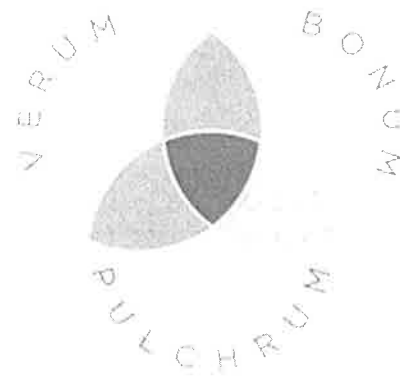


The Idea of a
Catholic Institute
for Advanced
Study



edited by
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T W O

The Catholic Mission of Notre Dame's Institute for Advanced Study and Scholarship in Arts and Letters

Mark W. Roche

When I chose to join the faculty of the University of Notre Dame in 1996, and a year later to become Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, several factors were involved. Above all was the sense that Notre Dame had a fascinating and complex identity and the aspiration to come ever closer to realizing its highest ambitions. The university was not only progressing rapidly, it was animated by an ennobling vision. Notre Dame is simultaneously a residential liberal arts college, with a traditional emphasis on undergraduate learning; an increasingly

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dynamic and ambitious research university; and a Catholic institution of international standing. In one respect after another, these three parts are being interwoven to enrich each other.

Whereas some universities had lost their sense for the value of undergraduate learning, Notre Dame never relinquished its traditional focus on students. The liberal arts ideal remains vibrant in Notre Dame's interest in educating the whole person. As we advanced in research, student evaluations of teaching improved. Having as teachers researchers who can bring to the classroom the most recent knowledge in their fields and the skills and passions of active researchers is ideal for students. We have introduced new seminars for first-year students and initiatives to foster learning beyond the classroom, as well as greater faculty-student contact. New programs in undergraduate research have ensured the most effective form of learning: student-centered learning.

While many Catholic universities, as a result of drift or conscious imitation of the mainstream, have lost their core identity, Notre Dame has not. The intellectual quest conducted at Notre Dame continues to take place in an explicitly Catholic environment. Here, ultimate questions draw on the immense resources of the Catholic tradition. Reason and faith are seen not as opposing forces but as complementary elements of the fully human pursuit of truth. In the past decade we have introduced one initiative after another to enrich our Catholic mission—from faculty workshops on our distinctive identity to curricular programs and faculty hires in areas central to our mission. Catholic social tradition, liturgical music ministry, and religion and literature are but a few examples of such programs. In the past decade theology majors have more than doubled.

The University of Notre Dame combines its heritage as a teaching college and a Catholic institution with a robust

commitment to scholarship. Over the past ten years Notre Dame faculty stand sixth among liberal arts faculties at leading research universities in the receipt of fellowships from agencies used by the National Research Council in its rankings, such as the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Guggenheim Foundation. We rank ahead of such universities as Columbia, Stanford, Duke, and Yale. Notre Dame ranks first nationally in terms of National Endowment for the Humanities fellowships. We have been able to recruit eminent faculty drawn to our distinctive mission from universities such as Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, and Yale. Our former graduate students are now on the faculty at institutions such as Chicago, Harvard, Michigan, and Virginia. We have developed distinctive leadership in areas of scholarship that are a great match for us as a Catholic university—medieval studies, theology, philosophy, religious history, religion and literature, Dante studies, Irish studies, Latin American studies, religion and politics, the sociology of religion, developmental psychology, and sacred music, to name simply a dozen fields within arts and letters alone.

Despite such remarkable progress, the one aspect of Notre Dame's triadic identity that remains in need of greatest advance is the newest, namely, research. Given the intertwining nature of all three elements, reaching new heights in research also benefits undergraduate learning and the Catholic mission. The more we are recognized in research, the more we can attract superior students, who can learn from one another and whose impact on the world is likely to be greater. To be taken seriously in the academic and public policy circles of the United States and the world, Notre Dame cannot have anything short of superior scholarship. Only to the extent that Notre Dame becomes a great research university will its Catholic voice be widely heard.

