Handbook for Theology and Religious Studies

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Introducing ourselves

Who are we and what are we about?

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Mary Immaculate College - University of Limerick - was founded in 1999. It offers modules for both undergraduate students (as part of the undergraduate degree courses in Liberal Arts and in Education) and a number of postgraduate programmes (taught and research).

The Department has many international links with prestigious Catholic universities throughout Europe (such as Leuven, Innsbruck) as well as in the United States of America (such as the University of Notre Dame). Apart from research undertaken on an individual basis by its staff members and research postgraduate students (MA/PhD) the Department of Theology and Religious Studies also co-sponsors the Centre for Culture, Technology, and Values. The Department also benefits from a close association with the Benedictine Abbey of Glenstal, Murroe, Co. Limerick.

The Department regularly organises Public lecture series and Conferences. These are a great opportunity to be exposed to other well-known theologians. We would ask you to attend as many of these events as you can.

The Chaplaincy will be happy to assist you in the development of your faith; it further organises a wide range of activities throughout the year. You can also daily attend Mass – contact the Chaplaincy for details.

Staff members

You will find the members of staff fairly approachable. If you want to meet with a member of staff to discuss any aspect of your *academic* life you are best advised to send an email to arrange a meeting.

Professor Eamonn Conway
Position: Head of Theology & Religious Studies
Research Interests: The works of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs Von Balthasar; faith and culture, especially the interface between culture, technology and religion; the profile and status of theology at third and fourth levels.
Telephone: +353 61 204353
Email: eamonn.conway@mic.ul.ie

Dr Patrick Connolly
Position: Senior Lecturer & Assistant Registrar
Research Interests: Canon law and its relationship to sacramental theology and ecclesiology. Christianity and wider society, morality and civil law, and church and state relations.
Telephone: +353 61 204575
Email: patrick.connolly@mic.ul.ie

Dr Rik Van Nieuwenhove
Position: Lecturer in Theology.
Research Interests: Medieval theology (including Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure); medieval spirituality (with specific attention to the spirituality of the Low Countries, including Jan van Ruusbroec); theology of the Trinity; theories of salvation; the relation between theology and art.
Telephone: +353 61 204547

Email: rik.vannieuwenhove@mic.ul.ie

Dr Eugene Duffy
Position**:** Lecturer
Research Interests: Ecclesiology, especially the history and development of collegiality in Church structures; pastoral renewal and development, particularly in the Irish context; theologies of ministry; New Testament Christology; sacraments of initiation.
Telephone: +353 61 204968
Email: eugene.duffy@mic.ul.ie

Dr Jessie Rogers
Position: Senior Lecturer
Research Interests: Biblical themes in Irish stained glass windows; ancient and modern readings of the book of Job; Scripture and the imagination; the Bible and social justice
Telephone: +353 61 204340
Email: jessie.rogers@mic.ul.ie

Rev Michael Wall
Position: Lecturer & College Chaplain
Research Interests: Ecclesiology, moral theology, medical ethics, business ethics
Telephone: +353-86-2550436
Email: michael.wall@mic.ul.ie

The Department also enjoys the valued support of Associate Faculty, including Dr Fintan Lyons OSB (fintan@glenstal.org) and Dr Cyprian Love OSB (cyprian@glenstal.org) of Glenstal Abbey.

Many questions of a practical nature can be answered by the Departmental Secretary, Ms Deirdre Franklin in the Arts Office (061-204507).

A word about the subject: What is Theology? Why study Theology ?

Theological Studies entails an intellectual exploration of the belief systems that have played a vital role in the shaping of our world throughout the centuries. As a valid academic pursuit, this discipline focuses on ultimate questions, explores the human phenomenon of religion and provides for the development of critical thought. Theology and Religious Studies involves an analysis of the historical perspectives and philosophical presuppositions of the content of religious faith and a clarification of the meaning of religious belief in the modern world. Theology is perhaps one of the most exciting subjects one can study in the Liberal Arts programme.

Human beings are in search of meaning, and an engagement with theology allows students to examine critically some of the most profound answers given to the most fundamental questions about life. Is life nothing but "a tale told by a madman, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (as Shakespeare puts it in Macbeth) or can we perceive meaning in the senselessness, the suffering and evil that we inevitably encounter?

Understood in the broadest sense, theology is therfore an enquiry into the human conviction that life has *ultimate* meaning and worth. It is a rational and critical exploration of the human experiences of faith, hope, and love. One cannot be neutral about ultimate questions, and so theological enquiry usually takes place from the perspective of a particular believing community.

Given that the majority of students at this college are Christian in background, and given the College's ethos, the focus of the theology programme is a critical and rigorously academic study of Christianity. However, the Department recognises the increasing need for detailed theological study of other religious belief systems and endeavours to provide for this. This does not mean that we assume that our students are practicing Christians; but we do expect (as one would in any other academic subject) that our students are positively disposed towards the subject area, and take its basic claims seriously.

While a few decades ago people in the Western world assumed that religion would simply fade away into insignificance and become nothing but a private option, the global situation today is a very different one. Religions are growing: there are today about 2bln Christians; 1.2 bln Muslims, 800 mln Hindus, and 350 mln Buddhists, while there are perhaps (it is hard to estimate) around 150 mln atheists.

In recent years we have witnessed a revival of Islam throughout the world; and in the West we are seeing a renewed interest in spirituality and world religions. An understanding of the beliefs of, and practices associated with, different religions and cultures has become vital in modern Ireland. While some may have reservations about how the church as an institution has dealt with some of the issues facing it, few would want to question the significance of the Christian tradition as one way of meeting the spiritual and religious needs of people today.

Religion is a major force in shaping society and political life; but the reverse also holds: society and politics have a bearing on religion. If we want to understand religion today, we need to take into account its specific setting. This is why in the Western world, for instance, theologians have to enter into dialogue with critics of religion, such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, or Sigmund Freud. These major thinkers who have deeply influenced modern society and thought will be studied in the First Year Course.

Similarly, if you are interested in architecture, music, literature, or the world of painting you will find that some of humanity's most magnificent achievements are immediately linked to religion. Again, if you are interested in ethical issues, such as in the field of genetic engineering and bio-ethics, you will find that theologians have an interesting contribution to make. What should we think about stem-cell research? Is it wrong to clone human beings, and if so, why?

There are so many different exciting aspects to theology and the study of religion that it is difficult to think of another subject that covers such a diverse range of topics and ideas. Whether you are interested in the study of different cultures, history, art, ethics, spirituality and mysticism, you will find something that appeals to you in the curriculum of our Department. It is therefore not surprising that in the last few years the number of

students taking this subject has grown, in part due to the realisation that religious belief must be re-examined and re-imagined if it is to be influential in shaping the new Ireland.

Theology, as part of a general Arts degree, produces students with a broad formation who end up in a variety of areas: education, journalism, banking, parishes, private sector, …

Undergraduate Information and Programmes

Undergraduate Information and Programmes General Information

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies offers a wide-ranging perspective on the phenomenon of religion, and Christianity in particular. It does so by drawing on a great number of sub-disciplines, such as philosophy, history, literary criticism, sociology, the study of art, and so forth.

This is an outline of the BA programme:

Please note that modules offered may vary from year to year.	
First Year	
Autumn Semester	RS4001: Religion and World Religions
Spring Semester	RS4011: Introduction to Systematic Theology
Second Year	
Autumn Semester	RS4033: Fundamental Moral Theology
	RS4023: Christology
Spring Semester	RS4710: Critical Issues in Modern Religion
	RS4013: Theology of the Second Testament
Third Year	
Off Campus Placement	
Fourth Year	
Autumn Semester	RS4007: Approaches to God
	RS4037: Selected Topics in Applied Moral Theology
Spring Semester	RS4027: Ritual and Sacrament
	RS4017: Ecclesiology

In the Academic Year 2013/2014 the modules in *First Year* offered are two out of the following three:

RS4001 Religion and World Religions

This course introduces students to the phenomenon of religion, and to the belief systems and foundational texts of the major world religions.To engage students in a critical dialogue with the major world religions from within the perspective of the Christian tradition. The phenomenon of religion seen as a possible answer and challenge to the human search for meaning. The nature of religion, and the critiques levelled at it by authors such as Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Introduction to some of the major world religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese traditions, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. The world-views and ideas of each religion, and their foundational texts. Specific practices, and political and sociological implications of different religions. Inter-faith dialogue between Christianity and the major world religions

RS4011 Introduction to Systematic Theology

To provide students with an overview of Christian theology and some of its major themes. To engage students in a critical reflection on the nature of the theological disciplines. Introduction to Christian theology: its nature and history, and its various disciplines. The meaning of Divine Revelation. Faith and belief. The Scriptural basis of theology, including the origin and authority of the Bible. The Christian understanding of God as Trinity. Creation and the problem of evil. Grace and Original Sin. The person of Christ and his role in salvation. The Spirit and the Church. Eschatology.

RS4021 The World of the Bible

To provide students with an insight into the historical background of the Bible, its various books, its literary genres, and its wider theological significance. Introduction to the historical and geographical background of the Biblical writings. Characteristics of the Biblical languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek). Survey and outline of the various Biblical books, including study of literary genres in both the Old and New Testaments. The concept of inspiration. The Bible and Divine Revelation. The role of the Bible in theology. The Bible and the Churches. Interpretation and modern exegetical methods. The methodology and hermeneutics used in the recent documents of the Pontifical Biblical Commission.

In *subsequent years* (second and fourth) you will sit four modules from TRS. Here are some of the key modules which you may encounter:

RS4003 Theology of the First Testament

To enable students to gain an appreciation of the Old Testament in its Ancient Near Eastern context. To introduce students to the main themes of the First Testament books and to the tools of Biblical criticism.The historical and geographical background of the Ancient Near East. The origins, formation and transmission of the First Testament. The canon of the Old Testament. Outline of the form and content of the First Testament books in their historical, literary and cultural contexts: the Torah, the Prophets, the Psalms and Wisdom Literature. Contemporary Biblical criticism. Application of exegetical methods to key Old Testament texts for their theological significance.

RS4023 Christology

To introduce students to theological reflection on Jesus of Nazareth.The distinctive character of the teaching of Jesus in its cultural and historical context. The various starting points for Christological study. The miracles and the parables and their role in Jesus' proclamation of the Reign of God. The significance of the ministry, death and resurrection of Christ. The humanity and divinity of Christ: the development of Christological doctrine and the debate from the Council of Nicea to the present. D ifferent approaches to Christology today. Christ in inter-religious dialogue: the challenge of other religions and ideologies.

