

# Scientific Strain and Hope for Harmonious Understanding: Considerations for Contemporary Education from Newman and Polanyi

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## Introduction: Our Current Educational Predicament

Twenty-first-century higher education is increasingly marked by a sense of *precarity*. A demographic plunge is already underway: 2025 saw a peak in the number of eighteen-year-old high-school graduates, at just shy of four million—a number that is slated to continue to decline in the years to come, and which will have fallen by just under fifteen percent by 2041.<sup>1</sup> The perennially rising cost of higher education also casts a dark shadow. People rightly find themselves wondering whether, say, a credential from an upper-mid-tier liberal arts college is worth eighty- or ninety-thousand dollars of annual tuition and fees. (They also wonder whether college and university credentials will generally continue to prove useful in the job market.<sup>2</sup>) Concerns about the quality of student learning of

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<sup>1</sup> Liam Knox, “A Long Way Down the Demographic Cliff,” *Inside Higher Ed*, December 11, 2024, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/admissions/traditional-age/2024/12/11/college-age-demographics-begin-steady-projected-decline>.

<sup>2</sup> Kim Parker, “Growing Share of Americans Say the U.S. Higher Education System is Headed in the Wrong Direction,” *Pew Research Center*, October 15, 2025, [https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/10/15/growing-share-of-americans-say-the-us-higher-education-system-is-headed-in-the-wrong-direction/?utm\\_campaign=whither-higher-education&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=fourthwatchcatholic.com](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/10/15/growing-share-of-americans-say-the-us-higher-education-system-is-headed-in-the-wrong-direction/?utm_campaign=whither-higher-education&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=fourthwatchcatholic.com).

course also loom large with pervasive reliance on artificial intelligence (AI). A recent piece profiles a computer science undergraduate at Columbia University, for example, who baldly admits to using AI to complete nearly all of his assignments—unabashedly submitting whatever it generates. He confidently tells the author that he is not at Columbia mainly to receive an education but instead to meet his spouse and the co-founder of his future startup. Another student at the University of Utah, profiled in the same piece, notes that excelling in college nowadays effectively boils down to using ChatGPT deftly. Such evidence is not just anecdotal: A study conducted just after the release of ChatGPT found that close to ninety percent of college students, across a range of schools, had used the tool to (help) complete assignments.<sup>3</sup>

Concerns like these understandably prompt questions about the nature of higher education: What is it *for*? What ends does it serve? Why should we continue to care about it? With some of the aforementioned demographic and economic pressures intensifying, professors and administrators will be forced to grapple, even publicly, with such questions in unprecedented ways. With such questions lively in these relatively early days of the twenty-first century, I think that John Henry Newman and Michael Polanyi alike offer some broadly congenial

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<sup>3</sup> James D. Walsh, “Everyone Is Cheating Their Way Through College: ChatGPT has Unraveled the Entire Academic Project.,” *Intelligencer*, May 7, 2025, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/openai-chatgpt-ai-cheating-education-college-students-school.html>.

considerations—both diagnostic and therapeutic—that can help us face with greater clarity aspects of our current (higher) educational quagmire and also direct it, one might hope, more confidently into the future.

I intend to take the following steps to outline these considerations. First, I want to sketch a broad (and hopefully uncontroversial) narrative history of college and university education over the past several centuries. In tracing especially its gravitation toward the ideal of the contemporary research university, I want to note a sort of scientific strain, as I shall call it, that Newman flags and that Polanyi, especially in his criticism of objectivism, highlights. Key aspects of their concerns on this front are strikingly similar—and I take this to be interesting in part given their relative historical placement, with Newman having written not long after the advent of the (early nineteenth-century German) research university and Polanyi having written from a career of immersion, both in science and philosophy, in its twentieth-century embodiment. I then hope to show how both—with an emphasis on integrated learning, the personal- and tradition-rooted cultivation of skill, and a focus on fostering the formation of creative intuition and tacit understanding—offer a striking counsel as to how higher education might helpfully be revived in the years and decades to come.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Given the intense familiarity with and focus on Polanyi in this venue, and the constraints of such a presentation, I will attend a bit more meticulously to my exposition of Newman. Also, my attention herein will be largely on Newman's *Idea of a University*, coupled with several works by Polanyi, and reflections therein on the theory and practice of education. Martin Moleski offers

## The Struggle for Educational Finality

A slew of noteworthy and well-placed commentators has raised concerns over the past several decades that higher education has lost a sense of its *mission*—that is, its foundational or chartered purpose. These figures are not just reactionary conservatives or traditionalists from outside the academic establishment. I have in mind figures like Harry Lewis, former Harvard professor and Dean of the College, John Ellis, longtime professor of German Literature at UC–Santa Cruz, and Matt Goodwin, who held a prestigious string of academic posts at British universities before transitioning into work in political thinktanks and as a pollster.<sup>5</sup> Their claims are of course variegated and multi-faceted, but they and others raise a common cry about a sort of waywardness in orientation that plagues the contemporary academy—particularly the college and university system.

