Oakeshott and Newman on Liberal Education

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Abstract: Michael Oakeshott and John Henry Newman wrote at length about liberal education. For both, experience was best understood from the perspective of different sciences (Newman) or modes (Oakeshott). Ultimately, they viewed this education as something that aimed at perfection of the intellect, not necessary at moral goodness. However, the "minimal" moral good of the gentleman remains a significant achievement. It seems to be essential for engaging in what Oakeshott called "civil association."

Keywords: Liberal Education, Liberal Learning, Michael Oakeshott, John Henry Newman, Integrity

Both Michael Oakeshott (1901-1990) and John Henry Newman (1801-1890) were concerned with the idea of liberal education. They believed that there was something intrinsically valuable about it, and that it was "useless" in the normal sense of the term. Newman described liberal education as an activity that aimed at the perfection of the intellect, and he distinguished it from the pursuit of both moral goodness and religious salvation. Oakeshott, likewise, saw liberal education as an activity that took place in retreat from the world, during an interim or interval between youth and adulthood, conducted without thought of career or future prospects of any kind. For both men liberal education was an "end in itself", something of great value for human beings.

In this essay, I explain the thought of the two men to show how both understand liberal education as producing the "cultivated intellect" or a desirable "habit of mind". Strictly speaking, it is not quite right to say that liberal education *produces* this habit of mind; for it isn't as if one does the liberal education first and then at the end the habit appears. Rather, in the doing and the learning one becomes, almost imperceptibly, the possessor of a set of characteristics and personal traits that are never fully fixed or finished. Newman's shorthand for this is the idea of the "gentleman", famously described in his fifth discourse of *The Idea of a University*. Oakeshott uses the word "integrity" to describe this character. It is not exactly moral or religious goodness, though it might be a precondition for these greater virtues. Yet I want to argue that this "minimal" moral good—of the gentleman, or of the integrated personality—inheres in such an education.

In this essay I consider two major aspects of their views. First, Newman describes a "circle of knowledge" that is made up of different sciences, each independent of

the others but also requiring their existence. Oakeshott likewise speaks of experience as having "modes". Second, both thinkers describe liberal learning as an "end in itself". It is not the only human end, but it is nevertheless an end that is desired by human beings, or at least by human beings who have the sufficient leisure, security and inclination for it. Crucially, this kind of liberal education encourages the development of a particular kind of human character. It is valuable because self-governance and civil association depend upon cultivating such a character.

THE CIRCLE OF KNOWLEDGE AND MODALITY

Newman employs the image of a "circle of knowledge" as a way of explaining the relationship of the discrete sciences that combine to make up a university curriculum. He uses the word "science" to designate not only physical sciences but all branches of knowledge that are studied in a university, including theology, math, and literature. Each science offers its own distinct view of the whole of experience, but each is only partial in scope. Newman did not invent this image of the circle, but borrowed it from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who employs it in his "Preliminary Treatise on Method" (1818), which is the introduction to the *Encyclopedia Metropolitana*. In this essay Coleridge justifies the production of a new encyclopedia organized systematically and by topic instead of alphabetically.

In trying to systematize all that can be known, Coleridge rejects the disorganization and randomness that he sees in alphabetical compendiums of knowledge, instead proposing that knowledge should be understood as a metaphorical "circle". He wants to "present the circle of knowledge in its harmony" and to "give that unity of design and elucidation, the want of which we have most deeply felt in other works of a similar kind [i.e., other encyclopedias], where the desired information is divided into innumerable fragments scattered over many volumes, like a mirror broken on the ground" (Coleridge 1818, p. 42). Coleridge does not set out the sciences as cafeteria offerings. Instead, they appear in an ordered structure that gives pride of place to the most important modes of knowledge.

Newman and Coleridge share a desire for "wholeness and unity", which both understand as "fundamentally a religious or spiritual quest" (Quinlan 1996, p. 223). In his *Philosophical Lectures*, Coleridge maintains that an encyclopedia should be "a co-organisation of the sciences, as so many interdependent systems, each having a life of its own, but all communicating with philosophy as the common centre or brain" (Newsome 1974, p. 69). This anticipates Newman, who writes as follows: "[T]he comprehension of the bearings of one science on another, and the use of each to each . . . this belongs, I conceive, to a sort of science distinct from all of them, and in some sense a science of sciences, which is my own conception of what is meant by philosophy, in the true sense of the word, and of a philosophical habit of mind" (Newman 1982, p. 38). Both Newman and Coleridge share a capacious view of knowledge, and for both men philosophy is the architectonic science that structures the whole.

