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The light of conscience and the power of the person: John Henry Newman revisited

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Abstract

This text seeks to present one of the most influential intellectual of nineteenth-century Britain, John Henry Newman (1801-1890). As the majority of his contemporaries he grappled with the Enlightenment legacy, i.e. the dominant role of the intellect and the secularization processes which followed in consequence. Newman sought to put the human mind on a new basis, that of an integral approach in which the human being is a composition of intellect and morality, reason and affections. It does not suffice to take cognizance of something. The human being is much too complex. He or she must take control over their own persons and makes decisions as integral (integrated) beings. John Henry Newman's views are referred to Karol Wojtyła's (John Paul II's) intellectual stance.

Keywords: *assent, faith, ideas, knowledge, Newman, person, Wojtyła*

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie jednego z najbardziej wpływowych intelektualistów XIX-wiecznej Brytanii, Johna Henry'ego Newmana (1801-1890). Jak większość mu współczesnych zmagał się z oświeceniowym dziedzictwem, tj. z jego dominującą rolą intelektu oraz wynikającymi z tego procesami sekularyzacji. Newman starał się umieścić ludzki umysł na nowym fundamencie, fundamencie podejścia integralnego, w którym człowiek stanowi połączenie intelektu i moralności, rozumu i uczuć. Nie wystarcza samo poznanie intelektualne ze względu na tę złożoność. Człowiek musi zapanować nad całą swoją osobą i podejmować decyzje jako integralny (zintegrowany) byt. Poglądy Johna Henry'ego Newman zostały odniesione do stanowiska Karola Wojtyły (Jana Pawła II).

Słowa kluczowe: *idee, Newman, osoba, przyświadczenie, wiara, wiedza, Wojtyła*

It seems then, my friend, that the art of speaking displayed by a man who has gone hunting after opinions instead of learning the truth will be a pretty ridiculous sort of art, in fact no art all.
Plato, Phaedrus, 262.

Introduction

John Henry Newman and John Paul II, these two important personalities – one who belonged to the nineteenth and the other to the twentieth centuries – may be called interlocutors in a unique intellectual and spiritual dialogue that spans two ages. They were brought up in different religious and philosophical traditions and yet one can find a common ground of their intellectual heritage. Newman was born as Anglican and Wojtyła as Catholic. Both would refer to Aristotle, but Newman was also steeped in the tradition of British empiricism, for his natural educational milieu included John Locke and David Hume, both viewed with a critical eye, whereas Wojtyła's immediate intellectual background was the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas and the school of phenomenology.[1] In his theological studies, Newman drew inspirations from a reflection on the primitive Church of the fourth century, and Wojtyła on the mystic writings of St. John of the Cross. When I call them "interlocutors," I do not want to say that Wojtyła devoted his time to actually studying Newman in detail or that he read him extensively. It is interesting to observe that Wojtyła, empowered by the Thomistic tradition of the Church, and Newman, "sapped" by modern individualism of the Post-Reformation Church, arrived at the same destination; by "modern individualism" I mean in the first place that the choice of a true religion was relegated to human decision (in that sense each religion is "true). One may better understand Wojtyła's main work, *The Acting Person*, after having read Newman's *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent.*

Surprisingly, they had both found an isle on which they met, i.e. personalism with its basic components: the dignity of the human person, the importance of the individual (free and responsible choice) in which the human being creates his environment and himself, and, an element of utmost importance – the significance of an individual conscience. I would like to show that any attempts to set Newman, as one who apparently disregarded the importance of objective truth, against John Paul II, for whom the truth

[1] Newman was not far from phenomenology, as his work on assent may be called "a phenomenology of religious belief" (Gilson, 1955, p. 20).

was fundamental, are doomed to failure.[2] We can gladly agree with Étienne Gilson who says that it is a mistake to interpret "Newman's doctrine [...] as a rational probabilism redeemed by a belated appeal to religious truth" or that he exalted "the inner faith of the believer at the expense of the objective truth of dogma." (Gilson, 1955, p. 15,16).

Weatherby writes that Newman "was thoroughly conservative in his acceptance of Catholic dogma; but his philosophy and his characteristic modes of expression reflect the subjectivism and relativism of modern thought" (Newman, 1955, 135). Let us note that as regards Newman's "dogmatic position" one could hardly call it "thoroughly conservative," considering especially his revolutionary views on the role of the laity in its respective historical context; therefore what now may seem naturally conservative or, better still, orthodox, was not necessarily so in the nineteenth century. Now with regard to Newman's philosophy, Weatherby misses the point entirely. Newman indeed took up the philosophical notion of assent from modern philosophers and, in general, from philosophical tradition (the term itself was not a property of modernity), but interpreted it in his own way. In no way was he enslaved to the rationalist or empiricist view of assent. And this was his main contribution to a new understanding of the theory of knowledge.

