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**THE PRAGMATISM OF J. H. NEWMAN:
HIS CONTRIBUTIONS FOR A COMMITMENT TO TRUTH
IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES**

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ABBREVIATIONS FOR THE WORKS OF J. H. NEWMAN

The abbreviations used for Newman's works are those listed by Joseph Rickaby in the *Index to the Works of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1914) and followed by the *Newman Studies Journal*, with some additions.

References to works included by Newman in his thirty-six volume uniform edition are always to that edition, begun in 1868 and concluded in 1881, the text of which is available in the Newman Reader (www.newmanreader.org).

The first volume, or general introduction, of Newman's *Philosophical Notebook* is not cited as one of Newman's works, as it was written in full by Edward Sillem. Only the second volume, which corresponds to the actual text of Newman's philosophical notebook, is cited as work of his and included in this list of abbreviations.

Apo *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. Edited by Wilfrid Ward. London: Oxford University Press, 1913.

AR *Addresses to Cardinal Newman with His Replies (1879-81)*. Edited by William Neville. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1905.

Ari *The Arians of the Fourth Century*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908.

AW *Autobiographical Writings*. Edited by Henry Tristram. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956.

- Call* *Callista*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901.
- Camp* *My Campaign in Ireland*. Aberdeen: A. King & Co., 1896.
- Cons* *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*. Edited by John Coulson. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961.
- CR* Articles published in “The Contemporary Review” in 1885.
- DA* *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907.
- Dev* *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909.
- Diff* *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900.
- Ess* *Essays Critical and Historical*. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907.
- GA* *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1903.
- HS* *Historical Sketches*. 3 vols. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909.
- Idea* *The Idea of a University*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907.
- Jfc* *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908.
- LD* *Letters and Diaries*. Edited by Charles Stephen Dessain, Ian Ker and Thomas Gornall. 32 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978–2009.

- LG* *Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1906.
- MD* *Meditations and Devotions of the Late Cardinal Newman*. Edited by William Neville. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907.
- Mix* *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1906.
- OS* *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908.
- PN* *The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman: The Text*. Edited by Edward Sillem. Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1970.
- Prepos* *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908.
- PS* *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. 8 vols. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907–08.
- SC* *Sermons 1824-1843*. Edited by Clement McGrath, Placid Murray and Vincent Blehl. 5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991–2012.
- SD* *Sermons Bearing on the Subjects of the Day*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1902.
- SE* *Stray Essays on Controversial Points*. Privately printed, 1890.
- TP, i* *Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Faith and Certainty*. Edited by Hugo de Achaval and Derek Holmes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.

TP, ii *Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Biblical Inspiration and on Infallibility*. Edited by Derek Holmes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

US *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909.

VM *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901.

VV *Verses on Various Occasions*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1903.

INTRODUCTION

John Henry Newman stands out as a courageous witness of what it means to search for the truth and be coherent with it; not only did he make of truth a vital option, he also reflected deeply on the way people can know the truth, assent to it and communicate it. Newman is widely known as an educator, a theologian, a philosopher, even a poet. He wrote on a wide variety of subjects, and his works show his concern for the real quandaries his contemporaries faced and his ability to connect with them. Although he did not consider himself a philosopher and did not subscribe to any philosophical tradition, he tackled the classical problems of truth, knowledge and belief in a novel and fruitful way. Truth could be identified as the focal point of his philosophical program.

Newman's life spanned for most of the nineteenth century, a time in which the illusions of modern philosophy with its ensuing rationalism and liberalism were quickly unfolding. He faced the growing skepticism he encountered not as a personal temptation, but as a searching contradiction for whose resolution he invested his heart and mind¹. Along with his contemporaries, he reflected on the causes of the doubts that assailed them and developed his philosophy as an attempt to find a way forward.

While Newman's philosophical contributions have not received much attention in the past, this has changed in recent years². However, philosophers who have studied Newman agree that, although he made

¹ Cf. Michael Buckley, "The Winter of My Desolation: Conscience and the Contradictions of Atheism According to John Henry Newman," in *Newman and Truth* (Louvain: Peeters, 2008), 71.

² For example, the American Catholic Philosophical Association dedicated the Winter 2019 issue of their journal to Newman's philosophical legacy.

valuable contributions to philosophy, he remains in its sidelines as he has not been framed within an established tradition. Along with others that have explored this possibility, I believe that showing the connection of his thought to pragmatism is a feasible and fruitful undertaking that can provide a greater relevance to his philosophical project³.

In the *Idea of a University* Newman describes how a person knows reality in this way:

We know, not by a direct and simple vision, not at a glance, but, as it were, by piecemeal and accumulation, by a mental process, by going round an object, by the comparison, the combination, the mutual correction, the continual adaptation, of many partial notions, by the employment, concentration, and joint action of many faculties and exercises of mind. Such a union and concert of the intellectual powers, such an enlargement and development, such a comprehensiveness, is necessarily a matter of training⁴.

These lines provided the starting point for the reflections that have consolidated into this dissertation, which is built upon Newman's texts that refer to his search for and commitment to the truth. Although I refer to thirty-two of his works, my primary sources are his *Oxford University Sermons* (1826-1843), *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845), *The Idea of a University* (1852), *The Grammar of Assent* (1870) and his *Letters and Diaries* (1808-1890). Through the discussion of these texts I attempt to bring to light the nuances of Newman's thought to showcase the compelling philosophical resources he offers. Newman does not provide ready-

³ As far as I am aware, the first mention of Newman in the context of pragmatism is found in Leslie Walker's book, *Theories of Knowledge*, published in 1911. Cyprus Mitchell wrote his MA Thesis in 1913 on this topic and Wilfrid Ward gave a lecture in 1914 on "Newman's Philosophy" in which he calls him a pragmatist. In 2014, Daniel Morris-Chapman dedicated a section of his doctoral thesis to "Newman and the Dawn of Pragmatism" mentioning thirteen authors that have studied this possibility.

⁴ *Idea*, 151.

made answers to today's questions, but how he analyzes and engages with the challenges of his time can point us to creative and fruitful ways of engaging with those of our times.

In a brief list of "individual souls who had gone their own way and found their own heaven, no matter how solitary the path or unfashionable the destination"⁵ Lewis Mumford mentions both, J. H. Newman and C. S. Peirce. Fifty years after Newman published the *Grammar of Assent* and across the Atlantic, Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of pragmatism, was faced with similar questions and sought to resolve them in ways that are reminiscent of Newman. After a cursory exploration of Peirce's thought, I am convinced that he can help today's philosophers not only to reassume their philosophical responsibility, which has been largely abdicated, but also to tackle some of philosophy's more pressing problems⁶.

Although a broadly recognized connection has not been established between Newman and pragmatism, numerous elements of his thought can be discerned within pragmatism's proposals. This dissertation is an attempt to place Newman's philosophical insights into conversation with the pragmatic tradition, particularly with the classical pragmatists, and show that there are several lines of concurrence. Pragmatism is used as a foil, or point of access, to delve into Newman's philosophy, bring forth the richness of his thought and place him in the canon of philosophy. As well, Newman's insights provide a means to understand the resources of pragmatism from a seldom-used vantage point and perhaps appreciate its solidity and fruitfulness in a new way.

⁵ Lewis Mumford, *My Works and Days: A Personal Chronicle* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 244.

⁶ Cf. Jaime Nubiola, "Peirce on Complexity," in *Sign Processes in Complex Systems* (Dresden: Thelem, 2001), 11.

My acquaintance with Newman began in 2013 as I was looking for an author who could enlighten my reflection on the role of philosophy within the curriculum for the initial formation of the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi. Newman proved to be a resourceful and trustworthy guide, and I completed the research for my MA Thesis, which I based upon his *Idea of a University*, with more questions than answers. Newman's unfaltering decision to follow the truth wherever it led him, along with his insights into the quandaries his contemporaries faced and his profound pastoral charity, have been an invitation to delve into his thought and follow a similar path of conversion and ever-deepening coherence with the truth.

Since I finished my Master's Degree, I have continued my reflections upon philosophy, truth and knowledge in academic and non-academic settings in several countries. The increasing polarization of society, where decisions are based on countless bits of immediate information but little rational discourse, has made me value more deeply the importance of scientific inquiry and research in the humanities. Even though one could think there should be ample points of convergence among educated Christians in developed western nations, the sharp divergences and apparent impossibility of dialogue do not cease to call my attention.

If there is broad agreement on something, perhaps it is on the assertion that polarization and divisiveness are quickly deepening. It is my impression that besides the superficiality of public discourse, there are diverse understandings of truth and rationality, of their nature and what they can deliver. The expectations placed in human rationality often seem unreasonable to me and I perceive much confusion on the nature of relativism and fundamentalism. There is also a lack of awareness of how fallibilism and pluralism can serve as intellectual resources for dialogue and encounter, progress and community and ultimately for living in the truth.

I have found that philosophers that subscribe to the pragmatic tradition, in particular to the line established by Peirce, have much to offer in this conversation. The pragmatists' way of understanding the role of the community in the search for truth, along with abductive reasoning and fallibilism, has been very enriching as I explore truth and rationality, certainty and assent. Studying Newman and pragmatist philosophers side by side has allowed me to appreciate their resourcefulness and recognize their limitations and the opportunities they offer for our commitment to truth in contemporary times.

Newman's commitment to truth was built upon a clear awareness of the powers of the human intellect, as well as its conditionings and constraints. Buckley writes that "no one celebrated the human intellect more wisely and more lyrically than Newman"⁷, and in the words of Peirce, "in order to reason well it is absolutely necessary to possess [...] a real love of truth"⁸. With Newman's and Peirce's commitment to the truth as a framework, I proceed to explain the development of the three parts that constitute this dissertation.

The main line of argumentation seeks to explore the richness of Newman's philosophical contributions, along with their connection to pragmatism, in order to identify the intellectual resources he offers for a commitment to truth. Since Newman's philosophical contributions have frequently passed unnoticed, discussing his philosophical profile in chapters 1 and 2 is important. Following my stated objective, I discuss Newman's affinities with pragmatism in chapters 3 and 4. The rich analysis that this comparison brings forth provides the setting for chapters 5 and 6, which explore the insights that Newman offers to strengthen our commitment to truth. Having stated the general flow of my argument, I now present the contents of each chapter in more detail.

⁷ Buckley, "Conscience and Atheism in Newman," 76.

⁸ Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1935–58), 2.82 (1902).

Chapter 1 explores Newman's biographical profile. Truth was not only an academic interest for him, it was foremost a vital commitment that guided all his decisions and for which he sacrificed much. In a letter to his mother during a difficult time Newman wrote, "I have not sinned against the light"⁹; this self-awareness of his coherence provided him with strength and clarity in times of turmoil. In this first chapter, I highlight moments from his life and excerpts from his writings that I find particularly telling of his commitment to truth.

In chapter 2 I discuss Newman's place in the conversation that constitutes the history of philosophy. When he was sixteen years old he began his study of Aristotle, which provided him with a solid philosophical foundation for his subsequent inquiries. He developed these, as it were, in dialogue with five British authors that preceded him: Francis Bacon, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Joseph Butler and David Hume. Newman not only conversed with the dead; his conversations with the living provided him with the driving force that guided his reflection. I discuss his relationship with Richard Whately, Catherine and William Froude, friends who played an important role in the development of his theory of knowledge. Afterward, I present three philosophical currents in which elements of Newman's thought have been identified: pragmatism, phenomenology and personalism. I conclude this chapter by explaining the choices I make in my understanding of Newman's philosophical project.

The understanding of pragmatism which I hold is discussed in chapter 3. I start my argument with the three elements identified by Misak as claims that pragmatists tend to share¹⁰ and show how these are present in Newman's philosophical insights.

⁹ *AW*, 127.

¹⁰ Cf. Cheryl Misak, "Introduction," in *New Pragmatists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2–4.

Afterward, I develop five affinities between Newman and pragmatism in chapter 4. The affirmation of these affinities does not imply that there are no points of divergence; it is only meant to show connections that indeed can be made between Newman's philosophy and pragmatist philosophers. The fifth affinity I identify presents, in my opinion, the most fruitful intersection between Newman and pragmatism since the parallel study of his Illative Sense and Peirce's Abductive Reasoning shows ample similarities and allows for a clearer understanding of the reasoning process. I conclude this chapter by exploring the possibility of considering Newman a forerunner of pragmatism.

Chapter 5 explores Newman's response to the philosophy of his day, which was characterized by rationalism, liberalism, skepticism and fideism. This nuanced exposition aims to present with clarity the elements in each of these positions, which Newman rejected as well as those which he understood as positive developments and incorporated in his works.

Finally, in chapter 6 some resources that Newman offers to overcome these hurdles and strengthen a commitment to truth are discussed: liberal education, a sense of community, personal influence, conscience, fallibilism and pluralism. A hundred and fifty years after Newman presented them, I believe these resources, especially when understood in Newman's terms, are particularly relevant for those who seek to live a coherent life committed to the truth.

It is my hope and desire that the exploration of the affinities between Newman and pragmatism will show that Newman overcame the modern philosophy of his time by reconnecting to the Aristotelian tradition in a very similar way to how Peirce did it fifty years later and the new pragmatists a century after. Further, that he found similar insights to the ones that characterize pragmatism and that these comprise a useful incentive and tool to strengthen our commitment to

truth in contemporary times. The study of Newman's contributions, within the framework of pragmatism, allows us to conclude that those who seem to be on the margins of the philosophical discourse, often prove to be precursors of later developments.

In 1845 Newman explained that "from the nature of the human mind, time is necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas"¹¹; these words can be well-applied to his own philosophical insights, as time has indeed been necessary for a better comprehension of his project. Although this dissertation relies heavily on Newman's own works (one-third of the references are to these), a wide array of secondary bibliography was also consulted and cited. I attempted to give relevance to works contemporary to Newman or closest to the time of his death, as they seem to portray him more genuinely. I was also committed to studying the most recent publications, some of which incorporate the insights from these 150 years of Newman scholarship. The interdisciplinarity found in the bibliography is another significant choice; like the editors of the 2018 *Oxford Handbook of Newman Studies I* "hold the conviction that when scholars from different disciplines work together with Newman as their subject, the probability grows of attaining deeper understanding"¹².

Regarding the more technical aspects of this dissertation, in my own writing I have used American spelling norms, as I am more familiar with these; however, when a text I quote follows the British spelling norms, I have respected those. I would also like to note that Newman's texts used in sections 4.3 and 6.2 and sections 4.4 and 6.5 are basically the same, since both deal with a similar theme; however, they are commented upon from a different perspective as each chapter calls for.

¹¹ *Dev*, 29–30.

¹² Frederick Aquino and Benjamin King, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3.

In July 2019 I presented a paper titled “Newman’s Philosophy and Illative Sense as Tools for Contemporary Dialogue” at a conference organized by the De Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture; this paper drew significantly from sections 2.1 and 4.5 of my dissertation. A summary of chapters 3 and 4 has been accepted for publication in the *Newman Studies Journal* and will most likely appear in the winter 2020 issue. I plan to present an adapted version of section 5.2 at the 2020 meeting of the American Catholic Philosophical Association. Section 6.1 relies heavily on a chapter from my MA Thesis and on a paper that I presented at the 2019 conference of the Newman Association of America.

Although there were some challenging moments, the research and writing process for my dissertation has been an enriching, stimulating and highly enjoyable undertaking. I am extremely grateful to Jaime Nubiola for accepting to direct this work, while leaving its ownership in my hands and modeling the virtues of an authentic servant leader that I wish to emulate; I know myself very blessed by his friendship and guidance.

Several conversations with Fred Aquino were very fruitful for my research; I benefitted not only from his acute scholarship but from his advice as I learn to navigate the academic world. Rosario Athie, Patricia Camarero, Ono Ekeh and Joe Milburn, fellow philosophers I encountered along the way, also provided me significant clues as I advanced in my research.

My studies were very enriched by the month I spent as a visiting scholar at the National Institute of Newman Studies, I am very grateful for the scholarly support I received from Bud Marr and Elizabeth Huddleston. I was also able to work as a visiting researcher at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, which holds a significant collection of Newman scholarship; I am indebted to DeAnne Besetzny for her

untiring and joyful attention to my bibliographic needs and to Fr. Thomas Baima for his invitation to work at their university.

My gratitude also extends to Mary Schwarz and Jorge Lopez, who generously read and offered suggestions for the entire draft of my dissertation. Sharing one's work can be daunting, but through their constructive criticism and their availability for numerous conversations, they have allowed me to experience the crowning jewel of academic work: friendship.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the general government of the Society of Apostolic Life Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi, of which I am a member, for the time and funding it has provided so I could undertake this project and conclude my doctoral studies. Last but not least, I am more than grateful to my community of consecrated lay women in Chicago, to my parents, brothers and future sisters in law and to Fr. Juan Carlos Ortega, for their constant encouragement during these years; through their kindness and interest, they provided for me what is closest to an ideal place for intellectual and human growth.

In 1851 Newman expressed in a lecture that “nothing would be done at all, if a man waited till he could do it so well, that no one could find fault with it”¹³; I came across these words at the beginning of my research and they have accompanied me every step of the way. If this dissertation provokes those who come across its pages to question and enhance their commitment to the truth, while they challenge and seek to better its arguments, it will have been successful; at the very least, I can say it has done so for me.

¹³ *Prepos*, 403.

PART I.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN'S LIFE AND CONTEXT

1. Newman's biographical profile

In order to study Newman's commitment to the truth, it is fitting to start by presenting his biographical profile, since truth was not only an intellectual endeavor for him, but a vital commitment¹. Moreover, since his philosophy originated "not from his reading of the works of other philosophers, but in his own life and experience [...] in studying his philosophy we have to ever be going from his life to his ideas, and from his ideas back to his life"².

When he was sixty-three years old, Newman wrote his *Apologia* in which he recounted the development of his religious ideas, as a response to severe criticism from Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), a pastor in the Anglican Church who subscribed to the liberalism in religion which Newman so radically opposed. Although Kingsley accused him on many fronts, Newman decided "to confine myself to one, for there is only one about which I much care –the charge of untruthfulness"³. Twenty-five years later, he made provisions for his biography to be written, asking for "a real fair downright account of me according to the best ability and judgment of the writer"⁴.

¹ This study should also consider Newman's historical context as "without historical analysis, Newman's life, thought, and writings become strangely disembodied, escaping from the sort of contextualizing that is needed to see and read him through the eyes of his contemporaries". Aquino and King, "Introduction," 2.

² Edward Sillem, *The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman: General Introduction to the Study of Newman's Philosophy* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1969), 93.

³ *Apo*, 87.

⁴ *LD*, xxviii 92.

Dozens of biographies, from many different angles, have been authored since his death. Especially worth mentioning are those by Wilfrid Ward (1912), Meriol Trevor (1962), Ian Ker (1988) and Juan Velez (2011). This brief profile does not intend to present a detailed, nor strictly chronological, account of Newman's life but rather highlights some episodes in each stage of his journey that portray his deep coherence and commitment to the truth which he undertook as his greatest duty:

The world has borne witness to the honesty and singleness of purpose which ever guided [Newman] in his religious inquiries, and to the marvellous intellectual power which he manifested in his long and arduous search after truth. The thousand claims upon his affections, the friendships, habits, customs, and associations of years [...] did not avail in the least to avert his eye from the steadfast contemplation of the truth. He kept resolutely to his course, though he clearly foresaw that it would end in the surrender of all that he held dearest upon earth⁵.

Newman was a prolific writer, and through his numerous essays, poems, books and especially his letters one can grasp the development of his convictions. His letters are of particular importance as he believed that "a man's life is in his letters [...], biographers varnish; they assign motives; they conjecture feelings; they palliate or defend; but contemporary letters are facts"⁶. Thus, this dissertation relies heavily on Newman's *Letters and Diaries*.

A possible division of his life, which brings forth Newman's commitment to truth is presented in the five sections of this chapter, each of which concludes with a brief commentary of one of his works from that period. These segments are by no means hard divisions,

⁵ John Toohey, "The *Grammar of Assent* and the Old Philosophy," *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 2, no. 8 (1907): 467.

⁶ *LD*, xx 443.

rather they bring forth in a clearer way the integrity and continuity in Newman's thought throughout his life.

1.1. Formative period (1801-1833)

John Henry Newman was born on February 21, 1801 in a pious Anglican family. He was the first of six children, and due to his father's bankruptcy and untimely death in 1824 he became the pillar of his family early on. He had a closer relationship with his sisters, Mary, Harriet and Jemima, than with his brothers, Francis and Charles; however, he provided all of them with spiritual and financial support⁷.

From his early years as a student, first in the Great Ealing School and then in Trinity College, Newman developed the qualities that would prove to be foundational for his life's calling: receptivity, resilience, responsibility, commitment and openness to friendship. Although he encountered failure in the first examinations for his bachelor's degree and shortly after obtaining this title he had to take on the tuition of his younger brother, he managed not only to grow intellectually, but in his piety and his commitment to others.

In his autobiography, Newman singles out a moment when he was fifteen years old and a student at Ealing as the occasion of his first conversion: "A great change of thought took place in me. I fell under the influences of a definite Creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma, which, through God's mercy, have never been effaced or obscured"⁸. He had come upon the works of Thomas Scott (1747-1821), whom he described as "the writer who made a deeper impression on my mind than any other, and to whom (humanly

⁷ Cf. Juan Velez, *Passion for Truth: The Life of John Henry Newman* (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2011), 25.

⁸ *Apo*, 107.

speaking) I almost owe my soul”⁹. What touched him most deeply about Scott’s character, which he attempted to live for the rest of his life, was his unworldliness and vigorous independence of mind, along with the fact that he followed the truth wherever it led him¹⁰. As well, in Scott’s *Essays* Newman found the two maxims that shaped him as a young man: “holiness rather than peace” and “growth the only evidence of life”¹¹.

In June 1817 Newman enrolled in Oxford’s Trinity College for his undergraduate studies, which he undertook with passion and zeal, studying an average of twelve hours a day for his final examinations, but gravely underperforming due to his lack of experience and maturity. This reversal did not discourage him, but rather taught him important lessons for his future career. Before returning to Oxford for graduate studies in 1821, he told his parents that he wanted to become a cleric and pursue a fellowship at Oriel College, “at that time the most respected and intellectually rigorous college at Oxford”¹², which he secured in April 1822.

After obtaining his fellowship, he continued tutoring young men while he prepared for Holy Orders. He was ordained a deacon in June 1824 and a priest in May 1825¹³. In July 1826 he preached the first of fifteen sermons on the relationship between faith and reason, which would eventually come to be known as the *Oxford University Sermons*, the last of which he preached in 1843.

⁹ *Apo*, 108.

¹⁰ Cf. *Apo*, 109.

¹¹ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 17.

¹² Reinhard Hütter, *John Henry Newman on Truth and Its Counterfeits* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 6.

¹³ The contributions to theology and philosophy which Newman made from the pulpit were exceptional in number and depth; in his nineteen years as an active clergyman of the Church of England he preached around 1,270 sermons. Cf. Gerard Tracey, “Preface,” in *John Henry Newman: Sermons 1824-1843* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992–2012), 1:vii.

At that time Oriel's leading intellectuals, known as the Noetics, were characterized by liberal ideas in religion, which influenced Newman making him say of those years: "I was drifting in the direction of liberalism"¹⁴. He was learning much through his dedicated study and the many conversations he had with the students he tutored, his peers and mentors, particularly Richard Whately (1787-1863), Edward Hawkins (1789-1882) and Joseph Blanco White (1775-1841). Each of these men would have a decisive influence on Newman. However, by 1830 their paths went different ways as Newman's religious ideas continued to develop, and he departed from their liberal outlook on religion.

Much could be said from Newman's work and relationships during his first decade as a fellow in Oriel. However, only one of his journal entries from 1824 is mentioned, since it is very telling of his intellectual struggle and development. As he was wrestling with the principles related to Baptism and trying to discern the "Catholic position", meaning the position held by the Church Fathers, he wrote:

I am always slow in deciding a question; and last night I was so distressed and low about it that the thought even struck me I must leave the Church. I have been praying about it before I rose this morning, and I do not know what will be the end of it. I think I really desire the truth, and would embrace it wherever I found it¹⁵.

In 1832 he was invited to Europe by his dear friend Hurrell Froude (1803-1836), who was seeking to recover his health, and his father Robert Froude (1771-1859)¹⁶. The opportunity for traveling in such company and the chance to fulfill the "duty to enlarge one's ideas,

¹⁴ *Apo*, 116.

¹⁵ *AW*, 202.

¹⁶ Newman also developed a deep friendship with another one of Robert's sons, William Froude (1810-1879) and his wife Catherine (1810-1878), for whom he would write *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. A fourth Froude, James Anthony (1818-1894), the youngest of Robert's sons, became a historian and left a telling account of Newman in his *Short Studies on Great Subjects*.

to break one's studies, and to have the name of a travelled man –this last being a pleasure also"¹⁷ compelled him to accept the invitation. During this trip, he wrote numerous letters to friends and family in which he describes the beauty of nature and the richness of civilization he encountered. His profound vitality and the continuous awakening of his soul shines forth through his diaries, letters and poems.

His visits to Athens and Rome were a particular highlight, the latter serving to mitigate his bias against Roman Catholicism¹⁸. However, Sicily was the city that provided the occasion for another turning point in his life. Robert and Hurrell returned to England in April, but Newman decided to visit Sicily once more and there he fell gravely ill with typhoid fever. Many were dying of the epidemic, but Newman was confident that he would live as he realized that "God has still work for me to do"¹⁹. His illness and recovery lasted a few weeks, and on June 13 he was able to start his return to England.

While on the ship taking him home he wrote his most famous poem "Lead Kindly Light":

Lead, Kindly Light, amidst th'encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on!

¹⁷ *LD*, iii 99.

¹⁸ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 151.

¹⁹ *AW*, 127.

I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will. Remember not past years!²⁰

Through this six month journey away from Oriel's Common Room, Newman's awareness of the dangers of liberalism and his decision to fight it was consolidated: "He was determined to pursue the doctrinal and spiritual renewal of the Church of England, even though he did not know the specific path to follow"²¹. With the realization that he "had a mission"²², he arrived home on July 9, 1833 to see the beginning of the Oxford Movement.

1.2. The Oxford Movement (1833-1841)

During his Mediterranean trip, Newman had ample time to reflect and correspond with like-minded friends and colleagues who became the nucleus of the Oxford Movement. Among them John Keble (1792-1866), William Palmer (1803-1885), Arthur Perceval (1799-1853), Hugh James Rose (1795-1838) and Edward Pusey (1800-1882) can be named²³.

Newman considered that the beginning of the Oxford Movement was the "Assize Sermon", on national apostasy, preached by Keble at St. Mary's on July 14, 1833²⁴. While acknowledging Newman's own judgment, Velez points out that "the birthday of the Movement might also be considered as January 22, 1832, the day on which Newman [...] delivered a sermon titled 'Personal Influence, the Means for

²⁰ *VV*, 156.

²¹ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 156.

²² *Apo*, 135.

²³ Cf. *Apo*, 139, 162. Although Newman's closest collaborator at the time was Hurrell Froude, there is no correspondence between them as they were together overseas; Edward Pusey fully adhered to the Oxford Movement until 1834.

²⁴ Cf. *Apo*, 136.

Propagating the Truth”²⁵. In this sermon Newman explains how doctrinal truths are often blurred by secular reason, but are not overcome if personal witness upholds them:

The warfare between Error and Truth is necessarily advantageous to the former, from its very nature [...] Truth is vast and far-stretching, viewed as a system; and, viewed in its separate doctrines, it depends on the combination of a number of various, delicate, and scattered evidences; hence it can scarcely be exhibited in a given number of sentences [...] How, then, after all, has it maintained its ground among men, and subjected to its dominion unwilling minds? [...] I answer, that it 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 as have already been described, who are at once the teachers and the patterns of it²⁶.

The initial meeting of the Oxford Movement was held a few days after the “Assize Sermon”, among men of personal influence, as called for by Newman. Although Rose and Palmer wanted to formally constitute a society, Newman opposed this idea as he feared it would stifle the zeal of each individual: “He thought that ‘living movements’ must arise from universities, which are the natural center for intellectual ideas where there is a connection between personal minds. These connections, rather than associations and committees, were the path for renewal”²⁷.

Three episodes during this period of the Oxford Movement provide evidence for Newman’s coherence: his development of the *Via Media* along with the publication of the *Tracts for the Times*, his study of the Christological heresies of the fourth and fifth centuries and his reaction to the establishment of an Anglican Bishopric in Jerusalem. Building upon these events, the turning point in Newman’s journey of

²⁵ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 169.

²⁶ *US*, 89–92.

²⁷ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 166.

faith was the publication of *Tract 90*, which brought the Oxford Movement to a halt and his religious crises and journey to the Catholic Church to a definitive beginning.

Since their early days, Newman intended for the *Tracts* which would develop the thesis of the Oxford Movement, to be published by each particular author, without the sanction of an association. He believed that “individuals who are seen and heard, who act and suffer, are the instruments of Providence in all great successes”²⁸ and that private ownership would give the authors “an excuse for being more bold”²⁹. In his *Apologia*, he recorded an inspiration which became a foundational idea for the Movement: “Deliverance is wrought, not by the many but by the few, not by bodies but by persons”³⁰.

It is worth dwelling on this principle of individual ownership for the *Tracts*, as Newman held it from different angles throughout his career, up to the *Grammar of Assent* where one of his central thesis is that the act of assent “is a free act, a personal act for which the doer is responsible”³¹. He wrote to Perceval at the time:

As to the Tracts every one has his own taste. You object to some things, another to others. If we altered to please every one, the effect would be spoiled. They were not intended as symbols *à cathedrâ*, but as the expression of individual minds; and individuals, feeling strongly, while on the one hand, they are incidentally faulty in mode or language, are still peculiarly *effective*. No great work was done by a system; whereas systems rise out of individual exertions. Luther was an individual. The very faults of an individual excite attention; he loses, but his cause (if good and he powerful-minded) gains. This is the way of things: we promote truth by a self-sacrifice³².

²⁸ *LD*, iv 68.

²⁹ *LD*, iv 69.

³⁰ *Apo*, 135.

³¹ *GA*, 232.

³² *LD*, iv 307–08.

The Tractarians would write ninety *Tracts* in eight years, Newman wrote twenty-nine of them, including the first one and the last one, holding fast to his heroic stance of promoting truth through self-sacrifice. The *Tracts* were the vehicle by which the Oxford Movement gained popularity in England; however, Newman's sermons at St. Mary's Church developed its essence by portraying the spiritual and moral consequences of the principles exposed in the *Tracts*³³.

Some critics thought that the *Tracts* promoted "Romanism" and "Popery". However, the intention of their authors, to which Newman went back time and again, was precisely to prevent people from converting to Roman Catholicism. The Tractarians expected to achieve this by identifying the Catholic principles upheld by the *Thirty-nine Articles* and the *Book of Common Prayer*³⁴.

As Newman sought to bring forth the Catholicity of the Anglican Church, he built upon the doctrine of the *Via Media* established by the Anglican Divines in the seventeenth century³⁵. This doctrine intended to distinguish the Anglican Church from Protestantism and from the Roman Church, but in Newman's opinion, it failed to present a positive theology. He developed what he understood to be the essential doctrines of Anglicanism as a *Via Media* in *Tract 38* and *Tract 41*, both published in 1834, and complemented them with a volume of *Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church* published in 1837. The fundamental points of his *Via Media* were "dogma, the sacramental system, and opposition to the Church of Rome"³⁶.

³³ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 174.

³⁴ Cf. Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 219.

³⁵ The term was first used in 1533 by Thomas Sharkey, who worked under Henry VIII. Cf. Aidan Nichols, *Panther and the Hind: A Theological History of Anglicanism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 38.

³⁶ *Apo*, 168.

Newman's research for these works led him to the unintended consequence of having his first contact with a Roman Catholic theologian. His correspondence with Fr. Jean-Nicolas Jager (1790-1868), a professor at the University of Paris, broadened his concept of scripture and tradition. Moreover, it gave him the first insights into the theory of the development of doctrine, which would provide the intellectual resource he needed for his departure from the Anglican Church and entry into the Catholic Church³⁷.

When the *Tracts* arose significant controversy, Newman retreated into what he expected to be a less polemic theme of study. Since the beginning of his career, he had researched the early councils of the Church. The first book he wrote was *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, published in 1833. However, due to other responsibilities, he was unable to continue the systematic study of the Fathers at the time. He narrates in his *Apologia*:

The Long Vacation of 1839 began early [...] I had put away from me the controversy with Rome for more than two years. In my Parochial Sermons the subject had never been introduced: there had been nothing for two years, either in my Tracts or in the British Critic, of a polemical character. I was returning, for the Vacation, to the course of reading which I had many years before chosen as especially my own. I have no reason to suppose that the thoughts of Rome came across my mind at all. About the middle of June I began to study and master the history of the Monophysites. I was absorbed in the doctrinal question. This was from about June 13th to August 30th. It was during this course of reading that for the first time a doubt came upon me of the tenableness of Anglicanism. I recollect on the 30th of July mentioning to a friend, whom I had accidentally met, how remarkable the history was; but by the end of August I was seriously alarmed³⁸.

³⁷ Cf. Geoffrey Rowell, "The Ecclesiology of the Oxford Movement," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 220.

³⁸ *Apo*, 210.

The study of the Christological heresies showed Newman that in the early Church the deciding factor in the discernment between heresy and sound doctrine had been communion with the other Churches and with the See of Rome³⁹, both of which had been severed by the Anglican Church in the sixteenth century. Particularly, he understood the words of St. Augustine, “*Securus judicat orbis terrarum!*”⁴⁰, to be a decisive stroke against Anglicanism and the branch theory of the Church he sustained at the time⁴¹. He explained: “For a mere sentence, the words of St. Augustine, struck me with a power which I never had felt from any words before [...] By those great words of the ancient Father [...] the theory of the *Via Media* was absolutely pulverized”⁴².

Newman determined to be guided not by his imagination but by his reason and took note of these discoveries but continued to live faithfully where God’s Providence had placed him⁴³. Two years later, during the summer of 1841, in another attempt to put aside all controversy, he returned to the translation of the works of St. Athanasius. However, he would say of this period: “The ghost [of Antiquity] had come a second time”⁴⁴ and described it as a fatal blow to his faith in the Anglican Church⁴⁵.

However, what brought his faith in the Anglican Church to its breaking point was a political event. The proper relation between Church and state had been a problem that interested Newman since the beginning of his career. Describing Newman’s stance on this topic during the first years of the Oxford Movement, Velez writes:

³⁹ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 274.

⁴⁰ Adage translated by Newman as “The multitude may not falter in their judgement”. *Apo*, 213.

⁴¹ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 181–83.

⁴² *Apo*, 213.

⁴³ Cf. *Apo*, 215.

⁴⁴ *Apo*, 235.

⁴⁵ The last work Newman published was a translation of the *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius*. He started and ended his prolific writing career with the Fathers of the Church.

[Newman] opposed Parliament's control over the Anglican Church, and, at the same time, he considered the loss of Church prerogatives as an abuse. In some sense, he held an inconsistent position that favored government patronage of the Anglican or Established Church while objecting to State interference⁴⁶.

As the years went by, Newman resented more and more the interference of the state into ecclesial affairs. The main problem he perceived was that the Church gave up its autonomy and its adherence to dogma, thus betraying her mission, in order to secure financial support from the state. In 1837, as he preached the *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church* he realized that "the Church of England did not have an intellectual basis and was, in fact, a department of the State"⁴⁷ which dismantled his doctrine of the *Via Media*.

Further actions from the state, sanctioned by the Church, continued to grieve him. As he recalls the series of events that led to his conversion, he writes: "As if all this were not enough, there came the affair of the Jerusalem Bishopric [in 1841]"⁴⁸. In order to increase England's presence in the Middle East, the government decided to appoint a Bishop for Jerusalem, even though there were no Anglicans in Jerusalem⁴⁹. The Bishop was meant to preside over people from diverse Christian denominations and accept their adherence irrespective of their particular Creed, thus making the Church, effectively, a vehicle for the advancement of England's political ends⁵⁰.

Up to this moment, Newman had been silent regarding his disagreements with the Bishops of the Anglican Church. However, at

⁴⁶ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 104.

⁴⁷ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 209.

⁴⁸ *Apo*, 236.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Apo*, 238.

⁵⁰ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 234–36.

this time, he published an article on the *British Critic* to object to the Jerusalem Bishopric, preached four sermons on the state of the Church and wrote a formal protest to the Archbishop of Canterbury⁵¹. Although his efforts proved fruitless in regard to this political decision, they accelerated the process of conversion of many of his acquaintances⁵².

In the end, the episode proved decisive for him as well. He concludes the fifth part of his *Apologia* by saying: “As to the project of a Jerusalem Bishopric, I never heard of any good or harm it has ever done, except what it has done for me; which many think a great misfortune, and I one of the greatest of mercies. It brought me on to the beginning of the end”⁵³.

Although the events discussed so far did not happen in a strict chronological order, they trace the lines of Newman’s conversion. These developments reached a climactic point in the publication of what happened to be the last *Tract of the Times*, *Tract 90*, and the culmination of Newman’s efforts to remain in the Anglican Church⁵⁴.

By 1840 Newman could only justify his position as an Anglican cleric if the *Thirty-nine Articles*, upon which the English Church was sustained, indeed were taught from a Catholic perspective. His honesty, coherence and commitment to the truth shines through this endeavor, which he describes with vivacity in his *Apologia*, and is worth quoting at length:

The great stumbling-block lay in the 39 Articles [...] Anglicanism claimed to hold that the Church of England was nothing else than a continuation [...] of that one Church of which in old times Athanasius

⁵¹ Cf. *Ess*, ii 336–74; *SD*, 308–80; *Apo*, 239–41.

⁵² Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 344.

⁵³ *Apo*, 241.

⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that Newman signed this *Tract* on January 25, the feast of the conversion of St. Paul.

and Augustine were members. But, if so, the doctrine must be the same; the doctrine of the Old Church must live and speak in Anglican formularies, in the 39 Articles. Did it? Yes, it did; that is what I maintained; it did in substance, in a true sense [...] It was a matter of life and death to us to show it. And I believed that it could be shown [...] This was in March, 1840, when I went up to Littlemore. And, as it was a matter of life and death with us, all risks must be run to show it. I observe also, that, though my Tract was an experiment, it was, as I said at the time, 'no *feeler*,' the event showed it; for, when my principle was not granted, I did not draw back, but gave up. I would not hold office in a Church which would not allow my sense of the Articles⁵⁵.

Newman concluded that if the Catholic and Apostolic character of Anglican teaching were to be upheld, the *Thirty-nine articles* could not be interpreted according to the beliefs of their authors, but had to be interpreted in the Catholic sense⁵⁶. His understanding resulted in "the bursting of the *Catholicity* of the Anglican Church, that is, my *subjective idea* of that Church. Its bursting [...] would be a discovery that she was purely and essentially Protestant"⁵⁷.

As Newman foresaw, *Tract 90* was not well received by the Bishops of the Anglican Church. Some of his friends had tried to persuade him not to go ahead with its publication, but he firmly believed that his first loyalty was to truth itself. When asked to suppress *Tract 90* he replied that in conscience he could not do it; however, he agreed to discontinue the publication of the *Tracts* on the condition that this one was not censured⁵⁸.

Throughout these years, he had intended to sustain the Catholicity and Apostolicity of the Church of England, in order to

⁵⁵ *Apo*, 226–27.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Apo*, 227.

⁵⁷ *Apo*, 231.

⁵⁸ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 324–25.

prove that it was the legitimate continuation of the Church of the Fathers⁵⁹. With the publication of *Tract 90* he realized this was not the case so he chose semi-retirement in Littlemore, thinking he could remain in the Anglican Church by bringing to life the third of the notes of the Church, holiness:

Under these circumstances I turned for protection to the Note of Sanctity, with a view of showing that we had at least one of the necessary Notes, as fully as the Church of Rome [...] We had the Note of Life, –not any sort of life, not such only as can come of nature, but a supernatural Christian life, which could only come directly from above⁶⁰.

Newman's life in Littlemore from 1841 to 1846 is discussed in the next section. Regarding the fate of *Tract 90*, Newman thought the storm would pass if he kept silent, but in May 1842 the Bishop of Oxford condemned the Tractarian doctrines as erroneous and heretical⁶¹. As the Oxford Movement began with the publication of the first *Tract*, it ended with their suspension. Twenty years later, Newman recognized that “I was on my death-bed, as regards my membership with the Anglican Church, though at the time I became aware of it only by degrees”⁶².

1.3. Crisis and conversion (1841-1847)

In his *Apologia*, Newman asserts that his first doubts regarding the Anglican Church had surfaced in 1839, as he studied the Christological controversies from the early Church. He cites a letter from that year to explain the timeframe of his conversion⁶³: “If I had

⁵⁹ Cf. *Apo*, 203.

⁶⁰ *Apo*, 248.

⁶¹ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 348, 362.

⁶² *Apo*, 245.

⁶³ Cf. *Apo*, 312.

my will, I should like to wait till the summer of 1846, which would be a full seven years from the time that my convictions first began to fall on me. But I don't think I shall last so long"⁶⁴. Indeed, he did not; he asked to be received in "the one fold of Christ" in October 1845.

The prospect of being moved by feelings and not by reason, of causing scandal to others and undue suffering to his friends led him to make his retreat from the Anglican Church and his entry into the Roman Church a very gradual process⁶⁵. Furthermore, for a long time, he was haunted by the fear of being mistaken: "I had been deceived greatly once; how could I be sure that I was not deceived a second time? I then thought myself right; how was I to be certain that I was right now?"⁶⁶. The process of his conversion led him to reflect upon the nature of certitude and assent that he would systematize decades later in the *Grammar*:

He who made us, has so willed that in mathematics indeed we should arrive at certitude by rigid demonstration, but in religious inquiry we should arrive at certitude by accumulated probabilities [...] And thus I came to see clearly, and to have a satisfaction in seeing, that, in being led on into the Church of Rome, I was proceeding, not by any secondary or isolated grounds of reason, or by controversial points in detail, but was protected and justified [...] by a great and broad principle⁶⁷.

Three events can be identified as the formal steps that Newman took while seeking to uphold with coherence his commitment to truth in this crucial stage of his life: his resignation from St. Mary's and retreat into Littlemore, his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* and the resignation of his Fellowship in Oriel College. Only after taking these gravely pondered steps did he ask to be received into

⁶⁴ *Apo*, 322–23.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Apo*, 274, 282, 317.

⁶⁶ *Apo*, 318.

⁶⁷ *Apo*, 292.

the Catholic Church and began the discernment regarding the place he would occupy within her.

Since 1840 Newman had been troubled regarding his post as Vicar of St. Mary's Church in Oxford. His quandary was the following: as his doubts regarding the tenability of the Anglican faith deepened he no longer considered himself adequate to act as its public representative. However, he knew that giving up the pulpit would mean opening the door for liberalism to be preached from the University Church, and as a result, many faithful who were on the fence would leave for the Roman Catholic Church⁶⁸. He discussed the issue at length with Pusey, who convinced him to remain as Vicar of St. Mary's up to August 1843⁶⁹.

While the environment in Oxford, on account of *Tract 90*, became more antagonistic towards him, Newman spent more and more time in Littlemore, seeking to avoid controversy and scandal. He owned a plot of land and decided to turn the stables into cottages, making a place of retreat, study and prayer for himself and those who wished to join him in a life of greater discipline and devotion⁷⁰. He moved to Littlemore in September 1841, and soon others associated with him.

Newman was not seeking to found a monastery; rather, he allowed others who felt called to a similar lifestyle to come and join him, with the express condition that, if they desired to leave the Anglican Church for the Church of Rome, they would wait a significant period. He had a strong sense of duty to the Anglican Church and could not bear the incoherence of swaying away from her anyone under his care⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 315.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Apo*, 300.

⁷⁰ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 356–58.

⁷¹ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 369–72.

He devoted himself to the translation of the treatises of St. Athanasius which he published in two volumes, in 1842 and 1844, and in 1843 started directing a project to write and publish the lives of the English saints, as a means of renewal for the Anglican Church:

I thought it would be useful, as employing the minds of men who were in danger of running wild, bringing them from doctrine to history, and from speculation to fact; again, as giving them an interest in the English soil, and the English Church, and keeping them from seeking sympathy in Rome⁷².

The first completed sketch was that of St. Stephen Harding, written by Bernard Dalgairns (1818-1876), a member of his Littlemore community, and others were on track for publication. However, Newman resigned the editorship of the project within a few months as those whom he consulted judged that the narratives led their readers towards Rome⁷³. Saddened, Newman wrote to his friend James Hope (1812-1873) that “to find that the English Church cannot hear the lives of her saints [...] does not tend to increase my faith and confidence in her”⁷⁴.

What ultimately precipitated his resignation from St. Mary's was the conversion of William Lockhart (1820-1892), a young man “sent by his family to Newman to keep him from going over to the Roman Catholic Church”⁷⁵. As was his custom, Newman asked him to sign an agreement that he would remain in the Anglican Church for three years, but within a year, Lockhart announced his conversion. Newman saw in this event a sufficient reason to resign as the Vicar of St. Mary's⁷⁶. He explained in his *Apologia*: “After that, I felt it was

⁷² *Apo*, 302.

⁷³ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 281–82.

⁷⁴ *LD*, x 55.

⁷⁵ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 370.

⁷⁶ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 278.

impossible to keep my post there, for I had been unable to keep my word with my Bishop”⁷⁷.

Newman had hoped to resign the pulpit at St. Mary’s, one of great relevance, but keep the one at Littlemore, a Church built by himself which depended on St. Mary’s, but his successor opposed⁷⁸. After his resignation on September 1843, he remained for two years “in lay communion in the Church of England, attending its services as usual, and abstaining altogether from intercourse with Catholics [...] I did all this on principle; for I never could understand how a man could be of two religions at once”⁷⁹.

By the summer of 1843, Newman was convinced that the Anglican Church was in schism, but still had some reservations towards Rome: “I could not go to Rome, while I thought what I did of the devotions she sanctioned to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints”⁸⁰. His difficulty was not with the doctrines themselves, but rather with what he considered to be extreme forms of their expression not found in the first centuries of the Church⁸¹.

His study on the Christological controversies of the early Church had given Newman an initial insight regarding the development of Christian doctrine and his continued reflection made him see that perhaps here laid the key to understanding the contemporary Roman practices he did not see in the Apostolic Church⁸²,

so, I determined to write an essay on Doctrinal Development; and then, if, at the end of it, my convictions in favour of the Roman Church were not weaker, to make up my mind to seek admission into her fold. I

⁷⁷ *Apo*, 272.

⁷⁸ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 274.

⁷⁹ *Apo*, 306.

⁸⁰ *Apo*, 278.

⁸¹ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 220.

⁸² Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 472–73.

acted upon this resolution in the beginning of 1845, and worked at my Essay steadily into the autumn⁸³.

Newman undertook this endeavor with a firm conviction of its relevance: "I must do my best and then leave it to a higher power to prosper it"⁸⁴. For many years he had worried about others and acted seeking their spiritual good. However, he wrote the *Essay on Development* to clarify ideas for himself: "I had not absolutely intended to publish it, wishing to reserve to myself the chance of changing my mind when the argumentative views which were actuating me had been distinctly brought out before me in writing"⁸⁵. His research gave him the decisive reassurance for his conversion; he narrates: "Before I got to the end, I resolved to be received [in the Roman Catholic Church] , and the book remains in the state in which it was then, unfinished"⁸⁶. Twenty years later, he illustrated the principle of development of doctrine as follows:

The idea of the Blessed Virgin was as it were *magnified* in the Church of Rome, as time went on, but so were all the Christian ideas; as that of the Blessed Eucharist. The whole scene of pale, faint, distant Apostolic Christianity is seen in Rome, as through a telescope or magnifier. The harmony of the whole, however, is of course what it was⁸⁷.

Once he was able to clear his doubts regarding the doctrinal developments he saw in the Roman Church, "my own duty seemed clear [...] in my case it was, 'Physician, heal thyself.' My own soul was my first concern [...] I wished to go to my Lord by myself, and in my own way, or rather His way"⁸⁸.

⁸³ *Apo*, 318–19.

⁸⁴ *Apo*, 318.

⁸⁵ *Apo*, 280.

⁸⁶ *Apo*, 324.

⁸⁷ *Apo*, 289.

⁸⁸ *Apo*, 310.

In the last days of September, Newman concluded his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* and sent it to the press. Although he does not say so explicitly, this essay presents the intellectual justification for his conversion to the Church of Rome, thus it could be seen as a first *Apologia*. His last act before his conversion was to write Provost Hawkins and resign his Fellowship in Oriel.

On October 8, 1845, with his characteristic discretion and simplicity, Newman invited Fr. Dominic Barbieri (1792-1849), a Passionist, to Littlemore and asked to be received in the Catholic Church. His love for the truth “prevailed over many previous prejudices in religion, the modest comfort of his life, and the feeling of separation from his English culture and close friends”⁸⁹.

A few days before receiving Newman into the Catholic Church, aware that his conversion was imminent, Fr. Barbieri had written:

Dear Littlemore, I love thee! A little more still and we shall see happy results from Littlemore. When the learned and holy Superior of Littlemore will come, then I hope we shall see the beginning of a new era. Yes, we shall see again the happy days of Augustine, of Lanfanc, and Thomas⁹⁰.

Fr. Barbieri’s excitement was not isolated. Shortly after Newman’s conversion, Pope Gregory XVI sent him a silver crucifix with a relic of the true cross as a congratulatory gift⁹¹. However, for Newman his reception into the Roman Catholic Church was not a victory; he described himself as a ship “coming into port after a rough sea”⁹². He shared with his sister Jemima the non-triumphalist way in which he saw his conversion:

⁸⁹ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 506.

⁹⁰ Qtd. in Denis Gwynn, “Father Dominic Barberi and Littlemore,” in *Newman and Littlemore* (Oxford: Salesian Fathers, 1945), 41.

⁹¹ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 510.

⁹² *Apo*, 331.

I have a good name with many; I am deliberately sacrificing it. I have a bad name with more; I am fulfilling all their worst wishes and giving them their most coveted triumph. I am distressing all I love, unsettling all I have instructed or aided. I am going to those whom I do not know, and of whom I expect very little. I am making myself an outcast, and that at my age. Oh, what can it be but a stern necessity which causes this⁹³.

For some time, Newman thought of pursuing a secular career, doubtful that he was called to the priesthood; he knew that he should not remain in Littlemore, but had no idea about where to go. In another letter to Jemima, he asks rhetorically: "Am I to take a house for my books in the first town I come to?"⁹⁴.

Words from his famous poem written in the Mediterranean Sea in 1833 can describe Newman's state of mind:

The night is dark, and I am far from home, lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me⁹⁵.

Along with his budding community, he remained in Littlemore until February 1846, when they moved into the old Oscott College at the invitation of Bishop Nicholas Wiseman (1802-1865). For all his reservations regarding devotion to the Blessed Mother, it is significant that he named his new home Maryvale. Shortly after, Bishop Wiseman suggested to Newman that he spend some time in Rome studying at the *Propaganda Fidei*, a college established in the seventeenth century to train priests to serve in missionary countries. Wiseman wanted Newman to be well-trained in theology and return to England, as he

⁹³ *LD*, x 595.

⁹⁴ *LD*, xi 16.

⁹⁵ *VV*, 156.

ultimately “envisaged a body of priests engaged in apostolic work of an intellectual rather than paroquial nature”⁹⁶.

Newman’s time in Rome was one of deep reflection about his newly assumed identity. Although he was well known for his work in the Oxford Movement, he lived with simplicity and humility⁹⁷. At the time, he did not have any great projects in mind, but in the upcoming decades, he would embrace with passion those that were given to him by his superiors in the Church. Even though he suffered much because of the episcopacy, both in the Anglican and the Catholic Church, Newman’s loyalty and obedience to the Bishops were heroic⁹⁸.

While in Rome Newman visited several religious communities with the desire to discern where God was calling him. St. Philip Neri’s Oratory seemed the right choice:

The Oratorian ideal [...] attracted him from the first, because it combined the pastoral ministry with the intellectual and therefore could be, as he said, ‘a continuation, as it were, of my former self’ (*LD*, xi 306). Newman was a man deeply committed to the principle of continuity⁹⁹.

He was granted permission by Pope Pius IX to start the first Oratory in England, provided that he adapted the rule to fit the apostolic needs of English Catholics¹⁰⁰.

Newman received Holy Orders in the Catholic Church in May 1847, underwent a brief novitiate with the Oratorians, along with seven of his companions from Littlemore, and returned to England in December of that same year. Even though some friends had insinuated

⁹⁶ Ker, *Biography*, 318.

⁹⁷ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 326.

⁹⁸ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 540.

⁹⁹ Marvin O’Connell, “Newman: The Victorian Intellectual as Pastor,” *Theological Studies* 46, no. 2 (1985): 334.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 515–16.

that it would be better if he were not to return, Newman always saw his place among the English people. While he acknowledged that his presence would unsettle many, he found comfort in the realization that “St Paul must have unsettled all the good and conscientious people in the Jewish Church. Unsettling might be a blessing”¹⁰¹.

An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine would be the most appropriate work to conclude this section on Newman's crisis and conversion, as its writing provided him with the final arguments he needed to achieve certitude and take the step towards the Catholic Church¹⁰². However, as this book was commented upon in the previous section, the first work he wrote as a Catholic, *Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert*, will be briefly discussed here.

Loss and Gain is a novel which Newman wrote in 1848 as a response to another novel, written by Elizabeth Harris (1822-1952), which sought to portray the conversion process of many Tractarians. Newman judged that “its contents were as wantonly and preposterously fanciful, as they were injurious to those whose motives and actions it professed to represent”¹⁰³. Instead of writing a formal response, he decided to publish his own novel, which told the story of Charles Reding, who although a fictional character, bore many similarities to himself, the most important of which is his sensitivity to that which was real¹⁰⁴.

Along with the *Essay on Development* and the *Apologia*, *Loss and Gain* provides a rich insight into Newman's thoughts in relation to his conversion. Neither in his *Apologia*, nor in his *Letters and Diaries* does he go into detail regarding the moment of his longed-for reception

¹⁰¹ *LD*, x 103.

¹⁰² Cf. *Apo*, 324.

¹⁰³ *LG*, vii.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 333.

into the Catholic Church, but *Loss and Gain* provides us with a significant account of that moment:

A very few words will conduct us to the end of our history. It was Sunday morning about seven o'clock, and Charles had been admitted into the communion of the Catholic Church about an hour since. He was still kneeling in the church of the Passionists before the Tabernacle, in the possession of a deep peace and serenity of mind, which he had not thought possible on earth. It was more like the stillness which almost sensibly affects the ears when a bell that has long been tolling stops, or when a vessel, after much tossing at sea, finds itself in harbour. It was such as to throw him back in memory on his earliest years, as if he were really beginning life again. But there was more than the happiness of childhood in his heart; he seemed to feel a rock under his feet; it was the *soliditas Cathedræ Petri*¹⁰⁵.

1.4. Projects in the Catholic Church (1847-1864)

Newman spent half of his life in the Anglican Church and half of his life in the Catholic Church. If the Oxford Movement can clearly characterize his Anglican period, it is harder to identify one highlight from the Catholic period, other than his fight with the spirit of liberalism in religion¹⁰⁶. The amount of secondary literature could point to his leadership at the University of Dublin, on account of which he wrote *The Idea of a University*, a work which “has achieved classic status in the context of debates about the nature and purposes of universities”¹⁰⁷. However, in itself, the University of Dublin was an undertaking marked by frustration and failure.

¹⁰⁵ *LG*, 430.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *AR*, 64.

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Dunne, “Newman Now: Re-Examining the Concepts of ‘Philosophical’ and ‘Liberal’ in *The Idea of a University*,” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 54, no. 4 (2006): 412.

Newman's ministerial life as a Catholic priest was characterized by times of intense activity and times of silence and retreat. Even though he did not seek publicity and was delicately obedient to the Episcopacy, he was more often than not immersed in controversy due to his unyielding commitment to truth¹⁰⁸. A few words from his *Grammar of Assent* manifest the attitude with which he faced the challenges brought by these years: "Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion [...] No one, I say, will die for his own calculations: he dies for realities"¹⁰⁹. Newman willingly gave his life day by day for the truth found in the Catholic Church.

In order to continue with the development of his profile from the chosen perspective of his commitment to truth, four projects from his first years in the Catholic Church will be discussed: the foundation of the Oratory in England, the establishment of the Catholic University in Dublin, his editorship of the Catholic periodical *The Rambler* and, as a conclusion for this period of his life, the publication of the *Apologia*. As the events narrated in the previous sections, these did not occur in a strictly sequential manner. However, approaching them in this way provides the needed insights for this investigation.

From the beginning of his time in Oxford, Newman was sought as a mentor by young men whom he aided with great solicitude¹¹⁰. He also developed a deep friendship with some of his peers, a glimpse of which is given by his ample correspondence: he left over 20,000 letters which have been compiled into thirty-two volumes. Further, his life in community was semi-formalized during his final years in Littlemore, when some men joined him in his efforts to lead a more disciplined life.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 543.

¹⁰⁹ *GA*, 93.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 126.

It is no wonder then that the communities of the Oratorian fathers, whom he met in Rome while preparing for the priesthood, provided him with an attractive model for living his vocation in the Catholic Church: “As a model for the English Oratorians, Newman had in mind something akin to that of celibate Fellows in Oxford colleges who cultivated an intellectual life and, as clergymen, exercised pastoral care; this had been his way of life at Oriel, St. Mary’s, and Littlemore”¹¹¹. Newman realized that the priests and brothers from the Oratory could meet an important need of society by providing educated and pastoral priests for the Church in England and in his adaptation of the Oratorian rule provided for schools to prepare young Catholics for university studies¹¹².

On February 1, 1848 the Oratory of England was formally established. The original founding members, all of them converts, were soon joined by another religious community, the Wilfridians, a community that had formed around William Faber (1814-1863). Newman not only faced much suspicion from cradle Catholics who were doubtful of the authenticity of his conversion, he also had to deal with the internal division brought on by Faber and his followers¹¹³. Within two years, the group had split into two independent houses, one in Birmingham directed by Newman and another one in London directed by Faber¹¹⁴. Although the division eased the tension, the relationship among both Oratories would be a deep source of suffering for Newman during the rest of his life. As a way of synthesizing the rift between the two Oratories, Ker identifies that there was a

contrast between Newman’s view of the necessity for adaptation and change if the Oratory was to remain true to St Philip’s original inspiration, and Faber’s idea that a real Oratory was one that imitated

¹¹¹ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 516.

¹¹² Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 330.

¹¹³ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 338.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 519.

as exactly as possible the sixteenth-century Philip Neri and his Oratory [...] Did loyalty to the past mean development or revival? Did fidelity to the tradition imply growth or imitation? It was one of Newman's deepest convictions that to cling to the literal letter of the past was to lose its essential spirit, and therefore to betray it¹¹⁵.

As it was mentioned, the notion of development was pivotal for Newman's conversion, and it continued to have a central place in his thought.

In 1851, while Newman looked after the construction of the Parish Church of the Immaculate Conception, the last building in the Birmingham Oratory to be completed, he was approached by Archbishop Paul Cullen (1803-1878) with the prospect of establishing a Catholic University in Dublin¹¹⁶. Although he did not immediately jump on the project, after some conversations with Cullen he realized that "a greater field of usefulness cannot be. It will be the Catholic University of the English tongue for the whole world"¹¹⁷. From 1851 to 1858, he dedicated much of his time and energy to this project, crossing St. George's Channel fifty-six times¹¹⁸.

Cullen's first request was that he write some lectures to persuade the Irish people to support this nascent Catholic university over the well-established Queen's Colleges, which were funded by the government¹¹⁹. Newman was appointed Rector in November 1851, and in the following months, he delivered five lectures that went far better than he expected¹²⁰. Within a year, he completed nine discourses on the scope and nature of university education addressed to the Catholics

¹¹⁵ Ker, *Biography*, 441.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Colin Barr, "Ireland," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 52.

¹¹⁷ *LD*, xiv 262.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *AW*, 333.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Barr, "Ireland," 54.

¹²⁰ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 380.

of Dublin which were incorporated into *The Idea of a University*, along with additional lectures he delivered as Rector. These discourses, still discussed today, proved to be the most fruitful and consequential effect that the University had in the long run.

Through these lectures, Newman argues that knowledge and religion should not be at odds with each other. Speaking of the educated man, he states:

If he has one cardinal maxim in his philosophy, it is, that truth cannot be contrary to truth; if he has a second, it is, that truth often seems contrary to truth; and, if a third, it is the practical conclusion, that we must be patient with such appearances, and not be hasty to pronounce them to be really of a more formidable character¹²¹.

Grounded in the conviction that truth is the object of knowledge, Newman explains that “when we inquire what is meant by truth, I suppose it is right to answer that truth means facts and their relations [as knowledge is] the apprehension of these facts, whether in themselves, or in their mutual positions and bearings”¹²². Newman calls a knowledgeable person someone whom today would be called an insightful person, a person who shows a good understanding of people and situations and can judge accordingly¹²³.

This kind of knowledge is the mark of the person with a “truly great intellect, [able to take] a connected view of old and new, past and present, far and near, and which has an insight into the influence of all these one on another”¹²⁴. For Newman, knowledge is not a mere

¹²¹ *Idea*, 461.

¹²² *Idea*, 45.

¹²³ Cf. Edward Miller, “Newman’s *Idea of a University*: Is It Viable Today?,” *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* 12, no. 1 (1991): 6.

¹²⁴ *Idea*, 134.

accumulation of data, it is philosophy and constitutes the proper end of university education¹²⁵.

In the context of his day, Newman's University offered a remarkable openness to non-Catholic knowledge and authors, allowing for the works of Protestants to be read, used, critiqued and challenged¹²⁶. Moreover, the insight that each science had its own laws enabled Newman to uphold and, at the same time, limit the role of theology and its bearings on other sciences, while protecting its proper autonomy.

Although Newman exerted himself in advertising and recruiting professors and students, his relationship with the Irish Bishops was difficult as he did not make their priorities his own¹²⁷:

[Newman] thought that laymen should have the day-to-day management of the university, and that under ordinary circumstances the president and the teaching faculty should be able to run the university. The Irish Episcopate, however, was not ready for these ideas and resented having an English convert in charge of an institution in their country¹²⁸.

The tension created by the division of his time between the Birmingham Oratory, where Newman habitually spent seven months

¹²⁵ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 390.

¹²⁶ Cf. Barr, "Ireland," 56.

¹²⁷ Cf. Barr, "Ireland," 58–63.

¹²⁸ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 530. Although this is the most common understanding of what went wrong in the Catholic University of Dublin, Collin Barr, using broader sources than those left by Newman, argues that "the University's fate was influenced by a number of causes, including Irish obstructionism, Newman's own personality, and the refusal of the British government to grant it a charter to award degrees". Barr, "Ireland," 48. Regarding Newman's personality he writes: "Although a compassionate friend, dedicated priest, and insightful spiritual advisor, Newman lacked what might be called practical empathy. In any matter touching his own character, reputation, plans, status, or beliefs he rarely saw the other point of view or the constraints under which others operated". Barr, "Ireland," 60–61.

of the year, and the University in Dublin led him to resign as Rector of the University in 1857 and fully retreat at the end of 1858.

As he settled back in Birmingham, Newman realized that the situation of the Catholic Church in England was quite different than when he had started traveling to Ireland eight years before:

The English Catholic community had been revitalized and enormously strengthened, intellectually by the wave of conversions from the Oxford Movement and numerically by the influx of Irish immigrants. The restoration of the hierarchy had given it a new status [...] But the phenomenal growth of a tiny, despised sect into a major religious body brought with it new strains and tensions. The clash with the London Oratory turned out to be the prelude for Newman of a much larger conflict, in which similar principles were at stake, although the issue was no longer the nature of the Oratory, but the nature of the Church itself, the problem became not how to be an Oratorian, but how to be a Catholic in the nineteenth century¹²⁹.

Newman's work in the University, through which he advocated for the laity to hold leadership positions, led him to reflect on a more general way about the role of the laity in the Church. This reflection played a central role in his next apostolic undertaking: the editorship of *The Rambler*, a periodical founded by a Catholic convert, which Newman assumed in 1859 intending to make it more favorable towards Rome. Although he accepted this project following the desires of his own Archbishop William Ullathorne (1806-1889) Newman was soon rejected by most of the English Episcopate when he advocated for consulting the laity on practical matters related to the life of the Church and was asked to resign before the end of the year¹³⁰.

¹²⁹ Ker, *Biography*, 463. Based on Newman's writings, this dissertation, among other objectives, intends to show an aspect of how to be a Catholic in the twenty-first century.

¹³⁰ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 540-43.

By suggestion of Ullathorne he independently published his well-known essay entitled *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, as he strongly believed that “the body of the faithful is one of the witnesses to the fact of the tradition of revealed doctrine, and because their *consensus* through Christendom is the voice of the Infallible Church”¹³¹. He advocated for laity who “know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold and what they do not [...] who know so much of history that they can defend it”¹³².

This essay ignited further controversy, and Newman was accused of heresy¹³³. The Holy See asked for clarification, but this letter never reached Newman and “this episode saddened Newman and made him retire from public life. He [...] wished to be left alone”¹³⁴. A moving letter from 1961 to his friend Maria Giberne (1802-1885) offers a glimpse of the state of his soul:

As for me, my writing days are for the present day over. The long cares I have had, the disappointments of religious hopes, and the sense of cruelty in word and deed on the part of those from whom I deserved other things, –a penance which I have had in one shape or another for thirty years, –at length have fallen on my nerves– and though I am otherwise well, I am sent here to be idle¹³⁵.

Charles Kingsley's accusations of untruthfulness, published in several pamphlets, would bring him out of his silence in 1864. Working fifteen hours a day for three months, Newman wrote his reply

¹³¹ *Cons.*, 63.

¹³² *Prepos.*, 390.

¹³³ A letter from Msgr. George Talbot (1816-1886), secretary of Pope Pius IX, to Card. Henry Manning (1808-1892), primate of England, relates the opinion that some in Rome had of Newman: “Dr Newman is the most dangerous man in England, and you will see that he will make use of the laity against Your Grace”. Qtd. in Edmund Purcell, *Life of Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 2:318.

