

# The Catholic Intellectual Tradition

## The Search for Truth Through Faith and Reason

By  
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In the last two or three decades, an extreme faction of "deconstructionists" have challenged our ability to grasp truth.

Now, "the search for, and the communication of, truth" is at the heart of the mission of the University of the Incarnate Word.

This component of our mission does not distinguish UIW from any other institution of higher learning. Indeed, the quest for, and the communication of, truth is what all universities have in common.

The search for truth distinguishes universities from the work of other important institutions such as health care facilities, social welfare agencies or political action committees.

And, as their name implies, universities seek, however imperfectly, the whole of truth.

In the Catholic intellectual tradition, the truth is generally understood as the conformity of judgments in the mind to what is outside the human mind. To have true knowledge is to know what is real as it is. When we endeavor to know the facts about a thing, we are seeking truth.

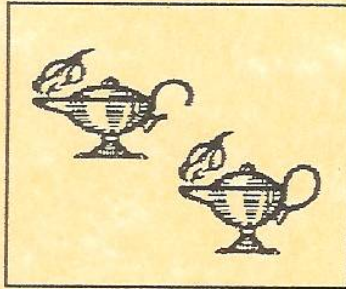
Many disciplines -- for example, anthropology, biology, chemistry, comparative religions, history, parts of philosophy and theology, physics, psychology, and sociology -- aim at truth in this sense of knowing the real as it is.

Other important disciplines, such as ethics and the arts -- fine, pedagogical, healing, and productive -- have some aim beyond knowing the

real as it is.

One distinguishing mark of UIW as a Catholic university is that in its pursuit of the fullness of truth it recognizes two different modes of achieving truth: "reason" and "faith."

By "reason," we mean natural human intelligence, the power of our marvelous minds deployed in philosophy and in all the sciences. This means of discovering truth we have in common with secular universities.



Because reason must demonstrate the truth of its assertions by logical or empirical proof, the entirely-reason-dependent disciplines are identical in their truth at UIW and state universities. There is no such thing as Catholic calculus.

By "faith," we mean a kind of supernatural intelligence that, through God's gift, allows us to know dimensions of the real we could not know through human reason alone.

Through faith we know the existence of God, God's love for us, and God's desire for us to be related to the deity individually and communally. Through faith, Christians know of the trinity of persons within the unity of God and they know that, as a testament of love for us, God sent the Son to us and that he rose from the dead.

The discipline that begins with faith and seeks to understand better what faith believes and implies for our living is theology.

In the Catholic intellectual tradition, the tradition that gave birth to the first European universities, faith and reason are understood as complementary methodologies for knowing the truth, knowing accurately the fullness of reality.

Of course, there are tensions between the findings of science and teachings of faith, but our tradition defends both means of achieving truth as necessary and good.

In the late twentieth-century, when the dignity and utility of human reason for discovering truth were under attack by some strands of deconstructionism, it was thinkers in the Catholic intellectual tradition that defended human reason against the self-contradictory "knowledge" that we cannot know anything.

Indeed, we *can* know truth, and at a Catholic university we know it through both faith and reason.

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