

## Newman, the University, and Its Counterfeit

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### *Handout*

Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*:

“Regardless of the academic discipline, knowledge in the Western world today is considered secular by definition. Its assumptions, methods, content, and truth claims are and can only be secular, framed not only by the logical demand of rational coherence, but also by the methodological postulate of naturalism and its epistemological correlate, evidentiary empiricism.” (*The Unintended Reformation*, 299)

“Leading scientists and scholars at research universities are the societal and indeed the global arbiters of what counts as knowledge and what does not in the early twenty-first century.” (*The Unintended Reformation*, 299)

John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*

“Admit a God, and you introduce among the subjects of your knowledge, a fact encompassing, closing in upon, absorbing, every other fact conceivable. How can we investigate any part of any order of Knowledge, and stop short of that which enters into every order? All true principles run over with it, all phenomena converge to it; it is truly the First and the Last. ... Granting that divine truth differs in kind from human, so do human truths differ in kind from one another. If the knowledge of the Creator is in a different order from knowledge of the creature, so, in like manner, metaphysical science is in a different order from physical, physics from history, history from ethics. You will soon break up into fragments the whole circle of secular knowledge, if you begin the mutilation with the divine. (*Idea*, 24; Discourse II, 3)

“Truth is the object of knowledge of whatever kind; and when we inquire what is meant by Truth, I suppose it is right to answer that Truth means facts and their relations. ... All that exists, as contemplated by the human mind, forms one large system or complex fact. (*Idea*, 40f; Discourse III, 2) Viewed altogether, [the sciences] approximate to a representation or subjective reflection of the objective truth, as nearly as possible to the human mind.” (*Idea*, 43; Discourse III, 2)

“[A]ll knowledge forms one whole, because its subject-matter is one; for the university in its length and breadth is as intimately knit together, that we cannot separate off portion from portion, and operation from operation, except by a mental abstraction; and then again, as to its Creator, though He of course in His own Being is infinitely separate from it, and Theology has its departments towards which human knowledge has no relations, yet He has so implicated Himself with it, and taken it into His very bosom, by His presence in it, His providence over it, His impressions upon it, and His influence through it, that we cannot truly or fully contemplate it without in some main aspects contemplating Him” (*Idea*, 45f; Discourse III, 4).

“Worse incomparably, for the idea of God, if there be a God, is infinitely higher than the idea of man, if there be man. If to blot out man’s agency is to deface the book of knowledge, on the supposition of that agency existing, what must it be, supposing it exists, to blot out the agency of God? (*Idea*, 53; Discourse III, 6) If the creature is ever setting in motion an endless series of physical causes and effects, much more is the Creator; and as our excluding volition from our range of ideas is a denial of the soul, so our ignoring Divine Agency is a virtual denial of God. Moreover, supposing man can will and act by himself in spite of physics, to shut up this great truth, though one, is to put our whole encyclopaedia of knowledge out of joint; and supposing God can will and act of Himself in the world which He has made, and we deny or slur it over, then we are throwing the circle of universal science into a like, or a far worse confusion.” (*Idea*, 53; Discourse III, 6)

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*:

“There exists neither “spirit,” nor reason, nor thinking, nor consciousness, nor soul, nor will, nor truth: all are fictions that are of no use. There is no question of the “subject and the object,” but of a particular species of animal that can prosper only through a certain relative rightness; above all, regularity of its perceptions (so that it can accumulate experience)—

Knowledge works as a tool of power. Hence it is plain that it increases with every increase of power—

The meaning of “knowledge”: here, as in the case of “good” or “beautiful,” the concept is to be regarded in a strict and narrow anthropocentric and biological sense. In order for a particular species to maintain itself and increase its power, its conception of reality must comprehend enough of the calculable and constant for it to base a scheme of behavior on it. The utility of preservation—not some abstract-theoretical need to be deceived—stands as the motive behind the development of the organs of knowledge—they develop in such a way that their observations suffice for our preservation. In other words: the measure of the desire for knowledge depends upon the measure to which the will to power grows in a species: a species grasps a certain amount of reality in order to become master of it, in order to press it into service.” (*The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), Aphorism 480)

**The remedy needed most is often hated most by those who need it most desperately for their cure.** (This sentence echoes a memorable phrase of Livy from his preface to book I of *The History of Rome from Its Foundation*, where he invites the reader to observe “the dark dawning of our modern day when we can neither endure our vices nor face the remedies needed to cure them” [Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, trans. Aubrey de Sélingcourt (London: Penguin Classics, 2002), 30]).

**“The least knowledge that one can attain of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge one can attain of the lowest things.”** (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 5, ad 1: “[M]inimum quod potest haberi de cognitione rerum altissimarum, desiderabilius est quam certissima cognitio quae habetur de minimis rebus.” Thomas paraphrases here a thought from Aristotle’s *Parts of Animals* I, v [644b31].)