This larger whole cannot be absorbed all at once by any human mind. "Now, it is not wonderful [i.e., surprising]" writes Newman, "that, with all its capabilities, the human mind cannot take in this whole vast fact at a single glance, or gain possession of it at once". Our intellectual capacities are unavoidably limited, he continues, and "as we deal with some huge structure of many parts and sides, the mind goes round about it, noting down, first one thing, then another, as it best may, and viewing it under different aspects, by way of making progress towards mastering the whole". In such a process we view reality through "partial views or abstractions" called sciences, which "embrace respectively larger or smaller portions of the field of knowledge" (Newman 1982, p 34).

He speaks of knowledge as divided and yet unified not only in his discussion of university education, but with respect to epistemology as a whole. In his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman observes that it is "characteristic of our minds, that they cannot take an object in, which is submitted to them simply and integrally". Whole objects, he continues, "do not create in the intellect whole ideas, but are, to use a mathematical phrase, thrown into series, into a number of statements, strengthening, interpreting, correcting each other, and with more or less exactness approximating, as they accumu-

late, to a perfect image". Nobody can see the whole of reality at once; and therefore we "cannot teach except by aspects or views, which are not identical with the thing itself which we are teaching" (Newman 1989, p. 55).

Newman offers the idea of "man" as an example of what he means. We may view man in a variety of ways: "in relation to the material elements of his body, or to his mental constitution, or to his household and family, or to the community in which he lives, or to the Being who made him". Each view is good so far as it goes, but incomplete. In consequence, Newman continues, "we treat of [man] respectively as physiologists, or as moral philosophers, or as writers of economics, or of politics, or as theologians" (Newman 1982, p. 36). But, he warns, each of these sciences—moral philosophy, economics, politics, theology—is both illuminative and limited. It illuminates certain aspects of "man" while necessarily ignoring others. An example of this in our own time is modern behaviorism, which studies man quantitatively but omits what might be understood through philosophy or theology.

The danger, of course, is that a practitioner of one science may mistake his partial view for the whole. He then becomes "a man of one idea", whose extensive specialized knowledge hinders him from recognizing his ignorance in other areas. To sum up his view of wholeness and abstraction, Newman comments thus: "I have hitherto been engaged in showing that all the sciences come to us, to use scholastic language, *per modum unius*, [in the manner of one thing] that they all relate to one and the same integral subject matter, that each separately is more or less an abstraction, wholly true as an hypothesis, but not wholly trustworthy in the concrete" (Newman 1982, p. 45). Students will not be well-served by becoming "men of one idea" who specialize without appreciating the concrete whole of knowledge. But they will be "the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle" (Newman 1982, p. 76).

Now how does this relate to Oakeshott's view? Oakeshott does not use the "circle of knowledge" imagery, but Newman's fundamental idea is strikingly similar to Oakeshott's idea of modality, in which each way of viewing the world is something like a particular discipline—good in what it offers, but partial. Each mode, as he writes in his early work, or "voice", as he calls them later, complements the others but does not speak back to them on their own terms. Instead, it speaks in its own "language" and each language can potentially be mastered—or at least appreciated and understood—by students who want a liberal education. Oakeshott's languages or modes (science, history, and practice, and later poetry or aesthetics) are broader in scope than Newman's. Yet each language or mode views the world in its own distinct way that cannot be appropriated by the others.

For Oakeshott, certain modes tend toward the domination and usurpation of other modes. Most dominant of all is the mode of "practice", which, in focusing on desire, aversion, and moral conduct, always presents itself as the most important mode—certainly far more important than the modes of history or poetry. Newman similarly fears that dropping any one science out of the circle of knowledge would mean that the circle would close up, with other sciences taking over the place of the one that had been omitted. "[I]if you drop any science out of the circle of knowledge", observes Newman, "you cannot keep its place vacant for it; that science is forgotten; the other sciences close up, or, in other words, they exceed their proper bounds, and intrude where they have no right" (Newman 1982, p. 55). And in discourse three of *Idea*, "Bearing of Theology on Other Branches of Knowledge" he observes that "no science is complete in itself, when viewed as an instrument of attaining the knowledge of facts … every science, for this purpose, subserves the rest; and, in consequence … the systematic omission of any one science from the catalogue, prejudices the accuracy and completeness of our knowledge altogether, and that, in proportion to its importance" (Newman 1982, p. 39).

