

"Threnody or Spoliation? Responding to the Place of the Catholic Intellectual in the Pagan University" — Paul J. Griffiths, Warren Chair of Catholic Theology at Duke Divinity School. First draft September 2013. Revised December 2013.

A prefatory note about my title. A threnody is a song of lament or a dirge; the Psalms contain many threnodies, as does the Book of Jeremiah. It's a genre beloved of those weighed down by the evils of their time, of which there are always many. Threnodists detail and lament those evils, sometimes with the hope of remedying them, but often, it seems, for the simple pleasure of complaining about them. Spoliation is the act of despoiling, of taking treasure from someone in order to put it to better use than its original owners could; a spoliast is someone who does this, and may also advocate it. The classical scriptural case is the despoiling of the Egyptians by the people of Israel commanded by the LORD in Exodus 3:21-22: the Egyptians had good things (gold, silver, clothing) that the Israelites needed and could make better use of than their original possessors; so, at least, the LORD's command suggests. Spoliation in its Christian form is an act supported by the view that there are many goods in the world, some of them brought into being, nurtured, and handed on by pagans, and all of them worthy of loving attention and, where possible and appropriate, expropriation for use by Christians for Christian purposes. I use the two words to label, in an ideal-typical way, families of Catholic attitudes toward the intellectual life of the contemporary pagan university: threnodists lament its degradation and its evils, and write tracts describing them, tracts often in thrall to nostalgia, the view that things were once better; spoliasts look for and find the goods evident in that life, eager to discover in them resources that will permit the Church to arrive at a fuller and more beautiful understanding of the revelation with which she has been entrusted. Spoliasts tend also to doubt, reasonably in my view, that things were ever better. I'll say more about these attitudes below.

A pagan university is, on my usage, any degree-granting institution of higher education which, in terms of its history, explicit self-understanding, and institutional form, is neither Christian nor Jewish, and which, as a result, does not understand itself to be serving the purposes of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus. (I leave aside the question of Islamic universities: although there is a good case to be made that the university is an historic Islamic gift to the Church, there are effectively no Islamic institutions of higher education in the United States at the moment, and so I don't need to take a decision about how to classify them in order to consider my topic.) There is no clear division between Christian and Jewish universities, on the one hand, and pagan ones, on the other; the two kinds shade into one another, and some that are historically and to some degree publicly Catholic or Protestant or Jewish are in their forms and practices essentially pagan in the sense that their Catholicity (and so on) serves only as ornamental top-dressing to a fundamentally pagan reality. But that is not a problem. I don't need a bright line that will permit easy identification of particular institutions as Catholic or pagan; all I need is an ideal-type distinction in order to permit thought to proceed, and the definition I'm using adequately serves that purpose.

A second prefatory comment, this one about the limited scope of this essay. I comment in it only on the kind of presence the Catholic intellectual tradition has, and can have, in contemporary pagan universities in the United States — what its condition and

possible future is in those places. That's what I know, and it's usually best to write about what you know. Apart from four years at the end of the 1980s, now a generation ago, on the faculty of the University of Notre Dame, my working life as teacher and writer, has, since 1983, been in the United States on the faculty of pagan universities – the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Duke University. For a good portion of those decades, my job has been to teach, represent, and nurture the Catholic intellectual tradition at such places. Further, I restrict my remarks here to the humanities in such places – to, that is, what pagan universities foster by way of the study of things human creatures do and make – since that is where the Catholic intellectual tradition is most lively and lovely, and because that too is what I know. Further and different things would have to be said about the place and function of the Catholic intellectual tradition in the natural sciences, and I have neither the knowledge nor the interest to engage that discussion. And finally, I comment only on top-tier research universities, those that, according to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education in the United States, are called RU/VH – doctorate-granting research universities with very high research activity. There are a few more than a hundred of these in the United States at the moment, and all five of the universities at which I've held faculty positions belong to that category. Again, that is what I know. However, a good deal of what follows applies also to other kinds of pagan institutions of higher education in the United States; it wouldn't be difficult to apply it, for example, to baccalaureate colleges and master's colleges and universities. However, I won't make such applications in this essay.

Given these restrictions, the first topic to address is: What are pagan universities like in the United States now?