RS4013 Theology of the Second Testament

To enable students to gain an appreciation of the New Testament in its historical and social context.To introduce students to the main themes of the Second Testament books and to develop methodological skills.The historical, geographical, and social background of the New Testament books. The origins, formation and transmission of the Second Testament. New

Testament writings as rooted in the Old Testament and the Jewish tradition. The canon of the New Testament. The form and content of the First Testament books: the Synoptic Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Johannine Literature, and the Pauline Letters. Biblical methodology, and exegesis of key New Testament texts for their theological significance.

RS4033 Fundamental Moral Theology

To introduce students to the foundations of Christian ethics, and to engage students in a critical reflection on the nature of moral theology. The nature of morality. The relationship between religion and ethics. The history and development of moral theology as a discipline. The sources and methods of moral theology, and its contemporary context. The role of the Bible in Christian ethics. The debate about whether or not there is a specific Christian morality. Human freedom, knowledge, moral responsibility, and the relationship between them. The concept of conscience. The natural law in tradition and today. The notion of sin in Scripture, tradition, and modern theological reflection.

RS4007 Approaches to God

To examine the major themes involving the God-question from a Christian perspective thereby providing students with a solid grounding in some of the key issues in systematic theology. The Christian understanding of God. The origins, development, and the relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity. The problem of evil and theodicy. The atheist critique of faith and belief. The Christian understanding of eschatology. writings of key thinkers from the patristic, medieval and modern eras as illustrating the manifold nature of the Christian understanding of God throughout the tradition.

RS4047 Selected Topics in Biblical Literature

To enable students to gain a better understanding and knowledge of the unity of the Old and New Testaments through analysis of selected Biblical themes. To enable students to develop their methodological and hermeneutical skills. Modern canonical approaches showing the unity of both parts of the Bible. Possible topics to be investigated in the First and Second Testaments using these approaches: Creation, God's everlasting covenant, sin and forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation, poverty and richness, images of God (mercy, compassion, judge, love etc), annunciation and the coming of the Messiah, faith and hope, poverty and wealth, law and commandments, oppression and liberation, vocations, and the community life of the faithful. The theological relationship between New and Old Testaments: superseding the old model of "promise and fulfilment". Exegesis of key texts commonly used in catechetical and pedagogical contexts.

RS4027 Ritual and Sacrament

To enable students to gain an appreciation of the role of ritual and worship in Christianity.To provide students with a basic theological and historical knowledge of the Christian sacraments.The concepts of ritual and symbol. Liturgy and worship. The concept of sacramentality. Christ as the primordial sacrament of God, and the Church as a basic sacrament. Outline of the historical development and theology of the sacraments, with special emphasis on Baptism and Eucharist. Ecumenical and contemporary pastoral considerations concerning liturgy and the sacraments. Particular issues (e.g. the liturgical year, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, etc).

RS4017 Ecclesiology

To introduce students to the ecclesial dimension of Christianity. The Biblical roots of ecclesial consciousness and the origins of the Christian Church. Survey of the main events in the history and life of the Church: pre-Constantinian Christianity; from Constantine to the East-West schism; the Reformation and the Council of Trent; Vatican I to Vatican II; the ecumenical movement; current and possible future developments. The nature of the Church and its marks. Models as a means of understanding ecclesiology. Salvation outside the Church. Ministries. Issues concerning ecclesial authority and structures. Special questions in ecclesiology.

RS4710 Critical Issues in Modern Religion

To enable students to gain an in-depth knowledge of one or two contemporary important theological problems. The focus varies from year to year. In recent times the lecturer has chosen to focus on christian faith in contemporary culture. The first part of the module clarifies students' understanding of christian faith, especially, what is meant by faith in general, the act and content of christian faith, the universal character of faith and its relationship to beliefs, and the situation of faith today. The second part of the module reflects on contemporary culture and the challenges and opportunities which consumerism, technology, secularisation and secularism present to christian faith. The third part of the module consists of some guest inputs on themes such as ecology, prayer in contemporary culture, God and violence, and martyrdom in contemporary religion.

The Placement Year (Third year)

The Off Campus Programme takes place in year three. Students are offered a wide range of learning opportunities, including international study and work assignments, which broaden and enrich the academic content of their degree.

Many students spend their Off Campus period in either a European or North American university, where they can pursue further studies in their subject areas and, if they wish, register for new courses of their choice. We strongly encourage you to consider going to one of the universities with which the Department has established links, such as Innsbruck (Austria), or Leuven (in Belgium) where you can attend courses in theology in the English language.

Students studying in continental Europe improve their foreign language skills and enjoy the multi-cultural dimension of student life there. Financial support under the SOCRATES - ERASMUS programme is currently available to students going to European universities. This contributes towards travel and additional costs incurred in studying abroad.

Other international work placements have also been developed and we encourage you to consider a "vocational" placement (such as one year in Africa).

Going abroad during your Placement year shows evidence of initiative and self-reliance, and it is higly valued by future employers. It is an invaluable experience and students should opt for an international experience over remaining in Ireland, if at all possible.

Postgraduate Information and Programmes

Master of Arts in Theological Studies

Master of Arts in Christian Leadership in Education

MA & PhD by Research

Structured PhD in Theological Studies

When you have finished your undergraduate degree you will undoubtedly be interested in further pursuing your theological formation – that is, if we are willing to accept you (i.e., you must be a good student). We offer *taught* postgraduate programmes (Master of Arts in Christian Leadership in Education; MA in Theological Studies), as well as postgraduate programmes by *research* (MA/ PhD by research). Recently we also introduced a "Structured PhD in Theological Studies."

Master of Arts in Theological Studies (taught)

Structure:

The programme consists of eight modules, obligatory attendance at a theological seminar, plus completion of a minor dissertation (15,000-20,000 words). The programme runs over two years, one or two evening(s) per week, with two modules in each of the four semesters. Some modules may be taught through blended learning.

Requirements:

The normal requirement for entry to the MA in Theological Studies programme is a First or Second Class Honours primary degree in Theology OR Theology and Religious Studies OR a cognate academic discipline. Applicants with equivalent qualifications or substantial relevant experience may also be considered. Final selection may require attendance for interview. Applicants without a First or Second Class Honours primary degree may, with the approval of the Course Co-ordinator, pursue a qualifying programme and be examined on completion of that programme. The examination may be taken once only.

Modules:

The following is a list of course modules, these are subject to revision and will depend on the number of students registered.
Core Modules:
- Principles of Christian Theology
OR Selected Foundational Topics in Christian Theology
- Theological Seminar I (6 cr.) [Pass/Failure]

Students may further choose one module from the following list, subject to availability: The Church and Churches; Medieval Theology; Morality in the Market Place; Church, State, Morality and Law; Selected Topics in Canon Law; Christian Spirituality; Biblical Spirituality; Liturgical Theology; Sacramental Initiation; Forms of Celebration; Theologians of the Twentieth Century; Introduction to Biblical Greek; Biblical Criticism; Intermediate Biblical Greek; Hebrew Narrative: the Primary History (Genesis-Kings) and later Biblical Prose; Prophetic Literature; New Testament Narrative (Four Gospels and Acts); The Epistles of the New Testament; Ancient Wisdom Literature; Johannine Literature; Ancient Hebrew.

It is your responsibility to check the Department notice board and website regularly.

Assessment:

The taught modules are assessed by a combination of continuous assessment, essays and end-of-semester examinations.

Minor Dissertation

Students are required to submit a research proposal for his/her minor dissertation to the Department. The proposal will be confirmed and a supervisor assigned, or in the case of an unsatisfactory proposal the Department will contact the student.

The deadline for submission of dissertations for assessment by the University Autumn Examinations Board is the second last Monday in August. Please note that the staff members are not usually available from late June till the end of August. Students are required to submit three copies of their work, spiral-bound, to the Arts Office on or before that deadline. Students who miss this deadline for whatever reason will not be eligible for examination by the Autumn Examination Board. When the assessment process for the dissertation is over, and any required changes and corrections have been made, two hardbound copies of the dissertation must be submitted to the Arts Office. In consultation with their supervisors and on payment of the continuation fee, students may apply to be granted an extension and to have their dissertations examined by the Spring Examination Board. The submission date for this board is the first Monday in December.

Each dissertation submitted must also be accompanied by a form, provided by the Department, in which the student declares the minor dissertation is his/her own work. A student must have received approval by the supervisor of the entire final version of the dissertation before submitting it to the Arts Office. You must present three hardbound copies to the Arts Office, and you should also send an electronic copy to your supervisor. For details of thesis presentation see University of Limerick Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures, available online at:
http://www2.ul.ie/pdf/388196739.pdf

Please also consult to section on *Writing Dissertations and Essays* elsewhere in this handbook.

The Programme Coordinator of the MA in theological Studies is Dr Patrick Connolly.

Master of Arts in Christian Leadership in Education (taught)

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies (TRS), at Mary Immaculate College launched an exciting and timely new professional qualification programme entitled MA in Christian Leadership in Education in 2010.

This programme is offered by the Department of Theology and is under the academic leadership of the TRS in association with CEIST (Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust), which comprises five Catholic Religious Congregations engaged in post primary education (Daughters of Charity, Presentation Sisters, Sisters of the Christian Retreat, Sisters of Mercy, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart). It is generously subsidised by the St. Stephen's Green Trust, a funding agency for Catholic charities.

The programme is offered on two campuses: Mary Immaculate College and (for those who are Dublin-based) the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin.

It is a two year programme leading to a professional qualification with a strong theology component for those working in the second level education sector such as school principals, members of boards of management, members of the trusts established by the various denominational bodies in Ireland, etc. Successful applicants are eligible for grant aid. The programme content covers key issues in educational leadership, education policy, management, developing and supporting ethos, as well as important topics in theology that assist school leaders in articulating sustaining the Catholic ethos of their schools.

The programme content builds on four pillars: Theology, Spirituality, Psychology, and Educational Leadership. The modules covered are : New Testament Christology; Developing Emotional and Relational Competence; Group Dynamics; Psychology of Leadership; Leading Curriculum and Learning; Education Legislation and Governance; A Christian Vision of Humanity for Contemporary Culture; Liturgy and Sacraments; Foundational Topics in Christian Spirituality and Ethos; Leading a Catholic School in Contemporary Ireland. Students will be provided with skills in research methods with a view to their dissertation, which will be completed in the final semester of the programme.