One major difference from Newman is that Oakeshott does not think that all experience points toward a transcendent whole. Oakeshott's "conversation of mankind" as an image for education is resolutely nonteleological; no "voice" or "language" is better than any other (at least not explicitly) and "there is no symposiarch" (Oakeshott 1991, p. 490). As Timothy Fuller has put it, Oakeshott's conversation "among different disciplinary voices" is an "indirect approach to the quest for wisdom. The quest for the whole lurks in the background, echoing elements of Newman's argument, but the fulfillment of the quest may or must be

delayed indefinitely in deference to the human conversation" (Fuller 2004, p. 44). Still, the important point here is that both Newman and Oakeshott see the university as obligated to offer all the sciences that make up liberal learning. Each contributes something distinctive that the others cannot. Yet each on its own is incomplete and needs the others, if a student is to have a complete view of the world.

LIBERAL LEARNING AS AN END IN ITSELF: NEWMAN

Newman is famous for arguing that liberal learning is an activity that ought to be valued fully as an end in itself, with no thought of subsequent rewards, and indeed no consequences at all. This radical idea is expressed most famously in discourse five of *The Idea of a University.* Oakeshott does not use the phrase "end in itself", but he does argue for the strict separation of learning from practical concerns.

What might it mean to say that liberal learning is a good in itself? The good of learning must accrue either to the learner, or to the things learned (the science), or perhaps to other people, to society as a whole. We are accustomed to saying that someone has advanced the cause of science in his research, and here the good attained appears as a contribution to a body of knowledge. The person who does the research is less important than the product he produces, and in principle the research could have been done by anyone, or by a machine.

Another option is that the good of learning accrues to society as whole, as it surely does in finding cures for disease or safer methods of transportation. In all but the most unusual cases, people learn computer coding not for its own sake but to facilitate some kind of advance in technology. Education in engineering aims at the production of better bridges and airplanes. In short, the good of learning understood in this way means that benefits flow from the learner to other people, and only incidentally to the learner himself.

The third and most radical option is that learning might be valued neither for its contribution to a body of knowledge nor for the improvement of man's estate, but instead for its effect on the learner. Liberal learning for its own sake is formation of the person, the perfection of an innate human potentiality. Newman laments that there is really no name for this perfection of the mind, in the way that health stands for the perfection of the body. And of course he knows that learning for its own sake is never the only thing a learner does. In the course of every person's education there must be extraneous purposes for learning, whether these are grades, tests, or the prospect of a career.

Nevertheless, unlike many theorists of education, and unlike many students and teachers, Newman vigorously promotes the idea that there is something desirable about the perfection of the intellect simply for its own sake. "We are satisfying a direct need of our nature in its very acquisition", Newman writes, "and, whereas our nature, unlike that of the inferior creation, does not at once reach its perfection, but depends, in order to it, on a number of external aids and appliances, Knowledge, as one of the principal of these, is valuable for what its very presence in us does for us after the manner of a habit, even though it be turned to no further account, nor subserve any direct end" (Newman 1982, p. 78). The good in liberal education is not external but accrues directly to the person himself, who pursues self-perfection through a long and sometimes arduous process.

The classical view of learning is that the pursuit of knowledge "of itself" fulfills a human need that is just as urgent as our needs for health, love or friendship. Paraphrasing Cicero, Newman maintains that knowledge is "the very first object to which we are attracted, after the supply of our physical wants" (Newman 1982, p. 79). And quoting Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, he sums up his argument as follows: "Of possessions, those rather are useful, which bear fruit; those *liberal, which tend to enjoyment.* By fruitful, I mean, which yield revenue; by enjoyable, where *nothing accrues of consequence beyond the using*" (Newman 1982, p. 82). Though ancient in its origins, this view has always been difficult to grasp. We are so accustomed to thinking about the utility of things, and the ways we might store up goods for future use or security, that it is hard to accept this notion of "enjoyment" and self-sufficiency. Far easier to comprehend is education as a means to virtue or profit.