Pagan RU/VH universities are institutions that employ as their faculty people concerned to devote their professional lives, often as a self-conscious matter of vocation to which they've sacrificed much time, energy, and money (they could almost always have earned vastly more in other lines of work), to the achievement of a deep intimacy of understanding with some among the things made or done by human beings. They may do that as historians, as musicologists, as philosophers, as political scientists, as students of poetry or film or what-have-you. They do what they do with a wide variety of motives and concerns. The university is an agonistic theater of pride and envy and anger and fear and hatred as much as any other human institution, and all academics are motivated in what they do at least in part by those things, and especially by desire to master what is studied and to outdo in mastery others who study what they do. Lording it over what is studied – seeking to become its *dominus*, its regulator, controller, orderer, and slave-driver – is usually intimate with acting similarly toward peers who are also always competitors, and toward students who may become competitors and who need to have their own ignorance displayed to them. That may be the whole story in some cases, though that in my experience is rare. There is often also a disinterested love of what is

studied, coupled with a desire to communicate that love to others by teaching and writing. And there is often, too, a passion of a self-sacrificial kind for intimacy with what is studied, and for the intellectual and moral transformation that can be provided by studying it and teaching about it. Some faculty, even at RU/VH universities, have a genuine love for their students and take delight in showing them the beauty of knowledge, and in receiving instruction from them. The typical case (certainly my own) is a combination of all these motivations, good and bad, beautiful and corrupt. The pagan university, then, in terms of the motivations and actions of those who write ('write' here is synecdoche for the various ways in which faculty communicate what they know and would like to be known as knowing to the world outside the lecture hall and seminar room) and teach in it, is just what a Catholic theologian would expect to find in a devastated world such as the one we live in: intellectual hatred and violence suspended in the liquid medium of intellectual love.

The principal virtues the pagan university intentionally inculcates in its acolytes are intellectual ones: habits of precision in thought and argument, of elegance in expression, of creativity and ingenuity in framing questions and imagining how they might be answered, of energy in application to all these tasks, and, for those on whom fortune smiles, of disciplining acolytes into a school of thought. The pagan university is deeply scholastic, as its history suggests it ought to be. It, both institutionally and in the persons of those who work in it, is also concerned to foster moral virtues on the part of its students. I find myself surrounded by pagan colleagues with deep moral convictions about all sorts of things, and with a strong desire to communicate those convictions by way of teaching and writing. As I see it, and as many Catholics would see it, these convictions are often wrong – confused, or corrupt, or in some other way problematic. But they are certainly not absent, and they are, in form, properly moral convictions and properly moral virtues. I have had colleagues who teach rational-choice theory as a liberating truth; those who teach philosophical materialism as a means of throwing off the intellectual shackles of Christianity; those who teach the moral equivalence of killing a chimpanzee and a human foetus; those who teach the in-principle moral superiority of democracy over all other forms of political organization; and those who work to bring about a transhuman future in which death is overcome. I share none of these substantive convictions, and much less the view that holding, advocating, and teaching them has good moral effects. Catholics should, as I do, think that such convictions are variously disordered and confused. But I also recognize that colleagues who hold and exhibit them are passionate about both their convictions and the moral importance of teaching them. That is the ordinary thing. The Weberian intellectual, shackled in the value-free iron cage of *Wissenschaft als Beruf* is vanishingly rare in the pagan university. Equally rare is the relativist, and that is certainly worth bearing in mind given the popularity in some Catholic circles of declaring the pagan university a haven for relativists. Outside the undergraduate classroom, I've run across almost none of these in my thirty years of teaching. Faculty in pagan universities are, ordinarily, people with deep convictions about what is the case (and what is not), and people who understand their work to be in the service of the good.

The contemporary pagan university, then, if represented by the writing, teaching, and public speech of its humanities faculty, is a place in which the intellectual virtues – or at least their simulacra, their likenesses in form – are valued, inculcated, and displayed

at a high pitch of sophistication; and in which, typically if not always, these are combined with deeply moral habits, or their simulacra. The pagan university is the only extra-ecclesial institutional form of any size or influence for us now in which habits of both kinds – moral and intellectual – are valued and inculcated as intrinsic to the being of the institution in question.