For Newman, the human person is ultimately the only being that has to do the individual task of translating what is objective into a personal and individual form. As I shall seek to show, John Paul II's self-determination to action vis-á-vis the recognized truth can be interpreted along the lines of Newman's real assent and realization. According to Newman, truths that guide our action cannot be merely theoretically apprehended, but, first and foremost, must be practically comprehended. This is especially important when our moral obligation is at stake. The truth about my obligation must be recognized and lived through, thereby becoming a practical principle of my actions. Indeed distanced (disengaged and buffered) subjects may feel safely shielded behind an impenetrable (non-transparent) network of concepts, so that a call of duty from without their immanence can hardly reach them.[3] To be thus entrenched is to ignore the acting of conscience entirely.

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[2]Newman's statements of the kind: "I know that I know," or "Egotism is true modesty" might be suggesting something contrary to objectivity. A superficial reading of either phrase is bound to be misleading. Weatherby argues on behalf of the Cardinal's subjectivism, individualism, and relativism, mitigating these notions with the word "orthodox" that does not help much to avoid criticism, especially because he notes that Newman verged on skepticism (Weatherby, 1973, p. 137-231).

[3]See Charles Taylor's interesting analyses of the buffered self, the disengaged subject (reason) (Taylor, 1989, p. 49, 168, 174; Taylor, 2007, p. 37-42).

It is not by accident that I combine John Paul II with John Henry Newman in my considerations. I would like to show how their ideas correspond to one another, how they coalesce and interrelate, giving forth new insights into our understanding of the human person. John Henry Newman and John Paul II were two important figures of the Catholic Church, and also two minds with similar intuitions. Let us also observe that their historical contexts, differences notwithstanding, were also somewhat similar; for Newman, it was a period of rationalism encroaching into the realms of faith under the guise of scientism and positivism. It was a period of sentimentalism that could easily undermine the rational grounds of belief. For Wojtyła (John Paul II), it was a period of dominant secularization, Marxist materialism, and a divided world (the iron curtain between the Soviet bloc and the West). In a word, both periods called for persons of intellectual capacity and action, for such persons who could not only combine intelligence with morality, but also manifest in practice their fruitful combination. In his encyclical *Fides et ratio*, John Paul II approved of Newman's contribution to "the same fruitful relationship between philosophy and the word of God" and of the cardinal's light of conscience. (John Paul II, 1998, par. 74) And the pope paid tribute to Cardinal John Henry Newman in a homily given at Coventry Airport in 1982. He mentioned Newman's inner light of conscience in his *Letter on the First Centenary of the Death of Newman* (18 June 1990). (John Paul II, 2014) I shall take into consideration some of Newman's writings and some texts penned by Wojtyła (John Paul II), primarily, *The Acting Person* and the encyclical *Veritatis splendor*.

Words and Opinions – Real versus Notional Assent

What Newman wished to avoid at all costs was, as Boekraad rightly noted, the "danger of becoming theoretical and unreal." Therefore he sought to find out how our individual minds can accept truth, possess truth, so that it can become "the foundation of our life [...]" (Boekraad, 1955, p. 9, 12). The precariousness of our circumstances resides in the fact that the mind is at best perplexed – because armed with impersonal and general logic, we are placed amidst very personal and concrete problems. Therefore, as such, it seems inadequate to the task at hand. In his personal intellectual history Newman writes: "I have no intention at all of denying, that truth is the real object of our reason, and that, if it does not attain to truth, either the premiss or the process is in fault; but I am not speaking here of right reason, but of reason as it acts in fact and concretely in fallen

man" (Newman, 1987, p. 163). And he comes up with a perception that "the rejection of Christianity" (the truth of Christianity) "arose from a fault of the *heart*, not of the *intellect*," (Ker, 1991, p. 35) and such was the source of unbelief which he sought to penetrate. The primary situation of our intellects is indeed difficult. They are immersed in shadows and images. It concerns persons who need to work in order to free themselves for this original chaos.

Another point needs to be stressed here, namely Newman's distinction between right reason and, say, individual (natural) reason. Apparently, this point was very important in Newman's discussion with the Thomistic approach. For Newman, human intellect does not reside in an idealized sphere of logic in which it can, undisturbed by any intrusion from without, arrive at the right conclusion. Rather, as I have noted it somewhere else, it is "besieged by images, things and people" (Kłos, 2012, p. 52). In this sense, it is not free to act independently, as its duty calls it to act, but must free itself. For Kant, moral acting was guided by a moral imperative from practical reason; for Newman, it came from the transformed person, from the person as a whole. And in this point the thinking of both John Henry Newman and John Paul II is especially interrelated: for the latter, the human person is made a whole in action. He calls it integration (in Newman: making person a whole).

According to Newman, any attempts made by a "mere intellect" – such that would rely only on the grounds of intellectual deliberation – to bring others round to a certain course of thinking and acting are futile. Our thinking in concrete matters is always individual, hidden, tacit, and – to use a more sophisticated term – idiosyncratic. Therefore, I do not know which paths the other person is wandering in his attempts to reach the goal that I seem to have found. We follow our own hidden ways that go beyond the safe, but inadequate, confines of general truths, before they become personal truths. I think that here again Newman and John Paul II would be of accord.[4] Contemporary psychological studies hint at that aspect of individual thinking which Newman anticipated in his writings. Jonathan Baron, for instance, asks in his study whether people are irrational because they are more often ready to follow ungrounded biases rather than well-tried arguments (Baron, 1994, p. 47). Newman would not go so far as to claim that people are irrational, but he does argue that the confines of rationality cannot be reduced to this kind of rigid thinking we find in the exact sciences.