Normally, you will be expected to attend two weeks of Summer School, in early July (precise dates yet to be determined), as well as during the regular academic year, one Friday evening and full Saturday and per month, from September to May inclusive. There may be additional attendance required, but this will be signalled well in advance.

The normal requirement for entry to the MA in Christian Leadership in Education is a First or Second Class Honours primary degree in Theology OR Theology and Religious Studies OR a cognate academic discipline. Applicants with equivalent qualifications or substantial relevant experience may also be considered. Final selection may require attendance for interview.

The Programme Coordinator is Dr Eugene Duffy.

Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy by Research and Thesis

The Department accepts a small number of suitably qualified candidates for advanced degrees (MA and PhD) by research and dissertation. Students who satisfy the university's admission requirements for such programmes may approach any full-time staff member for an informal discussion regarding possible research topics. Students should also arrange to meet the Head of Department, Prof. Eamonn Conway, so that they can formally be assigned to a member of staff who will guide them in drafting a research proposal and eventually be assigned a dissertation supervisor.

The research competencies of staff and their publications are listed on the Departmental web page and at the beginning of this Handbook. It is only possible to accept students who wish to research in an area that accords with the specialisms of faculty and their current research priorities. Only in exceptional circumstances will a supervisor be assigned who is not a fulltime member of staff or of the Department's adjunct faculty.

Ordinarily, students who do not have a full undergraduate degree in theology and religious studies will be required to take some postgraduate modules in theological studies as a condition of their registration.

Postgraduate students, as a condition of their acceptance by the Department for registration, are required to participate in departmental colloquia at which they present their research and generally to participate in the academic life of the Department.

Candidates are also encouraged and supported in presenting papers at national and international academic conferences. The Graduate School has made available modest stipends for this purpose.

Candidates are responsible for maintaining regular contact with their supervisor and for keeping a record of supervision meetings.

For information on admissions procedures, deadlines, fees etc. students should approach the College's Graduate School in the first instance. Enquiries relating to fee waivers, scholarships and assistantships may be directed to the Graduate School and/or the Head of Department.

Before beginning the application process, you should have an idea of which research topic (or research area) you would like to research. Essentially, your thesis should aim to "fill a gap" in current research, so you should have read around the area which you find interesting. It is important to come up with your own project. Do not ask a lecturer for a topic.

When you have an idea of what you would like to research, you should contact a member of academic staff in our Department to discuss it with her/him. If you are unsure as to which member of faculty's research interests best match your chosen research topic, you should contact the Head of Department. The application process cannot proceed until a member of faculty has agreed to act as supervisor for your thesis. The Graduate School can assist you with further practical information.

Writing Your Thesis Proposal

When a supervisor has been agreed, you should consult with them while drafting your thesis proposal.

The Research Proposal must include the following headings:

o Aims and objectives
o Substantive outline of the project (with proper references)
o Originality and relevance of the project (including location of the project within the current literature)
o Methodology and/or hermeneutical perspective
o Anticipated outcomes and results (if applicable)
o Ethical implications of your research (if applicable)
o Relevant bibliography

The length of the Research Proposal should be between 2,500 and 4,000 words in the case of a PhD application, and between 2,000-3,000 words in the case of a MA by research, including bibliography (unless otherwise approved by the supervisor). The proposal will be evaluated on the basis of overall quality, clarity, originality, evidence of familiarity with the field and literature, relevance of the topic, focus, feasibility, referencing (in accordance with either the Harvard or Chicago Style of Referencing), and style (including syntax, grammar, and spelling).

Academic Letters of Reference

While writing the thesis proposal, the applicant (in consultation with their supervisor) should decide on who their two academic referees will be and contact them, as hard copies of letters of reference must be included with the application. It is entirely appropriate for your proposed supervisor to act as referee, as they will be familiar with your research proposal and with your ability to see it to completion. Please note that both letters of reference must refer to the thesis topic / proposal, as well as the applicant's academic ability.

Bursaries and assistantships

As indicated. there are a very limited number of postgraduate bursaries available for Research students. These include a fee waiver and monetary assistance. Successful students are expected to assist the Department as tutors and with administrative help

for a limited number of hours per week. Please contact the Head of Department for further information.

Structured Phd in Theological Studies (taught and research)

The Structured PhD in Theological Studies provides an opportunity for students who want to pursue doctoral studies in a more structured manner than the traditional PhD (by research only) allows for. The programme should appeal to bright students who want to pursue theological research at the highest level but whose theological background is initially not sufficient to pursue the traditional PhD by research alone. This four year programme should therfore appeal to all students with a primary degree in a different area (such as philosophy, langauges or history) who are interested in pursuing research in theology. The first two years are mainly taught; the final two years are exclusively geared toward writing a doctoral dissertation of the same standard and lenght of a traditional research PhD.

In the first semester students sit a Core module, the Research seminar, and two other modules from the postggraduate portfolio of the TRS Department (cf. MA in Theological Studies). In the second semester they choose three modules, while in the Summer they attend Summer schools (e.g. learning a foreign language relevant to their research) and start working on their dissertation. The second year consists of another two modules per semester. The final two years will be dedicated solely to writing the dissertation.

Assessment

As per the university rules for structured graduate research education programmes degrees from the programme will be awarded on completion of the taught programme (semesters 1 through 4) and a research component, and semesters 1-4 of the programme will comprise Stage 1 of the programme.

The Doctoral Studies Panel will establish an Assessment Panel or Panels to assess the progress of the student and their competence and capacity to complete a doctorate at the end of Stage 1 and at any other suitable point in the programme. The Assessment Panel will base its judgement at the end of Stage 1 on a written statement of progress and a research plan from the candidate, and a written progress report from the principal supervisor, and satisfactory completion of the modules in Stage 1. Students will be deemed to have satisfactorily completed the modules in Stage 1 if they have a cumulative QCA of 3, but the Assessment Panel may decide to permit progression where there is evidence of significant research potential and progression in Stage 1. In this

case the written statement of progress must show a clear and workable research plan, and a level of originality in the proposed research topic commensurate with doctoral studies. The Assessment Panel may also require a presentation from the student and may interview the student and/or the principal supervisor. The Assessment Panel will, subject to review by the relevant Head of Department and the Programme Coordinator, make one of the following recommendations:

(i)   that the student should progress to Stage 2 doctoral studies;
(ii)   that the student should resubmit for further assessment after a prescribed period
(iii)   that the student should transfer to another graduate programme;
(iv)   that the student should graduate with a Graduate Diploma or Master's degree, subject to their satisfying the relevant University requirements;
(v)   that the student's registration be terminated and that the student be awarded a certificate of credit for any modules for which credit has been awarded.

Entry regulations:

Candidates with an upper second level (2.1) in Theology, or with a similar award from a cognate discipline (e.g., Philosophy, History, Classics, Law, Modern Languages if relevant…) from a recognised third level institution, will normally be considered. Acceptance will be subject to interview and/or a sample of written work. Acceptance is entirely at the discretion of the Department. Candidates should be proficient in the use of English for academic purposes.

Students who have finished the First Year of the taught MA in Theological Studies at MIC will be allowed to enter the second year of the Structured PhD in Theological Studies, subject to approval of the Course Coordinator and the Head of Department, and subject to normal access procedures for Postgraduate students in Mary Immaculate College. These students will have to sit three subject-specific modules in both Semesters 3 and 4, instead of two.

Students who have completed a taught MA at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, other than those in Theology, that includes one or more of the modules listed in the programme structure may not take those modules again as part of this programme, but they must still take the required number of modules per semester as outlined in the programme structure. Where a student has already taken a core module at MA level they may not take that module again, but must take an additional elective to bring their number of completed modules for each semester up to the required level.

Because the programme is modularised new candidates can begin the programme in either the Autumn or the Spring semester.

The Programme Coordinator is Dr Rik Van Nieuwenhove.

Essay & Dissertation Writing – A survival guide

I. Writing essays and dissertations

II. Detailed information on how to reference, using the Chicago system

III. The Undergraduate Dissertation

IV. Guidelines to assessment

V. Plagiarism

VI. "Research, Reading and (W)Riting": An Edifying Essay by Dr Cyprian Love, OSB

I.   Writing Essays and dissertations

This section consists of three parts. The first part introduces you to some of the basics. The second part contains a guideline how to make proper references. The third part is an interesting essay by Dr Cyprian Love on Essay writing.

1. What is an essay?

1.1 Every essay should either answer or discuss a question with the intention of setting out a clear viewpoint. This viewpoint should have been largely decided *in advance* of writing the essay. In a large number of cases you will be summarising and arguing for the views of a particular book or scholar, and sometimes you will find yourself confused and unable to come to one simple answer. Thus, in many cases, your final view may well be one that draws attention to ambiguity or to the impossibility of answering a question: *this also is a clear viewpoint* and must be carefully and coherently argued for, and thought out in advance.

1.2 Every essay has an argument. One particularly clear dictionary definition of 'argument' in this sense says: "An argument is a set of statements in support of an opinion or proposed course of action. It is expressed in an orderly way, and is used to try and convince someone that the opinion or course of action is correct."
All of your essays should be able to be described in these terms. You will have to work hard at learning both how to order an argument so that it best gets across your view, and at being able to write an essay in such a way that your argument is easily followed. In essays arguments are partly expressed by having an ordered series of *paragraphs.* Being able to write in clear paragraphs will greatly help you to write a good, well argued essay.

1.3 A paragraph is almost always a collection of sentences (i.e. more than one) on a common theme. Do not separate every sentence as if it were a paragraph. For examples of good practice, simply look through a few of the books you will have to read to write your essay. Think how the author has divided his or her work into separate sections. Sometimes a large theme has to be split into more than one paragraph, in which case each paragraph deals with a separate aspect of each theme. Do not induce "intellectual indigestion" in your reader by introducing different major ideas in every sentence, without any explanation or connection to the next sentences. If you do this your essay will end up being disjointed and cursory. Many students make that mistake.

1.4 Every essay will also have an introduction and conclusion. The introduction should be short and will briefly outline your case and will hint at your conclusion. Avoid either repeating information that is in the title of the essay, or beginning with a pointless judgement or statement about the subject in question (e.g., 'Augustine was a great man'). The introduction should help the reader begin to see where you are going and provide an initial view of how you think. As a rough guide to the usefulness of your introduction, look at the draft of your essay, if you can begin reading at the second paragraph without feeling lost, then cut out the first.