¹³⁴ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 544.

¹³⁵ *LD*, xx 38.

which was published in pamphlets as well. In these he forcefully narrates the history of his religious opinions, acknowledging in the preface that he “loved honesty better than name, and truth better than dear friends”¹³⁶. The *Apologia* signaled a new beginning in Newman’s public life, as his name and reputation were restored in England¹³⁷.

1.5. Gathering the fruits (1864-1890)

Newman lived with the awareness that he would not be fully understood in his lifetime and, on several occasions, was disheartened by what he called hopeless misrepresentations of his work¹³⁸. After the misunderstandings he faced in several projects he undertook, in 1865 he decided not to worry about pleasing anyone other than God¹³⁹. In a letter to Henry Wilberforce (1807-1873) he protested:

I have always preached that things which are really useful, still are done, according to God’s will, at one time or another –and that, if you attempt at a wrong time, what in itself is right, you perhaps become a heretic or schismatic. What I may aim at may be real and good, but it may be God’s will it should be done a hundred years later [...] Of course it is discouraging to be out of joint with time, and to be snubbed and stopped as soon as I begin to act¹⁴⁰.

However, the final years of his life offered Newman recognition from various fronts for his untiring commitment to truth. He also had the opportunity to reconnect with dear friends like Edward Pusey and John Keble, with whom he had labored in the Oxford Movement¹⁴¹.

¹³⁶ *Apo*, 82.

¹³⁷ Cf. Jan Klaver, “The Apologia,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 454.

¹³⁸ Cf. *LD*, xxv 279; Ker, *Biography*, 650.

¹³⁹ Cf. *AW*, 260–61.

¹⁴⁰ *LD*, xix 179–80.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 550.

He remained fairly active up to 1886 when his health began to fail, and died as well-respected Cardinal in the Catholic Church on August 11, 1890, surrounded by his brothers in the Birmingham Oratory.

In order to bring to a conclusion this exposition of Newman's life from the perspective of his commitment to truth, three of his works, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, and the *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius* will be briefly presented in this section. These were chosen as they are an expression of Newman's most systematic treatment of topics that deeply interested him throughout his life: the relationship between faith and reason, the nature of conscience and the Fathers of the Church. Further, the honors he received from the Anglican and the Catholic Church will be highlighted.

The relative peace that came after the publication of his *Apologia* was crowned with the publication of *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, in which he had been working for thirty years¹⁴². If the *Essay on Development* is considered a first justification for Newman's religious beliefs, the *Grammar* could be a third one following the *Apologia*, as he develops his views regarding apprehension, assent, certitude and belief in a philosophical manner. Ultimately he wrote the *Grammar* as a response to the skepticism of his friend William Froude (1810-1879). However, Newman was "careful to insist that the *Grammar of Assent* was no theological or philosophical treatise but an inquiry into how the mind responds to evidence"¹⁴³.

During his first years in Oxford Newman had become well acquainted with the *Logic* of Aristotle and with Butler's *Analogy of Religion*. His interest in philosophical themes deepened once he became Catholic and from 1858 on he kept a notebook which "takes us to the heart of Newman's thinking and justifies presenting him as

¹⁴² Cf. *LD*, xxv 199.

¹⁴³ O'Connell, "Newman as Pastor," 338.

serious, indeed a major philosopher”¹⁴⁴; however the publication of this notebook did not materialize during his lifetime¹⁴⁵.

In 1868 he confided in Edward Bellasis (1800-1873) his desires for his next intellectual work: “I have my own subject, one I have wished to do all my life [...] one, which, if I did, I should of course think it the best thing I have done”¹⁴⁶. He was referring to the exposition of his philosophy of knowledge, which he presented in the *Grammar of Assent*, a work that can be considered the maturation of his *Oxford University Sermons*¹⁴⁷.

Settling for a course of argumentation for the *Grammar* took him three years of very dedicated work; he later acknowledged that he wrote or rewrote a great part of this essay over ten times¹⁴⁸. The final draft could be considered not one but two works, with the first part dealing with assent and apprehension and the second one with assent and certitude. He begins each part by presenting his general theory of knowledge which he then applies to the specific object of the knowledge of God.

Once published, the *Grammar* was sold out in one day and before the end of the year two more editions had been printed¹⁴⁹. In it Newman displays his “profound acquaintance with the human heart [...], a resolve to stand by experience, and a subtlety of expression

¹⁴⁴ William Myers, *The Thoughtful Heart. The Metaphysics of John Henry Newman* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2013), 203.

¹⁴⁵ These notes were published posthumously by Adrian Boekraad and Edward Sillem as *The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman: The Text* (1970). William Myers published a second edition, which is easier to read, as part of his work *The Thoughtful Heart: The Metaphysics of John Henry Newman* (2013).

¹⁴⁶ *LD*, xxiv 112.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *US*, xvii; Ian Ker, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), xxiii.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *LD*, xxiv 389.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Ker, “Introduction to the *Grammar of Assent*,” xlvi.

corresponding to his fine analysis”¹⁵⁰. William Froude, with whom Newman had kept an intense correspondence regarding religion and certainty for over four decades, died in 1878, a year before Newman made the last revisions to this work¹⁵¹.

The dogma of papal infallibility was defined in 1870, the same year in which Newman published the *Grammar of Assent* and the defense of its true Catholic sense provided Newman with a new intellectual challenge. Three times he declined the invitation to assist the First Vatican Council as a theological advisor three times and intended to stay away from the public controversy it began¹⁵². However, after William Gladstone (1809-1898), who coincidentally was a good friend of his, published a pamphlet criticizing the decrees of the Council, Newman saw the need to manifest his thoughts¹⁵³.

Newman's response took the form of a letter to the Duke of Norfolk, Henry Fitzalan Howard (1847-1917), a leading Catholic layman who had been Newman's student at the Oratory school. The letter, or rather pamphlet, was 150 pages long and Newman described it as “the toughest job I ever had”¹⁵⁴. In this work, Newman “articulated his mature view of conscience and advanced a balanced, sober and consistently minimalist interpretation of the [...] dogma of papal infallibility”¹⁵⁵. His brilliant development on conscience is found at its core:

Conscience is not a long-sighted selfishness, nor 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

¹⁵⁰ William Barry, “John Henry Newman,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1913), 799.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 564.

¹⁵² Cf. *LD*, xxvii 158–59.

¹⁵³ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 682.

¹⁵⁴ *LD*, xxvii 158.

¹⁵⁵ Hütter, *Newman on Truth and Its Counterfeits*, 13.

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, and, even though the eternal priesthood throughout the Church could cease to be, in it the sacerdotal principle would remain and would have a sway¹⁵⁶.

The positive reception of the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, which consolidated his prestige in England and abroad, took Newman by surprise and he wrote a friend that the change in public opinion towards him was nothing short of a revolution¹⁵⁷. Although he did not lack critics, at this point of his life, he was seventy-four years old, he was highly respected by both Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

The Anglicans showed their recognition first. In 1877 Samuel Wayte (1819-1898) from Trinity College, who had been a Fellow alongside Newman and was now the College's President, offered Newman an Honorary Fellowship. Newman's response discloses the depths of his affection:

Trinity College is ever, and ever has been, in my habitual thoughts. Views of its buildings are at my bed side and bring before me morning and evening my undergraduate days, and those good friends, nearly all now gone, whom I loved so much during them, and my love of whom has since their death ever kept me in affectionate loyalty to the college itself¹⁵⁸.

Before accepting, though, Newman consulted his Archbishop as the Catholic Hierarchy was not favorable of mixed education¹⁵⁹. Ullathorne urged him to accept the compliment noting that it would be Newman who would be honoring the College, not the other way

¹⁵⁶ *Diff*, ii 248–49.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *LD*, xvii 243; Ker, *Biography*, 694.

¹⁵⁸ *LD*, xxviii 279.

¹⁵⁹ The term mixed education referred to the practice of Catholics attending Anglican or Protestant educational institutions.

around. Ker points out the significance of Newman ending his career as he had begun it, as a member of Trinity College¹⁶⁰.

As Newman received this award from an Anglican institution, his elevation to the Cardinalate in the Catholic Church was being considered. This had as its “explicit object [...] to secure Rome’s recognition of Newman’s loyalty and orthodoxy”¹⁶¹. Newman accepted this honor for the apostolic fruitfulness he foresaw it could bring about: “I knew many would become Catholics, as they ought to be, if only I was pronounced by Authority to be a *good* Catholic”¹⁶².

Newman petitioned to Pope Leo XIII to exempt him from the custom Cardinals had of living in Rome, request to which the Pope readily agreed, and chose as his motto a phrase from St. Francis de Sales: “*Cor ad cor loquitur*”, Heart speaks to heart. He traveled to Rome one last time on April 1879 and on May 12 delivered his famous address known as the “Biglietto Speech” in which he identified his life’s work as a fight against liberalism in religion. His words after the initial formalities reveal his untiring commitment to truth:

In a long course of years I have made many mistakes. I have nothing of that high perfection which belongs to the writings of Saints, namely, that error cannot be found in them; but what I trust I may claim throughout all that I have written is this –an honest intention, an absence of private ends, a temper of obedience, a willingness to be corrected, a dread of error, a desire to serve the Holy Church, and, through the Divine mercy, a fair measure of success¹⁶³.

Newman returned to Birmingham a Fellow of an Oxford College and a Cardinal of the Roman Church, “the two halves had come

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 711–12.

¹⁶¹ Ker, *Biography*, 715.

¹⁶² *LD*, xxix 160.

¹⁶³ *AR*, 63–64.

together in an astonishing way at the very end”¹⁶⁴. Finally free from controversies, he dedicated his time to prepare a uniform edition of his works which he finished in 1881 with the publication of the *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius*¹⁶⁵.

His study of the Church Fathers had played a central role in igniting his intellectual journey and now it marked its conclusion. Newman’s deepest appreciation for them is well summed up in these lines from a letter he wrote to Edward Pusey in 1864: “The Fathers made me a Catholic [...] I do not wish to say more than they suggest to me, and will not say less”¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶⁴ Ker, *Biography*, 722.

¹⁶⁵ The uniform edition of Newman’s works was published in thirty-six volumes between 1868 and 1881 by Logmans, Green, and Co. of London.

¹⁶⁶ *Diff*, ii 24–25.

2. Newman's philosophical profile

Edward Sillem (1916-1964), the editor of Newman's *Philosophical Notebook*, describes his philosophy as "something it can never be, that is to say, something too personal [...] instead of presenting his ideas and developing them objectively and systematically for their own sake, he is ever present himself in all he has to say"¹. Thus it was fitting to start this dissertation by presenting Newman's biographical profile from the perspective of his commitment to truth.

It is also fitting to note that his philosophical views are marked by his person and relationships. Newman was likely familiar with the adage pronounced by another English clergyman, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main"²; he lived out this principle with intensity throughout his career:

[Newman] absorbed from other men what nourished his own thought; but in the process of absorption what had been taken from others was so transformed [...] that he himself saw what was initially the thought of another as most intimately and organically his own³.

Having begun his education at Trinity College, Newman acquired, under Whately, a deep familiarity with Aristotle's logic, a field of research in which he would continue to work, up to the publication of the *Grammar of Assent*. Regarding his relationship with

¹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 1.

² John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 108. Originally published in 1624.

³ James Cameron, "The Night Battle: Newman and Empiricism," *Victorian Studies* 4, no. 2 (1960): 102.

Whately he wrote in 1852: “He was the first person who opened my mind, that is, who gave it ideas and principles to cogitate upon”⁴.

Although he read widely and philosophy was central to his interests, Newman’s philosophical mind was not dominated by any single influence⁵. He nourished and challenged his ideas with the thought of diverse British theologians, scientists and philosophers; however he “was never what would be called the disciple of any [one of them]”⁶ and his individual and controversial spirit led him to sidestep established philosophical and theological systems⁷.

In his discussion regarding the influences on Newman’s philosophy, Sillem mentions the professors and students of the Oriel Common Room, where Newman understood and exercised philosophy as a conversation within a community brought together by a common purpose⁸. In this respect, it is worth noting that his major works are “not a systematic collection but a series of responses to particular issues. In fact, Newman understood most of his works as a response to some specific occasion”⁹.

There is considerable divergence among philosophers of the regarding Newman’s specific place in the history of philosophy¹⁰. Although he was always in dialogue with his predecessors and contemporaries, he “belongs to no school [...] Newman is indeed one

⁴ *LD*, xv 176.

⁵ Cf. Laurence Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2007), 14.

⁶ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1946–75), 8:513.

⁷ Cf. Gerard Magill, “The Intellectual Ethos of John Henry Newman,” in *Discourse and Context: An Interdisciplinary Study of John Henry Newman* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 3.

⁸ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 164.

⁹ Frederick Aquino, *Communities of Informed Judgment: Newman’s Illative Sense and Accounts of Rationality* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 12.

¹⁰ Cf. Daniel Morris-Chapman, “Scepticism, Truth and Religious Belief in the Thought of John Henry Newman: A Contribution to Contemporary Debate” (PhD Dissertation, University of Bristol, 2014), 24.

of the most extraordinarily personal or individualistic philosophers in history”¹¹ –personal, but not isolated:

[Newman] considered that knowledge is an intellectual possession of the truth which is the more intimately our own when held in union with other people who share it with us, for he thought that other people act upon our minds at a deeper level than things, methods or arguments. He sought objective truth by the method of dialogue, in and through the experience of inter-subjectivity [...], that is to say in the intercourse of man with man, and the action of mind on mind¹².

With the purpose of sketching Newman's philosophical profile, this chapter will start by presenting his grounding on the philosophy of Aristotle. Next it will identify five historical British thinkers, along with three of his contemporaries, who were a stimulus for the development of his ideas. It will conclude by discussing three philosophical currents that have claimed him as their own in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

2.1. Aristotelian grounding

It is widely accepted that Aristotle played a significant role in the development of Newman's philosophy, that his mind was “formed and disciplined by the study of Aristotle”¹³ although the extent of this influence is up for debate. Copleston states that “though nobody would call him [Newman] an Aristotelian, the Greek philosopher certainly exercised some influence on his mind”¹⁴. Sillem places him as the greatest influence in Newman's thought, noting that he “regarded him

¹¹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 4.

¹² Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 8.

¹³ Joshua Hochschild, “The Re-Imagined Aristotelianism of John Henry Newman,” *Modern Age* 45, no. 4 (2003): 334.

¹⁴ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 8:512.

[Aristotle] with an esteem he rarely manifested for other philosophers”¹⁵.

Newman’s admiration for Aristotle spanned all his life. Thomas Short (1789-1879), his first tutor at Trinity College, started his education in 1817 with lectures on Aristotle’s *Rethoric*¹⁶. In 1820, Newman shared with his aunt Elizabeth that his principal amusement was the study of Aristotle: “The truth is that of late months, I have been so exclusively ranging the paths of philosophy that I find it very difficulty [*sic*] to descend into the ways of common conversation”¹⁷. The paths of philosophy he was ranging consisted in the study of Aristotle’s *Logic*, *Rhetoric* and *Ethics*¹⁸.

Once a Fellow in Oriel, Newman worked during six years in close collaboration with Whately, “the leader of a group intent on restoring the philosophy of Aristotle to a position of respect an honour in the University”¹⁹. Guided by Whately, his first publications included an essay on Aristotle’s *Poetics* and a few articles on Aristotle’s philosophy which Whately incorporated into his famous work *Elements of Logic*²⁰. As a tutor in Oriel, Newman expressed concern regarding the foreseeable exclusion of Aristotle from the curriculum if the government of the college changed²¹.

During these early years Newman was “fully engaged in the revival of Aristotelian philosophy”²² and later in his life he would use it as a compass for his work, especially for the *Oxford University Sermons*, the *Idea of a University* and the *Grammar of Assent*. These

¹⁵ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 151.

¹⁶ Cf. Edward Short, *Newman and His Contemporaries* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 1.

¹⁷ *LD*, i 98.

¹⁸ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 557.

¹⁹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 153.

²⁰ Cf. *AW*, 67.

²¹ Cf. *LD*, ii 186.

²² Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 4.

three works include eloquent tributes to Aristotle; the *Grammar* can be cited as an example: “As to the intellectual position from which I have contemplated the subject, Aristotle has been my master”²³.

However, the influence that Aristotle had on Newman is better assessed, not through the individualization of his praises, but rather through a study of the Aristotelian concepts further developed by Newman. Those he qualified or overcame should also be considered, because “though Newman always held Aristotle in high regard, he was at times a critical admirer of his system, and in his usual way, very selective in what he took from it”²⁴. This dissertation argues that what Newman acquired from Aristotle was not the totality of his teachings, but a frame of mind or a method²⁵.

This frame of mind is manifested primarily in Newman's firm grounding in the philosophical realism championed by Aristotle. Newman “follows Aristotle in considering our experience of reality as the source from which all our knowledge is derived”²⁶. In his twelfth university sermon he invites his listeners to “take things as we find them: let us not attempt to distort them into what they are not. True philosophy deals with facts. We cannot make facts. All our wishing cannot change them. We must use them”²⁷. Moreover, Newman considered reality not only as the starting point for knowledge, but as its goal or objective²⁸. In this regard he echoes Aristotle who “found

²³ GA, 430.

²⁴ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 157.

²⁵ Cf. Angelo Bottone, *Philosophical Habit of Mind: Rhetoric and Person in John Henry Newman's Dublin Writings* (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2010), 76; David Newsome, “Newman and Oxford,” in *Newman: A Man for Our Time* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1990), 39.

²⁶ Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 20.

²⁷ US, 231.

²⁸ Cf. Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 40.

the very possibility of knowledge to lie in an identity between the knowing mind and the reality known”²⁹.

In 1840 Newman credited Aristotle for providing “the boldest, simplest, and most comprehensive theory which has been invented for the analysis of the reasoning process”³⁰. Among these two philosophers the greatest conformity is found in their understanding of the nature of the intellect and of knowledge. When Sillem indicates that Newman associated Aristotle with the fundamental themes of his own philosophy, he refers to the idea that “knowledge is always a personal possession, woven within the very fabric of the individual life of the person who knows”³¹. In this conception Newman follows the Aristotelian principle that knowledge is the perfection of man. Culler explains it thus:

The full development and perfection of the rational soul, then, was the proper end of man, and Aristotle often called this simply ‘knowledge’. ‘All men by nature desire to know,’ he said in the first sentence of the *Metaphysics*, and in the *Politics* he added: ‘and the nature of a thing is its end. For what each living thing is when fully developed, we call its nature...’. Thus, if it is man’s nature to know and his end is the perfection of his nature, then knowledge is an end which may be pursued simply for its own sake [...] Both Aristotle and Newman reassert this view explicitly³².

The view that “knowledge is capable of being its own end”³³, which is the central thesis of Newman’s fifth discourse regarding university education, is reminiscent of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* where he speaks of “understanding and knowledge pursued for their own

²⁹ Dwight Culler, “Newman on the Uses of Knowledge,” *The Journal of General Education* 4, no. 4 (1950): 278.

³⁰ *US*, 258.

³¹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 162.

³² Culler, “Newman on the Uses of Knowledge,” 274.

³³ *Idea*, 103.

sake”³⁴. Newman relied heavily on Aristotle in the way he envisioned the unity and universality of knowledge for the curriculum of the University of Dublin. Specifically, his explanation of the manner in which different sciences require their proper methodology and shape the human mind in their own special way is based on Aristotle’s principles³⁵. Newman explains in the *Grammar*:

that a special preparation of mind is required for each separate department of inquiry and discussion [...] is strongly insisted upon in well-known passages of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Speaking of the variations which are found in the logical perfection of proof in various subject-matters, Aristotle says, ‘A well-educated man will expect exactness in every class of subject, according as the nature of the thing admits; for it is much the same mistake to put up with a mathematician using probabilities, and to require demonstration of an orator. Each man judges skillfully in those things about which he is well-informed; it is of these that he is a good judge’ [...] These words of a heathen philosopher, laying down broad principles about all knowledge, express a general rule³⁶.

Newman also applies to knowledge the distinction that Aristotle makes in his *Politics* between useful and liberal possessions, making it the core of his conception of liberal education³⁷: “All that I have been now saying is summed up in a few characteristic words of the great Philosopher. ‘Of possessions,’ he says, ‘those rather are useful, which bear fruit; those liberal, which tend to enjoyment.’”³⁸.

³⁴ Aristotle, “Metaphysics,” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans. William Ross (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2:982a.

³⁵ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 161.

³⁶ *GA*, 414–15.

³⁷ Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, “The Very Idea of a University: Aristotle, Newman, and Us,” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 57, no. 4 (2009): 349.

³⁸ *Idea*, 109.

Another aspect in which Newman builds upon Aristotle is in the importance he gives to allowing oneself to be guided by the experience that others have in their field of knowledge. After citing Aristotle Newman affirms that “instead of trusting logical science, we must trust persons, namely, those who by long acquaintance with their subject have a right to judge. And if we wish ourselves to share in their convictions and the grounds of them, we must follow their history, and learn as they have learned”³⁹. Both, Aristotle and Newman uphold the “social transmission of tested experience and of perfected modes of knowledge”⁴⁰ as central elements in their theories of knowledge. They also share a nuanced skepticism with regard to the individual assumptions that provide the foundation to reasoning⁴¹.

These principles are unified by Newman in one of his most original contributions, the Illative Sense, which can be defined as “that function of the intellect that enables us to integrate and evaluate all the evidence, together with the conclusions of our inferences, with respect to the likelihood of a particular conclusion being true”⁴². In order to function properly, the Illative Sense needs to bring forth implicit knowledge from diverse disciplines and be adjusted within a community of educated individuals in that subject⁴³. When introducing these characteristics of the Illative Sense, Newman makes reference to Aristotle’s *phronesis* explaining that as *phronesis* is the faculty that guides the mind in matters of conduct, the Illative Sense guides it in matters of reason⁴⁴. The analogy between Newman’s Illative Sense and Aristotle’s *phronesis* has been widely studied⁴⁵.

³⁹ GA, 341–42.

⁴⁰ Aquino, *Communities of Informed Judgment*, 67.

⁴¹ Cf. Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 35.

⁴² Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 124.

⁴³ Cf. Aquino, *Communities of Informed Judgment*, 69.

⁴⁴ Cf. GA, 354–55.

⁴⁵ A few relevant studies include Frederick Aquino, “Cultivating Personal Judgement,” in *Communities of Informed Judgment*, 48–94. Andrew Meszaros, “The Influence of Aristotelian

As it can be seen through this cast of topics, “there is ground to think that it was Aristotle who originally put Newman on to the basic themes of so many of his works”⁴⁶. After all, in a text where Newman discussed many of these topics he concludes categorically:

While the world lasts, will Aristotle’s doctrine on these matters last, for he is the oracle of nature and of truth. While we are men, we cannot help, to a great extent, being Aristotelians, for the great Master does but analyze the thoughts, feelings, views, and opinions of human kind. He has told us the meaning of our own words and ideas, before we were born. In many subject-matters, to think correctly, is to think like Aristotle; and we are his disciples whether we will or no, though we may not know it⁴⁷.

Aristotle’s influence can also be appreciated in Newman’s ethics, particularly in his well-known portrait of a gentleman. Referring to Aristotle, he explicitly states that his ethical views “are derived not simply from the Gospel, but prior to it from heathen moralists”⁴⁸. There are abundant similarities between Newman’s gentleman described in the eight discourse of his *Idea of a University* and Aristotle’s magnanimous man described in the fourth chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Begley offers considerable evidence to support his claim that “the similarity between these two moral portraits is too great to be accidental or unconscious. Newman has composed his sketch of the gentleman according to Aristotle’s pattern”⁴⁹. Even though only a few scholars assert that Newman followed Aristotle’s

Rhetoric on J. H. Newman’s Epistemology,” *Journal for the History of Modern Theology* 20, no. 2 (2013): 192–225. Laurence Richardson, “The Illative Sense,” in *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 121–26. Gerard Verbeke, “Aristotelian Roots of Newman’s Illative Sense,” in *Newman and Gladstone Centennial Essays*, ed. James Bastable (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1978), 177–95.

⁴⁶ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 163.

⁴⁷ *Idea*, 109–10.

⁴⁸ *GA*, 430.

⁴⁹ Ronald Begley, “‘To Diffident to Define’: The Gentleman in Newman’s *The Idea of a University*,” *Faith & Reason* 19, no. 4 (1993): 348.

pattern, it is widely agreed that there are ample similarities in both portraits⁵⁰. In short, Newman is at the source of so many departures because he revived the ancient Greek tradition of thought and brought it in contact with contemporary problems⁵¹.

However, Newman not only built upon Aristotle's philosophy, he also left it behind when he considered it too narrow for his purposes⁵². Although he based much of his theory of knowledge on Aristotle's logic, and initially professed admiration for its principles, it was precisely in this discipline where he came to recognize Aristotle as insufficient. Bottone explains: "With the development of his own thought Newman's interest in Aristotle waned. He became particularly dissatisfied with Aristotelian logic as it was unable to grasp the complexity of human life"⁵³.

Two aspects can be identified in Newman's dissatisfaction. On the one hand, in the context of his study of the Arian heresies, Newman "rejected as untrue to our experience the view that we have no intellectual knowledge of particular material things [...] He found it far too 'physical' in character to harmonise with his own 'Sacramental' or Platonic idea of the material world"⁵⁴. In his book *The Arians of the Fourth Century* Newman writes, in relation to Aristotle, that "that philosopher's logical system confessedly is to baffle an adversary, or at most to detect error, rather than to establish truth"⁵⁵. His recognition of this limitation of Aristotle's logic was the likely source of his rift with Whately after six years of working with him⁵⁶.

⁵⁰ Cf. Mary K. Tillman, "The Philosophic Habit of Mind: Aristotle and Newman on the End of Liberal Education," *Philosophical Inquiry in Education* 3, no. 2 (1990): 24.

⁵¹ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 46.

⁵² Cf. Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 8.

⁵³ Bottone, *Philosophical Habit of Mind*, 79.

⁵⁴ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 158.

⁵⁵ *Ari*, 29.

⁵⁶ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 158.

On the other hand, in his most mature work on the topic of knowledge, the *Grammar of Assent*, published forty-four years after his first university sermon on the matter, “he openly criticizes Aristotle for what he considers to be his rather narrow view on reasoning. It appears that Newman thought that it only comprised what he designates as Formal Inference”⁵⁷. Newman writes that “in spite of Aristotle, I will not allow that genuine reasoning is an instrumental art”⁵⁸; he acknowledges that the person’s reasoning process is not as simple as following a rule of logic and introduces the Illative Sense.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that Copleston, in his entry on Aristotle, expresses that it is unjustifiable to entertain the claim that the analysis Aristotle made of the reasoning process is complete. In order to illustrate his point, he makes a reference to Newman saying that “for instance, [Aristotle] did not consider that other form of inference discussed by Cardinal Newman in his *Grammar of Assent*, when the mind derives conclusions, not from certain propositions but from certain concrete facts”⁵⁹.

Furthermore, a second subject in which Newman diverts from Aristotle is on the importance he ascribes to metaphysics. In the philosophical climate of the University of Oxford at his time, metaphysics had negative notoriety, being unduly associated with Kantian idealism and “frowned upon as being grounded on altogether unverifiable and gratuitous hypothesis”⁶⁰. This conception led Newman to write in 1885, in one of his last essays, that “my turn of mind has never led me towards metaphysics; rather it has been logical, ethical, practical”⁶¹. Moreover, after a few years he abandoned his project of writing a book he had titled *Discursive Enquiries on*

⁵⁷ Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 108.

⁵⁸ *GA*, 338.

⁵⁹ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 1:284.

⁶⁰ Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 41.

⁶¹ *SE*, 94.

Metaphysical Subject leaving some notes behind, but not his complete thought. Rather than concluding that Newman disagreed with Aristotle in his metaphysical principles, it can be stated that he did not give them the attention that perhaps they deserved.

After this exploration of Newman's grounding on the philosophy of Aristotle, his own description of what it means to be "a learned Aristotelian", written in 1868, provides a suitable conclusion:

A learned Aristotelian, is one who can answer any [*sic*] philosophical questions whatever in the way that Aristotle would have answered them. If they are questions which could not occur in Aristotle's age, he still answers them; and by two means, by the instinct which a thorough Aristotelic intellect, the habit set up in his mind, possesses; next, by never-swerving processes of ratiocination⁶².

2.2. British thinkers with whom Newman dialogued

As it has been noted, Newman "was never what would be called the disciple of any philosopher"⁶³. Although his thought has been interpreted in many diverse and often contradictory manners, his philosophy presents "a remarkable unity, a unique synthesis. His writings have no traces of the eclectic"⁶⁴; as he contended in his *Apologia*, his intellectual stance had an organic and coherent development⁶⁵.

In the effort to portray Newman's philosophical profile and discern its foundations, the testimony of James Anthony Froude (1818-1894), an Oxford student who regularly attended Newman's sermons

⁶² *TP*, ii 156–57.

⁶³ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 8:513.

⁶⁴ John Cronin, "Cardinal Newman: His Theory of Knowledge" (PhD Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1935), 25.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Apo*, 97–101.

at St. Mary's and who would go on to become a well-respected historian, provides a firsthand impression of Newman:

Newman's mind was world-wide. He was interested in everything which was going on in science, in politics, in literature. Nothing was too large for him, nothing too trivial, if it threw light upon the central question, what man really was, and what was his destiny [...] Newman had read omnivorously; he had studied modern thought and modern life in all its forms, and with all its many-coloured passions⁶⁶.

Although he read varied subjects, "from history and theology to science and formal logic"⁶⁷, Newman was naturally and decisively shaped by being educated and teaching at Oxford and his sources were primarily British thinkers⁶⁸. The term thinkers is chosen over philosophers since in Newman's time the division of the sciences as it is contemporarily understood was uncommon. Newman maintained

that all branches of knowledge are connected together [...] the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance each other⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ James Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1894), 4:278–80.

⁶⁷ Jay Newman, *The Mental Philosophy of John Henry Newman* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 7–8. To avoid confusing him with John Henry Newman, Jay Newman will be always quoted with his name and surname.

⁶⁸ Cf. Fergus Kerr, "'In an Isolated and, Philosophically, Uninfluential Way': Newman and Oxford Philosophy," in *Newman and the Word* (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), 173; James Collins, "Newman and Philosophy," in *Philosophical Readings in Cardinal Newman* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961), 9. Pattison's widely cited epigram provides an insight into what some interpret as a limitation in the sources of Newman: "How different the fortunes of the Church of England might have been, if Newman had been able to read German!". Mark Pattison, *Memoirs* (London: Macmillan, 1885), 210. Although Newman never read Kant, he was acquainted with his thought through the works of Coleridge and Hamilton. Cf. *LD*, xxx 391; Johannes Artz, "Newman in Contact with Kant's Thought," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 31, no. 2 (1980): 518–19; Myers, *The Metaphysics of J. H. Newman*, 204.

⁶⁹ *Idea*, 99.

Newman completed his thought and elaborated his own original philosophy by freely drawing upon diverse sources and reconciling divergent traditions⁷⁰. He understood philosophy not as a constricted discipline, but rather as “a habit and attitude forming the whole mind of man and its personal judgement”⁷¹.

Richardson and Cameron explain that “in order to clarify his own view, [Newman] was happy to compare or contrast his thought with that of other thinkers”⁷², mostly of the empiricist tradition which was dominant in Oxford at his time⁷³. In this respect, Ker regards Newman as an empiricist only “in the general sense of having an empirical and open, undogmatic approach to knowledge and truth, [and] emphasising informal over against a strictly formalized logic”⁷⁴.

Although Newman’s writings present variations of common themes of British empiricism, trying to fit his thought into a strict empiricist mold distorts it and takes away its freshness and originality since he “transcends the common empiricist position and reaches forward to new philosophical insights”⁷⁵. In order to make a balanced assessment of his philosophy, we “must take Newman’s mind where

⁷⁰ Cf. Basil Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher,” in *Newman After a Hundred Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 226.

⁷¹ Johannes Artz, “Newman as Philosopher,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1976): 263.

⁷² Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 14.

⁷³ Cf. Cameron, “The Night Battle,” 116.

⁷⁴ Ian Ker, “Newman’s Standing as a Philosopher,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 78 (2004): 75.

⁷⁵ Cameron, “The Night Battle,” 102. Some scholars, such as Collins and Kerr, claim that Newman was simply an English empiricist. However, the position taken in this dissertation is that of Sillem and Richardson who maintain that “to associate his descriptive approach with empirical experience does not make him an empiricist. His use of certain phraseology common to the empiricism of his day is the result of it being more appropriate to express his realist position as opposed to that of idealism”. Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 39. Aquino argues that Newman appropriated and transformed the British Naturalist tradition, particularly its epistemological and methodological aspects. Frederick Aquino, “The British Naturalist Tradition,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 154.

we find it”⁷⁶, since he himself expressed, regarding his intellectual trajectory, “I like going my own way, and having my time my own”⁷⁷.

In his tenth *University Sermon*, in which he speaks about habits of the mind, Newman describes man’s search for truth as a “night battle”⁷⁸. Collins expounds: “Groping around for a more appropriate metaphor to convey the philosophers’ condition, he called it a night battle in which the footing is terribly slippery and where the darkness does not enable us to distinguish friend and foe with any ease”⁷⁹. An aspect of Newman’s genius lies in the fact that he was able to dialogue with both friend and foe and derive from this dialogue a profoundly original and compelling theory of knowledge⁸⁰.

Jaki comments that Newman made a “strange choice of philosophical heroes”⁸¹ and although the list of his sources, and particularly the importance attributed to each, varies from scholar to scholar, a few names appear regularly. In this regard Aquino observes that

the sources that have shaped Newman’s philosophical thought are complex and multifaceted [...] Newman’s appropriation of insights from different thinkers, sometimes from conflicting commitments, complicates attempts to reduce his philosophical approach to one school of thought⁸².

As Newman did not follow anyone’s particular path, but rather “what he did read was simply a stimulus for forming his own ideas”⁸³, five British thinkers have been selected with the purpose of shedding

⁷⁶ Collins, “Newman and Philosophy,” 4.

⁷⁷ *LD*, xxiv 213.

⁷⁸ *US*, 201.

⁷⁹ Collins, “Newman and Philosophy,” 14.

⁸⁰ Cf. Cronin, “Newman’s Theory of Knowledge,” 25.

⁸¹ Stanley Jaki, *Newman’s Challenge* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 206.

⁸² Aquino, “The British Naturalist Tradition,” 154.

⁸³ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 8:513.

light upon his philosophical profile; they are presented in chronological order according to the year of their birth: Francis Bacon (1561-1626), John Locke (1632-1704), Isaac Newton (1643-1727), Joseph Butler (1692-1752) and David Hume (1711-1776)⁸⁴.

At the beginning of his education in Oxford, Newman delved into the study of mathematics and physics, sciences which were examined in conjunction with natural philosophy⁸⁵. He valued these subjects not only for their content but especially for the rigor and depth they conveyed to him. Two diary entries from 1822 show his enthusiasm:

I lay great stress on the attention I have given to mathematics, on account of the general strength it imparts to the mind [...] I think (since I am forced to speak boastfully) few have attained the facility of comprehension which I have arrived at from the regularity and constancy of my reading, and the laborious and nerve-bracing and fancy-repressing study of Mathematics, which has been my principal subject⁸⁶.

One of the first collections of books he acquired in 1818 was *The Works of Francis Bacon* in eleven volumes and he cited them relatively often throughout his career. Ker notes twenty-four references to Bacon and his method in the *Idea of a University* and Jaki identifies three in the *Grammar of Assent*⁸⁷. It is in the *Grammar* where Newman refers to Bacon as “our own English philosopher”⁸⁸ and in the *Idea* he calls

⁸⁴ The main sources for this exposition are Aquino, “The British Naturalist Tradition”; Artz, “Newman as Philosopher”; Collins, “Newman and Philosophy”; Cronin, “Newman’s Theory of Knowledge”; Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher”; Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge* and Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*.

⁸⁵ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 183–85.

⁸⁶ *AW*, 61.

⁸⁷ Cf. Jane Rupert, “Newman and Bacon,” *The Downside Review* 118, no. 410 (2000): 48; Jaki, *Newman’s Challenge*, 206.

⁸⁸ *GA*, 350.

him “the most orthodox of Protestant philosophers”⁸⁹. Amidst his compliments and references, three principles that Newman held in common with Bacon can be identified.

First, although Bacon’s main subject of investigation was modern science and Newman’s was religious truth, “the two men shared a common first principle which gave clarity to these areas of truth: they both distinguished between the sacred and natural domains”⁹⁰. Second, both recognized that each science required a suitable method and that the inductive methods which were so profitable for the experimental sciences should not be applied to philosophy and theology expecting similar results⁹¹. When Newman asserts this he makes an explicit reference to Bacon to support his argument:

I suppose we must first take into account Lord Bacon’s own explanation of the opposition between Theology and Physics [...] From religious investigations, as such, physics must be excluded, and from physical, as such, religion; and if we mix them, we shall spoil both [...] The inquiry into final causes for the moment passes over the existence of established laws; the inquiry into physical, passes over for the moment the existence of God. In other words, physical science is in a certain sense atheistic, for the very reason it is not theology [...] This is Lord Bacon’s justification, and an intelligible one, for considering that the fall of atheistic philosophy in ancient times was a blight upon the hopes of physical science⁹².

Finally, in the *Grammar of Assent* Newman makes reference to Bacon’s recognition of the laws of nature in order to support the observations behind his epistemological principles⁹³. Although he does

⁸⁹ *Idea*, 319.

⁹⁰ Rupert, “Newman and Bacon,” 46.

⁹¹ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 189.

⁹² *Idea*, 221–22.

⁹³ Cf. Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 13.

not advocate for the use of Bacon's inductive method in order to ascertain how the person knows, he makes reference to his realism:

We are accustomed in this day to lay great stress upon the harmony of the universe; and we have well learned the maxim so powerfully inculcated by our own English philosopher, that in our inquiries into its laws, we must sternly destroy all idols of the intellect [...] So also is it in that microcosm, the human mind. Let us follow Bacon more closely than to distort its faculties according to the demands of an ideal optimism, instead of looking out for modes of thought proper to our nature, and faithfully observing them in our intellectual exercises⁹⁴.

In his private notes from 1863 Newman describes a good philosopher as someone who “demands and exercises perfect liberty of thought within the bounds of experience [and who] has the power of boundless speculation, which he carries by his originality in abstracting, generalizing and applying”⁹⁵. After this description he notes Bacon as an exemplar of these characteristics and states that time will show which of his doctrines prosper and which do not.

Collins writes that Newman regarded Bacon and Locke as the leading English philosophers, “the former in respect to the method of studying the external world and the latter in respect to man's interior universe”⁹⁶. Locke is by far the most disputed, and commented upon, of Newman's sources. That Newman engaged with his thought is beyond question, but there has been much debate regarding the degree of his adhesion to Locke's principles⁹⁷.

Newman read Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* in the summer vacation of 1818 and throughout his life addressed

⁹⁴ GA, 350–51.

⁹⁵ TP, i 118.

⁹⁶ Collins, “Newman and Philosophy,” 9.

⁹⁷ Cf. Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher,” 223.

similar questions in a similar language⁹⁸. Following Newman's own recognition in the *Grammar of Assent*, Copleston's assessment is that Newman regarded Locke with admiration and respect, however disagreed with him on substantial aspects⁹⁹. In Newman's own words:

I have so high a respect both for the character and the ability of Locke, for his manly simplicity of mind and his outspoken candour, and there is so much in his remarks upon reasoning and proof in which I fully concur, that I feel no pleasure in considering him in the light of an opponent¹⁰⁰.

Newman and Locke adhered to realism as the foundation for their analysis of knowledge; both hold in common the identification of the person as the starting point of their philosophy, the acknowledgment of the reality of individual things, the rejection of the theory of innate ideas and the understanding of knowledge as the relation between a knowing subject and a particular object apprehended through the senses¹⁰¹. In contrast with idealist philosophers, Newman appreciated that Locke stood more firmly in common human soil than other empiricists, this is the reason he chooses him as a foil for his own theory of knowledge¹⁰².

While acknowledging these areas of agreement, three significant points of divergence should also be recognized. First of all, Newman "criticizes Locke's account of rationality primarily because it proceeds more from an *a priori* view of human cognition than from the world of facts"¹⁰³. Newman writes in the *Grammar*: "We must take the constitution of the human mind as we find it, and not as we may judge

⁹⁸ Cf. *AW*, 40.

⁹⁹ Cf. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 8:512.

¹⁰⁰ *GA*, 162.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 194.

¹⁰² Cf. Collins, "Newman and Philosophy," 10; Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 6.

¹⁰³ Aquino, "The British Naturalist Tradition," 161.

it ought to be”¹⁰⁴. In his reply to Richard Hutton (1826-1897), who sought to clarify this principle, Newman explains: “I accuse Locke and others of judging of human nature, not from facts, but from a self-created vision of optimism by the rule of ‘what they think it ought to be’. This is arguing, not from experience, but from pure imagination”¹⁰⁵.

Second, Locke “limits rationality within the boundaries of formal inference, ignoring those aspects which depend on the multiform and varied reality of the concrete person”¹⁰⁶, while Newman’s view of intellectual abstraction demands that knowledge is not reduced to pure sense data:

When I speak of Knowledge, I mean something intellectual, something which grasps what it perceives through the senses; something which takes a view of things; which sees more than the senses convey; which reasons upon what it sees, and while it sees; which invests it with an idea¹⁰⁷.

The third and clearest disagreement between them is whether or not there are degrees of assent; Locke thinks there are and Newman maintains there are not¹⁰⁸. Sillem explains that “the whole burden of the *Grammar* is to disprove Locke’s thesis that there are degrees of assent or certitude”¹⁰⁹. The possibility of offering unconditional assent to truths which are not self-evident and of achieving moral certainty through a probabilistic process of reasoning are central themes in

¹⁰⁴ *GA*, 216.

¹⁰⁵ *LD*, xxv 115.

¹⁰⁶ Michele Marchetto, “The Philosophical Relevance of John Henry Newman,” *Louvain Studies* 35, no. 3 (2011): 321.

¹⁰⁷ *Idea*, 113.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Reginald Naulty, “Newman’s Dispute with Locke,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 11, no. 4 (1973): 453.

¹⁰⁹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 198.

Newman's theory of knowledge, which are not compatible with Locke's¹¹⁰.

Although Locke's conclusions were unsatisfactory for Newman, he did not dismiss his approach, rather he engaged with him as a respected interlocutor against whose ideas he measured his own¹¹¹. The fact that, on a few occasions, Newman mentions Locke as his intellectual opponent leads Artz to consider him an important contextual figure for Newman's philosophy¹¹². Despite their differing theories of knowledge, Newman "deeply admires Locke's commitment to the pursuit of truth"¹¹³, characteristic that he also found in Isaac Newton, the third person to be presented in this investigation.

As to Bacon and Locke, Newman was exposed to Newton during his first months in Trinity College. In his *Apologia* he recalls that his early reading of Newton's *Observations on the Prophecies* made him "most firmly convinced that the Pope was the Antichrist predicted by Daniel, St. Paul, and St. John. My imagination was stained by the effects of this doctrine up to the year 1843"¹¹⁴.

Newton not only shaped Newman's religious convictions for two decades; more importantly he provided him with a "clear grasp of the character of the knowledge which the experimental sciences give us"¹¹⁵. Furthermore, Newman's "various scientific interests added a valuable dimension to his philosophical thought and appreciation of reality"¹¹⁶. Throughout his career, Newman firmly opposed the unequivocal application of the scientific method to philosophical and

¹¹⁰ Cf. Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 80; Aquino, "The British Naturalist Tradition," 163.

¹¹¹ Cf. Mitchell, "Newman as a Philosopher," 224.

¹¹² Cf. Artz, "Newman as Philosopher," 269.

¹¹³ Aquino, "The British Naturalist Tradition," 161.

¹¹⁴ *Apo*, 110.

¹¹⁵ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 186.

¹¹⁶ Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 13.

theological realities, however, he profited from his scientific knowledge to deepen and illustrate his humanistic investigations.

In his *Essay on the Development* Newman illustrates his concept of antecedent probability with Newton's laws of gravity, observing that there are many events in life that we take for granted without relying on an explanation or reason¹¹⁷. In his *Idea of a University*, he notes that Newton did not make his great scientific discoveries in a university setting, thus arguing that universities are not the most conducive place for the advancement of science¹¹⁸; further he identifies Newton as a model of "a truly great intellect [...] one which takes a connected view of old and new, past and present, far and near"¹¹⁹.

In the *Grammar of Assent* he makes reference to Newton's theory of the limit when developing his doctrine of informal inference:

I consider, then, that the principle of concrete reasoning is parallel to the method of proof which is the foundation of modern mathematical science, as contained in the celebrated lemma with which Newton opens his 'Principia.' We know that a regular polygon, inscribed in a circle, its sides being continually diminished, tends to become that circle, as its limit; but it vanishes before it has coincided with the circle, so that its tendency to be the circle, though ever nearer fulfilment, never in fact gets beyond a tendency. In like manner, the conclusion in a real or concrete question is foreseen and predicted rather than actually attained; foreseen in the number and direction of accumulated premises, which all converge to it, and as the result of their combination, approach it more nearly than any assignable difference, yet do not touch it logically¹²⁰.

The possibility of attaining certainty through mental operations alternative to formal inference was one of Newman's central claims.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Dev*, 101.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Idea*, xiii.

¹¹⁹ *Idea*, 134.

¹²⁰ *GA*, 320–21.

In his discussions regarding his theory of knowledge, he often makes reference to Newton's own intellectual journey; he explains in his personal notes:

Newton had ascertained his great discoveries, before he had *proved* them true; and he had great difficulty in proving them. He was obliged to invent a calculus in order to prove them, and people found fault with the calculus, as clumsy, if not sophistical. He had a sort of presentiment of their truth, the result of his genius, and believed them before he knew them. It was his *prudentia* which made them credible to him, presenting to him a proof of their credibility, which he could not communicate to another. So he went about to invent a scientific proof of their truth¹²¹.

Newton was not the only source from which Newman developed his understanding of scientific knowledge and his notion of probability. Another great thinker, Bishop Joseph Butler, enlightened his reflections on these matters. From Butler he “learned as a first principle to recognise the limitations of human knowledge”¹²² and also acquired the principles of analogy and probability¹²³. Newman relates in his *Apologia*:

It was at about this date [1825], I suppose, that I read Bishop Butler's *Analogy* [...] If I may attempt to determine what I most gained from it, it lay in two points [...] First, the very idea of an analogy between the separate works of God leads to the conclusion that the system which is of less importance is economically or sacramentally connected with the more momentous system [...] Secondly, Butler's doctrine that Probability is the guide of life, led me, at least under the

¹²¹ *TP*, i 25.

¹²² Richard Church, *The Oxford Movement* (London: Macmillan, 1922), 211.

¹²³ A third principle, much less discussed, that Newman held in common with Butler is that of the unity of the person. He writes, as an objection to Mill's *Logic*: “I can't quite stomach the idea, as expressing a fact, that I have no consciousness of Self, as such, as distinct from a bundle of sensations. Bishop Butler speaks of consciousness as indivisible and one –this is my idea of man– of no unity have we practically experience, but of self”. *TP*, i 39.

teaching to which a few years later I was introduced, to the question of the logical cogency of Faith, on which I have written so much¹²⁴.

Scholars that have studied Newman's philosophical sources either frame his theory of knowledge within the limits of Butler's *Analogy* or sustain that he used it only as a point of departure. It is Cronin's opinion that "Butler's influence upon Newman was one of stimulus and suggestion rather than one of positive contribution"¹²⁵ and Sillem adds that Butler "provided him for the first time with a way of thinking philosophically about truths which he had already discovered for himself"¹²⁶. The analysis of Butler's and Newman's arguments makes clear that they "examine the facts of experience as they find them, to seek out from these the natural modes of action and thought without attempting to provide them with any theoretical or metaphysical justification"¹²⁷.

Newman developed his philosophical thought beginning with Butler's doctrine of analogy, which helped him understand that "there is an order of things more real than any we can observe sensibly [...] Material things appear to be nothing more than veils"¹²⁸. He explains in his *University Sermons* that the material and invisible systems act as "two independent witnesses in one and the same question; an argument contained by implication, though not formally drawn out, in Bishop Butler's *Analogy*"¹²⁹.

Further, Newman learned from Butler "his method of arguing, [...] his embrace of the whole nature of humankind, and his requirement for a delicate balance between generalization and

¹²⁴ *Apo*, 113–14.

¹²⁵ Cronin, "Newman's Theory of Knowledge," 30.

¹²⁶ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 170.

¹²⁷ James Robinson, "Newman's Use of Butler's Arguments," *The Downside Review* 76, no. 244 (1958): 163.

¹²⁸ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 171.

¹²⁹ *US*, 31.

discrimination”¹³⁰. However, the central doctrine that Newman acquired from Butler is that of probability. He explains in his *Apologia* that this principle

runs through very much that I have written, and has gained for me many hard names. Butler teaches us that probability is the guide of life. The danger of this doctrine, in the case of many minds, is, its tendency to destroy in them absolute certainty, leading them to consider every conclusion as doubtful, and resolving truth into an opinion, which it is safe indeed to obey or to profess, but not possible to embrace with full internal assent¹³¹.

Their point of disengagement is that, unlike Butler, Newman believes that probability can result in certitude. He writes: “I use probable as opposed to demonstrative, not to certainty”¹³² and explains that left to himself, he would be tempted to adopt Butler’s view and understand credibility as probability upon which it is safe to act¹³³.

Since people do not usually seek evidence for every fact they accept in daily life, Newman maintains that Butler’s principle can only be held when it is understood empirically¹³⁴; he believes that “probability does in some sense presuppose and require the existence of truths which are certain”¹³⁵. Here lies the epicenter of his disagreement with William Froude which prompted him to write the *Grammar of Assent*¹³⁶. In a letter to Newman in 1859, Froude writes:

For myself, in every province of thought and action, I am content to take as my motto the words ‘Ever learning and never able to come to

¹³⁰ Jane Garnett, “Joseph Butler,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 136.

¹³¹ *Apo*, 120–21.

¹³² *LD*, xi 293.

¹³³ Cf. *LD*, xv 456.

¹³⁴ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 177.

¹³⁵ *GA*, 237.

¹³⁶ Cf. Garnett, “Joseph Butler,” 138.

a knowledge of the Truth'. So long as I am able honestly to claim for myself the former characteristic, I am ready to submit contentedly to the reproach (if anyone choose to consider it a reproach) implied in the latter –as a condition inherent in imperfect faculties– I will not bury the talent in the earth on the plea that the Master 'is a hard one and gathers when he has not strawed'¹³⁷.

A central theme in Newman's philosophical reflections was the rebuttal of this expression of skepticism. He challenges it by distinguishing between certitude as a property of the mind which cannot be qualified by degrees and certainty as a quality of propositions which can¹³⁸. Newman "contrasts probability with formalized reasoning, not with certitude and demonstration, since informal inference can yield certitude of an appropriate demonstrated sort in concrete matters of fact"¹³⁹.

Cameron explains that "although there is much of Butler in Newman, they are men of very different temperaments and, more importantly, of very different intellectual climates"¹⁴⁰. Newman recognized Butler's influence in him despite their disagreements; in a letter written fifty-five years after having first read his *Analogy* Newman asserts: "Without of course comparing myself with Bishop Butler, I may say that I am of his school"¹⁴¹.

Although Newman refers to David Hume as someone whose "depth and subtlety all must acknowledge"¹⁴², and was deeply rooted

¹³⁷ Letter from December 29, 1859 qtd. in *LD*, xix 271.

¹³⁸ Although this is a common understanding among Newman scholars, Frederick Aquino pointed out to me that this is not a distinction to which Newman systematically adheres as he often interchanges both terms. For example, in this instance he uses them in the opposite way: "We differ in our sense and our use of the word '*certain*'. *I use it of minds*, you of propositions". *LD*, xxix 114. Emphasis added.

¹³⁹ Collins, "Newman and Philosophy," 10–11.

¹⁴⁰ Cameron, "The Night Battle," 110.

¹⁴¹ *LD*, xxix 207.

¹⁴² *US*, 195.

in his empiricism in contrast to idealism¹⁴³, Newman's philosophical project deeply contrasted with Hume's skepticism¹⁴⁴. He owned the four volumes of Hume's *Essays and Treatises on Various Subjects* but rarely cited them; besides two passages, one in the *University Sermons* and one in the *Idea of a University*, Newman's quotations of Hume are limited to his *Essay on Miracles* in which he rejects Hume's "type of 'reason' that would set the supernatural as impossible"¹⁴⁵; he considered Hume acute but dangerous¹⁴⁶.

Although most literature studied for this section mentions Hume within the cast of Newman's sources, it gives him little attention. The one exception is Cameron who writes:

The thesis I want here to maintain, namely, that there are many striking parallelisms between the thought of Newman and that of Hume, and that this far-reaching similarity represents a certain affinity in spirit and method –though not in conclusions– between the two writers, is not a thesis which is in any way tied to the possibility of demonstrating the literary dependence of Newman upon Hume¹⁴⁷.

Thus, the similarities that can be found between Newman and Hume are not in their doctrines, but in their affinity of spirit and method. In this line, Artz comments that "the *Grammar* could only be written by one who had a strong tendency to self-analysis [...] Much more influential [than Descartes], however, may be David Hume's style of thought, which starts from the self as the only undubitable certainty"¹⁴⁸, he makes this affirmation in light of Newman's early

¹⁴³ Cf. Mitchell, "Newman as a Philosopher," 223.

¹⁴⁴ Ono Ekeh is of the opinion that Newman was far more sympathetic to Hume's thought than he let on, this is a topic that needs further exploration.

¹⁴⁵ Cronin, "Newman's Theory of Knowledge," 7.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 8:512.

¹⁴⁷ Cameron, "The Night Battle," 102.

¹⁴⁸ Artz, "Newman as Philosopher," 269.

realization “of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator”¹⁴⁹.

A further point of contact between Newman and Hume is their criticism of Locke¹⁵⁰. Ferreira states that

whether or not he was aware of it, Newman echoed Hume’s explicit criticism of Locke. Just as Hume challenged Locke’s stark and uncompromising dichotomy between demonstration and probability as failing to do justice to the intermediate category of ‘proof’, so Newman criticized Locke and his followers for holding a doctrine which had as a logical consequence that absolute assent has no legitimate exercise, except as ratifying acts of intuition or demonstration¹⁵¹.

A plausible judgement of Newman’s and Hume’s relationship could be that Hume’s project “coheres with Newman’s overall aim to carve out a broader and more empirically informed account of the rationality of Christian belief”¹⁵². Hume could be considered a source for Newman not for the affinity of their ideas nor Newman’s textual references to him, but for his contextual consideration as an opponent¹⁵³.

The thinkers discussed in this section hold a common language and time frame, but differ in their specific discipline and approach to knowledge. However, in a nuanced way and “in more general terms it can be said that Newman’s cast of mind and intellectual sympathies are, in philosophical matters, always with the empiricist school”¹⁵⁴. Locke and Hume served as sources for Newman by providing a foil or contrast for his ideas, while Bacon, Newton and Butler, from the

¹⁴⁹ *Apo*, 108.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Aquino, “The British Naturalist Tradition,” 155.

¹⁵¹ Jamie Ferreira, *Scepticism and Reasonable Doubt: The British Naturalist Tradition in Wilkins, Hume, Reid and Newman* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 178–79.

¹⁵² Aquino, “The British Naturalist Tradition,” 164.

¹⁵³ Cf. Artz, “Newman as Philosopher,” 269.

¹⁵⁴ Cameron, “The Night Battle,” 100.

mathematical and religious points of view, provided insights that Newman incorporated into his theory of knowledge.

Newman was “capable and desirous of dialoguing with philosophers [...] he cannot conceal the fact that he is himself an intellectual man”¹⁵⁵ who had to devise a new approach to overcome the *a priori* empiricist and rationalist theories of knowledge constrained by mathematical or scientific ways of thinking in order to develop his philosophical project¹⁵⁶.

2.3. Contemporary interlocutors

Newman not only dialogued with those who preceded him, the thirty-two volumes that collect his letters attest to the fact that he was highly engaged in the intellectual debates of his time and understood that “real intellectual achievement is rarely if ever individualist, but rather the result of complex conversations with a community of both the living and the dead”¹⁵⁷. His engagement with his contemporaries also shines through his academic works as for him writing was never an end in itself, but an expression of his pastoral heart¹⁵⁸:

The importance of the pastoral dimension in Newman's career cannot be overestimated [...] humdrum parochial concerns determined the kind of man he was and, more to the point here, the kind of books he wrote [...] A pastor deals not with abstractions but with practical,

¹⁵⁵ Jay Newman, *The Philosophy of Newman*, 7.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 129. Towards the end of his career Newman exclaimed: “What I trust that I may claim all through what I have written, is this, –an honest intention, an absence of private ends, a temper of obedience, a willingness to be corrected, a dread of error, a desire to serve Holy Church, and, through Divine mercy, a fair measure of success”. *AR*, 63–64. As it has been portrayed in this section his willingness to be corrected and his dread of error are evident in his dialogue with others.

¹⁵⁷ Robert Barron, “John Henry Newman among the Postmoderns,” *Newman Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (2005): 27.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Short, *Newman and His Contemporaries*, 14.

concrete situations, with real people in all their individuality, not with belief as a speculative phenomenon but with the particular parishioner who has trouble believing¹⁵⁹.

His correspondence was aimed to accompany likeminded individuals, but “at times [he] cultivated the friendship of men with whom he had irreconcilable differences”¹⁶⁰. Often his interlocutors were his contemporaries in general, but on some occasions they were particular people: he wrote his *Apologia* as a reply to Charles Kingsley, his *Grammar of Assent* as an invitation to William Froude and his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* as a rebuttal to William Gladstone.

In order to continue sketching Newman’s philosophical profile, his relationship with three of his contemporaries will now be discussed. The first is Richard Whately, the professor with whom he worked at the beginning of his career in Oxford. The other two are Catherine (1810-1878) and William Froude (1810-1879), a married couple with whom he exchanged hundreds of letters on the nature of certitude and assent over a span of forty-one years.

Regarding Whately, Zuidwegt writes: “In contrast to other important influences on Newman’s thought, such as Aristotle and Joseph Butler, Whately was a living instructor and a close friend –one whose formative influence Newman acknowledged time and again”¹⁶¹; the same can be said about the Froudes from whom he gained “a new viewpoint which served him well in solving the difficulties presented to himself and other Catholics by their beliefs”¹⁶².

¹⁵⁹ O’Connell, “Newman as Pastor,” 335.

¹⁶⁰ Robert Carballo, “Newman and the Transition to Modern Liberalism,” *Humanitas* 7, no. 2 (1994): 20.

¹⁶¹ Geertjan Zuidwegt, “Richard Whately’s Influence on John Henry Newman’s *Oxford University Sermons on Faith and Reason* (1839–1840),” *Newman Studies Journal* 10, no. 1 (2013): 84.

¹⁶² Gordon Harper, *Cardinal Newman and William Froude: A Correspondence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), 8.

Upon his arrival to Oriel College in 1822 and because of his shy temperament, Newman was placed under the tutelage of Richard Whately, an extroverted professor who enjoyed mentoring young men and helping them flourish. Newman narrates:

They determined on putting their unformed probationer [Newman] into his hands [Whately's]. If there was a man easy for a raw bashful youth to get on with it was Whately –a great talker, who endured very readily the silence of his company, original in his views, lively, forcible, witty in expressing them, brimful of information on a variety of subjects [...] free and easy in manners, rough indeed and dogmatic in his enunciation of opinion, but singularly gracious to undergraduates and young masters who, if they were worth anything, were only too happy to be knocked about in argument by such a man¹⁶³.

At that time Whately was the leading figure of a group of academics known as the Noetics. Their cardinal principle was that “all reasoning, on whatever subject, is one and the same process, which may be clearly exhibited in the form of Syllogisms”¹⁶⁴. Along with Whately, the Noetic school was a deeply formative influence for Newman, however he came to regard it as representative of the religious liberalism he deeply opposed.

When their acquaintance began Whately was immersed in the subject of logic and introduced Newman into his work; “it was not long before Mr. Whately succeeded in drawing him out, and he paid him the compliment of saying that he was the clearest-headed man he knew”¹⁶⁵. One of Newman's first projects with Whately consisted in turning a series of his manuscripts on logic into an article for the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* in 1822. Once this article was published,

¹⁶³ AW, 66. Although this text refers to Newman in the third person, it is part of the third chapter of his *Autobiographical Memoir* written 1874.

¹⁶⁴ Richard Whately, *Elements of Logic* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1848), 208.

¹⁶⁵ AW, 66.

Newman continued to adapt Whately's manuscripts for his famous work *Elements of Logic*.

In its preface Whately was generous in his recognition of Newman: "I cannot avoid particularising the Rev. J. Newman, Fellow of Oriel College, who actually composed a considerable portion of the work as it now stands, from manuscript not designed for publication, and who is the original author of several pages"¹⁶⁶. Newman replied to this attention by stating:

Much as I owe to Oriel, in the way of mental improvement, to none, as I think, do I owe so much as to you. I know who it was that first gave me heart to look about me after my election, and taught me to think correctly, and (strange office for an instructor,) to rely upon myself. Nor can I forget, that it has been at your kind suggestion, that I have been since led to employ myself in the consideration of several subjects, which I cannot doubt have been very beneficial to my mind¹⁶⁷.

Logic and rhetoric were the core of these subjects. Through his work with Whately Newman not only acquired his theoretical grounding, but started developing his writing skills, "the work was not unsupervised; nor were Newman's efforts left unrevised. Nevertheless, Whately allowed him to find his way freely into the subject matter and make his own attempts at drafting the book, at a time when the experience was invaluable to him"¹⁶⁸.

Further, Newman learned from Whately the view that logic is "a method of analyzing that mental process which must invariably take place in all correct reasoning"¹⁶⁹ and inherited the distinction, uncommon at the time, between the process of reasoning itself from

¹⁶⁶ Whately, *Elements of Logic*, 6.

¹⁶⁷ *LD*, i 307.

¹⁶⁸ Gillian Evans, "'An Organon More Delicate, Versatile and Elastic': John Henry Newman and Whately's Logic," *The Downside Review* 97, no. 328 (1979): 178.

¹⁶⁹ Whately, *Elements of Logic*, 32–33.

the analysis of that process¹⁷⁰. Moreover, Newman and Whately initially agreed on the scope and limitations of logic¹⁷¹.

As Newman continued to mature his own thought he realized that Whately was misusing logic by identifying it with reason¹⁷². He “agreed in principle with Whately that reasoning can be expressed in syllogistic form. Yet, Newman denied that this process of reasoning must be stated syllogistically in order to be valid”¹⁷³. For Newman formal reasoning was one of many avenues for reason, not the only one.

In 1838 Whately published his work *Easy Lessons on Christian Evidences*, which he wrote for young people of the less-educated classes with the aim of providing them with “evidences [of the faith] that shall engage their attention, and afford them rational conviction”¹⁷⁴. Newman objected to Whately’s understanding that faith depended on reason and its operations¹⁷⁵, reducing it to “a sort of conclusion upon a process of reasoning, a resolve formed upon a calculation”¹⁷⁶.

Newman responded to Whately through the four sermons on faith and reason he preached between 1839 and 1840¹⁷⁷. In these, he developed his views on implicit reasoning from antecedent probabilities “creatively expanding the theoretical framework he inherited from Whately’s works on logic and rhetoric”¹⁷⁸. He did not directly reject Whately’s understanding of logic, he merely expanded

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Zuijdwegt, “Whately’s Influence,” 88.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Evans, “Newman and Whately’s Logic,” 190.

¹⁷² Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 166.

¹⁷³ Zuijdwegt, “Whately’s Influence,” 90.

¹⁷⁴ Richard Whately, *Easy Lessons on Christian Evidences* (London: John Parker, 1838), 5.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Geertjan Zuijdwegt, “Richard Whately,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 212.

¹⁷⁶ *US*, 179.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *US*, 176–277.

¹⁷⁸ Zuijdwegt, “Whately’s Influence,” 88.

it as he found it insufficient; Evans explains it thus: “Whately helped [Newman] to lay down lines of thought which were to develop steadily, and not to be set aside in favour of new views. It was never Newman’s way to abandon one habit of thought for another; his new perceptions always grew out of his earlier insights”¹⁷⁹.

After six years of intense collaboration centered around Whately’s *Elements of Logic*, Newman realized that they would need to part ways as their views had clearly diverged. He recalled that after the first edition of the *Elements of Logic* in 1826 “his hold [Whately’s] upon me gradually relaxed. He had done his work towards me or nearly so, when he had taught me to see with my own eyes and to walk with my own feet”¹⁸⁰.

Sillem explains that beyond the specific disagreements in their understanding of logic, theology or politics

Newman’s quarrel with Whately was itself the logical outcome of his determination to avoid both extremes. Fideism on the one hand, and Rationalism on the other, for, apart from their being theologically false, they were both expressions of unreal theories of human thinking. Fideism betrayed the mind by denying the value of reason altogether and surrendering to scepticism; and Rationalism did so by jettisoning, in favour of its exclusive attachment to a specialised technique, all other ways or methods of thinking a man can follow in the acquisition of knowledge. Both extremes stood for *simpliste* solutions to the problems of knowledge, and, in different ways, impoverished the real life of the human mind. Both were as harmful in their consequences as they were unjustifiable in their assumptions before the tribunal of experience¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁹ Evans, “Newman and Whately’s Logic,” 191.

¹⁸⁰ *Apo*, 114.

¹⁸¹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 164–65. However, the deepest conflicts between Newman and Whately were ecclesiological, regarding their understanding of the Holy Trinity and the

Newman narrates that their formal break happened in 1829, and although they took diverse paths, Newman continued respecting him¹⁸². In 1836 he wrote in reference to Whately: “Whatever his errors, [he] is openhearted, generous and careless of money”¹⁸³ and sixteen years later he recollected “thinking that I would dedicate my first book to him with some inscription as this if I could express it without rudeness, ‘To R. Whately etc, who by teaching me to think, has taught me to differ from him’, or ‘to think for myself’”¹⁸⁴. Despite their disagreements, Whately’s influence on Newman was long-lasting up to the *Grammar of Assent*¹⁸⁵.