Should Notre Dame be able to gain sterling scholarly standing as a Catholic university, we will have accomplished something unique in the modern world. No other university comes close to matching us in being both academically competitive and deeply religious, but for us to be given a full hearing in this world, we must attain a still higher level of scholarly excellence. The Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study promotes both the reality and the recognition of our standing as a preeminent Catholic research university. It addresses the reality by encouraging outstanding research on topics in all areas of human knowledge, especially those privileged by the animating principles of a Catholic university. It encourages the perception by bringing to Notre Dame preeminent scholars who experience firsthand the academic quality and distinctive mission of Notre Dame.

In this essay I explore the animating principles of a Catholic university, with a focus on the ways in which arts and letters, or, more precisely, the arts, humanities, and social sciences, contribute to those principles (section I). I then discuss some of the kinds of research to be explored at the Institute for Advanced Study, with a particular focus on the arts, humanities, and social sciences (section II). I conclude with some brief reflections on the value of such an institute, particularly in those disciplines where time and dialogue are among the most important presuppositions of scholarship (section III).

I

When secular academics think of a Catholic university, they often have no concept of what that might mean (after all, scholarship is either excellent or not, and religious context or sensibilities should have nothing to do with it) or negative

associations (reason and science are thought to be opposed to belief, and the Catholic Church has not always been on the side of intellectual advances). Partly to help address this broader unease, I wrote some years ago a little book entitled *The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University*. After noting some of the problems in the Catholic tradition that have given rise to modern suspicions, I addressed some of the principles that, I believe, should animate a Catholic university, with a special focus on those dimensions that, while true to the Catholic tradition, might also appeal to secular scholars and scholars from other religious traditions: Catholicism's universalism, its sacramental vision, its elevation of tradition and reason, and its emphasis on the unity of knowledge. I would like to summarize those arguments here, focusing in particular on their relevance for the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

First, a defining aspect of Catholicism is the stress on universalist principles and, with this, its emphasis on community and love. Christianity recognizes only one God, before whom all persons are equal, irrespective of their origin. Out of this concept of a single God for all humanity and the idea that all human beings reflect the image of God, Christianity originated the concept of universal human rights, with its emphasis on the dignity of every individual and the value of the common good.¹ In an age and a country that lays

1. Although Christianity awakened the concept of universal human rights, the Catholic Church has not always acted in accordance with those ideals. In the fifteenth century, for example, popes Nicholas V and Alexander VI authorized slavery in the Portuguese and Spanish territories (Noonan 62–67), and in advance of the Civil War most American Catholics resisted the case for the abolition of slavery (McGreevy 43–67). Such gaps (between the Church as it is and the Church as it should be) should motivate Catholics and a Catholic university to employ reason in evaluating current positions against the Church's highest ideals. Of course, the relationship is reciprocal: a Catholic university can be reminded by faculty and

tremendous stress on the individual, Catholic social teaching reminds us of the dignity of the other and our obligations to the common good.

This commitment to universality helps explain the Catholic university's emphasis on educating first-generation college students and on providing abundant opportunities for service learning. The elevation of the common good also helps us grasp the distinctive sense of community and collective identity on Catholic campuses, and it motivates further the importance of internationalism. The Catholic's moral responsibilities are not simply familial, local, or national, but extend to the international community and indeed to future generations.

The concept of universal human rights and our concomitant obligations toward other persons, especially the underprivileged and the underserved, are the inspiration behind the scholarly focus on social justice issues we find at Catholic universities: poverty, development, environment, education, and other challenges facing humanity. The mission of the social sciences at a Catholic university is to combine normative and social justice questions, including a special concern for the vulnerable and the oppressed, with the most sophisticated methodological advances.

The arts and humanities help foster the collective identity of a culture, and our meaningful exploration of earlier works links us to previous generations, fostering a community across time, a tradition. Whereas science is almost always measured in terms of progress, in the arts and humanities many peerless works derive from earlier eras; in these fields the past is very much alive. The various ways in which the

students as well as by the Catholic Church of ways in which it may fail to fulfill its highest ideals. The advantage of having normative ideals, even when they are not realized, should be apparent in contrast to the cynicism of abandoning such ideals or viewing them as unbinding conventions.

arts function as ritual reinforce this sense of community. Also, the universalism of Catholicism is indirectly supported through vibrant campus programs in foreign languages, literatures, and cultures and in other fields that foster internationalism, such as world history, cultural anthropology, and comparative politics.