What the pagan research university does not do, and because of its own self-understanding effectively cannot do, is to offer to its students or represent to its faculty any shared unitary idea of what intellectual work is or what it is for beyond the most abstract and formal. Were such a common understanding to develop, this would exactly be to alienate the contemporary pagan research university from its roots, which are to be found in the formation of the first real research university in Berlin at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and thus to overturn it. Institutions of this sort are ordered around and to the radical independence of the disciplines practised in them. Each discipline – historiography, let's say; or literary criticism; or economics; or jurisprudence – comes with its own, largely self-sufficient and free-standing, norms and purposes; those are what make it a discipline, and the acolytes of the disciplines serve those norms and purposes devotedly, and are typically without interest in considering or engaging the norms of other disciplines. This means that there's little interest abroad in the pagan research university in articulating, or giving any time at all to thinking about, norms and purposes for the intellectual life that transcend those that order the disciplines. It's not, I think, that there is deep and principled opposition to the development of such norms; it's rather that interest in them seems to workers in the field idiosyncratic, ornamental, without about as much connection to discipline-specific intellectual work as a taste for soccer or macramé. It's thought, and mostly correctly, that work on such norms cannot help, and may hinder, the enterprises of those working within the disciplines.

This lack of concern with articulating transdisciplinary norms and purposes for intellectual work is, from the point of view of university faculty, and certainly from mine, mostly right-headed. This is for two reasons.

The first is that those engaged in intellectual work ordinarily do not need to be able to give an account of what it is they're doing in order to be able to do it well; they simply need to be able to do it. Pianists need not be musicologists; musicologists need not know or be able to say where musicology belongs in the spectrum of intellectual work undertaken in the pagan university. Pianists need to play the piano; musicologists need (for example) to suggest emendations to the received score of Shostakovich's fifteenth string quartet (opus 144) on the basis of study of the manuscript tradition of that work, or to explain the lexical and prosodic innovations in 1990s American rap prompted by the oeuvre of the Wu-Tang Clan. Stepping back from performances like these to the very different activity of categorizing them as instances of a kind and analyzing what the range of kinds in question is, which is what's necessary if they're to be properly located in the spectrum of kinds of performance that constitute the intellectual life, would hinder intellectual performance as often as help it. I wouldn't trust what an accomplished musicologist has to say about the nature of musicology any more than I'd trust what a good baseball player has to say about the nature of baseball, and that's to say not much at all. So also, *mutatis mutandis*, for what a good literary critic has to say about what literary criticism is. Faculty in the pagan university have at least these good reasons for resisting the demand to articulate transdisciplinary norms for what they do, and for

seeking to conform their work to one such articulation or another. They have other things to do, from which acceding to such a demand would distract.

And there is a second reason why it is imprudent, indeed ridiculous, in the contemporary pagan RU/VH university, to recommend, or engage in an attempt to articulate, substantive norms for the ordering and understanding of the intellectual enterprises that occur within the university. It is that no agreement on the nature of such norms is to be found. As I've already indicated, the pagan research university houses, pays, and praises people with radically different understandings of what intellectual work is and is for. The idea that getting them to talk with one another about transdisciplinary norms for such work, and about the organization of curricula and departments according to those norms, is likely to produce anything but the laying of time to waste is quixotic at best and stupid at worst. Faculty find it hard enough to agree on minor matters of intra-disciplinary curricular reform, or on small questions of institutional procedure; they would find it impossible even to arrive at an agreed vocabulary for discussion of larger-scale matters, much less to reach agreement on substantive questions about what intellectual work is and what it is for. If something cannot be done, it is better not to waste time in trying to do it, especially if the work of the faculty does not depend in any interesting way on its being done. Here's a thought-experiment to illustrate the point. Imagine providing to a representative group of humanities faculty in a pagan RU/VH university Bonaventure's winsome little work *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, in which there is extended argument about why only theology, understood as a human intellectual activity, can provide the categories proper to the organization and understanding of every other kind of human intellectual work. Imagine further that they read it (already a difficult-enough imaginative act). And then imagine that it prompts across-the-board agreement, of the 'oh, yes, now I see it; what I do in my research seminar on the nature and significance of translocal economic forms really is best accounted for by theology' kind. You'd be better off trying to get advocates of baseball to agree with advocates of cricket on the principles by which ball-games ought be ordered and accounted for.

So, the articulation of trans-disciplinary norms and categories for organizing intellectual enterprises – or, if you prefer, the work of scholars – is not something the pagan university is much interested in, and certainly not something its faculty spend much time on. When, as they sometimes have to, the pagan university's public voices – its deans and provosts and presidents – say something about what the university is and is for, they use language of a high and empty formality. They talk of excellence, of research at the cutting edge, and of the importance of the life of the mind. But they do not, because they cannot, specify in what excellence consists, whether there are directions in which the cutting edge, no matter how sharp, had better not go, or just why the life of the mind is important. Their institutional location and function forbids such claims. The only remotely frequent exception to the ordinary elevatedly vacuous way of talking about the university's purposes in the public speech of its accredited representatives occurs when parents have to be persuaded that the education the university provides to its undergraduates really is worth its great cost. Then, the talk turns to the equipping of students for productive citizenship, which is code for saying that if your sons and daughters get their degrees from us, they'll succeed in life — which means at least that they'll avoid downward social mobility, the greatest fear among parents thinking of

paying their offspring's tuition at RU/VH universities. Even in this case, which is the closest universities ordinarily get to identifying the point of what they do, there is in play only a very thin understanding of what the university's work of teaching and research is for, and one that subserves in almost every way the pressures of the financial markets.