To try to approach these concerns and offer a narrative accounting of them can be a perilously broad and slippery task, indeed, but one insightful attempt to

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a magisterial epistemological comparison of the two in Martin X. Moleski, SJ, with a foreword by Avery Dulles, SJ, *Personal Catholicism: The Theological Epistemologies of John Henry Newman and Michael Polanyi* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Harry R. Lewis, *Excellence Without a Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006); John M. Ellis, *The Breakdown of Higher Education: How It Happened, the Damage It Does, and What Can Be Done* (New York: Encounter Books, 2020); and Matt Goodwin, *Bad Education: Why Our Universities Are Broken and How We Can Fix Them* (London: Transworld, 2025).

do so—whose key and broad strokes, I take it, many would not find especially controversial—is Anthony Kronman’s *Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*.<sup>6</sup> Kronman himself was Dean of Yale Law School before shifting into more traditional, humanistic educational endeavors. *Education’s End* offers a narrative history of the modern and contemporary college and university, and their decisive shortcomings, that resonates well, I think, with key aspects of the vision and critiques of both Newman and Polanyi. Allow me to sketch this rough history first and then connect it creatively with their respective assessments.

Kronman contends that colleges and universities have effectively abandoned what was once, arguably, their *raison d’être*: namely, the holistic cultivation of persons and the development of their character, particularly by drawing them into a tradition of learning and reflection that had been transmitted by their august forebears. This model broadly predominated at our most-prestigious universities in their infancies—at Harvard or Yale, say, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—and in the United States more broadly up through the antebellum period. Students were apprenticed into the great tradition of Western learning by targeted reading, discussion, and memorization of canonical authors and texts, often in their primary languages, in a way that did

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<sup>6</sup> Anthony T. Kronman, *Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

not foster skepticism or academic criticism but instead, through careful attentiveness and receptivity, a fullness of mind and a pious cultivation of spirit that was taken to be important for adult members of the Church and society.<sup>7</sup>

In the mid to late nineteenth century, and particularly in the American Reconstruction era, a marked shift occurred in favor of the university model of education: With the expansion of the German model inaugurated by Von Humboldt and others, there was a decisive pivot to orient higher education toward research and its production, and with that, also to train students in a more targeted vocational manner. This narrative, again, is admittedly broad and rough, but this transition stemmed at least in part from a more widespread, characteristically modern pluralism and concomitant sense that education could no longer be grounded in a more singular, theologically unified conception of human life and its goods. Within this model, pride of place was understandably accorded to the natural sciences, which were taken to be the paragons of the research ideal, but then also newly to the developing social sciences, which were taken to apply scientific rigor to the various dimensions of human life and society.

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<sup>7</sup> See Kronman, *Education's End*, especially ch. 2. Specifically, this was the structuring norm of the *college*, as contrasted with the university, and this era, we could say, was more of a collegiate one as regards the norm or golden standard of higher education.

One certainly does not want to overstate how quick or sharp this broad shift was. Newman himself, writing on the rise of the university system in the mid nineteenth century, notes decisive benefits to both models, with the traditional college characteristically serving as a place of stability, personal cultivation, and learning, and the university as a complementary space of professional polishing, daring research, and social and technological productivity.<sup>8</sup> Taking this sort of balanced approach between the two seems, on the face of things, quite salutary: These institutions can coexist profitably and thereby to foster a constructive tension between the old and the new; tradition and discovery; formation of the person and expansion of the intellect; knowledge for its own sake and professional formation; etc. In practice, however, striking such a balance can be immensely difficult, as Newman also attests, and Kronman takes it—and I trust many agree—that college and university education eventually found itself trending more and more overwhelmingly in favor of the research university and its ideals.<sup>9</sup>

The flagship values that emerged with this shift are, again, generally well-known: A priority for research and discovery; an emphasis on freedom and

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<sup>8</sup> John Henry Newman, “Abuses of the College: Oxford,” in *The Rise and Progress of Universities* (1854/1856), <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/historical/volume3/universities/chapter19.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Kronman, *Education’s End*, chs. 2 and 3.