Second, Catholicism elevates a sacramental vision that finds God in and through the world. Even among Catholic thinkers who rightly stress that the mystery of God is inexhaustible, there is recognition of the presence of God in the world and optimism about our ability to make discoveries about God. Recognizing the innate dignity of every human being, the Catholic tradition argues for the binding nature of the moral law. One of the ennobling tasks of philosophy and theology is to help us discover these truths. Though we can recognize the moral law, it does not derive from descriptive sentences; it is not hypothetical but categorical, and transcends us. The idea that the moral law is fully rational and at the same time not alterable by humanity is markedly countercultural, but potentially very attractive in an age of disorientation.

The Catholic idea that God is manifest in nature, and that nature has a certain intrinsic worth insofar as it is an instantiation of an ideal sphere, offers us a higher justification for the natural sciences. Biology, chemistry, and physics give us windows onto the divine structure of reality. Also, the customs, institutions, and interaction of human beings have a hidden wisdom, which we are invited to explore through the social sciences. There are patterns in human history, and one of the historian's tasks is to discover the logic of historical development, the hidden order and reason behind the apparent randomness of history.

Another obligation of the scholarly community is to ask in what ways our current world deviates from the ideal

principles we ought to realize. The study of politics at a Catholic university, for example, involves not only an introduction to existing political systems but also a reflection on tensions between existing structures and higher principles of justice. The sacramental vision, which both elevates what is and measures what is against a higher ideal, gives greater dignity to the university enterprise than a framework that reduces the scientific disciplines to merely technical reason and the humanities to the merely contingent and the merely critical, thus severing any connection to the transcendent.

The concept of sacramental vision also ennobles the arts, which make visible for us what may otherwise be transcendent and elusive. The arts bridge the spiritual and material worlds, giving us a distinctive window onto the absolute. The richness and mystery characteristic of the sacraments have in a sense an analogue in great art, which is likewise defined by a combination of meaning and inexhaustibility.

Third, the Catholic tradition is a highly intellectual one. Indeed, a distinguishing feature of Catholicism is its profound integration of Hellenic thought. Through the centuries Catholicism has placed great emphasis on philosophical argument and historical tradition. Instead of basing its claims solely on the Scriptures, it has attended to the philosophical development of the Church, as guided by the Holy Spirit. The *sola scriptura* perspective is vastly different from the Catholic emphasis on reason and tradition.

What Catholicism offers is wisdom in the tradition, reason and tradition together, not a dogmatism of belief over against enlightenment. Tradition guides us, but reason also shapes, evaluates, and revises tradition. The Catholic does not simply receive the accumulated wisdom of tradition; she seeks with the full array of her intellectual capacities to work through tradition, recognizing the logic of its development and raising questions about those elements of contemporary

doctrine that invite still greater critical reflection. The Holy Spirit works through the community of the Church in its historical development.

Because of its rich tradition, the Catholic Church offers an abundance of magnificent artistic and intellectual works to study. The history of music and the visual arts is inextricably linked with Catholicism. Through the early modern period, the Church was the most prominent patron of the arts, and virtually all art was created for the greater glory of God. Even today, architecture, art, and music remain central to the liturgical life of the Church. At a Catholic university one finds great respect for artistic traditions and for the wisdom of the ages, not only for the Christian tradition itself, but also for antiquity, which so profoundly shaped the early Church. Accordingly, Catholic universities tend to invest significantly in programs in art and music history, in classics and literature, in religious and intellectual history, and in philosophy and theology.

Finally, unlike earlier eras, where one single value provided an overarching framework for the different spheres of life, as did God in the Middle Ages, the modern, secular world is characterized by a splintering of the spheres of life into autonomous subsystems, each of which has its own inner logic. Similarly, the modern university consists of an array of parallel and unintegrated spheres. In the past centuries and increasingly in the past decades, new disciplines have emerged that have led to greater and greater precision of inquiry, but often at the cost of their contribution to a broader sphere.