[4]Let us add, however, that when John Paul wrote his texts still as Karol Wojtyła he sought to remain within, say, the orthodoxy of philosophical writing; John Henry Newman never taught philosophy, nor was a university philosophy professor.

What we can determine boils down only to some basic and universal principles, like for instance that A cannot be A and non-A at the same time and under the same conditions.

The natural point of departure is, therefore, very uncertain. Our knowledge is partial and often imperfect (vague), we give in to various drives and fall prey to passions; we learn to fear and to be biased. Then layer after layer rationalization comes in-between our duty and reality and we turn into superficial beings. We delight in argumentation instead of action; the more our selves are engaged in argumentation, the more garrulous and equivocal they become. We repeat words which are not ours, we follow what is fashionable, give in to the opinions of the attractive or the powerful. We tend to cling to what is expedient, not to what is true. This incommensurability of the mind, when taken in its – say – theoretical aspect, is inadequate to cope with real challenges. In matters of conduct, even the voice of the moral imperative of practical reason (as Kant wished it to be) is to no avail if the heart – i.e. man's whole person – is not transformed. At the same time, then, the power to rescue us from that most unwelcome situation is within man himself. Newman simply described how under the influence of modern ideas people tend to slide towards arid notional ideas, towards being reflective rather than active; especially if the latter is connected with a moral commitment.

And here comes Newman's most penetrating analysis of the way we acquire knowledge, which he expounded in his *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. It was his attempt to lay down some basic principles of how we arrive at certain knowledge. Contrary to Descartes and British empiricists, Newman sought to solve the problem of our task – which is to accept truth in the concrete. With regard to Descartes, Newman doubts whether we can be ever guided in our daily situations by clear and distinct ideas; such ideas are nothing but a claiming that the human is capable of reaching certitude, considering rather right reason than the reason of a real person. Real assent does not always follow, though it be preceded by indubitable argumentation. Newman argues that this situation may not even take place in the realm of mathematics, the kingdom of clear and distinct ideas. He complies with John Locke in many areas of his intellectual analysis, as he himself admits, but he definitely disagrees with the British philosopher as regards our mode of assenting to truth, our arriving at certitude. It seems that Locke like many other representatives of the rationalist-empiricist school mixed inference with assent. For Locke, assent has its grades of probability (like inference); for Newman, assent is unlike inference and has no degrees. In his view, to consider man as a universal mind, or to consider the mind as abstracted

from a concrete person, is to be "theoretical and unreal," to consult one's "own ideal of how the mind ought to act, instead of interrogating human nature, as an existing thing, as it is found in the world" (Newman, 1955, p. 124). I admit that this point, which I claim here to be of utmost importance with regard to the difference between Newman and rationalism, is especially difficult to grasp because inference and assent so easily overlap in common understanding. Because Newman makes an important distinction between inference and assent, he is adverse to Locke's view that we cannot carry our assent above the evidence. In our daily conduct, Newman intimates, we cling to things whose grounds are week and reject those with strong evidence. Newman's insight into the question of assent is excellently summarized in his claim that the human person is greater than intellectual difficulties at understanding.

What puzzled Newman in his intellectual quest was idiosyncrasy of our process knowledge: how come that two persons, for instance, may be exposed to the same truth and yet one is eager to assent to it, whereas the other abstains from it; one is eager to grasp the slightest argumentation on behalf of a point, whereas the other explains it away and shrinks even from the most convincing evidence. Newman knew very well that the truth often falls prey to the latter. And on a more general basis, he sought "to exhibit the insufficiency of contemporary rationalism" (Copleston, 1966, p. 270) and to prove that an act of faith is as rational as any reasonable human act, provided that we do not take a very narrow sense of what the rational means.

Two Exemplifications

Now let me refer to two examples that I find especially in point here, I mean the difference between our notional and our real assents. Several years ago Randy Pausch, the late computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon, published a book entitled *The Last Lecture* (2008). And this book is indeed about his last lecture; it was literally his last lecture. The reason was not his retirement (he was still young) or his decision to move to another university, as one might expect, but the diagnosis of his terminal condition (he had been diagnosed with a very malignant kind of liver cancer). I think that Pausch's book (and his very idea to deliver this lecture) is a splendid recapitulation of what we are talking here about. Existential philosophers say that the human being is a Being-toward-Death (Heidegger), in itself a clever term that covers our gradual passing away, but the connection between being and death rendered by this term is merely theoretical. Likewise one may

consider the death of any representative of *homo sapiens*, as a consequence of biological development (birth, growth, and decay). The situation takes an entirely new turning when one is struck by an unexpected message that his or her death is indeed imminent, that it is – so to speak metaphorically – standing at the threshold. A diagnosis is a visible sign of something concrete, something that has almost been calculated. At that moment words implode, they appear desperately inadequate to comprehend that truth, they fail to render the meaning, when, safely embedded within semantic and syntactic wholes, they are dimmed by the unknown; do not we express this feeling by saying that we are desperate for words, that words fail us? Indeed this is the situation when I learn that it is me who is about to die. And this is what Newman meant by realizing, by assenting to something real. The truth speaks itself, it shines through the human being; we experience that the time for a guided discourse has ended. Only real assent is meaningful, although one may hopelessly search for words to describe it.