In enjoying knowledge for its own sake we also develop what Newman calls "a habit of mind". In being exposed to the many different sciences that make up a university, students watch the conduct of their practitioners. Although few people, if any, can pursue all the sciences, every student nevertheless gains "by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle". Newman's ideal view of the university is worth quoting in full:

> [a university is an] assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes. . . . He profits by an intellectual tradition, which is independent of particular teachers, which guides him in his choice of subjects, and duly interprets for him those which he chooses. He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called "Liberal." A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what in a former Discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit (Newman 1982, p. 76).

A philosophical habit, or habit of mind, cannot be acquired by merely collecting knowledge and facts about the world. At the same time, it cannot be acquired *without* knowledge and facts, as if we could learn a skill like "critical thinking" without thinking about any subject in particular. Instead, the acquisition of knowledge and the character traits of equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom go together.

Crucially, Newman's desired habit of mind requires more than wide learning and a good memory. It requires a process of "digestion", perhaps recalling Thomas Cranmer's famous exhortation about scripture readings: we should "hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them". The desirable enlargement of mind is not merely passive reception of facts and theories but involves "the mind's energetic and simultaneous action upon and towards and among those new ideas". It asks that we take what we have received and make the knowledge ours; "it is a digestion of what we receive, into the substance of our previous state of thought; and without this no enlargement is said to follow". The ultimate aim of all this is to gain knowledge not only of things, "but also of their mutual and true relations; knowledge, not merely considered as acquirement, but as philosophy" (Newman 1982, p. 101).

Newman's ideas about liberal learning as an end in itself—learning pursued for the pure enjoyment it offers—and the cultivation of a habit of mind also point toward an implicitly moral character formation. While Newman plainly states that the aim of liberal knowledge, unlike religious knowledge, is *not* "to make men better", it nevertheless does seem to produce an admirable moral character. This is not the kind of character fit to equip someone for the day of judgment—liberal learning does not yield goodness per se—but it may yield character traits that could be called "ambiguously" moral, like steadiness, moderation, civility, and self-command. Taken together these comprise the character of "not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman". They are "no guarantee for sanctity", for they may as often attach "to the man of the world, to the profligate, to the heartless" (Newman 1982, p. 91). Far more is required to contend against "the passion and pride of man" than the morality of a gentleman.

Yet the character Newman describes as the result of a liberal education is perhaps not as void of content as he sometimes implies. The liberally educated person possesses "[g]ood sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candour, self-command, and steadiness of view …a faculty of entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and of taking up with aptitude any science or profession" (Newman 1982, p. XLIII). The philosophical habit of such a person implies "freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom" and "a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life" (Newman 1982, p. 91). All of this taken together is a not insig-

nificant set of political and social virtues. Sobriety, dispassion, reason, self-command: these characteristics are vital to civilized interactions with other people. Or as Newman quotes Ovid, *"Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros"*: [A careful study of the liberal arts refines manners and prevents them from being savage] (Newman 1982, p. XLII).

The liberally educated person therefore stands opposed to the "man of one idea", who believes that his specialized knowledge in one area entitles him to pronounce on matters that lie outside his realm of expertise. He is also distinguished from the man of no ideas, who has received no significant education, as well as the man whose entire intellect has been focused on things that are of practical and moral interest: the ideologue, the money-maker, the seeker after honor. The liberally educated person has cultivated a kind of disinterest, and in so doing he can see himself alongside other people, not as the center of the universe.

OAKESHOTT ON LIBERAL EDUCATION AND INTEGRITY

Oakeshott takes up a similar set of characteristics, which may be understood in general as the idea of "integrity". He did not argue explicitly for integrity as a motivating idea or *telos* for liberal education. Indeed, prior to the publication of his *Notebooks*, it would have been difficult to appreciate the centrality of this idea, for it is only mentioned in passing in *On Human Conduct*'s discussion of the activity of "self-enactment" and in a few other places throughout his corpus.

Nevertheless, integrity may properly be deemed both a central aim and the intrinsic satisfaction of an Oakeshottian liberal education. A sense of integration, of wholeness, is enjoyed by the person who, through learning, comes to understand the world he has inherited. Such a person recognizes and appreciates both the potentialities and limitations of his own mind and character. This achievement is not an endowment of nature. Nor do we accede to it as a matter of course upon reaching adulthood. It comes only in a process of learning, which is sometimes difficult and at other times delightful. Liberal education thus offers (but does not guarantee) liberation and identity, and release from slavish submission to politics, convention, and career.