The Catholic tradition, in contrast, has preserved and enriched the classical concept that truth is ultimately one, that the diverse branches of human knowledge can be integrated and synthesized, and that a greater harmony exists among the spheres of knowledge, which are complexly interwoven and

interrelated. This stress on unity is rare in an age in which the specialist does not often ask the broader questions about the relation of particular knowledge to the organic structure of knowledge or about the greatness and limits of her own disciplinary contributions. This unity cannot be one of rhetoric or abstraction alone; it requires detailed work in diverse disciplines. As Vittorio Hösle notes in his essay above, determining whether a war is just requires both theoretical principles and detailed knowledge of the empirical world.

The lost ideal of holistic knowledge provides, precisely in its foreignness, a valuable antidote to some of the weaknesses of the modern age and the contemporary university. Not only does familiarity with a contrasting ideal offer the formal advantage of fostering critical distance toward the reigning ideals of one's own era, but also, in this case, the holistic model presents us with a substantive alternative, an ideal toward which a Catholic university is obliged to strive.

II

Many graduates of Notre Dame and other universities remember their college experience as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to engage the great questions. These great questions remain alive in the classrooms, offices, and laboratories of today's faculty members: Does space end, or is it infinite? Has time always existed, or was there a beginning? How do planets form, and how did life on earth arise? Is there, or was there ever, life elsewhere? Do science and religion necessarily conflict? Is there a concept of God that is compatible with reason? What were the great turning points in history? Why do some countries develop successfully and others stagnate? Why must innocent persons suffer? What is the meaning of death? What are the great artworks of the ages? Do we pos-

sess free will, or is everything determined? Do animals have consciousness? How does the mind work? What is the highest good? What are our generation's most pressing moral obligations?

Certainly not every college class or faculty publication engages great questions at such a level. On the contrary, classes are often specialized, and scholarship advances for the most part incrementally, moved forward by studies of ever narrower scope. Disciplinary research, which represents the building blocks of scholarly progress, tends to explore very specific questions. Mean reversion in equilibrium asset prices, trimeter in Goethe's *Faust*, the problem of legitimacy in early revolutionary Russia, eye movement as a window onto foreign language comprehension, diamond mines in the development of South Africa, Frege and the philosophy of language, changing concepts of masculinity in Latin America, tonal analogies in Schoenberg's fourth string quartet, the socioeconomic impact of the Indiana state lottery, liturgical and ascetical prayer in fifth-century Palestine, the politics of military rule in Brazil—are all examples of topics, and one could list thousands more, that fit well within traditional and contemporary scholarly patterns, but which do not—at least at first blush—match the distinctive interests of the Institute. The universe of scholarship is vast, but it is uncommon for scholars to tackle topics beyond a limited horizon. Faculty know that their scholarly contributions are most likely to be accepted if they attend to finite innovations in method and carve out discrete spheres of inquiry.

The Institute for Advanced Study gives especially promising and proven faculty members an incentive and an opportunity to pursue those questions that push their research forward toward the great questions. This means encouraging the best scholars, while not fully abandoning their traditional work or proven methodologies, to stretch further. It means

projects, for example, on potential global catastrophes of the next century, the hierarchy of human virtues, the relation of academic disciplines to one another, the role of descriptive and normative concepts in psychology, the greatness and limits of capitalism, the extent of our obligations to future generations, the value of art and literature in a technological age, measures of human well-being, religion as a source of violence and peace, the ecological crisis in the light of metaphysical concepts of nature, and the possibility of universally valid knowledge claims. Such projects have a special intrinsic value, and when done superbly, have the capacity to shape more detailed studies by other scholars and, in some cases, to reach out to an audience beyond the academy.

The Institute is housed at Notre Dame and is animated by that association, but this does not mean that it supports primarily Catholic studies, focusing on topics within Catholic theology, questions of Catholic history, literature by Catholic writers, or the role of Catholics in modern society. Nor does it mean supporting only Catholic perspectives on truth. Instead, it means that the Institute privileges questions that are an appropriate fit for a Catholic university and pursues them with the full resources of the various disciplines. Because fundamental and integrative questions are often, and some of us would say, ultimately, related to religion, we see at the Institute an abundance of reflection on religion and God. Fortunately, the Institute undertakes this mission at a time when the academy is beginning to rediscover religion, having recognized that, despite predictions to the contrary, religion persists and cannot be bracketed from our understanding of a wide array of social, cultural, and political issues. Although religion is gaining in scholarly interest, much of secular culture focuses on its fundamentalist manifestations. We see an exacerbating tension: on one side, fundamentalism, and, on another side, a distrust of religion as necessarily irrational.