In Newman's view, it is not minds that think, but persons. Therefore, an assent to something is not a mere repetition of inference, a mirror reflection of the necessary conclusion; this is, philosophically speaking, one of the most important Newman's contribution to a new mode of thinking about judgements. If it were otherwise, if our judgments should, by necessity, follow clear and distinct ideas (as rationalists thought), there would be no personal effort to assent to a given truth or abstain from it. Indeed, the person himself would not even be necessary. It is clear for the Cardinal that there is a chasm between the inferential conclusion and the personal acceptance thereof. Otherwise all normally thinking people would readily arrive at the same thing. Inference is everybody's possession, while assent is always personal and individual. As a matter of illustration let us look at the inference below that exemplifies a typical Aristotelian syllogism: (1) each human being is mortal → (2) John is a human being → (3) John is mortal. The proper name 'John' only seemingly pretends to be someone's concrete name, but in fact it is not. It is a general term. The name is a middle term. John is nobody's name.

(1) $p \rightarrow q$
(2) p
...
(3) q

When I (really) assent to the fact that I am mortal – to follow Newman's reasoning – "I merely drop the thought of the premises [...]" (Newman, 1955, p. 124). Wojtyła, for his part, writes about the person's transcenden-

ce in action. In other words, the human person is transcendent vis-á-vis his object, he is not determined by its contents. Determination brings to mind inference. The human person is free towards his objects of knowledge. The proper seat of transcendence is in the will, and "every authentic, wholehearted 'I will' actualizes the proper self-governance and self-possession of the person" (Wojtyła, 1979, p. 147). Both for Newman and for Wojtyła, the power to decide (to act) comes from the person, not from the inferential strength of argumentation. To say "I will" is to (really) assent to something. Now let us take another example.

A Polish publishing house has recently published a book about the late Polish philosopher, Jozef Tischner. And this book also contains the word "last" in its formulation because it reads *Jozef Tischner Thinking According to Love. The Last Words.* I would like to stress in particular "the last words." The Polish philosopher knew Heiddeger's philosophy very well. In his case, he was diagnosed with malignant throat cancer. He must have reflected on the German philosopher's definition of the "being there" or "presence" as a Being-toward-Death (Sein-zum-Tode). But at the moment when he had learned about his terminal condition, this truth came to him, so to say, face to face, with its horrific immediacy. Indeed it was not "considering something," "reflecting on something," but "touching something." The unrelenting character of the diagnosis was not a passing pain that one might feel from time to time, an additional beat of the heart, but an empirical statement following an indubitable examination. At such moments one is no longer considering an anonymous being-toward-death, but one's own being. How am I supposed to find splendor in this truth? Perhaps even here one can find splendor because man must "die with his own death." This means that, paradoxically, there is a possibility that despite the fact that "all people die, not all die with their own death" (Poniklo, 2013, p. 116).

In this context, yet another thing is of utmost interest for us, something that may illuminate our understanding of Newman. Rev. Tischner wrote in one of his most important texts, one that could be treated as an exposition of his philosophy, that moral values (e.g. justice) are objective, but this does not mean that they are always real (Tischner, 1982, 60). They must be brought to reality by persons; they confront a person as a challenge, as an invitation to be realized. It is through the mediation of a just person, for instance, that we learn about (experience) justice; a just person, to paraphrase Newman's way of thinking, is someone who realizes justice. I think that Tischner's difference between objectivity and reality reflects well Newman's difference between notional and real assent.

When the safe shelter of metaphor is done away with, we have to stand, face to face, with reality. Then it appears who we are. When the self is no longer buffered or distanced (Taylor), when no conceptual artefacts of inauthenticity can squeeze in between me and my moral obligation, I no longer observe my self, I become one with my self (indeed I become myself). This is a special kind of immediacy and literariness. It is no longer this kind of immediacy that is present in aesthetic attitude, when the subject relishes his apparently unbounded freedom, absorbing anything that comes to hand; nor is it the immediacy of an adult who with a critical or sneering eye studies the numerous theories about the given, while none seems to be correct. Rather, it is the immediacy of a child who with a fresh and curious eye assents to the given. I am writing about the immediacy of moral obligation, that is here and now for me to take up or reject, that shines through a well-informed conscience. In this immediacy, man looks at the world around and himself as a special assignment, a something that is indelibly marked with a purpose that only he can accomplish or betray.

Realization – the Key Category of Action and the Power of Witnessing

The key category for Newman was the category of *realizing*. To know the truth is far too insufficient. We need to follow the truth as it individually and uniquely manifests itself in our life. Only that kind of knowledge does produce the right inclination in us. Newman's *realization* naturally resembles Aristotelian virtue because in Aristotle virtue also meant action. In *The Nicomachean Ethics* we read: "The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them [the acts – J.K.]; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character" (Aristotel, 1955, p. 104). The essence of a virtuous person is not to talk about virtue but to do virtuous things.