The conclusion should not introduce new themes, but should sum up your case and make it very clear where you stand (even if you are clear that there is no clear answer to the question). If the essay title asks a question then anyone reading just the conclusion should understand the basics of your answer to that question.

Sometimes, in the conclusion you can also indicate other areas that would need more consideration in order to answer the question at more length. It can also be helpful to indicate not only what you have proved or discussed but also what has *not* been possible, indicating that you are aware of the problems involved in deciding which evidence or themes are necessary to a particular argument. However, do not introduce new arguments without evidence in the conclusion, it simply looks as if you have not planned well.

1.5 In an essay you should always give an accurate reference to any source of information that you present (not to do so may be **plagiarism,** which will be discussed later). This will involve using footnotes. Footnotes are used to give the source of information or to present a digression from the main argument. They can be placed either at the bottom of the page (preferably), or at the end of the document. At the end of your essay you should also provide a bibliography which lists all the books and articles you have used in writing the essay.

2. Writing an essay and constructing an argument

2.1 Be clear about the subject

Read the title very carefully and make sure it is always in front of you when you plan and write the essay. You do not need to write down everything that you know about a given topic. Selection of material is the key to good essays. Try to spend some time being very clear about the exact question being asked by the title. Often terms used in the title will need to be defined, or you will need to be clear about what the terms mean; think carefully which terms are likely to cause problems.

2.2 Gather information, plan and think through the argument

Once you are clear about what the title demands do some appropriate reading (follow suggested reading lists). Begin with the set textbook (if one has been recommended) and move on from there. As you read and as plan the essay you should think carefully about the sources you have studied. When you read try to be clear to yourself what an author's basic thesis is, and which pieces of information they think are most important and most persuasive. What key assumptions does an author make which another person might question? Asking questions such as these will help you develop your analytic skills and help you produce much better arguments.

When you are trying to assess an argument - either one that you read or your own after you have initially planned - there are two basic types of critique you can apply. The first is an 'external' criticism: one author may seem to be wrong because another presents a more convincing argument. Sometimes one author may show that another has made assumptions which are not true, or has not accurately represented the facts of the case. Playing one author off against another is a basic technique in testing arguments and perhaps trying to find your own individual way through a question.

The second type of critique is an 'internal' one. When you read it is usually possible to judge how successful and author has been in achieving their own goals. If an author sets out to accomplish something or to prove a point and does not seem to have succeeded by the end of the piece it is possible to say that the author has failed without reference to any other account of the same problem. On internal criteria that author has failed. Sometimes an author's argument may simply not seem coherent. An author may say that a position is wrong and then a few pages later you may find the author using the same argument to support their own position, this would be another example of an argument failing simply on internal criteria.

Once you have read some appropriate material and thought about the topic you should plan your essay. A plan need only be a few words. It should list the main themes of your argument in order so that you can see how your argument will progress and how that argument will lead clearly to a particular conclusion. Under each main heading you may also want to indicate the main pieces of information that you'll need to use in discussing each theme. It's a good idea to list your introduction at the beginning and conclusion at the end and indicate briefly what will be in them, this helps you to focus on your overall argument and stops you waffling. Looking at your plan should be of great help when you are bogged down in the middle of writing and need to be reminded of 'the overall direction in which you are heading.

When you are writing essays outside an exam you have the time to make certain that each sentence follows from the previous one. If you cite an example does it actually back up what you have just said? If you describe a ceremony or historical incident is it actually an example of what you are trying to illustrate? Do the sentences actually follow one after the other? This is a very hard task, but if you can try and read through what you write and think about these questions it will much improve your technique. If the essay as a whole calls for both description and analysis (e.g. 'describe ... and assess how far...') make certain that what you describe is exactly what has been asked for in the question. Do not put information down simply because you have taken notes on it or been told it in a lecture. When someone asks you where you are studying for your degree you say 'Mary Immaculate College, Limerick"; you do not begin to answer by saying 'Limerick is an important Irish city along the banks of the Shannon.' This may seem ridiculous now, but you will find it very tempting to fill the pages with irrelevant (which is very different from 'false') information.
Academics are generally a dry lot. Avoid sentences that express your feelings ("I feel this or that.")

2.3 Presentation

Type your essay carefully. Presentation is very important. Make sure you include a title page with all the relevant information, such as your own name and student number, title of the course, title of the essay, and name of the lecturer (correctly spelled please). If you are word-processing your essays use a standard typeface, such as Times or Palatino. Use 12 point word size and leave a clear line between paragraphs. Leave one space after punctuation marks except for full stops and questions marks. After these two you should leave two spaces.

2.4 Internet & electronic resources

Do not rely on the internet as your primary source. Authors who publish in reputable books and specialized Journals are subject to peer review. The internet is different: anybody can publicize their "ideas" without quality control of any kind. Essays that rely mainly on Wikipedia (and similar websites) will only evoke the ire of the relevant lecturer – and receive a poor mark. Students, often new to the topic, cannot be expected to exercise sufficient discernment. Moreover, the internet is an extremely transient medium (an article that is here today may not be accessible tomorrow). You can, however, use the internet to access *primary* sources (such as texts from the Church Fathers, or the *Summa Theologiae*). You may also use it to access *secondary* sources but only when they have appeared in print, usually in pdf format. In that case you treat it as a photocopy of a printed text (which it essentially is). You can access many Journals on-campus via the computer. Go to the Library website, and click on "Electronic Resources." An excellent resource is http://www.jstor.org/ In the Library page of MIC you can type your topic (e.g., "pneumatology") or the name of an author in "Summon." Here you can find the academic equivalent of Aladdin's Cave – a wealth of articles and even some digitalised books.

2.5 Syntax and Spelling

A well-written essay is evidence of intelligence and literacy. If you hand in an essay which is badly written, with poorly constructed sentences, and inaccurate spelling, you will give the impression of being negligent (at best) or unintelligent and illiterate (at worst), and your mark will be significantly lower. Please ask somebody to check your **spelling** and **syntax**. Pay particular attention to the apostrophe. If you are not familiar with this cherished item of English punctuation, you may want to consider joining the *The Apostrophe Protection Society* which has the specific aim of preserving the correct use of this currently much abused punctuation mark in all forms of text written in the English language.

2.6 Structure of the Essay

By preference the text should be structured as follows:
I. First level
1. Second level
Reference notes should be placed at the bottom of the page as footnotes, and not collected at the end of the text as endnotes**.** TRS uses the Anglo-Saxon style of reference, as presented, among others, by Kate L. Turabian, *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 61996).

2.7 Some practicalities in relation to submission

In accordance with the University of Limerick practice, all written work for courses must be handed into the Arts Office, not directly to the lecturer concerned. The Office is open 10.00-12.45 and 14.00-16.30. All submissions must be made before 16.00. You will be asked to sign a register to indicate the date and time the work was received. Work

cannot be accepted by e-mail. Make sure to put your name and ID number on all course work, along with the names of the module and the lecturer.

While individual lecturers may have their own stipulations you should be aware that for reasons of fairness, late submission of essays, without adequate medical certificate to justify it, will be penalised.

II.   Detailed information on how to reference, using the Chicago system

This is tedious but it is important. Get it right from the start: as with most things in life you will only learn to do this right by actually doing it. After a while you may even derive a strange kind of pleasure from producing properly referenced essays…

Bibliography and Notes
1. Footnote numbers should begin with "1" in each chapter.[1] Endnotes
should be placed at the end of each chapter but you will generally only use footnotes in essays.
2. Bibliographies (to be included at the end of your paper) should be arranged alphabetically by the authors' last names.
3. For both bibliographies and notes, do not refer to authors by a single first initial and last name; use first names.
4. Following is a summary of the Chicago style that should be used for bibliographies and notes:

One Author in footnotes:
[1] John Burke, *Companion to the Prayer of Christians: Reflections and Personal Prayers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 15–22. So there you have it: First Name, Second Name, Comma, Title of the book in italics, open bracket, place of publication, comma, State, colon, publishing house, year of publication, close bracket, followed by page numbers *without* "p" [for "page"].

One Author in the bibliography:
Burke, John. *Companion to the Prayer of Christians*: *Reflections and Personal Prayers*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995.

Two or three authors (listed in order of appearance on title page) in the footnotes:
[2] Reginald H. Fuller and Daniel Westberg, *Preaching the Lectionary: The Word of God for the Church Today*, 3rd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 361–63.

Two or three authors (listed in order of appearance on title page) in the bibliography:

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[1] How do you do this? Well, you click on "References" at the top of the Window page, and then click on "Insert Footnote."

Fuller, Reginald H., and Daniel Westberg. *Preaching the Lectionary: The Word of God for the Church Today*. 3rd ed. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006.

Four or more authors in the footnotes:
3 Jaroslav Pelikan and others, *Religion and the University*, York University Lecture Series (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 101–9.

Four or more authors in the bibliography:
Pelikan, Jaroslav, William G. Pollard, Charles Moeller, Maurice N. Eisendrath, and Alexander Wittenberg. *Religion and the University*. York University Invitation Lecture Series. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964.

Book—no author named Book—no author named in bibliography:
Academic American Encyclopedia. Danbury, CT: Grolier, 1994.

Same… in footnotes:
4 *Academic American Encyclopedia* (Danbury, CT: Grolier, 1994).

Chapters or titled parts of a book—multiple authors in footnotes:
What do you do if you want to refer to an article by an author – for instance Koester – in a book which is a collection of essays edited by another scholar (Donahue)? No panic. It is easy:
5 Craig R. Koester, "The Death of Jesus and the Human Condition: Exploring the Theology of John's Gospel," in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond Brown*, ed. John R. Donahue, 141–57 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005).

Chapters or titled parts of a book—multiple authors in bibliography:
Koester, Craig R. "The Death of Jesus and the Human Condition: Exploring the Theology of John's Gospel." In *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond Brown*, edited by John R. Donahue, 141–57. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005.

Chapters or titled parts of a book— single author in footnotes:
If the author of the article/chapter is the same as the editor of the book you will simply have:
6 Irene Nowell, "Women of Courage and Strength: Judith and Susanna," in *Women in the Old Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 158.