creativity in inquiry; a push toward more abundant publishing; an extension of scientific methodology to other domains of life and inquiry; and so on. A sense of the spiritual, vocational dimension of the researcher also emerged with time: The researcher, devoting himself to his particular domain with dogged specificity, became a kind of spiritual exemplar—a modern-day monastic, as it were, who is purportedly impartially offering his contribution for the advancement of knowledge and the well-being of humankind.<sup>10</sup>

Some of the well-known risks, however, which Kronman and others have documented abundantly, also solidified during this broad period of consolidation, especially in the transition from the nineteenth into the twentieth century: *Hyper-specialization* in research; a loss of a sense of the unity of knowledge and understanding (despite positivistic efforts to the contrary); a breakdown of the sense of connection between learning and life; a more pragmatic, career-based orientation to education; and so on.

A rough narrative of this sort helps to account for how people have broadly approached higher education for at least a generation or two now, which can be seen in the following sorts of contemporary considerations. Many students, as parents are often quick to emphasize, attend college or university to study something that will lead them, in concert with their interests, into a job or field of

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<sup>10</sup> Kronman, *Education's End*, chs. 2 and 3.

technical expertise: One studies engineering, accounting, marine biology, or education, for example, to prepare for work in those fields—also while often taking *some* sort of sampling of other courses, at least cursorily to satisfy the aim or requirement to fill out or “liberalize” (in the traditional sense) one’s curriculum. Squarely lacking in such a space, though, is *any one* discipline (or even several of them) that is taken to unify the whole of one’s learning or understanding.<sup>11</sup>

This brings me to two principal concerns of Newman regarding our initial question or prompt of the university and its *mission*: The first is the “liberal” cast of mind and the education that is meant to shape or form it, and the second is the way in which philosophy (in conjunction with theology) as a discipline—or perhaps better, as an outlook or set of organizing concerns—best serves the cause of *integrating* our understanding across domains. Such concerns highlight a very important contrast for Newman that, in my view, mirrors an utterly central one for Polanyi: Namely, that between a liberal education and mind and Liberalism<sup>12</sup> in the first case and that between a (scientifically) objective mind or outlook and

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<sup>11</sup> It might not be uncommon, for example, for many faculty nowadays to think that a science like physics could serve such unifying role. It is unlikely, though, that such a position would be taken as authoritative or canonical or be highly touted as such.

<sup>12</sup> I shall generally capitalize Liberalism, Religion, and Theology in discussing Newman to lend to these terms their proper senses according to him. This will also help to distinguish the distinctiveness of this notion from, as I note subsequently, liberalism more broadly.

objectivism in the latter. I contend that both of these corruptions of healthy and just intellectual outlooks or attitudes, according to Newman and Polanyi, involve a kind of scientific strain on which legitimate (and indeed critical) aspects of human knowledge and understanding are occluded or theoretically sidelined on behalf of an overstated and rhetorically deployed conception of the sciences and the scientific.

### **A Liberal Education and Mind versus Liberalism, an Objective One versus Objectivism**

The lectures that constitute Newman's *The Idea of a University (IU)* are perhaps definitively about the oneness of human knowledge and understanding—rooted in the truth—and the way in which liberal or “philosophical” learning uniquely poises us to grasp the truth and to seek knowledge and understanding holistically.<sup>13</sup> The end of the university, for Newman, first and foremost, is the task bequeathing of *universal* knowledge—more than it is the moral formation of students, the impartation of vocational expertise, or the advancement of research, though these other ends should no doubt variously be fostered.<sup>14</sup> A

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<sup>13</sup> Martin J. Svaglic, Introduction and Notes for *The Idea of a University* by John Henry Newman (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1960) XV.

<sup>14</sup> John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, with an introduction and notes by Martin J. Svaglic (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, [1852] 1982), XXXVII–XXXIX.; 14–15.

crowning fruit of this work is the cultivation or activation of the intellectual powers of students—not in a specialized, narrow, or provincial manner, but instead in a way that is capable of reckoning with the whole and seeing how various parts or pieces of it (and our understanding thereof) fit together in an integrated fashion.<sup>15</sup> Newman is confident that such cultivation reliably promotes the moral and social development of students, too, and their preparation for the various tasks and responsibilities of life and work.<sup>16</sup> Such cultivation, he stresses, is not for the development of *opinions*—like those of the cultured man with many “views”—but instead for being grounded in the truth.<sup>17</sup>