Philosophy is born out of curiosity, as the question has fathered an answer. Immanuel Kant wondered at the starry heaven above and the moral law within him. John Henry Newman wondered at the corruption of human nature and man's calling to bear witness to the truth that he finds difficult to comprehend. Who is it that is supposed to know, assent to, and realize the truth? The world is carnal and the Truth is spiritual. How come that the spiritual Truth has been entrusted to the carnal world? One thing may

account for it – namely the fact that man is not only carnal, that he is spiritual as well; more than that, man is not only intellectual, but also moral. Thus persons can be bearers of Truth. This point is extremely important because if the Truth has sustained up to now, there may be two reasons for that: either there is an inherent power in it or else there is a power in Truth bearers. Now how do we learn about the Truth?

We learn about it from those who testify to it. Therefore its power arises "from the personal influence" (Newman, 1872, p. 79). And here, for Newman, is the point where the Truth and conscience converge. It is the light originally given us that, however, needs perfecting (Newman, 1872, p. 80). The way towards perfecting is obedience and the way away from it is trifling with conscience. Once trifling interferes, conscience "equivocates, or is irregular." If, however, we obey our "divinely implanted nature," our feeling "becomes fixed and definite" and strengthens "into principle;" then it "develops into habit." The world is whimsical and set in opposition to "the formal and finished character within" which naturally and spontaneously follows the Truth (Newman, 1872, p. 81). Therefore, although the inward light is "itself divine and unerring," it can be modified by "the idiosyncrasies and varieties of disposition, taste, and talents, nay of bodily organization [...]" (Newman, 1872, p. 82). Newman defines the aforementioned "habit" as "a state or quality of mind *under* which we act in this or that particular way; it is a permanent power in the mind; and what is grace but this?" (Newman, 1987, p. 1019). Thus grace and habit are interrelated; grace is given as the light, and it can be made "brighter by obedience" (Newman, 1872, p. 1019).

This link between the recognized truth and the person is always in danger of slackening; it slackens as result of disobedience. This happens when man falls upon his own contrivances instead of obeying the light of conscience. Newman writes that "the object of the Written Word [is] not to unfold a system for our intellectual contemplation, but to secure the formation of a certain character." In other words, the man of faith, he who realizes the Truth, is not a self-reflecting being, but someone who lives the Truth. The latter being not merely a matter for our consideration. And neither do we need to be conscious of it, as he adds: "The longer any one persevered in the practice of virtue, the less likely is he to recollect how he began it [...]." The process how one arrives at and holds the Truth is latent. Newman claims that if we do not make ourselves an object of observation, we live less likely to excuse ourselves for inactivity. He finds a qualitative interval between theory and practice. Reflection is intrusive. We seem to be very clumsy in explaining our duty when we do not take any "external survey" of ourselves (Newman, 1872, p. 83).

Intellect is a faculty of reflection in which man can distance himself from his own person and indeed he does so because the natural environments for the intellect is amongst universal (abstract) concepts. Truth, however, must be accepted by the whole person. The truth must live in the person and the person must live the truth. It would be odd to say that the person lives in concepts because concepts are everyone's property. They belong to general human culture.

On account of our mental complexity, our motives are latent, hidden in the mind, implicit in our actions; they are treated as "collateral and self-evident facts" (Newman, 1872, p. 84). Language and its conceptual (notional) character for obvious reasons simplify reality, especially, when we attempt to communicate and report on our behaviour. Moreover, they make the subject/agent itself an object of observation, immobilizing it, if I may put it so metaphorically, for the sake of analysis. Language imposes an artificial system, general rules of logic, foreign systems (schools) of thought. Thereby it leads the agent out of himself. Moral Truth "and human language are incommensurable [...] because language [is but] an artificial system adapted for particular purposes, which have been determined by our wants [...]" (Newman, 1872, p. 84-85). The conclusion is that moral obligation is not something to be talked about, but something to be realized. As we can see, not only external events warp the straight lines of our decisions but also our subjective sentiments. Language is an "arbitrary medium," but it is "impossible to write and read a man [...]." And, eventually, Newman recapitulates: "Moral character in itself, whether good or bad, as exhibited in thought and conduct, surely cannot be duly represented in words" (Newman, 1872, p. 85).

The ultimate goal is to have "an intuitive knowledge of the beautiful in art, or the effective in action, without reasoning or investigating; that this, in fact, is *genius* [...]," to "have a corresponding insight into moral truth [...]" (Newman, 1872, p. 84). It should be born in a person, not as an immanent construction but as a personal implementation, in its own way; this is what we mean by living the truth. In this manner the person becomes a witness, and the truth is given a personal form. Thus the person becomes a living witness of the truth. How much easier it is and how much more appropriate instead of ordering someone to do something, assuming that it is a right thing for him to do, that it is his obligation, to tell that person: this is what I am doing as well. It is the person himself, when moral Truth has been perfected, that is the right source of inspiration. Truth is "not a set of opinions [...], which may lodge on the surface of the mind [...] but [...] an instrument in changing [...] the heart [...]" (Newman, 1872, p. 85-86).