Also in relation to the *Grammar*, a definitive influence in Newman’s thought established through dozens of letters is that of Catherine and William Froude¹⁸⁶. It was through his lifelong correspondence with them that Newman “came to realize the points of conflict which can arise, not precisely between religion and science but between religion and a philosophical naturalism attempting to restrict all knowledge within the range of a scientific method and its revisable conclusions”¹⁸⁷.

Newman and William met in 1828 at Oriel College where Newman tutored him in mathematics and classics¹⁸⁸. Catherine met Newman in 1836 and started corresponding with him, even before she married William in 1839¹⁸⁹. Newman deeply appreciated William as

nature of Tradition. Politically, they had different views regarding the direction the Church of England should take. Cf. *Apo*, 117; Zuijdwegt, “Richard Whately,” 198–209.

¹⁸² *Apo*, 117.

¹⁸³ *LD*, v 251.

¹⁸⁴ *LD*, xv 178.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Evans, “Newman and Whately’s Logic,” 191.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Harper, *Newman and Froude*, 30.

¹⁸⁷ Collins, “Newman and Philosophy,” 8.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Don Leggett, “William Froude, John Henry Newman and Scientific Practice in the Culture of Victorian Doubt,” *The English Historical Review* 128, no. 532 (2013): 576.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Short, *Newman and His Contemporaries*, 138.

he held “intellectual honesty above every other ideal”¹⁹⁰ and in Catherine he saw “a woman with his own unbiddable respect for truth”¹⁹¹.

A close intellectual friendship between the three of them solidified through more than four decades in which they “carried on something of a philosophical inquiry into the nature of evidence and belief”¹⁹². Although raised in the Anglican Church, William left the faith of his youth and adopted a growing scientific agnosticism¹⁹³ that “established a layered, working understanding of doubt and certainty with which to navigate intellectual life, religious experiences and scientific practice”¹⁹⁴.

Newman saw Froude, a brilliant engineer, as the archetype of those engaged in the advancement of science who were embracing the rationalist views of Thomas Huxley (1825-1895) who maintained that for “the improver of natural knowledge [...] scepticism is the highest of duties; blind faith the one unpardonable sin”¹⁹⁵.

Their relationship deepened after the publication of *Tract 90* and Newman confided in the Froudes his growing uneasiness with the Church of England¹⁹⁶. In 1844, as the truth of the Roman Church dawned on him, Newman admitted to them that his doubts had started in 1839 and although he tried to put them aside they returned time and again. He reflected in a letter: “If the doubt come from Him [God], He will repeat the suggestion [...] fancies, excitements, feelings go and

¹⁹⁰ Harper, *Newman and Froude*, 18.

¹⁹¹ Short, *Newman and His Contemporaries*, 136.

¹⁹² Harper, *Newman and Froude*, 6.

¹⁹³ Cf. Patrick Sherry, “John Henry Newman and William Froude, F.R.S.,” *Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 3 (2011): 399.

¹⁹⁴ Leggett, “Froude, Newman and Scientific Practice,” 572.

¹⁹⁵ Thomas Huxley, *Lectures and Lay Sermons* (London: Dent & Sons, 1910), 53.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Harper, *Newman and Froude*, 33–36.

never return –truth comes again and is importunate”¹⁹⁷ and through his correspondence with them he matured his own ideas: “I am not writing with a purpose so much as finishing a subject I may not otherwise get myself to work out”¹⁹⁸.

Catherine encouraged him in his discernment by saying: “Even if you did in the end leave the Church, I might be quite sure you would not do so without a *call* so to do, and surely after the life you have led, you are not likely to mistake a call”¹⁹⁹. William and she were part of the small circle of friends that remained with Newman after his conversion. Unlike many Tractarians, what they “saw in his turn to Rome was not inconsistency or betrayal, but vocation”²⁰⁰.

After his priestly ordination in the Catholic Church he continued his correspondence with them “in his mission to encourage influential scientists and intellectuals to convert to Catholicism”²⁰¹. In 1848 he wrote Catherine:

Oh that I were near you, and could have a talk with you! –but then I should need great grace to know what to say to you– This is one thing that keeps me silent, it is, dear friend, because I don't know what to say to you. If I had more faith, I should doubtless know well enough; I should then say, ‘Come to the Church, and *you will find* all you seek.’ I *have myself* found all I seek –‘I have all and abound’– my every want has been supplied²⁰².

Catherine converted on March 1857 and four of her five children followed²⁰³. William bore this trial with much patience, “so gently, so

¹⁹⁷ *LD*, x 201.

¹⁹⁸ *LD*, x 244.

¹⁹⁹ *LD*, x 51.

²⁰⁰ Short, *Newman and His Contemporaries*, 140.

²⁰¹ Leggett, “Froude, Newman and Scientific Practice,” 578.

²⁰² *LD*, xii 223.

²⁰³ Cf. Sherry, “Newman and Froude,” 400.

meekly, so tenderly”²⁰⁴. He continued corresponding with Newman “for a single reason, to present opposite arguments in an attempt to arrive at the truth which he felt lay somewhere between Newman and himself”²⁰⁵.

As they continued their journey, on December 29, 1959 a few days after Newman received Hurrell, the Froudes’ eldest son, into the Catholic Church, William wrote a lengthy letter in which he states his position of having explicitly embraced universal doubt²⁰⁶, “a statement [...] of those principles of thinking and investigating which actuated the best of the liberal minds of the mid-nineteenth century”²⁰⁷:

More strongly than I believe anything else, I believe this. That on no subject whatever [...] is my mind, (or as far as I can tell the mind of any human being,) capable of arriving at an absolutely certain conclusion [...] That though any probability however faint, may in its place make it a duty to *act as if* the conclusion to which it points were absolutely certain, yet that even the highest attainable probability does not justify the mind in discarding the residuum of doubt; and that the attempt [...] to enhance or intensify the sense of the preponderance of the probabilities in either scale, is distinctly an immoral use of faculties²⁰⁸.

²⁰⁴ *LD*, xx 427–28.

²⁰⁵ Harper, *Newman and Froude*, 18.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Sherry, “Newman and Froude,” 403. Leggett discusses the honesty and complexity of Froude’s position: “For [him] doubt was not so much an opportunity as an experience, and one which shaped his approach to scientific practice, just as that scientific practice contributed to his doubts [...] he developed the conviction that experimenters were under a moral obligation to doubt and not to extend the limits of their knowledge through either approximation or pride”. Leggett, “Froude, Newman and Scientific Practice,” 575–77. In 1859 Froude wrote Newman: “Our ‘doubts’ in fact appear to me as *sacred*, and I think deserve to be cherished as *sacredly* as our beliefs”. *LD*, xix 270. In 1875 he wrote to another colleague: “The only way to truth as far as my judgement carries me, is by doubting and fumbling, and correcting errors where one can”. Qtd. in Leggett, “Froude, Newman and Scientific Practice,” 587.

²⁰⁷ Harper, *Newman and Froude*, 116.

²⁰⁸ *LD*, xix 270. The exchange of letters that followed in the span of three weeks is quoted at length as it clearly portrays Newman’s commitment to truth and the genesis of the *Grammar*.

After receiving this letter, Newman expressed vast gratitude as he now was able to understand Froude's stance in a deeper way. Although he disagreed with him, he received Froude's words with attention and respect and allowed himself to be challenged by his friend's arguments. He replied to Froude on January 2:

Now that I know clearly where to find you, I don't suppose that I'm going to argue, or indeed I can. The line you draw out in your letter is familiar to me [...] I shall keep your letter before me to use. Still I have long meditated on its subject. I think it a fallacy –but I don't think it is easy to show it to be so. It is one of various points which I have steadily set before me, as requiring an answer, and an answer from me [...] I am habitually praying to God to direct me whether to take up the line of subjects on which it lies, or to devote my remaining years to some other undertaking [...] In truth I think there is a far deeper philosophy on the subject than yours, if I could develop it²⁰⁹.

On January 15 Froude replied furthering the exposition of his stance and inviting Newman to contest his views. Their exchange of clearly differing opinions denotes mutual respect and intellectual humility. They made themselves vulnerable to one another with a desire to be corrected and allow for a clearer view of the truth to emerge.

My dear Newman, I did not intend to let so many days pass without thanking you for your very kind letter [...] I most heartily wish, (and I have heard others who think much as I do, express the same wish with equal heartiness) that you would really and fully work out this question –it is indeed one which you more than anybody else have been felt by those who know you, to be competent to examine fully²¹⁰.

On January 18 Newman answered with candor and willingness, and asked for Froude's assistance on serving providing constructive criticism for his arguments. In taking up this challenge Newman

²⁰⁹ *LD*, xix 272–73.

²¹⁰ *LD*, xix 283.

undertook the intellectual journey that would lead to the publication of the *Grammar of Assent*.

It is a cause of great sadness to me, when I look back at my life, to consider how my time has been frittered away, and how much I might have done, had I pursued one subject [...] Should I be led to pursue the subject of this letter, (which would be by very slow marches) I should ask your leave to put various points before you, as iron girders are sent to the trying house²¹¹.

Thus a new chapter in their correspondence unfolded “providing an impetus and inspiration for some of [Newman’s] most significant arguments”²¹². Surprisingly, Froude’s response to the *Grammar* is unknown; during that decade their letters “began to turn at last from these protracted arguments to more personal matters”²¹³.

Catherine died in July 1878 and William traveled to South Africa to mourn her loss. During this trip he wrote one last letter to Newman reinstating his position. This letter reached Newman while he was in Rome to be made a Cardinal of the Catholic Church. Newman started drafting his response, a summary of the principles he presented in the *Grammar*, which he never sent as he got word that Froude had died. He had begun this letter by expressing to his life-long friend that “my first and lasting impression is that in first principles we agree together more than you allow”²¹⁴.

Although he engaged in correspondence with hundreds of people, the length and depth of his conversation with the Froudes is remarkable, not only in its fruits, but in the reciprocal perseverance of maintaining a cordial and constructive argument for over four decades.

²¹¹ *LD*, xix 284–85.

²¹² Leggett, “Froude, Newman and Scientific Practice,” 594.

²¹³ Harper, *Newman and Froude*, 181.

²¹⁴ *LD*, xxix 112.

The way Newman respected William despite their long-lasting differences is well summed up in an 1871 dedication:

To you, my dear William, I dedicate these miscellaneous compositions, old and new, as to a true friend, dear to me in your own person, and in your family [...] as one, who, amid unusual trials of friendship, has always been fair to me, never unkind; as one, who has followed the long course of controversy, of which these Volumes are a result and record [...] Whatever may be your judgment of portions of their contents, which are not always in agreement with each other, you will, I know, give them a ready welcome, when offered to your acceptance as the expression, such as it is, of the author's wish, in the best way he can, of connecting his name with yours²¹⁵.

2.4. Reception in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

As Newman engaged with his contemporaries, philosophers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries continue to engage with him, since they see his writings “as a source of stimulus and inspiration, rather than as a rigid, systematic doctrine”²¹⁶. Ford comments that there is a fascinating resonance between Newman's insights and current concerns, while he cannot be expected to provide ready-made answers to today's questions; his writings provide a framework of meaning and a method for contemporary investigation²¹⁷. It is widely agreed that Newman's philosophical relevance is just beginning to be

²¹⁵ *Ess*, i v.

²¹⁶ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 8:525.

²¹⁷ Cf. John Ford, “Newman Studies: Recent Resources and Research,” *The Thomist* 46, no. 2 (1982): 287.

unpacked²¹⁸, and that “much in [his] work that slipped past [his] contemporaries finds a place in the debates of our own day”²¹⁹.

Newman provides an original and coherent response to the idealism and rationalism that permeated much of the nineteenth century philosophy; this response was naturally conditioned by its time. Nevertheless, it has borne fruit beyond its time in different philosophical traditions, of which some subscribers have claimed Newman as their own. The fact that Newman did not enter “into the philosophical arena as one of the philosophers of the day, [but] chose to remain outside and work on his own on a new philosophy”²²⁰ has made his thought open to diverse, and sometimes contradictory, ascriptions and interpretations²²¹. Newman himself wrote in his *Philosophical Notebook*: “If there be a subject, in which one is removed from the temptation of writing for popularity etc., it is this, for if there is any thing at once new and good, years must elapse, the writer must be long dead, before it is acknowledged and received”²²².

Pragmatism, phenomenology and personalism have been identified as three “streams of Newman’s philosophical reception”²²³. Broadly speaking, at least in their origins, these traditions have been grounded in realism and share a rejection of rationalism and its ensuing skepticism. They also hold in common a vast fecundity which has given way to several avenues of thought within their lines and methods of investigation. Hochschild explains that

²¹⁸ Cf. Frederick Aquino, “Epistemology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 389–91; Hütter, *Newman on Truth and Its Counterparts*, 18–20; Ian Ker, *The Achievement of John Henry Newman* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 72–73; Marchetto, “Philosophical Relevance of Newman,” 315–16; Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 2–4.

²¹⁹ Cameron, “The Night Battle,” 117.

²²⁰ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 70.

²²¹ Cf. Cronin, “Newman’s Theory of Knowledge,” xi–xii.

²²² *PN*, 86.

²²³ Morris-Chapman, “Scepticism, Truth and Belief in Newman’s Thought,” 50.

scholars have attempted to classify Newman's philosophy in relation to various familiar categories and figures in the history of philosophy. Classification is complicated by the fact that most of his writings are occasional and theological, rather than systematic and philosophical [...] While Newman's thought is marked by both originality and eclecticism, it also displays a remarkable coherence, and a consistency over the course of his long life²²⁴.

William James (1842-1910), following Giovanni Papini (1881-1956), expressed that pragmatism is a great corridor-theory, "a collection of attitudes and methods [...] like a corridor in a hotel, from which a hundred doors open into a hundred chambers"²²⁵. Phenomenology is widely accepted as a method or style of thought, not as a philosophical school; one of its main historians, Herbert Spiegelberg (1904-1990), maintained that "it would go too far to say that there are as many phenomenologies as there are phenomenologists. But it is certainly true that, on closer inspection, the varieties exceed common features"²²⁶. Regarding personalism, Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) states that "there are, at least, a dozen personalist doctrines, which, at times, have nothing more in common than the term 'person'"²²⁷. Framed in this understanding, Newman's reception by these three philosophical currents will be now discussed²²⁸.

²²⁴ Hochschild, "The Aristotelianism of J. H. Newman," 334.

²²⁵ William James, "G. Papini and the Pragmatist Movement in Italy," *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 3, no. 13 (1906): 339.

²²⁶ Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement, a Historical Introduction* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 1:xxvii.

²²⁷ Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John Fitzgerald (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), 2-3.

²²⁸ This sketch has the purpose of rounding up Newman's philosophical profile following others' work. In the genre of dissertations, Cyprus Mitchell wrote "The Pragmatism in J. H. Cardinal Newman" (University of Missouri, 1913) and Reed Frey, "The Philosophical Personalism of J. H. Newman" (University of Pittsburg, 2015). Both, John Cronin in his thesis "Cardinal Newman: His Theory of Knowledge" (Catholic University of America, 1935) and Daniel Morris-Chapman in "Scepticism, Truth and Religious Belief in the Thought of J. H. Newman" (University of Bristol, 2014) analyze Newman's reception by philosophical systems of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Finally, Laurence Richardson published his

Wilfrid Ward (1856-1916), Newman's first biographer, in a 1914 lecture devoted to his philosophy, develops what he perceived to be Newman's connection with pragmatism. He expressed that Newman "traced lines afterwards included, though with some differences, in another modern theory –which has become known as pragmatism– a theory which estimates the significance of thought by its bearing on what is practical"²²⁹. In this lecture he quotes a letter from Ferdinand Schiller (1864-1937), the Oxford pragmatist²³⁰, in which Schiller writes:

I recognise [...] that Newman was one of the forerunners and anticipators of pragmatism, and that he discovered in a quite original and independent manner the great discrepancy there is between the actual course of human reasoning and the description of it in the logical text-books²³¹.

Ward proceeds to present two confluences between Newman and pragmatism: the fact that Newman gives precedence to real over notional assent and the fact that he identifies the ideas that relate to concrete realities and inform our actions as those that most matter²³²: "We shall never have done beginning, if we determine to begin with proof. We shall ever be laying our foundations [...] Life is for action. If we insist on proofs for every thing, we shall never come to action: to act you must assume"²³³. Ward also recognizes some differences of

dissertation as *Newman's Approach to Knowledge* (2007), where he connects Newman and phenomenology.

²²⁹ Wilfrid Ward, "Newman's Philosophy," in *Last Lectures* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1918), 74.

²³⁰ Although Schiller was one of the main promoters of pragmatism in Europe at his time, his approach was substantially different from Peirce's realistic pragmatism. Nubiola maintains that some of the hostility towards pragmatism in Europe was caused by Schiller's arrogance and disdain of others. Jaime Nubiola, "Pragmatism in the European Scene: The Heidelberg International Congress of Philosophy, 1908," *Rivista Di Storia Della Filosofia* 72, no. 3 (2017): 397.

²³¹ Ward, "Newman's Philosophy," 86–87.

²³² Cf. Ward, "Newman's Philosophy," 89.

²³³ *GA*, 95.

understanding and summarizes them by stating that “Newman holds, and Mr. James seems to deny, that truths above the full comprehension of man may well have a practical significance for us”²³⁴.

As Ward prepared this lecture, Cyprus Mitchell defended a thesis on this topic in the University of Missouri. Although his interpretation of Newman's achievements is not the one upheld by this dissertation²³⁵, his work is worth mentioning as he found in textual references “sufficient justification for attempting a thesis on the ‘Pragmatism in Cardinal Newman’”²³⁶. Twenty years later, in his doctoral thesis on Newman's theory of knowledge, James Cronin writes that “the similarity between certain principles of Newman's philosophy and the main tenets of pragmatism has long been acknowledged”²³⁷. Although this might be an overstatement, he shows several connections as he understood the thesis of the *Grammar* to be

that thought is intimately related to life; that the mind, far from sitting apart in cold judgment upon syllogisms, is a living power influenced by feeling, habit, heredity and environment, one with the entire conscious life of the subject, bound by the necessity of reaching decisions for a life of action, is of real importance in understanding how people *do* reason²³⁸.

Throughout his thesis Cronin argues that all which is true in pragmatism can be found in Newman. To sustain this view he quotes Walker's book *Theories of Knowledge* published in 1911: “There is scarcely a single doctrine now upheld by the pragmatists which is not to be found verbally stated in the *Grammar of Assent*”²³⁹. The

²³⁴ Ward, “Newman's Philosophy,” 92.

²³⁵ Mitchell presents Newman as a rigid logician who despite his efforts became the historical and logical father of the Modernists. Cyprus Mitchell, “The Pragmatism in John Henry Cardinal Newman” (University of Missouri, 1913), 1.

²³⁶ Mitchell, “Pragmatism in Newman,” 3.

²³⁷ Cronin, “Newman's Theory of Knowledge,” 115.

²³⁸ Cronin, “Newman's Theory of Knowledge,” xv.

²³⁹ Leslie Walker, *Theories of Knowledge* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 648.

convergence between Newman and pragmatism that Mitchell and Cronin identify can be summarized in four points: the antagonism to individualistic epistemological systems, the dismissal of absolute claims made by logic, the centrality of the person in the reasoning process and the emphasis on real ideas that lead to action²⁴⁰.

For his part, after acknowledging that many of the pragmatists' claims are found in the *Grammar*, Walker also identifies some differences: "The real nature of truth is not confused with its pragmatic value. Product is not confused with process, content with intent, the various processes and methods by means of which truth is attained with the real objective validity of truth itself"²⁴¹. He concludes by stating that Newman is not a pragmatist because his standpoint is psychological and human rather than philosophical²⁴².

During the bulk of the twentieth century there are very few studies that relate Newman and pragmatism; one instance is Abbagnano's *Storia della Filosofia* where he identifies Newman as the initiator of the philosophy of action also known as pragmatism²⁴³. The most plausible explanation for the lack of other studies is that "the First World War changed the entire intellectual European stage and pragmatism and idealism soon became a thing of the past"²⁴⁴. However, academic interest in the connection between Newman and pragmatism has resurfaced in the last three decades²⁴⁵.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Mitchell, "Pragmatism in Newman," 4; Cronin, "Newman's Theory of Knowledge," 119.

²⁴¹ Walker, *Theories of Knowledge*, 648.

²⁴² Cf. Walker, *Theories of Knowledge*, 648.

²⁴³ Cf. Nicola Abbagnano, *Historia de la filosofía*, trans. Juan Estelrich and J. Pérez Ballestar (Barcelona: Hora, 1994), 3:374; Gabriel Alonso García, "J. H. Newman como autor filosófico," *Revista española de Teología* 61, no. 4 (2001): 506.

²⁴⁴ Nubiola, "Pragmatism in the European Scene," 396.

²⁴⁵ Jay Newman mentions three other authors that make this connection. However after examining their texts the resemblance seems remarkably loose. Cf. Jay Newman, *The Philosophy of Newman*, 28. In his thesis Morris-Chapman mentions thirteen authors that have discussed Newman's writings in relation to pragmatism. The relevant references are noted here. Cf. Morris-Chapman, "Scepticism, Truth and Belief in Newman's Thought," 34–35.

In 1993, in an article regarding the realism of C. S. Peirce (1839-1914), Oakes makes a passing reference to his insistence “in a manner reminiscent of Cardinal Newman, that good morals and good reasoning are closely allied”²⁴⁶, and a couple years later Fontrodona, in his doctoral thesis, expounds on this connection²⁴⁷. In 1995 Cosgrove publishes a paper that seeks to present a viable alternative to post-modern skepticism based on the dissimilar, yet compatible, approaches of Newman and James²⁴⁸.

In 2012 Nubiola presents a communication on this topic. He explains how Whately's *Elements of Logic* is a foundational work for the careers of both, Newman and Peirce, and identifies the references that Peirce made to Newman in his writings. He concludes that “the perspectives of Peirce and Newman are quite similar, perhaps because they spring from their common opposition to the rationalistic individualism typical of modernity. Neither of the two grounds his confidence on the self-sufficiency of the individual's reason”²⁴⁹.

Perhaps the most comprehensive study made in recent years regarding the parallels between Newman and pragmatism, specifically between Newman and Peirce, is that of Moore, who enumerates the points both philosophers hold in common:

They both write to oppose positivism; they both break away from modern philosophy and out of the critical problem; they both affirm philosophic realism; they both re-embodiment the intellect philosophically after its Cartesian philosophical disembodiment; [...] they both have theories of continuity/development that were articulated in response to evolution theories of the time; [...] both go beyond traditional logic by

²⁴⁶ Edward Oakes, “Discovering the American Aristotle,” *First Things* 38, no. 12 (1993): 27.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Joan Fontrodona, *Ciencia y práctica en la acción directiva* (Madrid: Rialp, 1999), 198–99.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Brian Cosgrove, “‘We Cannot Do without a View’ –John Henry Newman, William James and the Case Against Scepticism,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (1995): 32–43.

²⁴⁹ Jaime Nubiola, “John Henry Newman y Charles S. Peirce: conexiones y afinidades,” in *V Jornadas “Peirce en Argentina,”* 2012. My translation.

asserting some logical method of reasoning about singular facts and the concrete world; both develop theories of practical decision making by the personal, not subjective, interpretation of signs; both claim that the signs from which man reasons are in themselves only probable, not definitive, indicators, that require an interpretant²⁵⁰.

Newman's pragmatism is a central theme in this dissertation and will be studied in the fourth chapter. These introductory remarks show that although soon after his death Newman was framed as a forerunner of the pragmatic tradition, this study was short-lived and has only been reignited in the past three decades. With the rise of the phenomenological method in the twentieth century, it became common to relate Newman to that current of thought.

Phenomenology is the philosophical tradition in which Sillem, the editor of Newman's *Philosophical Notebook*, places Newman. He states that Newman is to be considered "at least a forerunner of the Phenomenologists of the present day"²⁵¹ and explains:

If we understand Phenomenology in a free sense, and refrain from identifying it too rigidly with the special form given to it by Husserl, its founder, if, in other words, we understand it to mean a person's method of investigating concrete, particular things by elucidating both his conscious, and his over-all personal, experience of them, then there is, it seems, a sense in which we can speak of Newman as using a phenomenological method in his philosophizing²⁵².

It is likely that the first person to connect Newman with phenomenology was Matthias Laos (1882-1965), the protagonist of Newman's reception in Germany in the first decade of the twentieth century²⁵³. Walgrave states in 1939 that Newman might have called his

²⁵⁰ Matthew Moore, "Newman and Peirce on Practical Religious Certainty," in *Semiotics Yearbook* (New York: Semiotic Society of America, 2008), 48.

²⁵¹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 135.

²⁵² Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 127-28.

²⁵³ Cf. Claus Arnold, "Newman's Reception in Germany: From Döllinger to Ratzinger," 2011.

main work "The Phenomenology of Assent"²⁵⁴. Likewise, in his lengthy treatise on Newman's epistemology published in 1955, Boekraad maintains that

although Newman lived long before the time that phenomenology was propagated, he agrees with the main tenets of that doctrine [...] His method as a thinker carries the characteristics of phenomenology so naturally that we feel that in him it was in no way based on a *programme*, but a kind of temper²⁵⁵.

Collins, in the introduction to his 1961 work *Philosophical Readings in Cardinal Newman*, expounds upon the elements that Husserl's and Newman's methods have in common²⁵⁶ and Sillem does the same eight years later in his introduction to Newman's *Philosophical Notebook* explaining that "Newman was concerned with the phenomenological investigation"²⁵⁷. For his part Ker, in the introduction he wrote for the *Grammar of Assent*, writes that "instead of misrepresenting Newman, fruitful parallels were drawn with the phenomenologists"²⁵⁸.

The desire to continue studying Newman in relation to phenomenology is still present today. Ekeh wrote that an aspect of Newman's originality which has not been fully explored is his philosophical phenomenology²⁵⁹ and Richardson's dissertation expounds on the similarities between Newman and phenomenology; he concludes his study by stating that Newman's methodology "satisfies the criteria of this movement such that it can be designated

²⁵⁴ Qtd. in Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 129.

²⁵⁵ Adrian Boekraad, *The Personal Conquest of Truth According to J. H. Newman* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1955), 139. He holds a special significance as he concluded the edition of Newman's *Philosophical Notebook* after Sillem passed away before the work was completed.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Collins, "Newman and Philosophy," 30–31.

²⁵⁷ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 129.

²⁵⁸ Ker, "Introduction to the *Grammar of Assent*," lv.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Ono Ekeh, "The Phenomenological Context and Transcendentalism of John Henry Newman and Edmund Husserl," *Newman Studies Journal* 5, no. 1 (2008): 35.

as descriptive phenomenology”²⁶⁰. The editor’s essay in the 2019 special issue of the *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* dedicated to Newman’s philosophy notes that “one has often noted a kinship of Newman with phenomenology. He seems to be in some ways a kind of proto-phenomenologist”²⁶¹.

The connections between Newman and phenomenology are commonly accepted and have passed the test of time. However, the specific points of convergence vary depending on the understanding each person has of phenomenology. Ekeh concluded his essay stating that “the question is one of degree [...] this would determine the extent to which one can label Newman’s thought as phenomenological or whether he should be seen as a proto-phenomenological thinker”²⁶².

Regarding the connection between Newman and particular phenomenologists, Morris-Chapman makes the case for Newman’s influence on Franz Brentano (1838-1937), who is widely accepted as a forerunner of phenomenology. In 1872 Brentano visited Newman at the Oratory²⁶³ and in 1889 he described the *Grammar* as “an interesting work [...] scarcely noticed in Germany”²⁶⁴. The connection with Husserl (1859-1938) does not seem to be that direct, although Richardson recognizes a similarity in their philosophical development²⁶⁵. Jay Newman points out that “when Newman wrote the *Grammar*, Husserlian phenomenology had not yet been invented; but much of what Newman is doing in the *Grammar* bears a striking

²⁶⁰ Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 170.

²⁶¹ John Crosby, “What Newman Can Give Catholic Philosophers Today,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2019): 14.

²⁶² Ekeh, “Newman and Husserl,” 50.

²⁶³ Cf. *LD*, xxvi 81.

²⁶⁴ Franz Brentano, *The Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, trans. Cecil Hague (Westminster: Archival Constable & Co., 1889), 53. The first translation of the *Grammar* into German was done in 1921 by Theodor Haecker (1879-1945); as a result Haecker converted to Catholicism.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 161.

resemblance to the kind of analysis that we find in the writings of such phenomenologists as Husserl”²⁶⁶.

The resemblance between Newman's epistemology and phenomenology can be identified in four points. First, in opposition to empiricist theories, both, Newman and the phenomenologists, argue that knowledge is not limited to sense data²⁶⁷. Second, both give central importance to the knowledge of individual concrete reality: Newman through his notion of real assent and the phenomenologists through their *leitmotif*: “to the things themselves”. In words of Newman: “I would confine myself to the truth of things, and to the mind's certitude of that truth”²⁶⁸. Sillem explains Newman's phenomenological approach in this matter:

[Newman's] task was, therefore, to bring clearly into the foreground, by way of carefully presented descriptions, how in fact men think in their day-to-day lives when they are dealing with matters of personal importance to them. Thus, in the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman said: ‘I am only contemplating the mind as it moves in fact, by whatever human mechanism; as a locomotive engine could not move without steam’²⁶⁹.

The third resemblance is their insistence on the necessary willingness to engage with and learn from reality²⁷⁰. Marchetto explains that Newman “considers things in their essential relation to our awareness of them, and recognizes that, just as our awareness of thought is a reflex action which implies our being [...] similarly the perception of moral conscience [...] implies the idea that there would be a corresponding external object”²⁷¹. Fourth, and last, there is a close

²⁶⁶ Jay Newman, *The Philosophy of Newman*, 24.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 75.

²⁶⁸ *GA*, 344.

²⁶⁹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 129.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 162.

²⁷¹ Marchetto, “Philosophical Relevance of Newman,” 322.

affinity between Newman's careful description of mental acts and their objects and the method of descriptive phenomenology²⁷². In this regard, Artz explains that "both steps of [the phenomenological] method may be found in Newman: the unprejudiced consideration of a phenomenon and its analysis, and [...] the perception of the essential after having subtracted the accidental and changing"²⁷³.

Together with these similarities the points of divergence must also be noted. Having begun his career in the realist camp, Husserl eventually fell into idealism. If Newman's method is to be considered phenomenological, a firm grounding in reality must be guaranteed²⁷⁴. In this regard, Newman did not accept Husserl's limitation to the intentional or formal object nor the exclusion of the real material object as existent²⁷⁵. Like Husserl, Newman explored the correlation of the subjective and objective elements in the person's way of knowing, and "as with Husserlian phenomenology, [his] concern for the role of subjectivity in attaining truth is open to misrepresentation as psychologism"²⁷⁶.

Within the discussion of Newman's phenomenological method, Sillem makes a perceptive description of his philosophical project:

Newman's method was designed to show that the life work of a philosopher is a persistent development and deepening of the personal knowledge he has of the things and people in the world around him. It was designed to bring his whole self into an ever closer touch with real things, so that he could enquire into their structure and mutual relations, and to do this he had to keep his mind clear from all forms

²⁷² Cf. Collins, "Newman and Philosophy," 31; Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 163–71.

²⁷³ Artz, "Newman as Philosopher," 283.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 163.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Artz, "Newman as Philosopher," 283.

²⁷⁶ Ekeh, "Newman and Husserl," 41.

of subjective 'clouding' [...] Newman designed his method to enable him to apprehend and think of things for himself²⁷⁷.

Velez writes that for Newman "knowledge is [...] more than reasoning; rather it is a real possession of the things we know [...] today his philosophical approach would be described as phenomenology, or more specifically, Christian personalism"²⁷⁸; likewise Crosby maintains that "Newman's personalism as it is found in the *Grammar*, in his teaching on conscience and on doctrinal development make me call him a proto-phenomenologist"²⁷⁹.

These lines serve as a fitting transition to the discussion on Newman's reception by the personalist tradition. More specific in focus, personalism in some of its expressions can be considered an offspring of the phenomenological method. Pointedly, Sillem argues that Newman's phenomenology led him to personalism and concludes the study of his philosophy stating that Newman "stands at the threshold of the new age [...] the pioneer of a new philosophy of the individual Person and the Personal Life"²⁸⁰.

Newman's connection to personalism was made as early as 1922. Edgar Brightman (1884-1953) in *The Personalist*, a journal which sought to spread this school in the United States, comments that "personalism is an empirical method, aiming at practical certainty; Cardinal Newman's *Grammar of Assent* illustrates it"²⁸¹. Around that

²⁷⁷ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 134.

²⁷⁸ Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 559–60.

²⁷⁹ Cf. John Crosby, "The Philosophical Legacy of John Henry Newman," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2019): 1.

²⁸⁰ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 250.

²⁸¹ Edgar Brightman, "The Use of the Word Personalism," *The Personalist* 3, no. 4 (1922): 257. The connection Brightman makes between personalism and pragmatism highlights the personal element in pragmatism: "In its logical use, the word 'personalism' is equivalent to the humanistic form of pragmatism for which not reason alone, but the whole personal life with all its needs, is the guide to truth. It is a reaction against the rigor and vigor of absolutism as well as against the vague excesses of mysticism". Brightman, "Personalism," 257.

time, William Inge (1860-1954), writes an essay for the *Edinburgh Review* in which he is “one of the first to speak of Newman’s personalism”²⁸². Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), French philosopher, also mentions Newman among the pioneers of the personalist movement in England²⁸³ and Jan Walgrave, a Dutch scholar, writes that Newman’s method resembles contemporary personalism²⁸⁴. These early studies not only show a similar understanding of Newman’s philosophy, but its world-wide relevance.

Several contemporary scholars also maintain Newman’s personalism as a core characteristic of his philosophy. Tillman develops “the personalism at the center of Newman’s thought”²⁸⁵. For his part Dulles indicates that “Newman remains the outstanding master of personalism in theological epistemology”²⁸⁶. In his discussion of Newman’s philosophical relevance, Marchetto comments on the three qualities of the person developed by Romano Guardini (1885-1968) and anticipated by Newman: incommunicability, unrepeatability and singularity²⁸⁷. Most recently Crosby published a study titled *The Personalism of John Henry Newman* and calls Newman “a kind of father or grandfather of what we call today Christian personalism”²⁸⁸. Frey concludes his thesis by stating that “it is *because* of Newman’s personalism (especially as found in his philosophical anthropology and

²⁸² John Crosby, *The Personalism of John Henry Newman* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), xviii.

²⁸³ Cf. Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (London: Routledge, 1950), xx.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Jan Walgrave, “The Rediscovery of Newman,” *New Blackfriars* 49, no. 578 (1968): 519.

²⁸⁵ Mary K. Tillman, “The Personalist Epistemology of John Henry Newman,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 60 (1986): 236.

²⁸⁶ Avery Dulles, *John Henry Newman* (London: Continuum, 2009), 45.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Marchetto, “Philosophical Relevance of Newman,” 325–26.

²⁸⁸ Crosby, “Newman and Philosophers Today,” 6.

epistemology) that he is able to be relevant to contemporary discussions”²⁸⁹.

One of Newman's central theses in the *Grammar* is that “instead of saying, as logicians say, that [...] two men differ only in number, we ought, I repeat, rather to say [*sic*] that they differ from each other in all that they are, in identity, in incommunicability, in personality”²⁹⁰. He expounds on this principle regarding each person's individuality:

To be rational, to have speech, to pass through successive changes of mind and body from infancy to death, belong to man's nature; to have a particular history, to be married or single, to have children or to be childless, to live a given number of years, to have a certain constitution, moral temperament, intellectual outfit, mental formation, these and the like, taken altogether, are the accidents which make up our notion of a man's person, and are the ground-work or condition of his particular experiences²⁹¹.

Newman's personalism is a natural reaction to rationalism through which he sought to replace impersonal reason with the personal mind. He disputed the fact that “cut off from its life-giving roots in the human person [...] officious reason has come to represent the intellectual powers in their entirety”²⁹². For Newman, knowledge can only belong to the person and as a consequence he developed his person-centered epistemology²⁹³. His teaching on notional and real apprehension and the distinction he made between formal and informal inferences show his appreciation for the way the person actually reasons. These postulates, along his understanding of conscience as a

²⁸⁹ Reed Frey, “Cor ad Cor Loquitur: The Philosophical Personalism of John Henry Newman” (MA Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2015), 66.

²⁹⁰ *GA*, 282.

²⁹¹ *GA*, 240.

²⁹² Tillman, “The Personalist Epistemology of Newman,” 236.

²⁹³ Cf. Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 151.

deeply personal avenue to God, are characteristics of his personalist thought²⁹⁴.

In his sermon “The Individuality of the Soul”, which he preached in 1839, Newman expresses that

every being in that great concourse is his own centre [...] He has his own hopes and fears, desires, judgments, and aims; he is everything to himself, and no one else is really any thing. No one outside of him can really touch him, can touch his soul, his immortality; he must live with himself for ever. He has a depth within him unfathomable, an infinite abyss of existence; and the scene in which he bears part for the moment is but like a gleam of sunshine upon its surface²⁹⁵.

Being well-grounded in realism, Newman’s personalism did not lead him into subjectivism²⁹⁶; he sustained that the individual’s search for truth should be carried out within the guiding grounds of his intersubjectivity and gave personal relationships a privileged place in the apprehension and communication of truth²⁹⁷. Regarding truth’s apprehension Newman writes: “Instead of devising, what cannot be, some sufficient science of reasoning which may compel certitude in concrete conclusions, [we ought] to confess that there is no ultimate test of truth besides the testimony born to truth by the mind itself”²⁹⁸ and regarding its communication he states: “[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 [...] who are at

²⁹⁴ Cf. Crosby, *The Personalism of Newman*, 36; Frey, “The Philosophical Personalism of Newman,” 29–32.

²⁹⁵ *PS*, iv 82–83.

²⁹⁶ Cf. John Crosby, “The ‘Coincidentia Oppositorum’ in the Thought and in the Spirituality of John Henry Newman,” *Anthropotes* 6, no. 2 (1990): 207; John Crosby, “John Henry Newman on Personal Influence,” in *Personalist Papers* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 238–41.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Tillman, “The Personalist Epistemology of Newman,” 242.

²⁹⁸ *GA*, 350.

once the teachers and the patterns of it”²⁹⁹. As a corollary, the choice of his Cardinal’s motto towards the end of his life, *Cor ad cor loquitur*, is an eloquent expression of his personalist vein³⁰⁰.

One of the first scholars who studied Newman’s philosophy writes that “his philosophy was strange, not because it was false, but because it was truth seen in a new light”³⁰¹. After the Second World War, a number of important studies have attempted to interpret Newman’s thought in its own right, instead of trying to fit it into an alien philosophical framework³⁰². Recently, Richardson invited “those who wish to appreciate his philosophy [to] approach his thought with a truly open mind, being prepared to find originality that must be considered first of all in its own right, and not judged solely according to the criteria of another way of thinking”³⁰³.

Crosby explains that “the drama of Newman’s thought lies in the fruitful tension of these two sides of his mind and personality”³⁰⁴ referring to the objective and dogmatic and the subjective and personal. In Newman’s own words: “One aspect of Revelation must not be allowed to exclude or to obscure another; and Christianity is dogmatical, devotional, practical all at once; it is esoteric and exoteric; it is indulgent and strict; it is light and dark; it is love, and it is fear”³⁰⁵. What Newman says about Christianity can be well applied to his philosophy and its ensuing reception; his thought is so rich that it has been able to inform diverse traditions including pragmatism, phenomenology and personalism.

²⁹⁹ *US*, 91–92.

³⁰⁰ Cf. Crosby, *The Personalism of Newman*, xxii.

³⁰¹ Cronin, “Newman’s Theory of Knowledge,” 142.

³⁰² Cf. Ker, “Introduction to the *Grammar of Assent*,” lv.

³⁰³ Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 15.

³⁰⁴ Crosby, *The Personalism of Newman*, xvii.

³⁰⁵ *Dev*, 36.

Conclusion: J. H. Newman as a philosopher

After discussing Newman's life and philosophical profile, part 1 concludes with a recapitulation of the fundamental aspects of Newman's philosophy upon which this dissertation is built. As it has been shown, Newman's intellectual pilgrimage "was a consistent development of a line of thought which conducted him slowly but undeviatingly to his predestined goal"¹: a commitment to truth and an invitation to others to make this same commitment.

The arguments in these two chapters have offered a glimpse of the diverse, and often contradictory, interpretations of Newman's writings. In order to account for these differences, Crosby appeals to Newman's capacity to harmonize apparent opposites². In this regard, Newman himself explains that "seeming contradictions arise from the want of depth in our minds to master the whole truth"³. This dissertation attempts to serve as a means to deepen in the understanding of truth brought forth by Newman.

Although he did invest systematically in philosophical research, Newman's attraction to the Fathers of the Church was due in part to the way they understood philosophy as an efficient means to bring individuals closer to the truth⁴. In 1868, as he undertook his last major project, the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman considered different avenues

¹ Christopher Dawson, "Newman's Place in History," in *Newman and Littlemore* (Oxford: Salesian Fathers, 1945), 33.

² Cf. Crosby, "Newman on Personal Influence," 241. On this subject Jaki remarks: "That Newman has become a battleground and possibly the great intellectual battleground within the Church shows more than anything else his greatness. Just as in Arian times, when both orthodox and unorthodox parties tried to secure the vote of Anthony, *the* saint of the day, so today both parties try to claim Newman to themselves". Stanley Jaki, "Newman's Assent to Reality, Natural and Supernatural," in *Newman Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 226.

³ *PS*, v 48.

⁴ Cf. Benjamin King, "The Church Fathers," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 119.

to discuss the nature of faith, belief, assent and certitude and concluded that the only approach “likely to do good, is *philosophical*”⁵. However, “much of what is most interesting and original from the standpoint of philosophy [in Newman] has to be dug for, sifted out from a mass of work concerned with matters not philosophical at all”⁶.

William Clark’s (1827-1878) review of the *Grammar of Assent*, written shortly after its publication, portrays the appreciation his contemporaries held for Newman’s philosophical work:

The powerful grasp of Dr. Newman’s mind appears very vividly and distinctly in its pages. The experience of a long life has perfected what was always one of the clearest notes of his intellect, his wonderful appreciation of points of view different than his own [...] It is almost a paradox to say it, but it seems as if the acceptance of the most dogmatic of creeds has made him less dogmatic. The more intense his own convictions, the more generous and liberal he is to those whom he considers in the unfortunate position of rejecting them. His own labours and sufferings, the persecutions he has endured, so doubly painful to a mind intensely sensitive, the troublous journey by which he won his way to his present faith, have refined and softened a character always remarkable for its intense sympathy⁷.

In order to provide a grounding point for the discussion in the next four chapters, the crucial choices of interpretation made in this dissertation regarding Newman’s philosophical insights will now be identified.

This dissertation is built on the understanding that the cornerstone of Newman’s philosophical project is his belief that “the human mind is made for truth”⁸. Newman’s deep introspection on the

⁵ *LD*, xxiv 74.

⁶ Cameron, “The Night Battle,” 103.

⁷ William Clark, “Review of *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*,” *The Athenaeum*, no. 2212 (1870): 379.

⁸ *GA*, 221.

gradual unfolding of truth in his own mind became the hermeneutical key for his research⁹, which was characterized by his ability to bring together apparently opposed truths even when he could not explain exactly how is it that they cohere¹⁰.

Early in his career, Newman understood that “each mind pursues its own course and is actuated in that course by tenthousand [*sic*] indescribable incommunicable feelings and imaginings”¹¹. His life-long study on the operations of reason led him to develop the notion of the Illative Sense as a way to give an account of the incommensurability of the human mind¹². In this sense,

Newman was a distinctly modern thinker, that is, a thinker who was dealing with the ‘turn to the subject’ that is commonly taken to be the signature of the modern period. For he is not only interested in what is objectively true [...] but also in the way in which objective truth is ‘lived,’ owned by the subject, is absorbed into the existence of the subject¹³.

Building on this personal notion of the commitment to truth, Newman appeals for a comprehensive approach to knowledge as a way to avoid falling into subjectivity: “In knowledge, we begin with wholes, not with parts. We see the landscape, or the mountain, or the sky. We perceive men, each individually being a whole. Then we take to pieces, or take aspects of, this general & vague object, which is before us”¹⁴. This methodology is particularly relevant for the study of

⁹ Cf. Dawson, “Newman’s Place in History,” 33.

¹⁰ Cf. Crosby, “Coincidentia Oppositorum,” 187.

¹¹ *LD*, ii 60.

¹² Cf. Ker, “Introduction to the *Grammar of Assent*,” xxiii.

¹³ Crosby, “Newman and Philosophers Today,” 8.

¹⁴ *PN*, 8.

someone as complex and original as Newman who was always “ready to take intellectual risks”¹⁵.

Accordingly, in this dissertation, Newman’s thought is taken as a whole, giving due importance to its historical and cultural context and without trying to fit it into a foreign mold of interpretation, since “it was Newman’s writing strategy to assume that ideas are complex and multifaceted. As such, each ‘idea’ has many aspects to it [...] each aspect of an idea is to be thought through, to be arranged *vis-à-vis* other aspects”¹⁶. In order to grasp all aspects of Newman’s philosophy, Collins’ invitation in his introduction to Newman’s *Philosophical Readings* is followed: “We in turn must take Newman’s mind where we find it, rather than remove it to an alien setting”¹⁷. Newman’s mind is found giving a central importance to real assent and actual practices; thus, the starting point for his philosophy is how men in fact think and reflect, not logical principles that force reason into a system¹⁸.

Built upon his observations and discussions with his contemporaries, another characteristic of Newman’s philosophy is that it is deeply personal: “The life of the individual human person is the starting point of his entire philosophy. He studied living people even more than the writings of philosophers [...] He refused to allow philosophers to tell him how men ought to think, when he knew that what they said conflicted with the way in which they do think”¹⁹. In the same vein, Newman is approached as a living person and the way

¹⁵ George Young, *Daylight and Champaign* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), 62. Young continues his description of Newman’s work: “He is always skimming along the verge of a logical catastrophe, and always relying on his dialectic agility to save himself from falling: always exposing what seems to be an unguarded spot, and always revealing a new line of defence when the unwary assailant has reached it”. Young, *Daylight and Champaign*, 62.

¹⁶ Edward Miller, “Introduction,” in *Conscience the Path to Holiness: Walking with Newman* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 4.

¹⁷ Collins, “Newman and Philosophy,” 4.

¹⁸ Cf. Brian Hughes, “The Contemplative Function of Theology within Liberal Education: Re-Reading Newman’s *Idea of a University*,” *Horizons* 32, no. 1 (2005): 217.

¹⁹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 73–74.

he does think is at the center of the discussion –thus the ample recourse to most of his published works, as well as to his *Letters and Diaries*.

This study of his texts avoids two pitfalls: dealing with him as with a systematic author, which he was not, and taking isolated ideas out of context²⁰. In his *Autobiographical Writings* Newman admits to his “habit, or even nature, of not writing & publishing without a call [...] or invitation, or necessity, or emergency”²¹. Newman thinks and writes, not for himself but for others. He puts his mind and his entire personality in every word because he writes for people he knows and cares about²². This approach results in an unsystematic exposition characterized by a lack of strict definition of terms²³: “It is as if he is trying to get a wide terrain into clear focus, directing his lens now in one direction, now in another, without at any stage piecing the results together in any single coherent picture”²⁴. In this sense, “Newman’s thought can be described as ‘dialectical’ in the straightforward sense that his emphasis at any time depends upon who is it that he is arguing with at that time”²⁵.

Besides the occasional nature of his work, Newman’s appropriation of insights from various philosophers, often ascribed to different schools of thought, complicates the attempts to ground his philosophical approach in one tradition²⁶. The *Grammar of Assent*, the unfolding of the theory of knowledge which Newman outlines in his *University Sermons*, portrays his acquaintance with the British naturalist tradition, however few scholars reject all trace of empiricism from his thought while others treat him as merely an empiricist. The

²⁰ Cf. Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher,” 231, 240.

²¹ *AW*, 272–73.

²² Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 6.

²³ Cf. Cameron, “The Night Battle,” 112.

²⁴ Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher,” 231.

²⁵ Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher,” 240.

²⁶ Cf. Aquino, “The British Naturalist Tradition,” 154.

stance taken in this dissertation is that Newman incorporates some insights from Locke, Hume and Mill, particularly from their epistemology, not their metaphysics, and uses them to show that “reason in matters of religion did not operate differently from the way it worked in history, philosophy or morality”²⁷. Thus he overcomes some constraints of the empirical tradition and allows for the possibility of certainty and assent²⁸.

Newman's congeniality with empiricism is also qualified, or rather limited, by his all-encompassing realism, which is mirrored in his conviction that “true philosophy deals with facts. We cannot make facts. All our wishing cannot change them. We must use them”²⁹. Walker comments that “for Newman, as for all realists, there is only one ultimate and universal criterion of truth, the evidence which results from a careful examination and study of that which we wish to know”³⁰.

The scope and originality of his work have caused Newman's philosophical depth to be underestimated³¹. Newman aimed to explore new grounds and provide those that came after him, not finished answers, but novel and challenging perspectives³². In 1840 he confided to Mary Holmes (1815-1878):

Be assured that I have my doubts and difficulties as other people. Perhaps the more we examine and investigate, the more we have to perplex us. It is the lot of man: the human mind in its present state is unequal to its own powers of apprehension; it embraces more than it can master. I think we ought all to set out on our inquiries, I am sure we shall end them, with this conviction³³.

²⁷ Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher,” 226.

²⁸ Cf. Aquino, “The British Naturalist Tradition,” 154.

²⁹ *US*, 231.

³⁰ Walker, *Theories of Knowledge*, 648.

³¹ Cf. Cameron, “The Night Battle,” 103.

³² Cf. Crosby, “Newman and Philosophers Today,” 6.

³³ *LD*, vii 407.

Newman understood that his analysis of how the individual reasons and comes to the truth was not absolute nor infallible. His only intention was to move the conversation forward and aid particular individuals in their quest for knowledge and belief. Ward comments that this understanding gives scholars “the key to his philosophy. It anticipates, more or less clearly, certain theories which have, in our own day, made a stir in the philosophical world”³⁴. In speaking of certain theories, Ward is referring to pragmatism, the philosophical tradition that this dissertation sets out to unpack in dialogue with Newman.

The introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* expresses that the research it contains “does not intend to protect [Newman’s] legacy, but to examine his life, writings, thought and significance”³⁵. The same objective stands for this dissertation, within the particular theme of the affinities between Newman and the pragmatist tradition. It aims to provide a plausible entry point to study and develop Newman’s theory of knowledge, as well as a nuanced understanding of pragmatism as a tool for dialogue in today’s world.

³⁴ Ward, “Newman’s Philosophy,” 74.

³⁵ Aquino and King, “Introduction,” 1.

PART II.

THE PRAGMATISM OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

3. Understanding of pragmatism

In 1878, eight years after Newman published the *Grammar of Assent*, in which he gives an account of the needed conditions to hold a proposition with certainty, C. S. Peirce published the paper “How to Make our Ideas Clear” which gave birth to pragmatism, understood by him as a philosophical method that delineates the conditions needed for inquiry to lead to truth. The convergence of interests and profound similarities that can be appreciated between these two philosophers and their theories is explored in chapters 3 and 4¹.

Peirce’s paper, “How to Make our Ideas Clear”, the second he wrote in a six-part series for the *Popular Science Monthly*, suggests that philosophy can find a way forward from Cartesian rationalism by examining concepts and ideas in relation to their consequences in human behavior². Peirce’s discussion on the clarity and distinctness of ideas leads him to develop what came to be known as the pragmatic maxim, which states in its earliest formulation: “Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object”³.

At the time, Peirce was not attempting to develop a philosophical tradition; he simply intended to use logic to overcome the dead-end to

¹ Cf. Moore, “Newman and Peirce,” 56.

² Cf. Michael Bacon, *Pragmatism: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 16.

³ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.402 (1878).

which philosophy had arrived with Descartes and the development of modern rationalism. Twenty years passed before his ideas reached a wider audience. In a lecture to the Philosophers Union at Berkeley University, William James coined and popularized the term “pragmatism” giving credit to Peirce for its inception. James starts his conference by presenting an approachable account of himself and his philosophical project:

I feel that there is a center in truth’s forest where I have never been: to track it out and get there is the secret spring of all my poor life’s philosophic efforts; at moments I almost strike into the final valley, there is a gleam of the end, a sense of certainty, but always there comes still another ridge, so my blazes merely circle towards the true direction; and although now, if ever, would be the fit occasion, yet I cannot take you to the wondrous hidden spot today. Tomorrow it must be, or tomorrow, or tomorrow; and pretty surely death will overtake me ere the promise is fulfilled. Of such postponed achievements do the lives of all philosophers consist⁴.

Although James appears to have modest ambitions, this lecture proved to be highly consequential. He stated its objective as follows: “I will seek to define with you merely what seems to be the most likely direction in which to start upon the trail of truth”⁵ and explained that the compass for such trail was given to him by Peirce, whom he recognizes as one of the most acute contemporary thinkers and the developer of the first formulation of pragmatism.

Neither Peirce nor James present pragmatism as a thoroughly original theory, rather both recognize its roots in earlier philosophers. Peirce mentions Leibniz (1646-1716), Berkeley (1685-1783) and Kant

⁴ William James, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” *University Chronicle* 1, no. 4 (1898): 289.

⁵ James, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” 289–90.

(1724-1804) as its precursors⁶, while James writes that “there is absolutely nothing new in the pragmatic method. Socrates was an adept at it, Aristotle used it methodically. Locke, Berkeley, and Hume made momentous contributions to truth by its means [...] these forerunners of pragmatism used it in fragments: they were a prelude only”⁷. James’ recognition of pragmatism’s forerunners is central to this dissertation in which Newman’s concerns and convictions are examined in relation to this precise theme.

Since the moment of its conception, pragmatism has not been understood as a uniform theory or set of doctrines; rather it has developed as “an epistemological proposal, an account of knowledge, belief, justification, inquiry, or truth”⁸. At the turn of the twentieth century, Peirce and James drifted apart, which lead Peirce, in 1905, to rename his theory as “pragmaticism” in order to distinguish it from the formulations other philosophers developed, that gave it a different meaning than the one he envisioned⁹.

By 1908 Arthur Lovejoy (1873-1962) recognized thirteen different philosophical positions labeled as pragmatism¹⁰. In general terms, two lines developed: a reforming strand of pragmatism which recognizes the legitimacy of traditional questions regarding the truth behind our cognitive practices and a revolutionary pragmatism which distances itself from the notions of truth and objectivity¹¹.

⁶ Cf. Charles S. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, ed. Nathan Houser, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992–98), 2:457 (MS 675, 1911).

⁷ William James, *Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), 50.

⁸ Robert Talisse and Scott Aikin, *Pragmatism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 2.

⁹ Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.414 (1905).

¹⁰ Cf. Arthur Lovejoy, “The Thirteen Pragmatisms,” *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 5, no. 2 (1908): 29–39.

¹¹ Cf. Jaime Nubiola, “Pragmatismo y Relativismo: Una Defensa Del Pluralismo,” *Themata, Revista de Filosofía* 27 (2001): 53.

Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey are recognized today as classical pragmatists; however, each philosopher that has been identified with this tradition emphasized diverse points. In some aspects, this has brought forth contradictions, and in many others, it has proven to be an enrichment. Through this discussion on the convictions of a few pragmatist philosophers, the claims they hold in common will be brought forth.

The method that has united pragmatists throughout the decades consists in taking seriously lived human experience and theorizing from that basis, from its richness and its deficiencies, in order to find and develop resources from actual social practices¹². Cheryl Misak (b. 1961) writes that the common thread among pragmatist philosophers is “their effort to articulate a position that tries to do justice to the objective dimension of *human inquiry*”¹³.

As it has been noted, in the turn of the twentieth century, Newman was considered a forerunner of pragmatism. Ward, in a 1914 lecture on Newman’s philosophy, mentions his anticipation of pragmatism in connection to the development of the Illative Sense¹⁴. This insight into Newman’s place within the pragmatic tradition has not been completely forgotten, nor has it been fruitfully explored. Sillem writes that although Newman did not subscribe to any philosophical tradition, he would be open to others placing him in one, since he “would have understood the expression to refer to more or less general agreement of thinking men about the truth of certain fundamental philosophical ideas or principles”¹⁵.

This chapter begins with an exposition of the central tenets of pragmatism as a philosophical tradition in order to justify the proposal

¹² Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, vii.

¹³ Misak, “Introduction,” 1.

¹⁴ Cf. Ward, “Newman’s Philosophy,” 86.

¹⁵ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 93.

to identify Newman as one of its forerunners. Particular attention is given to those contributions that can be connected to Newman's philosophical insights or that serve as a foil for the exploration of the affinities between Newman's philosophy and the pragmatic tradition in chapter 4. It also sets the stage for the discussion, in chapter 6, regarding the contributions that Newman makes for a commitment to truth in contemporary times.

3.1. Pragmatism as a way of thinking

This review begins with Charles S. Peirce, the first philosopher to propose pragmatism as a principle of inquiry and an account of meaning, and who was familiar with Newman's *Grammar of Assent* although he did not discuss it directly. Besides Peirce's familiarity with the *Grammar*, it is worth noting that both Newman and Peirce studied logic from Richard Whately and had a deep interest in and affinity for the natural sciences¹⁶.

One of Peirce's convictions, shared by all pragmatists as well as Newman, is that Descartes' method of universal doubt is not an appropriate foundation for knowledge. Peirce wrote in one of his earliest papers: "Now without wishing to return to scholasticism, it seems to me that modern science and modern logic require us to stand upon a very different platform from this"¹⁷. He maintains that the external world, known through its effects, is the appropriate platform for thought, as "there is no such thing as non-relational thought; there is no intuitive, or immediate, knowledge"¹⁸. A more thorough discussion of anti-foundationalism in the thought of Peirce and Newman will be presented in section 3.2.

¹⁶ Cf. Nubiola, "Newman y Peirce."

¹⁷ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.265 (1868).

¹⁸ Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 19.

Peirce argues that all knowledge is built upon our interaction with the external world through signs, in a three-way or triadic relationship, versus Descartes' two-way relationship. Although he revised his theory of signs several times throughout his career, its three basic elements and their correlation remained consistent: "I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former"¹⁹.

Building upon his theory of signs, the relationship that Peirce recognizes between surprise, doubt, inquiry and truth is central to his conception of pragmatism. He dismisses Descartes' foundational doubt as "paper doubt", and argues that inquiry must be grounded on the external world, since "there are real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them"²⁰, and on a genuine doubt, as "there must be a real and living doubt, and without this all discussion is idle"²¹. The meaningful interplay between the external world, surprise, doubt, inquiry and truth is generally held by all pragmatists who choose, as a matter of principle, to ground their philosophy in real-life experience²².

Peirce believes that the only path that can lead inquiry to truth is the scientific method, as it takes its data from the external world and answers to it. He understands the scientist as he who "embraces evidence, engaging with it by showing how existing beliefs can accommodate it or, if they do not, revising them accordingly"²³ and describes truth as "the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed

¹⁹ Peirce, *The Essential Peirce*, 478 (1908).

²⁰ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.384 (1877).

²¹ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.376 (1877).

²² Cf. Misak, "Introduction," 4.

²³ Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 23.

to by all who investigate”²⁴. In other words, Peirce claims that genuine inquiry involves a communal effort, the willingness to revise a hypothesis for as long as there is a motive to do so, and results in truth. However, while upholding these principles, Peirce does not maintain that truth is determined by the community; what he believes is that truth is that to which the community is led through inquiry²⁵. This is the reason behind Nubiola’s portrayal of Peirce as “a traditional and systematic philosopher, but one dealing with the modern problems of science, truth and knowledge from his valuable personal experience as a logician and as an experimental researcher in the bosom of an international community of scientists and thinkers”²⁶.

In his account of truth, Peirce upholds fallibilism as an alternative to both skepticism and dogmatism²⁷. Although with different nuances, fallibilism is held by all pragmatic philosophers discussed in this chapter, who maintain that no assertion can be made in a definitively conclusive manner.

While remaining in dialogue with Peirce, William James built upon and departed from Peirce’s pragmatism. Whereas Peirce, who worked as a scientist for much of his life, focused and restricted the development of pragmatism within the natural sciences, James, a psychologist, broadened the application of the pragmatic maxim to metaphysical questions and the human sciences. In one of his earliest essays, he states explicitly that the pragmatic maxim

should be expressed more broadly than Mr. Peirce expresses it. The ultimate test for us of what a truth means is indeed the conduct it dictates or inspires. But it inspires that conduct because it first foretells

²⁴ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.407 (1878).

²⁵ Cf. Cheryl Misak, *Truth and the End of Inquiry: A Peircean Account of Truth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 135.

²⁶ Jaime Nubiola, “Abduction or the Logic of Surprise,” *Semiotica* 153, no. 1 (2005): 119.

²⁷ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 20.

some *particular turn to our experience* which shall call for just that conduct from us²⁸.

James understands pragmatism as “a method only. However, the general change of that method would mean an enormous change [...] Science and metaphysics would come much nearer together, would in fact work absolutely hand in hand”²⁹. This leads James to take the metaphysical questions that Peirce leaves aside and strive to show that pragmatism offers “alternative, and better, answers to these questions by casting them in terms of the effect they have for our behavior”³⁰. Through this widening of the pragmatic maxim, pragmatism loses the objectivity that Peirce had secured by means of the natural sciences.

James aims to use psychological states as a justification for certain beliefs held with insufficient evidence. After the publication of his work “The Will to Believe” in 1896 he realized that the title should have been “The Right to Believe” as his intention was not to discuss the volition behind belief, but rather the possibility of holding a belief with partial evidence³¹. James’ understanding of psychological states as determining evidence for inquiry informs his novel conception of truth, in which the person is not a passive observer of reality, but rather an active co-creator:

The knower is not simply a mirror floating with no foothold anywhere, and passively reflecting an order that he comes upon and finds simply existing. The knower is an actor, and coefficient on one side, while on the other he registers the truth which he helps to create. Mental

²⁸ James, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” 291.

²⁹ William James, *Selected Papers on Philosophy* (London: Dent & Sons, 1918), 202.

³⁰ Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 30.

³¹ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 32. Newman held a similar objective in writing the *Grammar*, however “much as he shared James’s taking seriously religious experience, [Newman] always retained something that James had abandoned: he retained a respect for notional apprehension and notional assent and thus a respect for the rational side of religion. He wanted not only experience, but truth as well”. Crosby, “Newman and Philosophers Today,” 9.

interests, hypotheses, postulates, so far as they are bases for human action [...] help to make the truth which they declare³².

If truth is created by the knower, then the manner in which each person grasps and understands reality is not universal, but rather particular to her. This understanding leads James to embrace a conception of the world characterized by a plurality of goods that cannot be put together in a unitary way³³. This conception of pluralism is the source of a major break from Peirce's pragmatism, which is characterized by pluralism and fallibilism but upholds the objectivity of truth.

In 1907 James published his work *Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* in which he compiles eight lectures he gave at Columbia University to unify the picture of the pragmatic movement³⁴. As a response, Peirce drafts an article in which he presents his most thorough account of pragmatism:

It is now high time to explain what pragmatism is [...] Pragmatism is, in itself, no doctrine of metaphysics, no attempt to determine any truth of things. It is merely a method of ascertaining the meanings of hard words and of abstract concepts [...] All pragmatists will further agree that their method of ascertaining the meanings of words and concepts is no other than that experimental method by which all the successful sciences [...] have reached the degrees of certainty that are severally proper to them today; this experimental method being itself nothing but a particular application of an older logical rule, 'By their fruits ye shall know them'³⁵.

With these nuances, Peirce distances himself from James and divergent strains of pragmatism develop from different authors

³² William James, "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind as Correspondence," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (1878): 17.

³³ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 38.

³⁴ James, *Pragmatism*, vii.

³⁵ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.464–65 (1907).

emphasize particular elements. Nevertheless through a careful study of the developments of “the pragmatic century”, as Richard Bernstein (b. 1932) called the twentieth century³⁶, common elements of pragmatism can be discerned.

Before commenting on these elements, John Dewey (1859-1952), the third and last philosopher considered a classical pragmatist, is now presented. Like Peirce, Dewey “was an anti-foundationalist and a believer in the self-correcting nature of empirical investigation in a community of inquirers”³⁷. He understood that the scientific method has ample bearings upon everyday life and that pragmatism’s “methods and techniques –open-mindedness, flexibility, preparedness to be swayed by the findings of our fellow inquirers [...] ought to be shared to a greater or lesser degree by everyone and should be adopted everywhere, including in political and social matters”³⁸. Thus, like James, Dewey widens the scope of pragmatism, arguing that it is philosophy’s task to deal with the every-day problems of individuals, instead of burying itself in elusive abstract questions.

Dewey states that the most pressing philosophical questions are concerned with a better understanding of the relationship between thought and action, between privately held beliefs and the external world:

Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men. Emphasis must vary with the stress and special impact of the troubles which perplex men. Each age knows its own ills, and seeks its own remedies. One does not have to forecast a particular program to note that the central

³⁶ Richard Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Century: Conversations with Richard J. Bernstein*, ed. Sheila Davaney and Warren Frisina (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 4.

³⁷ Scott Soames, “Analytic Philosophy in America,” in *The Oxford Handbook of American Philosophy*, ed. Cheryl Misak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 451.

³⁸ Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 55.

need of any program at the present day is an adequate conception of the nature of intelligence and its place in action³⁹.

Another element in the process of inquiry in which Dewey captures Peirce's stance, and which is central in Newman's thought as well, is the role of the community: "No scientific inquirer can keep what he finds to himself or turn it to merely private account without losing his scientific standing [...] Every new idea and theory has to be submitted to this community for confirmation and test"⁴⁰. By paying recourse to a community of inquirers, Dewey and most pragmatist philosophers overcome the individualism and subjectivity of Descartes' rationalism.