What the pagan RU/VH university has in lieu of discipline-transcending and discipline-ordering articulations of its activities is a vast and massy range of particular studies prosecuted with self-abnegating passion by acolytes of the intellect, a largely self-governing professoriate whose principal loyalty is rarely to an institution but rather to a guild of others who do what they do. Philosophers kneel before the altar of the American Philosophical Association, literary scholars commune with the Modern Language Association, historians dance before the ark at the American Historical Association, economists drink the kool-aid at the American Economic Association – and so, endlessly and acronymically (APA, AHA, MLA, AEA ... ) on. These are the powerful, translocal deities of the pagan university; beside them, the local gods, even those with pockets as deep as Harvard and Yale, or with football teams as powerful as Alabama and Nebraska, are weak. They provide paychecks, parking, and perquisites; but the real rewards, the delights of victory and reputation as well as the joys of sharing knowledge with those whose intellectual passions are like yours, are to be had principally by way of translocal affiliation.

A final point about RU/VH universities. They are rich and powerful, among the most rich and powerful institutions in the contemporary United States. About seventy of the hundred or so universities currently (2012 figures) in this category have endowments in excess of one billion dollars (a 'short,' or American, billion, that is: one thousand million), and a very high proportion of those top-seventy endowments belongs to RU/VH universities. Being such a university and being wealthy are, therefore, very intimately linked. Endowment is not the only measure of university wealth, of course; the annual flow of money through an institution from corporate and governmental grant-giving bodies is at least as important. But endowment provides a convenient indication, and it shows not only that being an RU/VH university goes hand-in-hand with wealth, but also that it goes hand-in-hand with being pagan. To consider only Catholic institutions of higher education: there are about 260 of these in the US (there are some definitional difficulties about what counts as such an institution, and so the number must remain imprecise), and among those only three have a top-seventy, one-billion-plus endowment. They are Georgetown, Boston College, and Notre Dame. Georgetown and Boston College only just make it into that club. Notre Dame is the exception: its endowment, something over six billion in 2012, roughly on a par with Duke University's and the University of Pennsylvania's, permits it to approach and occasionally to crack the top-ten list. But even Notre Dame looks poor beside Harvard (thirty billion plus) and Yale (twenty billion plus), and no other Christian or Jewish university makes the top thirty and few the top seventy. The picture is clear enough: RU/VH universities are overwhelmingly wealthy and overwhelmingly pagan. They have the resources to indulge both their virtues and their vices, as I've sketched these so far; and they provide the model to which almost all institutions of higher education in the US, and increasingly elsewhere in the world, aspire. They attract to themselves most of those with the greatest intellectual gifts, and, because of their resources, they can and do provide them with time, space, and support that can only be dreamt of by almost all Catholic universities.



What, now, about the Catholic intellectual tradition and its place in these juggernauts (the Sanskrit root of that word means 'lord protector of the universe'; it is a title of Krishna and it is not too elevated for the grandiosity with which these universities tend to regard themselves) of pagan wealth, power, and intellectual achievement? What can it do there, how can it flourish there, what has it to offer there, and how ought its representatives to comport themselves there and to think about their pagan colleagues and the paganness of the institution in which they work?

In deep contrast to the pagan university, the Catholic intellectual tradition has as an element integral to itself the purpose of giving an account of what the entire territory of the intellectual life is, and of how the various specialized studies that conjointly constitute it ought relate one to another. The Catholic tradition doesn't offer a single such account – there are disputes among Thomists and Augustinians about what's proper to such accounts, for instance; but that such accounts are a desideratum, and that they are offered, is one constitutive mark of catholicity in the intellectual life. The broadly Catholic intellectual tradition is in this respect deeply and irreducibly at odds with the contemporary pagan research university.