Notre Dame offers a different avenue, religion in its relation to reason, God and truth as one. Religion is thus central, and the rich resources of the Catholic tradition even more so, but that is not to suggest that they are exhaustive. On the contrary, we are interested in a wider dialogue. A Catholic university is always open to new perspectives in the common pursuit of truth.

The Institute has two interrelated emphases. First is the incorporation of integrative and ultimate questions that often escape scholars enmeshed in the everyday and sometimes narrow practices of their disciplines. The Institute encourages faculty members to reflect on questions that probe the bases of their discipline or extend beyond their discipline to integrate the insights of other disciplines. Scholars may ask questions that are often taken for granted or set aside because they require thinking outside traditional and often technical questions of research. The Institute could, for example, offer an economist working on the environment the opportunity to expand her specialized, technical work to include larger social and ethical questions. An engineer working in nanoelectronics may want to consider the legal and ethical implications of integrating electronic sensors within human microfluids. A scientist who works on diseases in developing countries might wish to expand her reach into anthropology, asking why people in parts of the world reject modern medicine in favor of traditional forms of healing. Beyond integrative work of this kind, the Institute fosters scholarship that rethinks the assumptions of disciplines. An international relations scholar, for example, might evaluate the once reigning concept of modernization as secularization and sketch in response an alternative framework for the field. A scholar in philosophy, literature, scripture, or law might assess the reigning presuppositions in contemporary hermeneutics or the theory of interpretation and suggest a major modifica-

tion of overarching interpretive principles. The Institute privileges proposals based on sound disciplinary scholarship that seek to stretch further and ask even more ambitious questions. To reflect on the basic principles of one's own discipline or on the connection between questions in one's own discipline and deeper questions of ultimate value is to promote the unity of knowledge that a Catholic university fosters, and it gives a Notre Dame signature to such studies. We at Notre Dame have the potential to ask original academic questions that are not asked elsewhere in ways—and perhaps with answers—that can push the frontiers of disciplines.

Second is the relationship between the descriptive and the normative or between the world as it *is* and the world as it *ought* to be. One of the defining characteristics of modern scholarship is that it tends to bracket questions of value. The Institute privileges projects that engage such questions. For example, wireless communications have proved enormously beneficial for many people: we can now be connected to the rest of the world at any time and in any place. At the same time, such connectivity poses legal issues concerning privacy and social issues involving changed patterns of behavior. Technology advances so quickly that we rarely take the time to address the larger human issues raised by such advances. Where should we draw the line between artificial and human intelligence? As engineers develop automation and machine intelligence to assume more and more functions for humans, are there ethical and psychological concerns that have not been sufficiently considered? A sociologist who explores the attitudes of youth toward religion might go beyond the description and analysis of their attitudes and ask how religious institutions can educate them to deeper knowledge and greater capacities of articulation. An architect might ask what principles should guide livable human space in the light of what our normative concept of humanity implies, what we

know from tradition, and what specific challenges we face today. A constitutional scholar might compare and evaluate several constitutions in the light of an ideal concept of justice. To pursue such reflections is to engage in a very Catholic pursuit. Catholicism recognizes that there are certain ideals that ought to be our standards even if they are never fully manifest in the world, but the Catholic tradition also recognizes that God participates in the world and is partially recognizable there. In life we strive for a state which is not yet realized, but which ought to be. To reflect on this teleological dimension is to help realize the ideal of a Catholic university.

While both themes are central to Catholicism and many projects directly address the question of faith, the Institute also offers a home for academics working out of other religious traditions or a secular framework. For example, a secular scholar working on the place of the social sciences in relation to the other sciences or one studying issues of race or immigration in more than a descriptive context can easily enhance, and be enriched by, the Institute.