Dewey coins the term "warranted assertability" as the goal of inquiry, which he prefers over terms such as belief or knowledge⁴¹. Even though he does not equate warranted assertability with truth, when he speaks of truth, he makes his own Peirce's account: "The best definition of truth from the logical standpoint which is known to me is that of Peirce: 'The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented by this opinion is the real'"⁴².

The pragmatic understanding of the relationship between inquiry, community and truth are central to Dewey's conception of democracy as a method of social inquiry, and in a nuanced way, has been shared by most pragmatist thinkers⁴³. As will be seen in chapter 4, Newman also studied the interplay of these elements attaining similar results.

³⁹ John Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," in *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude* (New York: Holt, 1917), 65–66.

⁴⁰ John Dewey, *Individualism Old And New* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931), 143.

⁴¹ Cf. John Dewey, *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 12:15.

⁴² Dewey, *Later Works*, 12:343.

⁴³ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 61.

Although the background of Willard Quine's (1908-2000) thought is not the study of the classical pragmatists, in 1951, he described his position as a shift toward pragmatism⁴⁴. He is mentioned in this survey of pragmatist philosophers as he uses two similar metaphors to Newman's in his account of knowledge: the web of belief and a woven cord (a metaphor which was also used by Peirce). Quine argues

that our entire belief system must be seen as an interconnected web. Mathematics and logic are at the center, gradually shading into the theoretical sentences of science [...] When faced with recalcitrant evidence, we must choose where to make adjustments in our web of belief –no sentence is immune from revision⁴⁵.

This metaphor brings forth three central characteristics of Quine's account of knowledge: naturalism, holism and fallibilism⁴⁶. Holism, as expressed in this metaphor, is reminiscent of Newman's theory of knowledge which maintains that "all branches of knowledge are connected together [...] Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment"⁴⁷. Anchored in the external world, pragmatism identifies an order in reality, which Newman also recognizes.

The second metaphor Quine uses in his analysis of knowledge is that of "a cord woven together out of different strands [...] we can preserve any belief, even in the face of doubt, if we are prepared to make revisions to other beliefs"⁴⁸. His account of inquiry, with its

⁴⁴ Cf. Willard Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *Philosophical Review* 60, no. 1 (1951): 20.

⁴⁵ Cheryl Misak, "The Reception of Early American Pragmatism," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Philosophy*, ed. Cheryl Misak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 219.

⁴⁶ Cf. Misak, "Reception of Early Pragmatism," 219.

⁴⁷ *Idea*, 99.

⁴⁸ Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 66.

ensuing fallibilism, is described in similar images in the works of Newman and Peirce⁴⁹. Furthermore, the anti-foundationalism to which this metaphor points is a common principle among pragmatist philosophers⁵⁰.

Following Quine, the next milestone in the development of pragmatism corresponds to Richard Rorty's (1931-2007) *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* published in 1979. This book "brought about a renaissance of a certain kind of pragmatism, [as] there were very few pragmatists [...] in major American universities"⁵¹. However, rather than a renaissance of pragmatism, Rorty's work can be considered its tergiversation⁵².

At that time, most philosophers considered the analytic and continental approaches in philosophy to be mutually excluding; however, as Bernstein and Haack have pointed out, in hindsight, pragmatic themes can be identified throughout the twentieth century⁵³. With the publication of Rorty's work,

two very different versions of the pragmatic account of truth and objectivity [have emerged] from applying the pragmatic maxim to the concept of truth –from linking the concept of truth to our practices. One version is Peirce's. He focuses on the practices of inquiry and tries to capture our cognitive aspirations to objectivity. The other is James's, the view which in substance took root in Dewey and then in Rorty⁵⁴.

A crucial principle in Rorty's pragmatism is that "we understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief, and

⁴⁹ Cf. *LD*, xxi 146; *GA*, 288; Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.265 (1868).

⁵⁰ Cf. Misak, "Introduction," 2.

⁵¹ Misak, "Reception of Early Pragmatism," 198.

⁵² Cf. Nubiola, "Pragmatismo, Relativismo y Pluralismo," 53.

⁵³ Cf. Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Century*, 1–14; Susan Haack, "Pragmatism, Then and Now," *Pragmatism Today* 1, no. 2 (2010): 38–49.

⁵⁴ Misak, "Reception of Early Pragmatism," 202.

thus have no need to view it as accuracy of representation”⁵⁵. Rorty argues that philosophy’s task is not meant to mirror or account for nature, but rather, it is meant to provide the necessary tools to cope with its demands⁵⁶. In this approach, he follows James’ conception of the knower as a coefficient actor⁵⁷. Developing this line of reasoning, Rorty claims that “our only usable notion of objectivity is agreement, rather than mirroring”⁵⁸. This leads him to conclude that there is no certainty, no objectivity and no truth, only agreement with others and solidarity within a community⁵⁹. With this conception, Rorty distances himself from Peirce, and from most pragmatists, in a significant way since their goal is to find a way that accounts for pluralism and fallibilism while upholding the objectivity of truth.

Susan Haack (b. 1945), who has dedicated much of her career to bringing Peirce’s account of pragmatism to the forefront of philosophical research, is of one Rorty’s strongest critics. She argues that Rorty distorted the insights of the classical pragmatists to such a degree that he should not even be considered a pragmatist philosopher and labeled his philosophical stance as vulgar pragmatism⁶⁰. In 1998 she published a 6,800 word constructed dialogue between Peirce and Rorty, which she composed by weaving together statements from their own writings, in order to show how contrasting their notions of pragmatism are: Peirce believes in the objectivity of truth and sets it as

⁵⁵ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 170.

⁵⁶ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 97.

⁵⁷ Cf. James, “Remarks on Spencer’s Definition,” 17.

⁵⁸ Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 337.

⁵⁹ Cf. Misak, “Reception of Early Pragmatism,” 198.

⁶⁰ Cf. Haack, “Pragmatism, Then and Now,” 47; Susan Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry: A Pragmatist Reconstruction of Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 182–202.

the goal of inquiry while Rorty argues that inquiry can only aspire to a consensus which will always be relative to the circumstances⁶¹.

In her effort to elaborate on Peirce's account of inquiry, Haack identifies as one of her central concerns, which is shared by Newman in his *University Sermons* and the *Grammar of Assent*, the definition of good standards of inquiry and evidence for belief⁶². She argues that a belief is justified if it stems from well-evidenced and mutually supporting premises and includes notions of community and development into her account of justification. She uses the analogy of a crossword puzzle to explain her understanding of good evidence:

How reasonable one's confidence is that a certain entry in a crossword puzzle is correct depends on: how much support is given to this entry by the clue and any intersecting entries that have already been filled in; how reasonable, independently of the entry in question, one's confidence is that those other already filled-in entries are correct; and how many of the intersecting entries have been filled in⁶³.

Haack's notion of good evidence resembles Newman's analogy of a "cable which is made up of a number of separate threads, each feeble, yet together as sufficient as an iron rod; [representing] an assemblage of probabilities separately insufficient for certainty, but, when put together, irrefragable"⁶⁴. Newman makes use of this image to illustrate the legitimate and sufficient conditions for assent; a similar image was developed by Peirce and Quine to talk about the nature of knowledge⁶⁵.

Haack also studies themes such as truth, inquiry and fallibilism, sharing Peirce's "ideal-realist conception of truth as the final opinion

⁶¹ Cf. Susan Haack, "We Pragmatists: Peirce and Rorty in Conversation," in *Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 31–47.

⁶² Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 147.

⁶³ Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry*, 82.

⁶⁴ *LD*, xxi 146.

⁶⁵ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.265 (1868); Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 66.

that would be agreed were inquiry to continue indefinitely”⁶⁶. Her conditional, “were inquiry to continue”, is telling: the fact that at any given moment the fullness of truth cannot be possessed by an individual does not imply that inquiry does not yield truth nor that one cannot advance in its possession.

How Newman shares Haack’s understanding of these themes will be presented in chapter 4 where it will be proposed that Newman’s epistemology fits within this classical notion of pragmatism and its fruitfulness. Haack suggests

that we [avoid thinking] of pragmatism as a party one must either join or oppose, or as a brand one might ‘export.’ In brief: I see the classical pragmatist tradition [...] as an extraordinarily fertile one, and moreover, as in some ways ahead not only of its own time but also of ours. It is high time to focus less on squabbling over who owns its legacy, and more on exploring the wealth of insight that classical pragmatism bequeathed us⁶⁷.

Without standing as such a close follower of Peirce like Haack, nor a manifest detractor like Rorty, Hilary Putnam (1926-2016) is one of pragmatism’s most significant contemporary exponents⁶⁸. He proposes that “the heart of pragmatism [...] is the insistence on the supremacy of the agent’s point of view”⁶⁹ and calls his epistemic position direct realism, describing it as the middle ground between a metaphysical realism in which there is only one true and complete account of the way the world is and Rorty’s irresponsible relativism⁷⁰.

⁶⁶ Susan Haack, “Five Answers on Pragmatism,” *Journal of Philosophical Investigations at University of Tabriz* 12, no. 24 (2018): 4.

⁶⁷ Haack, “Five Answers on Pragmatism,” 11.

⁶⁸ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 107.

⁶⁹ Hilary Putnam, *The Many Faces of Realism* (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1988), 70.

⁷⁰ Cf. Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 49; Hilary Putnam, *The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body, and World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 5.

Putnam uses his notion of direct realism to argue for the pluralism developed by other pragmatist philosophers.

Putnam's direct realism also leads him to hold fallibilism as it was proposed by Peirce. He observes that "fallibilism does not require us to doubt *everything*, it only requires us to be prepared to doubt *anything* –if good reason to do so arises"⁷¹. His understanding of objectivity implies grounding oneself in reality as one perceives it, and from there, working out, in conversation with others, better or worse approaches to the relevant questions that reality brings forth⁷². These questions are analyzed and discerned by a community of inquirers, which Putnam considers to be an essential element of pragmatism, one that is indispensable to overcome modern rationalism⁷³. The themes of anti-foundationalism, community, development and fallibilism emerge once more as common threads when the pragmatic method is followed.

For his part, Jurgen Habermas (b. 1929) shares a similar approach to Peirce and Dewey regarding the notions of truth and knowledge, although he is not always considered a pragmatist philosopher⁷⁴. When asked what he considers to be the greatest strengths of pragmatism, Habermas answered that he finds them in "the combination of fallibilism with anti-skepticism, and a naturalist approach to the human mind and its culture that refuses to yield to any kind of scientism"⁷⁵. In upholding these elements, Habermas opens up a path for inquiry that can lead the person, within a community, towards the truth.

Following Peirce and the pragmatic tradition, Habermas maintains that truth is tied to the world as it exists in independence of

⁷¹ Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism: An Open Question* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 21.

⁷² Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 118.

⁷³ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 120.

⁷⁴ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 122.

⁷⁵ Jurgen Habermas, "Reflections on Pragmatism," in *Habermas and Pragmatism*, ed. Mitchell Aboulafia, Myra Bookman, and Catherine Kenp (London: Routledge, 2002), 228.

human understanding. Furthermore, he believes that knowledge is legitimized through social interaction⁷⁶:

Reaching understanding cannot function unless the participants refer to a single objective world, thereby stabilizing the intersubjectively shared public space with which everything that is merely subjective can be contrasted. This supposition of an objective world that is independent of our descriptions fulfills a functional requirement of our processes of cooperation and communication. Without this supposition, everyday practices [...] would come apart at the seams⁷⁷.

In order to account for the diversity of opinions characteristic of today's culture, Habermas pays recourse to pluralism in traditions and values, while retaining universally valid moral norms which, he argues, emerge from rational discourse under ideal conditions⁷⁸. He understands the law to be local, and describes it as the application of a universal moral norm to the particular situation of a particular person⁷⁹. These considerations bring to mind Newman's Illative Sense, which aims precisely at the assent to truth in particular circumstances⁸⁰.

Another twentieth-century philosopher, introduced earlier in this section, Richard Bernstein, argues that "much of the best philosophic thinking of our century can be understood as variations [*sic*] on pragmatic themes [which] have had a strong influence on the range of cultural and social disciplines"⁸¹. As it is for Habermas, a central topic in Bernstein's philosophical research is that of pluralism, which he studies as a way to overcome Rorty's refusal of truth and objectivity.

⁷⁶ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 125, 128.

⁷⁷ Jürgen Habermas, "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn," in *Rorty and His Critics* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 41.

⁷⁸ Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 101.

⁷⁹ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 134.

⁸⁰ Cf. *LD*, xxix 115.

⁸¹ Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Century*, 4.

Bernstein develops the concept of engaged fallibilistic pluralism in contrast to what he identifies as fragmenting, flabby or polemical pluralisms. He understands engaged fallibilistic pluralism as “an orientation wherein we acknowledge what is different from us, but seek to understand and critically engage it [as] it is always possible to move beyond and enlarge our limited horizon”⁸². He argues that engaged pluralism requires the development of certain habits of inquiry, among them openness, imagination, fairness and willingness to change our ideas⁸³. These traits resemble the habits that Newman enlists when he describes philosophy as a virtue⁸⁴.

A second theme from Bernstein’s philosophical project worth highlighting is the methodology he follows. Bacon explains that

Bernstein moves back and forth between different philosophers, reading them against each other in an attempt not merely at criticisms but to show how they lend mutual support and indeed strengthen each other’s arguments [...] By interweaving the ideas and insights of members of different philosophical traditions, Bernstein argues for the transformation of ourselves and of our societies. This is achieved not by reference to an objective perspective, but through pluralist and self-reflective conversation. This proposal is pragmatist in holding that, through dialogue, we can reach a situated but non-relativist consensus⁸⁵.

⁸² Richard Bernstein, *The Abuse of Evil: The Corruption of Politics and Religion since 9/11* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 34–35.

⁸³ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 137.

⁸⁴ “The intellect of man, on the contrary, energizes as well as his eye or ear, and perceives in sights and sounds something beyond them. It seizes and unites what the senses present to it; it grasps and forms what need not have been seen or heard except in its constituent parts. It discerns in lines and colours, or in tones, what is beautiful and what is not. It gives them a meaning, and invests them with an idea. It gathers up a succession of notes into the expression of a whole, and calls it a melody; it has a keen sensibility towards angles and curves, lights and shadows, tints and contours. It distinguishes between rule and exception, between accident and design. It assigns phenomena to a general law, qualities to a subject, acts to a principle, and effects to a cause. In a word, it philosophizes”. *Idea*, 74–75.

⁸⁵ Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 141.

Bernstein's call for self-reflective and pluralist conversation is also reminiscent of Newman, who speaks of the University as an assemblage of learned men who learn to consult, respect and aid each other and, in this way, transmit knowledge which can transform the students⁸⁶. In consonance with what Bernstein identifies as a pragmatic proposal, this dissertation interweaves insights from philosophers who have been understood as belonging to different traditions, in this case, Newman and pragmatist philosophers, intending to identify resources for a commitment to truth in contemporary times.

The last philosopher to be discussed in this section is Cheryl Misak whose interest in pragmatism focuses on Peirce showing through her work that "the gap between Peircean pragmatists and others is not as large as sometimes thought"⁸⁷. In her 2007 anthology of essays related to pragmatism she identifies three commitments that pragmatists tend to share⁸⁸, which have been highlighted in this review of core pragmatist philosophers to justify their place in the upcoming analysis of Newman's connection to pragmatism.

Although these commitments can be challenged or nuanced, they are useful for this dissertation as they present a possible platform for an understanding of pragmatism with which Newman can enter in conversation. As Misak understands them, these commitments are:

- 1) standards of objectivity evolve over time, but being historically situated does not compromise their objectivity
- 2) knowledge has no certain foundations and is fallible
- 3) philosophy is connected with first-order inquiry and real-life experience.

These commitments will be further explained and analyzed in relation to Newman's philosophical principles in section 3.2, where they will

⁸⁶ Cf. *Idea*, 101, 148.

⁸⁷ Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 159.

⁸⁸ Cf. Misak, "Introduction," 2–4.

be used as a foil, or point of access, to develop Newman's philosophical principles.

Rooted in Peirce's notion of truth, Misak argues that "truth is an important concept, but it must be understood in the context of our lives and not as something metaphysical which stands apart from them"⁸⁹. In this way she holds a realist approach that grounds knowledge in the external world, as Newman and most pragmatist philosophers have done. In the same line, she argues that "the best kind of pragmatist [holds] a substantive, low profile, conception of truth and objectivity, a conception which nonetheless *can guide us* in inquiry"⁹⁰. Newman shares a similar conception of truth, allowing it to guide him in every step of his journey.

In an essay from Misak's anthology *New Pragmatists*, Stout indicates that "philosophers who believe that classical pragmatism was on to something important [...] have recently renewed the effort to provide accounts of inquiry that are both recognizably pragmatic in orientation and demonstrably hospitable to the cognitive aspiration to get one's subject matter right"⁹¹. In the upcoming pages, Newman will be studied in conversation with philosophers who identify themselves with this understanding of pragmatism, which has withstood the test of time and continues to bear fruit.

⁸⁹ Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 161.

⁹⁰ Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 14. Emphasis added.

⁹¹ Jeffrey Stout, "On Our Interest in Getting Things Right: Pragmatism without Narcissism," in *New Pragmatists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.

3.2. Commitments of pragmatism to which Newman subscribes

In the review of the development of pragmatism as a way of thinking, common elements in the claims of pragmatist philosophers were brought forth. Misak has identified three of these as central claims pragmatists tend to share: a historical attitude towards objectivity, a fallibilist epistemology grounded in anti-foundationalism and a commitment to keeping philosophy rooted in real-life experience⁹².

Although these commitments can be questioned or nuanced, they provide a suitable standpoint from which to begin the study of Newman's philosophy in conversation with pragmatism. In this section, Newman's philosophical principles will be studied in contrast with these three commitments of pragmatism, as understood by Misak, in order to evaluate if indeed, he could have a place among the forerunners of this tradition.

The first commitment entails a historical attitude towards objectivity and truthfulness. In Misak's words: "Standards of objectivity come into being and evolve over time, but [...] being historically situated in this way does not detract from their objectivity"⁹³. Bernard Williams (1929-2003) makes a useful distinction between truth and truthfulness, which bears light on this principle. He defines truth as a formal concept, and as such, an objective and timeless reality. On the other hand, he believes that truthfulness is rooted in history as the way in which finite human beings are able to apprehend and conceptualize truth at any given moment.

Furthering this argument, Ian Hacking (b. 1936) understands truth as a condition for truthfulness, and truthfulness as that which

⁹² Cf. Misak, "Introduction," 2–4.

⁹³ Misak, "Introduction," 2.

individuals are able to predicate about a subject. Truthfulness thus understood is analogous to objectivity⁹⁴. This leads Hacking to state that “the fact that the methods of argument we now regard as canonical have a history, and once did not exist even for the wisest of the ancients, does not make them any less objective standards”⁹⁵. These words are reminiscent of Peirce, who understood science as “a living historic entity” and “a living and growing body of truth”⁹⁶ discovered by a community of experts who build on each other’s discoveries, corrected each other, and, as a community, advanced towards truth:

Science is to mean for us a mode of life whose single animating purpose is to find out the real truth, which pursues this purpose by a well-considered method, founded on thorough acquaintance with such scientific results already ascertained by others as may be available, and which seeks cooperation in the hope that the truth may be found, if not by any of the actual inquirers, yet ultimately by those who come after them and who shall make use of their results⁹⁷.

This notion that standards of objectivity evolve over time is often traced back to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*⁹⁸. For his part, Ward in one of the first commentaries on Newman’s theory of development, writes that “the idea of the gradual deepening of thought in the synthesis of aspects of objective reality is certainly common to Newman’s idea of development and Hegel’s conception of evolution”⁹⁹. Although it is improbable that Newman read Hegel’s *Phenomenology* as he did not read German, and it was only translated

⁹⁴ Cf. Ian Hacking, “On Not Being a Pragmatist: Eight Reasons and a Cause,” in *New Pragmatists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 38–40; Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 7–13.

⁹⁵ Hacking, “On Not Being a Pragmatist,” 39.

⁹⁶ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.44 (c.1896), 6.428 (1893).

⁹⁷ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 7.54 (c.1902).

⁹⁸ Cf. Hacking, “On Not Being a Pragmatist,” 40.

⁹⁹ Ward, “Newman’s Philosophy,” 93.

into English in 1910¹⁰⁰, the similitude of their notion of development is noticeable.

Newman had a deep awareness of man's historical existence¹⁰¹ and "consciously impressed upon his readers the relevance of historical context for appreciating the supple and malleable nature of [...] discourse"¹⁰². He alludes to the notion of a truth evolving over time as early as 1834 when he writes that "the greater part of the theological and ecclesiastical system [...] was developed at various times according to circumstances [...] Our Creeds, our Liturgies, our canons are for the most part developed and determined by a definite period after the Apostles"¹⁰³. Newman grappled with the theme of development in the following decade, as it was the theoretical framework for the main objection he held towards the Church of Rome. He expounded on these principles in his 1843 sermon "The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine"¹⁰⁴, the last sermon he preached in Oxford. In this sermon, he connected his theory of development with his previous distinction of implicit and explicit knowledge¹⁰⁵.

Speaking specifically of religious truths, Newman affirms that "even centuries might pass without the formal expression of a truth, which had been all along the secret life of millions of faithful souls"¹⁰⁶. In saying so, he upholds the notion that historicity does not detract

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Fred Rush, "Review of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* by Georg Hegel," *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2018.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Hütter, *Newman on Truth and Its Counterfeits*, 5.

¹⁰² Magill, "The Intellectual Ethos of Newman," 2.

¹⁰³ *LD*, iv 180. The discussion on Newman's theory of development is a valid illustration of how he espoused a historical attitude towards objectivity.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *US*, 312–51.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ian Ker, "Foreword," in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), xxiii.

¹⁰⁶ *US*, 323.

from truthfulness or objectivity. To make his claim more precise, he exclaims:

Its half sentences, its overflowings of language, admit of development; they have a life in them which shows itself in progress; a truth, which has the token of consistency; a reality, which is fruitful in resources; a depth, which extends into mystery: for they are representations of what is actual, and has a definite location and necessary bearings and a meaning in the great system of things¹⁰⁷.

In the above passage, Newman refers to truth, consistency, reality and actuality and establishes that precisely because of these characteristics, historical development, and therefore change, is admitted in the commitment to truth.

The principle of the historicity, or development, of ideas was of vital importance for Newman. As he studied the Church Fathers, he grew in the conviction that the Catholic Church held the truth. However, he had to intellectually work out what he understood for many years to be innovations or corruptions in her practice¹⁰⁸. Once he was able to formulate a coherent theory of development, he was ready to ask to be received into the Roman Catholic Church. He began writing his *Essay on Development* in the Anglican Church, acquired the needed reassurance for his conversion, and left this work unfinished¹⁰⁹.

In the first chapter of his *Essay on Development* Newman not only deals with religious doctrines, but with the development of ideas in general. He argues that “there is no one aspect deep enough to exhaust the contents of a real idea, no one term or proposition which will serve to define it”¹¹⁰ and goes on to explain that the multiplicity

¹⁰⁷ *US*, 318.

¹⁰⁸ *Cf. Apo*, 278.

¹⁰⁹ *Cf. Apo*, 324. Although he described it as such in his *Apologia*, Newman did publish a first version in 1845 and an extensively revised edition in 1878.

¹¹⁰ *Dev*, 35.

of facets under which an idea presents itself, the collision of opinions it causes and its change over time provide evidence for its truthfulness, not for the contrary¹¹¹.

Speaking specifically of the history of ideas in philosophy, Newman explains that

its vital element needs disengaging from what is foreign and temporary, and is employed in efforts after freedom which become more vigorous and hopeful as its years increase. Its beginnings are no measure of its capabilities, nor of its scope. At first no one knows what it is, or what it is worth [...] From time to time it makes essays which fail, and are in consequence abandoned. It seems in suspense which way to go; it wavers, and at length strikes out in one definite direction. In time it enters upon strange territory; points of controversy alter their bearing; parties rise and around it; dangers and hopes appear in new relations; and old principles reappear under new forms. It changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often¹¹².

With these words, Newman describes his positive understanding of the historicity of ideas, and explains how being historically situated does not compromise objectivity. He concludes his *Essay on Development* stating seven notes that can serve to discern healthy developments from corruption and decay. Although he admits their varying cogency, independence and applicability, their relevance is still conspicuous in the present day¹¹³.

In his 1855 novel *Callista*, Newman mentions once more the theme of development, this time applying it to the conversion of a fictional character living in the third century. Callista's conversion,

¹¹¹ Cf. *Dev*, 34, 40.

¹¹² *Dev*, 40.

¹¹³ Cf. *Dev*, 171; Gerard McCarren, "Development of Doctrine," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 118.

like his own, was not a sudden event, but a slow and steady development. Newman narrates: “While she was continually differing from herself, in that she was changing, yet it was not a change which involved contrariety, but one which expanded itself in (as it were) concentric circles, and only fulfilled, as time went on, the promise of its beginning”¹¹⁴. The seven notes he had established to discern a healthy development are present in Callista’s story: preservation of type, continuity of principles, assimilative power, logical sequence, anticipation of its future, conservative action on its past and its chronic vigor¹¹⁵.

In her discussion on Newman’s theory of truth Garnett explores his recognition that “persuasiveness of argument –whether in the past or the present– grows within a historical tradition the terms of articulation of which themselves change over time”¹¹⁶. What has been presented so far, along with Garnett’s understanding, shows that Newman holds a historical attitude towards objectivity, like most pragmatist philosophers do.

A second claim firmly associated with pragmatism is that “knowledge has no certain foundations. All beliefs, no matter how strongly held, are fallible”¹¹⁷. Since Descartes wrote the *Discourse on Method* in 1637 his foundationalism has been understood, upheld and criticized from numerous angles. The interpretation of foundationalism taken here is not the moderate contemporary version, but the Cartesian-minded foundationalism encountered by Newman and by the classical pragmatists, particularly in the thought of Locke:

At the heart of the foundationalist agenda is the desire to overcome the uncertainty generated by our human liability to error and the inevitable

¹¹⁴ *Call*, 291.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *Dev*, 171.

¹¹⁶ Garnett, “Joseph Butler,” 141.

¹¹⁷ Misak, “Introduction,” 2.

disagreements that follow. Foundationalists are convinced that the only way to solve this problem is to find some means of grounding the entire edifice of human knowledge on invincible certainty¹¹⁸.

Both strains of classical foundationalism, empirical and theoretical, claim that only that which is grounded empirically or logically can be accepted. This is an insufficient position for Newman, since he wants to protect the right of any individual to believe beyond proof¹¹⁹. Specifically, Newman rejected the empirical strain of foundationalism upheld by Locke and Hume, which claims that in order to be valid, knowledge must be grounded in the immediacy of sense experience¹²⁰. In this regard, Newman writes in his *Philosophical Notebook*: “Another remark to be made is (against all my lifelong convictions), their obstinate assumption that all things must be reduced to *one* principle”¹²¹. Although the rejection of foundationalism by most pragmatist philosophers is broader than Newman’s, it encompasses the nuances opposed by him.

In contrast to Descartes and Locke, pragmatist philosophers argue that knowledge is justified, not because of its ultimate foundations, but because of its practical success in enabling individuals to cope with the world¹²². Peirce argues that there is no intuitive or immediate knowledge, rather that *all* knowledge is inferential: “We must begin, then, with a process of cognition, and with that process whose laws are best understood and most closely follow external facts. This is no other than the process of valid inference”¹²³.

¹¹⁸ Stanley Grenz and John Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001), 30.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Angelo Bottone, “Newman and Wittgenstein after Foundationalism,” *New Blackfriars* 86, no. 1001 (2005): 67.

¹²⁰ Cf. Barron, “Newman among the Postmoderns,” 21–22.

¹²¹ *PN*, 91.

¹²² Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 9.

¹²³ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.267 (1868).

Peirce derives his anti-foundationalist stance from his insights on inquiry. He believes that “we are always immersed in a context of inquiry, where the decision to be made is a decision about what to believe from here, not what to believe were we able to start from scratch –from certain infallible foundations”¹²⁴. This notion of inquiry governed by the scientific method, which understands science to be intrinsically self-correcting, allows Peirce to embrace a fallibilist epistemology while avoiding skepticism¹²⁵.

In this context, it is relevant to note Putnam’s observation: “[the fact that] one can be both fallibilistic and antiseptical is perhaps the basic insight of American Pragmatism”¹²⁶. Many agree with him, including the authors discussed in this dissertation who believe that

to emphasize that any appeal to reasons and arguments is contestable and/or fallible and that our idea of what we consider to be good reasons and arguments can change is not to call into question the rationality of this process but rather to characterize the rationality of the self-corrective nature of scientific inquiry¹²⁷.

As Peirce did a century later, Newman develops his theory of knowledge grounded in the way individuals think and inquire, not in a general and abstract notion of human rationality:

His philosophy of mind is one which acknowledges various roads to truth, arising out of different first principles and methods of investigation proper to each individual area of intellectual activity, but each converging and needing the completion of other areas of thought, if one is to attain a comprehensive grasp of reality¹²⁸.

¹²⁴ Misak, “Reception of Early Pragmatism,” 209.

¹²⁵ Cf. Hacking, “On Not Being a Pragmatist,” 35.

¹²⁶ Putnam, *Pragmatism: An Open Question*, 21.

¹²⁷ Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 72.

¹²⁸ Vincent Blehl, “The Intellectual and Spiritual Influence of J. H. Newman,” *The Downside Review* 111, no. 385 (1993): 251.

In contrast to Locke, Newman argues that “*there is no ultimate test of truth besides the testimony born to truth by the mind itself* [...] this phenomenon, perplexing as we may find it, is a normal and inevitable characteristic of the mental constitution of a being like man on a stage such as the world”¹²⁹. He understands rationality to be a natural practice for which no justification is required beyond the cognitive exercises in which individuals do in fact engage¹³⁰ and, through his philosophical project, solves the paradox presented by the possibility “that a proposition can rightfully claim and receive from us acceptance of its truth without any admixture of doubt when we cannot demonstrate it but can only prove that it is probably true”¹³¹.

Newman’s project is further elucidated by the fact that he chooses to call his epistemological work a “Grammar”:

Grammar is not simply description of practice, but description of the norms generated in practice. Genuine description cannot be *a priori*, and prescription cannot be arrived at without regard to description. Newman does not attempt to say *a priori* what should be practised; nor does he evaluate the norms he abstracts [...] The description he aims at is clearly meant to allow him to correct illegitimate usage, so it is description of norms [...] rather than merely empirical generalization¹³².

In the *Grammar of Assent* Newman asserts that “any philosophical theory [does not have] the power to force on us a rule which will not work for a day”¹³³, and seeks to overcome the unnecessary intellectual restrictions placed upon reason by modern

¹²⁹ *GA*, 350. Emphasis added.

¹³⁰ Cf. Frederick Aquino, “Philosophical Receptions of the Grammar of Assent, 1960–2012,” in *Receptions of Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 64.

¹³¹ Joe Milburn, “Newman’s Skeptical Paradox,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2019): 108. The elimination of any admixture of doubt in this context refers to Newman’s belief that certitude is not granted in degrees, but in an absolute way.

¹³² Ferreira, *Scepticism and Reasonable Doubt*, 231–32.

¹³³ *GA*, 179.

philosophy which can be identified with a strict epistemic foundationalism or evidentialism. He “wishes to avoid grounding our certitude on intuition; and on the other hand, [he] denies that there are internal marks that can be given to separate true from counterfeit certitudes”¹³⁴.

The foundationalists which Newman opposes hold “that what does not satisfy the criteria required must be rejected as unjustified, irrational or dogmatic”¹³⁵. Contrary to their claim that knowledge must be grounded in indubitable foundations, and that assent must be proportional to evidence, Newman maintains that the combination of informal and formal inference is that which produces assent¹³⁶. Furthermore, he argues that assent is not relative to evidence nor given in degrees¹³⁷. Ker explains that:

Since he rejects foundationalism, the problem for Newman [...] is how to judge between differing systems of belief [...] Newman’s resolution [...] lay in the recognition that a rational resolution of disputes between rival traditions does not depend on a neutral standpoint. Instead, one can always re-examine and revise one’s first principles or antecedent assumptions in light of one’s evolving understanding and appeal to tradition¹³⁸.

With this understanding Newman “move[s] away from the typical foundationalist tradition of modern European philosophy towards a non-foundationalist account of knowledge and belief”¹³⁹ placing in the Illative Sense the final judgment regarding the validity of an inference, not in its logical correctness¹⁴⁰. Thus Newman’s

¹³⁴ Milburn, “Newman’s Skeptical Paradox,” 112.

¹³⁵ Bottone, “Newman and Wittgenstein,” 67.

¹³⁶ Cf. Barron, “Newman among the Postmoderns,” 23.

¹³⁷ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 198.

¹³⁸ Ker, “Newman’s Standing as a Philosopher,” 71.

¹³⁹ Bottone, “Newman and Wittgenstein,” 62.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Bottone, “Newman and Wittgenstein,” 63.

understanding of certitude is not compatible with epistemic certainty as it does not require the exclusion of every doubt, but rather is grounded in an assemblage of probabilities¹⁴¹.

Newman explains in his *Apologia*: “My argument is in outline as follows: that that absolute certitude which we were able to possess [...] was the result of an assemblage of concurring and converging probabilities, [...] that probabilities which did not reach to logical certainty, might create a mental certitude”¹⁴². This understanding of certitude is thus compatible with fallibilism when considered as “an attempt to account for the conjunction of the fact of human knowledge and the profound limitations of human knowing”¹⁴³.

For Newman, “it is through the *accumulation* of probabilities that we are able to perceive the truth of the proposition in question”¹⁴⁴, not through the corroboration of its foundations. Therefore, Newman’s theory of knowledge provides “a rigorous account of the certainty of faith that is consistent with fallibilism”¹⁴⁵.

The third and last claim which Misak identifies as central to pragmatism is the commitment “to keeping philosophy connected to first order inquiry, to real examples, to real-life expertise”¹⁴⁶. Peirce’s aim through his pragmatic maxim is to bring to the forefront of philosophical research the relationship between concepts and practical endeavors: “Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Brandon Dahm, “The Certainty of Faith: A Problem for Christian Fallibilists?,” *Journal of Analytic Theology* 3, no. 1 (2015): 137–40.

¹⁴² *Apo*, 122.

¹⁴³ Dahm, “Newman and Fallibilism,” 130.

¹⁴⁴ Milburn, “Newman’s Skeptical Paradox,” 116. Although Milburn accepts this claim, he rejects the understanding of Newman as a fallibilist.

¹⁴⁵ Dahm, “Newman and Fallibilism,” 144.

¹⁴⁶ Misak, “Introduction,” 4.

Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object”¹⁴⁷.

Peirce writes that the fundamental hypothesis of the scientific method is that “there are real things whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them”¹⁴⁸; this leads him to ground inquiry in the external world. In the application of the pragmatic maxim to the concept of truth, Peirce focuses on practices of inquiry and invites the community of experts to journey towards objectivity:

Remembering, then, that philosophy is a science based upon everyday experience, we must not fall into the absurdity of setting down as a datum and starting-point of philosophy any abstract and simple idea [...] We must not begin by talking of pure ideas, –vagabond thoughts that tramp the public roads without any human habitation– but must begin with men and their conversation¹⁴⁹.

Likewise, in his first lecture on pragmatism, James grounds this “new philosophy” in everyday life, and articulates the consequences this brings about:

Mr. Chesterton writes these words: ‘There are some people –and I am one of them– who think that the most practical and important thing about a man is still his view of the universe [...] We think the question is not whether the theory of the cosmos affects matters, but whether, in the long run, anything else affects them.’ I think with Mr. Chesterton in this matter. I know that you, ladies and gentlemen, have a philosophy, each and all of you, and that the most interesting and important thing about you is the way in which it determines the perspective in your several worlds [...] For the philosophy which is so

¹⁴⁷ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.402 (1878).

¹⁴⁸ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.384 (1877).

¹⁴⁹ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 8.112 (c.1900).

important in each of us is not a technical matter; it is our [...] sense of what life honestly and deeply means¹⁵⁰.

Contemporary pragmatists who understand philosophy “not as an academic exercise but as an instrument for the progressive, critical and reasonable reconstruction of our daily practices”¹⁵¹, find in this connection with real-life experience one of the most appealing traits of pragmatism. In this regard, Misak writes in her introduction to *New Pragmatists*: “The hope is that the new pragmatists can connect our philosophical concepts of truth, rationality and norms to the practices which are so central to human life – science, ethics and politics”¹⁵².

This objective is highly compatible with Newman’s conception of philosophy, in fact, with his entire academic and pastoral career. His philosophical project “emphasises the personal aspect conceived as the involvement of the human being in its whole nature in knowledge and belief [...] he attempt[s] a philosophical account of the phenomena [he is] concerned with [...] as it ‘in fact is’, as formed and given in ordinary experience”¹⁵³.

Unlike the British empiricists that preceded him, Newman did not ground his insights on formulas or theories, but rather, he based them on the real persons whom he encountered and with whom he walked throughout his life¹⁵⁴. He had a deep knowledge of the human mind and the human heart, which he matured through decades of study and ministry, allowing himself to be affected by the quandaries, questions and problems of his contemporaries. His philosophical project was not an isolated endeavor, but one always carried out in

¹⁵⁰ James, *Pragmatism*, 3–4.

¹⁵¹ Nubiola, “Pragmatismo, relativismo y pluralismo,” 52. My translation.

¹⁵² Misak, “Introduction,” 5.

¹⁵³ Bottone, “Newman and Wittgenstein,” 66.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Short, *Newman and His Contemporaries*, 1.

dialogue with others and with reality itself, as his twenty thousand letters attest.

Newman explicitly states his concern with real life in the *Grammar*: “My aim is of a practical character [in regards] to the truth of things, and to the mind’s certitude of that truth”¹⁵⁵. His objective was not to devise an epistemological system *a priori*, but to justify how it is that individuals do in fact attain certitude and reach assent. In order to leave no doubt about his understanding, he exclaims:

Life is not long enough for a religion of inferences; we shall never have done beginning, if we determine to begin with proof. We shall ever be laying our foundations; we shall turn theology into evidences, and divines into textuaries. We shall never get at our first principles. Resolve to believe nothing, and you must prove your proofs and analyze your elements, sinking further and further, [...] till you come to the broad bosom of scepticism [...] Life is for action. If we insist on proofs for everything, we shall never come to action: to act you must assume, and that assumption is faith¹⁵⁶.

Newman not only believed that life was for action, he also sustained that philosophy begins with facts: “Let us take things as we find them: let us not attempt to distort them into what they are not. True philosophy deals with facts. We cannot make facts. All our wishing cannot change them. We must use them”¹⁵⁷. Further, he believed that “truth means facts and their relations”¹⁵⁸. His strong realism and his deep interest in the connection between thought and human practice is one more reason to comfortably place him in dialogue with pragmatism.

¹⁵⁵ *GA*, 344.

¹⁵⁶ *GA*, 94–95.

¹⁵⁷ *US*, 231.

¹⁵⁸ *Idea*, 45.

As not all pragmatists share a common set of doctrines, but rather understand pragmatism to be “a philosophical family –often a contentious family– of thinkers holding distinct yet related positions on the ‘workmanlike’ nature of knowledge, meaning and truth”¹⁵⁹, it is not necessary to reconcile Newman with every pragmatic principle in order to justify a possible understanding of his place in the history of philosophy amidst the forerunners of pragmatism. Even if this were to be attempted, it would not be achievable, as there is not an accepted canon of all pragmatist claims with which to contrast his thought.

However, with his own particular nuances, Newman does uphold the three central commitments that Misak has identified as shared by all pragmatists: a historical attitude towards objectivity, a fallibilist epistemology grounded in anti-foundationalism and a commitment to keeping philosophy rooted in real-life experience¹⁶⁰. This discussion has attempted to give evidence to how Newman shares in these principles in order to ground chapter 4, which will explore the affinities between Newman and pragmatism.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Westbrook, *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 1.

¹⁶⁰ Misak, “Introduction,” 2–4.

4. Affinities between Newman and pragmatism

Considering an account of pragmatism characterized by realism, anti-skepticism, fallibilism and a commitment to keeping philosophical inquiry connected to real-life experience, Newman's philosophy has been shown to share the three central claims that pragmatists tend to share, thus opening the way to study him in relation to this tradition, and possibly establishing him as one of its forerunners. To continue the development of Newman's philosophical principles and show their relevance, five further affinities between his claims and pragmatism will be explored in this chapter.

It must be stressed once more that to talk broadly about "pragmatism" or "pragmatist philosophers" could be an idle undertaking since, from its beginnings through the present day, there is not one clear set of doctrines which unites all pragmatists. However, pragmatism can be described as a tradition of thought in which common themes reoccur and are explored from similar approaches. As developed in the previous chapter, "Understanding of pragmatism", the chosen vantage point for this dissertation is that

the centre of pragmatism's contribution to philosophy [lies] in the resources it finds in and develops from our social practices. Pragmatism challenges the often implicit assumption that our practices are necessarily inadequate and require backup from some standard or principle which lies beyond them. It does so while avoiding the kind of relativism or conservatism which holds that those practices are beyond reform and improvement. For pragmatists, suggestions for improvements are themselves worked up from elements contained within those practices. In other words, pragmatism takes our lives, in

all their richness as well as their deficiencies, seriously, and theorizes from that basis¹.

In the discussion that follows, claims from different pragmatist philosophers will be put in conversation with Newman. Within this discussion, the work of Charles Peirce, as the founder of pragmatism, will hold a relevant place. The objective is not to make a detailed analysis of the pragmatists who hold each of these claims and those who do not, but rather, to use these claims as a foil for developing Newman's philosophical outlook and, in doing so, enrich the understanding of the resources that can be found in both, Newman's philosophy and pragmatism.

4.1. Realism²

Although they do so with different nuances, Newman and pragmatist philosophers subscribe to a realist epistemology³ and have a strong appreciation for the method of inquiry in the natural sciences. In similar ways, both overcome modern rationalism, and its ensuing skepticism, and open up fresh avenues for knowledge, belief, justification, inquiry and truth by reconnecting to the Aristotelian tradition.

Even though Peirce has been considered "a renovator of the Aristotelian tradition which played a central role in the development of Western philosophy"⁴, his realism has been much debated. While

¹ Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 1.

² Newman's grounding in the Aristotelian tradition was discussed in section 2.1 as part of the presentation of his philosophical profile; this section attempts to avoid unnecessary repetition.

³ In this context, realism is understood as a direction: "To assert that something is somehow mind-independent is to move in the realist direction; to deny it is to move in the opposite direction". Timothy Williamson, "Realism and Anti-Realism," in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1808.

⁴ Nubiola, "Peirce on Complexity," 12.

some speak of his “battle for the cause of realism”⁵ and sustain that “the prevailing view continues to be that Peirce was a realist throughout his life”⁶, a more balanced approach sees his intellectual trajectory as a maturing *towards* realism as it is seldom questioned that his later writings are developed within a realist framework. Peirce’s realism was characterized by a markedly anti-Cartesian understanding of knowledge, science and reality. He upheld the claim that knowledge must begin in experience, understood as that which we gather when confronted with reality⁷.

From its core, Peirce’s pragmatic maxim has a distinctive realist character as it turns to the effects of a concept in order to ascertain its meaning: “To develop [a thought’s] meaning, we have simply to determine what habits it produces, for what a thing means is simply what habits it involves”⁸. Peirce builds his pragmatism around the practice of inquiry which aims to arrive at a belief that accounts for our experience, and is thus placed in a position to guide action.

In searching for a method to discern these beliefs, Peirce recognizes four elements at the core of distinct methods of investigation: tenacity, authority, *a priori* beliefs and science. He argues that when confronted with doubt, the only method which yields satisfactory results and can withstand the test of ongoing experience is the method of science⁹. In upholding this method, Peirce does not prescribe a novel way of investigation. Rather he makes explicit the commitments that individuals acknowledge as constitutive of proper

⁵ Michael Raposa, *Peirce’s Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 16.

⁶ Fred Michael, “Two Forms of Scholastic Realism in Peirce’s Philosophy,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 24, no. 3 (1988): 317.

⁷ Cf. Sara Barrena and Jaime Nubiola, “Una Introducción a Charles S. Peirce,” in *Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914): Un pensador para el siglo XXI* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 2013), 31–32.

⁸ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.400 (1878).

⁹ Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.377–85 (1877).

inquiry and sets adequate boundaries for them¹⁰. In doing so, he is careful not to overextend the reach of science and its applications.

Peircean inquiry responds to a genuine doubt and is connected to all previous knowledge. Its fundamental hypothesis is its relation to reality, which Peirce understood as follows:

There are Real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those Reals affect our senses according to regular laws, and, though our sensations are as different as our relations to the objects, yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really and truly are; and any man, if he have sufficient experience and he reason enough about it, will be lead to the one True conclusion¹¹.

As can be seen, Peirce not only manifests a realist orientation but explicitly upholds it. In one of his later papers, “Issues of Pragmaticism”, he considers the doctrines of critical common-sensism and scholastic realism as two essential consequences of pragmatism¹². Realism as a characteristic of pragmatism was also upheld by James, who is described by Putnam as “the first philosopher to present a completely worked out version of direct realism in the entire history of modern philosophy”¹³. Although James’ philosophical insights are often considered in contraposition to realism, towards the end of his life, he complained of being misread in this respect and stated “I am a natural realist”¹⁴ ascertaining his understanding that reality plays an essential part in judging truthfulness.

Further, James upholds that the ordinary ways of thinking and talking about our perceptions should be taken seriously in philosophy.

¹⁰ Cf. Talisse and Aikin, *Pragmatism, a Guide*, 19–20.

¹¹ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.384 (1877).

¹² Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.439, 5.453 (1905).

¹³ Hilary Putnam, “Pragmatism and Realism,” *Cardozo Law Review* 18, no. 1 (1996): 153.

¹⁴ William James, *The Letters of William James*, ed. Henry James (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), 2:241.

He rejects the subject-object split proper to Cartesian metaphysics, understands the world to be the experienceable world¹⁵ and connects the possibility of authentic knowledge with the need for action, a connection which Newman made half a century earlier¹⁶. Putnam argues that James, most likely without any awareness of doing so, thinks of perception in an Aristotelian fashion¹⁷, and explains the congruity between James' pragmatism and realism in the following way:

The advantage of pragmatism over traditional 'foundationalist' epistemology, in James's view, is that the way in which pragmatist philosophers answer skeptical doubts is the way in which doubts are answered in practice, by appealing to tests that in fact work in our lives [...] There are not, in James's view, two sets of criteria for being 'real' –commonsense criteria and philosophical criteria¹⁸.

Once again, the connection of pragmatism to real-life experience comes forth, not only as a way of displaying its relevance, but moreover, as a way of justifying its validity. Putnam acknowledges that it was James who led him to appreciate the fundamental importance of realism, which became a central concept in his own philosophical career¹⁹. At first, Putnam upheld a metaphysical realism, then he embraced an internal realism, and described his final position as natural or common-sense realism²⁰. Through these developments, his rejection of cultural relativism and his defense of the thesis of conceptual relativity remained constant. Putnam believes that "the fact that we use our language to talk about reality does not make this reality less real. Our descriptions of reality deal with reality just as it really

¹⁵ Cf. Putnam, "Pragmatism and Realism," 167.

¹⁶ Cf. Cosgrove, "Newman, James and Scepticism," 38.

¹⁷ Cf. Putnam, "Pragmatism and Realism," 158.

¹⁸ Putnam, "Pragmatism and Realism," 166.

¹⁹ Cf. Putnam, "Pragmatism and Realism," 154.

²⁰ Cf. Celesta Cancela, "Putnam and the Notion of 'Reality,'" in *Following Putnam's Trail: On Realism and Other Issues*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 10.

is”²¹. Although Putnam did not study Newman’s work at length, he recognizes him as a careful and responsible thinker and sets him forth as an example of an intellectually virtuous man²².

For his part Newman understands the exercise of philosophy as a thinking of things in and through personal experience which makes them live as they ought to live in the very depths of the mind; [...] an intellectual living with realities, which ought to penetrate beneath the surface of the mind, and, as personal possessions, become the sources and principles of our thinking, while remaining the objects we experience as independent realities²³.

On the one hand, Newman acknowledges the existence of reality as independent of the mind and, on the other hand, the possibility of the intellect to know reality. A central characteristic of his philosophical outlook, which brings him close to pragmatism, is its connection with action, with “conceivable effects”. He insists repeatedly on the need to realize what we think, write, or say, which means to assimilate and bring forth our ideas into concrete realities²⁴. In one of his well-known essays, which he later quoted in the *Grammar of Assent*, he declares: “We shall never have done beginning, if we determine to begin with proof [...] Life is for action”²⁵.

Newman understands knowledge to be a personal possession that transforms the knower²⁶, versus an “antiquated and cumbersome

²¹ Cancela, “Putnam and the Notion of ‘Reality,’” 13.

²² Cf. Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*, 163.

²³ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 11–12.

²⁴ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 11. When Newman speaks of “realizing” he refers to the assimilation and fruition of ideas in concrete realities. He understands the person “primarily as a being that realizes itself through conscientious moral action within the framework of a history that is inevitably –even necessarily– ambiguous”. Terrence Merrigan, “Conscience and Selfhood: Thomas More, John Henry Newman, and the Crisis of the Postmodern Subject,” *Theological Studies* 73, no. 4 (2012): 841–42.

²⁵ *GA*, 95.

²⁶ Cf. Hughes, “The Contemplative Function of Theology,” 16.

heirloom of family relic, a thing kept because people cannot make up their minds to throw it away”²⁷. Being a pragmatic man, Newman believed that ideas must have practical consequences in one’s life, and his own journey from the Anglican to the Catholic Church provides testimony for this.

Another characteristic of Newman’s philosophy is his epistemological realism. In his sermon “On the Nature of Faith in Relation to Reason” he develops this realism as follows:

We are surrounded by beings which exist quite independently of us, exist whether we exist, or cease to exist, whether we have cognizance of them or no [...] Of the material [beings] we have direct knowledge through the senses; we are sensible of the existence of persons and things, of their properties and modes, of their relations towards each other, and the courses of action which they carry on [...] The senses, then, are the only instruments which we know to be granted to us for direct and immediate acquaintance with things external to us. Moreover, it is obvious that even our senses convey us but a little way out of ourselves, and introduce us to the external world only under circumstances, under conditions of time and place, and of certain media through which they act [...] Now, Reason is that faculty of the mind by which this deficiency is supplied; by which knowledge of things external to us, of beings, facts, and events, is attained beyond the range of sense²⁸.

Although Newman is grounded in an Aristotelian frame of mind characterized by realism, he does not develop a philosophy of being as the Scholastics did, but a philosophy of mind “conceived not as the faculty of pure ideas, nor of ideas abstracted from sense data, but of

²⁷ Thomas Mozley, *Reminiscences Chiefly of Oriel College and the Oxford Movement* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1882), 2:258. The quote was changed from the plural to the singular, without altering its meaning.

²⁸ *US*, 205–6.

mind as the power of knowing existent beings”²⁹. His attention to the workings of the mind, his understanding of the mind as “personal reason”, and his apparent preference for real over notional assent, has caused some scholars to describe him as a nominalist. However, many others have disproved these claims and the most common designation ascribed to him is that of a moderate realist³⁰. Within contemporary categories, Newman’s epistemological position could be labeled as a nuanced critical common-sensism: he understood that concepts give true knowledge. However, this knowledge is poor and notional and should be complemented with knowledge of the concrete and singular for real assent to the possible³¹. Boekraad writes that Newman’s realism particularly shines forth in his sermons:

[Newman] could never be satisfied with shallowness or merely professed opinions; he wanted to know the real meaning of things and live according to it. This was not merely a question of his personal feelings, but rather it was his way of stating the fundamental doctrine of realism³².

Had Newman known of Peirce’s insights regarding the method of science he would likely have offered his approval, as he believed that science yields true, relevant and necessary knowledge. In his first *University Sermon* he urged his listeners not “to feel jealous and appear timid, on witnessing the enlargement of scientific knowledge”³³ and in the University of Dublin, he promoted the advancement of all the

²⁹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 75. When he was asked regarding the compatibility between his doctrine in the *Grammar* and scholasticism, Newman replied: “All I can say is I have no suspicion, and do not anticipate, that I shall be found in substance to disagree with St. Thomas”. *LD*, xxviii 431; Cf. Toohey, “The Grammar of Assent,” 484.

³⁰ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 108; Ker, “Newman’s Standing as a Philosopher,” 72; Charles Dessain, “Cardinal Newman on the Theory and Practice of Knowledge,” *The Downside Review* 75, no. 239 (1957): 8.

³¹ Cf. Dessain, “Newman on the Theory and Practice of Knowledge,” 18.

³² Boekraad, *The Personal Conquest of Truth*, 90.

³³ *US*, 4.

sciences, insisting they should follow their proper methodologies³⁴. Further, he believes that “what makes propositions concrete and enables assent to be real is personal experience”³⁵.

A paper presented at a conference on semiotics, contrasted Newman’s and Peirce’s philosophies. It provides a good summary of realism as an affinity between Newman and pragmatism:

Both write to oppose positivism; they both break away from modern philosophy and out of the critical problem; they both affirm philosophic realism; they both re-embody the intellect philosophically after its Cartesian philosophical disembodiment; [...] both go beyond traditional logic by asserting some logical method of reasoning about singular facts and the concrete world; both develop theories of practical decision making by the personal, not subjective, interpretation of signs³⁶.

Moore describes this paper as a call for further comparative studies of Peirce and Newman in order to explore the broad philosophical lines he has identified. Among other objectives, this dissertation attempts to answer this call.

4.2. Concern for the unity of knowledge

A second affinity between Newman and pragmatism is their recognition that human beings desire a reasonable integration of the different aspects of reality, along with their similar understanding of the unity of knowledge³⁷. When dealing with the notion of unity, Newman often speaks of knowledge, while Peirce and Dewey refer to

³⁴ Cf. *Idea*, 74.

³⁵ Ker, “Newman’s Standing as a Philosopher,” 73.

³⁶ Moore, “Newman and Peirce,” 48.

³⁷ Cf. Nubiola, “Pragmatismo, Relativismo y Pluralismo,” 54.

science. However, the analysis of their texts shows their common understanding and similar approaches.

Further, both Newman and Peirce give a central place to the human subjects who possess knowledge or advance science and consider them the axis of their considerations. It is from the perspective of the inquirer that both speak of the unity of knowledge as something possible and desirable, while respecting the inherent peculiarities of each science.

James, for his part, writes that “what our intellect really aims at is neither variety nor unity taken singly, but totality”³⁸, which is reminiscent of Newman who maintains that “human knowledge is gained by a synthesis of the sciences; each science deals with an aspect of nature, and their synthesis is attained adequately only by free discussion among the experts”³⁹. He writes:

In knowledge, we begin with wholes, not with parts. We see the landscape, or the mountain, or the sky [...] Then we take to pieces, or take aspects of, this general & vague object, which is before us. The idea of unity is prior to the idea of wholeness or totality. The idea of wholeness to the idea of partness⁴⁰.

When speaking about unity Newman and the classical pragmatists see it as a dynamic reality that comes forth within each individual as he grows in knowledge, especially when he does so within the community of scientists. They sustain that “human knowledge is gained by a synthesis of the sciences; each science deals with an aspect of nature, and their synthesis is attained adequately only by free discussion among the experts”⁴¹.

³⁸ James, *Pragmatism*, 130.

³⁹ Ward, “Newman’s Philosophy,” 97.

⁴⁰ *PN*, 8. A similar description can be found in *Idea*, 331.

⁴¹ Ward, “Newman’s Philosophy,” 97.

In this context, the grounding point shared by Newman and Peirce is an empirical approach to the world based on the methods of the natural sciences, and their emphasis on the continuity between humanity and physical nature⁴². Peirce's formal education in chemistry and his thirty years of research in mathematics and astronomy sparked in him the interest to "uncover the links between the various kinds of scientific inquiry"⁴³. He observed and recorded physical phenomena with rigor; however, he held that in themselves, these observations do not constitute science. He believed that something else is needed for science to develop: the knowledge of the relations among isolated facts which can reveal the unity among them. In 1898 Peirce described a scientist as someone "who has become deeply impressed with the efficacy of minute and thorough observations [...] Science then may be defined as the business whose ultimate aim is to deduce the truth by means of close observation"⁴⁴.

With a similar argumentation to Newman's⁴⁵, Peirce recognizes the tendency of the intellect towards unity and writes that "reasonableness consists in association, assimilation, generalization, the bringing of items together into an organic whole"⁴⁶. The thousands of observations he recorded during his investigations only acquired meaning as parts of a whole which was not limited to one specific branch of science or area of study. This is why Peirce maintains that a scientist "needs to be more than a mere specialist; he needs such a

⁴² Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 4.

⁴³ Jaime Nubiola, "The Classification of the Sciences and Cross-Disciplinarity," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41, no. 2 (2005): 275.

⁴⁴ Charles S. Peirce, *Historical Perspectives on Peirce's Logic of Science: A History of Science*, ed. Carolyn Eisele (Berlin: Mouton, 1985), 2:1123 (1898).

⁴⁵ "We know, not by a direct and simple vision, not at a glance, but, as it were, by piecemeal and accumulation, by a mental process, by going round an object, by the comparison, the combination, the mutual correction, the continual adaptation, of many partial notions, by the employment, concentration, and joint action of many faculties and exercises of mind". *Idea*, 151.

⁴⁶ Charles S. Peirce, "Review of Clark University, 1889-1899. Decennial Celebration," *Science* 11, no. 277 (1900): 621.

general training of his mind, and such knowledge as shall show him how to make his powers most effective in a new direction”⁴⁷. This understanding led him to the development of the notion of abductive reasoning, which will be discussed in section 4.5.

In order to provide the means for a general training of the mind, Peirce made several attempts to develop a classification of the sciences. He wanted to elicit a system that would reflect an organic whole in which sciences fit together and built it upon the work of Auguste Comte (1798-1857)⁴⁸. Like Comte, Peirce understands each science as a historical development. However, unlike Comte’s linear scheme, Peirce opts for a tree-like scheme of dependence among the sciences, in which they relate to one another as branches.

Peirce sought an alternative to Comte’s system of “a ladder, [in which] each [science] derives its principles from the discoveries of the more abstract science that occupies the rung above, while all are at the same time pressing upwards in the endeavor to become more abstract”⁴⁹, and chose a natural classification which expresses the mutual bearings each science has upon the others:

In order to make it useful I wished it to be a natural classification, that is, I wished it to embody the chief facts of relationship between the sciences so far as they present themselves to scientific and observational study [...] My notion is that what we call ‘natural classification’ is, from the nature of things limited to natural objects [...] What is a science, as a natural object? It is the actual living occupation of an actual group of living men. It is in that sense only that I presume to attempt any classification of the sciences⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ Peirce, *Historical Perspectives*, 2:942–43 (1882).

⁴⁸ Cf. Nubiola, “The Classification of the Sciences,” 275.

⁴⁹ Charles S. Peirce, “Adirondack Summer School Lectures” (MS 1334, 1905), 8.

⁵⁰ Peirce, “Adirondack Summer School Lectures” (MS 1334, 1905), 9–11.

One of the elements Peirce chooses to distinguish each of the sciences from the rest is its instrument of observation, or more broadly, its method of research⁵¹: “Sciences must be classified according to the peculiar means of observation they employ”⁵². In relation to their method of research, Peirce writes elsewhere that sciences could be classified considering those studies whose findings are published on the same journal as he believes that “a natural classification must exhibit the living relations between the different branches of the tree of knowledge, between the different traditions of inquiry”⁵³. In this sense, Peirce sees the classification of the sciences as a means to further their connections and harmony, not as a way of separating them and driving them in different directions.

Moreover, Peirce gives significant recognition to the community of inquirers as the determining factor which binds together a science. He understands that what unites a group of scientists, and ultimately compounds a science, is the familiarity of the researchers with a common methodology and their capacity of communicating with one another. He explains that scientists

spend their lives in finding out similar kinds of truth about similar things [and] understand what one another are about better than outsiders do. They are all familiar with words which others do not know the exact meaning of, they appreciate each other’s difficulties and consult one another about them. They love the same sort of things. They consort together and consider one another as brethren. They are said to pursue the same *branch* of science⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Cf. Nubiola, “The Classification of the Sciences,” 276.

⁵² Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.101.

⁵³ Nubiola, “The Classification of the Sciences,” 276; Cf. Charles S. Peirce, “Carnegie Application” (MS L75, 1902).

⁵⁴ Peirce, *Historical Perspectives*, 2:804–05 (1904).

Therefore, in Peirce's understanding, a branch of science is not only determined by the relationships among topics of study, but by the relationships among researchers and their views⁵⁵.

The association of scientists with one another is of central importance for Peirce because he understands that "science is a cross-disciplinary process in which communication [...] produces new knowledge"⁵⁶. Communication, as Peirce envisions it, involves the effort to share one's discoveries in a language accessible to non-specialized inquirers, to place oneself outside his realm of expertise and be willing to be enriched by others with diverse backgrounds⁵⁷. However, Peirce does not advocate for a unified line of research. Rather he argues that when researchers have a variety of interests, a well-rounded understanding of the relationships among the sciences proves to be very useful as it helps them understand that

their studies must be so closely allied that any one of them could take up the problem of any other after some months of special preparation and [...] each should understand pretty minutely what it is that each one of the other's work consists in [...] Any two of them meeting together shall be thoroughly conversant with each other's ideas and the language [one] talks and should feel each other to be brethren⁵⁸.

It is through this exchange that the different branches of science develop and strengthen one another: "By far the most ordinary way in which one science extends a service to another is by furnishing it with a new fact which the aided science treats as if it were a direct observation [...] The science which receives that fact [...] will return to the science which furnished that fact an explanation of it"⁵⁹. This

⁵⁵ Cf. Jaime Nubiola, "The Law of Reason and the Law of Love," in *Process Pragmatism: Essays on a Quiet Philosophical Revolution*, ed. Guy Debrock (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 46.

⁵⁶ Nubiola, "The Classification of the Sciences," 272.

⁵⁷ Cf. Nubiola, "The Classification of the Sciences," 280.

⁵⁸ Peirce, "Adirondack Summer School Lectures" (MS 1334, 1905), 13–14.

⁵⁹ Peirce, *Historical Perspectives*, 2:808–09 (1904).

exchange does not lead to the assimilation of the sciences into one another, but is meant to have the opposite effect: the strengthening of each science as its aim is “not the unity of the science, but the unity of the scientists, the real inquirers of the truth”⁶⁰. Nubiola comments that Peirce’s understanding of the unity of science is

strikingly relevant to our contemporary views regarding the nature of science, because [it] shifts the emphasis of the discussion from the view of sciences as objects to be classified towards the lives of real men and women involved in scientific research. Indeed, in Peirce’s view, the sciences of discovery are to be identified with the lives of their practitioners⁶¹.

James also pays attention to these themes; he dedicates his fourth Lowell Lecture on pragmatism to the topic of unity⁶². As it has been quoted, in its introductory lines, he notes that “what our intellect really aims at is neither variety nor unity taken singly, but *totality*. In this, acquaintance with reality’s diversities is as important as understanding their connexion”⁶³. James’ insight that the diversifying elements are as important as the connections among the sciences will be central to Newman’s arguments in this topic. James further analyses several aspects of unity, recognizing that it is only possible when “manyness” or diversity is presupposed and accounted for, arguing that unity does not lead to uniformity, but rather to pluralism. He states that in pragmatism a “hypothesis, of a world imperfectly unified still, and perhaps always to remain so, must be sincerely entertained. This [...] hypothesis is pluralism’s doctrine”⁶⁴.

These themes were also developed by Newman in similar lines. The discussion on the unity of knowledge and the relations among the

⁶⁰ Nubiola, “The Law of Reason and the Law of Love,” 47.

⁶¹ Nubiola, “The Classification of the Sciences,” 276.

⁶² Cf. James, *Pragmatism*, 127–62.

⁶³ James, *Pragmatism*, 130.

⁶⁴ James, *Pragmatism*, 161.

different sciences is a central topic that runs through his discourses on university education; he also deals with it in the *Oxford University Sermons* and in the *Grammar of Assent*.

Newman identifies the quest for comprehensiveness as a central need of the person: “General love of order, congruity, and symmetry [...] that very desire of arranging and adjusting [...] must, in its essence, be considered, if anything is considered, [as] an original principle of human nature”⁶⁵. Time and again he goes back to this principle of organic development and writes that only “by piecemeal and accumulation, by a mental process, by going round an object, by the comparison, the combination, the mutual correction, the continual adaptation of many partial notions”⁶⁶ are we able to apprehend reality.

Newman shares the assumptions of the British naturalists who maintain that there is a connection among all existing things, and in consequence there are general laws that guide them. Furthermore, since reality forms one whole, then knowledge of any of its parts is a legitimate means for knowledge of the other parts, because of the unity of law and existence⁶⁷. Newman explains that “if we may justly regard the universe, according to the meaning of the word, as one whole, we may also believe justly that to know one part of it is necessarily to know much more than that one part”⁶⁸. Newman upholds the notions of unity and wholeness as conditions for the enlargement of the mind, arguing that without them the result achieved through the gathering of new information is shallowness, not enlargement⁶⁹. He criticizes those who ignore a unified vision of reality:

They conceive that they profess just the truth which makes all things easy. They have their one idea or their favourite notion, which occurs

⁶⁵ *US*, 108.

⁶⁶ *Idea*, 38.

⁶⁷ Cf. Ekeh, “Newman and Husserl,” 43.

⁶⁸ *GA*, 260.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Idea*, 142.

to them on every occasion. They have their one or two topics, which they are continually obtruding, with a sort of pedantry, being unable to discuss, in a natural unconstrained way [...] Perhaps they have discovered, as they think, the leading idea, or simple view [...] and they insist upon this or that isolated tenet, selected by themselves or by others not better qualified⁷⁰.

In a similar vein to Peirce who based his research on minute observations knowing that they would lead him to the truth⁷¹, Newman understands the value of each particular observation, or piece of data, or fact, and explains how all of them ought to be fit together in the individual's quest for truth. For Newman truth is necessarily an organic affair in which diverse aspects of reality are integrated and which cannot be apprehended apart from their relationship to one another:

Truth means facts and their relations [...] All that exists, as contemplated by the human mind, forms one large system or complex fact, and this of course resolves itself into an indefinite number of particular facts, which, as being portions of a whole, have countless relations of every kind, one towards another. Knowledge is the apprehension of these facts, whether in themselves, or in their mutual positions and bearings⁷².