Newman stresses that this approach to knowledge and learning is *capacious*: That is, it is ordered toward receptivity to *all* forms of knowledge.<sup>18</sup> It also strives, concomitantly, to be *humble*: It instinctively balks at the idea that any one approach to a question simply, of its own accord, has the (full) truth of the matter.<sup>19</sup> It takes the sciences, then, as complementary views of the whole and

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<sup>15</sup> For another recent piece drawing together some of Newman’s key views on these matters, see Joe Milburn, Frederick D. Aquino, and Peter Distelzweig, “Newman’s Philosophical Habit of Mind as the Primary Epistemic End of Education: The Importance of Intellectual Flourishing,” in *John Henry Newman and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Frederick D. Aquino and Joe Milburn (New York: Routledge, 2025).

<sup>16</sup> Newman, *Idea*, XLII–XLIII.

<sup>17</sup> Newman, *Idea*, XLV.

<sup>18</sup> Newman, *Idea*, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Newman, *Idea*, 54.

aids to our understanding of it, but stresses that they are in fact “partial views” of it.<sup>20</sup> Philosophy, or the philosophical habit of mind or reflection, becomes a privileged means of grasping the interconnectedness of these various partial views and grasping their collective or joint significance.<sup>21</sup>

We can usefully contrast the aspirational norm of liberal learning or education, within the college or university, with the restrictive and singularly toxic norm, for Newman, of *Liberalism*, which he so often doggedly pillories.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere, Newman calls Liberalism the “anti-dogmatic principle” that unduly subjects to human scrutiny religious truths and norms that have been given, to be received and believed, by revelation.<sup>23</sup> Though he does not flag it as such in *IU*, his concern for it is manifest: He particularly worries about the way in which Theology (or religious knowledge) is treated *differently* in the modern and contemporary university—and often with a sense of condescension, or even scorn, vis-à-vis the other sciences or approaches to knowledge. The consequence

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<sup>20</sup> Newman, *Idea*, 34.

<sup>21</sup> Newman, *Idea*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> We would be unwise *simply* to think of typical political liberalism when assessing such critical comments from Newman, though we would also be unwise to exclude it. His primary focus seems to be anti-dogmatic (theological/moral) liberalism. How separable that is from typical political liberalism is a distinct question.

<sup>23</sup> John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, ed. David J. DeLaura (New York: W.W. Norton, [1864] 1968), 16–18.

of this, Newman notes, is not difficult to see—Theology (or Religion) *either* comes to be seen as lacking in real knowledge or understanding *or* the university becomes a place that trades in various forms of knowledge or understanding *with the exception of it*.<sup>24</sup>

The contemporary academy characteristically, Newman contends, tends in the former direction, treating Theology or Religion as matters to be studied but not as domains that yield truth or understanding—especially not as the sciences do. Instead, Theology and Religion come to be treated—as the positivistic and naturalistic/scientistic tradition approaches them—as matters of wish fulfillment or desire satiation. They are characteristically taken to deal with human affectivity and the longings of the heart, but they do not, *ex hypothesi*, deal with the truth or with robust judgments about reality.<sup>25</sup>

Newman sees another pernicious consequence of this shift, one which will allow me to clarify what I mean by “scientistic strain.” He notes: “[I]f you drop any science out of the circle of knowledge, 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.”<sup>26</sup> This is an

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<sup>24</sup> Newman, *Idea*, 16.

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Newman, *Idea*, 20–25.

<sup>26</sup> Newman, *Idea*, 55.

easily appreciable outcome given Newman's broader approach to liberal learning and understanding: If all forms of knowledge and understanding are meant, united in truth, ultimately to be appreciated jointly (i.e., philosophically), then the exclusion of any one will—if the integrity of the whole is sought to be maintained—unduly strain the others that remain.

Such a strain is *scientistic*, I claim, because it demands that the sciences reach farther or more deeply than they need to or should in offering understanding or explanatory accounts of various phenomena. A clarification should be emphasized at this juncture: It is not as though, in such circumstances, the sciences *themselves* lead to this sort of strain. Instead, it is often an attempted philosophical-cum-rhetorical mobilization of the sciences that submits them to this undue heavy lifting. Such attempts amount to, as Polanyi notes, a kind of “poisonous” *mythology* that comes to be associated or bound up with the sciences but that is itself, ultimately, unscientific.<sup>27</sup>