The main reason for specialization, as I have noted, is that modern research for the most part advances through specialized studies, an inevitable and not necessarily unwelcome development. We have increasingly recognized, for example, that the web of causality for almost any event, be it cultural or historic, sociological or economic, is much more complex than previously imagined, and both the world to be analyzed as well as the information we have about our world is far more complex than in earlier ages. But there are other catalysts as well. New, seemingly arcane, but in fact meaningful topics have been uncovered insofar as we have recognized that historical biases blinded us to certain topics. Increasingly, progress in the social sciences has come through methodological advances, with ever more innovative uses of

quantitative strategies. At times these are as much the end of the study as is the content being explored, which in many cases may simply confirm common sense or prove the obvious. And there is, of course, the problem that new and often less than substantial topics arise from the hectic and desperate search for originality.

Just as contemporary tendencies favor specialization, they also encourage the bracketing of normative questions. Because normative claims are not grounded empirically, they stand outside the methodological competence of specialists in the sciences and social sciences, whose primary task is to understand what is, not what should be. These, however, are the disciplines generally heralded for their methodological rigor and sophistication. For a quantitative social scientist, the word "norm" refers to the average, not to the ideal. What has been presented over time as normatively valid has often enough turned out to be the specious reflection of historical biases, but the search for valid normative claims remains one of the most pressing pursuits of our day, as various traditional morals crumble and as new challenges surface from developments in science, technology, the global economy, and world politics.

Each of the disciplines in arts and letters has the capacity to engage in broader and normative questions. The arts, for example, deal with the full range of human experience, from the most mundane to the most lofty, and from their earliest origins the arts have often been connected with religious subjects. Scripture has been a grand source for the artist's imagination. Even in the modern era, many great artworks focus on religious questions or allude, directly or indirectly, to aspects of the sacred. Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus*, with its integration of German history, National Socialism, the Faust theme, the philosopher Nietzsche, modernist aesthetics, and the development of atonal music, may be an

extreme example, but many artworks seek to make sense of the totality of an age or at least its most vibrant dimensions. Even today one may think of the Russian Maxim Kantor, both his etchings and woodcuts and his two-volume epic *The Drawing Textbook*, which together seek to capture the tragedy of post-Soviet society and of the West.

Artists can also ask normative questions and engage the intersection of the normative and descriptive. What is great art? What are the obligations of the artist today? How can one create great religious art in the twenty-first century? How can art awaken a greater sensitivity to social justice or a deeper understanding of tragedy in its relation to the sacred? In what ways is artistic form related to the absolute? Insofar as modern art often reflects in the artwork itself on art as a subject, we need not expect treatises by artists. Instead, artworks themselves might integrate normative dimensions. Art can offer us not simply a more vibrant sense of what is, but an inspiring and inspiriting sense of what should be. And when art shows what is less than ideal, it may offer a criticism of the negativity of reality, thus implying an ideal.

The connections between art and literature and our deepened understanding of, and empathy with, a wide range of human experience suggest that many normative questions can be linked not only with art and literature but also with the interpretation of art and literature. Increasing attention given to world literature may encourage broader studies over time, and the recent growth of interest in religion and literature may open up avenues for the links between literature and ultimate questions. In addition, literature and history are both traditionally interdisciplinary and, not surprisingly, the major forces behind newer composite fields such as area studies, culture studies, and gender studies, even if scholars within these fields may not always choose broad topics that are of interest to, as well as accessible to, a wider audience.

History has the capacity to give us an appreciation of broad contexts and traditions. Historians can teach us to understand how contemporary challenges relate to, and derive from, earlier developments, and through their knowledge of other eras, historians can offer us a wider horizon and thus a richer perspective on contemporary challenges. Historians, perhaps more than scholars in any other field, have the capacity to address the wider interests of a lay audience. A development in the discipline is an increasing interest in world history, which means both tremendous scope but also new questions, including the seeming inevitability of asking normative questions triggered by the exploration of gaping differences in historical developments.

Philosophy and theology are ideally integrative disciplines that draw on advances in individual disciplines. The concept of the self, for example, which is a prominent topic in both disciplines, must take advantage of insights in fields ranging from biology and anthropology to psychology and sociology. The principles of ethics, which are explored in philosophy and theology, have applications across the disciplines, and the concrete puzzles that arise in those applied areas can in turn help philosophers and theologians advance their thinking. Philosophy has increasingly become a discipline that favors detailed studies, both historic and analytic, of very finite problems, which can greatly contribute to the larger purposes of the field, but at its highest level philosophy does not stop there. Like theology, it asks and explores questions concerning the opportunities, obligations, and ultimate meaning of human life. These disciplines have both the opportunity and the obligation to give us insight into the whole and into the presuppositions and ends of the diverse disciplines.