As Peirce understands reasonableness as bringing items together into an organic whole⁷³, Newman believes that "the quest for this comprehensive view is natural, indeed necessary, and as such, an end in itself"⁷⁴. For Newman, comprehensiveness is not an accidental aspect of knowledge; rather, it is essential and requires intentionality since "such a union and concert of the intellectual powers, such an

⁷⁰ *US*, 306.

⁷¹ Cf. Peirce, *Historical Perspectives*, 2:1123 (1898).

⁷² *Idea*, 45.

⁷³ Cf. Peirce, "Review of Clark University," 621.

⁷⁴ Terrence Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts: The Religious and Theological Ideal of John Henry Newman* (Louvain: Peeters, 1991), 113.

enlargement and development, such a comprehensiveness, is necessarily a matter of training”⁷⁵. Crosby describes that

as soon as the human mind discovers some truth, it has a strong tendency to assert this truth at the expense of certain other truths whose credentials are just as good as those of the discovered truth. There is often some difficulty in understanding how this truth can cohere with other truths, and instead of overcoming the difficulty, or at least enduring it, one declares the difficulty to be a contradiction and so ends up playing off truth against truth⁷⁶.

He argues that an important aspect of Newman’s genius lies in the fact that he was able to bring into harmony apparently opposed truths. In this line, Newman describes a truly great intellect as

one which takes a connected view of old and new, past and present, far and near, and which has an insight into the influence of all these one on another; without which there is no whole, and no centre. It possesses the knowledge, not only of things, but also of their mutual and true relations⁷⁷.

According to Newman, only within this web of relations can sciences develop. In this regard, Ekeh states that in Newman’s mind individual sciences are nothing other than “incomplete and partial perspectives of the one whole”⁷⁸. From this angle the centrality that Newman gives to the relational aspect among the different branches of science is duly understood. He seeks a “comprehensive view of truth in all its branches, of the relations of science to science, of their mutual bearings, and their respective values”⁷⁹ as the core of education and an indispensable condition for the person to be able to grow in the knowledge of reality.

⁷⁵ *Idea*, 151.

⁷⁶ Crosby, “Coincidentia Oppositorum,” 193.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Idea*, 134.

⁷⁸ Ekeh, “Newman and Husserl,” 46.

⁷⁹ *Idea*, 103.

Since reality is multifaceted, a plurality of sciences is necessary, “no one science being able to deal adequately or intelligently with the whole mass of aspects under which an object might be viewed”⁸⁰. These considerations give an adequate context for Newman’s understanding of science:

These various partial views or abstractions, by means of which the mind looks out upon its object, are called sciences, and embrace respectively larger or smaller portions of the field of knowledge [...] Now these views or sciences [...] have far more to do with the relations of things than with things themselves. They tell us what things are, only or principally by telling us their relations⁸¹.

Being partial views, and therefore incomplete in themselves, sciences need external assistance from one another, and can provide it to each other⁸². It is precisely the connected view of the whole that affords sciences their truth and efficacy; this is why in his *Idea* Newman vigorously defends that sciences be presented as a whole, in their relation to each other. If one science is omitted “you cannot keep its place vacant for it; that science is forgotten; the other sciences close up, or, in other words, they exceed their proper bounds, and intrude where they have no right”⁸³. Newman is deeply persuaded that “a science which exceeds its limits falls into error”⁸⁴, since “almost every statement [it pronounces] is perverted and made false, because it is not the whole truth”⁸⁵. Like Peirce chose and developed the classical metaphor of the tree of knowledge, Newman speaks of a circle of

⁸⁰ Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts*, 125.

⁸¹ *Idea*, 46.

⁸² Cf. *Idea*, 47.

⁸³ *Idea*, 73.

⁸⁴ *Idea*, 74.

⁸⁵ *Idea*, 200.

universal science to imply interdependence, but not submission among the sciences⁸⁶.

In his lecture “Christianity and Scientific Investigation” Newman further argues that knowledge is gained from a synthesis of the sciences. He advocates for free discussion as an expedient means for progress in knowledge and states that the investigator should be free, independent, and unshackled in his movements⁸⁷. Only in the free interchange among scholars of different disciplines “a breadth and spaciousness of thought [comes forth], in which lines, seemingly parallel may converge at leisure and principles, recognized as incommensurable, may be safely antagonistic”⁸⁸.

For Newman “the ideal of knowledge [...] is, in short, the achievement of a comprehensiveness of view which sees the universal in each and every particular, and which is able to hold in (tensile) unity the whole body of –sometime conflicting– information about those particulars”⁸⁹, and the most proper setting for this achievement is the university, where different disciplines are taught and explored by professors and students united by a common desire for truth.

Two central texts in this discussion show a point of disagreement between Peirce and Newman regarding the place of teaching and research in the university⁹⁰. Peirce lauds Clark University for having the most lofty ideal that any university could have since it recognizes “the pursuit of science as its first object, with teaching –of course, an indispensable means of securing continuity of work– as only a subordinate, or at most a secondary object”⁹¹ while Newman writes

⁸⁶ Cf. *Idea*, 59; Nubiola, “The Classification of the Sciences,” 276.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Idea*, 471.

⁸⁸ *Idea*, 460.

⁸⁹ Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts*, 113.

⁹⁰ Peirce’s “Review of Clark University, 1889-1899. Decennial Celebration” and Newman’s *Idea of a University*.

⁹¹ Peirce, “Review of Clark University,” 621–22.

that the process of enlightenment or enlargement of mind through teaching is the first and foremost vocation of the university⁹².

The understanding which Peirce and Newman have of the unity of knowledge, or the unity of the sciences, portrays one more point of affinity between Newman and pragmatism and provides a common ground for the development of their theories of knowledge. In relation to knowledge Newman writes that “it *is* a something, and it *does* a something”⁹³; this is only possible when it is presented with a view of the whole.

4.3. Search for truth as a communal pursuit through time

Pragmatists subscribe to the understanding that “real intellectual achievement is rarely if ever individualist, but rather the result of complex conversations with a community of both the living and the dead”⁹⁴; this was Newman’s conception of intellectual achievement as well. He engaged in this conversation at Trinity College; a few years later, he found excellent interlocutors in both the Fathers of the Church who preceded him by a millennia and in his contemporaries, and he remained an active participant of this conversation until the end of his life.

Although he believes that knowledge is “a personal possession”⁹⁵, Newman does not see its attainment as an individualistic endeavor, but rather as one that is achieved within “an assemblage of learned men”⁹⁶. This is yet another way in which both Newman and

⁹² Cf. *Idea*, 130.

⁹³ *Idea*, 148.

⁹⁴ Barron, “Newman among the Postmoderns,” 27.

⁹⁵ *Idea*, 113.

⁹⁶ *Idea*, 101.

pragmatists, attempt to overcome modern rationalism which is characterized by isolation and lack of continuity.

Descartes identifies certainty as residing within the individual consciousness and makes the criteria for its attainment private rather than communal. He enthrones the individual as the final judge of truth and opposes all reliance on tradition and authority⁹⁷. From the beginning of his career, Peirce challenges the spirit of Cartesianism and establishes the notion of community as a central element in his pragmatic proposal. He sees in the cognitive community an escape from the false dilemma of the exclusive possibility of two epistemic alternatives: one must embrace either dogmatism or skepticism⁹⁸.

Peirce does not give up the possibility of truth; rather he details the conditions for its attainment. He does not understand the attainment of truth as an individual task, he approaches it as a community enterprise open to revision and sustained through time. He understands that “truth and reality, though independent of any individual, are defined in terms of the long-run agreement of the whole community of inquirers”⁹⁹. Peirce does not bind the truth to a particular inquirer; however, in doing so, neither does he unbind it from inquiry itself; rather, he firmly grounds it in communal inquiry¹⁰⁰.

In a 1982 paper, Haack makes a succinct and useful comparison between Descartes’ and Peirce’s epistemologies, which is worth reproducing with slight modifications¹⁰¹. Point 2 is discussed in this section and points 1 and 3 will be discussed in sections 4.4 and 5.2.

⁹⁷ Cf. Susan Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” *Monist* 65, no. 2 (1982): 173.

⁹⁸ Cf. Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” 156.

⁹⁹ Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” 158.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Misak, *Truth and the End of Inquiry*, 2.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” 158.

	DESCARTES	PEIRCE
1	Method of radical doubt.	Method of doubt is impossible: doubt is not voluntary, it requires specific reasons and must be grounded in the beliefs we have.
2	Individualism. Certainty of self-consciousness. Rejection of tradition and authority.	Community-oriented. Defines truth and reality via intersubjective agreement. The individual is seen as the locus of ignorance and error. Self-consciousness is learned via interactions with others. All thought happens in public signs.
3	Dogmatism and quest for certainty. Understands knowledge as a chain of inference.	Fallibilism: no infallible intuition nor indubitable first premises. Understands knowledge as a cable of many arguments.

In contrast to Cartesianism which holds that only intuitions acquired within one’s self-consciousness are certain, pragmatism aims to acquire certainty through the method of science, which Peirce understood “not only [as] a collective activity of conduct but [as] a conduct of discovery of what is out there”¹⁰². For Peirce, the notions of reality and community were intrinsically united:

The real, then, is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus, the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of an indefinite increase of knowledge¹⁰³.

¹⁰² Oakes, “Discovering the American Aristotle,” 32.

¹⁰³ Charles S. Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, ed. Max Fisch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982–2009), 2:239.

Along with the pragmatic maxim, Peirce's definition of truth, and its relationship to inquiry, are the pillars on which he builds his philosophical system. He writes that "the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real"¹⁰⁴. He claims that genuine inquiry, carried out through the rigorous testing of hypothesis and with the openness to revise these however many times it is necessary as new evidence is brought forth, will unequivocally result in truth. In consequence, truth is not what the community chooses to agree upon, but rather the conclusion that inquiry brings to light, as long as the inquirers move within the boundaries of "real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them"¹⁰⁵. Misak summarizes this outlook as follows: "Inquirers, at any given stage of investigation, do not determine or create the truth; truth is not a matter of what inquirers happen to think. The objective truth of the matter is that which inquiry would determine"¹⁰⁶.

In his search for the means to ascertain truth, Peirce evaluates four diverse methods of investigation and concludes that only the method of science can put our doubts at ease in a satisfactory manner¹⁰⁷. The method of science is fallibilistic and intrinsically social and is distinguished from the other methods of inquiry by its cooperative and public character, as well as its liability to constant revision and improvement: "[Science] conceives of evidence as an objective factor inviting universal examination and compelling ultimate unanimity; it conceives of its results as essentially provisional or corrigible; and for these reasons it ensures measurable progress"¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁴ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.407 (1878).

¹⁰⁵ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.384 (1877).

¹⁰⁶ Misak, *Truth and the End of Inquiry*, 135.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.377–86 (1877).

¹⁰⁸ Justus Buchler, "Introduction," in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), x.

Haack considers that the most important epistemological proposal that Peirce makes entails a shift from the individual consciousness to the cognitive community¹⁰⁹. In this regard, Peirce writes that

to make single individuals absolute judges of truth is most pernicious [...] We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the community of philosophers. Hence, if disciplined and candid minds carefully examine a theory and refuse to accept it, this ought to create doubts in the mind of the author of the theory himself¹¹⁰.

Peirce conceives the philosopher, or scientific enquirer, “as just one contributor to a vast enterprise extending both within and across generations”¹¹¹. However, he also acknowledges that, being carried out by individuals, scientific inquiry does have an intrinsically personal component. He invites scientists to make their work available to other specialists, who will either re-affirm their conceptions or propose a new direction, aware that ideas mature in a “rambunctious inter-subjective process of questioning, wondering, answering, critiquing and arguing”¹¹². He explains that

different minds may set out with the most antagonistic views, but the progress of investigation carries them by a force outside of themselves to one and the same conclusion. This activity of thought by which we are carried, not where we wish, but to a foreordained goal, is like the operation of destiny. No modification of the point of view taken, no selection of other facts for study, no natural bent of mind even, can enable a man to escape the predestinate opinion. This great law is embodied in the conception of truth and reality¹¹³.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” 156.

¹¹⁰ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.265 (1868).

¹¹¹ Susan Haack, “Pragmatism,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy* (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 778.

¹¹² Barron, “Newman among the Postmoderns,” 28.

¹¹³ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.407 (1878). In the same line, Newman says that men would realize that their opinions are not that dissimilar if they only carried their conversation long

Peirce's confidence that inquiry will lead to truth is upheld by two premises: the idea that evolutionary adaptation has provided human beings with an instinct to guess what is right and the thesis that induction tends to be self-corrective¹¹⁴. This understanding is accepted by those who have followed Peirce, however there is some disagreement regarding whether inquiry can ever be said to have concluded or if its results are intrinsically provisional. In this regard, Nubiola comments that "truth with a small 't' has not been discovered once and for all, but rather is a living body that grows and remains open to everyone's contribution"¹¹⁵.

Those who understand science in this way, as "a living and growing body of truth"¹¹⁶ or as a method "which seeks cooperation in the hope that the truth may be found"¹¹⁷, see themselves as inquirers or cognitive agents necessarily bound to their interactions with others, express their achievements in an essentially public language and hold as the criteria of truth the sustained agreement of the community¹¹⁸. When inquiry is carried out with this understanding, it can contribute to the advancement of science.

A community of inquiry is not defined by time or space; rather, the connection among the inquirers is forged by a common question, problem or interest¹¹⁹; it is rooted in the personal experience of each inquirer and the collective experience of humanity¹²⁰. The careful

enough for them to understand each other: "When men understand what each other mean, they see, for the most part that controversy is either superfluous or hopeless". *US*, 201.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Haack, "Pragmatism," 778.

¹¹⁵ Jaime Nubiola, "La búsqueda de la verdad en la tradición pragmatista," *Tópicos*, no. 8-9 (2001): 186. My translation.

¹¹⁶ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 6.428 (1893).

¹¹⁷ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 7.54 (c.1902).

¹¹⁸ Cf. Haack, "Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community," 173.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Patricia Shields, "The Community of Inquiry: Insights for Public Administration from Jane Addams, John Dewey and Charles S. Peirce" (Public Administration Theory Network, Portland, 1999).

¹²⁰ Cf. Nubiola, "La búsqueda de la verdad," 184.

examination of the historical standards and practices that have been distilled in the course of scientific inquiry is essential to make progress; in this sense, inquiry does not begin from scratch but at the point where previous inquiry arrived¹²¹. Genuine inquiry makes its own the “cumulative work built among all inquirers by a multi-secular history of trials, errors, amends and successes”¹²².

However, the historical character of truth should not become a ballast that prevents it from moving forward; essential to the scientific method is the ability to suspend belief and consider new and diverse ideas and evidence¹²³. Attentive listening and good communication and are essential for scientific progress. Jane Addams (1860-1935)¹²⁴ developed and applied many of pragmatism’s principles in a concrete social setting and collaborated with Dewey, providing him with practical insights. Her settlement was her community of inquiry, of which she said:

The only thing to be dreaded in the Settlement is that it lose its flexibility, its power of quick adaptation, its readiness to change its methods as its environment may demand. It must be open to conviction and must have a deep and abiding sense of tolerance. It must be hospitable and ready for experiment. It should demand from its residents a scientific patience in the accumulation of facts and the steady holding of their sympathies as one of the best instruments for that accumulation. It must be grounded in a philosophy whose foundation is on the solidarity of the human race [...] Its residents must

¹²¹ Cf. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 72.

¹²² Nubiola, “La búsqueda de la verdad,” 186. My translation.

¹²³ Cf. Shields, “The Community of Inquiry.”

¹²⁴ Jane Addams co-founded Chicago’s Hull House, a settlement house, and became the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her social work in favor of immigrants. As a philosopher, she made important contributions to the pragmatist tradition since she “viewed her settlement work as a grand epistemological endeavor but in the process she also never forgot the humanity of her neighbors. [She] was indeed a public philosopher—one who was not afraid to get her hands dirty”. Maurice Hamington, “Jane Addams,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Zalta (Stanford University, May 23, 2018).

be emptied of all conceit of opinion and all self-assertion, and ready to arouse and interpret the public opinion of their neighborhood. They must be content to live quietly side by side with their neighbors, until they grow into a sense of relationship and mutual interests¹²⁵.

The notions of convergence, consensus and community were central to Dewey's pragmatism, which focused on the development of its political consequences. Dewey believed that inquirers should handle the claims addressed to them as members of a social practice ruled by shared norms, the most important of which is to justify one's assertions in dialogue with others: "No scientific inquirer can keep what he finds to himself or turn it to merely private account without losing his scientific standing. Everything discovered belongs to the community of workers. Every new idea and theory has to be submitted to this community for confirmation and test"¹²⁶. Dewey did not understand the community as an embodiment of a timeless order, but as an experiment in cooperation and adaptation¹²⁷ and opened it to specialist and amateur members alike: "While agreement among the activities and their consequences that are brought about in the wider (technically non-scientific) public stands upon a different plane, nevertheless such agreement is an integral part of a complete test of physical conclusions wherever their public bearings are relevant"¹²⁸.

As Dewey emphasizes the notions of community and practice in his development of pragmatism, Putnam develops, among other traits, its historical contingency. He explains that his pragmatist

¹²⁵ Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 126–27.

¹²⁶ Dewey, *Later Works*, 5:115.

¹²⁷ Cf. Charlene Seigfried, *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 92.

¹²⁸ John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Holt, 1938), 490. Peirce argues that a trait of inquirers is that they express their achievements in a language that is essentially public and Dewey talks about bringing their agreements to the wider public. In my opinion, this openness of pragmatism to the world outside the Academia is one of its most appealing characteristics, one which Newman also incarnated.

enlightenment was the realization that the situated resolution of ethical conflicts can be more or less warranted without being absolute and that the proposals and solutions to problems are not required to be free of contingent historical perspective in order to be valid¹²⁹. He understands that history not only provides context, it provides grounding as well; in this sense, Putnam argues that to separate doing philosophy from studying its history, this is, the separation of ideas from their development, is impoverishing. In the same article where he mentions this claim, he refers to a concept he was not yet ready to hear thirty years prior, giving evidence to the historical character of ideas, and more broadly speaking, to the fact that “truth is the daughter of time”¹³⁰.

In relation to the notion of community, Putnam states that the two errors of Cartesian rationalism which pragmatism overcame are the claim that there are truths that can be known *a priori* and that these truths are accessible to individuals isolated from society. He follows Dewey’s lead in arguing that the results of inquiry will be more advanced when all members of a community express their views and evaluate alternative solutions to a problem¹³¹.

In their compendium on pragmatism, Talisse and Aikin conclude that “the very nature of belief commits us to processes of inquiry, which in turn commits us to participation in a certain kind of community, namely one in which inquiry can commence”¹³². For her part, Misak links in an essential manner, the notions of truth, inquiry and community by stating that “trying to give up the concept of truth is not something we can do, for it would require too radical a change in our practices of communication and engagement with others. We do

¹²⁹ Cf. Hilary Putnam, *Ethics without Ontology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 129.

¹³⁰ Aulus Gellius, *Noctium Atticarum*, n.d., 12:11; Cf. Hilary Putnam, “A Half Century of Philosophy, Viewed from Within,” *Daedalus* 126, no. 1 (1997): 200.

¹³¹ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 120–21.

¹³² Talisse and Aikin, *Pragmatism, a Guide*, 159–60.

assert, we do believe, we do engage with others, we do take disagreement to matter. These practices are central to who we are”¹³³. As it will be argued, Newman wholeheartedly agrees with these statements, enriching them with a particular nuance, namely, the personal nature of truth and knowledge.

In his discourses on university education, Newman succinctly states that “all greater matters are carried on and perfected by a succession of individual minds”¹³⁴. Although he asserts time and again that truth is a personal possession, he argues with the same resolution that it is not an individualistic endeavor, but rather a pursuit to be carried on with others, in a community of learning: “The development then of an idea [...] is carried on through and by means of communities of men and their leaders”¹³⁵. For Newman, a community is not a convenient add-on, rather it is an essential aspect to the process of inquiry; he even claims that in order to ensure learning in a university setting, the community is more important than assignments or examinations¹³⁶.

Like Peirce does, Newman holds the natural sciences in great esteem. After stating that the peculiarities of each science must be respected, he describes the method of inquiry as follows:

It is the very law of the human mind in its inquiry after and acquisition of truth to make its advances by a process which consists of many stages, and is circuitous. There are no short cuts to knowledge; nor does the road to it always lie in the direction in which it terminates, nor are we able to see the end on starting [...] Moreover, it is not often the fortune of any one man to live through an investigation; the process is one of not only many stages, but of many minds. What one begins

¹³³ Cheryl Misak, “Making Disagreement Matter: Pragmatism and Deliberative Democracy,” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (2004): 19.

¹³⁴ *Idea*, 312.

¹³⁵ *Dev*, 38.

¹³⁶ Cf. *Idea*, 146; *HS*, iii 74.

another finishes; and a true conclusion is at length worked out by the cooperation of independent schools and the perseverance of successive generations. This being the case, we are obliged, under circumstances, to bear for a while with what we feel to be error, in consideration of the truth in which it is eventually to issue¹³⁷.

The circumspection of the process which Newman envisions, the importance he ascribes to the cooperation of many minds during a lengthy period and the certainty he has that truth will eventually come to light are parallel to Peirce's conditions for genuine inquiry. Furthermore, like Peirce, Newman believes that Cartesian rationalism is sterile because of the isolation in which it places the human mind. Newman writes that devising some sufficient science of reasoning to reach certitude, is a futile project, as progress towards truth "is a living growth, not a mechanism; and its instruments are mental acts, not the formulas and contrivances of language"¹³⁸. He understands truth to be an acquired illumination or an inward endowment transmitted from person to person and effective only when incarnated in daily life, not when dormant in a system¹³⁹.

Reflecting on Newman's approach to philosophy, Sillem writes that in his understanding:

A philosopher [...] is not a thinking machine, but a living person, and persons think about existing realities together as necessarily as they live and work together. A philosopher therefore philosophizes well, if he is a normal man, not alone with his thoughts, systems or books, but in a lived union of mind with other persons, by collating his thoughts with, and measuring the against, those of other people¹⁴⁰.

Throughout his life, Newman constantly measured his thoughts against those of other people, first in Oxford, St. Mary's, and

¹³⁷ *Idea*, 474–75.

¹³⁸ *GA*, 350.

¹³⁹ Cf. *Idea*, 113.

¹⁴⁰ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 76.

Littlemore, then in the Oratory, the Catholic University of Dublin and with other theologians. This is also evidenced through his copious correspondence and his wide array of publications, most of which count with several editions, as Newman considered the opinions of his colleagues to be a great incentive for his growth and often made corrections to his work; he believed that “truth was many-sided and only likely to emerge out of an atmosphere of free discussion”¹⁴¹.

Newman’s appreciation for the Fathers of the Church gives further evidence to his belief that knowledge and truth cannot be constrained into a system. He comments on their fruitfulness with the following words: “St. Athanasius [and] St. Augustine had a life, which a system of theology has not”¹⁴². His deep appreciation for the Fathers was a consequence of his conviction that a person holds the truth in a way no argument, abstract system or reasoning process can¹⁴³. He believes that personal inquiry and reflection is more fruitful when carried out in communion with others, in a heart to heart conversation with those who are grappling with similar issues as those that call one’s attention¹⁴⁴; “truth, he maintained, is the product of many minds exploring the implications of great and living ideas under the impact of alien and even hostile ideas and systems. Only by such collisions can a true idea grow and become known in all its manifold aspects and implicit significances”¹⁴⁵.

As Newman led the Oxford Movement, to strengthen the Catholicity of the Church of England, he chose to rely on personal reflection within a community, rather than on an institutional or

¹⁴¹ Christopher Hollis qtd. in Terrence Merrigan, “Newman and Theological Liberalism,” *Theological Studies* 66, no. 3 (2005): 615.

¹⁴² *Jfc*, 31.

¹⁴³ Cf. *Idea*, 113.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 95. Newman’s motto, *Cor ad cor loquitur*, brings light to these reflections and shows the centrality which relationships and community had in his understanding of life, learning and the pursuit of truth.

¹⁴⁵ Blehl, “The Intellectual and Spiritual Influence of Newman,” 251.

systematic approach. The *Tracts of the Times*, which were the Movement's most notorious vehicle of action, "were not intended as symbols *à cathedrâ*, but as the expression of individual minds [since] no great work was done by a system; whereas systems rise out of individual exertions"¹⁴⁶. Newman was convinced that "a movement of philosophy is a number of persons agreeing together to promote similar ideas they share amongst themselves. A great historical system of philosophy is nothing apart from the many persons who think in each successive century on the same or rather on similar lines"¹⁴⁷.

The argumentation so far portrays Newman's understanding of truth as a personal possession, which could lead one to believe that he did not uphold the centrality that a community holds in pragmatism's method of inquiry as previously described. This is far from the truth; just like Peirce does, what Newman dismisses is abstraction, which he calls paper logic¹⁴⁸: "There is no contradiction between Newman's famous theory on the intensely personal nature of the highest knowledge in the individual, and his emphatic words on the necessity of free cooperation among various thinkers in the search for truth. Both are appeals from the sterile formula of paper logic to the fruitful work of living minds"¹⁴⁹. In one of the most well-known passages of his *Idea*, Newman details the fruitfulness of the interaction among living minds:

If I had to choose between a so-called University, which [...] gave its degrees to any person who passed an examination in a wide range of subjects, and a University which [...] merely brought a number of young men together for three or four years, and then sent them away [...] I have no hesitation in giving the preference to that University

¹⁴⁶ *Apo*, 144.

¹⁴⁷ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 92. This description of a philosophical movement shows Newman's affinity with the understanding of pragmatism sustained in this dissertation.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *Apo*, 169.

¹⁴⁹ Ward, "Newman's Philosophy," 76–77.

which did nothing [...] How is this to be explained? I suppose as follows: When a multitude of young men [...] come together and freely mix with each other, they are sure to learn one from another [...] the conversation of all is a series of lectures to each, and they gain for themselves new ideas and views, fresh matter of thought, and distinct principles for judging and acting, day by day¹⁵⁰.

Ward explains that the presupposition behind Newman's *Idea*, which also informs the *University Sermons* and the *Grammar of Assent*, is that

human knowledge is gained by a synthesis of the sciences [...] their synthesis is attained adequately only by free discussion among the experts [...] It is the energy of human minds in cooperation that actually develops knowledge. If that energy is among the experts, whose knowledge is full and whose heart is set on truth, each in his own department, the progress is obviously towards ever exacter knowledge¹⁵¹.

Newman writes that "great acts take time"¹⁵² and identifies two outcomes of a collegial and patient approach to the search for truth. On the one hand, he realizes that ideas become purer or rather, more precise, since the input of different persons through time trims and balances beliefs so they can reach their full potential, which is never actually settled¹⁵³. On the other hand, he believes that through time and cooperation ideas are strengthened, and their power of attraction grows as "the true correction of the one-sidedness of the single living mind, however penetrating, is effected by coordinating his intellectual perceptions with those of his fellows –other living minds"¹⁵⁴.

¹⁵⁰ *Idea*, 145–46.

¹⁵¹ Ward, "Newman's Philosophy," 95.

¹⁵² *Apo*, 169.

¹⁵³ Cf. *Diff*, ii 306–07.

¹⁵⁴ Ward, "Newman's Philosophy," 77.

In a letter written in 1863, after years of much turmoil due to the difficulties in the apostolic works he had undertaken, Newman pondered on the conditions for intellectual fruitfulness. He writes to Robert Ormsby (1820-1889): “Why was it that the Medieval Schools were so vigorous? Because they were allowed free and fair play –because the disputants [...] could move their limbs freely and expatiate at will [...] Truth is wrought out by many minds, working together freely”¹⁵⁵. This insight on truth will be fundamental for the notion of the Illative Sense, which Newman develops in the *Grammar of Assent*.

Moreover, the notion of time is as strong as the notion of community in Newman’s theory of knowledge, he “had a deep reverence for the rhythm of growing and flourishing, and he knew that things in themselves good are not possible at just any time”¹⁵⁶. The way he upholds the historicity of truths and fallibilism is quite remarkable considering the historical period in which we wrote. He introduces his famous *Essay on Development* as follows:

It is indeed sometimes said that the stream is clearest near the spring. Whatever use may fairly be made of this image, it does not apply to the history of a philosophy or belief, which on the contrary is more equable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full. It necessarily rises out of an existing state of things, and for a time savours of the soil. Its vital element needs disengaging from what is foreign and temporary, and is employed in efforts after freedom which become more vigorous and hopeful as its years increase. Its beginnings are no measure of its capabilities, nor of its scope. At first no one knows what it is, or what it is worth. It remains perhaps for a time quiescent; it tries, as it were, its limbs, and proves the ground under it, and feels its way. From time to time it makes essays which fail, and are in consequence abandoned. It seems in

¹⁵⁵ *LD*, xx 426.

¹⁵⁶ Crosby, “Coincidentia Oppositorum,” 193.

suspense which way to go; it wavers, and at length strikes out in one definite direction. In time it enters upon strange territory; points of controversy alter their bearing; parties rise and around it; dangers and hopes appear in new relations; and old principles reappear under new forms. It changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often¹⁵⁷.

The vivid imagery in these lines is an apt illustration for Peirce's method of inquiry, which maintains that truth is clarified over time. In fact, Newman mentions several times in his correspondence the adage that "truth is the daughter of time"¹⁵⁸. He does so by quoting George Crabbe's (1754-1832) poem "The Preceptor Husband":

Leaving the truth to Time, who solves our doubt,
By bringing his all-glorious daughter out—
Truth! for whose beauty all their love profess,
And yet how many think it ugliness¹⁵⁹.

In his fifth *University Sermon* Newman argues that 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 [...] who are at once the teachers and the patterns of it"¹⁶⁰; both Newman and Peirce are good exemplars of such teachers and patterns. Not only in their writings, but also in their lives, Newman and Peirce, along with many pragmatist philosophers, uphold the notion of truth as a communal pursuit through time. The fruitfulness that this understanding brings forth will be further detailed in chapter 6.

¹⁵⁷ *Dev*, 40.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *LD*, x 375; *LD*, xvi 106; *LD*, xxiii 16; *LD*, xxv 279; *LD*, xxix 337.

¹⁵⁹ George Crabbe, *The Poetical Works of George Crabbe* (Paris: A&W Galignani, 1829), 242.

¹⁶⁰ *US*, 91–92.

4.4. Recognition of the crucial role doubt and error play in the pursuit of knowledge

A fourth affinity between Newman and pragmatism is their regard for the essential and unequivocally positive role that doubt and error play in the growth of knowledge and attainment of truth. Related to anti-foundationalism and fallibilism, this point was mentioned in section 3.1 as a core commitment that pragmatists tend to share. With the acknowledgment that “along with the pragmatist view of truth comes a fallibilist epistemology”¹⁶¹, doubts and errors are not seen by pragmatists as liabilities or obstacles in the process of inquiry; rather they are welcomed as essential building blocks for this endeavor. Peirce talks about doubt as that which gives purpose to inquiry, and for his part, Newman sees it as a positive state because it is contrary to inactivity¹⁶², and invites his listeners to opt “not [for] formal doubt, but [for] a state of mind which recognizes the possibility of doubting”¹⁶³.

Peirce holds a nuanced understanding of fallibilism and doubt; he acknowledges that his own capacity to advance in truth is limited, as is the capacity of every other person. As has been discussed, this realization does not make him question the possibility of knowledge; rather it makes him seek a community of inquirers to balance, contrast, correct and advance his personal reflection. While he believes any specific belief could be overturned in the course of inquiry, he upholds his beliefs with enough confidence until a reason to question them arises¹⁶⁴. In this sense, Peirce understands fallibilism as a doctrine regarding the person as a cognitive agent and her cognitive methods, not as a doctrine about truth and knowledge as objective realities¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶¹ Misak, “Reception of Early Pragmatism,” 202.

¹⁶² Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.376 (1903); *GA*, 77; *US*, 215.

¹⁶³ *US*, 215.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 20.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Susan Haack, “Fallibilism and Necessity,” *Synthese* 41, no. 1 (1979): 54.

Peirce's position offers an "appealing compromise between our cognitive limitations and our cognitive aspirations –it acknowledges the ubiquity of one's liability to error and the inevitability of one's cognitive dependence on others, but at the same time it offers the prospect of our attaining genuine knowledge"¹⁶⁶. Recognizing the limitations of human reason Peirce proposes fallibilism as an epistemological thesis and an epistemological recommendation, a thesis because it describes the person's propensity to hold false beliefs and a recommendation because it advises that one should always be open to revising her beliefs in the light of new evidence¹⁶⁷. In a manuscript from 1897, he describes fallibilism as follows:

For years in the course of this ripening process, I used for myself to collect my ideas under the designation *fallibilism*; and indeed the first step toward *finding out* is to acknowledge you do not satisfactorily know already; so that no blight can so surely arrest all intellectual growth as the blight of cocksureness [...] Indeed, out of a contrite fallibilism, combined with a high faith in the reality of knowledge, and an intense desire to find things out, all my philosophy has always seemed to me to grow¹⁶⁸.

Even though the remark "contrite fallibilism" appears only once in Peirce's writings, it is one of his most well-known phrases. Houser explains that Peirce chose the adjective contrite because he holds "that we can only make progress together as a community of dedicated investigators, that there will be many setbacks along the way, and that our own part will at most be small"¹⁶⁹. The notion of the community of investigators has been discussed in section 4.3; in this section the

¹⁶⁶ Haack, "Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community," 174.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Haack, "Fallibilism and Necessity," 41–43.

¹⁶⁸ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.13–14 (c.1897).

¹⁶⁹ Nathan Houser, "Peirce's Contrite Fallibilism," in *Semiotics and Philosophy in Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Rossella Fabbrichesi and Susanna Marietti (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 14.

notions of setback, doubt and error will be presented as a further affinity between Newman and pragmatism.

Following Peirce, pragmatists understand inquiry as a process that removes incoherent claims from one's expectations and beliefs. Another way of understanding inquiry is to view it as the process that leads to a belief that is coherent with one's experience and thus is in a position to guide one's actions without engendering doubts¹⁷⁰. The method of science proposed by Peirce is intrinsically self-correcting, which means that even though any appeal to a particular reason or argument can change over time, the rationality of the process is not called into question¹⁷¹.

When inquiry is carried out efficiently and responsibly and viewed as an attempt to discover truth, it involves several tasks: "Evidence has to be collected, experiments have to be devised and carried out, dialogues must be engaged in with fellow inquirers, decisions must be made about when we have scrutinized our opinions enough to trust our results"¹⁷². If and when this point is ever achieved is a matter of discussion among pragmatists. It seems that Peirce believes that this point is never actually reached as he explains that inquiry "is not standing upon the bedrock of fact. It is walking upon a bog, and can only say, this ground seems to hold for the present. Here I will stay *till it begins to give way*"¹⁷³. Further, he believes that "the scientific spirit requires a man at all times [be] ready to dump his whole cartload of beliefs, the moment experience is against them. The desire to learn forbids him to be perfectly cocksure that he knows already"¹⁷⁴.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Christopher Hookway, *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism: Themes from Peirce* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 249; Talisse and Aikin, *Pragmatism, a Guide*, 20.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 72.

¹⁷² Hookway, *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism*, 246.

¹⁷³ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.589 (1898). Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁴ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.55 (c.1896).

As it has been seen, Peirce develops his notion of inquiry, not as a certain destination, but as the road that goes from doubt to belief: “The irritation of doubt causes a struggle to attain a state of belief. I shall term this struggle *Inquiry*”¹⁷⁵. However, it cannot be said without qualifiers that the starting point for inquiry is complete doubt, as Peirce explicitly states that “we cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all the prejudices which we have when we enter upon the study of philosophy. These prejudices are not to be dispelled by a maxim”¹⁷⁶. The starting point for inquiry is a surprising experience; “every inquiry whatsoever takes its rise in the observation [...] of some surprising phenomenon, some experience which either disappoints an expectation, or breaks in upon some habit of expectation”¹⁷⁷, which has no relation to Cartesian doubt¹⁷⁸.

This surprising experience does not take place in a void setting but within a settled body of beliefs, which serves as the context for the development of a specific doubt¹⁷⁹, elsewhere described by Peirce as “a real and living doubt”¹⁸⁰. In this regard, Misak explains that our body of background beliefs is only susceptible to doubt on a *piecemeal* basis, which implies that we must regard it as true, until a surprising experience causes a disruption, and once this disruption comes forth, it must be dealt with methodically¹⁸¹. Peirce explains that a philosopher

will be further distinguished [...] by the great value he attaches to doubt, provided only that it be the weighty and noble metal itself, and

¹⁷⁵ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.374 (1877).

¹⁷⁶ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.265 (1868).

¹⁷⁷ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 6.469 (1908).

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Sara Barrera and Jaime Nubiola, “Abduction: The Logic of Creativity,” in *Bloomsbury Companion to Contemporary Peircean Semiotics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 192.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Hookway, *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism*, 17.

¹⁸⁰ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.376 (1903).

¹⁸¹ Cf. Cheryl Misak, “C. S. Peirce on Vital Matters,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, ed. Cheryl Misak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 153. Emphasis added. The theme of will be further developed in section 4.5.

no counterfeit nor paper substitute. He is not content to ask himself whether he does doubt, but he invents a plan for attaining to doubt, elaborates it in detail, and then puts it into practice¹⁸².

In a later essay, Peirce contrasts what he calls paper doubts with genuine doubts and argues that the latter should be attained through a deliberate plan¹⁸³. A genuine doubt arises in the context of a settled body of beliefs, and has for a detonator a surprising experience which results in a *specific* doubt. This characterization of doubt as a specific element, versus the generalized Cartesian method of doubt is a significant claim of pragmatist philosophers, one that finds several resemblances with the understanding of doubt that Newman supports¹⁸⁴.

In his paper “The Fixation of Belief” Peirce defines doubt as “an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief”¹⁸⁵ and argues that doubt is the opposite state to belief, which he understands as the condition that “guide[s] our desires and shape[s] our actions”¹⁸⁶. When a person examines the belief she holds against a new recalcitrant experience or an unexpected occurrence, a doubt arises and sets a new process in motion: inquiry. Haack explains that “because doubt consists in the interruption of a belief by some experience, inquiry, which is motivated by doubt, must start in the context of some problem-situation [...] One must have had, consciously or otherwise, some earlier belief, the interruption of which threw one into doubt”¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸² Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.451 (1905).

¹⁸³ Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 6.498 (1906).

¹⁸⁴ Cf. *US*, 215; *GA*, 377.

¹⁸⁵ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.372 (1877).

¹⁸⁶ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.371 (1877). Note that Peirce places doubt, not disbelief, as the opposite to belief; he does not advocate for a generalized disbelief.

¹⁸⁷ Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” 160.

There are several explicit distinctions between Peirce's pragmatic understanding of doubt and the Cartesian concept of doubt:

Many and many a philosopher seems to think that taking a piece of paper and writing down 'I doubt that' is doubting it, or that it is a thing he can do in a minute as soon as he decides what he wants to doubt. Descartes convinced himself that the safest way was to 'begin' by doubting everything, and accordingly he tells us he straightway did so, except only his *je pense*, which he borrowed from St. Augustine. Well I guess not; for genuine doubt does not talk of *beginning* with doubting. The pragmatist knows that doubt is an art which has to be acquired with difficulty; and his genuine doubts will go much further than those of any Cartesian. What he does not doubt, about ordinary matters of everybody's life, he is apt to find that no well matured man doubts¹⁸⁸.

Peirce's understanding of a genuine doubt makes it relative and dependent to belief: He argues that a person needs "reason to doubt what he began by believing"¹⁸⁹. This is another means through which Peirce upholds his claim that inquiry begins, not with a blank slate nor with a paper doubt, but with the beliefs a person holds¹⁹⁰. Understanding doubt as the detonator for inquiry, in the context of previously held beliefs, Peirce sees it as a valuable asset in the quest for truth:

Thus, both doubt and belief have positive effects upon us, though very different ones. Belief does not make us act at once, but puts us into such a condition that we shall behave in a certain way, when the occasion arises. Doubt has not the least such active effect, but stimulates us to inquiry until it is destroyed¹⁹¹.

¹⁸⁸ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 6.498 (c.1906).

¹⁸⁹ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.265 (1868).

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Haack, "Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community," 160.

¹⁹¹ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.373 (1877).

The capital offense in philosophical investigation, in Peirce's eyes, is to block the way of inquiry¹⁹². Genuine doubts achieve the opposite effect, they keep it open and inform it with an objective as "when doubt ceases, mental action on the subject comes to an end; and if it did go on, it would be without a purpose"¹⁹³. Doubts are not considered to be a liability nor a problem, but rather "an art that has to be acquired with difficulty"¹⁹⁴.

Along with his recognition of the value of doubts, Peirce also recognizes the value of errors within the method of inquiry. Peircean inquiry does not entail the systematic development of truth from one single premise. Rather it results from weaving together diverse findings, where even failures become "one of the carcasses over which future generations of inquirers climb as they finally storm the fortress of knowledge"¹⁹⁵. Both favorable and unfavorable outcomes are threads in the cable of reasoning, "a cable whose fibres may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected"¹⁹⁶.

As a consequence of his fallibilism, Peirce maintains that any, but not all, of our beliefs can be mistaken: "Although any of the fibres in the cable might break, all cannot; since some of its fibres will hold, the cable is safe"¹⁹⁷. With this understanding, he places fallibilism as an intermediate epistemological position between Cartesian dogmatism and outright skepticism¹⁹⁸. Peirce's account of knowledge

¹⁹² Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.170 (c.1897).

¹⁹³ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.376 (1903).

¹⁹⁴ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 6.498 (1906).

¹⁹⁵ Haack, "Pragmatism," 778. The metaphor of carcasses brings to mind Ratzinger's description of the history of dogma as a "graveyard of heresies". Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 172.

¹⁹⁶ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.265 (1868). Peirce chooses the image of a cable in opposition to that of a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link, Newman also describes knowledge as a cable. Cf. *LD*, xxi 146.

¹⁹⁷ Haack, "Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community," 172.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Haack, "Fallibilism and Necessity," 47.

is fallibilist, meaning that one could always be wrong, but committal, meaning that one believes, and acts upon, her hypothesis¹⁹⁹.

These two angles of Peirce's account of knowledge, fallibilism and commitment, along with a recognition of the crucial role which doubt and error play in the pursuit of knowledge, are clearly discerned in Newman's life and works. Although he described a method of inquiry similar to Peirce's²⁰⁰, in the development of his own theory of knowledge, Newman was more concerned with the attainment of truth, than with the avoidance of error: "Newman did not in the first place see himself called to [...] refute errors. He sought rather to make people *realize* the truths that they were so fruitlessly professing"²⁰¹.

Traces of pragmatism can be discerned in Newman's emphasis on the realization of truth, which he explains in his *Idea* as a capacity of the human intellect which

discerns in lines and colours, or in tones, what is beautiful and what is not. It gives them a meaning, and invests them with an idea. It gathers up a succession of notes into the expression of a whole, and calls it a melody; it has a keen sensibility towards angles and curves, lights and shadows, tints and contours. It distinguishes between rule and exception, between accident and design. It assigns phenomena to a general law, qualities to a subject, acts to a principle, and effects to a cause²⁰².

This description of the path that the human mind follows in the process of inquiry is reminiscent of Peirce's call to "consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings"²⁰³. Although

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Haack, "Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community," 170.

²⁰⁰ Cf. *Dev*, 37–38; *Idea*, 473–78.

²⁰¹ Crosby, *The Personalism of Newman*, 34; Cf. Frey, "The Philosophical Personalism of Newman," 18. Frey comments that this is also seen in the preference Newman has for real over notional assent.

²⁰² *Idea*, 74–75.

²⁰³ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.402 (1878).

he expresses it differently, Newman understands the necessity and the benefits of inquiry and considers doubt as a positive step in the attainment of truth: “If we are intended for great ends, we are called to great hazards; and, whereas we are given absolute certainty in nothing, we must in all things choose between doubt and inactivity”²⁰⁴. Like Peirce and the pragmatists would do a few decades later, Newman accepts the lack of absolute certainty as an inherent condition of humanity, and prefers doubt over inactivity, or in Peirce’s mind, prefers grappling with doubt over blocking the way of inquiry²⁰⁵.

Newman understands the pursuit of truth, the method of inquiry, as a living process of continuous development in which different pieces of evidence are examined and found to strengthen, interpret, and correct each other, and thus approximate an idea to its perfect image. He believes that “antagonist principles correct each other”²⁰⁶ and concludes his description of inquiry by stating that it is the only way of learning, or teaching, a new science²⁰⁷. Offering his comments regarding a particular historical situation, he refers to the definition of a doctrine in two different moments at which diverse statements on the same subject were considered true; he skillfully integrates both by concluding that the second moment “trimmed the balance of doctrine by completing it”²⁰⁸, and offers this example to give confidence that this is how our understanding of doctrine and truth will continue developing in the future. This cumulative understanding of knowledge, which takes into account its intrinsic limitations, is widely present in Newman’s works²⁰⁹:

²⁰⁴ *US*, 215.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.170 (c.1897).

²⁰⁶ *LG*, 170.

²⁰⁷ Cf. *Dev*, 55.

²⁰⁸ *Diff*, ii 307.

²⁰⁹ Cf. *Dev*, 37; *Idea*, 474–76; *GA*, 192–93.

We are aware, while we do so, that they [words] are inadequate, but we have the alternative of doing so, or nothing at all. We can only remedy their insufficiency by confessing it [...] We can only set right one error of expression by another²¹⁰.

Although Newman deals with the themes of inquiry, doubt and error primarily in an *Essay on the Development of Doctrine* and in *The Idea of a University*, he speaks of doubt in several of his works and ascribes to it diverse meanings among which three can be identified²¹¹. The first meaning is the understanding of doubt in relation to doctrinal statements; the two statements that Newman gives as examples for this meaning are the existence of God and the divinity of Christ. Understanding doubt in this particular context, Newman states that “the Church does not allow her children to entertain any doubt of her teaching [because] faith is incompatible with doubt”²¹². This is not the context for the discussion that this dissertation presents.

A second meaning which Newman ascribes to doubt is that of a complete skepticism or suspension of all belief. In this regard, he says:

There are writers who seem to have gone far beyond [...] reasonable scepticism, laying down as a general proposition that we have no right in philosophy to make any assumption whatever, and that we ought to begin with a universal doubt [...] I would rather have to maintain that we ought to begin with believing everything that is offered to our acceptance, than that it is our duty to doubt of everything²¹³.

As it has been argued, Peirce shares this criticism of the method of doubt brought forth by Cartesian rationalism.

²¹⁰ *TP*, i 102.

²¹¹ Cameron points out that “the strict definition of terms is not part of Newman’s method”. Cameron, “The Night Battle,” 112.

²¹² *Mix*, 215.

²¹³ *GA*, 377.

Newman, like Peirce, maintains that genuine doubt arises within a settled body of beliefs. He writes in the *Grammar*: “Doubt itself is a positive state, and implies a definite habit of mind, and thereby necessarily involves a system of principles and doctrines all its own”²¹⁴. This understanding of doubt as a positive state is the third meaning which Newman ascribes to this term and is qualified by Dahm as Newman’s normal use of doubt in his epistemological works²¹⁵.

When Newman writes that “mere investigation [...] into the grounds of our [subject] is not to doubt; nor is it doubting to consider the arguments urged against it, when there is good reason for doing so”²¹⁶ he refers to doubt with the first meaning, that which challenges a doctrinal proposition. However, in the context of this dissertation and with the pragmatic understanding of doubt that has been developed, it is possible to identify what Newman describes as a positive state with Peirce’s genuine doubt which leads to inquiry. Bottone is of this mind when he writes that “in many sections of the *Grammar* Newman recognises that doubt carries an important value in the investigation”²¹⁷, and Ker writes that although “an investigation may lead to a loss of assent, [...] the sense of the possibility of this loss is not the same as doubt –nor does assent imply an intention never to change one’s mind, but instead the absence of any imagination of ever changing”²¹⁸.

Newman is aware of the liability of human reason²¹⁹, however, like Peirce, he believes that it is possible to advance towards truth. When Peirce talks about the process of inquiry he refers to the

²¹⁴ *GA*, 377.

²¹⁵ Cf. Dahm, “Newman and Fallibilism,” 137.

²¹⁶ *Mix*, 226–27.

²¹⁷ Bottone, “Newman and Wittgenstein,” 71.

²¹⁸ Ker, “Introduction to the *Grammar of Assent*,” xvi.

²¹⁹ As Peirce recognizes his contrite fallibilism, Newman writes in a moment of turmoil: “I had been deceived greatly once; how could I be sure that I was not deceived a second time? I then thought myself right; how was I to be certain that I was right now?” *Apo*, 318.

community of philosophers²²⁰; similarly, Newman speaks of educated minds:

In the case of educated minds, investigations into the argumentative proof of the things to which they have given their assent, is an obligation, or rather a necessity. Such a trial of their intellects is a law of their nature, like the growth of childhood into manhood [...] The intellectual assents, in which they have in like manner been instructed from the first, have to be tested, realized, and developed by the exercise of their mature judgment²²¹.

It is telling that Newman talks about inquiry as a trial of the intellect, as Peirce describes it as a struggle²²². Further, as Peirce upholds that “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth”²²³, Newman says that “we are obliged, under circumstances, to bear for a while with what we feel to be error, in consideration of the truth in which it is *eventually to issue*”²²⁴.

Newman and Peirce uphold the objectivity of truth, maintaining that it can be discovered through the way of inquiry. Moreover, both acknowledge that many detours will be encountered during this process and do not see them as a negative circumstance. Newman sees them as a condition for success stating that there is “no intellectual triumph of any truth [...] which has not been preceded by a full statement of what can be said against it”²²⁵ and Peirce talks of a “whole

²²⁰ Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.311 (1868).

²²¹ *GA*, 192–93.

²²² Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.374 (1877).

²²³ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.407 (1878).

²²⁴ *Idea*, 475. Emphasis added.

²²⁵ *Idea*, 475–76. Newman’s own way of dealing with controversy exemplifies this belief: “By entering into the objections, his position does not become more diffuse, but clearer. It gains in breadth, but also in sharpness [...] He knows that the objections will give him the opportunity to sharpen his convictions, and so he approaches them with sovereign calm”. Crosby, “Coincidentia Oppositorum,” 199.

cartload of beliefs”²²⁶ that might need to be discarded. In his *Apologia* Newman details the benefits of this process:

Many a man has ideas, which he hopes are true, and useful for his day, but he is not confident about them, and wishes to have them discussed. He is willing or rather would be thankful to give them up, if they can be proved to be erroneous or dangerous, and by means of controversy he obtains his end. He is answered, and he yields; or on the contrary he finds that he is considered safe²²⁷.

One of Newman’s major works is dedicated to the development or growth of truth. Although lengthy, the following paragraph where he describes the process of inquiry is worth quoting almost in its entirety as it brings together many of the elements previously discussed and offers Newman’s particular insights on the matter:

There will be a general agitation of thought, and an action of mind upon mind. There will be a time of confusion, when conceptions and misconceptions are in conflict, and it is uncertain whether anything is to come of the idea at all, or which view of it is to get the start of the others. New lights will be brought to bear upon the original statements of the doctrine put forward; judgments and aspects will accumulate [...] As time proceeds, one view will be modified or expanded by another, and then combined with a third [...] It will be surveyed too in its relation to other doctrines or facts, to other natural laws or established customs, to the varying circumstances of times and places, to other religions, politics, philosophies, as the case may be. How it stands affected towards other systems, how it affects them [...] will be gradually wrought out. It will be interrogated and criticized by enemies, and defended by well-wishers. The multitude of opinions formed concerning it in these respects and many others will be collected, compared, sorted, sifted, selected, rejected, gradually attached to it, separated from it, in the minds of individuals and of the community [...] Thus in time it will have grown [...] according to its

²²⁶ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.55 (c.1896).

²²⁷ *Apo*, 358.

capabilities: And this body of thought, thus laboriously gained, will after all be little more than the proper representative of one idea, being in substance what that idea meant from the first, its complete image as seen in a combination of diversified aspects, with the suggestions and corrections of many minds, and the illustration of many experiences²²⁸.

The pragmatic notion of inquiry holds errors as stepping stones towards the attainment of beliefs. Newman sees error from a similar perspective recognizing that “it is the very law of the human mind in its inquiry after and acquisition of truth to make its advances by a process which consists of many stages, and is circuitous”²²⁹. He introduces two analogies to explain this point: that of a person climbing a mountain and needing to turn once and again to find adequate paths and that of a ship that changes course in its way to the port²³⁰.

As he accepts fallibilism as an inherent human condition, Newman also believes that truth and error are often found together and that they are not an obstacle for truth: “Error having always some portion of truth in it, and the truth having a reality which error has not, we may expect, that when there is an honest purpose and fair talents, we shall somehow make our way forward, the error falling off from the mind, and the truth developing and occupying it”²³¹. These claims bring to mind the pragmatist notion of the self-corrective nature of scientific inquiry²³². Newman goes as far as to say that “in scientific researches error may be said, without a paradox, to be in some instances the way to truth, *and the only way*”²³³.

Developing his analogy of a ship at sea, Newman writes that “the passenger should not have embarked at all, if he did not reckon on the

²²⁸ *Dev*, 37–38.

²²⁹ *Idea*, 474.

²³⁰ Cf. *Idea*, 475.

²³¹ *GA*, 377.

²³² Cf. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 72.

²³³ *Idea*, 474. Emphasis added.

chance of a rough sea, of currents, of wind and tide, of rocks and shoals”²³⁴ and gives a recommendation to those who set out in the path to inquiry: “We should act more wisely in discountenancing altogether the exercise of Reason than in being alarmed and impatient under the suspense, delay, and anxiety”²³⁵. As can be seen, for Newman and Peirce the search for truth is not a straight path, nor is it always luminous, nevertheless it is ultimately fruitful.

4.5. Illative sense and abductive reasoning

The path and fruitfulness of the search for truth is further expressed in Newman’s and Peirce’s work through their respective development of the Illative Sense in the case of Newman and of Abductive Reasoning in the case of Peirce. A detailed study of these two theories shows affinity and complementarity, not only in their chosen approach to the individual’s acquirement of knowledge and the development of the sciences, but also in the language and images they use to establish their insights. Ward explains that the Illative Sense

has a close connection with pragmatism, [as Newman] emphasised the fact that all the thought that most matters for us in life relates to the concrete, and bears on our actions [...] The theory of the Illative Sense is an attempt to include [...] the *maximum* of actually existing and practically influential evidence (explicit and implicit), not to limit it to that portion only which is scientific in form. All this is in accord with Mr. Peirce’s and Professor James’s principle of pragmatism²³⁶.

In the introductory paragraphs of the ninth chapter of the *Grammar*, where Newman develops his theory of the Illative Sense, he argues that the perfection of the individual’s reasoning powers “is a

²³⁴ *Idea*, 475.

²³⁵ *Idea*, 475.

²³⁶ Ward, “Newman’s Philosophy,” 90.

living growth, not a mechanism; and its instruments are mental acts, not the formulas and contrivances of language”²³⁷ and qualifies this phenomenon as perplexing. Peirce, speaking of the same matter, calls it baffling: “For the methods of thinking that are living activities in men are not objects of reflective consciousness. They baffle the student, because they are a part of himself”²³⁸. The religious and scientific environment in which both lived and worked gave undue preponderance to logic as an overarching science, which they challenged and sought to overcome. In this regard, Newman wrote:

Logic [...] does not really prove; it enables us to join issue with others; it suggests ideas; it opens views; it maps out for us the lines of thought; it verifies negatively; it determines when differences of opinion are hopeless; and when and how far conclusions are probable; but for genuine proof in concrete matter we require an *organon* more delicate, versatile, and elastic than verbal argumentation²³⁹.

Coincidentally, both Newman and Peirce were well trained in logic through their acquaintance with the work of Whately. Newman began his fellowship at Oriel College, collaborating with Whately for whom he wrote several articles on the logic of Aristotle, which Whately later incorporated into his manual *Elements of Logic*²⁴⁰. From an early age, Peirce thoroughly studied this manual, which was Harvard’s core text for teaching logic at the time of his education²⁴¹; he narrates:

I remember picking up Whately’s *Logic* in my elder brother’s room, and asking him what logic was. I see myself, after he had told me, stretched on his carpet and poring over the book, and I must have past most of my time so during that week, since subsequent severe tests

²³⁷ GA, 350.

²³⁸ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 3.404 (1892).

²³⁹ GA, 271.

²⁴⁰ Cf. AW, 67.

²⁴¹ Cf. Charles Seibert, “Charles Peirce’s Reading of Richard Whately’s *Elements of Logic*,” *History & Philosophy of Logic* 26, no. 1 (2005): 7.

showed that I had then mastered Whately's work [...] From that day to this logic has been my passion²⁴².

Although they hold logic in high esteem, Newman and Peirce also recognize its limits and argue that the reasoning capacity entails much more than the direct application of logic's rules and principles. Both study induction and deduction as modes of inference, but cannot account for how individuals think with only these two operations of the mind: while deduction can draw the necessary and verifiable conclusions that follow if a hypothesis were true and induction can verify a hypothesis in a limited number of cases, a third kind of reasoning is necessary to introduce new ideas in science and "gather disparate details into a meaningful synthesis"²⁴³.

Peirce discusses this topic in his 1878 papers and, in his mature years calls this way of reasoning *Abduction*²⁴⁴: "Not merely a 'logical operation', but [...] rather, from a semiotic point of view, that spontaneous activity of the mind which makes the strange familiar"²⁴⁵. Abduction could be defined as "the process whereby hypotheses are generated in order to explain surprising facts"²⁴⁶.

Similarly, after analyzing deduction and induction in chapter 8 of the *Grammar* and calling attention to the fact that "it is the mind that reasons, and [...] controls its own reasonings, not any technical apparatus of words and propositions"²⁴⁷ Newman sets the stage for the introduction of the Illative Sense to which he had alluded thirty years prior in his *Oxford University Sermons*. Within the context of the

²⁴² Charles S. Peirce, "One, Two, Three" (MS 905, 1907), 12.

²⁴³ Gerard Magill, "Newman on Liberal Education and Moral Pluralism," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45, no. 1 (1992): 56.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Gonzalo Génova, *Charles S. Peirce: la lógica del descubrimiento*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico 45 (Universidad de Navarra, 1997), 56–57.

²⁴⁵ Jaime Nubiola, "Walker Percy y Charles S. Peirce: abducción y lenguaje," *Analogía Filosófica* 12, no. 1 (1998): 90. My translation.

²⁴⁶ Nubiola, "Abduction or the Logic of Surprise," 118.

²⁴⁷ *GA*, 353.

modes of inference, the Illative Sense can be considered as “a perfecting touch in the individual’s inferential capacity”²⁴⁸.

After an insightful exposition of Newman’s and Peirce’s contributions to the philosophy of religion, Moore states that

Newman and Peirce [...] identify a new method of reasoning that would allow man to make assertions that are neither induced nor deduced [...] In Abduction and Illative Sense, Newman and Peirce go beyond the limits of traditional logic to achieve a way of knowing practical and concrete matters. Such profound similarities between two such monumental thinkers requires academic attention²⁴⁹.

This dissertation as a whole, and particularly this section, aims to provide some attention to this topic.

As operations of the mind, deduction, induction and abduction are not necessarily independent from each other, some authors argue that the mature Peirce considers the three of them as stages in a single inquiry process²⁵⁰. Within this process, the role of abduction is to provide the inquirer with a hypothesis to be tested through induction, and if proven false, providing further hypotheses, until one of them is verified. “Abduction is an essential element of self-corrective science which recursively moves back and forth between observations and generalizations”²⁵¹ until a hypothesis can satisfactorily explain the available evidence. In Peirce’s words: “All that makes knowledge applicable comes to us via Abduction [...] Not the smallest advance can be made in knowledge beyond the stage of vacant staring, without making an abduction at every step”²⁵².

²⁴⁸ Rosario Athié, *El asentimiento en J. H. Newman*, Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico 141 (Universidad de Navarra, 2001), 75. My translation.

²⁴⁹ Moore, “Newman and Peirce,” 55.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Kuang Fann, *Peirce’s Theory of Abduction* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 10.

²⁵¹ Ilkka Niiniluoto, *Truth-Seeking by Abduction* (Switzerland: Springer, 2018), 15.

²⁵² Peirce, *Historical Perspectives*, 2:899–900 (1901).

Newman explains that the Illative Sense operates similarly, having “its function in the beginning, middle, and end of all verbal discussion and inquiry, and in every step of the process [...] and [attending] upon the whole course of thought from antecedents to consequents, with a minute diligence and unwearied presence”²⁵³. Newman’s portrayal of the Illative Sense and Peirce’s portrayal of Abduction shows how individuals reason, “either in the state of nature or as strengthened by habit”²⁵⁴. Their theory of knowledge is an expression of their lived experience: Newman’s as a pastor, highly engaged in the intellectual debates of his time and Peirce’s as an experimental researcher in an international community of scientists²⁵⁵.

Newman identifies the Illative Sense as that “power of judging and concluding, when in its perfection”²⁵⁶. A broader definition could be: “A function of the intellect that enables us to integrate and evaluate all the evidence, together with the conclusions of our inferences, with respect to the likelihood of a particular conclusion being true”²⁵⁷. In like manner, having as a point of departure the available evidence and as a destination truth, Peirce writes that “Abduction consists in studying facts and devising a theory to explain them”²⁵⁸ and understands it to be an instinctive ability:

A primary hypothesis underlying all abduction [is] that the human mind is akin to the truth in the sense that in a finite number of guesses it will light upon the correct hypothesis [...] For the existence of a natural instinct for truth is, after all, the sheet-anchor of science²⁵⁹.

²⁵³ GA, 361.

²⁵⁴ Boekraad, *The Personal Conquest of Truth*, 302.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Cronin, “Newman’s Theory of Knowledge,” xv; Nubiola, “Abduction or the Logic of Surprise,” 119.

²⁵⁶ GA, 353.

²⁵⁷ Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 124.

²⁵⁸ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.145 (1903).

²⁵⁹ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 7.220 (c.1901).

In this context, it is important to note that Peirce “is a realist in the sense that for him explanatory hypothesis are candidates for truth [...] This attempt to find new truths is clearly the main function of Peirce’s abduction”²⁶⁰. It could be said that truth is the beacon that guides Abduction and brings inquiry to safe port.

Peirce’s understanding of Abduction as an instinctive ability can be related to Newman’s explanation of the Illative Sense as an individual’s natural inheritance²⁶¹. In order to explain that the Illative Sense is present in all persons from their birth, Newman makes a parallel between this faculty and good sense, common sense and the sense of beauty, which he understands as innate but undeveloped faculties every person possesses. Ker explains that “the use of the word sense, [...] is justified by the need to emphasize the element of the personal in the living intellect for our conclusions in informal reasoning are judgements arrived at [...] by our own individual perception of the truth in question”²⁶².

Newman calls the Illative Sense “a living *organon*, [...] a personal gift, and not a mere method or calculus”²⁶³ and explains that it “exists in varying degrees of perfection in each individual according to their personal experience and training”²⁶⁴, clarifying that its development is not a mechanical matter, but depends on the individual’s personal effort²⁶⁵.

Similarly, Peirce’s “guessing instinct is a result of the development of our animal instincts and of the process of rational adaptation to our environment [...] It could also be called

²⁶⁰ Niiniluoto, *Truth-Seeking by Abduction*, 11.

²⁶¹ Cf. *GA*, 349.

²⁶² Ker, “Introduction to the *Grammar of Assent*,” lxvi.

²⁶³ *GA*, 316.

²⁶⁴ Richardson, *Newman’s Approach to Knowledge*, 130.

²⁶⁵ Cf. *GA*, 349.

*creativity*²⁶⁶, an innate but undeveloped faculty. Newman sees this reality as thoroughly positive, stating that it is the individual's gift "to be the creator of his own sufficiency; and to be emphatically self-made. This is the law of his being, which he cannot escape; and whatever is involved in that law he is bound, or rather he is carried on, to fulfil"²⁶⁷. Through creative inquiry, the person not only perfects herself but enriches the world around her; Peirce's understanding is that "creativity resides in the possibility of growth inherent to human beings [...] and their possibility of learning, this is, of going beyond what is given to them"²⁶⁸; thus he sees creativity not only as a personal talent but a responsibility.

In Newman's and Peirce's understanding, the Illative Sense and Abductive Reasoning are innate faculties that must be intentionally developed if they are to reach their perfection. Their development is, in Newman's words, "necessarily a matter of training"²⁶⁹, although their exercise is not necessarily a conscious act. Likewise, Peirce argues that "the methods of thinking that are living activities in men are not objects of reflective consciousness"²⁷⁰.

In this regard, Newman gives particular attention to the operations of the mind of which the individual is not aware. In his 1840 sermon "Implicit and Explicit Reason" Newman makes an insightful distinction between the process of reasoning in itself and the person's self-awareness of that process. The former, the process of reasoning in itself or implicit reason, is what Newman came to identify three decades later as the Illative Sense:

²⁶⁶ Barrena and Nubiola, "Abduction: The Logic of Creativity," 194.

²⁶⁷ *GA*, 349.

²⁶⁸ Sara Barrena, "La creatividad en Charles S. Peirce," in *Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914): Un pensador para el siglo XXI* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 2013), 117. My translation.

²⁶⁹ *Idea*, 151.

²⁷⁰ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 3.404 (1892).

Here, then, are two processes, distinct from each other, the original process of reasoning, and next, the process of investigating our reasonings. All men reason, for to reason is nothing more than to gain truth from former truth [...] but all men do not reflect upon their own reasonings, much less reflect truly and accurately [...] In other words, all men have a reason, but not all men can give a reason. We may denote, then, these two exercises [...] as Implicit Reason and Explicit Reason [...] The process of reasoning is complete in itself and independent. The analysis is but an account of it; it does not make the conclusion correct; it does not make the inference rational²⁷¹.