The end of this liberal education therefore is not encyclopedic knowledge, as if its purpose were to produce people who retain many facts and can provide limitless answers to concrete inquiries. Nor does it aim only at conveying "the best that has been thought and known in the world," *a la* Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot. Of course the great works are to be read and studied, but they are not idolized. Other contemporary works—of art, music, literature and philosophy—may prove as worthy as the traditional "greats". Oakeshott thus flatly rejects the idea of education as acquisition. Instead, culture must be filtered through a person's mind and made one's own through a process of reflection. The aim is to develop "an integrated self whose purpose is not to remember, adopt or assimilate, but to live a life contemporary with itself" (Oakeshott 1930, p. 367).

This vision differs from the conventional and sometimes platitudinous character of many contemporary discussions of liberal education. Some commentators place liberal education in the service of some other relatively clear moral or political end, like good citizenship or social change. Others talk about it in terms of skills and aptitudes like critical thinking or problem-solving. Still others say that liberal education offers the best preparation for successful careers after formal education is complete. All these descriptions contain elements of truth, and all are somewhat empirically accurate.

Yet these justifications do not offer the inspiration or excitement of Oakeshott's vision. His idea of liberal learning is conservative and romantic at once, indebted to tradition and ongoing practices but not subservient to them. Education yields a deep sense of existential meaning for Oakeshott, because it offers multiple lenses for seeing the world. We might, for example, come to understand love and marriage not just in the relationships of our parents or our friends, but in the images of Odysseus and Penelope or Abraham and Sarah, in van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait, or in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*. These are modally different ways of seeing the world: practically, historically, and aesthetically.

Oakeshott's vision of education also requires learners to adopt a skeptical stance toward the very things they have probably taken most for granted. In this sense, he is quite definitely "questioning authority". The authorities Oakeshott questions, however, are not simply the political or social authorities of a particular place or time. They are the dominant ideas that govern most of us: that we should orient ourselves toward the future; that we should understand career and accomplishment as markers of human flourishing; and that ambition is unambiguously good.

This view also contrasts sharply with the imperatives of contemporary identity politics, because Oakeshott questions all categorical explanations of human conduct. Instead of adopting various *personae* based on one's race or sex, he expects people to engage in the difficult work of developing character through a process of learning. Ascriptive characteristics can explain only part, and perhaps little, of an individual's experience. Oakeshott's notion of integrity thus requires both a process of clearing away and of taking on. It also requires detachment from ordinary moral life even as it ultimately promises a durable and satisfying moral self-understanding.

What sorts of ideas, pressures, and conventions must one escape to become liberally educated? Oakeshott believes that one must both embrace and reject the present. I shall say more below about what he thinks is to be embraced. What must be rejected are certain deformed and harmful aspects of living in our contemporary place and time: for example, an excessive focus on practical concerns, self-obsession, and preoccupation with career and achievement.

First, although he recognizes that the "practical mode" (in which ordinary moral and political life takes place) offers certain satisfactions, Oakeshott also considers it depressing and limited. Here people are caught up in the "deadliness of doing", as if life were one long, unending list of tasks. In this mode we are subject to the incessant and never-ending news cycle, to fads in fashion and in education, and we may be enslaved to the pursuit of comfort, material needs, pleasure, ease and speed—in short, to a whole host of experiences that offer instant or short-term gratification.

In his essay, "A Place of Learning," Oakeshott describes the need for escape from these afflictions in vivid terms. Liberal education "promise[s] and afford[s] liberation from the here and now of current engagements, from the muddle, the crudity, the sentimentality, the intellectual poverty and the emotional morass of ordinary life" (Oakeshott 1989, p. 18). Liberal education, as he wrote in his essay, "Education: The Engagement and its Frustration," offers emancipation "from the mere 'fact of living,' from the immediate contingencies of place and time of birth, from the tyranny of the moment and from the servitude of a merely current condition." Such education is emphatically not "learning the latest steps in the *danse macabre* of wants and satisfactions" (Oakeshott 1989, p. 104). It is something quite different.

Second, we must escape a pathological preoccupation with ourselves and our circumstances. Self-obsession has probably been a temptation since the race began, but it is extraordinarily magnified in modernity. We worry about image, about how we appear to others, how we compare with others, and we may even attempt to curate our "brands". This yields a tremendous sense of insecurity about how one stacks up compared to others, and we look outward for approbation. We become distracted and disinclined to do the kind of patient, reflective self-examination that is necessary for a durable and stable sense of self.