Chapters or titled parts of a book— single author in bibliography:
Nowell, Irene. "Women of Courage and Strength: Judith and Susanna." Chap. 8 (pp. 153–83) in *Women in the Old Testament*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997.

Book—editor(s) in footnotes:
7 Kenneth J. Zanca, ed., *American Catholics and Slavery, 1789–1866: An Anthology of Primary Documents* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 47.
8 Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 380.

Book—editor(s) in bibliography:

Zanca, Kenneth J., ed. *American Catholics and Slavery, 1789–1866: An Anthology of Primary Documents*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994.
Komonchak, Joseph A., Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane, eds. *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990.

Book—author and translator/editor Book—author and translator/editor in footnotes:
9 Enrico Mazza, *The Origins of the Eucharistic Prayer*, trans. Ronald E. Lane (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 112–18.

Book—author and translator/editor Book—author and translator/editor in bibliography:
Mazza, Enrico. *The Origins of the Eucharistic Prayer*. Translated by Ronald E. Lane. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995.

Book in a series Book in a series in footnotes:
10 Francis Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 25.

Book in a series Book in a series in bibliography:
Moloney, Francis. *The Gospel of John*. Edited by Daniel J. Harrington. Sacra Pagina Series. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998.

Article in a periodical or Journal in footnotes:
11 Mary Forman, "Benedict's Use of Scripture in the Rule: Introductory Understandings," *American Benedictine Review* 52, no. 3 (2001): 324–45. By the way, pay attention how we quote an article: Name of the author, followed by the title of the article in inverted commas, followed by the name of the jornal, followed by its number, followed by the year of publication in brackets, followed by page numbers after a colon (no "p.").

Article in a periodical or Journal in bibliography:
Forman, Mary. "Benedict's Use of Scripture in the Rule: Introductory Understandings." *American Benedictine Review* 52, no. 3 (2001):324–45.

Does this seem like hard work? Well, there is good news. A full reference citation as listed above should be given the first time a work is cited in each chapter (or essay). The good news is that after that, a shortened version consisting of the author's last name (include the first name if there are two or more authors with the same last name), a shortened version of the title, and the page numbers should be cited. Use the abbreviation "Ibid." (not italicized) when referring to a single work cited in the immediately preceding note (do not use "Ibid." if more than one work is cited in the preceding note).

Example of this for footnotes:

1 Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 4th ed. (Englewood

Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 145.
2 Ibid., 146.
3 Ibid.
4 William F. Strong, *The Copyright Book: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1984), 14.
5 Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 162.
6 Strong, *The Copyright Book*, 22.
7 See ibid., 27.

III.   The Undergraduate Dissertation

The Arts Office distributes a handbook on Undergraduate dissertations. Please familiarise yourself with its contents (available on LAN). You should submit a title of your project (in consultation with a member of staff of the Department) in Week 10 of the Spring Semester of your Second Year at the very latest. You should start reading relevant literature in the Summer of second year, and throughout your third year. It is *very* unwise to start working on your Undergraduate dissertation only a couple of weeks before the deadline (Week 1 of Spring semester of year 4). The undergraduate dissertation is the equivalent of the credits for two modules.

Please note that it is entirely your own responsibility to contact your supervisor, and maintain regular contact with her/him. Supervisors cannot be expected to chase after their students. Nor can they be reasonably expected to be available during term-breaks (Summer, Christmas and Easter holidays).

IV.   Guidelines to assessment

The following guidelines apply generally to postgraduate dissertations.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR DISSERTATIONS

In marking the dissertation an examiner will usually take into consideration the following aspects::

The Research Dimension
♦   Quality
♦   Scope and appropriateness
♦   Thoroughness
♦   Accuracy

The Intellectual Dimension
♦   Originality (topic/approach)

- ♦ Command of subject matter
- ♦ Normative elements (e.g. analysis, synthesis, evaluation)
- ♦ Academic discourse skills (e.g., ability to communicate ideas, assess evidence and structure argument)

Organisational & Structural Dimensions
- ♦ Content
- ♦ Methodology
- ♦ Structure and Sequence
- ♦ Lay-out and presentation
- ♦ Quality of referencing
- ♦ Adherence to regulations
- ♦ Student application during dissertation writing process

The following table offers an approximate description of the different grades that may be awarded.

GRADE	DESCRIPTORS
A1/A2	Work of exceptional merit.
B1/B2	Impressive, managing all three dimensions with distinction. Excellent but not exceptional.
B3	An accomplished but not outstanding piece of work.
C1/C2	A commendable but limited work. Descriptive rather than analytical.
C3	Adequate but uninspired.
D1	Weak. Fails to address some of the essential elements.
D2	Seriously inadequate.
F	Irredeemable or plagiarised.

V.   Plagiarism & Cheating

The University has strict rules to ensure that any works which students present for assessment are actually the result of their own efforts, skills and knowledge. Two of the

forms of cheating which apply to written coursework are identified here. If you are in any doubt as to whether something might be regarded as cheating, ask the dissertation supervisor or lecturer. Remember, it is your responsibility to ensure that your work does not violate any of the regulations with regard to cheating.

Plagiarism

A student must ensure that any work submitted by him/her for assessment is genuinely his/her own, and is not borrowed, copied or stolen, in part or in whole, from another published or unpublished source. If you are making use of ideas, fact or quotations which are derived from a published or unpublished source – even from work you have written yourself – you must acknowledge this **each time** you do so by the use of a form of referencing which is recommended or approved by the relevant lecturer. It is not enough to list your sources in a bibliography at the end of the work. Nor is it acceptable to change some of the words or the order of sentences if, by failing to reference properly, you give the impression that this is your own work. For safety's sake, it is best to use your own words unless you are specifically quoting from a properly referenced source.

Syndication

You must also ensure that the work which you submit has been prepared by you alone unless you are specifically instructed that a piece of work for assessment is to be produced jointly with other students. If you collude with other students to produce a piece of work jointly, or copy each other's work and pass them off as individual efforts you are engaged in syndication, a form of cheating. Obviously, copying someone else's work without their knowledge is also cheating. If you believe that another student has copied, or has attempted to copy, your work you should notify the Programme Director immediately in order to protect you own interests.

Remember:

1. You must not pass off the ideas and work of others as your own. Ideas and work remain the intellectual property of those who generated them.
2. To do so is a type of intellectual property theft which is treated *very seriously* by the Department and the University. Under the University of Limerick's **Code of Conduct** it is a major offence to "engage in academic cheating in any form whatsoever". Under Section 5.3 of the Code:
   > "The Discipline Committee shall be entitled to impose penalties including suspension or expulsion where, in its view, the gravity of the complaint or offence or the University disciplinary record of the offender shall so warrant."

VI.   Research, Reading and (W)Riting – an essay by Dr Cyprian Love OSB

Research

My first observations today will be on the subject of research in some of its practicalities. It is important to know the possibilities for research. As well as your having the MIC Library, all University Libraries in Ireland will allow you to visit and consult (though not necessarily borrow), on presentation of a special inter-library card obtainable from the MIC Library. The MIC Library also provides an inter-library loan service of books and journals from other university libraries, which can also be used to obtain unpublished dissertations, and 'grey literature' such as unpublished conference proceedings. Do not forget ordinary public libraries, which will also obtain books and journals from other public libraries.

Generally, before it reaches the book market, the most up-to-date research is found in scholarly journals. Journal articles come to print more quickly than books. Journals serve the intellectual community by publishing the articles submitted by scholars, whose work is thereby made public. Please familiarise yourself with relevant journals, starting with the extensive collection at MIC. There are also certain directories of journals giving the names and scope of current journals. There are also online journals.

Many people coming to research for the first time have no idea how many journals there are. To look no further than the field of liturgical studies, for example, some journals are as follows: *Orate Fratres; Worship; La Maison Dieu; Liturgisches Jahrbuch; Notitiae; Ecclesia Orans; Ephemirides Liturgicae; Scripture in Church; Liturgy; Questions Liturgiques et Pastorales.* Many articles on liturgy are also to be found in theological journals not specific to liturgy, some well-known titles being: *Irish Theological Quarterly; Theological Studies; The Furrow; Doctrine and Life*. If you have foreign language competence, do not forget non-English journals. Certainly in Catholic liturgical studies, much of the material generated by twentieth-century theologians was and is in French, Italian or German.

Journals each have their own ethos and traditions. One of my favourite journals is *Worship* published by St John's Collegeville, Minnesota, which comes down in direct descent from the earlier journal *Orate Fratres*. These journals are living history in terms of their relationship to the Catholic liturgical movement in the twentieth century. The great liturgist Odo Casel entrusted some of his thoughts to *Orate Fratres.*

Journals fall into two classes. The most scholarly and rigorous journals are those referred to as peer-reviewed journals. This means that when someone submits an article, it is read by at least one other scholar in their field, who does not know who wrote the article. This person or these persons advise the editor whether to publish,

based on what they think of the article, or they may suggest the article is published with changes. The strong point of peer-reviewed journals is the professional rigour of what they publish, but, on the other hand, their circulation is specialised and the readership of articles may not be very numerous. In Ireland a distinguished example of a peer-reviewed theological journal is the *Irish Theological Quarterly*. This journal is definitely theologians writing for theologians.

The other type of journal is not - or at least not officially - peer-reviewed, and submissions are accepted or rejected based on whether the editor thinks they fit in with the tone of the journal. These journals publish more accessible, but nevertheless sometimes very theological articles, and the latter are likely to be read by more people. A good Irish example of a journal which is not officially peer-reviewed is *The Furrow*. This journal was begun in 1950 from Maynooth at the time when the liturgical movement was reaching these shores and it is, again, living history, of the assimilation of that movement and subsequently Vatican II into Ireland. It is not aimed primarily at academic theologians but at clergy and thoughtful lay people and it seems to be mainly these people, as well of course as some university theologians, who write for it.

A volume of a journal, by the way, means a whole year of that journal, and a number means one single journal. Sometime a particular number of a journal is themed. For example I have a favourite number of *Doctrine and Life* devoted to liturgy and the Second Vatican Council.[3] *Concilium* is very useful in this context because all its numbers are themed. Each *Concilium* is about a particular subject area, such as Christianity and Technology, Inculturation, or Creativity and Worship. To find a *Concilium* close to the subject of your dissertation is extraordinarily useful. Journals also sometimes have a party line. In *Concilium*, we hear the voice of the radicalism associated with the 60s, 70s and 80s while a journal like *Communio* breathes the air of the more right-wing turn in theology which came later. These are both excellent journals but it helps to have a clear understanding of their spirit.