Throughout his writings, Newman uses a few synonyms to refer to the Illative Sense: he calls it a reasoning faculty as exercised by well-prepared minds, an inductive sense and even philosophy²⁷². Similarly, Peirce calls Abductive Reasoning a fair guess, a hypothesis, a presumption or retroduction²⁷³. What remains a constant is their understanding of a foundational faculty of the mind which is not only at play in professional affairs but is particularly useful for ordinary activities. Barrena and Nubiola discuss Peirce's abduction in the context of scientific research and artistic development²⁷⁴, while Athié explores four settings Newman gives for the use of the Illative Sense: moral problems, professional endeavors, fine arts and personal ventures²⁷⁵.

An excerpt from Newman's *University Sermons* presents a full description of what he understands to be the exercise of reason which is compatible with Peirce's notion of Abduction:

Reason, according to the simplest view of it, is the faculty of gaining knowledge without direct perception, or of ascertaining one thing by

²⁷¹ *US*, 258–59.

²⁷² Cf. *GA*, 361; *LD*, xxx 148; *Idea*, 125.

²⁷³ Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 2.623 (1878), 2.625 (1878), 6.469 (1908).

²⁷⁴ Cf. Barrena and Nubiola, "Abduction: The Logic of Creativity," 194–202.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Athié, *El asentimiento en J. H. Newman*, 76–77.

means of another. In this way it is able, from small beginnings, to create to itself a world of ideas, which do or do not correspond to the things themselves for which they stand, or are true or not, according as it is exercised soundly or otherwise. *One fact may suffice for a whole theory; one principle may create and sustain a system; one minute token is a clue to a large discovery.* The mind ranges to and fro, and spreads out, and advances forward with a quickness which has become a proverb, and a subtlety and versatility which baffle investigation. It passes on from point to point, gaining one by some indication; another on a probability; then availing itself of an association; then falling back on some received law; next seizing on testimony; then committing itself to some popular impression, or some inward instinct, or some obscure memory [...] And such mainly is the way in which all men, gifted or not gifted, commonly reason, –not by rule, but by an inward faculty. Reasoning, then, or the exercise of Reason, is a living spontaneous energy within us, not an art²⁷⁶.

“One minute token is a clue to a large discovery”, this minute token can be easily identified with Peirce’s notion of Abduction. Two further examples that Newman and Peirce relate serve as useful illustrations of the correspondence of their thought on these topics. Newman alludes to how it is known that Great Britain is an island, pointing out that this fact does not rest on logical proof but in an assemblage of data of diverse epistemic value: natural inferences, informal inferences and formal inferences. These support each other and through their combination provide the conditions required for assent:

We are all absolutely certain, beyond the possibility of doubt, that Great Britain is an island. We give to that proposition our deliberate and unconditional adhesion [...] Our reasons for believing that we are circumnavigable are such as these: first, we have been so taught in our childhood, and it is so in all the maps; next, we have never heard it contradicted or questioned; on the contrary, every one whom we have

²⁷⁶ *US*, 256–57. Emphasis added.

heard speak on the subject of Great Britain, every book we have read, invariably took it for granted [...] I am not at all insinuating that we are not rational in our certitude; I only mean that we cannot analyze a proof satisfactorily²⁷⁷.

As he continues his commentary on this example, Newman explains that even if one were to obtain logical proof for this belief, it would not make one more certain of the fact that Great Britain is an island than one already was employing the Illative Sense.

Peirce, for his part, exemplifies Abductive Reasoning with the following story:

I once landed in a seaport in a Turkish province; and, as I was walking up to the house which I was to visit, I met a man upon horseback, surrounded by four horsemen holding a canopy over his head. As the governor of the province was the only personage I could think of who would be so greatly honored, I inferred this was he. This was a hypothesis²⁷⁸.

The hypothesis, or Abduction, that Peirce makes in this narrative is not a necessary conclusion, but a merely probable one. It is meant to explain an observed phenomenon and suggest a strategy for further inquiry: “what experiments must be performed, in which direction it is necessary to look”²⁷⁹. As these examples suggest, the Illative Sense aids the individual in the formulation of practical knowledge, which brings forth the possibility for theorizing through Abductive Reasoning²⁸⁰.

²⁷⁷ GA, 294–96. Ker explains that “it is rather the cumulation of probabilities, which cannot be reduced to a syllogism, which leads to certainty in the concrete”. Ker, “Introduction to the *Grammar of Assent*,” xviii.

²⁷⁸ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 2.625 (1878).

²⁷⁹ Nubiola, “Abduction or the Logic of Surprise,” 119.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Jeff Gold, “Scholarly Practice Is HRD Research,” in *Handbook of Research Methods on Human Resource Development* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), 56. This is one of the most relevant sources of scientific literature in which the author discusses the Illative Sense and Abductive Reasoning.

In his discussion on the existence of the Illative Sense, Newman points to the teleological nature of the universe, which gives evidence to certain order and finality in its beings. Through analogy, he explains that the person possesses a faculty which enables her to know truth in concrete realities, as *phronesis* allows her to make concrete decisions:

There is a faculty in the mind which [...] when properly cultivated and used, answers to Aristotle's *phronesis* [practical wisdom], its province being, not virtue, but the '*Inquisitio veri*', which decides for us, beyond any technical rules, when, how, etc. to pass from inference to assent, and when and under what circumstances etc. etc. not²⁸¹.

Newman recognizes that although “an ethical system may supply laws, general rules, guiding principles, a number of examples, suggestions, landmarks, limitations, cautions, distinctions, solutions of critical or anxious difficulties”²⁸² these are not enough to guide decisions in particular matters, and *phronesis* is needed to navigate daily life. Likewise, deductive reasoning is not enough to reveal truth in concrete realities, and the Illative Sense acts as the “mind's power of spontaneously reasoning and concluding”²⁸³ which “enables people to form beliefs reliably without awareness of how such beliefs, in fact, are justified”²⁸⁴.

For Peirce, Abduction's “only justification is that if we are ever to understand things at all, it must be in that way”²⁸⁵, meaning that reality can only be understood through the study of facts and the formulation of hypothesis to justify them. He believes that without

²⁸¹ *LD*, xxix 115.

²⁸² *GA*, 354.

²⁸³ Ward, “Newman's Philosophy,” 82.

²⁸⁴ Frederick Aquino, “Externalism and Internalism: A Newmanian Matter of Proper Fit,” *The Heythrop Journal* 51, no. 6 (2010): 1028.

²⁸⁵ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.145 (1903).

Abductive Reasoning it would be impossible to explain how knowledge comes to be²⁸⁶.

Further, as Newman points to the teleological nature of the universe in his justification of the Illative Sense, Peirce points to “*illumine naturale* –borrowing the expression from Galileo– in order to explain this surprising ability to guess the right answer from a great variety of possibilities”²⁸⁷. He was mesmerized by the individual’s ability to choose correctly between many hypothesis more often than not²⁸⁸. In Peirce’s words “there is a reason, an interpretation, a logic, in the course of scientific advance, and this indisputably proves to him who has perceptions of rational or significant relations, that man’s mind must have been attuned to the truth of things in order to discover what he has discovered; it is the very bedrock of logical truth”²⁸⁹. For Peirce, the teleological nature of Abduction acts as a guarantor of its truth.

Newman, for his part, writes that the structure of the universe speaks of the Creator who made it, therefore inquiry will lead us to matter for assent, this is, to truth:

It is He who teaches us all knowledge; and the way by which we acquire it is His way. He varies that way according to the subject-matter; but whether He has set before us in our particular pursuit the way of observation or of experiment, of speculation or of research, of demonstration or of probability, whether we are inquiring into the system of the universe, or into the elements of matter and of life, or into the history of human society and past times, if we take the way proper to our subject-matter [we] shall find, besides abundant matter for mere opinion, the materials in due measure of proof and assent²⁹⁰.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 2.753 (1883), 5.603 (1903).

²⁸⁷ Barrena and Nubiola, “Abduction: The Logic of Creativity,” 193.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Barrena and Nubiola, “Abduction: The Logic of Creativity,” 192–93.

²⁸⁹ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 6.476 (1908).

²⁹⁰ *GA*, 351–52.

Peirce's notion of Abduction also led him to acknowledge a Creator; moreover, Abduction was for him a useful means to point towards God's existence as he "felt sure that [...] if only the scientist would let the free play of imagination take over at some point in the abductive process, the thoughts of the mind would then inevitably be lifted to God"²⁹¹. Both Newman and Peirce, accept the existence of God not by looking for strict rational justifications as some fideists did in their times, but rather by receiving the world as it was, allowing themselves to be surprised and challenged by the reality it presents in all its details and beauty.

Following this line of thought, it is useful to repeat that Peirce understands Abduction as "studying facts and devising a theory to explain them"²⁹² which resembles Newman's sanction of the Illative Sense which he introduced with these words: "We are in a world of facts, and we use them; for there is nothing else to use. We do not quarrel with them, but we take them as they are, and avail ourselves of what they can do for us"²⁹³. These facts are the threads or fibers which sustain knowledge. In order to explain the reasoning process, both Newman and Peirce use a very similar metaphor; Newman chooses that of a cord and Peirce that of a cable, and both do so for almost identical reasons.

In 1864 Newman explains in a letter to John Walker (1800-1873), who had written him inquiring about his views on probability, that the best illustration of his views is

that of a *cable*, which is made up of a number of separate threads, each feeble, yet together as sufficient as an iron rod. An iron rod represents mathematical or strict demonstration; a cable represents [...] an

²⁹¹ Oakes, "Discovering the American Aristotle," 33.

²⁹² Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.145 (1903).

²⁹³ *GA*, 346.

assemblage of probabilities, separately insufficient for certainty, but, when put together, irrefragable²⁹⁴.

Four years later, in 1868, Peirce articulates his metaphor in very similar words to Newman's:

Philosophy ought to imitate the successful sciences in its methods, so far as to proceed only from tangible premises which can be subjected to careful scrutiny, and to trust rather to the multitude and variety of its arguments than to the conclusiveness of any one. Its reasoning should not form a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link, but a cable whose fibers may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected²⁹⁵.

Thagard and Beam explain that the cord and cable metaphors, while limited as all metaphors are, serve as fruitful antidotes to the analogies which view knowledge as a linked chain and have dominated much of the epistemology since Descartes. These images show that what matters is not the strength of a particular proposition, but its connection to the others: in the same way that the number and interconnection of fibers is what makes a cable strong, the number and interconnection of beliefs is what gives validity to the reasoning process²⁹⁶. Moreover, "at a certain point there is a qualitative change. The indications corroborate each other and produce something greater than themselves"²⁹⁷.

Although Newman was not exposed to Peirce's work, Peirce did read Newman's. He paid special attention to the *Grammar of Assent*, which he recommends should be present in any scientist's collection²⁹⁸. Within the entries that Peirce prepared for the *Century*

²⁹⁴ *LD*, xxi 146.

²⁹⁵ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.265 (1868).

²⁹⁶ Cf. Paul Thagard and Craig Beam, "Epistemological Metaphors and the Nature of Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy* 35, no. 4 (2004): 507–08.

²⁹⁷ Charles Dessain, *John Henry Newman* (London: Nelson, 1966), 158.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Charles S. Peirce, "Miscellaneous Fragments" (MS 1573); Nubiola, "Newman y Peirce."

Dictionary, he quotes Newman's *Grammar* sixty-four times, which suggests he had "a through familiarity with his thought and particularly a remarkable admiration for the precision in his use of English terms"²⁹⁹. Especially relevant to this discussion is Peirce's entry for the term "Illative"; as its third meaning he writes: "Illative sense, a name given by J. H. Newman to that faculty of the human mind whereby it forms a final judgment upon the validity of an inference"³⁰⁰.

Both Newman and Peirce, through their notions of the Illative Sense and Abductive Reasoning, give credibility to the varied sparks, "minute tokens" in Newman's words and "fair guesses" in Peirce's, that initiate the process of discovery and the development of knowledge; it must be noted that in the Peircean sense Abduction explains not only the selection of the right hypothesis, but also its generation³⁰¹. Further, both explain that certitude does not necessarily follow from these modes of inference, but the conclusions reached must be tested through induction and presented to the wider community as it has been discussed in section 4.3.

Newman's Illative Sense and Peirce's Abductive Reasoning are different concepts, developed by men formed in different traditions of thought across the Atlantic. However, their affinity, along with the affinity in other discussed themes, serves as a testimony to the truth of their philosophical heritage and an aid to place Newman as an illustrious forerunner of pragmatism.

²⁹⁹ Nubiola, "Newman y Peirce." My translation.

³⁰⁰ *The Century Dictionary* (New York: The Century Company, 1889–91), 4:2986.

³⁰¹ Cf. Barrena and Nubiola, "Abduction: The Logic of Creativity," 201.

Conclusion: J. H. Newman as a forerunner of pragmatism

In order to establish an adequate framework for the discussion on Newman as a forerunner of pragmatism, a specific understanding of this philosophical tradition must be identified. In non-specialized and specialized circles alike, the perception of pragmatism is widely diverse. In its colloquial sense, a pragmatic outlook can be predicated as a compliment for a person who achieves results, or as a criticism for one who lacks principles. In an academic setting, among philosophers who are well acquainted with the history of philosophy but not with the pragmatic tradition in particular, a possible shortfall entails reducing pragmatism to a utilitarian attitude:

No less dangerous is *pragmatism*, an attitude of mind which, in making its choices, precludes theoretical considerations or judgements based on ethical principles. The practical consequences of this mode of thinking are significant. In particular there is growing support for a concept of democracy which is not grounded upon any reference to unchanging values: Whether or not a line of action is admissible is decided by the vote of a parliamentary majority [...] Anthropology itself is severely compromised by a one-dimensional vision of the human being, a vision which excludes the great ethical dilemmas and the existential analyses of the meaning of suffering and sacrifice, of life and death¹.

While these approaches to pragmatism are valid, the conception held in this dissertation is that of Charles S. Peirce, who argued that philosophy could provide a service to humanity by examining ideas in terms of the effects they have upon human behavior. By focusing on conceivable effects, Peirce does not deny the objectivity of truth, neither does he examine it from a theoretical point of view. Precisely because Peirce upholds that truth exists, and individuals can come to

¹ John Paul II, "Fides et Ratio," 89.

its knowledge, he discusses the scientific method as an effective method of inquiry that facilitates communication and convergence among persons. In defining truth as “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate”², Peirce does not equate truth with consensus, rather identifies it with the existing objective reality that will be discovered through inquiry when carried out by a community of experts who build upon the findings of those who preceded them³.

Peirce’s pragmatism was popularized and developed in a new direction by William James. From their writings, two different strands of pragmatism can be discerned, with as many nuances as philosophers that have taken on this tradition in the past 150 years. Without intentionally excluding any philosopher that subscribes to pragmatism, this dissertation favors its Peircean account, which in contemporary times has been developed by Hilary Putnam, Susan Haack and Cheryl Misak. In her 2007 book *New Pragmatists*, Misak identifies three commitments which pragmatists tend to share: a historical attitude towards objectivity, a fallibilist epistemology grounded in anti-foundationalism and a commitment to keeping philosophy rooted in real-life experience⁴.

Considering that the earliest discussion made of Newman’s philosophy identified traces of pragmatism amidst his writings⁵, that several contemporary authors have called for a further study of Newman’s philosophy and that there is an immediate similarity between his Illative Sense and Peirce’s Abductive Reasoning, chapters 3 and 4 have studied the affinities between Newman and pragmatism

² Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.407 (1878).

³ Cf. Haack, “Five Answers on Pragmatism,” 4.

⁴ Cf. Misak, “Introduction,” 2–4.

⁵ Cf. Ward, “Newman’s Philosophy,” 74.

yielding several positive results which are summarized in this concluding section.

At the beginning of this study, Newman was placed in dialogue with those claims that pragmatists tend to share. Regarding a historical attitude towards objectivity and truthfulness when Newman deals with the development of ideas in general, he writes that “there is no one aspect deep enough to exhaust the contents of a real idea, no one term or proposition which will serve to define it”⁶. He continues his argument by explaining that the multiplicity of angles under which an idea is presented, the variety of opinions it causes and, moreover, its own change over time provide evidence to its truthfulness, not to the contrary.

In reference to the life of a philosophical idea, Newman writes that “its vital element needs disengaging from what is foreign and temporary, [...] dangers and hopes appear in new relations; and old principles reappear under new forms. *It changes with them in order to remain the same*”⁷. Newman understands that the possibility of historically situating an idea is necessary to uphold its truthfulness. This principle of the historicity of ideas was essential for him; only once he was able to work out an intellectual explanation of how this works in the history of dogma was he able to make the most consequential decision of his life: ask to be received into the Roman Catholic Church.

The second commitment of pragmatists in Misak’s cast, fallibilism, often raises questions among Newman’s scholars. To show Newman’s affinity with this posture, it is necessary to note that in the context of this argumentation, fallibilism is understood as a doctrine regarding the person as a cognitive agent, not a doctrine regarding truth

⁶ *Dev*, 35.

⁷ *Dev*, 40. Emphasis added.

as an objective reality. That is, fallibilism is predicated in relation to the subject of knowledge, not the object⁸.

A second helpful clarification regards the meaning that Newman gives to doubt and error, which is different depending on the context in which he deals with these issues. The first context refers to doctrinal statements, where fallibilism is inadmissible for Newman⁹; the second leads to complete skepticism, which Newman also rejects¹⁰. However, in the *Grammar of Assent*, after dealing with Descartes' universal skepticism, he defines a third context: "Doubt itself is a positive state, and implies a definite habit of mind"¹¹. In this passage, Newman distinguishes between an all-encompassing skepticism and specific well-founded questions. It is in this habit of the mind where fallibilism finds a place in Newman's theory of knowledge, as he recognizes that "it is the very law of the human mind in its inquiry after and acquisition of truth to make its advances by a process which consists of many stages, and is circuitous"¹².

Pragmatic fallibilism implies that, as the mind advances in the process of acquiring truth, any but not all of our beliefs can be questioned; it is an intermediate epistemological position between dogmatism and skepticism¹³. Newman recognizes the benefits of this approach: "If we are intended for great ends, we are called to great hazards; and, whereas we are given absolute certainty in nothing, we must in all things choose between doubt and inactivity"¹⁴. He embraces the lack of absolute certainty as an inherent condition of humanity and, in preferring doubt over inactivity, accepts a fallibilist position.

⁸ Cf. Haack, "Fallibilism and Necessity," 54.

⁹ Cf. *Mix*, 215.

¹⁰ Cf. *GA*, 377.

¹¹ *GA*, 377.

¹² *Idea*, 474.

¹³ Cf. Haack, "Fallibilism and Necessity," 47.

¹⁴ *US*, 215.

The commitment to keep philosophy rooted in real-life experience is easily discerned in Newman's philosophical endeavors. Unlike the empiricists that preceded him, he did not base his insights on theories, but rather, he articulated them from the lives of those with whom he walked throughout his years. Newman had a profound knowledge of the human mind and heart, which he matured through decades of study and ministry, reflecting upon the questions and problems of his contemporaries. His philosophical project was not an isolated endeavor, but one carried out in dialogue with others and with reality itself, as "facts were all in all to him, the touchstone of all his reasonings; in the midst of his highest sights of speculation he kept his eye fixed upon the busy scene of life"¹⁵. He used that which reality presented to him and tried to make sense of it discerning with his contemporaries a possible way to grow closer to the truth through every happening.

Having established Newman's concurrence with the three commitments that pragmatist philosophers tend to share, five further affinities between Newman and pragmatism were developed in chapter 4. It must be noted that the harmony between Newman's philosophy and some pragmatic theses does not imply that Newman subscribes to all the claims held by pragmatists (this could not even be said of Peirce), however, it does allow to place him within the pragmatic tradition, specifically as its forerunner, as he preceded Peirce by half a century. In this conclusive section, very succinct evidence that Newman embraces the identified theses will be presented. For a broader discussion on how these are claims held by pragmatism, or a more nuanced exposition of Newman's thought, chapter 4 should be consulted.

The first affinity between Newman and pragmatism comes forth from the fact that both attempt to overcome Cartesian rationalism by

¹⁵ Toohey, "The Grammar of Assent," 467.

subscribing to a realist epistemology which not only respects but promotes the method of inquiry of the natural sciences. Peirce argues that “there are Real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them [...] we can ascertain by reasoning how things really and truly are; and any man, if he have sufficient experience and he reason enough about it, will be lead to the one True conclusion”¹⁶. Similarly, Newman acknowledges the existence of reality as independent of the mind: “We are surrounded by beings which exist quite independently of us, –exist whether we exist, or cease to exist, whether we have cognizance of them or no”¹⁷. These texts show that both Newman and Peirce, although they did not develop a vast metaphysical treatise, had a basic realist approach to the external world.

Moreover, Newman upholds the possibility of the intellect to apprehend reality through notional and real assent, in which the knowledge of that which is concrete and singular provides richness to conceptual knowledge. He conceives his philosophy of mind “not as the faculty of pure ideas, nor of ideas abstracted from sense data, but [...] as the power of knowing existent beings”¹⁸. Further, in deep consonance with pragmatism, Newman insists on the need to realize our ideas into concrete realities¹⁹: “We shall never have done beginning, if we determine to begin with proof [...] Life is for action”²⁰. Along with pragmatism, Newman focuses his philosophy on the individual who knows and acts, and not only transforms reality, but is transformed by it.

A second affinity between Newman and pragmatism is their shared concern for the unity of knowledge and the way they uphold it:

¹⁶ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.384 (1877).

¹⁷ *US*, 205.

¹⁸ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 75.

¹⁹ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 11.

²⁰ *GA*, 95.

both place the human subject who grows in knowledge, and thus advances science, at the center of their considerations and ground their theories of knowledge in the individual's natural inclination towards unity. Peirce writes that "reasonableness consists in association, assimilation, generalization, the bringing of items together into an organic whole"²¹, a fragment which resembles Newman's description: "We know, not by a direct and simple vision, not at a glance, but [...] by the comparison, the combination, the mutual correction, the continual adaptation, of many partial notions"²².

Furthermore, Newman and Peirce pay much attention to the relations that the sciences hold among themselves, considering that they form one whole and only when studied from this context can they bring the individual closer to the truth. As Peirce develops the metaphor of the tree of knowledge in several sketches, Newman speaks of a circle of universal sciences and dedicates three of his nine discourses on university education to present a "comprehensive view of truth in all its branches, of the relations of science to science, of their mutual bearings, and their respective values"²³.

The search for truth as a communal pursuit through time is a third affinity between Newman and pragmatism. Pragmatist thinkers, following Peirce, maintain that the search for truth is not an individualistic nor isolated endeavor, but can only be effective in as much as it is the pursuit of a community of inquirers extended through time and space. In this regard, Peirce writes: "We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the community of philosophers"²⁴.

²¹ Peirce, "Review of Clark University," 621.

²² *Idea*, 151.

²³ *Idea*, 103.

²⁴ Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.265 (1868).

Newman was of the same opinion: “All greater matters are carried on and perfected by a succession of individual minds”²⁵.

Within the particular instances where Newman lived or developed this principle, one can look to the Oxford Movement or his *Idea of a University*. In these concrete realities, Newman placed great emphasis on the efficacy of individuals working together, balancing each other’s views and contributing, from their individual talents, to a common pursuit as he believed that “truth is wrought out by many minds, working together freely”²⁶. He identifies two outcomes of a patient and collegial approach to the search for truth. First, he realizes that the input of different persons through time trims and balances beliefs so they can reach their full potential, which is never actually settled. Second, he believes that through time and cooperation, ideas are strengthened, and their power of attraction grows²⁷.

Within this pursuit for truth, Newman and the pragmatists recognize the crucial role that doubt and error play, and see them, not as obstacles, but as building blocks in the edifice of knowledge. Pragmatism offers an appealing compromise between the individual’s cognitive limitations and his aspirations by acknowledging the person’s liability to error and, at the same time, upholding the prospect of attaining genuine knowledge and truth through the way of inquiry²⁸.

Newman, as well, believes that truth can only be discovered through a laborious and circuitous process of inquiry, which he describes as follows:

There will be a general agitation of thought, and an action of mind upon mind. There will be a time of confusion, when conceptions and misconceptions are in conflict [...] As time proceeds, one view will be

²⁵ *Idea*, 312.

²⁶ *LD*, xx 426.

²⁷ Cf. *Diff*, ii 306–07.

²⁸ Cf. Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” 174.

modified or expanded by another, and then combined with a third [...] Thus in time it will have grown [...] according to its capabilities [...] its complete image as seen in a combination of diversified aspects, with the suggestions and corrections of many minds, and the illustration of many experiences²⁹.

This text shows the communal understanding that Newman held regarding the acquirement of truth, and its constant perfecting through time. In a later text, he explicitly states that “in scientific researches error may be said, without a paradox, to be in some instances the way to truth, and the only way”³⁰.

The fifth and final theme studied in chapter 4 is the clear affinity between Newman’s Illative Sense and Peirce’s Abductive Reasoning. Although Newman and Peirce hold logic in high esteem, they recognize its limits and maintain that the reasoning capacity of the individual entails much more than the direct application of the rules of logic. They argue that induction and deduction are not sufficient tools to account for how individuals actually reason, thus they identify a third method of inference for practical and concrete matters which allows the individual to make assertions that are neither induced nor deduced from the given data. Newman calls it Illative Sense and Peirce, Abduction.

Newman presents the Illative Sense as an individual’s natural inheritance, which nevertheless needs to be developed with intentionality if it is to function correctly; in a similar manner, Peirce conceives Abduction as an instinctive ability, also in need of training³¹. Newman and Peirce describe this faculty in similar terms and

²⁹ *Dev*, 37–38.

³⁰ *Idea*, 474.

³¹ Cf. *GA*, 349; Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 3.404 (1892).

acknowledge that it shows that the person's mind is, in words of Peirce, "attuned to the truth of things"³².

When Newman describes the process of reasoning in his *University Sermons*, he explains that "one fact may suffice for a whole theory; one principle may create and sustain a system; one minute token is a clue to a large discovery [...] Reasoning, then, or the exercise of Reason, is a living spontaneous energy within us"³³. This minute token that Newman mentions can easily be identified with Peirce's notion of Abduction, which is intended to provide a plausible hypothesis for a surprising observation. Although this hypothesis is often right, both Newman and Peirce acknowledge that certitude does not follow from these modes of inference, and their conclusions but must be tested by the wider community and framed within the unity of knowledge.

In conclusion, Newman and the classical pragmatists paid recourse to Aristotelian philosophy in order to overcome the modern rationalism that was dominant in the philosophical scene at their time, both were influenced by empiricism but found it lacking, and both presented a fresh alternative. How Newman shares the core commitments that pragmatists uphold, along with these affinities between his philosophical project and pragmatism, show enough kinship to refer to him as a forerunner of pragmatism. Even though Newman did not associate himself with any particular philosopher during his lifetime, and did not seek to form a school or tradition like Peirce did, both left many philosophical insights scattered throughout their works. Although un-systematic, their philosophical principles have a strong internal coherence and provide avenues for the person to grow in her self-understanding and the understanding of the world

³² Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 6.476 (1908). Newman writes that it has "truth for its direct object". *SE*, 97.

³³ *US*, 256–57.

around her. Their coherence shines forth in a clearer way when considered side by side, as it has been done in these two chapters.

A reductionist or superficial understanding of pragmatism, along with Newman's Catholic faith, creates some resistance to associate him with this philosophical tradition as his defense of dogma can be understood to be incompatible with Peirce's account of truth. I argue that the points of convergence are more than sufficient for a fruitful dialogue that leads to a clearer understanding of pragmatism and serves as a foil for an incisive exploration of Newman's philosophical principles.

Maintaining so does not imply that there are not points of divergence nor excludes the possibility of studying Newman's philosophy in relation to other schools of thought; rather, it adds one more avenue of research and provides Newman's insights with a wider reach. Although it was never his intention to be considered a forerunner of pragmatism (the term was coined seventeen years after his death), studying Newman's philosophy in the context of pragmatism can prove very fruitful as this discussion has shown.

PART III.
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN'S
COMMITMENT TO TRUTH

5. Newman's insights into reductionist philosophical positions

Exploring Newman's legacy, John Paul II remarked:

Newman was born in troubled times [...] Old certitudes were shaken, and believers were faced with the threat of rationalism on the one hand and fideism on the other. Rationalism brought with it a rejection of both authority and transcendence, while fideism turned from the challenges of history and the tasks of this world to a distorted dependence upon authority and the supernatural. In such a world, Newman came eventually to a remarkable synthesis of faith and reason¹.

Newman's intellectual environment was strongly influenced by the ongoing debates between idealists and empiricists regarding the extent and limits of knowledge and certitude, which had occupied center stage in philosophy since the seventeenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the claim that human reason is the measure of truth had attained a wide consensus: "Philosophers came to agree that man is genuinely 'enlightened' in the measure that he thinks in accordance with the demands of Reason; and that he is free, independent and progressive, or in one word 'Liberal', in the measure that he throws off the yoke of all [...] non-Rational, authoritarian teaching"².

¹ John Paul II, "Letter on the Bicentenary of Newman's Birth," January 22, 2001.

² Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 27.

Most philosophical discussions in Newman's day revolved around what is understood by human reason and what is the nature of that upon which reason operates. However, Newman remains independent from both idealism and empiricism and challenges the grounding assumption of reason as a self-enclosed principle, proposing an alternative and novel understanding of human reason and its operations³.

The questions of the certainty of knowledge and the certainty of faith encompass Newman's life-project, which he undertook from different angles. These questions, framed within his personal journey and missionary efforts, are informed by his unswerving unity of purpose, which bore fruit in a coherent and vigorous philosophical project⁴.

Another significant element amidst the intellectual controversies Newman faced was the scientific revolution of the nineteenth century, along with the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. For many of his contemporaries, the advances of science led to the weakening or complete loss of religious belief, since their faith could not stand the analysis of the empirical methods of science⁵. As a response, many clerics sought to liberalize religion, this is, to liberate it from all constraints of dogma and tradition, holding on exclusively to that for which they could provide a rational proof⁶. Newman sees in this process a great delusion. In the context of the narrative of the development of his religious opinions, he writes that the vital question

³ Cf. Jan Walgrave, "Faith and Dogma in Newman's Theology," trans. Edward Miller, *Newman Studies Journal* 15, no. 1 (2018): 51.

⁴ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 59–60.

⁵ When asked for his opinion on Darwin's work, Newman answered: "I do not fear the theory [...] It does not seem to me to follow that creation is denied because the Creator, millions of years ago, gave laws to matter". *LD*, xxiv 77.

⁶ Cf. Blehl, "The Intellectual and Spiritual Influence of Newman," 254.

that guided his research, sermons and publications was: “how were we to keep the Church from being liberalized?”⁷.

When he received the honor of the Cardinalate, Newman summarizes his life's work by stating: “For thirty, forty, fifty years I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of liberalism *in religion*”⁸. Since this dissertation has a broader scope than strictly religious matters, Newman's insights will be applied to the person's knowledge and assent in all areas of knowledge, while respecting his line of thought and intentions.

This appears to be a legitimate course of action as Newman, drawing fresh insights from the British naturalist tradition, argued that “belief in revealed truths depends on belief in natural. Belief is a state of mind; belief generates belief; states of mind correspond to each other”⁹. By affirming that states of mind correspond to one another, Newman claims that the modes of reasoning for all truths, independently of their object, are analogous. He maintains that the supernatural knowledge of revealed truths bears a resemblance to natural knowledge since the subject who knows, the human person, is the same:

Though Newman's immediate problem is concerned with the reaching of certainty regarding supernatural faith, we must always remember that at bottom there lies a truly philosophical question [...] He considers the solution of the natural or philosophical problem (how the mind of a definite individual will gain certainty regarding a concrete truth) as an indispensable guidance in the solution of the same problem in the supernatural sphere [...] It is possible therefore to use quotations which at first sight might not seem to be to our purpose, since, though they deal explicitly with the reaching of certitude in relation to

⁷ *Apo*, 131.

⁸ *AR*, 64. Emphasis added.

⁹ *GA*, 413; Cf. Aquino, “Epistemology,” 154.

supernatural faith, yet are concerned with a process which is parallel in reality to the natural process¹⁰.

After the discussion of Newman's biographical and philosophical profile in chapters 1 and 2, and the exposition of his affinities with pragmatism in chapters 3 and 4, chapters 5 and 6 will focus on his insights regarding the reasoning process and the elements involved in attaining personal certainty. The present chapter explores his criticism of the reductionist philosophical positions he confronted, and chapter 6 presents some resources he developed to counter them and uphold a commitment to truth.

As most themes found in Newman's writings, the four philosophical positions studied in this chapter were not developed systematically. Moreover, their nature and the traits that distinguish them from one another are ambiguous and discussed with a different vocabulary than the one used today. Besides terminology, another difference with the contemporary understanding of these topics is that Newman does not establish a sharp distinction between the conditions needed for assent in natural and supernatural matters. It is precisely the continuity he recognizes in them what provides the backbone for his theory of knowledge: "Newman undertook to show that reason in matters of religion did not operate differently from the way it worked in history, philosophy or morality. Hence [...] he extended his concern to the whole range of human inquiry"¹¹.

Newman's philosophical project is also characterized by the breadth and scope of his concerns. In this regard, Hughes writes: "None was ever more aware of every current and tendency in the life of his own time; nor more keenly sensitive to all of them"¹². Being well acquainted with the philosophers that preceded him and the scientific

¹⁰ Boekraad, *The Personal Conquest of Truth*, 33–35.

¹¹ Mitchell, "Newman as a Philosopher," 226.

¹² Philip Hughes, "Newman and His Age," *The Dublin Review* 217, no. 435 (1945): 117.

developments of his day, Newman looked to the future, and sought to provide the needed intellectual resources to overcome “the usurpation of reason”¹³, which he denounced as early as 1831, and show that “truth is not the heritage of any individual, it is absolute and universal; mankind ought to seek and profess it in common”¹⁴.

Newman realized that his contemporaries were ill-equipped to face the intellectual challenges that assailed them and remarked: “In each age, as it comes, we shall [...] hear the complaint of good men marvelling at what they conceive to be the especial wickedness of their own times”¹⁵. However, he did not stay in lamentations, but sought to remedy this situation:

[Newman] is to be seen as one of those creative personalities whose place is not in the line of tradition, but who are the inspiration of new departures. He had certain personal qualities of a high order: an intimate sense of ideas in their living, experienced, incarnate, concrete reality, joined to a very rare power of analysis and deduction. The pressing needs of his life impelled him to have recourse to these powers; he was driven by the force of his circumstances to commit himself to lands still unexplored¹⁶.

In order to explore Newman's insights into the reductionist philosophical positions he encountered, this chapter begins with a discussion of rationalism followed by a discussion of liberalism, doctrines sometimes referred to by Newman, and some of his commentators, in an interchangeable way. Afterward, skepticism and fundamentalism are presented as other two epistemological positions in which reason is given an undue place.

¹³ *US*, 54–74.

¹⁴ *Dev*, 50.

¹⁵ *US*, 97.

¹⁶ Jan Walgrave, *Newman the Theologian: The Nature of Belief and Doctrine as Exemplified in His Life and Works* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960), 13.

Through the exploration of Newman's insights regarding these doctrines, it is convenient to keep in mind that he "was a man of action rather than a pure thinker, and he philosophized within certain limits which were laid down for him by the exigencies of his missionary work"¹⁷. Judging his philosophical projects without considering these characteristics can lead to misjudging both his achievements and his weaknesses as a philosopher.

5.1. Rationalism

Newman dedicates his fourth *University Sermon*, which he delivered in 1831, to denounce for the first time the dangers he sees in rationalism. Throughout his career, he continued to engage with this theme, his *Grammar* being precisely an attempt to overcome skepticism without falling into rationalism¹⁸. Crosby remarks that the thread which unites all the strands of Newman's thought is certain anti-rationalism¹⁹, however in his later years, he did not speak directly of rationalism but of what he understood to be its major social and cultural consequence: liberalism.

As a framework for his reflections, Newman distinguishes reason and moral sense as two complementary faculties in the human person. He asks rhetorically, "why should we be surprised that one faculty of our compound nature should not be able to do that which is the work of another?"²⁰, thus suggesting that each faculty has its distinct and necessary role in the process of knowledge and belief-formation.

¹⁷ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 59–60.

¹⁸ Cf. Bottone, "Newman and Wittgenstein," 67.

¹⁹ Cf. Crosby, "The Philosophical Legacy of Newman," 1.

²⁰ *US*, 61.

When Newman speaks of rationalism he refers to a misuse of reason, which can be due to excess by its exaltation to the detriment of the moral sense. It can also be due, either to defect, by its constraint to an explicit mode of operation limited by the application of the rules of logic or to its complete exclusion as called for by fideism.

However, when Newman speaks of liberalism his focus is broader; he is not referring solely to intellectual operations but rather to the personal and social consequences of the aggrandizement of reason to the exclusion of every other faculty or sense. Rationalism can be understood as one of the features or principles of liberalism²¹. The present section, 5.1, discusses Newman's reflections on the misuse and proper use of reason; section 5.2 will discuss liberalism.

Newman describes rationalism as "a certain abuse of Reason; that is, a use of it for purposes for which it never was intended, and is unfitted"²². He understands that reason plays an important, but not exclusive, role in the process of knowledge and belief-formation and judges that it can be employed industriously in all sciences²³. What he states regarding the exercise of reason in relation to theology holds for all areas of knowledge: "It appears that exercises of Reason are either external, or at least only ministrative, to religious inquiry and knowledge: accidental to them, not of their essence; useful in their place, but not necessary"²⁴. The understanding of reason as useful, but not the only method of thinking proper to man, is a central thesis in Newman's philosophical project²⁵. He introduces his sermon "The Usurpation of Reason" by stating:

²¹ Cyril O'Regan, "Newman's Anti-Liberalism," *Sacred Heart University Review* 12, no. 1 (1992): 87–88.

²² *Ess*, i 31.

²³ Cf. *US*, 73.

²⁴ *US*, 67.

²⁵ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 65.

I propose now to make some remarks upon the place which Reason holds in relation to Religion, the light in which we should view it, and certain encroachments of which it is sometimes guilty; and I think that, without a distinct definition of the word, which would carry us too far from our subject, I can make it plain what I take it to mean. Sometimes, indeed, it stands for all in which man differs from the brutes, and so includes in its signification the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong, and the directing principle in conduct. In this sense I certainly do not here use it, but in that narrower signification, which it usually bears, as representing or synonymous with the intellectual powers, and as opposed as such to the moral qualities, and to Faith. This opposition between Faith and Reason takes place in two ways, when either of the two encroaches upon the province of the other²⁶.

Besides denouncing the magnification of reason and its trespassing over the moral sense, Newman also criticizes its constraint to one explicit mode of reasoning that privileges the mechanical application of the principles of logic to the exclusion of other habits of the mind. Newman was specifically opposed to rationalism as understood by Locke in these terms: “If one’s warrant for accepting a proposition is inferentially mediated, then one is warranted in accepting this proposition only to extent that he is able to provide arguments in favor of it”²⁷.

However, Newman “never denied, as some have maintained, that the mind must be guided by the laws of logic in its thinking; but he rejected [...] that the mind must be completely dominated by, or wholly subjected to, its guide, the laws of logic. Logic, he held, is a servant, not a master”²⁸. Newman upheld the freedom and creativity of the person who is capable of going beyond explicit modes of

²⁶ *US*, 58–59.

²⁷ Milburn, “Newman’s Skeptical Paradox,” 109.

²⁸ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 74.

reasoning, arguing that “all men have a reason, but not all men can give a reason”²⁹.

Newman also challenges the rationalist principle, which dictates that “certainty is only possible when the evidence is so compelling that all possibility of doubt or error is excluded”³⁰. This principle brought forth by the scientific revolution, sought to equate the study of philosophy and theology to that of mathematics and the physical sciences. However, Newman argues that each science has its proper methodology and certitude can also be attained through the accumulation of probabilities and the Illative Sense³¹. In this context, he brings forth a clear distinction between reason as a critical power and reason as a creative power, explaining that although reason is unable to act as the origin of some truths, such as religious truths, it may test and verify them³². Newman’s developments in this line cohere with the maxim which states that “faith is not rational but it is reasonable”³³.

A third aspect of rationalism which Newman challenges was the exaltation of the individual as the arbiter of truth: “the Rationalist makes himself his own centre [...] Our private judgment is made everything to us, is contemplated, recognized, and consulted as the arbiter of all questions, and as independent of everything external to us. Nothing is considered to have an existence except so far forth as our minds discern it”³⁴. Newman understands the subject who knows not as a disembodied reasoning power but as a person in relation, a unique self³⁵. Further, as it was argued in section 4.3, Newman believes

²⁹ *US*, 259.

³⁰ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 48.

³¹ “What is true in one science is dictated to us indeed according to that science, but not according to another science, or in another department”. *Idea*, 509–10; Cf. *GA*, 344, 351.

³² Cf. *US*, 134; Aquino, “Epistemology,” 378.

³³ Cf. Benedict XVI, “The Reasonableness of Faith in God” (Address, Paul VI Hall, 2012).

³⁴ *Ess*, i 33–34.

³⁵ Cf. Tillman, “The Personalist Epistemology of Newman,” 237.

that growth in knowledge and the attainment of truth are not individualistic endeavors, but rather communal.

Newman speaks of the exaltation of reason as blindness since it hinders the intellect from using its resources and powers in their entirety. In his sermon on the usurpation of reason, he includes a footnote in which he lists the following terms to make his point more clearly: “officious reason”, “captious reason”, “usurping reason” and “rebellious reason”³⁶. Throughout his writings, he details the problems caused by this misconception of reason, particularly in two fronts: apologetics and education.

With the rise of rationalism, Christian clerics often turned to evidential apologetics to defend the faith, reducing the entire *corpus* of Christian revelation, dogma and tradition to a system of reasoned evidences and thus falling into the same rationalism by which they were being attacked³⁷. Newman believes that “reason rightly exercised, leads the mind to the Catholic faith”³⁸; however he maintains that the evidentialist approach is damaging for the faith, as reason is too blunt an instrument to encompass the totality of Christian revelation and convey the efficacy of its saving message:

When we come to what is called Evidence, or, in popular language, exercises of Reason [...] nothing can be urged, or made to tell, but what all feel, all comprehend, all can put into words; current language becomes the measure of thought; only such conclusions may be drawn as can produce their reasons; only such reasons are in point as can be exhibited in simple propositions; the multiform and intricate

³⁶ Cf. *US*, 62.

³⁷ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 29.

³⁸ *Idea*, 181. In *Tract 73* Newman distinguishes the act of rationalizing in matters of revelation from the ways in which the use of reason in religious matters is not only acceptable, but commendable. Cf. *Ess*, i 31–32.

assemblage of considerations, which really lead to judgment and action, must be attenuated or mutilated³⁹.

Besides being detrimental for the doctrines of faith themselves, Newman also argues that evidential apologetics are not an advantageous asset for the ordinary person as “whatever be their character and consequences, they do not answer the needs of daily life. Diligent collection of evidence, sifting of arguments, and balancing of rival testimonies, may be suited to persons who have leisure and opportunity to act when and how they will; they are not suited to the multitude”⁴⁰. Thus Newman maintains that reason alone is not only an inadequate means for the preservation and development of religious truths; it is also insufficient for the task of defending, recommending and teaching the faith to others⁴¹.

It was not only clerics who attempted to introduce rationalism in their teaching, many educators also tried to follow this path, believing that “as soon as a man thinks by Reason, that is to say, scientifically and logically, every kind of truth must inevitably become uniformly clear to him, and as clear to one man as to another, for [...] Reason is the same for all men”⁴². Robert Peel (1788-1850), who served twice as Britain’s Prime Minister during the Newman’s life, promoted reason as the great principle of social cohesion and moral stability for the country⁴³. For his part, Newman

saw clearly that the Liberal dream of creating an equality for all human minds, so that all men would think in the same purely scientific, logical manner, and assent in the same way to the same truths, was a complete mirage [...] Simply speaking mathematicians and scientists are as unequal in their ways of thinking as in their capacities for thinking.

³⁹ *US*, 229–30.

⁴⁰ *US*, 188.

⁴¹ Cf. *US*, 253.

⁴² Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 25.

⁴³ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 47.

The Liberal theory ignores the fact that thinking is a personal activity [...] He reminded the readers of *The Times* that it is persons who make inferences and who reason, not logic or syllogisms, and that human behaviour is not shaped by 'Reason', but by the impressions made on a living person by other things and other persons⁴⁴.

Although Newman was highly critical of the over-reaching attempts of reason, he was also an avid defender of its rights and capabilities. He offered "a much more subtle appreciation of the way reason works, not only in relation to religious truth, but also in respect to all matter of serious importance"⁴⁵. Newman identifies the shortcomings of fideism and hard rationalism and presents an alternative understanding of the complementarity of faith and reason. In the context of this dissertation, the understanding of faith is not limited to religious truth; it also includes the truths of science which cannot be proved by logical demonstration, such as those of history or ethics.

Newman believes that the human intellect is very resourceful and able to go far beyond the mere application of logical rules. In several texts he describes the powers of the intellect, among them this passage from the *Idea*:

The intellect of man [...] energizes as well as his eye or ear, and perceives in sights and sounds something beyond them. It seizes and unites what the senses present to it; it grasps and forms what need not have been seen or heard except in its constituent parts. It discerns in lines and colours, or in tones, what is beautiful and what is not. It gives them a meaning, and invests them with an idea. It gathers up a succession of notes into the expression of a whole, and calls it a melody; it has a keen sensibility towards angles and curves, lights and shadows, tints and contours. It distinguishes between rule and exception, between accident and design. It assigns phenomena to a

⁴⁴ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 50.

⁴⁵ Mitchell, "Newman as a Philosopher," 226.

general law, qualities to a subject, acts to a principle, and effects to a cause. In a word, it philosophizes⁴⁶.

In his fourth University Sermon, Newman remarks: “No one can deny to the intellect its own excellence, nor deprive it of its due honours; the question is merely this, whether it be not limited in its turn, as regards its range”⁴⁷. He calls the refusal to the use of reason in religious inquiries an extravagant objection⁴⁸ and concludes his sermon on reason by inviting his listeners to “freely cultivate [it] in all its noble functions”⁴⁹.

Paying recourse to the Illative Sense, Newman broadens the rationalist understanding of reason and argues that “probabilities which did not reach to logical certainty, might suffice for a mental certitude; that the certitude thus brought about might equal in measure and strength the certitude which was created by the strictest scientific demonstration”⁵⁰. Instead of the hard rationalism of his time, which he oftentimes described as “paper logic”, he proposed a novel philosophy, based on his conception of the self as a person, a being higher than reason⁵¹. In saying that “it is the mind that reasons, and that controls its own reasonings, not any technical apparatus of words and propositions”⁵², Newman refers to the person as a free subject for whom formal inferences are only one aspect of the reasoning process; “after all, man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. He is influenced by what is direct and precise”⁵³.

⁴⁶ *Idea*, 74–75.

⁴⁷ *US*, 57.

⁴⁸ Cf. *US*, 63.

⁴⁹ *US*, 73.

⁵⁰ Garnett, “Joseph Butler,” 140.

⁵¹ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 52.

⁵² *GA*, 353.

⁵³ *DA*, 294.

In reference to his conversion, a decision which he pondered several years and which had far-reaching consequences, he narrates in his *Apologia*:

I had a great dislike of paper logic. For myself, it was not logic that carried me on; as well might one say that the quicksilver in the barometer changes the weather. It is the concrete being that reasons; pass a number of years, and I find my mind in a new place; how? the whole man moves; paper logic is but the record of it. All the logic in the world would not have made me move faster towards Rome than I did [...] Great acts take time. At least this is what I felt in my own case; and therefore to come to me with methods of logic had in it the nature of a provocation⁵⁴.

Fifteen years later he explains the same event in the *Grammar*: “We have arrived at these conclusions –not *ex opere operato*, by a scientific necessity independent of ourselves, but by the action of our own minds, by our own individual perception of the truth in question, under a sense of duty to those conclusions and with an intellectual conscientiousness”⁵⁵. Since the person, not impersonal reason, is the subject of knowledge and belief-formation, Newman argues that people can arrive at different conclusions in moral matters and offers his respect for this reality⁵⁶.

Newman’s theory of personal reason and his rejection of the claim that faith ought to be exempt from rational analysis are the grounds on which some contemporary philosophers call him a soft

⁵⁴ *Apo*, 169.

⁵⁵ *GA*, 318.

⁵⁶ Cf. *GA*, 375. Newman also remains open to mysteries that go beyond reason: “We experience Newman’s breath [*sic*] of mind in a particularly convincing way in those cases in which we realize that Newman himself does not understand how two truths can be consistent with each other, though he adheres firmly to both of them [...] he ends by letting the mystery stand, which he recognizes to be beyond him. He knows nothing of that rationalistic impatience which is quick to posit contradictions, and which likes to get rid of mysteries by affirming the one term of a supposed contradiction and denying the other”. Crosby, “Coincidentia Oppositorum,” 196.

rationalist⁵⁷. Mitchell writes that Newman “is, undoubtedly, a rationalist of some kind, albeit one who is sensitive to the many different ways in which rationality can be manifested”⁵⁸, and Aquino introduces his account of Newman’s epistemology stating that

though reason plays an important role in evaluating the process of belief-formation, it does not follow that faith springs from a formal account of Christian belief, nor does it follow that reason is reducible to an explicit kind of reasoning and that faith is dependent upon this kind of reasoning [...] In fact, Newman thinks that it is problematic to exempt faith from rational analysis⁵⁹.

In short, Newman does not attempt to separate faith from reason, rather he broadens the understanding of reason so it is able to embrace the truths of faith.

5.2. Liberalism

Newman’s stance regarding liberalism has been widely studied, with some authors speaking of him as “the most formidable agent of Catholic liberalism in England”⁶⁰, while others present him as the champion of the nineteenth century’s anti-liberal movement⁶¹. Newman’s own writings, particularly a few often quoted but isolated phrases from his *Apologia* and “Biglietto speech” seem to support his staunch anti-liberalism, however his position is quite nuanced for two reasons.

⁵⁷ Cf. Aquino, “Epistemology,” 390; William Abraham, “Revelation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 311.

⁵⁸ Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher,” 240.

⁵⁹ Aquino, “Epistemology,” 378.

⁶⁰ Denis Gwynn, *A Hundred Years of Catholic Emancipation (1829-1929)* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 170.

⁶¹ Cf. O’Regan, “Newman’s Anti-Liberalism,” 83–108; Carballo, “Newman and the Transition to Modern Liberalism,” 19–41.

First, there is not an unequivocal understanding of liberalism; the term has virtually no explicit meaning today, and even in the nineteenth century, it meant a great variety of things. The thread that seems to be present in its multiple definitions is the recognition of liberty as an inalienable right, not the privilege of a few but the fundamental bounty of all⁶². De Ruggiero describes liberalism as the awareness “that the formation of human individualities is the work of freedom [and that] no progress will be enduringly achieved, unless it is a conscious development from within”⁶³. Newman would have likely agreed with this understanding.

Second, although Newman’s thought is grounded on unfaltering commitments and displays ample coherence and consistency, it matured and evolved over six decades of intense intellectual and pastoral work. His mind is complex, nuanced and profound; he was too deeply concerned with a great range of issues over a long period of time for it to be reasonable to interpret his thought in closed terms such as liberal or anti-liberal⁶⁴. Jost points out that “few words are more ambiguous than ‘liberalism’, and when we speak of it in connection with an extraordinarily complex man [...] we seem to invite confusion”⁶⁵. If not confusing, contemporary labels are not proper tools to present the complexity and depth of Newman’s work.

Newman’s thought is “at once the embodiment and the contradiction of the spirit of his age”⁶⁶, therefore modernists, liberals and conservatives can all find texts from his writings to support their

⁶² Cf. Guido de Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 357–58.

⁶³ de Ruggiero, *History of European Liberalism*, 358–59.

⁶⁴ Cf. Adrian Hastings, “Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal,” in *The Theology of a Protestant Catholic* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 118.

⁶⁵ Edward Jost, “Newman and Liberalism: The Later Phase,” *The Victorian Newsletter* 24 (1963): 1.

⁶⁶ Dawson, “Newman’s Place in History,” 32.

position⁶⁷. When Pope Leo XIII recounted Newman's elevation to the cardinalate, he exclaimed: "It was not easy; no, it was not easy. They said he was too liberal; but I was determined to honor the Church by honoring Newman. I have always felt a deep veneration for him. I am proud that it has been given me to honor such a man"⁶⁸. However, in his acceptance speech for this honor, Newman himself exclaimed: "For thirty, forty, fifty years I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of liberalism in religion"⁶⁹.

As it has been argued, Newman was mostly concerned with religious matters, and his central purpose was missionary. Often, when he writes of liberalism he explicitly states that what he opposes is liberalism in religion. At the same time, he recognizes that the inevitable political and cultural liberalism is good and true⁷⁰. Moreover, his *Idea of a University* is a defense of the liberal elements in education. All throughout, "Newman's struggle was not so much *against* liberalism as *on behalf* of the Church. In other words, in his battle with liberalism Newman was, in the first place, championing a cause, not simply resisting change"⁷¹.

In 1864 Newman writes that "the Liberalism which gives a colour to society now, is very different from that character of thought

⁶⁷ Norman explains: "The independence and isolation of Newman's mind did not mean that others avoided seeking to claim his authority for their own party positions. Within the Catholic Church most of the opponents of ultramontanism, whether Old Catholic or liberal, sought to identify him as a supporter. But as an Anglican he had tried to keep clear of parties and as a Catholic he certainly did so". Edward Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 98.

⁶⁸ Qtd. in Paul Thureau-Dangin, *The English Catholic Revival in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Simpkin & Co., 1914), 362. The citation is accompanied by the following footnote: "This account is taken from a letter written on January 26, 1888, immediately after the interview [the interview of Leo XIII with Sir Roundell Palmer, Lord Selborne (1812-1895)] and has been communicated to me by Lord Selborne's daughter".

⁶⁹ AR, 64.

⁷⁰ Cf. AR, 68.

⁷¹ Merrigan, "Newman and Theological Liberalism," 609.

which bore the name thirty or forty years ago”⁷². By this time, almost four decades after he delivered the first sermon in which he engages with this topic, Newman had come to recognize that liberalism was not only an ecclesiastical or theological matter, but a social and cultural phenomenon as well. He understands that the Church needs to learn to live with it, and that it can prove beneficial to her mission if correctly embraced⁷³.

The years which Newman spent traveling to Ireland for the establishment of the Catholic University of Dublin (1851-1858) provided him with personal experience of the dangers of the rise of ultramontaniam and the resistance to the advancement of cultural pluralism. This led him to reflect on the benefits that political liberalism could bring about⁷⁴. Through the discourses compiled in his *Idea of a University* one can appreciate his growing awareness that “liberalism went with a practical acceptance of social and intellectual pluralism [...] It did not renounce the concept of truth but it did renounce the right to impose truth other than through conviction, or on the basis of rational, empirical evidence”⁷⁵. Newman further developed these convictions in the *Grammar of Assent* and the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*.

⁷² *Apo*, 261.

⁷³ Cf. Merrigan, “Newman and Theological Liberalism,” 608. It is worth noting that, using the political sense of the word, in an essay from 1854 Newman commends the Popes for the instances in which they have upheld liberalism in their actions: “And, thus independent of times and places, the Popes have never found any difficulty, when the proper moment came, of following out a new and daring line of policy [...] of leaving the old world to shift for itself and to disappear from the scene in its due season, and of fastening on and establishing themselves in the new”. *HS*, iii 134. He adds: “A Conservative, in the political sense of the word [...] means a man who upholds government and society and the existing state of things [...] not because it is good and desirable [...] but rather because he himself is well off in consequence of it [...] It means a man who defends religion, not for religion’s sake, but for the sake of its accidents and externals; and in this sense Conservative a Pope can never be, without a simple betrayal of the dispensation committed to him”. *HS*, iii 131–32.

⁷⁴ Cf. Jost, “Newman and Liberalism,” 2; Merrigan, “Newman and Theological Liberalism,” 613.

⁷⁵ Hastings, “Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal,” 119.

As a social movement in the nineteenth century, liberalism advocated for the diffusion of knowledge, social reform and economic progress; in this regard, Newman characterized his time as one of “superabundant temporal advantages”⁷⁶ and recognized “that there is much in the liberalistic theory which is good and true; for example, not to say more, the precepts of justice, truthfulness, sobriety, self-command, benevolence”⁷⁷. Moreover, Newman was one of the few Christian thinkers who did not identify the cause of the Church with that of political reactionaries who condemned the rise of democratic sentiments⁷⁸. He “was never a critic of any of the purely social reforms which the Liberal sociologists and politicians introduced in their day: on the contrary, he approved of them”⁷⁹, and he only opposed liberalism in as much as it was used “to supersede, to block out, religion”⁸⁰.

In words of Tillman, “what Newman means by Liberalism [in religion] is the pervasive spirit of Enlightenment rationalism which proclaims the absolute power of reason to achieve all knowledge worthy of the name, and concomitantly preaches that revealed religion is not a body of truth, but merely private sentiment or individual taste”⁸¹. Dulles adds that by liberalism Newman “meant approximately what many today would describe as the privatization of religion and its reduction to the private sentiment”⁸². Three elements can be identified in Newman’s discussion of liberalism in religion: the overreaching of the intellect, the reduction of knowledge to that which can be

⁷⁶ *CR*, ii 462.

⁷⁷ *AR*, 68.

⁷⁸ Cf. Dawson, “Newman’s Place in History,” 34.

⁷⁹ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 45.

⁸⁰ *AR*, 68.

⁸¹ Tillman, “The Personalist Epistemology of Newman,” 235–36. Newman writes: “Liberalism consists in looking at all conclusions [...] as strong only in proportion to the strength of their premises”. *PN*, 170.

⁸² Dulles, *John Henry Newman*, 14.

empirically proven and the consequent understanding of religion as nothing more than a personal sentiment or opinion.

Regarding the aggrandizement of the intellect, liberalism is built on an assumption that is erroneous in the realm of religious thought. It makes human reason the measure of that which is real and submits to personal judgment those revealed religious doctrines which are, by their nature, beyond reason and independent of it⁸³. Newman explains in his *Apologia*:

By Liberalism I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place. Among such matters are first principles of whatever kind; and of these the most sacred and momentous are especially to be reckoned the truths of Revelation⁸⁴.

With the term liberalism Newman refers in this text to the philosophical theory which maintains that there is no legitimate way of attaining knowledge of the truth except by formal argumentation or by empirical demonstration⁸⁵. This understanding leads to the eventual replacement of religion by humanism, which is precisely what Newman energetically opposed during his years in Oxford: Culler explains: "If there were an official seat or center, a kind of Holy See of the Religion of Philosophy, surely that See was to be found at Oxford, and for twenty years Newman had preached against this religion in the very temple of its worshippers"⁸⁶. Newman disputed the subjection of religion to the limits of reason because it made "religious

⁸³ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 61; Hastings, "Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal," 121.

⁸⁴ *Apo*, 288.

⁸⁵ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 62.

⁸⁶ Dwight Culler, *The Imperial Intellect* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 229.

belief purely a matter of personal opinion or of individual taste, feeling or mere fancy”⁸⁷.

Newman himself dedicated most of his efforts to the exercise of thought upon religious matters; in itself, this is not what he indiscriminately condemns. In this line, it is important to note that he did not object to liberty of thought, but rather to *false* liberty of thought. He does not suggest that the exercise of thought should be restrained in all cases, rather he insists that the natural limitations of our reasoning faculties should not be ignored. Newman defends the rigorous exercise of thought on religious matters and, at the same time, is profoundly aware of the fact that religion cannot be reduced to a matter of the intellect⁸⁸: By insisting on the dogmatic principle against the corrosion of liberalism, Newman did not mean to encourage a passive acceptance of religious truths nor to discourage religious inquiry; “if Newman wished to prune somewhat the burgeoning culture of experience, he by no means wished to exclude it”⁸⁹.

Newman’s attitude towards liberalism underwent a steady evolution as his personal life and his ministry developed through distinct phases which mirrored the world in which he was immersed⁹⁰:

Late Victorian England was a liberal England in which rights were guaranteed regardless of beliefs [...] in which there was a general acceptance that reason and social utility should prevail over tradition and authority. Freedom of conscience and of expression was the presupposition of this society as it never had been of pre-nineteenth-century England. When Newman was born in 1801 England was not a liberal society. When he died, in 1890, it was⁹¹.

⁸⁷ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 60.

⁸⁸ Cf. Merrigan, “Newman and Theological Liberalism,” 611.

⁸⁹ O’Regan, “Newman’s Anti-Liberalism,” 104.

⁹⁰ Cf. Dulles, *John Henry Newman*, 164; Jost, “Newman and Liberalism,” 1.

⁹¹ Hastings, “Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal,” 116.

When Newman wrote his *Apologia* as the history of his religious beliefs in 1864, he was compelled to include a lengthy explanatory note regarding his stance on liberalism. This is his most systematic text on the matter, and the fact that he writes it ten years after his reception in the Catholic Church is significant. Short excerpts are often quoted, however, a longer passage reveals Newman's thought more clearly:

I have been asked to explain more fully what it is I mean by 'Liberalism,' because merely to call it the Anti-dogmatic Principle is to tell very little about it. An explanation is the more necessary, because such good Catholics and distinguished writers as Count Montalembert and Father Lacordaire use the word in a favorable sense, and claim to be Liberals themselves [...] I do not believe that it is possible for me to differ in any important matter from two men whom I so highly admire. In their general line of thought and conduct I enthusiastically concur, and consider them to be before their age [...] If I hesitate to adopt their language about Liberalism, I impute the necessity of such hesitation to some differences between us in the use of words or in the circumstances of country; and thus I reconcile myself to remaining faithful to my own conception of it, though I cannot have their voices to give force to mine. Speaking then in my own way, I proceed to explain what I meant as a Protestant by Liberalism, and to do so in connexion with the circumstances under which that system of opinion came before me at Oxford⁹².

Two elements in this text are often overlooked. First, Newman recognizes that good Catholic men whom he admires have embraced liberalism and expresses that he concurs with them at the level of ideas, although not at the level of language. Second, he prefaces the remainder of his text, in which he lists eighteen tenets of liberalism, by stating that he is explaining what he meant as a Protestant in Oxford, when he led the Tractarians.

⁹² *Apo*, 285–86.

Further, Newman states that the degree to which the Liberal Movement of the 1830's subscribed to these tenets and the sense in which he opposes them at the present moment would be a topic for another long essay⁹³. In saying this, he admits that he does not hold without commentary what he writes there regarding liberalism and its downfalls at the present moment (1864). The evolution of Newman's understanding of this principle through the different stages of his life will now be examined⁹⁴.

Newman speaks of his intellectual crises at the beginning of his career in Oxford, under the tutelage of Whately, as a drift towards liberalism. With this phrase, he refers to a more critical approach to Church doctrine and tradition, which he found unacceptable at the time; this was 1827⁹⁵. Six years later, as he is about to return to England from his Mediterranean trip, he writes a poem which he titles "Liberalism", in which he calls out the doubting character of clerics and politicians who do not defend the Church and her doctrine. Its final stanza reads:

And so ye halve the Truth; for ye in heart,
At best, are doubters whether it be true,
The theme discarding, as unmeet for you,
Statesmen or Sages. O new-compass'd art
Of the ancient Foe! –but what, if it extends
O'er our own camp, and rules amid our friends?⁹⁶

His trip to the Mediterranean provided Newman with space to mature the convictions that would flourish in the Oxford Movement, which began as a counter-attack against the advance of liberalism⁹⁷. Newman himself expresses that "the vital question was, how were we

⁹³ Cf. *Apo*, 294–97.

⁹⁴ Cf. Jost, "Newman and Liberalism," 1.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Apo*, 116; Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 45.

⁹⁶ *VV*, 145.

⁹⁷ Cf. Hastings, "Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal," 116.

to keep the Church from being liberalised?”⁹⁸ and states once more: “My battle was with liberalism; by liberalism I meant the anti-dogmatic principle and its developments. This was the first point on which I was certain”⁹⁹. Thirty years later, reflecting upon those years he spent leading the Tractarians, Newman admits that the absolute confidence in his cause led him to imprudence, wantonness and fierceness in certain steps he took or words he published¹⁰⁰.

As an Anglican, what most attracted Newman about the Catholic Church was its solid identity and resistance to liberalism; however, after his conversion, a pervading sense of the importance of the exercise of reason and freedom for the life of faith grew in him¹⁰¹. During the decade of the 1860’s Newman begins to discern the positive elements of the liberalism as promoted by some Catholic circles at the time: the assertion of personal and social freedom and the need of understanding the Church not only as a dogmatic reality but also from a historical and developmental point of view which complements it¹⁰². Further, his reflections upon freedom and conscience lead Newman to grow in his understanding of religious pluralism; he writes in 1875: “When the intellect is cultivated, it is as certain that it will develop [sic] into a thousand various shapes, as that infinite hues and tints and shades of colour will be reflected from the earth’s surface, when the sunlight touches it; and in matters of religion the more”¹⁰³.

Hasting comments that in his works as a Catholic, “Newman was undoubtedly aligning himself with theologians and lay people who at the time did call themselves liberal Catholics”¹⁰⁴. Although he never

⁹⁸ *Apo*, 131.

⁹⁹ *Apo*, 150.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Apo*, 148.

¹⁰¹ Cf. O’Regan, “Newman’s Anti-Liberalism,” 99; Hastings, “Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal,” 127.

¹⁰² Cf. Hastings, “Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal,” 126.

¹⁰³ *Diff*, ii 267.

¹⁰⁴ Hastings, “Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal,” 128.

accepted the label of liberalism, he deals favorably with some of its main premises in the central works of this stage: In *An Essay on Development* (1845) he talks about the imperative necessity of recognizing change; the *Idea of a University* (1852) is, among other things, a defense of a liberal education; in *On Consulting the Faithful* (1859) he expounds upon the need for private judgment while recognizing its limits; *The Grammar of Assent* (1870) is a book about reason and its operations, and the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* (1875) is a defense of conscience and civil freedom.