The politics of personal and group identity is an example of this excessive self-concern. In this realm we are encouraged always to think about ourselves and our personal characteristics, and even to make *ourselves* the subjects of academic study. Thus, women major in women's studies, gays and lesbians in gender and sexuality studies. This explains the metastasizing of many new "grievance studies" departments in universities, which Oakeshott would have deplored. These fields take as given the idea that oppression and privilege are the primary facts of social life. They also assume certain deterministic outlooks on human conduct—i.e., someone of a certain race or sex *will* (or should) think particular things and hold particular views.

These classes and majors therefore approach academic inquiry as investigation of the self in the terms of unchosen characteristics. They are not liberal or free in character because they focus only on certain categories deemed important over the past fifty years (race, sex, sexual orientation, for example, but never reli-

gious commitment). Finally, this self-examination in terms of ascriptive characteristics and group identity aims at political activism and social change. Gone is the notion that the university is a place of retreat and contemplation; it is instead the generator of "changemaking", to use an ugly modern term. All these developments point to an overemphasis on self in terms of image and in terms of characteristics that may have little to do with individual self-understanding.

The third "escape" that Oakeshott's vision requires is from the modern obsession with career, ambition and achievement. Oakeshott is scathing in his critique of careerism and he rejects the idea that value is embedded primarily in one's professional life. He maintains that locating self-worth in work entails abandoning our most important human activity, which is the conscious and intentional living of life. The essential challenge is to dwell neither on the past nor to live in the fantasy of a future, better world, but instead to pay attention to what takes place in the present.

Oakeshott wrote in his notebooks that achievement is "the 'diabolical' element in human life; and the symbol of our vulgarization of human life is our near exclusive concern with achievements" (Oakeshott 2014, p. 468). In pursuing career at the expense of other things one might do, "[t]he safe way is pursued, prudence is made a virtue, and, for the sake of an hypothetical old man, who may bear his name thirty years hence, the young man hoards his energies and restrains his activities" (Oakeshott 1993, p. 31).

Liberal education, in Oakeshott's terms, therefore, cannot take place if students are caught up in the pathologies of the present or in the promotion of themselves as commodities. It also cannot occur in an environment where everything is valued solely for its productive, practical, future value. Insistent questions about "usefulness" and relevance for career tend to crowd out reading and thinking for its own sake.

Perhaps, though, these three escapes cannot be accomplished in advance of learning but take place in the process of becoming liberally educated. Maybe, indeed, they cannot be achieved until liberal education itself begins to loosen the vise grip of present concerns, showing students that everything has not always been the way it is now, and that seeing one's own littleness and insignificance in the sweep of history offers a kind of liberation all its own.

Oakeshott summarized this sentiment in his notebooks: "Dante met somewhere in hell a man whose crime was that he did not love the sweet light of day. It is the crime of our civilization. Instead of the sweetness of the present day, the light of today, we love what is gone or is to come. We despise all that is not productive, contributory: we do not understand what is simply for itself" (Oakeshott 2014, p. 148). In liberal learning, students begin to see that some activities are not productive—and need not be productive—but instead may simply be enjoyed. They may even learn to value these activities more than all others.

The preceding catalogue of escapes offers a beginning point for describing Oakeshott's positive vision of character, and of the liberal education that produces it. While rejecting many aspects of modern culture, he nevertheless embraces a view of life that is grounded in immediate and *present* experience. In the hope of escaping self-obsession, he describes an alternative, positive way of thinking about the self, which takes detachment, humility and moderation as first principles. This positive vision is what he designates as integrity.

Integrity has two important aspects: first, it is the development of moral character; second, it is the acquired disposition to engage in certain kinds of activities. Oakeshott often writes about the importance of acting in a certain *manner*. He therefore describes integrity in terms of "adverbial" conditions: the person of integrity acts humbly, disinterestedly, "punctually, considerately, civilly, [and] candidly" (Oakeshott 1975, p. 56). As a group, these characteristics summarize Oakeshott's positive moral vision, which is remarkably similar to Newman's description of a gentleman. As courage is a supreme virtue in action, integrity "seems to be [its] intellectual counterpart . . . something like *amour propre*, *phronesis*, or "Honour". A person with integrity is the "honnête homme." It is a "rediscovery of the Democritian *aidos*" and conveys a sense of self-sufficiency (Oakeshott 2014, pp. 461-2). All these suggestions are different ways of getting at the essential meaning of integrity: self-sufficiency, honesty, and understanding of oneself and others.