This is not to say that the Catholic intellectual tradition is without interest in the deliverances of specialized studies, whether of mathematics or history or economics or political science; but it is to say that the Catholic intellectual tradition has nothing particular to say about how the work of such studies should be done. It is axiomatic, I think, for the Catholic intellectual tradition, at least in its best moments, that most specialized studies can be performed just as well by pagans as by Christians or Jews, and that this is because their canons and methods are in very large part given to them by the nature of the objects with which they are concerned. Christians have no particular insight, for example, into how mathematics should be done; there is no such thing as Catholic mathematics, and no special capacity on the part of Catholics to engage in it. If you want a proof of Goldbach's Conjecture, for example – that every even number greater than two can be expressed as the sum of two primes – than you'll be deeply confused if you think that the baptismal status of the mathematician is something you should attend to in seeking it. Neither should you expect – and the Catholic intellectual tradition itself does not expect – that Catholic institutions of higher learning should do better at mathematics than pagan ones. The same is true for most other specialized studies: whether they are done well, and how well they are done, is affected not at all by the Catholicity of those doing them. The double fall, of angels and us, has devastated both the cosmos and ourselves as knowers of it; but not so far as to make intellectual work of the highest specialized sort any more difficult for the pagans than for us. To think something like that would be to move in a hyper-Calvinist or perhaps in a quasi-Jansenist direction.

There may be transdisciplinary intellectual virtues that conduce to good work. These may include such things as habits of care and precision in thought, slow and repeated attentiveness to the object of study, humility before that object, separation of desires for fame and wealth (yes, sometimes the pagan university gives these to its members) from the activity of study, and so on. And it may be that the Catholic tradition is good at theorizing and inculcating these, better, perhaps, than pagan traditions. It

would take a strictly empirical study to determine whether that is true. But whether or not it is true, these are not virtues or practices specific to particular specialized studies. They stand at a distance from those studies, embracing them all at once, and are good things, productive of good intellectual work to whatever extent this turns out to be the case, without having any special application to particular instances. There are no Catholic mathematical or historical or (even) poetical virtues. The infused theological virtue of faith, which Catholic orthodoxy understands to be among the effects of baptism, does not make its possessors better at particular specialized studies – neither better than they would have been without it, nor better than pagans in other respects their intellectual equals. This seems to me sufficiently obvious that it's a puzzle to find some – even many – of my Catholic sisters and brothers speaking and writing as if it were not. There is the beginning of an argument here about the necessity for a humble and joyful gratitude on the part of Catholic intellectuals toward the gifts given us by the pagans. I'll return to this when I come to expound spoliation, below.

What the Catholic intellectual tradition does offer that the pagan university neither does nor can is a coherent account of how the disciplines fit together one with another, and what, overarchingly, they are for. Such an account is theological, I would say, though there are divisions within the Catholic tradition about whether that is the best way to characterize it. Some think that such an account is better thought of as philosophical, and I won't go further into that difference now except to say that so far as I can see a Catholic account of how the disciplines fit together and what each of them is for ought place theology, as an intellectual enterprise, at the apex of the disciplines, and ought allot to it, as *regina scientiarum*, queen of the sciences, the work of explaining and ordering the disciplines, of displaying their hierarchy and relations, and of showing in what way each discipline glorifies the LORD. The reason, most fundamentally, that the Catholic tradition has been interested in offering unified and universal accounts of the intellectual life, is that it is convinced that the intellectual life has a unity given to it by the LORD. A Catholic university that takes itself seriously as such would incarnate in its institutional structure some such transdisciplinary account of the disciplines, and would use it to structure curriculum and to order the relations of its departments and programs one to another. Some Catholic institutions of higher education try this. Those that do so most systematically and seriously are typically Catholic liberal arts colleges and universities without a large postgraduate research component, like Christendom College, the Franciscan University of Steubenville, and Ave Maria University. Attempts to order an institution's work by such an account of the place and meaning of particular specialized studies tend toward attenuation, however, as an institution ascends the ladder of wealth and power. In the three Catholic RU/VH universities with endowments above one billion dollars, mentioned above, they are vestigial, embarrassed, and of little or no interest to most of the faculty. That's inevitable given the nature of faculty loyalties and interests in such institutions. It is not necessarily a matter for lament by Catholic intellectuals.