In 1879, upon receiving notice that the Pope wanted to make him a Cardinal, he writes to his dear friend Dean Church (1815-1890): "All the stories which have gone about of my being a half Catholic, a liberal Catholic, under a cloud, not to be trusted, are now at an end"¹⁰⁵. During his discourse of acceptance, he states:

For thirty, forty, fifty years I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of liberalism in religion [...] Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion [...] It teaches that all are to be tolerated, for all are matters of opinion. Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste¹⁰⁶.

The liberalism to which Newman refers in this well-known discourse is "quite other from the liberalism he was suspected of advancing and yet the two were not wholly unrelated either in the minds of his adversaries or his own mind or indeed in the objectivity of things"¹⁰⁷. Perhaps a question of greater relevance than the broad query of Newman's blanket acceptance or rejection of liberalism refers to what he did about it. Newman realized before most that the rationalistic philosophy which permeated the nineteenth century would

¹⁰⁵ *LD*, xxix 72.

¹⁰⁶ *AR*, 64.

¹⁰⁷ Hastings, "Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal," 129.

“burn itself out, leaving in its path an intellectual desolation that might well last a very long time, and require centuries to heal”¹⁰⁸.

Reflecting upon his mission, in 1866, he writes in his journal: “From first to last education, in this large sense of the word has been my line”¹⁰⁹. His response to the intellectual desolation brought about by the overreaching of reason, was to propose a genuinely liberal education, whose objective he defines with these words: “To open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to know, and to digest, master, rule, and use its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, resource, address, eloquent expression”¹¹⁰. In the *Idea of a University* “liberal” stands for virtues much desired: freedom, equitableness, moderation, wisdom and courtesy¹¹¹; in this work, Newman places liberalism, thus understood, within the foundation for the educated person and right social relationships.

Newman succeeded in presenting the ideal of a liberal education, without falling into the trap of rationalism nor religious indifferentism, by giving each science its autonomy. In the same way in which he defends theology and the liberal arts from the interference of the scientific method, he defends the natural sciences from theological dogmas, arguing that every science has its particular principles and methodology¹¹². Thus the assumption that underpins his educational liberalism is that:

God made man, and made his mind able to discover, assess, and understand the objective truths of the natural world, and these gifts were not limited to Catholics or to Christians. Therefore nothing true, whatever its source, could ultimately be hostile, inimical, or

¹⁰⁸ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 33.

¹⁰⁹ *AW*, 259.

¹¹⁰ *Idea*, 122.

¹¹¹ Cf. Hastings, “Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal,” 124.

¹¹² Cf. *Idea*, 509–10.

contradictory to the doctrines of God's Church. This was particularly the case in the natural sciences [...] Each science had its own laws, and although those laws all came from God, dogmatic religion informed them to significantly different degrees¹¹³.

Newman understands liberal education as the cultivation of the intellect, and as such, a good to be sought for its own sake¹¹⁴. His educational ideal will be discussed in section 6.1 as one of his contributions to strengthen our commitment to truth; the aim of these paragraphs has been solely to establish the connection between liberalism and Newman's idea of a liberal education.

Relevant in Newman's position is his recognition that liberalism "had become part of the air which later nineteenth-century man could not but breathe. He saw even that his own Catholic church greatly needed this air"¹¹⁵. He grasped the intellectual and social advantages of liberalism as the consequence of profound cultural change, which was both inevitable and actually right; he judged "that the liberal society had come to stay, that there was no conceivable alternative consonant with justice"¹¹⁶. In his own words: "The liberal principle is forced on us through the necessity of the case"¹¹⁷.

Newman certainly had an affinity with some of the proposals entertained by liberal Catholics¹¹⁸, if his "intellect was liberal, his instincts were conservative"¹¹⁹. The breadth and coherence of his proposal makes him a valuable conversation partner with contemporary philosophers. Scholars from diverse theological and political positions eagerly claim him to their side, and can do so with

¹¹³ Barr, "Ireland," 57.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *Idea*, 162.

¹¹⁵ Hastings, "Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal," 131.

¹¹⁶ Hastings, "Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal," 123.

¹¹⁷ *AR*, 67.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England*, 99; O'Regan, "Newman's Anti-Liberalism," 106.

¹¹⁹ Josef Altholz, *The Liberal Catholic Movement in England* (London: Burns & Oates, 1962), 20.

sufficient evidence. However, to profit from his thought in its totality “we should read him on his own terms, assess his arguments objectively, take him in full”¹²⁰, since he

meant by liberalism the vast revolution of the nineteenth-century whereby society accepts its pluralism and was secularized in consequence, so removing religion’s public significance. His heart, as he freely admitted, was with the Christendom world of the past, but he wholly recognized the inherent inevitability and indeed appropriateness of the liberal and secularizing revolution [...] He saw too that as religion lost its public and political position, it seemed also to lose its sense of objectivity, its dogmatic quality¹²¹.

This is why he focused his efforts on the education of the laity; on providing them with the intellectual tools needed for a real assent of their beliefs. He realized that culture was no longer a sustenance for faith nor morals and therefore worked tirelessly to form a laity “who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold, and what they do not, who know their creed so well, that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity”¹²².

In 1875 Newman concludes his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* with a hopeful tone: “In centuries to come, there may be found out some way of uniting what is free in the new structure of society with what is authoritative in the old”¹²³. His own writings over six decades provide a helpful resource in this endeavor, as it is in “his ability to

¹²⁰ Robert Barron, “John Henry Newman in Full,” *Word on Fire* (blog), October 2019.

¹²¹ Hastings, “Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal,” 130.

¹²² *Prepos*, 390. In this respect Walgrave writes: “Newman has always defended the apologetic principle along with the dogmatic principle: faith is to be justified by reason. Newman’s originality does not consist in affirming this principle but in his fuller concept of reason”. Walgrave, “Faith and Dogma in Newman’s Theology,” 51.

¹²³ *Diff*, ii 268.

hold in tensile unity apparently opposite tendencies and concerns”¹²⁴ that the truth behind his thought is more clearly revealed.

5.3. Skepticism and fundamentalism

This section deals with two apparently opposite philosophical positions which Newman sought to avoid: skepticism and fundamentalism. Both are expressions of an incorrect understanding of reason which prompts individuals to exercise it in areas where it cannot operate properly, and when experiencing the limitations of its outcomes, to disregard it completely¹²⁵. Although skepticism could appear to be the attitude of a person who is confident enough in her reason, it is often a product of her disenchantment with its possibilities and in this sense is very similar to fundamentalism as both positions spring from a mistrust of reason.

As it has been argued in previous chapters, Newman believes that the search for truth is a strenuous task: “it is the very law of the human mind in its inquiry after and acquisition of truth to make its advances by a process which consists of many stages, and is circuitous”¹²⁶. However, he never despairs of reason’s possibility to attain truth, he only seeks “to rescue it from its own suicidal excesses”¹²⁷. Unlike many of his contemporaries who argued that there was “a moral obligation to doubt and not to extend the limits of their knowledge through either approximation or pride”¹²⁸, Newman writes in the *Grammar* that the true way of learning implies that

¹²⁴ Merrigan, “Newman and Theological Liberalism,” 621.

¹²⁵ Cf. Gerald McCarthy, “A Via Media Between Scepticism and Dogmatism? Newman’s and MacIntyre’s Anti-Foundationalist Strategies,” *Newman Studies Journal* 6, no. 2 (2009): 62.

¹²⁶ *Idea*, 474.

¹²⁷ *Apo*, 337.

¹²⁸ Leggett, “Froude, Newman and Scientific Practice,” 577.

we soon discover and discard what is contradictory to itself [...] error having always some portion of truth in it, and the truth having a reality which error has not, we may expect, that when there is an honest purpose and fair talents, we shall somehow make our way forward, the error falling off from the mind, and the truth developing and occupying it¹²⁹.

Newman recognizes and integrates into his theory of knowledge the limitations of human thought and the unavoidable shortcomings of language. This recognition, paired with his awareness of man's natural orientation towards truth¹³⁰, allows him to find a balanced and clear pathway between rationalism on one end, and skepticism and fundamentalism on the other, and present a fruitful and coherent integration of faith and reason¹³¹.

Although he steered clear from both, skepticism and fundamentalism, and explicitly refuted them in his writings, Newman was criticized as a skeptic or fideist during his lifetime. Early scholarship often holds this opinion¹³²; however, in recent decades, a more balanced understanding has emerged, encouraged by the desire for "faith and philosophy [to] recover the profound unity which allows them to stand in harmony with their nature without compromising their mutual autonomy"¹³³.

In his *Apologia* Newman narrates that Butler's *Analogy* was one of the first works he studied in Oxford; from this book he derived the underlying principles of a great portion of his beliefs, one of which is that "probability is the guide of life"¹³⁴. Butler's understanding of probability was the seed for Newman's development of the Illative

¹²⁹ *GA*, 377.

¹³⁰ "The human mind is made for truth" *GA*, 221; Cf. *GA*, 352.

¹³¹ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 122.

¹³² Cf. Ker, "Newman's Standing as a Philosopher," 223.

¹³³ John Paul II, "Fides et Ratio," 48.

¹³⁴ *Apo*, 113.

Sense five decades later, which stood in sharp contrast with the hard certainty sought by most rationalists.

Newman explains that his adherence to Butler's principle of probability "led to a charge against me both of fancifulness and of scepticism"¹³⁵. By fancifulness and skepticism Newman refers to his adherence to dogma, which caused many to discredit his thought: "For the Victorians, the most notable instance of Newman's skepticism is to be found in his oft-repeated insistence on the dogmatic principle in religion. That insistence was proof of his doubts about religion and perhaps everything else"¹³⁶.

From the moment of his conversion, Newman sought to deepen and explicitly clarify his position regarding the nature of reason, knowledge and truth, since he wanted to write in consonance with Catholic Tradition. The opposition and criticisms he encountered led him to write the *Apologia* in 1864 and *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* in 1870, also to reprint his *Oxford University Sermons* with a new preface and copious additional notes in 1871. Abraham explains that

when John Henry Newman went to Rome late in 1846, after his transition to Catholicism, he found himself under suspicion by the theological powers that be for his views on the relation between faith and reason. Insiders worried that he was a fideist who failed to acknowledge the objective evidence for faith; he was genuinely afraid some of his *University Sermons* would end up on the *Index of Prohibited Books*. The temptation to trim his sails must have been real; yet Newman held his ground, sought diplomatically to explain his position, and stayed the course long enough to tackle the deep

¹³⁵ *Apo*, 114.

¹³⁶ John Griffin, "Cardinal Newman and the Origins of Victorian Skepticism," *Heythrop Journal* 49, no. 6 (2008): 980. Dulles explains Newman's position "[He] gave no quarter to dogmatic relativism. He argued vigorously for the irreversibility of dogmas, not necessarily in their wording, but in their meaning. His balanced position represents a middle course between a fluid historicism and a rigid dogmatism". Dulles, *John Henry Newman*, 79.

epistemological questions that were developed later in his great *Grammar of Assent*¹³⁷.

The fiercest exponent of the view that Newman was a skeptic who did not care for truth was Charles Kingsley, whose essay in *MacMillan's Magazine* led Newman to write the *Apologia* as a defense of the honesty of his intellectual journey. Kingsley began this controversy by stating: "Truth, for its own sake, had never been a virtue with the Roman clergy. Father Newman informs us that it need not, and on the whole ought not to be"¹³⁸. At that moment in his life, twenty years after his conversion, Newman had already encountered much contradiction and disapproval; however, it was the charge of untruthfulness that prompted his thorough reply¹³⁹.

Although the publication of his *Apologia* restored Newman's reputation in England among Protestants, Anglicans and Catholics and marked a new beginning in his public life¹⁴⁰, in some quarters it was indeed received as evidence of his "very rationalistic and sceptical mind"¹⁴¹. When Henry Coleridge (1822-1893), seeing the good reception the *Apologia* had, prompted him to start writing again, Newman turned down the suggestion explaining that in "seasons [such as this] extreme views alone are in favour, and a man who is not extravagant is thought treacherous"¹⁴².

¹³⁷ Abraham, "Revelation," 304.

¹³⁸ Charles Kingsley, "Review of Froude's *History of England*, Vols. VII and VIII," *MacMillan's Magazine* 9 (1864): 217.

¹³⁹ Cf. *Apo*, 87.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 549.

¹⁴¹ George Denison, "Review of Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*," *Church and State Review* 27, no. 5 (1864): 56. Another reviewer accused Newman of "reckless skepticism taking the form of the wildest superstition". James Stephen, "Dr. Newman's *Apologia*," *Fraser's Magazine* 70, no. 417 (1864): 285. A thorough exposition of reviews that follow this line can be found in Klaver, "The *Apologia*," 462-64.

¹⁴² *LD*, xxi 160.

Thus, six years would pass before Newman publishes the *Grammar of Assent*, in which he pursued a twofold objective: to show that one can believe what one cannot understand and that one can believe what one cannot absolutely prove¹⁴³. At that time, “Catholic theologians had difficulty accepting his non-syllogistic, informal model of reason as rational at all”¹⁴⁴. His appeal to feeling, experience and the personal dimension of assent made some suspect that he was falling into the liberal Protestantism which had attracted him in his youth¹⁴⁵. These lines from the review Thomas Harper (1821-1893) made of the *Grammar* exemplify this suspicion: “Either my inference is formally valid, or it is not. If it be formally valid, it is *ipso facto* moulded by logical law; if it is not, it is no inference at all. For a similar reason, I cannot see my way to admit of an illative sense in any way distinct from the *logos* or reason”¹⁴⁶.

Contemporary scholarship is much more understanding of Newman's intentions. In her exposition of how Newman built on Butler's principle of probability Garnett explains that:

Newman sought out the problematic elements in the world which threatened to operate powerfully and disruptively on people's imaginations, and drew on Butler to create a dynamic idea of development and of faith which could stand firm, on the one hand, against rationalism and the privileging of certain forms of 'paper logic' and, on the other, against fideism¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴³ Cf. Dessain, *John Henry Newman*, 148; *PN*, 153.

¹⁴⁴ Mark McInroy, “Catholic Theological Receptions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 504.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. McInroy, “Catholic Theological Receptions,” 504–5.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Harper, “Dr. Newman's *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*,” *The Month* 12, no. 6 (1870): 688. Another reviewer stated that with the introduction of the Illative Sense “any attempt at a common measure of truth as an ‘objective test’ is explicitly pronounced impossible”. Leslie Stephen, “Dr. Newman's Theory of Belief II,” *The Fortnightly Review* 22, no. 132 (1877): 808.

¹⁴⁷ Garnett, “Joseph Butler,” 141.

Newman seeks to prove that knowledge which is not logically nor scientifically warranted, whether in religion or secular matters, can be reasonable. As he labored, he had two groups of people in mind: on the one hand educated Victorian rationalists, as his friend William Froude, who were taught to regard as an offense to truth the acceptance of more than was demonstrated, and on the other hand, the vast majority of mankind who did not have the time nor intellectual resources to uphold their beliefs with scientific or logical explanations¹⁴⁸. Newman's philosophical appeal comes from "his ability to expand the intellectual horizons of his time and open up new constructive possibilities"¹⁴⁹. In the paragraphs that follow the way in which Newman dealt with the skepticism and fundamentalism with which he was accused will be discussed.

In his *Apologia*, Newman denounces "the all-corroding, all-dissolving scepticism of the intellect"¹⁵⁰ and in his *Theological Papers* defines skepticism as "the system which holds that no certainty is attainable, as not in other things so not in questions of religious truth and error"¹⁵¹. He wrote the *Grammar of Assent* to tackle the skepticism of a large group of serious thinkers whom he deeply esteemed and sought to help¹⁵². The general difficulty of religious belief in this age where skepticism was rapidly growing, was not helped by the fundamentalism which some clerics used as a response. In Newman's words, the unfortunate result of this approach was:

Inculcating as necessary to be believed what is not necessary, circumscribing the allowable liberty of the mind, at making certain political views as virtually *de fide*, at tying down Catholic action to what is obsolete and *effete*, and thereby at unsettling the faith of

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Dessain, *John Henry Newman*, 151–52.

¹⁴⁹ Aquino and King, "Introduction," 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Apo*, 243.

¹⁵¹ *TP*, i 150.

¹⁵² Cf. Bottone, "Newman and Wittgenstein," 67.

Catholic youth and talent, and making a dreadful breach between society and religion. I could do nothing else but fold my hands and beg God to end the tyranny, and look for Him to do so¹⁵³.

As can be seen, Newman was quite critical of this reductionist approach and chose rather to develop a broader understanding of reason. Gordon Harper (1904-1934), the editor of the volume that gathers the correspondence between Newman and Froude, explains that the first task which Newman undertook in Rome, after being made a Cardinal, was to write one more lengthy letter to Froude on the theme of belief and assent since

in the short time a curiously ironic fate had left to him, Newman desired to use his new position for the conversion of important thinkers to the Church, and the person above all others whom he wished most dearly to influence was one of the leading scientists of the day, Fellow of the Royal Society, freethinker, and lifelong friend, William Froude. For thirty-five years Newman had corresponded with Froude [...] Froude, however, remained unshaken in his skepticism¹⁵⁴.

Froude's skepticism was all-pervasive, touching upon secular as well as religious matters. He sustained "two related rules for his thinking: there is a moral obligation to doubt every proposition and conclusion; [and] the achievement of permanent certainty is impossible"¹⁵⁵. Newman attempts to counter this skepticism by appealing to "'the natural' –to how we are constituted, to what we as human beings, are and do in the arena of believing"¹⁵⁶; instead of

¹⁵³ *LD*, xxiv 247–48.

¹⁵⁴ Harper, *Newman and Froude*, 1. A detailed exposition of the friendship between Newman and Froude and significant sampling of their correspondence can be found in section 2.3 of this dissertation.

¹⁵⁵ Harper, *Newman and Froude*, 9.

¹⁵⁶ Ferreira, *Scepticism and Reasonable Doubt*, vii.

pondering how men *ought to think*, he describes how in fact *they do think*¹⁵⁷.

Newman realizes that the epistemological requirements that many of his contemporaries uphold are unrealistic and accuses “Locke and others of judging of human nature, not from facts, but from a self-created vision of optimism by the rule of ‘what they think it ought to be’. This is arguing, not from experience, but from pure imagination”¹⁵⁸. Newman proposes a different route, one that is better grounded in reality and reflects upon “the nature of reasoning in the context of normal human experience and practice, where trust and love played a fundamental role in the workings of the mind”¹⁵⁹. Based on his personal experience and that which came from his ample pastoral work, Newman writes that

assent on reasonings not demonstrative is too widely recognized an act to be irrational, unless man’s nature is irrational, too familiar to the prudent and clear-minded to be an infirmity or an extravagance. None of us can think or act without the acceptance of truths, not intuitive, not demonstrated, yet sovereign. If our nature has any constitution, any laws, one of them is this absolute reception of propositions as true, which lie outside the narrow range of conclusions to which logic, formal or virtual, is tethered; nor has any philosophical theory the power to force on us a rule which will not work for a day¹⁶⁰.

In his theory of knowledge, Newman captures the interweaving of the personal and interpersonal, formal and informal elements that make up the process of reasoning. His main argument builds upon the existence and validity of the individual’s natural ability to arrive at correct conclusions through “the cumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 73–74.

¹⁵⁸ *LD*, xxv 115.

¹⁵⁹ Garnett, “Joseph Butler,” 147.

¹⁶⁰ *GA*, 179.

of the particular case which is under review; probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be convertible into syllogisms”¹⁶¹. To this faculty he gives the name of Illative Sense, and through it, he sanctions the individual’s right to believe beyond logical or scientific demonstration.

As was discussed in section 4.4 it is pertinent to note that doubt does have a place in Newman’s theory of knowledge. He considers global skepticism as a nonstarter, which blocks even the possibility of beginning an investigation¹⁶²; however, he welcomes a reasonable skepticism in which doubts, considered as specific and well-founded reservations, spark the process of inquiry¹⁶³.

Understanding human nature and being a firm defender of personal conscience, Newman is aware that “philosophical skepticism leads [...] to some variety of authoritarianism. When doubt is cast upon the possibility of discovering truth by the use of reason, other means of achieving certitude are required”¹⁶⁴. Through his sanction of the Illative Sense he evades skepticism without yielding to a system of authoritarian dogmatic assertion¹⁶⁵.

Newman finds the proper balance by recognizing the limits of human reason while upholding its ability to know and freely assent to reality. In this way, his theory of knowledge overcomes the trap of fundamentalism. Newman maintains that formulas and dogmas are but symbols, expressions of a truth that is much deeper, and by its very nature unable to be contained by nor restricted to any one specific formula:

¹⁶¹ *GA*, 288.

¹⁶² Cf. Aquino, “The British Naturalist Tradition,” 165.

¹⁶³ Cf. *GA*, 377.

¹⁶⁴ David Nicholls, “Conscience and Authority in the Thought of W. G. Ward,” *The Heythrop Journal* 26, no. 4 (1985): 416.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Cosgrove, “Newman, James and Scepticism,” 56.

Particular propositions, then, which are used to express portions of the great idea vouchsafed to us, can never really be confused with the idea itself which all such propositions taken together can but reach, and cannot exceed. As definitions are not intended to go beyond their subject, but to be adequate to it, so [...] dogmatic statements [...] however multiplied, cannot say more than is implied in the original idea, considered in its completeness [...] Dogmas live in the one idea which they are designed to express, and which alone is substantive; and are necessary only because the human mind cannot reflect upon that idea, except piecemeal, cannot use it in its oneness and entirety, nor without resolving it into a series of aspects and relations. And in matter of fact these expressions are never equivalent to it; we are able, indeed, to define the creations of our own minds, for they are what we make them and nothing else¹⁶⁶.

For Newman a real idea is timeless, eternal; however, the formulations in which it is expressed in order to be understood and communicated are relative to time and context¹⁶⁷.

Context is also important to understand the full scope of Newman's achievement. Speaking about his understanding of reason and its operations, Ramelow provides an insightful framework for Newman's work which serves as well as a fitting transition for the discussion of Newman and fundamentalism:

The modern quest for certainty would never have arisen, had the certainty of faith never been experienced. Without this experience, modern man would not despair over the apparent inability of natural reason to find certainty. This is not the diagnosis of J. H. Newman, but it might provide the proper context for his explorations of the problem of certainty. *His response is not a simple and fideistic return to the certainty of faith, but the analysis and restoration of the normal*

¹⁶⁶ *US*, 331–32.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Dev*, 40.

workings of natural reason. Natural reason has its own certitude, but it is different from the certainty at which modern thought aims¹⁶⁸.

In the *Grammar*, Newman claims that the scope and range of reason covers a much more vast territory than that which is covered by formal logic and scientific demonstration, arguing that non-syllogistic mental processes are reasonable despite being informal. When recognizing the limits of reason, instead of abdicating from it, Newman “expands the prevailing view of rationality such that it includes the practical, the concretely lived, and that which is not strictly scientific”¹⁶⁹. Reason is enlarged by Newman’s theory, not diminished.

When talking about the abdication or constraint of reason in the context of Newman’s writings, one could speak of fideism, dogmatism or fundamentalism. Although these terms have particular nuances depending on the context in which they are used, in this chapter they are treated with a univocal meaning and the term fundamentalism is given preference.

As Newman’s concerns regarded primarily religious beliefs, often his position is described as a rejection of fideism understood as “any attempt to show that faith is immune to the demands of reason”¹⁷⁰. However, Newman does not use the term fideism in any of his public works; its only appearance is in his correspondence in relation to the first Catholic edition of his *Oxford University Sermons* in 1847, where he expresses concern over being associated with the fideistic

¹⁶⁸ Anselm Ramelow, “Knowledge and Normality: Bl. John Henry Newman’s *Grammar of Assent* and Contemporary Skepticism,” *Nova et Vetera* 11, no. 4 (2013): 1082. Emphasis added.

¹⁶⁹ McInroy, “Catholic Theological Receptions,” 509.

¹⁷⁰ Terence Penelhum, *God and Skepticism: A Study in Skepticism and Fideism* (Boston: Reidel Publishing, 1983), 2.

philosophy of Louis Bautain (1796-1867) and thus censored by the Holy See¹⁷¹.

Even though Newman frequently speaks about dogma (development of dogma, defense of dogma, etc), in the few instances in which he uses the term “dogmatism”, he does so with a different meaning than that which the term has today. In an *Essay on Development* he refers to the process of the development of the faith through the centuries as dogmatism¹⁷², and in “The Tamworth Reading Room” he uses it to denote the contents of the faith¹⁷³. These meanings are quite different than its contemporary understanding as “the tendency to lay down principles as incontrovertibly true, without consideration of evidence or the opinions of others”¹⁷⁴.

Since the aim of the chapter is to discuss Newman’s view regarding reductionist philosophical positions as applied to secular as well as religious matters, this section will speak of fundamentalism, understood as strict non-rational adherence to the basic principles of any subject or discipline¹⁷⁵. As it has been shown, Newman was charged with fundamentalism in several instances; however, he firmly upheld the powers of reason, showing a great openness to the development of ideas and defending personal conviction versus coercion as a method to obtain adherence to any belief.

Newman’s defense of reason has been widely discussed in this dissertation. In order to avoid being redundant, only one aspect will be mentioned now which does not have a particular relevance but has not been discussed beforehand.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman Based on His Private Journals and Correspondence* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), 1:162–75.

¹⁷² Cf. *Dev*, 360.

¹⁷³ Cf. *DA*, 277.

¹⁷⁴ “Dogmatism,” in *Lexico.com* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁷⁵ Cf. “Fundamentalism,” in *Lexico.com* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Even though Newman was a renowned apologist and encouraged others to grow in their understanding of the world through study and inquiry, he maintains that intellectual reasons are not enough to uphold one's beliefs. He writes in the *Grammar*:

Why am I to begin with taking up a position not my own, and unclothing my mind of that large outfit of existing thoughts, principles, likings, desires, and hopes, which make me what I am? If I am asked to use Paley's argument for my own conversion, I say plainly I do not want to be converted by a smart syllogism; if I am asked to convert others by it, I say plainly I do not care to overcome their reason without touching their hearts. I wish to deal, not with controversialists, but with inquirers¹⁷⁶.

While intellectual grounding is commendable for belief, it is not sufficient. Newman writes to Robert Ormsby, a professor in the Catholic University of Dublin, regarding how he should proceed with the education of the young men under his care: "Cut and dried answers out of a dogmatic treatise are no weapons with which the Catholic Reason can hope to vanquish the infidels of the day [...] Truth is wrought out by many minds working together freely"¹⁷⁷. In this letter, Newman strongly encourages inquiry and the free and fair play of the intellect, as the best means not only for intellectual growth but for moral growth as well. He concludes by expressing his discontent when free inquiry is not allowed¹⁷⁸.

Newman also argues that when new problems arise, merely to conserve known formulas does not necessarily mean to preserve right doctrine. In regards to the foundation and governance of the Oratory, which at his time had a history of two centuries, Newman asked

¹⁷⁶ GA, 424–25. William Paley (1743-1805) is considered one of the first Christian evidentialists and is known for his work *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity* (1802).

¹⁷⁷ LD, xx 425–26.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. LD, xx 424–26.

himself: “Did loyalty to the past mean development or revival? Did fidelity to the tradition imply growth or imitation? It was one of [his] deepest convictions that to cling to the literal letter of the past was to lose its essential spirit, and therefore to betray it”¹⁷⁹. One of the fundamental principles in his *Essay on Development* is that “if a great idea is duly to be understood [...] its vital element needs disengaging from what is foreign and temporary [...] In time it enters upon strange territory [...] and old principles reappear under new forms. *It changes with them in order to remain the same*”¹⁸⁰.

Alongside this principle of discernment and adaptation, Newman also upholds freedom. In the above-mentioned letter to Ornsby he states: “Denunciation effects neither subjection in thought nor in conduct [...] You cannot make men believe by force and repression [...] you train the reason to defend the truth. Galileo subscribed what was asked of him, but is said to have murmured: ‘*E pur muove*’”¹⁸¹. Newman believes that a person should be “kept from scepticism, not by any external prohibition, but by admiration, trust, and love”¹⁸². As it has been argued,

Newman thinks that faith is not exempt from or impervious to rational scrutiny (*pace* fideism). Furthermore, Newman emphasizes the cumulative nature of evaluating evidence (*pace* the idealized accounts of reason) [...] What Newman calls into question, then, is an idealized (if not impossible) set of rational demands, not reason itself. In one sense, Newman thinks that faith has an evidential basis, though this basis is not necessarily spelled out in providing reasons¹⁸³.

Newman’s theory of knowledge provides a nuanced understanding of the possibilities and limits of reason. The way he

¹⁷⁹ Ker, *Biography*, 441.

¹⁸⁰ *Dev*, 40. Emphasis added.

¹⁸¹ *LD*, xx 425.

¹⁸² *LD*, xx 430.

¹⁸³ Aquino, “Epistemology,” 390.

steered clear from skepticism and dogmatism is fruitful because it shows the individual how to tolerate certain ambiguity in doctrinal formulations, while understanding that the limits in the formula do not imply an impoverishment of the reality, but rather, can prove to be an enrichment for its comprehension.

When one is able to avoid both, skepticism and fideism, and uphold reason as understood by Newman, one can act as a “learned Aristotelian” who answers questions that did not occur in the age of the “Master” in a fashion consonant with his vision¹⁸⁴. It is within this balance that human reason can be truly fruitful and allow the individual to grow in his commitment to the truth.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. *TP*, ii 156–57; Merrigan, “Newman and Theological Liberalism,” 618.

6. Newman's contributions to strengthen our commitment to truth

Throughout his life, Newman was deeply aware of the uniqueness of his position and of his possibilities to make a contribution and steer the course of rationalistic thought towards a more wholesome understanding of reason. In 1848 he wrote in his diary: "God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission [...] I have a part in this great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connexion between persons [...] I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place"¹.

As it has been argued, Newman's commitment to truth was the thread that wove together his reflections, writings and choices. He did not limit himself to analyze the progress made in science and philosophy and denounce some of its abuses; rather, he sought to find a way forward from the reductionist views that dominated his intellectual environment as he believed that "to murmur and rail at the state of things under which we find ourselves, and to prefer a former state, is not merely indecorous, it is absolutely unmeaning"². In his multiple works, he was more concerned with presenting truth to the mind and heart than with avoiding error³. His commitment to truth underpinned his efforts as a preacher, apologist, educator, philosopher and theologian and provided his missionary efforts with a unity of purpose, which consisted in equipping his contemporaries with the intellectual resources they needed to uphold their beliefs and values⁴.

¹ *MD*, 301–02.

² *US*, 67.

³ Cf. Frey, "The Philosophical Personalism of Newman," 54.

⁴ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 59.

In his analysis of Newman's philosophical relevance, Marchetto identifies a third way that Newman proposed in contrast to ascertaining either irrationality or the supremacy of reason and indicates that the following elements are at the core of Newman's proposal:

- the assertion of the person as a living system
- the enlargement of the idea of reason
- the recognition of conscience as its own center
- the identification of tradition as that which embodies the truth and sustains individuals and communities
- the delineation of one absolute truth in multiple forms of personal existence⁵.

Even though every philosopher that has engaged with Newman's work analyzes his contributions from a particular lens and brings out diverse nuances, Newman is often regarded as "the pioneer of a new philosophy of the individual Person and Personal Life"⁶. It is commonly agreed that one of his chief concerns was to enable the individual to justify and realize his assent to truth beyond scientific or logical demonstration: "He sought [...] to make people realize the truths that they were so fruitlessly professing [and] appeal not only to the intellect but also to the heart, and in this way to stir up his listeners to action"⁷.

Newman undertakes this task of the defense of truth with the development of the notion of the Illative Sense⁸, grounding assent in the conscience of the individual and aiming for practices, conceivable effects, or what he would call real assent (versus merely notional assent)⁹. In his repeated insistence on the need to realize what one

⁵ Cf. Marchetto, "Philosophical Relevance of Newman," 321.

⁶ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 250.

⁷ Crosby, *The Personalism of Newman*, 34.

⁸ Cf. Dessain, *John Henry Newman*, 148.

⁹ Cf. Crosby, "Coincidentia Oppositorum," 206.

thinks, writes or says Newman advances half a century some insights held by pragmatist philosophers.

In a manner that resembles the Illative Sense, in which the strength of a cable (proposition) lies in the combination of a number of separate threads (formal and informal inferences) bound together¹⁰, this final chapter identifies five resources, within Newman's vast contributions, that help strengthen the individual's commitment to truth. Newman does not identify one "silver thread" to uphold belief; rather, he claims that the consideration of the mutual positions and bearings of a broad range of notions is what aids the person in her growth in knowledge and attainment of truth¹¹.

This chapter does not deal with the conditions for assent, but rather with the means, or resources, which Newman proposes to assist the person in her commitment to truth. Some of these are not broadly discussed in his works; however, there is enough evidence to merit their inclusion. First, Newman's understanding of a liberal education and the goal it pursues is presented. Afterward, the discussion moves towards his sense of community and tradition as the setting in which the formation of the individual finds the most adequate grounding. Third, Newman's understanding of personal influence as a very effective means of formation is portrayed, followed by an account of his understanding of conscience as the core of the individual. In the fifth section, these elements are brought together and discussed in relation to fallibilism and pluralism, seen as the philosophical stances that allow the totality of the edifice of Newman's philosophy to stand and sustain a life committed to the truth.

¹⁰ Cf. *LD*, xxi 146.

¹¹ Cf. David Paternostro, "How St. John Henry Newman Can Help Us Understand Why Catholics are Leaving the Church," *America Magazine* (blog), January 2020.

6.1. Liberal education¹²

In 1863 Newman wrote in his diary: “From first to last education, in this large sense of the word, has been my line”¹³. By the large sense of the word, he refers to intellectual excellence, the object he consistently pursues in the nine discourses that comprise his *Idea of a University*. Newman understands the goal of education to be “nothing more or less than intellectual excellence”¹⁴, and sets liberal studies as an essential element in the attainment of this goal. He sees in the liberal arts “the best instruments of mental cultivation, and the best guarantees for mental progress”¹⁵ as he believes that

knowledge is not a mere extrinsic or accidental advantage, which is ours today and another's tomorrow, which may be got up from a book, and easily forgotten again, which we can command or communicate at our pleasure, which we can borrow for the occasion, carry about in our hand, and take into the market; it is an acquired illumination, it is a habit, a personal possession, and an inward endowment¹⁶.

Newman believes that the best way to acquire this inward endowment is a liberal education understood as a process of training, in contraposition to the mere attendance of lectures or the reading of many books. He follows the views of his provost at Oriel College, Edward Copleston (1776-1849), who maintained that “to exercise the mind of the student is the business of education, rather than to pour in

¹² This section is based upon a chapter from my MA Thesis: “The University as a Place for Intellectual Excellence,” in *Philosophy in Higher Education: A Study of J. H. Newman's The Idea of a University* (Madrid: Apeiron, 2019), 55–61 and a paper I presented in 2019: “Utilitarianism and Leisure as Understood by J. H. Newman in *The Idea of a University*” (Annual Conference of the Newman Association of America, University of Holy Cross, 2019).

¹³ *AW*, 259.

¹⁴ *Idea*, 121.

¹⁵ *Idea*, 262.

¹⁶ *Idea*, 113.

knowledge”¹⁷. Newman understands the training of the intellect as a dialectical process that involves the concurrence of giving and receiving insights, principles and methodology¹⁸.

In addition to developing reason’s habits and opening unknown horizons through new content, “intellectual illumination does not simply develop reason, it transforms the knower”¹⁹. Newman is convinced that intellectual labor bears its fruit in the virtuous behavior, a clear judgment, an articulate expression and a vivid imagination; thus he proposes a liberal education as the most effective means for forming good citizens²⁰. Towards the end of his sixth discourse on university education, he affirms with vigor that knowledge “*is* a something, and [...] *does* a something”²¹.

Framed within the totality of his philosophical project, the cardinal questions that Newman asks regarding education are “how best to strengthen, refine, and enrich the intellectual powers? [...] What subjects beget the genuine habit of mental cultivation?”²². He conceives education as a continual process of improvement or elevation of human nature, which is achieved “not by undoing it, but by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims higher than its own”²³. This process, which comprises Newman’s educational ideal, is built on three pillars: the unity, universality and utility of knowledge. One of his core educational thesis is that

¹⁷ William Copleston, *Memoir of Edward Copleston, Bishop of Llandaff* (London: John Parker, 1851), 38.

¹⁸ Cf. Frederick Aquino, “The Craft of Teaching: The Relevance of Newman for Theological Education,” *Christian Higher Education* 2, no. 3 (2003): 281.

¹⁹ Hughes, “The Contemplative Function of Theology,” 16.

²⁰ Cf. *Idea*, 167; Ian Ker, “Newman on Education,” *Studies in Catholic Higher Education*, 2008, 8.

²¹ *Idea*, 148.

²² Miller, “Newman’s *Idea of a University*: Is It Viable Today?,” 8.

²³ *Idea*, 123. The known maxim from St. Thomas Aquinas comes to mind: “Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it” *Summa Theologica*, i, q.1, a.8.

“knowledge is capable of being its own end”²⁴, and as a consequence should not be subjugated to any other objective, which at first sight may appear to be more useful or profitable. Newman begins his seventh discourse on university education by asking rhetorically:

On the supposition that the article called ‘a Liberal Education’ does not teach us definitely how to advance our manufactures, or to improve our lands, or to better our civil economy; or again, if it does not at once make this man a lawyer, that an engineer, and that a surgeon; or at least if it does not lead to discoveries in chemistry, astronomy, geology, magnetism, and science of every kind, what is its real worth in the market?²⁵

Newman knows that many object to his *Idea* because they see a liberal education as useless. However, he argues that utility is an important end of education and presents knowledge as the most useful of goods to be sought. To explain this matter, he makes a parallel with bodily health and argues that health is a good in itself: even though we cannot identify any concrete product it effects, it is worth seeking and caring for. Despising it because it does not entitle one to perform a particular task would be absurd as health empowers us to perform *any* task. Newman applies this same principle to knowledge as a good to be sought by the intellect for its own sake, since it empowers the individual to perform any task with more ease and profit²⁶.

Nevertheless, Newman maintains that the utility of education is found in itself, before being found in what it enables the individual to achieve. He affirms that what is useful is not limited to what is immediately good, but also encompasses what tends to the good or is instrumental for the good. Arguing from the very foundations of the discussion, Newman presents his conception of utility and its

²⁴ *Idea*, 103.

²⁵ *Idea*, 153.

²⁶ Cf. *Idea*, 152, 164–66.

relationship to knowledge: “Though the useful is not always good, the good is always useful”²⁷. In order to illustrate his views, he writes:

*Looking always to real utility as our guide, we should see, with equal pleasure, a studious and inquisitive mind arranging the productions of nature, investigating the qualities of bodies, or mastering the difficulties of the learned languages. We should not care whether he was chemist, naturalist, or scholar, because we know it to be as necessary that matter should be studied and subdued to the use of man, as that taste should be gratified, and imagination inflamed*²⁸.

Although Newman recognized these outcomes and wanted his students to acquire marketable skills²⁹, he believes that the real utility of knowledge lies in the fact that it directs the person to “a more profound understanding of [his] identity”³⁰. He incorporated a school of engineering and a school of medicine at the Catholic University of Dublin; however, he made liberal education the foundation of both schools, as he knew that having a greater dominion over the world is useless if the individual ignores the finality of such dominion. Newman observed that individuals were rapidly growing in their technical capacities, but did not know which are the things they need to do, and much less, for what purpose. These answers are provided by a liberal education, not by professionalization; this is why Newman advocates for the former as a basis for the latter.

Newman also denounces the depersonalization of education that started to take place in universities at his time. He writes that “there is to be nothing individual in [a utilitarian education]. What the steam engine does with matter, the printing press is to do with mind; it is to act mechanically, and the population is to be passively, almost

²⁷ *Idea*, 164.

²⁸ *Idea*, 161.

²⁹ Cf. Barr, “Ireland,” 64.

³⁰ Hughes, “The Contemplative Function of Theology,” 13.

unconsciously enlightened”³¹. In contrast to this view, Newman upholds a personalized education, which has at its heart “a dynamic dependence of objective meaning upon subjective perception”³². Education, in Newman’s mind, is carried out through lively inquiry within a community setting; he argues that only “when we are free from necessary duties and cares, [...] we are in a condition for desiring to see, to hear, and to learn”³³. Understanding the freedom of students to inquire and to build relationships as a necessary means to achieve intellectual excellence, Newman “humanizes knowledge and contends that embodied wisdom is indispensable to university education”³⁴.

Newman observes that an excess of information may prove detrimental for education. He affirms that the needed “training is a matter of rule; [that] it is not mere application, however exemplary, which introduces the mind to truth, nor the reading many books, nor the getting up many subjects, nor the witnessing many experiments, nor the attending many lectures”³⁵. He conceives that a “liberal education consists in personally interpreting specific information within a broad horizon of knowledge”³⁶; therefore, he sees the acquisition of intellectual excellence as an eminently active process in which the student is the leading actor of his growth, not a passive one³⁷.

Regarding the broad but superficial exposure to a multiplicity of subjects, Newman comments that the proliferation of scientific and literary works can only be a benefit for the general public if people are first given a liberal education that will enable them to understand and give what they read its proper value in relation to the entire circle of

³¹ *Idea*, 142–43.

³² Magill, “Newman on Liberal Education and Moral Pluralism,” 47.

³³ *Idea*, 104.

³⁴ Aquino, “The Craft of Teaching,” 272.

³⁵ *Idea*, 151–52.

³⁶ Magill, “Newman on Liberal Education and Moral Pluralism,” 48.

³⁷ Cf. Ian Ker, “Newman’s *Idea of a University* and Its Relevance for the 21st Century,” *Australian eJournal of Theology* 18, no. 1 (2011): 25.

knowledge³⁸. He fears that the attempt to remedy the lack of a liberal education by the reading of many books might lead to narrow-mindedness, and even to the tyrannizing of the mind:

[People] may read without thinking; and in their case [...] it holds good, that such knowledge is unworthy of the name, knowledge which they have not thought through, and thought out. Such readers are only possessed by their knowledge, not possessed of it; nay, in matter of fact they are often even carried away by it, without any volition of their own. Recollect, the Memory can tyrannize, as well as the Imagination³⁹.

Instead of focusing on the contents of education, Newman speaks of the necessary conditions for a person to acquire a philosophical habit of mind, as “it is not ‘culture’ in the modern sense of the word that he is concerned with, but rather ‘mental cultivation’”⁴⁰. Newman finds in leisure a very efficient means to counteract the superficiality, thoughtlessness and celerity by which the life of his contemporaries is permeated, and a necessary means to prepare them to be transformed by the knowledge they acquire.

Being well aware that “enlargement of mind and leisure enjoy a long relationship”⁴¹, Newman understands leisure as it was comprehended in the Greek culture, which conceived it not as an occasion for dispersion, but as the tranquility and openness of soul necessary for intellectual growth⁴². This is why he advocates for liberal studies, because these arts “free” the intellect and in doing so enable its growth:

³⁸ Cf. *Idea*, 143.

³⁹ *Idea*, 140–41.

⁴⁰ Ker, “Newman on Education,” 5.

⁴¹ Hughes, “The Contemplative Function of Theology,” 14.

⁴² Cf. Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1998), 3–4.

The bodily eye, the organ for apprehending material objects, is provided by nature; the eye of the mind, of which the object is truth, is the work of discipline and habit. [The university is where] this process of training, by which the intellect, instead of being formed or sacrificed to some particular or accidental purpose, some specific trade or profession, or study or science, is disciplined for its own sake, for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own highest culture⁴³.

Newman's understanding of liberal education does not consist in a set of subjects, and rather than being related to content it is related to method. He considers liberal education in opposition to illiberal or technical education, which enables a person to exercise a profession. Illiberal education is oriented towards production, and as such, it is eminently utilitarian. In contrast, liberal education seeks to form the free man, the citizen, one who is not bound by any particular task, rather is free for contemplation understood as knowledge, following the Greek origin of the term, hence the adjective *liberal*. In short, liberal education is the one that *liberates* the mind from the preoccupations and occupations that impede its flourishing.

A liberal education is not necessarily equated with mental pursuits, as illiberal education is not necessarily equated with bodily tasks. Newman "holds that some bodily pursuits are liberal while some pursuits of the mind [...] are not"⁴⁴; for example, he sets gymnastics as an example of a bodily, yet liberal, art. He describes liberal knowledge as that which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be informed by any end or absorbed into any profession⁴⁵.

A further element which Newman upholds as a means to intellectual excellence is inquiry. He considers that one of the

⁴³ *Idea*, 152.

⁴⁴ Dunne, "Newman Now," 423.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Idea*, 107–8.

characteristics of an educated person is that she inquires about the truth of things⁴⁶ and believes students must be given sufficient time and space to explore reality freely, as this exploration is an essential requirement for the development of thought. Creativity is sparked when thought is not constrained by the boundaries of time⁴⁷.

Newman sees as a grave problem in education, perhaps the gravest, that students “have too much on their hands to indulge themselves in thinking or investigation”⁴⁸. He observes that they have so much work to *do* that they do not have time to *think*. After speaking about “the drudgery so ignoble” to which students are exposed when they are taught a wide multiplicity of subjects, he exclaims:

How much more profitable for the independent mind, after the mere rudiments of education, to range through a library at random, taking down books as they meet him, and pursuing the trains of thought which his mother wit suggests! How much healthier to wander into the fields, and there with the exiled Prince to find ‘tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks’!⁴⁹

Borges counsel fits well in this context: “Seek for the pleasure in seeking, not in finding”⁵⁰. This is what Newman would describe as elbow-room for inquiry in a lecture he gave as Rector of the

⁴⁶ *Idea*, 75.

⁴⁷ “Scholars and poets have suggested over the years that the timeless intensity of the present moment is a gateway to creativity and joy. Creativity in particular is associated with highly intrinsically motivated states, loss of self-consciousness and the sense of time” Charalampos Mainemelis, “When the Muse Takes It All: A Model for the Experience of Timelessness in Organizations,” *The Academy of Management Review* 26, no. 4 (2001): 548.

⁴⁸ *Idea*, 149.

⁴⁹ *Idea*, 149–50. Newman quotes Shakespeare’s play “As you like it”, act 2, scene 1, which puts these words in the mouth of Duke Senior: “Sweet are the uses of adversity / Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, / Wears yet a precious jewel in his head; / And this our life, exempt from public haunt, / Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything. / I would not change it”.

⁵⁰ Jorge Luis Borges, *Poesía Completa*, ed. Sara Luis del Carril (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 2009), 332. My translation. The original phrase in Spanish says “Busca por el agrado de buscar, no por el de encontrar”.

University⁵¹. He is well aware that the intellect does not possess a pre-conceived route for knowledge, rather it searches, explores, finds dead-ends and starts all over again, since “there are no short cuts to knowledge; nor does the road to it always lie in the direction in which it terminates”⁵². Newman uses two analogies to exemplify this principle. He speaks about a mountain hike and says that no one can go up on a straight path, rather one needs to roam a bit, or a lot, to find sure support and clear pathways for his ascent. He also says that no vessel can make it to port without shifting sails and tacking⁵³. Miller shows

that the viability of Newman's *Idea* can be addressed in terms of his dialectics where free inquiry and regulation come together. These are sustained by a creative tension that enables a civility of discourse. Newman's philosophy of liberal education emphasizes the active, formative power of knowledge as the source of intellectual order and meaning. They belong to the personal process of learning in the quest for truth.⁵⁴

Giving students enough time and space for inquiry is a top priority for Newman. However, he argues that inquiry is only profitable when informed by the right attitude, which he calls a philosophical approach to reality. This approach means “to articulate and to pursue answers to questions posed by human beings in general, and not only by professional philosophers. It is characteristic of human beings that, whatever our culture, we desire to know and to understand”⁵⁵. Newman believes that the university is the place to cultivate the mature fruits of philosophical inquiry by exercising oneself in dialogue with others and with reality itself. Dialogue,

⁵¹ Cf. “Christianity and Scientific Investigation” *Idea*, 456–79.

⁵² *Idea*, 474.

⁵³ Cf. *Idea*, 475.

⁵⁴ Magill, “The Intellectual Ethos of Newman,” 6.

⁵⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 180.

conversation and discussion are highly valued by him in the quest for intellectual excellence⁵⁶.

Having a philosophical attitude also means that questions are more important than answers and, even though answers are found, philosophy is kept alive through the continual deepening of the same questions. What has truly interested philosophers throughout history is to transmit this art of asking questions to their disciples, rather than transmitting particular answers⁵⁷. This is what Newman advocates as a philosophical approach to reality, which does not mean that scholars are to move in permanent circles or that advances cannot be made. The attainment of truth advances in spirals, dealing once and again with the same themes and, if done with honesty, allowing for a more precise understanding⁵⁸. In this respect, MacIntyre comments that good philosophers understood their writing

as contributing to an ongoing philosophical conversation, a conversation that had had a long history before they became a part of it and that would continue after they had fallen silent. This self understanding enabled them to treat their readers [...] as likewise contributing to that same conversation⁵⁹.

Newman believes that this philosophical conversation must not be circumscribed to a particular branch of knowledge; rather it should happen between the sciences and especially between the humanities and the natural sciences⁶⁰. To have a philosophical approach to reality means to be willing to engage, both as a listener and as a speaker, in

⁵⁶ Cf. William Rojas, "Filosofía e investigación en la universidad," *Franciscanum* 47, no. 140 (2005): 29.

⁵⁷ Cf. Lourdes Flamarique, "Enseñanza de la filosofía. Apuntes para la universidad del siglo XXI," *Pensamiento y Cultura* 11, no. 1 (2008): 100.

⁵⁸ A pragmatist theme can be appreciated: the understanding that there are better and worse ways to conduct inquiry and that these are always perfectible. Cf. Bacon, *Pragmatism*, 121.

⁵⁹ MacIntyre, *The Tasks of Philosophy*, 130–31.

⁶⁰ Cf. Gianfranco Pacchioni, *The Overproduction of Truth: Passion, Competition, and Integrity in Modern Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 150.

this ongoing conversation which touches upon the most fundamental questions of every branch of knowledge.

In Newman's understanding, liberal education is only a first step, but a necessary one, to prepare the person for any and every professional path, it "is the indispensable condition of expansion of mind, and the instrument of attaining to it; this cannot be denied, it is ever to be insisted on; I begin with it as a first principle"⁶¹. Among the qualities of education as a first principle, Newman lists force, steadiness, comprehensiveness and versatility, command of the intellect over its own powers, capacity to view and express relationships between subjects, ability to estimate things as they pass before us and competence to contrast conclusions and principles⁶².

Newman maintains that "an enlarged mind sees more, compares more, judges relations with superior insight. The liberally educated are more apt to be people of vision and of leadership"⁶³. The knowledge which is acquired through a liberal education that pursues intellectual excellence

expands and enlarges the mind, excites its faculties, and calls those limbs and muscles into freer exercise which, by too constant use in one direction, not only acquire an illiberal air, but are apt also to lose somewhat of their native play and energy. And thus, without directly qualifying a man for any of the employments of life, it enriches and ennobles all. Without teaching him the peculiar business of any one office or calling, it enables him to act his part in each of them with better grace and more elevated carriage; and, if happily planned and conducted, is a main ingredient in that complete and generous education which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully, and

⁶¹ *Idea*, 129.

⁶² Cf. *Idea*, xvi.

⁶³ Hughes, "The Contemplative Function of Theology," 17.

magnanimously, all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war⁶⁴.

In short, when Newman speaks of the knowledge acquired through a liberal education, he refers to it as a personal possession, saying that “it *is* a something, and it *does* a something”⁶⁵ to its proprietor, allowing him to have a better grasp of truth.

6.2. Sense of community

An essential characteristic of Newman’s proposal for a liberal education is that it is carried out within a community of learning, in opposition to an individualistic setting; he believed that real intellectual achievement is realized through ongoing conversations carried out in a community of both the living and the dead⁶⁶. When discussing Newman’s philosophical profile, Hochschild remarks that Newman proposes a “human epistemology, not a theory of knowledge for disembodied intellects, and we cannot ignore the fact that human beings live in relation to other human beings. Learning is not a relation between one man and his ideas, but between one man and other men”⁶⁷. Newman’s own experience in Oxford, Dublin and Birmingham validates this principle.

Newman believed that the framework for a community committed to the truth should be the recognition of the individual’s need for friendship and mutual dependency⁶⁸, and showed time and again through the various projects he undertook that “communication

⁶⁴ *Idea*, 169.

⁶⁵ *Idea*, 148.

⁶⁶ Cf. Barron, “Newman among the Postmoderns,” 27.

⁶⁷ Hochschild, “The Aristotelianism of J. H. Newman,” 339.

⁶⁸ Cf. James Tolhurst, *The Church, a Communion: In the Preaching and Thought of John Henry Newman* (Herefordshire: Gracewing Publishing, 1988), 166.

of knowledge inevitably gives rise to a community of life”⁶⁹. Newman was not a lonely intellectual who worked among his papers and books and produced brilliant results; his educational, philosophical and theological work was brought to fruition in a pastoral context. His methodology not only points to his sources and conclusions, but models the way for his followers⁷⁰.

From the beginning of his career at Oriel College, Newman was greatly interested in the community formed by professors and students, and sought to reform the tutor system so it would lead to more incisive and fruitful relationships⁷¹. Newman himself profited much from this system. In his analysis of Newman's most formative philosophical sources, Sillem mentions the professors and students of the Oriel Common Room in second place, following Aristotle⁷².

The fruitfulness that results from carrying out one's inquiry within a community has a central place in Newman's *Essay on Development* where he argues that the one-sidedness of any individual, however penetrating, is corrected by the interchange of his intellectual perceptions with those of his fellow inquirers⁷³. Newman's strong advocacy for a community setting as a necessary condition for the attainment of truth holds a central place in his discourses on university education, where he explains that its natural diversity allows for specialists in different sciences to “complete, correct, balance each other. This consideration [...] must be taken into account, not only as regards the attainment of truth, which is their common end, but as

⁶⁹ Angelo Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*, trans. Michelle Borrás (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 177.

⁷⁰ Cf. Tolhurst, *The Church, a Communion*, 165; Hochschild, “The Aristotelianism of J. H. Newman,” 339.

⁷¹ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 115.

⁷² Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 164.

⁷³ Cf. Ward, “Newman's Philosophy,” 77.

regards the influence which they exercise upon those whose education consists in the study of them”⁷⁴. He explains that if he had

to choose between a so-called University, which dispensed with residence and tutorial superintendence, and gave its degrees to any person who passed an examination in a wide range of subjects, and a University which had no professors or examinations at all, but merely brought a number of young men together for three or four years, and then sent them away [...] I have no hesitation in giving the preference to that University which did nothing [...] How is this to be explained? I suppose as follows: When a multitude of young men, keen, open-hearted, sympathetic, and observant, as young men are, come together and freely mix with each other, they are sure to learn one from another even if there be no one to teach them; the conversation of all is a series of lectures to each, and they gain for themselves new ideas and views, fresh matter of thought, and distinct principles for judging and acting, day by day⁷⁵.

Newman’s notion of community is also present in the *Grammar of Assent* as an essential element for the correct functioning of the Illative Sense. He “acknowledges that refinement of the illative sense of reasoning requires the company of informed people, that is, people who, by means of practice and experience, have acquired proficiency in a field of knowledge”⁷⁶. As he maintains that the Illative Sense is more than the combination of different propositions, Newman believes that a community is “not merely a body of men living together in one dwelling, but *belonging* to one establishment. In its very notion, the word suggests to us position, authority, and stability; and again, these attributes presuppose a foundation”⁷⁷. He described this foundation

⁷⁴ *Idea*, 99–100.

⁷⁵ *Idea*, 145–46.

⁷⁶ Aquino, *Communities of Informed Judgment*, 7–8.

⁷⁷ *HS*, iii 213. Emphasis added.

well as he encouraged the professors to foster a sense of community in the Catholic University of Dublin:

It is of great importance to create among the young men a good academical secondly spirit, which may be carried on by tradition. It is scarcely too much to say that one-half of the education which young people receive is derived from the tradition of the place of education. The *genius loci* [...] is the instructor most readily admitted and most affectionately remembered. The authorities cannot directly create it; still they can encourage, and foster, and influence it⁷⁸.

Two elements Newman recognizes as essential in a community are unity and diversity. By unity, he means not only unity in principles or unity in purpose but also physical proximity; in fact, he believes that unity of purpose comes about through frequent interaction and places great value in the periodic and informal exchange of ideas between all members of a community. In the university setting, he gives this exchange a greater importance than the one he gives to established lectures and experiments⁷⁹.

Regarding the diversity of members in a community, Newman advocates it as a quality that reflects the universality of knowledge and states that the educational community should be conformed by an assemblage of strangers from every quarter of learning⁸⁰. He believes that through their interactions, specialists from diverse fields develop a unifying philosophy that reflects and enhances the unity and universality of knowledge they are trying to develop and teach. Newman argues that "it is the energy of human minds in cooperation that actually develops knowledge. If that energy is among the experts, whose knowledge is full and whose heart is set on truth, each in his

⁷⁸ *Camp*, 39.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Idea*, 146.

⁸⁰ Cf. *HS*, iii 6.

own department, the progress is obviously towards ever exacter knowledge”⁸¹.

Since Newman understands knowledge as the personal possession of living minds, he sees in the community an efficient means for the attainment of truth, which by its very nature is not partial, nor sectarian, but expansive and universal. In Newman’s words, a healthy community will

constitute a whole, it will embody a specific idea, it will represent a doctrine, it will administer a code of conduct, and it will furnish principles of thought and action. It will give birth to a living teaching, which in course of time will take the shape of a self-perpetuating tradition, or a *genius loci*, as it is sometimes called; which haunts the home where it has been born, and which imbues and forms, more or less, and one by one, every individual who is successively brought under its shadow⁸².

In his *Apologia*, speaking about community in a more general sense, Newman describes it as an “assemblage of human beings with wilful intellects and wild passions, brought together into one [...] for the melting, refining, and moulding, as in some moral factory, [...] of the raw material of human nature, so excellent, so dangerous, so capable”⁸³. The individuality and the potential for greatness of every person, as well as her melting and molding for the attainment of an ideal, are both given a place in Newman’s conception of community. However, while ascertaining that the individual has “duties to be observed towards the community”⁸⁴, he places the community at the service of the individual. He understands the community as an

⁸¹ Ward, “Newman’s Philosophy,” 95.

⁸² *Idea*, 147.

⁸³ *Apo*, 344.

⁸⁴ *LG*, 234.

instrument for perfecting the person, and avoid searching for the good of the community *by means* of the person⁸⁵.

Although the community fosters discipline and provides a foundation for the identity of its members, Newman argues that it should achieve these advantages “without ever thwarting the natural bent of the individual, or diverting his natural powers by a multiplicity of employments”⁸⁶. In this regard, the community of St. Mary’s, which he was personally responsible of leading at the Catholic University of Dublin, has been described as “congenial, comfortable, and intellectually stimulating”⁸⁷.

Thirty years after concluding his work there, Newman wrote to Froude and expounded upon his theory of knowledge and of the Illative Sense. In that letter he states that “men must have chronic familiarity to understand each other, and that truth slowly sinks into the mind, and that therefore paper argument is most disappointing”⁸⁸. As he had done in many other instances, Newman makes explicit the relationship between inquiry and truth explaining that inquiry should be carried out by a community of experts who are well-acquainted with each other, since “truth is wrought out by many minds, working together freely”⁸⁹.

In reference to Newman’s understanding of inquiry and intellectual development, Ward writes that for Newman, the individual who inquires “think about existing realities together as necessarily as they live and work together. [He is able to work] well, if he is a normal man, not alone with his thoughts, systems or books, but in a lived union of mind with other persons”⁹⁰. Besides measuring and expanding his thoughts through dialogue with his contemporaries, the inquirer is

⁸⁵ Cf. *Idea*, 160.

⁸⁶ *Prepos*, 404.

⁸⁷ Barr, “Ireland,” 65.

⁸⁸ *LD*, xxix 106.

⁸⁹ *LD*, xx 426.

⁹⁰ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 76.

meant to build on that which his predecessors have established since truth grows in time:

It is not often the fortune of any one man to live through an investigation; the process is one of not only many stages, but of many minds. What one begins another finishes; and a true conclusion is at length worked out by the cooperation of independent schools and the perseverance of successive generations⁹¹.

A community is not only an efficient means for the search and attainment of truth, but Newman believes, it is also central for its transmission, since “knowledge is something more than a sort of passive reception of scraps and details; it is a something, and it does a something, which never will issue from the most strenuous efforts of a set of teachers [...] who are teaching or questioning a set of youths who do not know them, and do not know each other, on a large number of subjects”⁹². Acquaintance and friendship make possible the transmission of knowledge and are valuable assets for a commitment to the truth which is supported by “a community with vibrant practices, nurtured by exemplars of skillful judgment”⁹³.

Newman not only upholds the notion of community but enriches it with a nuanced development of tradition and authority. Ker writes that in his work “we see a vigorously independent and original mind, yet imbued with a profound sense of authority and tradition, in the actual process of forming a balanced theory”⁹⁴. Newman understands the community to be sustained through a tradition which guarantees the needed resources for cohesion and continuity over time⁹⁵. Although most of what he wrote regarding tradition refers to the Catholic Church, it can be understood in a broader scope since he “approaches

⁹¹ *Idea*, 474–75.

⁹² *Idea*, 147–48.

⁹³ Aquino, *Communities of Informed Judgment*, 3.

⁹⁴ Ker, *Biography*, 523.

⁹⁵ Cf. Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 105.

tradition as a continuous and ongoing development that shows past and present becoming progressively more intelligible and mutually illuminating⁹⁶, and this is the way truth develops not only in ecclesiastical venues, but in secular communities as well.

In his work *The Via Media*, first published in 1837, Newman describes tradition in the following enigmatic, yet precise, way:

It is latent, but it lives. It is silent, like the rapids of a river, before the rocks intercept it. It is [an] unconscious habit of opinion and sentiment; which [humanity] reflects upon, masters, and expresses, according to the emergency. We see then the mistake of asking for a complete collection of [...] traditions; as well might we ask for a full catalogue of a man's tastes and thoughts on a given subject. Tradition in its fulness is necessarily unwritten; it is the mode in which a society has felt or acted during a certain period, and it cannot be circumscribed any more than a man's countenance and manner can be conveyed to strangers in any set of propositions⁹⁷.

Newman likens tradition to an atmosphere and clarifies that it cannot be embodied, constrained nor fully systematized within a code or treatise, but rather is sustained and passed on through the life of a community⁹⁸. While recognizing that tradition is rooted in history, Newman argues that it is not stifled by it. Writing about a group of scholars that demanded an explicit historical framework for a novel proposal, Newman exclaims: "I think them utterly wrong in what they have done and are doing; and, moreover, I agree as little in their view of history as in their acts. Extensive as may be their historical knowledge [...] they seem to me to expect from History more than History can furnish"⁹⁹. In Newman's view, history can provide facts but these need to be built upon, developed. In another instance he talks

⁹⁶ Thomas Pfau, "Newman's Idea of Tradition," *Newman Studies Journal* 12, no. 2 (2015): 86.

⁹⁷ *VM*, i 32.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Dev*, 76.

⁹⁹ *Diff*, ii 311–12.

about the systematic treatment of a doctrine as a swaddling band wrapped so tightly around an infant (he speaks of an infant to represent a budding truth) that prevents him from growing¹⁰⁰.

While Newman holds the conventional understanding of tradition, he offers his contemporaries, and successive generations, a “distinctive and influential reappraisal of tradition as a form of ‘development’”¹⁰¹, arguing for development as a trait that has to be incorporated in the understanding of truth¹⁰². Chadwick writes that

the idea of development was the most important single idea which Newman contributed to the thought of the Christian Church. This was not because the idea of development did not exist already. But it was a very restricted idea, so restricted that it posed insuperable problems for anyone who studied history with open eyes. Newman made it wider and vaguer, and thereby far more fertile in conception, and more useful to anyone who cared about intellectual honesty¹⁰³.

Through his understanding of the development of ideas, Newman strengthens the sense of community enabling it not only to harbor diverse coetaneous individuals, but also acquire a wider scope and reach amidst successive generations. He invites his contemporaries “to be deep *in* history”¹⁰⁴, this is, to place themselves not at the endpoint of history but in the midst of its making, in the midst of the reflection and trans-generational transmission of knowledge and truth¹⁰⁵. Newman understands that truth unfolds as individuals

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *LD*, xxiv 316. Newman’s imagery is so rich that his sentence is worth quoting in full: “Our theological philosophers are like the old nurses who wrap the unhappy infant in swaddling bands or boards –put a lot of blankets over him– and shut the windows that not a breath of fresh air may come to his skin as if he were not healthy enough to bear wind and water in due measure”.

¹⁰¹ Pfau, “Newman’s Idea of Tradition,” 86.

¹⁰² Cf. T. Howland Sanks, “A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Dynamics of Tradition,” *Theological Studies* 76, no. 2 (2015): 302.

¹⁰³ Owen Chadwick, *Newman: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 48.

¹⁰⁴ *Dev*, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Pfau, “Newman’s Idea of Tradition,” 93.

“compare, contrast, abstract, generalize, connect, adjust, classify”¹⁰⁶ and argues that a true development “is an addition which illustrates, not obscures, corroborates, not corrects, the body of thought from which it proceeds”¹⁰⁷.

Newman places authority, both ecclesiastical and secular, at the service of this process of development. Authority is not only meant to protect, but to promote the exercise of reason and the development of ideas amidst established communities and traditions. In the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* Newman explains that the objective of authority is “not to enfeeble the freedom or vigour of human thought in [...] speculation, but to resist and control its extravagance”¹⁰⁸. In this regard, Newman believes that “far from being mutually contradictory, authority and reason need each other precisely because, paradoxically, each is actually sustained by conflict with the other”¹⁰⁹.

In his *Apologia* Newman presents a broad notion of authority: “Conscience is an authority; the Bible is an authority; such is the Church; such is Antiquity; such are the words of the wise; such are hereditary lessons [*sic*]; such are ethical truths; such are historical memories, such are legal saws and state maxims; such are proverbs; such are sentiments, presages, and prepossessions”¹¹⁰ and speaks of his good friend and mentor, John Keble, as someone who allowed all his actions to be guided by the sanction of authority through one of the many forms it could take on. The most basic foundation that Newman

¹⁰⁶ *Dev*, 33.