To fill out this description, Oakeshott quotes a detailed description of Pierre Charron, the French skeptic and friend of Montaigne. Like Montaigne, Charron exhibited the characteristics that Oakeshott

admired so much. According to the description by scholar John Owen, Charron possessed true integrity or "Prud'homie"—a combination of wisdom, balance, moderation, honesty and in general, *phronesis*. The person who possesses this Prud'homie is "free, candid, manly, generous, cheerful, pleasant, *self-possessed*, constant . . . [he] walks with a firm tread, is bold and confident, pursuing [his] own path…not changing [his] gait & pace for wind or weather or any other circumstance". (Oakeshott 2014, p. 461). This image combines many of Oakeshott's favored characteristics, which are also summed up in the old ideas of the gentleman and the Stoic.

Charron's integrity is self-sufficient and disinterested. In an integrated soul, virtue and religion are not "a means to self-interest, but [are] their own privilege and their own reward . . . the duties suggested by them should be performed entirely for their own sakes, for their own inherent nobility and excellence, and not for any extraneous motive, of whatever kind" (Owen 1893, p. 584). Here again, the emphasis is on activity undertaken for its own sake, not for reward or honor. Integrity moreover "denotes a combination of the highest goodness, with the greatest amount of veracity, both moral and intellectual". For Charron, it marks "that attitude of the soul or mind which answers to the perfect health of the body" (Owen 1893, p. 582). Again, in the moral sphere we praise courage, and in athletics, strength and health. Yet in the intellectual realm we lack a word that denotes wisdom combined with a certain moral temperament. For integrity is not *solely* intellectual; it also reflects the intellect as it appears to others in a person's actions and temperament.

In the words of the more famous French skeptic, Montaigne, whom Oakeshott often quotes: "The greatest thing in the world is to know how to belong to oneself". This is potentially, though not necessarily, at odds with the pursuit of career and honor because Oakeshott maintains that knowing "how to belong to oneself" requires "no less singleness of purpose, no less concentration of effort, no less discipline . . . than to produce a homogenous piece of work" (Oakeshott 2014, p. 152). If we are consumed with work and achievement, we likely fail to attend to the intentional living of life. The person of integrity, in contrast, seeks a life that is "unimpeded by this fatal, but seductive, mistress – achievement, purpose, destiny, progress" (Oakeshott 2014, p. 244). As Oakeshott puts it in an early essay, life in the present requires the "religious" sensibility of someone who is "free from the encumbrance of extraneous motives and parasitic opinions, which is the sole condition of the intellectual integrity he values more than anything else" (Oakeshott 1993, p. 32).

In his earliest work Oakeshott describes the essential human task as the cultivation of "insight" and designates as its aim "the realization of a self". Against the imperatives of career and success, he protests that the "vulgar mass called work" and "things done" are not valuable for what they produce, "but only insofar as they could prove themselves of worth as elements in the present experience of the most permanent and stable thing in life—our selves". Ambition, he continues, "and the world's greed for visible results . . . would be superseded by a life which carried in each of its moments its whole meaning and value" (Oakeshott 1993, p. 32). The worth of life, here, is measured in insight and sensibility, and it is cultivated by someone fully engaged in a present-focused life. The most vital human activity, Oakeshott maintains, "has a certain semblance of integrity when it is engaged in, not for profit, nor for any practical purpose, but for the glory of doing it, as play" (Oakeshott 2014, p. 506).

Also in his notebooks, Oakeshott references chapter two of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, where Nietzsche explains the importance of educating students so that their talents, inclinations and potential come together into a harmonious whole. Nietzsche observes that the true educational task of a teacher is "to mold the whole man into a living solar and planetary system and to understand its higher laws of motion" (Nietzsche 1910 p. 110). Personal character here is not disorganized and flighty, but well-ordered and stable, with all parts accounted for, all circling around a coherent center. As Oakeshott writes in "Rational Conduct," to say "that a man has a character or a disposition is to say, among other things, that his activities of desiring compose a more or less coherent whole" (Oakeshott 1991, p. 125). To summarize: the person of integrity is supremely self-aware. He is not deceived about the importance of achievement, nor does he hope for post-

humous fame. He is conscious of his want of greater perfection and has understood his talents and weaknesses alike. He is content to live in the world he has inherited.