Relevant citations from recent journals make for good references in the footnotes of any essay or dissertation. Examiners of essays and dissertations rate highly the competent use of journal material by postgraduate students, because it shows that students are engaging with the most recent scholarly discussions.

Journals also advertise forthcoming conferences and publish certain conference proceedings. Attendance at conferences provides opportunities to meet others interested in the same areas as you. There may be a conference coming up somewhere in the area of your dissertation or special interest.

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[3] *Doctrine and Life*, vol 53 no 10 (2003)

Finally, it is important not to be too fastidious about what is available to you. Although obtaining obscure material is creditable, provided it is relevant, a great deal of valuable material may be found in works which are easy to obtain. Do not ignore encyclopaedias. The people who write the books and articles also write the articles in the encyclopaedias. Valuable bibliographies of a subject area may also be found at the end of encyclopaedia articles on that subject.

Reading

Having provided yourself with what you want to read, there comes the task of reading. Reading is an intuitive skill, but, while allowing for this important point, more profound deliberate thought and articulation of what reading entails can liberate this intuition to function on a more informed level.

Some texts are straightforward, but others are more difficult. How should we approach a difficult text? You know the type of thing: after reading the first page, there are about three sentences you cannot make head or tail of and several words you have to look up in the dictionary, one of which you find you cannot understand even after looking it up. The key to this situation is to realise that we read with our imagination as well as with our reason. You do not always have to be able to parse the exact sense of every sentence or phrase in a piece of writing in order to reach the meaning, largely or even completely, of that piece of writing. Our reason may fail us, but our imagination does not, and the key in this situation is not to give up on the text but to keep going. When we reach the end of the text, our imagination will often provide an accurate sense of the overall purport of the text, its scope, its main purpose, even if our rational grasp of individual parts of it is weak.

There are different ways of reading. There is close and careful reading, speed reading, reading with the purpose of finding *one* particular thing in the text, reading to find the *main* points, and just relaxed general reading without an agenda. Worthwhile reading can be either more or less critical: we can read as if we were expected to review the book but we can also hurry through a book just to see what it says. Likewise, there are different ways of writing. Some writing is so densely constructed that we do indeed miss something significant if, as readers, we fail to understand just one word or phrase, but most texts are not like this. The reason we tend to think many texts are like this, when they are not, is that we are apt to understand the written word by analogy with a mathematical sum or a scientific equation, where, undoubtedly, to miss one detail is to collapse the whole process. But very little writing is as compact as mathematics. Relatively few texts are constructed with such density that comprehension of every detail is necessary to comprehend the whole. Most writing takes place in the freedom of imagination and in the freedom of imagination it can also be read. Often it is not ultimately a text you are trying to understand but another person's mind.

This is especially true with some of the greatest and most creative thinkers, those who still struggle with their own new ideas. Their writing is a continuing exploration of newly forming concepts which only later commentators will form into a tight synthesis. Such great writers struggling to write down their difficult ideas for the first time are often diffuse and unclear. They are still wrestling with the process of idea formation rather than standing back from their ideas and offering them as a finished product. Their text is more like a kitchen than a dining room. That is, of course, precisely why they are the most difficult to read, but it also provides a reassuring insight into how they should be read. When coping with the books of some of the great primary-source thinkers in theology, try to learn to swim in them without clinging to the side of the pool every time your reason cannot make something out. However, make sure you get to the end of whatever you are reading. You are unlikely to have missed the main point of the text, even if the finer points eluded you, and, unless you are an absolute specialist, it is probably only the main points you want. Perhaps the most famous theological text in this category is the *Letter to the Romans*.

We need to ask ourselves what we do when we read, because that is what other people will do when they read what we write. The reader needs to sense the relationship between the whole and the parts in the text, so it is the task of the writer to write in a way which makes that relationship clear. When reading something like a dissertation, the first reading, in the words of Mortimer Adler, will be 'structural or analytic. Here the reader proceeds from the whole to its parts. The second reading can be called interpretative or synthetic. Here the reader proceeds from the parts to the whole.'[4] In other words a reader must take in a whole picture first, before attending in detail to the component parts of that picture. The reader should be able to summarise the overall sense of the work after a first reading, a reading which seeks to establish the scope and claims of the work. This of course shows us at once how we read with the imagination and not just with the reason. At a first reading, we miss many details and fail to grasp this or that point, but we are left with a sense of the whole. Only with this sense of the whole can we then return to the details and assign them to their proper place in the edifice. The point is that the edifice was first revealed in large outline without the details. It is also possible to establish the scope and claims of a text at first reading without reading in the least bit critically. At this point we simply note: "This is what he is writing about and this is what he is saying". But a critical approach must undoubtedly come later when start to agree or disagree.

In his book *How to Read a Book*, Adler also makes a valuable distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic reading. He writes: 'By "intrinsic reading" I mean reading a book in itself, quite apart from other books. By "extrinsic reading" I mean reading a book in

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[4] Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Read a Book: the Art of Getting a Liberal Education* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), 124.

the light of other books.'[5] An obvious example of the other books in the light of which we will sometimes read a book, will be dictionaries and encyclopedias designed to explain the book we are reading. Sometimes, however, people have difficulty in understanding a book because to understand it requires that we also read other books to which it is close related. In other words, they have failed to consider the book extrinsically. An obvious example of this is where we need to read an author's earlier work to understand the later work. The author has written her books in a sequence and presupposes the content of earlier books whenever she writes a new one. Moreover the output of an author is not a fixed essence consisting of an unchanging intellectual perspective. Authors change their minds over a lifetime and sometimes unsay what they have said. It was Heidegger who exemplified supremely the ideology of the grand change of mind in his famous *Kehre* or turn in his thinking. I can still remember how bemused I was when I first encountered many years ago the idea that a great thinker could change his mind. Surely this must be a great disappointment or defect? How could Heidegger be a great philosopher if he had changed his philosophy? The point here, of course, is that when a thinker thinks, it is not a fixed essence being expounded, but a process rooted in history, and Heidegger, as well as exemplifying this historicity of the thinking process, also explicitly understood it himself, for his writing is pre-eminently the source of our contemporary philosophical sense of history as the matrix within which thought develops. So this is a case where extrinsic reading will identify change or reversal in an author's thought. Another example of the need for extrinsic reading is where a book is located within a school or tradition of reflection, and earlier authors are needed to understand later ones. There is no point in trying to read in the nineteenth-century romantic theories of art, for example, if you have no sense that these theories go back to Immanuel Kant in the *Critique of Judgement*.

Adler's point about extrinsic reading reminds us of something often forgotten, which is that when we read a book, it is not a book we are trying to understand but a person, and when we try to understand a person, with the exception of the most radical thinkers, it is likely that we are not really trying to understand a person, but a school. All this suggests that books should be contextualised as much as possible.[6] At the same time, this principle does not make a de-contextualised reading of a book fruitless by any means. We have to start somewhere, and properly contextualised reading is in many ways more the fruit of a scholarly life than its beginning, though it remains a goal at every stage.

Writing

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[5] Ibid, 128
[6] For more on extrinsic reading see ibid., 128-130.

i) Referencing

Our natural lives are built around two poles, the personal and the communal. The same is true of dissertation writing and research, which are forms of *personal* creativity and discovery set within the *context* of a scholarly community. There is a dialectic involved between these two aspects. On one hand our work comes from our own creativity but on the other hand that creativity is necessarily prompted by the work of other scholars. Our written work consequently has two aspects: 1) exposition of our own ideas and 2) acknowledgement of the ideas and sources we have used belonging to others. Acknowledgement is done in footnotes below the text and a bibliography which occurs after the text.

It is sometimes asked why we have both footnotes and a bibliography when they contain substantially the same information. The answer is that footnotes show where and how our use of sources enriches the text *as it unfolds.* The bibliography *indexes* the sources alphabetically, and collects them in one place (usually at the back), so we can obtain an easy overview of them and thus acquire a feel for the overall scope of the sources used, the intellectual horizon within which the work is constructed. A bibliography may also include works consulted, but not referred to or quoted in the text, and therefore not found in the footnotes. The way sources are described in footnotes is slightly different from the way sources are described in a bibliography. There is thus *footnote style* and *bibliographic style* and care should be taken to follow the styles consistently and correctly.

When word-processing a document using footnotes, do not just type the footnotes on to the page. Always use the footnote facility provided by the program. Also, when still working on your piece of writing, presumably still collecting quotations from other people's works, it is a good idea to retain all your footnote references in their fullest form possible, and deal with any footnote abbreviations when the essay/dissertation is complete. In this way, if you have to move sections of text around on the computer, full footnotes will stay with all the quotations and, in particular, you will not have a problem of stray *ibids*, and wondering what source they refer to.

In fact, just about nothing is more frustrating than wanting to use a quotation for which you have lost the reference. Always footnote your references meticulously. Not only will you not lose them but you may even find you remember them in detail, because what we do fastidiously we are more likely to remember. Thus you will remember not just that your source was John Macquarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought* but John Macquarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought* London SCM 1963 and that kind of detail at your fingertips can be quite useful.

Some people may have been surprised to hear me begin my discussion of writing with the down-to-earth technicalities of footnotes rather than more intellectual or creative matters. However, a dissertation is both an art and a craft and it is the craft that is more often overlooked in my experience. People are inclined to resent the discipline of referencing and to feel that the technical side of the work is a drag on the flair and creativity which caused them to embark on a dissertation in the first place. And, of course, depending on the attitude one brings to it, it can be such a drag. To use a

musical metaphor, we would rather play pieces than scales. We would rather work in the freedom of creative imagination than under the constraints of rules, and footnoting can sometimes just seem like a lot of rules.