I should repeat that most university intellectuals have little interest in giving an account of what their discipline is and is for, and that pagan universities are as a matter of principle opposed to such accounts. University intellectuals are practitioners of their particular studies rather than theorists of them, and it is an ordinary truth that being a skilled practitioner of something provides no capacity to give an account of what it is that

one does. Fluent speakers of English are usually bad at giving an account of the language's grammar, and being able to give an account of that grammar won't make you a better speaker – usually rather the reverse. So also, *mutatis mutandis*, for practising an intellectual discipline. There are of course those in both pagan and Catholic universities who make it their intellectual business to theorize the disciplines in something like the same way that the Catholic intellectual tradition has often done. But no one expects that what they write will in fact come to order the work of the institution to which they belong. Transdisciplinary theorizing of the disciplines inevitably becomes just one more special study which the university can accommodate without breaking a sweat. Thus there is no necessary tension between an institution offering and trying to incarnate a transdisciplinary account of the disciplines, and housing people who practice the disciplines without caring whether any account of their discipline is offered. That tends to be the situation in Catholic universities that do try to articulate a transdisciplinary account of what is done under their aegis.

Nonetheless, there remains a fundamental difference between an intellectual tradition like the Catholic, non-negotiably committed as it is to the unity of the intellectual life because of particular theological commitments about the nature of that life; and one like the pagan, non-negotiably committed as it is exactly to taking no position on that matter and, thus, committed to letting a thousand flowers bloom, intellectually speaking, so long as the bills can be paid, the lights be kept on, the parking lots maintained, and the endowment nurtured. This difference gives rise to friction which shows itself in many ways, not least in the incompatibility between the threnodists' and spoliasts' responses to the nature of the pagan university, and to the limitations it places upon the ways in which the Catholic intellectual tradition can be present in it. To that difference I return below; before doing so, however, a few more words about the modes of the Catholic intellectual tradition's presence in the pagan university.



The Catholic intellectual tradition's first mode of presence in the pagan university is in its artifacts. Those artifacts include texts, paintings, sculptures, musical scores and performances, and buildings. All these are objects of attention in pagan universities: faculty study them, write about them and teach them, and so, perforce, students are brought face to face with them. Among the Catholic writers of the Latin West, Augustine and Boethius and Francis and Bonaventure and Thomas and Dante are constant presences, widely taught and read, still. Since almost the entire history of Western painting and sculpture from the fourth through the sixteenth centuries is broadly Catholic, all students and teachers of those activities and their products will have to deal with many that represent the Catholic intellectual tradition. It would be difficult to teach or write about twentieth-century music without adverting to Olivier Messiaen; it would be almost as difficult to study sixteenth-century sculpture without looking at and thinking about the works of Michelangelo Buonarroti (though his own Catholicity is a rather complex question); and it would be quite impossible to teach fourteenth-century European

literature without Dante's *Commedia* playing some part. This is as true for those working in pagan universities as for those in Catholic ones. It is not that the mode of the presence of these artifacts is the same in each; the more Catholic the institution, the stronger the signals are likely to be that these artifacts are ours, and that they should therefore be thought about and represented differently than, say, the Sanskritic literary heritage of India or the Hindu-Buddhist monuments of Java; and the more pagan the institution the more certain the lack of any such signals, and the concomitant likelihood that artifacts of the Catholic intellectual tradition will be represented as of merely historical interest, or as dangerous opponents. But either way, and in any institution of higher education, the Catholic intellectual tradition is massively present in its artifacts. This is not to say that these artifacts are ordinarily taught and written about by Catholics, or by those with much concern to show their place in the Catholic tradition. Neither is it to say that all, or even most, university students have any sense of the meaning and purpose of these artifacts in anything but the most disjointed and partial sense. And it is emphatically not to say that these artifacts have a dominant place in the institutional lives of universities. But it is to say that they are necessarily present, that this necessity is given by the course of history, and that these artifacts, however their presence is framed and explained, are not without agency. Their presence is a reality with evangelical weight and unpredictable effects.

Secondly, the Catholic intellectual tradition is present in pagan universities in the persons and work of Catholics who teach and study there. Most of these, for the reasons already noted, will and should find their Catholicism of little relevance to the work they do. They may find it of ancillary importance, perhaps as an encouragement in the practice of intellectual and moral virtues preparatory to their work. But for the most part, this mode of presence is not lively and should not be expected to be. The macro-economist and the laboratory technician, the analyst of Milton's prosody and the specialist in Middle Indo-Aryan, the seismologist and the oncologist – these, Catholic or not, will and should do their work in essentially the same way even if they differ in their meta-understandings of what they do (the Catholic might understand her work as an offering to the LORD even if that does not affect the particularities of her performance; the pagan might understand his work as an untrammelled act of the human mind, and that, too, won't usually affect the particularities of his performance).