I have briefly contended that, for Newman, a certain sort of intellectual *Liberalism*—taken in a manner that is exclusive of Theology, Religion, or Revelation—is in fact corrosive toward a more holistic sort of liberal learning, capacious and philosophically integrated, that is the primary aspiration of a

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<sup>27</sup> Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 63.

traditional university education. Polanyi, I take it, offers a strikingly similar critique of “objectivism,” which is of course, for him, a “prevailing conception” of the sciences, framed as ideal forms of human knowing, that are taken to be devoid of the passionate and personal aspects that we sometimes ascribe to them—and that he of course finds utterly necessary to them in practice.<sup>28</sup> Polanyi is not concerned with assailing healthy *objectivity* in the sciences but instead *objectivism*, which is, again, a kind of philosophical-cum-rhetorical marshalling of the sciences to promote a certain worldview or argue against other ways of knowing or practices of understanding. Indeed, in advocating for the centrality and indispensability of personal knowledge, the tacit dimension, and the fiduciary program, Polanyi aims to show that our knowing and understanding *generally* exhibits the characteristically *personal* triadic structure comprising the subsidiary, the focal, and the person—a structure that, shot through with imagination and ordered toward the exercise of creative intuition, is pervasive across the range of scientific and humanistic forms of understanding and the practices associated with them (whether art, science, poetry, religious worship, etc.).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, [1958] 1962), 15–16.

<sup>29</sup> Polanyi, *Meaning*, 63–65; Michael Polanyi, *Science, Faith, and Society: A Searching Examination of the Meaning and Nature of Scientific Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1946] 1964), 17.

We might say, then, that Newman and Polanyi alike offer a *conciliatory* framework for understanding our knowledge and, indeed, for thinking about the enterprise of education. Professors, on an approach like theirs, are able to have a confident but humble take on reality, assured of successes in their own fields or modes of understanding but also attuned to their limitations relative to our fuller sense of reality. Their instruction, in other words, can (and should) be marked by gratitude, awe, wonder, and collegial respect. It should also strive with generosity in the direction of a more integrated framework of understanding. Attempts to make one approach to the world and our knowledge of it—especially by appeal to the sciences—should be resisted. This is rather distinct from the sorts of teachers or experts that the aforementioned kinds of Liberalism and objectivism cultivate: As Newman notes, these ideological commitments poise teachers to be “narrow-minded bigot[s]” rather than humble servants of the truth.<sup>30</sup>

### **Hopeful (even Pragmatic?) Holism**

We can return to the opening concerns about present-day education, especially as outlined through Kronman. Several emerge acutely in light of these

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<sup>30</sup> Newman, *Idea*, 44.

considerations from Newman and Polanyi. First, whereas the broad thrust of contemporary higher-education has been *away* from orienting students more foundationally to deeper questions of (personal) meaning and purpose, an approach drawn from the insights of Newman and Polanyi would decisively orient education *toward* these concerns—though not, I should stress, instrumentally so. It would not be the case, as I read them, that one should forsake studying biology, accounting, or musicology robustly—quite the contrary, of course. Instead, one’s study of these domains should (at least broadly and in principle) be susceptible to, and respectfully ordered toward, integration within a broader synthesis of reality, which includes one’s own place, activity, and calling within it.

Second, the (scientific) pressure to approach education and intellectual formation excessively by way of the research paradigm could be healthily assuaged. This tendency, which we noted with Kronman, is arguably symptomatic of the *scientistic* strain I have been describing: That is, the monolithic favoring of the sciences (especially the “hard” ones) as paragons of knowledge and understanding tilts the intellectual enterprise in favor of generating research and cultivating discovery. Polanyi especially would not balk at that latter impetus, but he would recoil, I take it, at the notion that other disciplines or domains of understanding need to be more *superficially* scientific

or to be conformed ostensibly to the sciences, in a way that injures their own integrity. Again, both thinkers invite us to see a harmonious potential for integration—and surprising deeper similarities in structure—between the sciences and more traditional humane forms of knowledge and understanding.