The intellect that is not subdued to the demands of the truth, one that is not integrated with the person's moral obligation, goes astray and indeed becomes wild. In fact it wanders solitary along the paths of its own constructions, doomed to language games. We can sense hear the ancient *non serviam* revolt. One important "deficiency" of Truth is that it has no power of eloquence, or at least that the power of eloquence has nothing to do with the power of Truth. We read in Newman: "Truth is vast and farstretching, viewed as a system; and, viewed in its separate doctrines, it depends on the combination of number of various, delicate, and scattered evidences; hence it can scarcely be exhibited in a given number of sentences." These "various, delicate, and scattered evidences" are dispersed throughout human history, therefore "[...] to seek and gain religious truth is a long and systematic work" (Newman, 1987, p. 1664). Immediately, one can anticipate Newman's hint not at the contrivances of individual minds, but of the hidden hand of Someone behind the scene of human history. If we are called upon to demonstrate our faith in words, we feel awkward and at a loss, indeed garrulous and equivocal, because when called upon to narrate we need to simplify, to "round off its rugged extremities, and write its straggling lines, by much the same process by which an historical narrative is converted into a tale" (Newman, 1872, p. 90). If the final objective is narration, the end-result is of aesthetic rather than ethical character, and we become distanced further away from our commitment to moral obligation.

The greatest paradox is that a Christian may regard his reason as transcendental reason, not as reason-in-that-person; if reason is no one's in particular or it is anyone's reason, there is no point talking about conversion or transformation. If understood in that manner, we may baulk at ethical intellectualism whereas at the same time we willingly, even though somewhat involuntarily, commit ourselves to unending arguments, believing that the basic flaw is misunderstanding rather than fundamental resentment to assent to what otherwise seems obvious. The intellect may be capable of understanding, but the person must be capable of realizing.

Man shies shy away (shrinks) from ethical engagement because first and foremost we want to be people of subtle and refined intellects, such intellects that are ready to discuss any matter and remain indifferent. Indifference and neutrality have become modern virtues. And the illusion of irreligious people is that they wish to converse with pure and disengaged intellects, while they encounter persons in their concreteness. And they force persons to be bracketed. They bracket even their own persons because they are under the illusion that, once religion has been repressed into the privacy of their

own minds, they are ready to converse with unbiased attitudes; naturally, those who wish to realize what emerges from their religious duties are thereby biased for them. They are abhorred at the thought of being rejected, they pretend to be disengaged intellects and play the game of neutrality. They keep their faith to themselves, as if it were a foreign body in their organism. Therefore Newman ridicules those who are "religious on paper."

Nor can religion be removed from the political sphere, if it is to be taken seriously, such that practically informs each sphere of our lives, a result that any real religion produces. Newman elaborates on this point, writing: "It is sometimes said that religion is not (what is called) political. Now there is a bad sense of the word 'political', and religion is nothing that is bad. But there is also a good sense of the word, and in this sense whoever says that religion is not political speaks as erringly, and (whether ignorantly or not) offends with his tongue as certainly [...]." Religion is political as long as it means taking sides, because it is important which side we take. At the same time "the exhibitions of Reason, being incomplete in themselves, and having nothing of a personal nature, are capable almost of an omnipresence by an indefinite multiplication and circulation, through the medium of composition [...]," whereas "a good deed will be witnessed and estimated at most by but a few." These exhibitions, Newman continues, "being in their operation separable from the person furnishing them, possess little or no responsibility" (Newman, 1872, p. 91). They are anonymous. In other words what Newman is saying comes down to the following: eloquent elaborations on moral matters are counter-effective if the persons who hold them are not willing to stand by them in practice, and by holding them show that they are workable.

Newman's answer is that the Truth "has been upheld in the world not as a system, not by books, not by argument, nor by temporal power, but by the personal influence of such men [...] who are at once the teachers and the patterns of it [...]." Witnesses are those who have realized the Truth. The testimony of a witness is something that makes anyone stop and consider. People can "scoff at principles, [...] ridicule books, [...] make sport of the names of good men; [...] they cannot bear their presence: it is holiness embodied in personal form, which they cannot steadily confront and bear down: so that the silent conduct of a conscientious man secures for him from beholders a feeling different in kind from any which is created by the mere versatile and garrulous Reason" (Newman, 1872, p. 92).

Truth enlivens when conveyed by a person, "the Inspired Word being but a dead letter [...], except as transmitted from one mind to another"

(Newman, 1872, p. 94). Thus we arrive at what Newman calls "unconscious holiness," that is that kind of holiness which is not intellectually premeditated, deliberately willed, that is not for show, but personally lived, which is "of an urgent and irresistible nature [...]" (Newman, 1872, p. 95). It does not invite to any intellectual deliberation or reflection, but to imitation and realization.