The second important aspect of integrity has to do with how one chooses to live once this temperament has been cultivated. Do we subscribe to an investment theory of happiness, in which enjoyment of life is postponed while we better ourselves through strict discipline, save for the future, and establish a career and reputation? Or do we choose instead to embrace life's contingency, see ourselves as we are, and enjoy the poetic intimations of the present? Of course, neither of these options can be pursued absolutely to the exclusion of the other. Life requires insurance, investment, and perseverance, not just cultivated enjoyment. Nevertheless, Oakeshott thought that most people were almost entirely disposed toward the "investment" option and therefore missed much of the beauty and meaning that is part of any ordinary human life, if only we are inclined to pause and look for it.

Oakeshott's corpus is full of references to poetry, religion, aesthetics, play (as opposed to work), conversation, love and friendship. These were the things he valued, and he thought certain characteristics—the ones I have described as integrity—disposed people to engage in them. Oakeshott is known for thinking in terms of dichotomous ideal types, and one might observe simply that the person with integrity enacts himself "into" these valuable non-utilitarian practices. The contrasting type is someone caught up in the worldliness of all the things Oakeshott rejects, like the future, achievement, worldly success, career, ambition, and fame.

Oakeshott's most mature statement about integrity appears in his 1975 masterwork, *On Human Conduct*, where he describes two aspects of moral conduct. One he calls "self-disclosure", which is conduct as it is normally understood in ordinary moral life. Here one speaks, acts and expects responses from other people; we may attempt to bend others to our will, or we may choose to act selflessly or charitably. What distinguishes self-disclosure, though, is an agent "seeking what he wants *from* conduct" (Oakeshott 1975, p. 72). Self-disclosure is interminable and hazardous because it depends on others.

Self-enactment, on the contrary, offers an alternative understanding of moral conduct. Someone who engages in self-enactment is "indifferent to consequences of any sort". For here, "what the agent chooses to think is related to his understanding and respect for himself, to the *integrity* of his character". Where agency "is self-enactment, where the consideration in doing is not what is intended to be achieved but the sentiment in which it is done, conduct is released from its character as a response to a contingent situation and is emancipated from liability to the frustration of adverse circumstances" (Oakeshott 1975, p. 73).

Integrity therefore describes a manner of life that presupposes an understanding of self-sufficient human activities, a disposition to engage in them, and a clear-sighted assessment of one's own gifts, talents, and possibilities. It also requires a sober view of one's inadequacies and, as a Christian might say, our unavoidable fallenness.

CONCLUSION

In many ways Oakeshott and Newman are quite different thinkers. Newman's thought is, of course, explicitly Christian; and he believes both that theology deserves a prized place in the "circle of sciences" and that only philosophy can integrate all the sciences. Oakeshott is far more ambivalent about religious experience, and resolutely committed to the idea that the "modes" or "voices" do not speak directly to the concerns of any other. This does not mean that they cannot converse, but they must do so only "obliquely". No mode can explain away any other mode; all must be part of a liberal education. But there is no hierarchy of subjects among Oakeshott's modes.

However, both men believe that liberal education offers something of distinct value to human beings. It neither makes human beings virtuous nor promotes their worldly success. Instead, it satisfies, in Newman's terms, "a direct need of our nature." Just as there is a flourishing of the body (health) and of the moral sense (goodness), there is excellence of the intellect, and this is what such an education can produce in a person. We simply desire *to know*, and to know as well as possible.

Nevertheless, an exiguously moral character often appears in those who have undergone a liberal education. This is what Newman calls "the gentleman" and what Oakeshott designates as "integrity". Such a person has certain commendable character traits. To quote Newman again, he is likely to possess "[g]ood sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candour, self-command, and steadiness of view," as well as "equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom". These characteristics also describe Oakeshott's man of integrity. Can such a character contend adequately with pride, or overwhelming grief, or with lust, or envy? Newman says no, and Oakeshott does not answer. But one thing is clear: the gentlemanly character, were it prevalent, would certainly facilitate a more civil political and social climate. In this sense, I believe liberal education has a direct connection to civility, and also perhaps, to our hope for peace and compromise among people who may otherwise differ markedly from each other.

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