A set of noteworthy concerns emerge for both, I think, with regard to the broad area of *practice*. We might recount here Kronman's contention that, along with a broad shift in favor of the research paradigm, contemporary higher education has become decisively more career-oriented. The rough line of thought is as follows: As education became less about character cultivation and shaping students into an inherited, unified tradition of learning and moral formation, one simple and attractive way of compensating was to focus more keenly on career-targeted training, especially for the white-collar and professional classes. This shift is understandable, though not without its evident perils, which are being accentuated acutely by the rapid rise of AI. It has been quite common for elite students to attend elite colleges and universities over the past several generations to pursue careers in finance, law, and consulting, for example. Concerns are lively now, though, that a substantial portion of entry-level positions in these fields could be consumed by imminent widespread AI implementation—particularly those involving more rote tasks like document review.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Thibault Spirlet, "The CEO of Anthropic is Doubling down on his Warning that AI will Gut Entry-level Jobs," *Business Insider*, September 5, 2025,

There was perhaps, then, a certain sort of comfort or consolation in seeking a college or university degree that is at risk of vanishing: A student nowadays, that is, may well lack a sense of confidence that pursuing especially *career-targeted* coursework or degree programming will in fact reliably yield a related career. This sort of unease regarding education and surefire career trajectory might in fact be salutary, though, when we look to Newman and Polanyi alike. As we already noted, they are insistent about seeing harmony across various ways of knowing and approaches to reality and also in emphasizing deeper structural similarities to them. In similar fashion, they are both skeptical, I take it, of approaching education in unduly utilitarian terms, allowing pragmatic or career-oriented concerns to predominate. If we can rightly say they are both anti-scientistic, as I have already sketched, we might in this regard say they are also—and I trust few would contend with this—anti-technocratic, i.e., wary of seeing such a foundational human enterprise as the work of education and formation mainly in terms of its pragmatic payoffs.

It seems to me that both men offer a cautionary take on how adopting such a technocratic approach routinely backfires and poises people to be *less* prepared for the broader sphere of human life than they would otherwise be. Polanyi is

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<https://www.businessinsider.com/anthropic-ceo-ai-cut-entry-level-law-finance-consulting-jobs-2025-9>.

routinely insistent that socio-political concerns are deeply bound-up with his criticism of objectivism: That he had especially witnessed the mobilization of that perilously false conception of the sciences at the hands of Marxist regimes such that his epistemological critique “includes the whole life of thought in society.”<sup>32</sup>

Newman is adamant, from the outset of *IU*, about the broadly salutary character of a liberal education:

[M]akes itself felt in . . . good sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candour, self-command, and steadiness of view, . . . [along with] developed habits of business, power of influencing others, and sagacity. . . . In all it will be a faculty of entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and of taking up with aptitude and science or profession.<sup>33</sup>

It does not, in other words, just or mainly equip a student with a skill set or array of job-specific tools. Far more importantly, it poises them to be stronger citizens, family members, spouses, and creative contributors to the common good. What is more, this sort of deep intellectual and personal actualization is not a task that can be achieved by way of (AI-driven) expediency but that must instead be patiently and consistently cultivated in a profound spirit of engagement and conversation with one’s forebears and fellows.

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<sup>32</sup> Polanyi, *Science*, 9; Mark T. Mitchell, *Michael Polanyi: The Art of Knowing* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books), 52.

<sup>33</sup> Newman, *Idea*, XLIII–XLIV.

This sort of orientation, on the part of both Newman and Polanyi, helps us to see potential for an educational orientation that inclines more robustly toward the common good and away from another pervasive and pernicious contemporary educational issue: individualized commodification. In other words, we have succumbed, many would claim, to a model on which students are the consumers and educational institutions are the producers or providers, present to suit students' needs and wants. If they simply cater to this set of demands, however, then very little is being done or offered for the sake of the common good. Students are leaving institutions of higher education with job-specific credentials and a variety of social experiences but often without the virtues that make for sounder, more responsible citizens.

What is more, we can speak to formative, practice-related benefits of a more holistic education even apart from their potential political benefits. Jerry Gill stresses that Polanyi's embrace of personal knowledge and tacit understanding and his rejection of the "cult of objectivity . . . introduces an understanding of knowing as grounded in the body, the society of knowing agents, and the affirmation of our cognitive powers of judgment. This posture enables us to act with both confidence and humility in the quest for knowledge."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Jerry H. Gill, *The Tacit Mode: Michael Polanyi's Postmodern Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 29–30.

Again, political upshots notwithstanding, a citizenry cultivated in confident intellectual aspiration—coupled with humility—robust cognitive conviction—rather than pervasive systematic doubt<sup>35</sup>—and healthy attunement to their fundamental embodiment will, *ceteris paribus*, be healthier, more stable, and more cohesive. They will be those in whom, in a word, science, faith, and society can be seen as mutually edifying matters of concern and practice for the sake of the common good.

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<sup>35</sup> This matter of the pervasiveness of doubt in the contemporary educational enterprise could surely be another item on the list of this discussion, which Newman and Polanyi alike offer help to remedy.