Thirdly, the Catholic intellectual tradition is present in pagan research universities under its own name and as a specific object of study and representation in its own right. That is, it is increasingly the case that there are programs of various kinds in Catholic thought, Catholic history, even Catholic theology, in pagan universities. Sometimes, these programs are accompanied or headed by more-or-less accredited representatives of the tradition, charged with representing it to and in the university. Since the 1990s, more than a dozen chairs of Catholic Studies or Catholic Theology or some closely similar label have come into being in pagan universities in the United States. I hold one of these myself at Duke University, and held another earlier in my career at the University of Illinois in Chicago. Many of these chairs are connected with programs of one kind or another: undergraduate minors or concentrations or majors; components of various master's-level programs; and so on. These chairs and programs are, I suppose, the most evident, and certainly the most explicit, public face of the Catholic intellectual tradition in the pagan university. Along with these chairs and programs often go attempts to represent the Catholic tradition to the broader university community. This can occur

pedagogically by the teaching of courses in such things as the Catholic architecture of the City of Chicago, or the Catholic tradition of thinking about the nature and meaning of evil, or the Catholic tradition of articulating positions on the difference between the Church and the secular city, or the twentieth-century Catholic novel, or the thought of Thomas Aquinas – all these are actual examples of courses taught in pagan universities during the past two decades. It can occur at the faculty level, when interdisciplinary faculty seminars include treatment of Catholic authors or Catholic themes, or when pagan universities invite their accredited Catholic representatives to give public lectures on their behalf, and so on. I recall, for example, being asked to address the faculty of the University of Illinois at Chicago immediately following the events of 9/11 on what Catholics think of such events. And it occurs at the public level, when accredited representatives of the Catholic tradition at pagan universities write about Catholicism, or intervene in an explicitly Catholic voice, and in the name of their university, in public debates about this or that. During my time at Duke University, for instance, I've written op-eds for various secular newspapers on this or that topic, and have always had my contributions noted as by a professor of the university.

In all these ways, the Catholic intellectual tradition is present and lively in the pagan RU/VH university. Its presence is of course very far from dominant; Catholic Studies is, from the viewpoint of the pagan university, just like Transhuman Studies or Gender Studies: if some among the faculty want to do it, if there are donors wanting to endow chairs in it, and if there are students who will take courses in it, then it will be among the thousand flowers blooming in the rich soil of the pagan university. Almost anything can be accommodated in this way, even the most evangelical and universalist traditions of thought and practice. The representative of such traditions – and Catholicism is certainly one – like all, will be given offices, support, and salaries for as long as they serve the formal purposes of the university. Nothing more is to be expected, but also nothing less. Some Catholic threnodists appear to think that the pagan university is deeply inhospitable to the Catholic intellectual tradition. That is true if it means that the pagan university is not about to reshape itself to accord with Catholic norms for ordering the intellectual life. Why should it? It's pagan, after all. But it is not true if it means that the university is unwilling to support Catholics on its faculty, or to establish and support accredited representatives of Catholicism, together with their programs of teaching and writing. They (we) get support of these kinds by the same criteria and with the same restrictions as anyone else. And that support is generally without restriction when it is given. The pagan university is now among the more significant sponsors of Catholic intellectuals in the US: it pays us to live the life of the mind and to do the work of the Church, and among the proper responses to that state of affairs is gratitude.



The Catholic tradition is present in the pagan RU/VH university as one hothouse bloom among hundreds of others, given just the same kind of nurture as all the others, and with blooms of often considerable luxuriance and beauty. Nothing more is possible

while the pagan university remains faithful to itself, and certainly nothing more should be hoped for. Threnodists – to return now to the distinction between them and spoliasts – appear to want something more, something different. They want, perhaps, the University of Paris in the thirteenth century, when Thomas was discoursing on Peter Lombard's *Sententiae*; or Oxford University in the nineteenth century, when Newman was tutor at Oriel and teaching the Fathers of the Church (this is odd, since Oxford was then a self-consciously Anglican establishment); or the University of Chicago in the 1950s, when Augustine and Thomas were regularly taught by Jews and atheists to midwestern Protestants (this is even more odd, since the University of Chicago, along with Johns Hopkins and Stanford, is one of the principle exemplars of the Berlin-model research university in the US, and therefore an institution to which the work of teaching has always been and remains peripheral). And so they write laments, identifying what is missing in the pagan university and advocating that it be remade to accord with one or another Catholic idea about how the work of thinking and teaching and writing should go on. This seems to me futile, for the reasons already canvassed, and that is one reason for not doing it. It is evidence of a utopian institutional politics, coupled usually with nostalgia for an imagined past, and such a politics is always a bad thing.