The question may then be asked, what attitude of mind can liberate us to enjoy both sides of our work, the art and the craft? We come back again to the question of where it is that my ideas come from, and of course they do not just come from me. Footnotes are about the aspect that does not come from me, and it is largely thanks to this aspect that my work can be free from being idiosyncratic, temperamental, and unbalanced. Through the use of others' work, my ideas are refined in the fire of other points of view. Involvement with other texts, and the consequent referencing process, is really a form of liberation from personal limitations rather than principally a restriction on my time and energy. My footnotes are a good indication that I am in conversation, and not spinning an incommunicable private fantasy, talking to myself, producing work with no credibility for others. Footnotes are therefore a source of reassurance and doing my footnotes becomes a comforting reminder that there are other people out there.

ii) Simplicity and Clarity

Now, however, we can turn to what is more in the province of creativity. Above all, when writing a dissertation, aim to write simply. Such simplicity helps the reader but is also self-knowledge for the writer, because in 95% of situations, if we do not know how to say something simply, it is because we do not really know what we mean. We will not discover that we do not really know what we mean until we have tried to say it simply and failed, and then we will be all the wiser. It may take considerable effort to try to say something simply, but, whether we succeed or not, it will always be effort well spent. We sometimes fear to use simplicity of expression because it seems childish and we adopt sophisticated ways of expression because they seem adult. However, simplicity is not childish here in our dissertation, but authoritative; it is an indication that you are in command of your discourse. There is a simplicity this side of complexity, when we have not yet understood, which can be childish, but there is also a simplicity on the other side of complexity when we have interiorised and made difficult ideas our own. The latter is a mature simplicity. It is really post-complex. So do not let pompous or meretricious words cast a spell, because if you do you will become less not more wise in your subject matter. Words should be your servants not the other way round. Do not let your thesaurus run you. There is nothing more childish than using pretentious language to write about something you not only do not understand but which may not actually mean anything anyway, all the time pathetically unaware that that is what you are doing. Yet one sometimes sees in weaker students' work something perilously close to this. I think what sometimes happens is that such people read books which they do not personally understand, conclude that intellectuals write unintelligibly, and then write non-comprehensible work in imitation, because they think that is being academic.

One way to see whether you have written simply and clearly enough is to have someone else read your work, or to leave it for some time and re-read it yourself. Indeed, the psychology surrounding re-reading our own work is most intriguing. We have all had the experience of re-reading, after a significant interval, some item of our own written work. Almost always, on re-reading, the contours and emphases of the text seem to have altered from what was intended when we wrote it. Things which seemed like the main points when we wrote them do not now emerge so clearly, and minor points made in passing seem to leap off the page as if they were important elements in the text. Words or phrases we gave no particular thought to suddenly strike us anew, either as felicitous or unfortunate. Other words or phrases we were proud to write we fail even to notice.   It is this curious experience of the text *talking back to us* which to some extent lies behind modern theories of the autonomy of the written text, or the idea that texts leave their authors in order to assume a life of their own. It reveals that we cannot immediately imprint our ideas in language, and we do not really know what our text has said before we have given it time to talk back to us. Paradoxically, we can be too close to what we have written to have a full appreciation of what we have written. How my text is received is not the same as how I wrote it. In the words of Mortimer Adler: 'To communicate well with others, one must know how communications are received….[The teacher] must be able to read what he writes, or listen to what he says, as if he were being taught by it.'[7]

In this connection of communications being received, it is worth reflecting on the similarities and differences between listening to a lecture being read, and reading a piece of work silently. Listening to a lecture, we cannot turn back and read a page again, nor can we choose the speed with which the ideas pass before us, whereas, reading, I can choose the speed with which I read. To take account of this a wise lecturer avoids developing the lecture points too rapidly. The latter can be constructively slowed down, with judicious use of illustrations and comparisons, stories and jokes which can indeed actually assist the assimilation of the lecture. The lecturer can also cajole his hearers with discreet repetitions of points which would be tiresome if they were reading. I fully recognise that work designed to be read silently is not expected to resemble a lecture in style. Nevertheless, the two idioms are not absolutely separate either, and the option of touching lightly on some of the techniques used by lecturers is available to the writer of an essay or dissertation. Notice I say touching lightly. As with many of the suggestions I shall make, they can be disastrous if not implemented with finesse. In short, try to remember that while a reader generally does not mind going back over things again, it is always more of a pleasure when, as in a lecture, the material is successfully presented in the flow of real time. This also raises the perceived competence of the writer, while the reader also enjoys an enhanced sense of being in command of the material.

One piece of advice which I have always found fruitful with my students, as an aid to simplicity and clarity, is the technique of internal summary. This is a technique by

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[7] Ibid, 68.

which you discreetly summarise what you are saying in the text as you go along. The most obvious way in which this can be done is to include, at the end of each chapter or section, a paragraph consisting of a minimal and highly condensed summary of what you have just said in that chapter or section. It has to be minimal and condensed or else it will irritate the reader and sound repetitive, but done skilfully, it will lift your writing to a new level of clarity. A more subtle technique, which can be used in conjunction with the last or separately, is what is sometimes called the topic sentence. The topic sentence summarises the topic of a paragraph inside the paragraph itself. How does this work? Once you have completed a difficult paragraph, you then write a sentence summarising the paragraph, and find a way to insert that sentence somewhere into the paragraph. It does not matter where: it could be beginning, middle or end. The clarity of the paragraph is lifted to a new level of lucidity by this clarification internal to the paragraph itself. Of course, this technique also needs finesse especially if you use it in every paragraph. Another technique is to place the whole vision of the dissertation before the mind of the reader at various places in the text, as a reminder of the overall vision that is being unfolded.

iii) Style

Style is not just for your readers: style is for you. The more meticulously and accurately you think your thoughts out into language, the more efficiently and exactly your thoughts will develop. We can think by just thinking, but we often think even better when we write. This is why it is never too soon for those embarking on a dissertation to start writing something. Do not make the mistake of allocating a large amount of preliminary time to reading alone: people only really understand something well when they have taken care to express it in their own words. Writing puts thoughts through a kind of mill. Where thinking our thoughts allows them to race ahead, writing reins our thoughts in. We need to do both. Psychologically speaking, human thought is a preparation for action. Consider the implications of the phrase 'to *stop* to think'. Thinking exists at the interstices between activities. To deprive thought of its outcome in action is to create frustration, which will express itself in walking up and down or chewing a pencil if you do not start to write. So write.

Finally, if you have difficulty writing good English you can take comfort that there is nothing new under the sun. Mortimer Adler, writing in 1940 observed:

> Teachers…….. in college have had to do over again what should have been completed in high school. Teachers….have complained about the impossible sloppy and incoherent English which students hand in on term papers or examinations. And anyone who has taught in the graduate school ….. knows that a B.A from our best colleges means very little with reference to a student's skill in writing or speaking. Many a candidate for the PhD has to be coached in the writing of his dissertation, not from the point of view of scholarship or scientific

merit but with respect to the minimum requirements of simple, clear straightforward English.[8]

Written in 1940! Yet how modern this complaint sounds. The PhD candidate, who had to be coached in clear straightforward English, may well have passed her degree and gone on to a successful career in academia, in due course handing down the same complaints to her own students. My point is that the problem of inadequate English is perennial, nor is it a terminal condition, for numerous students have overcome it. If you do have trouble writing well and clearly, a standard work is *The Complete Plain Words* a style guide for English written by Ernest Gowers, an English civil servant, and published in 1954. It has never been out of print. This book is worth buying just for its witty final chapter of examples of linguistic bloomers. These include the mixed metaphor "The sacred cows have come home to roost with a vengeance", and civil service clerical blips referring to "Bulletin no 160 on the Housing of Pigs from Her Majesty's Stationery Office" and another which said "I have discussed the question of stocking the proposed poultry plant with my colleagues."[9]

Of course it also needs to be said that many people's English style becomes gradually more acceptable, not just because they have mastered existing criteria of good expression, but also because the defining goalposts of good English shift with time. Part of their difference with those who initially taught them and criticised them lay not in the fact that their written style was bad but in the fact that language gradually changes and they were already the transmitters of new trends. Students should not of course be too quick to assume that their every lapse is evidence of the emergence of a new English style. This would be a lazy way of excusing errors. Nevertheless it has to be conceded some of the usages judged mistakes in (especially) younger writers are ultimately instances of language emerging. There is no other way of explaining the fact that what is deemed bad usage at one stage in history is sometimes considered acceptable a hundred years later.

One thing that is often forgotten by writers in an academic context is the need to write agreeably. Sometimes a dissertation can well-researched, interesting in content, well structured and persuasive. But there is something wrong. It is a slog to read. The writer has failed to write agreeably. An important part of the scholarly process is communication and it is not enough to present your ideas: you need to recommend them. Just as some people are intelligent and articulate but somehow strangely lack the art of conversation, so some writers can possess every other needful quality yet are not agreeable. There are all sorts of little charms we can use to win over our reader, such as varying our sentence lengths, cajoling our reader with rhetorical questions, decongesting dense parts of our argument with some similes or illustrations. Therefore, take time to say things well: this is not the same as waffling. Do not feel that you always

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[8] Ibid., 66

[9] Sir Ernest Gowers, *The Complete Plain Words* (1954) (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1973), 221-222.

have to hurry up: this is not the same as lacking conciseness. Good presentation of complex ideas is based on 'more haste, less speed' and the most concentrated style should be reserved for summaries and conclusions, where it will be welcome. Remember that you, unlike your reader, already know what you are trying to say, and this will tempt you to go at your speed rather than his. Also, try to avoid an assertive style. A remark, I think attributable to Jean de la Bruyère the seventeenth-century French philosopher and moralist, runs as follows:

It is profound ignorance which inspires the dogmatic tone. He who knows nothing thinks to teach others what he has just learned himself. He who knows much scarcely thinks that what he says can be unknown to others, and he speaks in a more diffident fashion.

