.)

This incident serves to remind us that Newman's ability as an educator was, if not doubtful, then unreliable, meeting with mixed results. He got on with people like himself, but for those of the gentry and aristocracy, who needed stronger discipline and more cajoling, he was less successful. As one of his students — the future Earl of Malmesbury and Lord Privy Seal — James Howard Harris (1807–1889), recalled, Newman 'used to allow his class to torment him with the most helpless resignation; every kind of mischievous trick was, to our shame, played upon him — such as cutting his bell-rope, and at lectures making the table advance gradually till he was jammed into a corner. He remained quite impassive, and painfully tolerant.'[67] It was this kind of student and situation that Newman sought to escape through his advocacy of small group tutorials.

Newman could educate those who were already educating themselves. Of course Newman was not only a tutor, he was also a pastor, and as such he taught through his sermons, for which he was renowned.[68] People hastened to hear him preach at Saint Mary's, to receive the 'electric shock' of understanding, as if for the first time, the meaning of the oft-heard gospel.[69] But some were less beguiled. Thomas Arnold Jr (1823–1900) was 'confused and bewildered' by his preaching,[70] while Sir Charles Murray (1806–1895) would

[66] Newman in a private memorandum (7 May 1826); quoted in A. Dwight Culler, *The Imperial Intellect: A Study of Newman's Educational Ideal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 52.

[67] Earl of Malmesbury, *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister: An Autobiography*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1884), vol. I, p. 18; quoted in Culler, *The Imperial Intellect*, p. 55.

[68] Preaching, as Denis Robinson notes, was for Newman a theological undertaking, 'a kind of performative theology worked out in the midst of the people.' Denis Robinson, 'Preaching' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, edited by Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 241–254 (p. 243).

[69] J. A. Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1867), p. 286; quoted in Cornwall, *Newman's Unquiet Grave*, p. 13.

[70] Thomas Arnold Jr, *Passages in a Wandering Life* (London: Edward Arnold, 1900), p. 57; quoted in Cornwall, *Newman's Unquiet Grave*, p. 13. Thomas's account contrasts

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declare that Newman never inspired him or his 'fellow undergraduates, with any interest, much less respect: on the contrary, we disliked, or rather distrusted, him.'[71] Tellingly, Newman's sermons were written out in full.[72] He was not an orator who had to wait to hear what he had to say to know what he thought, what he thought had already come into the light through the exertions of writing and rewriting. Newman was first and foremost a writer, a prodigious labourer in words, whose texts — books, pamphlets, sermons, and letters — were the main means by which he educated his own generation and those who came after.

I stress these aspects of Newman's educational abilities because they so nicely contrast with his theory of teaching. For while he taught largely through the written word, through a seemingly endless production of texts, and relied upon them even when speaking, he himself praised the spoken word and deplored its written equivalent. For him, education was a supremely social, if intimate affair, with learning the result of people meeting with people, and not of people meeting with books.[73] Newman would tell the story of how, in the 'age of Charlemagne', 'two wandering Irish students' fetched up in France and began hawking their wares in the market place: 'Who wants wisdom? here is wisdom on sale! this is the store for wisdom!' But in the nineteenth-century matters are different. 'Our seats are strewed, our pavements are powdered, with swarms of little tracts; and the very bricks of our city walls preach wisdom, by informing us by their placards where we can at once cheaply purchase it.'[74] The spoken has been replaced by the written word and we are the poorer for it. 'The general principles of any study you may learn by books at home; but the detail, the colour, the tone, the air, the life which makes it live in us, you must catch all these from those in whom it lives already.'[75]

Even the 'experiments and investigations' of science — which Newman imagines are 'conducted in silence; discoveries made in solitude' — benefit from the 'suggestions, the instruction, the

with that of his brother, Mathew Arnold, who famously recalled Newman 'rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music,—subtle, sweet, mournful.' Matthew Arnold, *Discourses in America* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1885), pp. 139–140.

[71] Murray in Sir Herbert Maxwell, *The Honourable Sir Charles Murray KCB: A Memoir* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1898), pp. 56; quoted in Culler, *The Imperial Intellect*, p. 54.

[72] Cornwall, *Newman's Unquiet Grave*, p. 48.

[73] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', pp. 48–49.

[74] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 7.

[75] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 9; '[I]f we wish to become exact and fully furnished in any branch of knowledge which is diversified and complicated, we must consult the living man and listen to his living voice' (p. 8).

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stimulus, the sympathy, the intercourse with mankind on a large scale' afforded by scientific associations and conferences.