Normative questions in the humanities often involve, as with applied ethics, movement into other fields, but within

the humanities alone an abundance of normative and normative-descriptive questions arise. What are the purposes of the study of history? What is the relationship of literature and truth? How do modern concepts of reason help or hinder our understanding of God? What virtues does the good life presuppose? Why are normative judgments necessary, and how can they be grounded?

The social sciences increase our understanding of human nature, both as individuals and in groups, and can assist us in the development of a society that is politically and economically sensitive to those most in need. To the extent that psychologists, for example, engage in studies that address human challenges—from understanding, preventing, and alleviating mental health problems to grasping the conditions for human flourishing—one can imagine any number of projects that combine normative and descriptive realms. Political science departments in the United States are normally divided into four fields: political theory, international relations, comparative politics, and American politics. In each field normative and normative-descriptive questions can, in principle, be recognized: What is the purpose of the state? By what strategies can we foster peace in the world? How can we assist developing countries? How can we ensure that marginalized groups participate in American political processes?

Integrative topics are natural for the social sciences. The study of the family, for example, involves disciplines ranging from psychology, sociology, and economics to philosophy, theology, and education. A similar range of disciplines is necessary to understand, for example, the causes of crime and ideal conditions for rehabilitation. Other prominent interdisciplinary topics in the social sciences include the gap between developed and developing countries and the ecological crisis. None of these can be solved without the help of the social sciences.

III

The worth of something can be defined by its intrinsic value or its value for society. Both dimensions are relevant to the work and aspirations of the Institute. The social science questions above point toward the Institute's impact on society, but learning and discovery for its own sake should not be undervalued, especially at a Catholic university. In his 2005 inaugural address, Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., the President of the University of Notre Dame, highlighted several principles of a Catholic university. His "first principle" involved the intrinsic value of learning and discovery: "Knowledge is good in itself and should be pursued for its own sake." Father Jenkins argued that because humankind is made in God's likeness insofar as we have an intellect, the "pursuit of knowledge is not only part of a good human; it is the human activity in which we are most like God. Seeking knowledge is, therefore, good in itself."

Today we tend to think of Catholicism as linked to social justice and service and often forget the older Christian ideal of contemplation as a way of coming closer to the divine. Moreover, we may underestimate and underappreciate the quiet time, the sacred leisure, that makes this possible. The Institute grants faculty members sacred leisure—free from the daily demands of teaching and service—so that they can embark upon or complete ambitious and meaningful projects, which have intrinsic value or a potential impact on society.

The Institute cultivates the contemplative ideal that is part of the Catholic heritage and an essential factor in the advancement of scholarship, yet the greatest advances occur not in solitude, but in the company of those who engage in meaningful dialogue. In this sense the Institute is both an intellectual and a social entity. In addition to allowing schol-

ars quiet time, the Institute fosters formal settings for presentations and discussions, structured informal opportunities for intimate and intense discussion, and serendipitous opportunities for casual conversations. Just as students improve through discussions with one another and with their mentors, faculty members learn through dialogue, especially with those beyond their discipline, who can extend their intellectual reach and ask unanticipated questions. At the Institute, our scholars, along with our students, many of whom will become future faculty members, engage in such dialogue with an elite cohort of faculty from other universities.

The Institute represents a special opportunity for Notre Dame to help chart the course of future scholarship. At least some of the questions we seek to explore and do not find sufficiently raised at other universities will, as a result of the work of the Institute, become more recognized, more appreciated, more mainstream. The goal of the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study is not simply to occupy a unique position in the landscape of American higher education, but to compete with, and complement, the very best secular institutes of advanced study. We seek to accomplish this task not by abandoning our Catholic identity as an anomaly, but by drawing attention to it as a strength. Our privileging ambitious projects ennobled by a sense of greater purpose offers us a competitive distinction and advantage. Finally, the combination of intrinsic and societal value along with the support of disciplined contemplation and trusting dialogue links the Institute to the two primary characteristics that bond God and humanity and define our highest calling, knowledge and love.

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