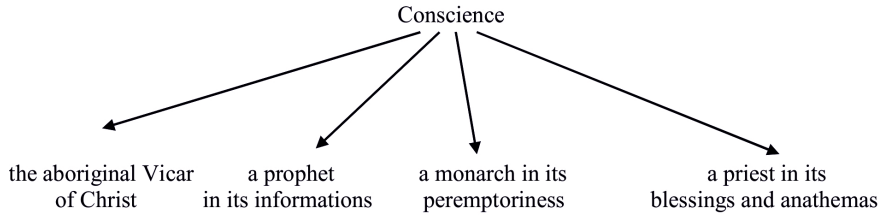
Conscience

As I have pinpointed before, Newman claims that we often give theoretical assent to many things: opinions, temporary attitudes, political likings, etc. We do not hold on to them with the whole of our person, but rather "by the mere exercise of [our] intellect, the random and accidental use of [our] mere reasoning powers," so that everything seems to be lying on the surface of our minds. If intellect is the measure of praise and blame, we find delight in accurate reasoning instead of moral action. Eventually, one sets up "the usurping empire of mere reason [...]." Reason falls prey to contradictions and equivocations, however, in the area of moral and religious truths because such truths "fall under the province of *Conscience* far more than of the intellect." And the author ridicules ethical intellectualism by saying that his contemporaries in vain convince themselves that "as men grow in knowledge they will grow in virtue" (Newman, 1987, p. 142). What man needs is "*a moral* transformation" and "self-denial," "a *surrender* of himself," not intellectual capacities (Newman, 1987, p. 144, 1103). In his view of conscience, Newman goes contrariwise to modern tendencies. In his view: "It is this principle of self-seeking, [...] this influence of self upon us, which is our ruin" (Newman, 1987, p. 1102).

God implanted "in the intelligence of all His rational creatures" His ethical character, i.e. "the attributes of justice, truth, wisdom, sanctity, benevolence and mercy," that is, "the Law of His being [...]" (Newman, 1891, p. 246). It is the natural law (St. Thomas) or the eternal law (St. Augustine) in us. This implantation is what classical philosophy calls *synderesis*. And this is where God resides, for conscience – and such is Newman's principal assumption – is the voice of God. Conscience, therefore, in Newman has primarily a dialogical character. It is Someone (not something) that speaks to us. Now our conscience is capable of apprehending this law implanted in us.

Though this law (conscience) "may suffer refraction in passing into the intellectual medium of each, it is not therefore so affected as to lose its character of being the Divine Law [...], commanding obedience" (New-

man, 1891, p. 247). It is the voice of God, (Newman, 1987, p. 140), not a creation of man. As such, conscience has nothing to do with "utility, nor expedience, nor the happiness of the greatest number [the utilitarian position – J.K.], nor State convenience, nor fitness, order, and the *pulchrum* [...], not a long-sighted selfishness, or a desire to be consistent with oneself; but it is a messenger from Him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by His representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas [...]" (Newman, 1891, p. 248-249). Newman's view of conscience goes against the vein of utilitarian thinking or the claim of subjectivism, so popular in his days. For Newman, as Copleston rightly notes, "religious faith was not the expression of an irrational attitude or a purely arbitrary assumption" (Copleston, 1966, p. 271). The graph below illustrates four categories by which Newman also defines conscience.



Let us observe all these categories: the aboriginal Vicar, a prophet, a monarch, a priest are all images that stress the personal character of human conscience. It is not a mere practical reason, but Someone who speaks to us. Newman refutes noncognitivism (we cannot learn the truth about good or evil), subjectivism, consequentialism (which gives rise to utilitarianism). He is aware of the popular subjectivism of his day. In this view, conscience is "the right of thinking, speaking, writing, and acting, according to their judgment or their humour, without any thought of God at all [...]" is the position in which man is "his own master in all things [...]" (Newman, 1891, p. 250). To counteract the tendency to treat conscience as a mere private point of view Newman stresses: "Conscience has rights because it has duties; but in this age, with a large portion of the public, it is the very right and freedom of conscience to dispense with conscience, to ignore a Lawgiver and judge, to be independent of unseen obligations" (Newman, 1891, p. 250). And he concludes that the dominant view is "the right of self-will" (Newman, 1891, p. 250).

The knowledge that conscience has is of a special kind. Unlike other forms of knowledge, and here Newman indirectly refers to the formal sciences – which employ the method of deduction-and the natural sciences – which employ the method of induction – the sense of right and wrong has no such methods at its disposal. The methodological paradigms in both cases may be drawn as follows:
deduction: undeniable premises → necessary conclusions
induction: phenomena → manipulated into general truths.

Conscience (the sense of right and wrong) "is so delicate, so fitful, so easily puzzled, obscured, perverted, so subtle in its argumentative methods, so impressible by education, so biased by pride and passion, so unsteady in its course, that, in the struggle for existence amid the various exercises and triumphs of the human intellect, this sense is at once the highest of all teachers, yet the least luminous [...]" (Newman, 1891, p. 253-254). Owing to the idiosyncratic character of our experience in concrete circumstances, we are under many, often contradictory, forces. Consequently, a mere intellectual prowess does not suffice. We need a personal prowess, in a word, we need a person with a well-formed and consistent character to act. An exemplary chain of inference, e.g. if a $>$ b and b $>$ c, then a $>$ c, hardly ever applies so smoothly in real life, when it concerns real objects.