Therefore the best note to strike in a dissertation is often "I wouldn't insist on it for a moment, but wouldn't you agree that…….?" Finally, think of the examiner with his tottering pile of scripts and you will quickly appreciate what it means to come upon a script which is engaging and a pleasure to read.

iv) Words

At some point in the writing of your dissertation you will begin to realise that some words come back and back. These are your keywords. Keywords are very important and some published journals even list the keywords of an article before the article itself, to show something of the scope of the article. What kind of words are these? If you were reading Charles Darwin the keywords would probably be variety, genus, selection, survival, adaptation, hybrid, fittest, creation, and others. If you were reading Adam Smith they would be labour, capital, land, wages, profits, rent, commodity, price, exchange, productive, money and so on.[10]

The problem with words is that they often have many meanings or nuances of meaning. It is not obvious that the sense in which you are using your keywords is identical to the sense your reader is assuming and this can be disastrous for comprehension. This is why it is advisable to identify and define your keywords, especially if you are using those words in more than one sense in different places. When the keywords are well understood by a reader he or she is well on the way to understanding the text. This is what we mean when we speak of 'coming to terms' with something.[11] You can define your keywords in the text or in footnotes, and you can even take the opportunity to discuss the history and various usages of the word you are defining. Sometimes your dissertation will take issue with the way another writer uses a given word and you may wish to compare their usage to yours. This will have the effect of alerting the reader to the fact that that particular word is important to you. Adler observes: 'When you find

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[10] See Adler, *How to Read*, 195.
[11] See ibid., 185.

an author telling you how a particular word has been used by others, and why he chooses to use it differently, you can be pretty sure that that word makes a great difference to him'.[12]

v) Putting Questions to your Text

The best pieces of writing are those which have the most intelligible and apparent structure. Even though they may be complex, 'their greater complexity is somehow also a great simplicity, because their parts are better organized, more unified.'[13] As a unified structure your dissertation is almost always based on one big question. This question can probably be reduced to something like: 'Does something exist? What kind of thing is it? What caused it to exist, or under what conditions can it exist, or why does it exist? What purpose does it serve? What are the consequences of its existence? What are its characteristic properties, its typical traits? What are its relations to other things of a similar sort, or of a different sort? How does it behave?'[14] When writing your dissertation, it would probably help you to apply one or more of these questions to it in order to clarify your intentions in your own mind. Likewise the practical implications, if you intend any, of your argument probably boil down to something like this: 'What ends should be sought? What means should be chosen to a given end? What things must one do to gain a certain objective, and in what order? Under these conditions, what is the right thing to do, or the better rather than the worse? Under what conditions would it be better to do this rather than that?'[15] Try asking your dissertation such questions as these, and the lines of your thinking will gradually become clearer and clearer. These questions are not definitive nor exhaustive. Try also formulating your own 'generality' questions and putting your ideas through the mangle of having to answer them. Finally, generality questions are useful as a way of suggesting the form and content of summaries because they recall your thought to absolute basics.

vi) Proceeding

It good to have some kind of provisional plan as we embark upon the process of research but the plan should not be interpreted as a blueprint for the finished product. The plan is really a field of operation. Therefore what both should, and does normally happen is that our goal shifts subtly as we go along and the creative activity of research eventually produces a dissertation slightly different from the one we envisaged when we started. This is not surprising, as the process of research is a learning process, not

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[12] Ibid., 196.
[13] Ibid., 164.
[14] Ibid., 184.
[15] Ibid.

just an accumulation of evidence for ideas we already have, or the implementation of something already in possession. If we confine our research within our initial plan, our research will lose all its excitement and creativity, and we will also miss out on the fascinating experience of being changed by our research. Let your subject matter talk back to you constantly and assist you in reflecting on the possible directions of the research journey.

One of the most basic ways in which the subject matter often talks back to us when we embark on a dissertation is by showing us that we have too many ideas or that they are too wide-ranging to be manageable. For every student who has to be coaxed to expand his or her ideas, there are a dozen students who need to narrow them down, because these students may not have the time or the prior forms of competence necessary for all they would like to achieve. It is of course good to set out with a large number of ideas, because that will give a richness of options to fall back on. However there is often a kind of global ambition in those starting a dissertation, a tendency to want to use it to say everything they have ever wished to say about their subject! The funny thing also is that those who eventually have to narrow their aims never seem to emerge disappointed by the more restricted dissertation they are eventually called to write. Their satisfaction, in due course, comes not from being global but from being scholarly. Moreover their heightened view of the part they have explored often changes their view of the whole to which they first aspired.

The fact that dissertation ambitions have to be limited is also often due to the lack or inaccessibility of research material. We may have the time and ability to do what we wish but not the tools. There are not enough relevant journal articles or books in existence, or at least accessible to us within the limited time-span of our MA course, to enable us to write about a particular subject. As we saw, our research is in a very real way conditioned by other texts, what they say, and, more fundamentally, whether we have them. It is essential to be realistic about what is available to you and to reconnoitre the scholarly ground as thoroughly as reasonably possible, as well as being prepared to change direction when one avenue of sources opens up and another closes.

vii) Integrity

As I said at the start, research has an individual dimension and a community dimension. Your research is yours but also stimulated by what has already been published in the scholarly community of which, as a graduate student, you are a member. Some students feel that everything they write should be white-hot from their own creative brains and they feel ashamed to be dependent on the research of others. This is a hyper-individualistic view which probably owes something to the Cartesian *cogito* and nineteenth-century romantic views of creativity and does not properly describe

scholarly research. Instead, you should be proud to be part of a scholarly community. The books and articles you read are like sacraments which infuse the grace of shared understanding, and, like sacraments, they involve you in a community of common interests and concerns.

Do not be secretly ashamed of quoting other scholars as though this represented some failure of your own ability to think alone. Instead you should be proud to link up with and depend on the scholarly community and take pleasure that this community is mirrored in your work through their names and publications. One of the reasons some people plagiarise is that they are secretly ashamed to need the work of others and they seek to pass work off as their own. But this shows a misunderstanding of the scholarly process as a community process. Writing a dissertation has always had an inter-textual aspect and the enduring myth of white-hot subjectivity communing alone with the muses needs to be critiqued more often than it is. Texts lead to other texts including your text, and the input from your creative subjectivity is not more important than the textual input of the community.

However, in the case of other people, there is also an opposite psychology of plagiarism. Just as plagiarism can arise from an exaggerated individualism which cannot feel the pride of community, as we saw, so it can also arise from an exaggerated awareness of our inter-textual dependency. Students can feel at ease with plagiarism because of the postmodern emphasis on the allegedly already derivative, inter-textual nature of all I think and write. Thus if my thinking and writing are in all circumstances an unconscious re-assemblage of other people's ideas and phrases, and my own creative input is minimal (or, according to some versions of post-structuralism, non-existent), then all my writing is simply, in the words of Roland Barthes 'a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash…a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.'[16] If this is so, the argument runs, then why not simply acknowledge the whole process, and bring it into the light of day by simply taking other people's ideas and treating them as mine without further ado, since this is what all my thinking consists of already. If my thinking and writing are always a jigsaw puzzle made of other people's pieces, and if I bring little or nothing to the process, what sense is there to distinguish others' work from "mine"? The response of the student accused of plagiarism now becomes: "Don't be so modernist!" The problem with this attitude is that even if we do accept that all our thoughts and ideas are heavily derived, we still want to know the textual influences which led to them insofar as these influences can be known. The fact that we may all be, to uses Roland Barthes' word, scriptors[17] and not writers, does not exempt us from acknowledging a community of scriptors.

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[16] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author." In *Image, Music, Text,* Stephen Heath (ed.) (London: Harper Collins, 1977), 146.
[17] See ibid., 147.

It is not only students who plagiarise. I was recently reading a book by a well-known theologian. A short time later I turned to a well-known encyclopedia and found that my author had followed one of the articles point for point over a long stretch of text, without any acknowledgement, changing nearly all the words and phrases, thereby falsifying it into his own writing.

viii) Process and Product

Writing a dissertation is a process and the finished dissertation is a product. We have a habit of thinking of process and product in a linear way along the lines of Newtonian mechanics, one causing the other, process causing product, but this is not really helpful. The relationships of process and product are generally better not thought of in terms of cause and effect at all. Instead, product and process are embedded in each other. Why is this? Process is not free-standing, and remains process rather than random change only because it is faithful to some fixed principle which is not itself embedded in the process, and does not change with the process, a kind of prior product from elsewhere. Process is also only ultimately revealed as process, rather than random change, insofar as it is productive of a visible product or products. Without any product as its end point, there would be no yardstick for identifying developing life in any process, and so there would not really be grounds for thinking it process at all, rather than simply ungoverned change. So process needs fixed principles, or products, in order to be process.

Conversely, products need processes to be products and are not generated a-historically outside processes. They are the products of processes. We might imagine numerous waves in motion on a computer screen. Each wave symbolizes a separate process. The waves also intersect from time to time, and this may be taken to symbolize the way in which products essentially arise at the intersection of processes. Thus the Council of Nicaea emerges as a product of the intersection of the historical process of the developing Church and Constantine's personal life process and conversion.

In the light of all these thoughts please take some time to ask yourself how the complex interactions of process and product might apply to the practical task of your own dissertation. Do not proceed unthinkingly on the basis of unexamined models of process, but think creatively not just about *what* you want to write but *how* you may want to go about writing it, and allow yourself to be affected by feedback at every stage. The relation of product and process is circular. A key phrase here is 'hermeneutical circle'. This phrase captures the idea that many of the processes we are used to thinking of as linear are in fact circular. Not all cognitive circularity is 'vicious' circularity. One example will suffice. If I am a scientist making an experiment, it is true that I seek information, but it is also true that I already know what kind of thing would count for the information I am looking for in this context. I am looking for something, yet in another sense I already know what I am looking for. My thinking is linear to the extent that I am looking for something new, but also circular in the sense that I am coming

from a pre-understanding of the field or horizon out of which the possible results of my experiment must arise. . I cannot in fact go after any knowledge unless I already possess it in some preliminary way. This is a circular process in the sense that my prior knowledge informs my discovery process, and the actual discovery then returns and replenishes my prior knowledge.

ix) Intergenerational dynamic

On average, those of us who teach postgraduates are older than our students. On average the older teach the younger, and where we are not literally older and younger, we are at least respectively older and younger in scholarship. But it is important to recognise that there is feedback from younger to older, in the sense that lecturers value and wish to listen to what students are saying to them. Perhaps the younger do not yet perform as well as their elders at certain types of task. That is why they are learners. However they may still have something to teach the old. There may be things they do better. They may grasp certain issues and values better than their elders and, of course, the whole point of attempting a PhD is that nobody has thought of your idea before, despite the fact that your supervisor is older than you. We can never do away with the value of experience, yet, at the same time, if the young have nothing new to bring to a culture, the latter can only be in state of dead conservatism. The relationship of lecturers and students has to be founded on mutual respect before the legitimate claims of the lecturers' valuable experience can come into their own. The world of scholarship is a community before it is a hierarchy.

x) Afterword

Last but not least, please do not lose your work. It is still possible to hear of students who have lost whole dissertations because of a mishap with their computer. Such an event can cause great distress. Therefore the advice to save your work to disc is still worth repeating. It can sometimes also be safer not to have everything on one file. The dullest advice is sometimes still the best and I am not afraid to end with it.