Just as important among reasons for rejecting the threnodic as the principal approach to the question of the pagan university is that it is insufficiently Catholic. Catholics do not – or ought not – think that the lack of some good, even an important good, in a particular institutional form means that no goods remain there. Catholics ought, rather, to be constantly alert for and awake to the vestiges of glory that remain even in the most devastated places. There are many of those vestiges in the pagan university, many deep cognitive intimacies with particular created goods arrived at by unremitting and dedicated intellectual effort. Celebration is the right response to those, as is expropriation where they are of particular use for the intellectual enterprises of the Church.

Expropriation of intellectual goods is in one important respect unlike the Israelites' expropriation of Egyptian gold. If I choose to expropriate and use for ecclesial-theological purposes a technical distinction made by a pagan philosopher, the pagan philosopher is not thereby deprived of the distinction. It's a feature of intangible goods such as these that they are, or may be, public, not capable of sequestration into the private sphere in the way that material goods are: if I take it, you still have it. Intellectual property laws increasingly attempt attenuation of this feature of intangible goods, hedging them about with restrictions of copyright, patent, and trademark. Catholics ought resist such restrictions, certainly, and lament them when they become too deeply entrenched. But intellectual property laws cannot in any case alter the fundamentally public nature of intangibles, and it is that nature which makes their expropriation by Catholic intellectuals for ecclesial purposes both proper and delightful. The ground-bass of the music that ought to inform the Catholic intellectual's response to the goods of the pagan RU/VH university is gratitude: gratitude for the vestiges of intellectual glory, gratitude for unasked and undeserved support by an institution whose purposes are alien to one's own, and, above all, gratitude for the fact that human creatures, pagan and otherwise, are capable of intellectual loves of such depth and passion.

The threnodists' laments, then, ought, in so far as they are proper at all as response to the sheer fact of the pagan university, be a minor ornament to the hymn of gratitude

that is what constitutes the spoliasts' response to that fact. We acknowledge the genuine goods evident in the discipline-specific intellectual work done by the pagans in their universities; we seek to despoil those goods because we know that most (perhaps all) of the principal advances the Church has made in understanding the truths entrusted to it have occurred when spoliation has been intensive and intentional on the part of Catholic intellectuals (Augustine and the *libri platonici*; Thomas and Aristotle; John Paul II and Husserlian phenomenology; and so on); and we are grateful that an institutional form as alien to the Church as the pagan university is nevertheless happy to support us in our work. I used the figure of the patron to suggest the nature of this support earlier, and it is a good and illuminating one: once, patrons were wealthy individuals who supported artists and scholars in their work by providing them money, a place to work, and other material subventions. It was no necessary part of the relation between patron and patronized that patrons should understand and approve the work they were supporting. Their reasons for supporting it were various, but typically had little to do with those matters: they sought, rather, such things as reflected glory, and to engage in an activity appropriate to the members of their social class. What they expected from those who took their money and used their resources was, in the case of writers, the epistle dedicatory prefaced to a publication, in which there would be an ecomium to the sponsor's virtues – a formalized expression of gratitude, that is, which would represent in verbal form the nature of the relationship. Catholic intellectuals in pagan universities should not ask more of their universities than our forebears did of their patrons; and we should be as publicly grateful as they were.

It is true that Catholic intellectuals always suffer wounds from doing their work in institutions whose self-understanding is so at odds with their own. It is true, too, that pagan universities sponsor work whose goals and results are anathema to Catholic intellectuals. These wounds should sometimes be lamented, and the appropriate anthemata sometimes uttered: that's part of our duty as Catholic intellectuals, too. But the threnody and the anathema should not be the dominant notes; they should subserve gratitude and delight. And that is not just, nor even principally, because the pagan university is so willing to support us in what we do. It is also because we Catholics, now as always, have so much to learn from the specialized studies of the pagans. We are an alien presence in the decentered and fragmented pagan RU/VH university, of course; and there will always be tensions because of that. But the university harbors only aliens because of its own self-understanding: it is not the kind of place anyone can be at home in. My own experience has been and continues to be that it is possible to live a fully Catholic intellectual life in pagan universities; and, given the vastly superior resources available to pagan universities when compared to Catholic ones in the United States now, that the bleeding edge of hope for future of Catholic intellectual life here now lies within such institutions rather than within specifically Catholic institutions of higher education.