> The novelty of place and circumstance, the excitement of strange, or the refreshment of well-known faces, the majesty of rank or of genius, the amiable charities of men pleased both with themselves and with each other; the elevated spirits, the circulation of thought, the curiosity; the morning sections, the outdoor exercise, the well-furnished, well-earned board, the not ungraceful hilarity, the evening circle; the brilliant lecture, the discussions or collisions or guesses of great men with one another, the narratives of scientific processes, of hopes, disappointments, conflicts, and successes, the splendid eulogistic orations; these and the like constituents of the annual celebration, are considered to do something real and substantial for the advance of knowledge which can be done in no other way.[76]

Newman is describing the meetings of such as the British Association (for the Advancement of Science), founded in 1831, but he might as easily be describing those of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain, which also advances knowledge through its gatherings.

Newman is so insistent on the sociality of learning that he thinks of the university as like a great city, and of the city as a kind of university. 'As the chief city is the seat of the court, of high society, of politics, and of law, so as a matter of course it is the seat of letters also; and at this time, for a long term of years, London and Paris are in fact and in operation Universities'. 'The newspapers, magazines, reviews, journals, and periodicals of all kinds, the publishing trade, the libraries, museums, and academies there found, the learned and scientific societies, necessarily invest it with the functions of a University'.[77] The metropolis is a 'virtual' university, only lacking in a principle or rule that directs all to a single end.[78]

Diversities

Diversity (*diversitas*) was once the occasion for wonder,[79] but for some, and in more recent days, it brings only dismay, or more dismay than delight. Newman's image of the city as a virtual university, lacking only a unifying principle, perhaps answers to the vision of modern society as we find it, for example, in Alasdair MacIntyre's already mentioned *After Virtue*. That begins by imagining a world in which all traditions of rational inquiry have been destroyed and only

[76] Newman, "Rise and Progress of Universities", p. 12.
[77] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 13.
[78] Newman, 'Rise and Progress of Universities', p. 14.
[79] See Bynum, 'Wonder', pp. 43, 50.

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fragments remain. Applied to the moral sphere, this catastrophe is the state of our society, which lacks sufficient commonality for the reaching of agreed principles, let alone acting upon them.[80] MacIntyre has returned to this theme in his recently published *God, Philosophy, Universities* (2009). In this study he offers his own history of the university in relation to the tradition of Catholic philosophy. I mention it here, and in closing, because in many ways it is a companion to Newman's own history of the university, and because it makes Newman's idea of the university the culmination of the tradition it sketches. For Newman allows for both the diversity of the sciences and their unity by placing them in the context of a university where theology is one of the sciences, theology being that science which ponders the unity that the other sciences traverse in detail but only in part. Theology allows us to think that these knowledges can be united as a single knowledge of the one world that God has made.

Of course it is not evident to all that the sciences need such unity, that the disunity to which we are otherwise condemned, as MacIntyre fears, is not more than aesthetically distasteful, if even that. Does it matter if the universe that the modern university imagines barely exists, as MacIntyre has it, 'no whole of which the subject matters studied by the various disciplines are all parts or aspects, but instead just a multifarious set of assorted subject matters.'[81] Can the university not allow for the cohabitation of different universes within it, so that for some the universe is Stephen Hawking's multiverse, with no God needed for its intelligibility,[82] while for others only the universe provided by MacIntyre's Thomism will do? This is, of course, as MacIntyre notes, to already render the university a multiverse.[83]

Perhaps things are, or should be, different in a Catholic university, which was what Newman was charged to establish. But here also is cause for lament, for today 'the most prestigious Catholic universities often mimic the structures and goals of the most prestigious secular universities and do so with little sense of something having gone seriously amiss.'[84] But then, at the last, MacIntyre allows that it

[80] For a less distraught view of the modern situation see Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents* (Cambridge; James Clarke & Co., 1990 [1988]).

[81] Alasdair MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 174.

[82] Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Press, 2010).

[83] It makes the university more of a multiverse than someone like Hawking would relish, since he strives for a single theory of everything. Theologians relinquish such ambition when they commit to learning the unknowability of the universe; the wonder that there is.

[84] MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities*, p. 179.

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was always thus, that the tradition of Catholic philosophy he himself has traced is a tradition of disagreement and conflict, of competing views.[85]

As Newman suggests, the universities we make reflect the cities we build, with all their diversities and unities. And as long as there remain occasions for wonder — and the diversity of experience, conjecture and hope are such occasions — then there is reason to ponder, and so again attempt the explication of the implicit, to traverse our astonishment. Only if we lose the latter will we lose the universe.[86]

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[85] MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities*, p. 180.

[86] I must thank Gavin D'Costa for suggestions that have improved this paper.

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