In other words both the formal and natural sciences have their logical (universal) strongholds, whereas the fortune of conscience relies on the very unsteady sands of human persons as its main vehicles. There the light is the least luminous because it is foreshadowed by the workings of our rational powers; and these often are very indulgent to our passions. The shaft of light, so to say, shows the way for one pair of feet only. It has to be personally apprehended to be luminous because its light is always personal and individual. To put it differently, conscience is potentially a strong light, but it can be dimmed by our egos. Despite this precarious position of our conscience, one is still encouraged by Newman: "Act up to your light, though in the midst of difficulties and you will be carried on, you do not know how far" (Newman, 1987, p. 1665). Newman firmly believed that every act, even if it be evil, when done in sincerity, is more worthy than an act done without the person present in it, without the person's engagement. Therefore he firmly expresses his critical stance by writing: "I had rather the church were levelled to the ground by a nation, really, honestly, and seriously, thinking they did God service in doing so [...], than that it should be upheld by a nation on the *mere* ground of maintaining property, for I think this is a much greater sin" (Newman, 1987, p. 612).

In Newman's concept of conscience we can find the same classical elements: *synderesis*, *sapientia*, and *scientia*. As regards *synderesis*, the principal and primitive element, it denotes that "there is a right and a wrong, that some things ought to be done, and other things not done; that we have duties, the neglect of which brings remorse; and further, that God is good, wise, powerful, and righteous, and that we should try to obey Him" (Newman 1987, p. 138).

And in other sermons he repeats the same thought: "I only say there is a right and a wrong, that it is not a matter of indifference which side a man takes, that a man will be judged hereafter for the side he takes" (Newman, 1987, p. 612) Or, to take yet another example: "There must be a right and a wrong, and no matter whether others agree with us or not, it is to us a solemn practical concern not to turn away our ears from the truth" (Newman, 1987, p. 1667).

He calls it natural conscience. The term "natural" is of key importance here because in his moral considerations, what Newman calls natural is everything that has not been subjected to rational deliberation. Newman's reasoning in this matter may be presented as follows. If the human being is unregenerate, we would be inconsistent should we treat his mind differently, as if it were perfect. Consequently, with regard to conscience, what is not "natural" is not conscience but at most someone's personal view. These first things, let us say, ontic axioms, "do not proceed from the mere exercise of our minds, though it is true they are strengthened and formed thereby." We accept things that belong to synderesis, and we strengthen things that belong to sapientia and scientia. Things that we unconditionally obey "without our exertion will never make us proud or conceited, because they are ever attended with a sense of sin and guilt, from the remembrance that we have at times transgressed and injured them." There are truths one may only accept in humility; they are not ours, and we feel remorse when we transgress them. Thereby we are called upon to some duties higher than those that result from the working of our minds, things that man obtains "not by nature, but by his own industry, ability, and research [...]" (Newman, 1987, p. 138). We hold on to our imaginary discoveries, to our visions and personal interpretations; we feel a strong sense of possession here. Likewise in our moral nature we have to arrive at the sense of being possessed, of belonging to, of being obliged to Someone from without our immanence. We need to transcend our immanence, that is, to touch and enjoy rather than reflect and consider.

In view of our unregenerate nature, Newman is very realistic about our reasoning powers in moral and religious matters, as I have often underlined

here. They are very weak in this area. Newman writes: "Clear-sighted as reason is on other subjects, and trustworthy as a guide, still in questions connected with our duty to God and man it is very unskilful and equivocating" (Newman, 1987, p. 139). The safest ways to arrive at religious truth are prepared in nature (Conscience) and revelation. Conscience is our divinely-enlightened sense of duty (voice of God), our right feeling implicitly. Such is the situation from our earliest years, but then, together with the development of our rational powers, reason is "led on by passion, to war against our better knowledge" (Newman, 1987, p. 140). Conscience is "the light of innocence" set in opposition to "the dim, uncertain light of reason" (Newman, 1987, p. 140).

Conclusion

Newman's cardinal motto reads *cor ad cor loquitur*. When heart speaks unto heart there is least danger of distortion, the conversation is most simple because it hardly needs words. Rather, it reminds us of a kind of spiritual interpenetration, the sharing of one's own being. The conversation is implicit, most intimate. It is from the innermost depth of our personalities. Perhaps it should not even be called conversation, but rather a community of our very beings. They are at one with one another, tied with the most profound bond of unity. There are not spheres of human life that can be exempt from moral judgement. Religion, taken seriously, radically penetrates all aspects and contexts of our life worlds.

If that is the case, it seems that man is the worst enemy to himself. Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II) seeks to combine the metaphysical position with a personalist (phenomenological) view. Newman, for his part, first and foremost focuses on man's original situation, on man's concrete being. It is of no use to propound the transcendental point of view because human reason is always placed in a concrete person. We do not think from some impersonal and neutral position. We approach the truth with our natural reasoning. Natural reasoning differs from transcendental and universal categories; we do not reside amidst pure concepts but we reason from within our idiosyncratic beings.

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