¹⁰⁷ *Dev*, 200.

¹⁰⁸ *Apo*, 253.

¹⁰⁹ Ker, *Biography*, 552. In another essay Ker details Newman's view regarding authority and freedom in the Church: “For Newman, it is not finally a choice between theological freedom and an omnipotent magisterium but of a perennial and necessary conflict between theology and the magisterium, the result of which paradoxically is not the victory of one over the other or a stalemate –but the preservation and vitality of each”. Ian Ker, “Magisterium and Theologians,” in *Verantwoordelikheden in de Kerk Volgens John Henry Newman* (Nijmegen: Dispuutgezelschap HOEK, 1981), 46.

¹¹⁰ *Apo*, 290.

considers for the exercise of authority is the fact that the person is essentially a relational being, therefore her search for objective truth should develop within her relationships, foremost with God, but likewise with her contemporaries¹¹¹.

As it was argued on section 5.3, Newman does not advocate for the abdication of reason in front of authority, rather he maintains that authority can only act when reason has done her part, helping “to give objective balance and measure to the personal judgements of the illative sense”¹¹². In chapter 8 of the *Grammar* he calls for a deeper exercise of reason and the development of “a method which may act as a common measure between mind and mind, as a means of joint investigation, and as a recognized intellectual standard, –a standard such as to secure us against hopeless mistakes, and to emancipate us from the capricious *ipse dixit* of authority”¹¹³. In the subsequent chapter he presents the Illative Sense as such method.

Thus, the role of authority is to confirm the truth discovered through the Illative Sense and give a courageous witness to it, rather than advance it¹¹⁴. This is why Newman held the universities in the middle ages in high regard as he understood that their scholars were allowed free and fair play and authority did not intervene prematurely¹¹⁵. Although lengthy, the following text is worth quoting as it clearly portrays the ideal interplay between reason, community and authority in Newman’s thought:

There never was a time when the intellect of the educated class was more active, or rather more restless, than in the middle ages. And then again all through Church history from the first, how slow is authority in interfering! Perhaps a local teacher, or a doctor in some local school,

¹¹¹ Cf. Tillman, “The Personalist Epistemology of Newman,” 242.

¹¹² Tillman, “The Personalist Epistemology of Newman,” 242.

¹¹³ *GA*, 262.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Tolhurst, *The Church, a Communion*, 168.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *LD*, xx 390–93, 424–26.

hazards a proposition, and a controversy ensues. It smoulders or burns in one place, no one interposing; Rome simply lets it alone. Then it comes before a Bishop; or some priest, or some professor in some other seat of learning takes it up; and then there is a second stage of it. Then it comes before a University, and it may be condemned by the theological faculty. So the controversy proceeds year after year, and Rome is still silent. An appeal perhaps is next made to a seat of authority inferior to Rome; and then at last after a long while it comes before the supreme power. Meanwhile, the question has been ventilated and turned over and over again, and viewed on every side of it, *and authority is called upon to pronounce a decision, which has already been arrived at by reason*¹¹⁶.

Thus, Newman understands that the Illative Sense, exercised within a tradition of thought and verified by authority, is a central means for the individual to grow in his commitment to the truth. He will avail of these means most perfectly when he is able to do so within a community.

6.3. Personal influence

Combined with his sense of community, Newman is a strong advocate for cultivating personal relationships. In 1829 he writes to his sister Jemima that “it requires one to be intimate with a person, to have a chance of doing him good”¹¹⁷. His philosophy of personal influence unifies his theory of knowledge with his writings on education. As well, it is a constant theme in the *Apologia*, where he shares the witness of his own way of acting, and in his letters, where personal influence is not only the impulse but a central piece of the advice he gives to others. Crosby writes that “we cannot even begin to understand

¹¹⁶ *Apo*, 357–58. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁷ *LD*, ii 119. Three years later he explained in a sermon: “We could scarcely in any situation be direct instruments of good to any besides those who personally know us, who ever must form a small circle”. *US*, 98.

Newman and to receive his rich legacy if we do not understand [...] his teaching on personal influence”¹¹⁸.

Education is understood by Newman as a humanizing enterprise¹¹⁹, in which not only the students, but also the professors are meant to be transformed by the search for truth. He describes the university as “an *Alma Mater*, knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill”¹²⁰. In the context of this section, education can be understood in a broad sense, as a relationship that leads to the growth of the parties involved, not exclusively as the business of the university. Although most of Newman’s writings on education refer to the university, his formal engagement in one took up a relatively short time compared to the rest of his endeavors.

Within his *University Sermons*, Newman dedicates the fifth one to the topic of personal influence. He introduces it by asking:

What is that hidden attribute of the Truth, and how does it act, prevailing, as it does, single-handed, over the many and multiform errors, by which it is simultaneously and incessantly attacked? [...] It is proposed to consider, whether the influence of Truth in the world at large does not arise from *the personal influence*, direct and indirect, of those who are commissioned to teach it. [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 it¹²¹.

Early in his life Newman’s religious sense was shaped by his aunt Elizabeth Newman and by his grandmother Elizabeth Good, who taught him how to read the Bible and pray¹²²: “I was instructed in religious knowledge by kind and pious friends, who told me who my

¹¹⁸ Crosby, “Newman on Personal Influence,” 221.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Aquino, “The Craft of Teaching,” 418.

¹²⁰ *Idea*, 144–45.

¹²¹ *US*, 76, 79–80, 91–92.

¹²² Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 11.

Maker was, what great things he had done for me, how much I owed to Him, and how I was to serve Him. All this I learned from them, and I rejoice that they taught it to me”¹²³. He attributes his first conversion to the testimony of Thomas Scott¹²⁴, and in Oriel College, his relationship with Richard Whately became foundational for his entire adult life. Although they eventually parted ways over precise theological disagreements, Newman always treasured what he learned from Whately¹²⁵. His mind and spirit were mostly shaped by encounters that bore fruit because of the interest and personal witness of his interlocutors, not because of their sharp arguments.

After obtaining his fellowship, Newman insisted on making his relationship to his pupils in Oriel College a pastoral one and having direct influence over their moral and intellectual formation. However, the Provost, Edward Hawkins, thought his role should be limited to imparting lectures as it was more cost-efficient for the college. Since Newman would not yield, Hawkins decided to not assign him any more students, leading his short career as a tutor to an abrupt end in 1829. Mark Pattison (1810-1884), a fellow with Newman at Oriel, explains that personal influence “was the point which Newman would not give up, and for which he resigned, or rather was turned out”¹²⁶.

Newman’s emphasis on personal influence was also a deciding factor for ending his career as the Rector of the Catholic University of Dublin thirty years later. In that period, his biggest hardship was dividing his time between the university in Dublin and the oratory in Birmingham, as both institutions, and their members, required his constant attention. In a letter where Newman explains the motives behind his resignation he states that he “had ever acted, not by formal

¹²³ *PS*, viii 110.

¹²⁴ Cf. *Apo*, 108.

¹²⁵ Cf. *Apo*, 111–16.

¹²⁶ Pattison, *Memoirs*, 87.

authority and rule, but by influence, and this power cannot be well exerted when absent”¹²⁷. Besides his appreciation for the effects his personal influence had on those under his care, Newman regarded it as a “a key component in his personal quest for holiness”¹²⁸; it was such an essential aspect in his life and mission that he immortalized it in his motto as a Cardinal: “*Cor ad cor loquitur*”.

Through his writings, Newman identifies personal influence as the great instrument for propagating truth. He believes that only a living person is able to infuse an abstract subject with vitality and humanity, and bring others to real assent: “A man finds himself in a definite place; he grows up in it and into it; he draws persons around him; they know him, he knows them; thus it is that ideas are born which are to live, that works begin which are to last”¹²⁹. For this reason he credited the success of the Oxford Movement to the personal influence that the Tractarians held over their circle of friends and acquaintances: “Individuals who are seen and heard, who act and suffer, are the instruments of Providence in all great successes”¹³⁰.

Time and again Newman ascertains that only when an individual is convinced of what he holds to be true he is in a position to “engage, delight and absorb [another] human intelligence”¹³¹ by means of natural sympathy and attraction. In his argumentation to uphold this principle, Newman explains that he is following one of Aristotle’s maxims in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: “We are bound to give heed to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of the experienced and aged, not less than to demonstrations; because, from their having the eye of

¹²⁷ *LD*, xviii 217.

¹²⁸ Peter Nockles, “Oriel and the Making of John Henry Newman: His Mission as College Tutor,” *British Catholic History* 29, no. 3 (2009): 421.

¹²⁹ *Prepos*, 381.

¹³⁰ *LD*, iv 68.

¹³¹ *HS*, iii 186.

experience, they behold the principles of things”¹³². Within his explanation of natural inferences, Newman comments these words of Aristotle in a penetrating manner:

Instead of trusting logical science, we must trust persons, namely, those who by long acquaintance with their subject have a right to judge. And if we wish ourselves to share in their convictions and the grounds of them, we must follow their history, and learn as they have learned. We must take up their particular subject as they took it up, beginning at the beginning, give ourselves to it, depend on practice and experience more than on reasoning, and thus gain that mental insight into truth, whatever its subject-matter may be, which our masters have gained before us. By following this course, we may make ourselves of their number, and then we rightly lean upon ourselves, directing ourselves by our own moral or intellectual judgment, not by our skill in argumentation¹³³.

Newman recognizes that the one available alternative to personal influence is the exercise of power, for which he advises against as he sees it limited in its reach and prone to be degraded into persecution. For matters of belief, he compares the inefficacy of sheer argument with that of torture¹³⁴ and in the university setting he opposes the excessive multiplication of regulations since “the minute labor of a discretionary rule is too fatiguing to be exercised on a large number”¹³⁵. After being criticized for setting only a few rules to govern St. Mary’s College, the house directly under his care in the Catholic University of Dublin, Newman explains the reasoning behind his formative style in a report to Archbishop Cullen:

In proposing rules on this subject, I shall begin with laying down, first, as a guiding principle, what I believe to be the truth, that the young for

¹³² Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” book 6, question 11. Translation by Newman in *GA*, 341.

¹³³ *GA*, 341–42. He makes the same point in *HS*, iii 8–9.

¹³⁴ Cf. *US*, 63.

¹³⁵ *Camp*, 39.

the most part cannot be driven, but, on the other hand, are open to persuasion, and to the influence of kindness and personal attachment; and that, in consequence, they are to be kept straight by indirect contrivances rather than by authoritative enactments and naked prohibitions¹³⁶.

His disapproval for the exercise of power, understood as imposition and not as influence, extends also to politics, leading him to regard this practical science “as a very secondary affair, unsatisfactory because it substitute[s] impersonal categories for the real personal relationships in which human experience was encountered and dignified”¹³⁷. In the beginnings of the Oxford Movement he had a serious disagreement with William Palmer, who opposed the personal action and responsibility of individuals and wished for a Committee or an Association, with rules and meetings¹³⁸; nothing farther from Newman’s preferred way of acting, who believed that “deliverance is wrought, not by the many but by the few, not by bodies but by persons”¹³⁹.

Regarding argumentation, Newman explains that when it is understood as a methodical process or as the application of the rules of logic it has a very limited reach and can only bring the individual to notional assent. In order to be effective, logical arguments need to be complemented by real ratiocination which gives them a meaning beyond their letter, and which, while acting through them, enables the person to attain conclusions above and beyond them. Newman calls this capacity of going beyond the formality of an argument a living

¹³⁶ *Camp*, 36.

¹³⁷ Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England*, 98.

¹³⁸ Cf. *Apo*, 143. Although what Newman prized the most in the numerous projects he undertook were the persons with whom he shared his mission, he had a deep antipathy towards bureaucracy. When he was Rector of the Catholic University of Dublin, he proposed to build the University Church with his own funds as he did not want to use university funds since that would require going through a committee. Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 412.

¹³⁹ *Apo*, 135.

organon and personal gift¹⁴⁰, which cannot be contained in a proposition nor in a book as

no book can convey the special spirit and delicate peculiarities of its subject with that rapidity and certainty which attend on the sympathy of mind with mind, through the eyes, the look, the accent, and the manner, in casual expressions thrown off at the moment, and the unstudied turns of familiar conversation [...] The general principles of any study you may learn by books at home; but the detail, the colour, the tone, the air, the life which makes it live in us, you must catch all these from those in whom it lives already¹⁴¹.

The importance that Newman places in the eyes, the look, the accent, the manner of the individual who wishes to be effective in his accompaniment of others in their search for truth is very telling. This is what his parishioners remembered about him. Five decades after listening to Newman's sermons in St. Mary's Church Froude recalls with vivacity:

Greatly as his poetry had struck me, he was himself all that the poetry was, and something far beyond. I had then never seen so impressive a person. I met him now and then in private; I attended his church and heard him preach Sunday after Sunday; he is supposed to have been insidious, to have led his disciples on to conclusions to which he designed to bring them, while his purpose was carefully veiled. He was, on the contrary, the most transparent of men. He told us what he believed to be true¹⁴².

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *GA*, 316.

¹⁴¹ *HS*, iii 8–9.

¹⁴² Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, 4:278. In a similar note Grandmaison remarks: "It is paradoxical of Newman's life and influence that before and after joining the Church, he essayed to trace out a *Via Media* which would set aside all excess and every extreme, and yet, that one can scarcely mention him without emotion. So direct is his grip on souls, and so inescapable is his method of reasoning that, like the arrows in Lonfellow's poem, his shafts are shot off into space almost at random, only to be found one day still vibrating, fixed in the heart of some problem that has found its solution". Léonce de Grandmaison, "John Henry Newman, Consideré Comme Maître," *Etudes*, no. 109 (1906): 722.

A few months after asking to be received into the Catholic Church he details his own experience regarding the human elements which accompanied his conversion: “The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but [...] by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion”¹⁴³. When he was asked about the reasons for his conversion he answered:

I do not know how to do justice to my reasons for becoming a Catholic in ever so many words –but if I attempted to do so in few, and that in print, I should wantonly expose myself [...] This I will not do. People shall not say ‘We have now got his reasons, and know their worth.’ No, you have not got them, you cannot get them, except at the cost of some portion of the trouble I have been at myself. You cannot buy them for a crown piece –you cannot take them in your hand at your will, and toss them about. You must consent to *think* [...] I am not assuming that my reasons are sufficient or unanswerable, when I say this– but describing the way in which alone our intellect can be successfully exercised on the great subject in question, if the intellect is to be the instrument of conversion. Moral proofs are grown into, not learnt by heart¹⁴⁴.

This is what Newman means when he writes that in moral questions “egotism is true modesty”¹⁴⁵, he believes that in these matters a person can only speak for herself and cannot place her experience as a law unto others. However, by candidly sharing it she can enable others to make concrete their own propositions and reach real assent¹⁴⁶. Newman was always willing to walk with others on their

¹⁴³ *DA*, 293.

¹⁴⁴ *LD*, xi 110.

¹⁴⁵ *GA*, 384.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Ker, “Newman’s Standing as a Philosopher,” 73.

journey, and talk about his experience, as he did in his copious correspondence, but did not offer a shortcut for his interlocutors. As an educator and pastor, Newman helped others to internalize principles and laws so as to be able to apply them resourcefully in their own concrete situation.

The capacity to contrast and combine diverse pieces of data, theories and interpretations, transmit them and make an impression on others are essential qualities of the educator in Newman's mind. He writes that "if we wish to become exact and fully furnished in any branch of knowledge which is diversified and complicated, we must consult the living man and listen to his living voice"¹⁴⁷.

Personal lectures and accompaniment are Newman's preferred means of education since he believes that "truth, a subtle, invisible, manifold spirit, is poured into the mind of the scholar by his eyes and ears, through his affections, imagination, and reason; it is poured into his mind and is sealed up there in perpetuity, by propounding and repeating it, by questioning and requestioning, by correcting and explaining"¹⁴⁸. When a professor limits himself to meet students at public and formal engagements and dispense them with assignments, Newman says that he has not fulfilled his duty, but rather "trotted on like a squirrel in his cage"¹⁴⁹.

For these reasons, Sillem sees in Newman a Christian Socrates¹⁵⁰: he encountered his students out of the established lectures, the chapel and the academical gown and addressed their questions by opening his own mind and heart and giving testimony to the unifying principles of his own life¹⁵¹. He did not present them with prefabricated

¹⁴⁷ *HS*, iii 8.

¹⁴⁸ *HS*, iii 14.

¹⁴⁹ *HS*, iii 75.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 250.

¹⁵¹ Cf. *HS*, iii 75.

answers, but helped them to ask the right questions and taught them to think, sharing his personal involvement with the same human quandaries¹⁵². This allows him to write that truth “has come down to us, not risen up among us, and is found rather than established”¹⁵³. Summing up, Newman believes that

with influence there is life, without it there is none; if influence is deprived of its due position, it will not by those means be got rid of, it will only break out irregularly, dangerously. An academical system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils, is an arctic winter; it will create an ice-bound, petrified, cast-iron University, and nothing else¹⁵⁴.

These words can be applied not only to universities, but to any community whose members search for the truth, as “even with these few considerations before us, we shall find it difficult to estimate the moral power which a single individual, trained to practice what he teaches, may acquire in his own circle, in the course of years”¹⁵⁵. Newman’s personal investment and influence over others was deeply fruitful. He teaches those that have come after him that the individual who is able to identify and grasp the liabilities in his surroundings “must attempt to bear them on his own shoulders. Even if he is completely alone, he must make the effort. Newman’s example proves how great can be the influence of one man’s attempt to shoulder the problems; his strength became the strength of a whole generation”¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵² Cf. Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*, 176.

¹⁵³ *HS*, ii 388.

¹⁵⁴ *HS*, iii 74.

¹⁵⁵ *US*, 94.

¹⁵⁶ Colin Wilson, *Religion and the Rebel* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957), 230.

6.4. Conscience

Newman indeed was a great influence on those around him, not only because of the clarity of his argumentation and the coherence of his testimony, but because he led others, through his preaching and example, to form and rely on their own conscience. Speaking about matters of belief, he stated that “in these provinces of inquiry egotism is true modesty. In religious inquiry each of us can speak only for himself [...] he cannot lay down the law; he can only bring his own experiences to the common stock of psychological facts”¹⁵⁷. At a time when freedom of conscience was emerging as a novelty, and was looked upon with suspicion by many in the Church and in the political establishment, Newman argued that “obedience to our conscience, in all things, great and small, is the way to know the Truth”¹⁵⁸.

The *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, prompted by Gladstone's criticisms of the decrees of the First Vatican Council and published as a 150 page pamphlet in 1875, is Newman's most well-known discussion on conscience, where he describes it as “the aboriginal Vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas”¹⁵⁹. However, his doctrine of conscience is built upon a prolonged reflection and underwent a gradual development. Several sermons from his Anglican years deal with the attributes and duties of conscience¹⁶⁰, he refers to its formation in his *Essay on the Development of Doctrine* and in his *Idea of a University* and in the *Grammar of Assent* he presents his fullest and most sophisticated account of its nature¹⁶¹. While Newman

¹⁵⁷ *GA*, 384–85.

¹⁵⁸ *PS*, i 227.

¹⁵⁹ *Diff*, ii 248–49.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. “Conscience and its use” *SC*, v 236–42 (1825); “The Self-Wise Inquirer” *PS*, i 215–27 (1830); “The Testimony of Conscience” *PS*, v 237–53 (1838).

¹⁶¹ Cf. Terrence Merrigan and Geertjan Zuijdwegt, “Conscience,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 443.

elicited a rich understanding of conscience by the relations he brought forth “he did not see himself as putting forward any new ideas on the claims of conscience within the Church; nor was he”¹⁶².

Besides being at central to his intellectual interests, conscience had a crucial place in Newman’s vital trajectory. A few months before he asked to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church he wrote to Jemima: “I am distressing all I love, unsettling all I have instructed or aided. I am going to those whom I do not know, and of whom I expect very little. I am making myself an outcast, and that at my age. Oh, what can it be but a stern necessity which causes this”¹⁶³. The necessity he speaks about is the necessity of following his conscience.

Although Newman’s “life and work could be designated a single great commentary on the question of conscience”¹⁶⁴, he does not present a systematic treatise in any of his writings, rather he identifies and develops some of its dimensions and characteristics which, seen in a superficial way, could appear to be one-sided or even contradictory. Newman’s doctrine of conscience portrays a nuanced harmony of its deeply personal and yet relational nature, understanding it to be both a moral sense and a sense of duty. In some instances Newman speaks of conscience as a faculty of reason and in others as the voice of God which is innate to the person and, at the same time, requires careful education. Among the many descriptions of conscience which Newman writes, these lines from the *Grammar* provide a comprehensive view:

[Conscience] is a moral sense, and a sense of duty; a judgment of the reason and a magisterial dictate [...] It is seated in the mind of the

¹⁶² Selwyn Grave, *Conscience in Newman’s Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 182.

¹⁶³ *LD*, x 595.

¹⁶⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth,” in *Benedict XVI and Cardinal Newman*, ed. Peter Jennings (Oxford: Family Publications, 2005), 45.

individual, who is thus his own law, his own teacher, and his own judge in those special cases of duty which are personal to him. It comes of an acquired habit, though it has its first origin in nature itself, and it is formed and matured by practice and experience; and it manifests itself, not in any breadth of view, any philosophical comprehension of the mutual relations of duty towards duty, or any consistency in its teachings, but it is a capacity sufficient for the occasion, deciding what ought to be done here and now, by this given person, under these given circumstances¹⁶⁵.

Newman observes that, unlike in previous centuries, in the nineteenth century “when men advocate the rights of conscience [they mean] the right of thinking, speaking, writing, and acting, according to their judgment or their humour [...] They do not even pretend to go by any moral rule, but they demand [...] for each to be his own master in all things”¹⁶⁶. He clearly distinguishes the rights of conscience from the rights of self-will, which he deprecates as a counterfeit never heard of before¹⁶⁷.

Newman also argues that conscience is intrinsically relational, not individualistic: “Conscience is not a long-sighted selfishness, nor 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”¹⁶⁸. As it was discussed in section 6.2, Newman believes that the person is a being of passion and action essentially oriented towards relationship and communion¹⁶⁹, “a humanized subject, a person of flesh and blood, a thinking, willing, feeling, imagining *res extensa*”¹⁷⁰. When the person stops listening to her conscience, gives up her personal search

¹⁶⁵ *GA*, 105, 354–55.

¹⁶⁶ *Diff*, ii 250.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth,” 43; Hütter, *Newman on Truth and Its Counterfeits*, 14.

¹⁶⁸ *Diff*, ii 248–49.

¹⁶⁹ *PN*, 33.

¹⁷⁰ Merrigan, “Conscience and Selfhood,” 866.

for the truth or delegates her decision making to others, “in some way she is losing her personality”¹⁷¹.

Grounding his reflections on this anthropological understanding, Newman does not present conscience as a faculty that determines the truth, but as the moral compass which points towards Someone else, who as “Creator [...] implanted this Law, which is Himself, in the intelligence of all His rational creatures”¹⁷². In his view

one is not simply identifiable with his or her conscience. Neither did one create or excite this sense of obligation –any more than one created or excited the experience of an external world. One found it –or, if you prefer, *one was found by it*. Conscience recognizes something or someone that is other¹⁷³.

The universal sense of right and wrong, the awareness of transgression with the associated feeling of guilt and the enjoyment felt when one has done a good deed lead Newman to believe that conscience “implies a relation between the soul and a something exterior, and that, moreover, superior to itself; a relation to an excellence which it does not possess, and to a tribunal over which it has no power”¹⁷⁴. In Newman’s anthropology “morality and ethics appear as relation: relation between persons [...] Conscience is a place where these two self-evident beings –myself and God, subjective truth

¹⁷¹ Cf. Sebastian Galecki, “Newman Versus Objectivism: The Context of Modern Rationalism, Legalism and ‘Paper Logic,’” *Prace Naukowe Akademii* 12, no. 1 (2015): 29. Galecki refers to those who, in Newman’s words, “have no firm grasp of principles, are perplexed and lose their way every fresh step they take; they do not know what to think or say of new phenomena which meet them, of whatever kind; they have no view, as it may be called, concerning persons, or occurrences, or facts, which come upon them suddenly; they cannot form a judgment, or determine on a course of action; and they ask the opinion or advice of others as a relief to their minds” *US*, 292.

¹⁷² *Diff*, ii 246.

¹⁷³ Buckley, “Conscience and Atheism in Newman,” 83. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁴ *US*, 18.

and objective Truth—meet”¹⁷⁵. He portrays this fact well in his novel *Callista*, where the protagonist explains:

I feel that God within my heart. I feel myself in His presence. He says to me, ‘Do this: don’t do that.’ You may tell me that this dictate is a mere law of my nature, as is to joy or to grieve. I cannot understand this. No, it is the echo of a person speaking to me. Nothing shall persuade me that it does not ultimately proceed from a person external to me. It carries with it its proof of its divine origin. My nature feels towards it as towards a person. When I obey it, I feel a satisfaction; when I disobey, a soreness –just like that which I feel in pleasing or offending some revered friend. So you see, Polemo, I believe in what is more than a mere ‘something.’ I believe in what is more real to me than sun, moon, stars, and the fair earth, and the voice of friends [...] An echo implies a voice; a voice a speaker. That speaker I love and I fear¹⁷⁶.

While revealing the existence of Another, the conscience in Newman’s understanding is also personal and requires the complete ownership of its premises and mandates. The individual is meant to judge by the action of his own mind, by his own lights and on his own principles¹⁷⁷; these principles “are not propositions which present themselves as abstractly obvious. They are reached by abstraction from particular experiences”¹⁷⁸.

In his last two years as an Anglican cleric in Littlemore, Newman sought to prevent others from joining his departure to the Catholic Church without doing their own personal and lengthy

¹⁷⁵ Galecki, “Newman Versus Objectivism,” 37–38.

¹⁷⁶ *Call*, 314–15. In a letter to his publisher, Newman expresses the significance of this novel by stating that he does not think that “Catholics have ever done justice to the book; they read it as a mere story book”. *LD*, xxvi 130.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *GA*, 302, 318.

¹⁷⁸ Grave, *Conscience in Newman’s Thought*, 183.

discernment; he was adamant that they should work their own reasons and follow their own path¹⁷⁹. He believed that:

Conscience is nearer to me than any other means of knowledge. And as it is given to me, so also is it given to others; and being carried about by every individual in his own breast, and requiring nothing besides itself, it is thus adapted for the communication to each separately of that knowledge which is most momentous to him individually¹⁸⁰.

In the context of his own journey, Newman explains in his *Apologia* that “He who made us, has so willed that in mathematics indeed we should arrive at certitude by rigid demonstration, but in religious inquiry we should arrive at certitude by accumulated probabilities”¹⁸¹. Although he does not state so explicitly, the personal nature of conscience as Newman presents it has led some scholars to make a parallel with the Illative Sense¹⁸². From this perspective, conscience is “a first-person, imaginative, implicit, non-discursive mode of moral reasoning focused practically on particular, concrete situations of value and duty”¹⁸³.

Summing up, conscience is the medium of the relation between the person and God, where she can hear his voice and answer in a uniquely personal manner. It is “a principle planted within us, before we have had any training, although training and experience are necessary for its strength, growth, and due formation”¹⁸⁴. The training of conscience implies following good advice, reading profitable books

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Velez, *Passion for Truth*, 369–72.

¹⁸⁰ *GA*, 390.

¹⁸¹ *Apo*, 292.

¹⁸² Cf. Walter Conn, “Newman on Conscience,” *Newman Studies Journal* 6, no. 2 (2009): 21; Ker, *Biography*, 622. Having a slightly different understanding Tillman remarks that “what is called ‘conscience’ in the moral and religious spheres [...] is analogous to what Newman calls ‘intuition’ or ‘simple assent’ when speaking more epistemologically”. Tillman, “The Personalist Epistemology of Newman,” 238.

¹⁸³ Conn, “Newman on Conscience,” 22.

¹⁸⁴ *Diff*, ii 248.

and acting upon precedent and experience¹⁸⁵; it presupposes that the person has “a serious moral commitment, a willingness to obey the moral imperative, and a fundamental choice for generosity [...] This goal is only realizable in and through a sustained moral commitment made incarnate in the mundane routine of every day”¹⁸⁶.

Patience, obedience and an absolute regard for the truth are characteristic of Newman's understanding of the formation of conscience. Six years went by between the moment of his first doubts regarding the Anglican Church and the moment in which he asked to be received in the Catholic Church. During this long period of discernment he wrote to Catherine Froude that “time alone can turn a view into a conviction [...] It is possible in process of time to have a proposition so wrought into the mind, both ethically and by numberless fine conspiring and ever-recurring considerations, [...] to command our obedience”¹⁸⁷.

Along with the patience required to discern God's voice correctly, the individual needs willingness to obey it, since moral character is improved by acts of obedience to one's conscience¹⁸⁸. Moreover, Newman argues that “human beings recognize in conscience a moral imperative that should rule over all their other choices and actions”¹⁸⁹. Even if it is mistaken, Newman claims that conscience must be obeyed:

Certainly, I have always contended that obedience even to an erring conscience was the way to gain light, and that it mattered not where a man began, so that he began on what came to hand, and in faith –that

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Gerard Hughes, “Conscience,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 201.

¹⁸⁶ Terrence Merrigan, “Myself and My Creator: Newman and the (Post-) Modern Subject,” in *Newman and Truth* (Louvain: Peeters, 2008), 18.

¹⁸⁷ *LD*, x 190.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Merrigan and Zijidwegt, “Conscience,” 440.

¹⁸⁹ Buckley, “Conscience and Atheism in Newman,” 84.

any thing might become a divine method of Truth; that to the pure all things are pure, and have a self-correcting virtue and a power of germinating¹⁹⁰.

Newman writes these words in the context of his discernment regarding whether or not to ask to be received into the Catholic Church, explaining that even if he were mistaken in following his conscience in this particular step, God would be able to bring him to the truth through a circuitous road, as the only thing that God asked of him is that he followed truth wherever it led him¹⁹¹. In this regard, it is “characteristic of Newman that he emphasized truth’s priority over goodness in the order of virtues”¹⁹².

Although the person will never attain absolute certainty regarding her decisions, Newman claims that “the nearest approach to such certainty which is possible, would seem to be afforded by [...] this good understanding (if I may use such an expression) between the soul and its conscience”¹⁹³. If she chooses to disobey her conscience, it will be silenced, but not destroyed since

man himself has not power over it [...] He did not make it, he cannot destroy it. He may silence it in particular cases or directions, he may distort its enunciations, but he cannot, or it is quite the exception if he can, he cannot emancipate himself from it. He can disobey it, he may refuse to use it; but it remains¹⁹⁴.

Besides relating conscience to a supernatural being, namely God, Newman grounds it in man’s nature stating that it “has a legitimate place among our mental acts; as really so, as the action of memory, of

¹⁹⁰ *LD*, x 190.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *Apo*, 109.

¹⁹² Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth,” 46.

¹⁹³ *PS*, v 250.

¹⁹⁴ *PN*, 53; *OS*, 64–65. Buckley explains that “if conscience is corrupted or misunderstood or deadened or neglected, there is nothing that can take its place”. Buckley, “Conscience and Atheism in Newman,” 79.

reasoning, of imagination, or as the sense of the beautiful”¹⁹⁵. Within the realm of the discernment of the particular truth which is most relevant, both for the fundamental questions of existence and as a guideline for action in specific instances, Newman advocates for the joint action of reason and conscience¹⁹⁶.

Considering conscience as a faculty of reason, Newman identifies two dimensions: a judgement of reason, which he also calls a testimony or moral sense, and a magisterial dictate which he also calls a sanction or sense of duty. He explains that these two dimensions are distinct from each other and call for separate consideration, nevertheless, they make up one indivisible act¹⁹⁷:

Conscience has both a critical and a judicial office, and though its promptings, in the breasts of the millions of human beings to whom it is given, are not in all cases correct, that does not necessarily interfere with the force of its testimony and of its sanction: its testimony that there is a right and a wrong, and its sanction to that testimony conveyed in the feelings which attend on right or wrong conduct¹⁹⁸.

Newman clearly distinguishes these two dimensions in his own discernment and shows how they have a different function and range: “My own convictions are as strong, as I suppose they can be –only it is so difficult to know whether it is a call of *reason* or of *conscience*. I cannot make out, if I am impelled by what seems clear to me, or by a sense of *duty*”¹⁹⁹. A call of reason would not be sufficient for his conversion, but a call of duty would, as it is “a voice, imperative and constraining, like no other dictate in the whole of our experience”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ *GA*, 105; Cf. *PN*, 43.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Merrigan and Zuijdwegt, “Conscience,” 444–46.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. *GA*, 105–6.

¹⁹⁸ *GA*, 106.

¹⁹⁹ *LD*, x 610.

²⁰⁰ *GA*, 107.

and signifies what a particular person must do in a specific circumstance.

Another relevant theme in Newman's writings on conscience is its relationship with authority, which he details in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* written as "the culmination of a lifelong reflection on the centrality of conscience"²⁰¹. Although Newman was invited three times to participate as an advisor in the First Vatican Council, he declined wishing to avoid another public controversy. He considered that the decrees of the council were not timely, nevertheless he accepted them with an open mind and heart. He avoided pronouncing himself until William Gladstone, who had been Prime Minister, wrote a pamphlet condemning the doctrine of papal infallibility and asserting that as a consequence of this dogmatic definition Catholics could not fulfill their civil duties²⁰². In the introduction to his reply Newman explains that:

When, then, Mr. Gladstone asks Catholics how they can obey the Queen and yet obey the Pope, since it may happen that the commands of the two authorities may clash, I answer, that it is my *rule*, both to obey the one and to obey the other, but that there is no rule in this world without exceptions, and if either the Pope or the Queen demanded of me an 'Absolute Obedience,' he or she would be transgressing the laws of human society. I give an absolute obedience to neither. Further, if ever this double allegiance pulled me in contrary ways, which in this age of the world I think it never will, then I should decide according to the particular case, which is beyond all rule, and must be decided on its own merits. I should look to see what theologians could do for me, what the Bishops and clergy around me, what my confessor; what friends whom I revered: and if, after all, I could not take their view of the matter, *then I must rule myself by my*

²⁰¹ Conn, "Newman on Conscience," 15.

²⁰² Cf. *LD*, xxvii 158–59; Ker, *Biography*, 679–88.

own judgment and my own conscience. But all this is hypothetical and unreal²⁰³.

Gladstone presents the morality of authority and the morality of conscience as two opposing models, constrained by the struggle with one another. Newman, on the other hand, sees their tension as fruitful, life-giving, and indeed necessary to uphold the social system²⁰⁴. Instead of choosing one over the other, as Gladstone or Manning (the representative of the party which held the Ultramontane view) were doing, Newman distinguishes the realms of action of each, personal conscience and external authority. Conn explains that “though occasioned by the Liberal Gladstone, the *Letter* was at least equally aimed at the Ultramontanist Manning, something of a *via media* against the left and the right”²⁰⁵.

Furthering his argument, Newman dissolves the apparent collision between conscience and authority by explaining that these two principles do not have jurisdiction in the same sense²⁰⁶. He explains that the prerogative of the Pope is engaged in general propositions, regards the domain of thought and lies in speculative matters²⁰⁷, while conscience is a practical judgement for action by a particular person in specific circumstances. In this context Newman writes that “conscience has rights because it has duties”²⁰⁸ and is meant to inform authority, while authority is meant to protect it²⁰⁹.

Newman claims that he has “not known where to look for instances of his [the Pope’s] actual interposition in our private

²⁰³ *Diff*, ii 243–44. Emphasis added.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth,” 41; Merrigan and Zuijdwegt, “Conscience,” 452.

²⁰⁵ Conn, “Newman on Conscience,” 15.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Grave, *Conscience in Newman’s Thought*, 181.

²⁰⁷ Cf. *Diff*, ii 256, 341.

²⁰⁸ *Diff*, ii 250.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth,” 46.

affairs”²¹⁰, however, since ““there is no rule in this world without exceptions,’ Newman gave ‘absolute obedience to neither.’ And should these allegiances ever conflict, he would decide the particular case on its own merits, after extensive consultation, by his own judgment and conscience”²¹¹. In Newman’s own words, conscience “is to be taken as a sacred and sovereign monitor, its dictate, in order to prevail against the voice of the Pope, must follow upon serious thought, prayer, and all available means of arriving at a right judgment on the matter in question”²¹².

Although Newman did not systematically articulate his doctrine on conscience, he realized it in his own life. Amidst the decisions that guided his journey “a *unified* conscience as a radical dynamism for truth, goodness, and love”²¹³ shines through. A letter to Louisa Simeon (1843-1895), which Newman wrote while he was working on the *Grammar*, presents a good synthesis of his beliefs on this topic:

To gain [...] starting points, we must in a parallel way, interrogate our hearts, and (since it is a personal, individual matter) our *own* hearts – interrogate our own consciences, interrogate, I will say, the God who dwells there. I think you must ask the God of Conscience to enable you to do your duty in this matter [...] and this with an earnest desire to know the truth and a sincere intention of following it²¹⁴.

²¹⁰ *Diff*, ii 228.

²¹¹ Conn, “Newman on Conscience,” 94.

²¹² *Diff*, ii 257–58.

²¹³ Conn, “Newman on Conscience,” 26.

²¹⁴ *LD*, xxiv 276.

6.5. Fallibilism and pluralism

As it has been noted, Newman's life and work can be understood as a prolonged commentary on the question of conscience²¹⁵. Another angle to access Newman's journey is his unwavering commitment to the truth. In an essay which compares Newman's philosophical method to that of Putnam, Newman was described as "a man so preternaturally sensitive to the nuances of his thought, so determined to set his ideas down with absolute precision, that his honesty became an excuse for his opponents to call him dishonest"²¹⁶. The accusation of dishonesty was precisely what prompted him to write his *Apologia*, and explain with exquisite subtlety the development of his thought.

The six chapters that comprise this dissertation are an attempt to delve into Newman's life and identify the lines of his philosophical project from the angle of his commitment to truth, using pragmatism as a foil. Vincent Blehl, the postulator for Newman's canonization cause, attributes his far-reaching influence to two factors: his sincerity and his love of and earnest search for truth²¹⁷. Newman's love for the truth is evident in his writings, which also make clear that he

wrote with a particular context and particular controversies in mind, and so the contemporary reader should not expect to find in this nineteenth-century thinker a corpus of ready-made answers to our contemporary questions, concerns, and hermeneutical inquiries. As a result, the task is to work through the subtleties of Newman's thought, decipher possible connections, and show how insights from various disciplines contribute to a deeper understanding²¹⁸.

The terms "fallibilism" and "pluralism" were both coined after Newman's life-time, so it would be anachronistic to understand them

²¹⁵ Cf. Ratzinger, "Conscience and Truth," 45.

²¹⁶ Joseph Bottum, "Hilary Putnam, 1926-2016," *The Washington Free Beacon* (blog), March 2016.

²¹⁷ Cf. Blehl, "The Intellectual and Spiritual Influence of Newman," 256.

²¹⁸ Aquino and King, "Introduction," 2.

as a direct characteristic of his thought. Moreover, both can be applied to different sciences and understood in diverse senses, some of which would definitively be rejected by Newman. However, traces of both can be detected in his writings, and give his commitment to truth a particular relevance for contemporary times.

Truth “is the central thought of Newman’s intellectual grappling”²¹⁹. In his *Essay on Development* he elaborates on the nature of truth as follows:

That there is a truth then; that there is one truth; [...] that the search for truth is not the gratification of curiosity; that its attainment has nothing of the excitement of a discovery; that the mind is below truth, not above it, and is bound, not to descant upon it, but to venerate it; that truth and falsehood are set before us for the trial of our hearts²²⁰.

While firmly upholding the objectivity of truth, Newman explores its historical, pluralistic, personalistic, and as a consequence, fallibilistic elements²²¹; this exploration allows him to present a rich, nuanced and resourceful understanding of truth which builds on the premise that “truth cannot change [and] what is once truth is always truth”²²². Regarding Newman’s notion of the indefectibility of certitude, Ker explains that

this subjective confidence only reflects a *general rule* to which exceptions are always possible; Newman’s concern, in his own words, is merely ‘to show, that, as a general rule, certitude does not fail’ (*GA*, 221). Far from confusing indefectibility with incorrigibility, the latter of which does not entail the former, Newman proceeds immediately to

²¹⁹ Ratzinger, “Conscience and Truth,” 46.

²²⁰ *Dev*, 357.

²²¹ Cf. Blehl, “The Intellectual and Spiritual Influence of Newman,” 251.

²²² *GA*, 221.

enlarge upon but also to qualify this 'inward assurance' [...] The possibility of error is freely allowed²²³.

In this line, Newman explains that the path to its discovery is circuitous and always perfectible, since he understands that an "insight into truth is a development from concrete reasoning based on antecedent probabilities at the junctures of person and nature, individual and community, conscience and authority"²²⁴, not the development of a logical syllogism.

Understanding a mature person as one who is aware of the relative validity of her convictions and yet is able to stand for them unflinchingly, Newman makes his own the mission of providing tools for his contemporaries to grow in maturity, thus understood. In order to address the challenge presented by the individuals who are attracted to an absolutist way of thinking and maintain that the only alternative to their position is relativism, Newman proposes a *via media* which upholds a fallibilism without skepticism and a cooperative pluralism. Grounded in the belief that "the human mind is made for truth, and so rests in truth"²²⁵, such approach supports the intercourse between thought and life, enabling the rigor of philosophical reasoning to gain human depth and relevance, and thus grow in fruitfulness²²⁶.

Newman's philosophical principles are compatible with fallibilism when fallibilism is understood as a doctrine regarding the person as a cognitive agent, not a doctrine regarding truth as the end of knowledge²²⁷. In other words, Newman embraces fallibilism when it

²²³ Ker, "Introduction to the *Grammar of Assent*," lxxviii. Ferreira offers four possible ways of understanding the apparent inconsistency in Newman's analysis of the indefectibility of certitude, one of which is that his "continual qualifications of indefectibility effectively dissolve the claim altogether". Jamie Ferreira, *Doubt and Religious Commitment: The Role of the Will in Newman's Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 106.

²²⁴ Tillman, "The Personalist Epistemology of Newman," 243.

²²⁵ *GA*, 221.

²²⁶ Cf. Nubiola, "Pragmatismo, Relativismo y Pluralismo," 49–50.

²²⁷ Cf. Haack, "Fallibilism and Necessity," 54.

is predicated in relation to the subject who knows, not the object which is known. With this understanding, in his *Grammar of Assent*, he “provides a rigorous account of the certainty of faith that is consistent with fallibilism”²²⁸.

In a letter from 1872, Newman comments a novel development of Church doctrine and admits his own uncertainty in these terms: “Now we are new born children [...] We do not know what exactly we hold –what we may grant, what we must maintain”²²⁹. He concedes that the full consequences of what has been discovered will take time to come to light and will need to be adjusted through a gradual interchange between error and truth:

There will be a general agitation of thought, and an action of mind upon mind. There will be a time of confusion, when conceptions and misconceptions are in conflict, and it is uncertain whether anything is to come of the idea at all, or which view of it is to get the start of the others. New lights will be brought to bear upon the original statements of the doctrine put forward; judgments and aspects will accumulate [...] As time proceeds, one view will be modified or expanded by another, and then combined with a third [...] The multitude of opinions formed concerning it in these respects and many others will be collected, compared, sorted, sifted, selected, rejected, gradually attached to it, separated from it, in the minds of individuals and of the community [...] Thus in time it will have grown [...] according to its capabilities²³⁰.

In all his writings, from his *University Sermons* in the 1830’s to his last works in the 1870’s, Newman shows openness to fallibilism as an essential characteristic of human reason. Without using the term, he positively upholds fallibilism in opposition to the more mechanical and cold understanding of reason proposed by rationalism. For Newman

²²⁸ Dahm, “Newman and Fallibilism,” 144.

²²⁹ *LD*, xxvi 59–60.

²³⁰ *Dev*, 37.

truth entails “a combination of diversified aspects, with the suggestions and corrections of many minds, and the illustration of many experiences”²³¹. He writes elsewhere that “there are no short cuts to knowledge; nor does the road to it always lie in the direction in which it terminates, nor are we able to see the end on starting. It may often seem to be diverging from a goal into which it will soon run without effort, if we are but patient and resolute in following it out”²³². In speaking about a road that diverges from its goal, or the need of making amendments along the way, Newman builds on the fallibilist claim that human knowledge can always be corrected, bettered and augmented.

Within the context of opening the door to scientific research in the Catholic University of Dublin, Newman writes that “if we invite reason to take its place in our schools, we must let reason have fair and full play [...] Great minds need elbow-room [for] thought. And so indeed do lesser minds, and all minds”²³³. His openness to exploration and inquiry had found opposition in some of his colleagues who were afraid of the possible errors to which free inquiry could lead, however, Newman believed that “when there is an honest purpose and fair talents, we shall somehow make our way forward, the error falling off from the mind, and the truth developing and occupying it”²³⁴. Newman not only makes room for tolerance and error, he understands that these play an important role in the acquisition of truth: “Error may be said, without a paradox, to be in some instances the way to truth, and the only way”²³⁵.

Newman's certainty that truth will be found through honest inquiry reflects his confidence in human reason and its possibilities; he is comfortable with the prospect of error not because he thinks less of

²³¹ *Dev*, 38.

²³² *Idea*, 474.

²³³ *Idea*, 475–76.

²³⁴ *GA*, 377.

²³⁵ *Idea*, 474.

man, but because he thinks much. He encourages his congregation at St. Mary's to be courageous: "If we are intended for great ends, we are called to great hazards; and, whereas we are given absolute certainty in nothing, we must in all things choose between doubt and inactivity"²³⁶.

Newman preached these words in 1839, as he began his journey to the Catholic Church. Six years later, and a couple months before giving the final step, he writes: "I have always contended that [...] it mattered not where a man began, so that [...] any thing might become a divine method of Truth, that to the pure all things are pure, and have a self-correcting virtue and a power of germinating"²³⁷. He is able to recognize how his endeavors, which were aimed at the purification and strengthening of the Anglican Church, brought him closer to the truth, although in a different direction than the one he was intending at the time.

Another aspect of fallibilism, which Newman recognizes, is the cooperative and cumulative nature of the quest for truth. He writes that "it is not often the fortune of any one man to live through an investigation; the process is one of not only many stages, but of many minds. What one begins another finishes; and a true conclusion is at length worked out by the co-operation of independent schools and the perseverance of successive generations"²³⁸. The researcher is part of a community extended through space and time. This reality brings forth the clear link between fallibilism and pluralism; since human experience occurs in a plural manner, and cannot be fully comprehended in an abstract way. It only be accessed through

²³⁶ *US*, 215.

²³⁷ *LD*, x 190.

²³⁸ *Idea*, 474–75.

incarnated experiences and only from that plural and yet personal vantage point, truth can be discerned²³⁹.

Grounded in realism and in his personal experience, Newman's philosophy "acknowledges various roads to truth, arising out of different first principles and methods of investigation proper to each individual area of intellectual activity, but each converging and needing the completion of other areas of thought, if one is to attain a comprehensive grasp of reality"²⁴⁰. As it has been seen in different sections of this dissertation, comprehensiveness is a core aspect of Newman's understanding of truth:

It is the characteristic of our minds to be ever engaged in passing judgment on the things which come before us. No sooner do we apprehend than we judge, we allow nothing to stand by itself, we compare, contrast, abstract, generalize, connect, adjust, classify and we view all our knowledge in the associations with which these processes have invested it²⁴¹.

Newman understood diversity as a place of encounter, rather than exclusion²⁴² and developed "a positive acceptance of a non-ideological, pluralist, and open society"²⁴³. He builds on the fact that human realities have numerous aspects which, although different, do not necessarily exclude each other, but rather are able to enrich each other and the broader reality. With this awareness, Newman makes his own a characteristic of the contemporary understanding of pluralism. His views are consonant with the idea that

upholding pluralism does not imply a renunciation of the truth [...] On the contrary, pluralism not only affirms that there are different ways of

²³⁹ Cf. Nubiola, "Pragmatismo, Relativismo y Pluralismo," 52.

²⁴⁰ Blehl, "The Intellectual and Spiritual Influence of Newman," 251.

²⁴¹ *Dev.*, 33.

²⁴² Cf. Charles of Windsor, "John Henry Newman: L'armonia Della Differenza," *L'Osservatore Romano*, October 13, 2019.

²⁴³ John Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 239.

thinking about things, but maintains that among them there are –in Stanley Cavell’s words– *better and worse ways*, and that through contrast, experience and rational dialogue, human beings are able to recognize the superiority of one opinion over another [...] The belief that our theories are human creations means that they not only can –but must!– be replaced, corrected and improved as we discover better or more refined versions [...] Since reality is multilateral and has an unlimited multiplicity of aspects, truth cannot be exhausted by any particular scientific claim, but is always open to new formulations²⁴⁴.

Another aspect of pluralism which is compatible with Newman’s philosophy is the understanding that the highest good to be sought through inquiry is not diversity, but dialogue. The goal of pluralism is not to present a multiplicity of options seen as a good in itself, but to enable different sciences (or persons, or realities) to enter into a genuine conversation, talk to, learn from and work with each other²⁴⁵. After expressing his refusal to make his own doctrinal views a necessary element for others to be recognized as “good Catholics”, Newman concludes a letter stating: “How strongly I advocate the maxim ‘*In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*’”²⁴⁶.

Considering the time in which he lived, Newman’s advocacy for religious freedom, a core tenet of pluralism, is novel. He writes to the Irish politician William Monsell (1812-1894) who had asked for his opinion regarding the benefits of having a religion upheld by the state:

There is so much corruption, so much deadness, so much hypocrisy, so much infidelity, when a dogmatic faith is imposed on a nation by law, *that I like freedom better* [...] We see every where a new state of things coming in, and it is pleasant to believe one has reasons not to

²⁴⁴ Nubiola, “Pragmatismo, Relativismo y Pluralismo,” 49. My translation.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Paul Knitter, “Religious Pluralism and Religious Imagination,” *Louvain Studies* 27, no. 3 (2002): 240–41.

²⁴⁶ *LD*, xxiii 190. “In essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity”.

fear it, but to be hopeful about it, as regards the prospects of religion. It is pleasant not to be obliged to resist a movement, which is so characteristic of the age²⁴⁷.

The way in which Newman understands liberal education is also related to his positive regard for pluralism. Magill observes that the tension which Newman recognizes and assimilates between the discursive and non-discursive elements of reasoning enables him to establish a coherent foundation for pluralism²⁴⁸, since he believes that the richness and subtlety of personal reasoning means that the intellect “will not only create a variety of interpretations, but it will also be able to recognise underlying harmony in the depth of meaning”²⁴⁹.

Newman's positive view of pluralistic doctrines can find its roots in his admiration for the Fathers of the Church, who had a rich and paradoxical relationship with the culture that surrounded them and regarded the use of any of its resources as legitimate in as much as it was helpful to their cause; Newman had the courage of relating with the modern world with the same attitude of openness and trust and recognize in non-Christian cultures elements of truth²⁵⁰. After listing more than ten such elements in an essay he concludes that “from the beginning the Moral Governor of the world has scattered the seeds of truth far and wide over its extent; that these have variously taken root, and grown up as in the wilderness”²⁵¹.

In the *Idea* Newman presents his assessment of the fruits that embracing pluralistic view of reality can bring to a community:

²⁴⁷ *LD*, xx 477. Emphasis added.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Magill, “Newman on Liberal Education and Moral Pluralism,” 45–64.

²⁴⁹ Magill, “Newman on Liberal Education and Moral Pluralism,” 59.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Lawrence Cross, “John Henry Newman: A Father of the Church?,” *Newman Studies Journal* 3, no. 1 (2006): 10.

²⁵¹ *Ess*, ii 231. There is a striking resemblance between these words from Newman and Vatican II's revolutionary invitation to missionaries: “Let them gladly and reverently lay bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden among their fellows” Second Vatican Council, “Ad Gentes,” 11.

Now every event has a meaning; they have their own estimate of whatever happens to them; they are mindful of times and seasons, and compare the present with the past; and the world, no longer dull, monotonous, unprofitable, and hopeless, is a various and complicated drama, with parts and an object, and an awful moral²⁵².

The beauty of diversity, grasped as in a polyphony, is also portrayed by Newman in his poem “The Dream of Gerontius” where he describes heaven as “a grand mysterious harmony: It floods me, like the deep and solemn sound of many waters”²⁵³. Newman understands that harmony presupposes difference, and that differences are not to be feared but cherished. As an Anglican, he led the Church to a deepen her appreciation of its Catholic roots, and as a Catholic, he enriched the Church with lessons from the Anglican tradition, as the education of the laity²⁵⁴. Under his leadership, Catholics became more engaged with the wider society, which in turn was enriched and became a community of communities.

Although his life and writings were firmly rooted in the truth, Newman was aware that “truth is vast and far-stretching, viewed as a system; and, viewed in its separate doctrines, it depends on the combination of a number of various, delicate, and scattered evidences; hence it can scarcely be exhibited in a given number of sentences”²⁵⁵ and that “there is no rule in this world without exceptions”²⁵⁶. He was able to integrate at a personal and philosophical level his appreciation for the richness of truth while humbly recognizing his inability to grasp it with totality. How he did so portrays a particular understanding of fallibilism and pluralism which can be a great asset for a commitment to truth in contemporary times.

²⁵² *Idea*, 133.

²⁵³ *VV*, 360.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Charles of Windsor, “L’armonia Della Differenza.”

²⁵⁵ *US*, 90.

²⁵⁶ *Diff*, ii 243.

Conclusion: J. H. Newman, a relevant author for our times

John Henry Newman lived through times of deep cultural change and had a remarkable influence upon his age¹. The assumptions that had held society together, and served as the bedrock for religious belief, were challenged by the scientific revolution and the rise of the democratic states. Since his early years in Oxford, considered by some of his contemporaries the sacred shrine of knowledge², Newman was profoundly involved in the undercurrents of thought that confronted tradition and framed these revolutions.

His intellectual environment prompted him “to explore other conceptions of rationality and, in doing so, to attend carefully to the ways in which men actually reason, especially when dealing with substantial questions of great complexity”³. Newman faced these questions with a great willingness to mature his own thought through study and dialogue with others and with reality itself. Further, he did not limit himself to assess the situation but sought to offer practical remedies that could be useful for all people, those who benefited from an education and those who did not.

Newman's *Apologia*, which he wrote when he was sixty-three years old, is a narration of the development of his convictions in which he identifies, within the gradual enlargement of his ideas, three moments of intellectual conversion. In no way was he indifferent to the philosophical developments that surrounded him; whether he agreed with them or not, he sought to engage with these changes and discern the elements which were consonant with a Christian view of the person and the world. Richard Hutton, a contemporary of Newman

¹ Cf. Magill, “The Intellectual Ethos of Newman,” 1.

² Cf. *LG*, 354.

³ Mitchell, “Newman as a Philosopher,” 239.

who commented on his works for over four decades wrote of him: “No life known to me in the last century of our national history can for a moment compare with it, so far as we can judge of such deep matters, in unity of meaning and constancy of purpose”⁴.

As it has been argued, one of Newman’s chief concerns was the vindication of reason, which he understood as “a living spontaneous energy within us, not an art”⁵; he upholds reason as the intrinsically personal faculty which

seizes and unites what the senses present to it; it grasps and forms what need not have been seen or heard except in its constituent parts. It discerns in lines and colours, or in tones, what is beautiful and what is not. It gives them a meaning, and invests them with an idea. It gathers up a succession of notes into the expression of a whole, and calls it a melody; it has a keen sensibility towards angles and curves, lights and shadows, tints and contours. It distinguishes between rule and exception, between accident and design. It assigns phenomena to a general law, qualities to a subject, acts to a principle, and effects to a cause⁶.

This understanding of reason, proposed by Newman, clearly contrasted with Robert Peel’s theory of liberal education, very popular at the time, which suggested that reason should be limited to mathematical and scientific exercises which, according to him, could account for all of human reality. In this way, once every individual accepted a univocal and unified principle of reason, all disagreements and conflicts would cease⁷. For his part, Newman believed that even though logic has an important role to play in the reasoning process, it could not account for its totality, as reason is a personal faculty, unique to each individual: “It is the mind that reasons, and that controls its

⁴ Richard Hutton, *Cardinal Newman* (London: Methuen and Co., 1891), 250.

⁵ *US*, 257.

⁶ *Idea*, 74–75.

⁷ Cf. Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 47–50.

own reasonings, not any technical apparatus of words and propositions”⁸.

While maintaining a nuanced understanding of reason, of its possibilities and limitations, Newman objected to rationalism and described it as “a certain abuse of Reason; that is, a use of it for purposes for which it never was intended, and is unfitted”⁹. He disagreed with those who, in order to safeguard religious belief, reduced its contents to those propositions which could be scientifically proven by “appeal[ing] to reason, even with the probable consequence of an entire abandonment of our most cherished convictions”¹⁰.

Newman’s disapproval of liberalism in religion, which he described as his lifelong battle¹¹, was due to its connection with rationalism: “By Liberalism I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place”¹². Newman believes reason acts beyond its powers when it confines knowledge to only those claims, which can be empirically proven and reduces religion to a personal sentiment or private opinion.

However, while he denounced liberalism in religious matters, Newman “goes out of his way, indeed, in the very *Biglietto* speech, to acknowledge the good [in liberalism]”¹³, which he recognizes in its assertion of the values of justice and truthfulness, its avowal of personal and social freedom and its inclusion of a historical approach in religious inquiry¹⁴. While upholding dogma and tradition, Newman

⁸ *GA*, 353.

⁹ *Ess*, i 31.

¹⁰ Mozley, *Reminiscences of Oriel College*, 2:316.

¹¹ Cf. *AR*, 64.

¹² *Apo*, 288.

¹³ Hughes, “Newman and His Age,” 124.

¹⁴ Cf. *AR*, 68; Hastings, “Newman as Liberal and Anti-Liberal,” 126.

able values the suitability of the liberal movement for the advancement of social and political concerns. The key to unravel the complexity of his thought is found in “his ability to hold in tensile unity apparently opposite tendencies and concerns. Indeed, it is in the attempt at synthesis that Newman is most truly revealed”¹⁵.

The nuances of Newman’s philosophical principles are clearly seen in his discussion of skepticism and fundamentalism. Although these could be understood as opposite tendencies, Newman was accused of both during his lifetime, as he sought to vindicate the right of the uneducated person to believe in mysteries which she could not explain. He was called a skeptic because he accepted claims that were beyond reason, and a fideist or fundamentalist, because of his openness to hold them as true¹⁶. In challenging skepticism and fundamentalism,

Newman is not retreating to a ‘simple and fideistic return to the certainty of faith’, nor is he employing a kind of scepticism to level the playing field. Instead, Newman wants to show that the scope, range, and modalities of human cognition cover more territory than an ideal version of rationality (e.g. a formal kind of reasoning). Furthermore, he seeks to offer a deeper analysis of the natural workings of reason in concrete matters¹⁷.

Newman’s rejection of dogmatic liberalism does not lead him to fundamentalism¹⁸; he treads the path of inquiry by proposing a reasonable skepticism that discovers and discards what is contradictory in itself and thus allows truth to develop and occupy the mind¹⁹. His proposal can be understood as “a *via media* [which] was but a receding from extremes: if radical subjectivism is one extreme, then radical

¹⁵ Merrigan, “Newman and Theological Liberalism,” 621.

¹⁶ Cf. Dessain, *John Henry Newman*, 152.

¹⁷ Aquino, “Epistemology,” 382.

¹⁸ Cf. Ker, *Biography*, 268.

¹⁹ Cf. *GA*, 377. What Newman calls reasonable skepticism perhaps could be understood today as fallibilism.

objectivism is the second. Truth is equally distant from dogmatic subjectivism as from dogmatic objectivism”²⁰. In his defense of truth Newman expands the dominant view of rationality so it can include that which is concretely lived, practical, and not strictly logical nor scientific, and proposes admiration, trust and love as the most effective safeguards for belief²¹; it is worth remarking that these safeguards act within the person, not as an imposition upon her.

Even though Newman recognizes the dangers within these currents of thought and the liabilities they pose for his contemporaries, especially lay Catholics, he remains hopeful. In a letter to Emily Bowles he comments on the situation: “This is a way of things which, in God’s own time, will work its own cure, of necessity; nor need we fret under a state of things, much as we may feel it”²²; he goes on to describe how even though there are many obstacles to the propagation of the truth, the situation is less hostile than in ages past, and much good can be achieved with creativity and courage. Newman displays this creativity in his assessment of the various theories regarding knowledge and assent; when he finds no suitable option he chooses

to devise for himself a new method, first, to cut his way through the *a priori* Empiricist and Rationalist theories of knowledge [...] and second, to set in the foreground of attention, for the consideration of philosophers in the future, data of personal experience [...] His task was, therefore, to bring clearly into the foreground, by way of carefully presented descriptions, how in fact men think in their day-to-day lives when they are dealing with matters of personal importance to them²³.

Newman embraced this task, not as a merely academic undertaking but in an eminently pastoral way; he saw it “as a mission of prophecy; a mission that is to say, addressed to the Christian

²⁰ Galecki, “Newman Versus Objectivism,” 28.

²¹ Cf. *LD*, xx 430; McInroy, “Catholic Theological Receptions,” 509.

²² *LD*, xx 447.

²³ Sillem, *Philosophical Notebook*, 129.

intelligence”²⁴. He was aware of his unique possibilities to reach his contemporaries, to reach them as a group through his preaching and writings and as individuals, through his copious correspondence. Undoubtedly Newman can be seen as a monumental scholar, but at the same time, he can be regarded as “simply a man who lived with other men, who was loved by them and loved them in return”²⁵.

While assessing the culture that surrounded him, Newman did not limit himself to analyze and criticize its philosophical currents; he judged that this would be not only indecorous, but pointless²⁶. Holding an understanding of the term in its broadest possible sense, Newman chose to dedicate his life to education: “From first to last education, in this large sense of the word has been my line”²⁷ and built his philosophical position on the assertion of the person as a living system²⁸. He writes in the *Grammar*:

An ethical system may supply laws, general rules, guiding principles, a number of examples, suggestions, landmarks, limitations, cautions, distinctions, solutions of critical or anxious difficulties; but who is to apply them to a particular case? whither can we go, except to the living intellect, our own, or another’s?²⁹

Thus Newman devotes his life to the formation of living intellects, of his contemporaries. Since the hurdles and liabilities he described are still valid today, and human nature has not changed, the means he presented to help his contemporaries navigate their world are also valid and enriching in present times. Perhaps it could be said that they are even more enriching since Newman’s legacy has been deepened by the reflection of hundreds of scholars.

²⁴ Hughes, “Newman and His Age,” 134.

²⁵ Henry Tristram, *Newman and His Friends* (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1933), vii.

²⁶ Cf. *US*, 67.

²⁷ *AW*, 259.

²⁸ Cf. Marchetto, “Philosophical Relevance of Newman,” 321.

²⁹ *GA*, 354.

Without being exhaustive, nor closing the door to other ways of understanding Newman's vast legacy, five means can be identified within it as ways to yield this formation and strengthen the individual's commitment to truth: a liberal education realized within a community informed by personal influence, which seeks the formation of the conscience to assent to truth, while embracing fallibilism and pluralism as characteristic of the human way of inquiry. Having been relevant in the nineteenth century, these contributions remain as contemporary as ever.

Newman understands liberal education as a privileged means to strengthen, refine and enrich the intellectual powers of the individual³⁰. Through his writings, he does not detail the contents that a liberal education should cover, rather he advocates for universality as a characteristic of the curriculum and focuses on the conditions which are necessary for a person to acquire a philosophical habit of mind and intellectual excellence, which he believes is the end of education³¹.

Further, Newman maintains that there is not a determined nor set route for knowledge, rather, the intellect explores reality, finds dead-ends and starts all over again, as "it is the very law of the human mind in its inquiry after and acquisition of truth, to make its advances by a process which consists of many stages, and is circuitous"³². This understanding leads him to advocate for leisure and elbow-room for inquiry as only "when we are free from necessary duties and cares [...] we are in a condition for desiring to see, to hear, and to learn"³³. When education is carried out within this framework, it not only provides knowledge, but transforms the knower. Moreover, it is most effective

³⁰ Cf. *Idea*, 263.

³¹ Cf. *Idea*, 20, 50–51.

³² *Idea*, 474.

³³ *Idea*, 104.

when realized within a community of learning rooted in tradition and verified by authority. A community, in Newman's mind,

will constitute a whole, it will embody a specific idea, it will represent a doctrine, it will administer a code of conduct, and it will furnish principles of thought and action. It will give birth to a living teaching, which [...] imbues and forms, more or less, and one by one, every individual who is successively brought under its shadow³⁴.

Thus, for Newman, the communal aspect of education is not accidental, it is essential for the formation of the individual and the discovery and transmission of the truth, since he believes that "truth is wrought out by many minds, working together freely"³⁵. Regarding its transmission, Newman argues that truth is best communicated from person to person and effective only when incarnated through concrete gestures in every-day life, not when dormant in a system³⁶. He writes that the best instrument for the propagation of truth is personal influence as "the heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us"³⁷.

Personal testimony, or personal influence in Newman's words, is what enables real assent³⁸; rules, committees or books can only bring the individual to notional assent. A further benefit that personal influence provides, according to Newman, is that it enlightens the individual allowing him to internalize the truth, discern and own his decisions. It is in this context that Newman argues that "egotism is true

³⁴ *Idea*, 147.

³⁵ *LD*, xx 426.

³⁶ Cf. *Idea*, 113.

³⁷ *DA*, 293.

³⁸ Cf. Ker, "Newman's Standing as a Philosopher," 73.

modesty”³⁹, meaning that the reasons that guide the core decisions in one's life are completely personal and cannot be shared:

Newman thereby reconciles internal authorities –reason and conscience– with external authorities. We aren't devoid of any external help on the path of searching the truth, but we always have to remember that no other person can give me final and obligating answer for my existential questions, and no one else can make a choice on behalf of me⁴⁰.

Newman's doctrine on conscience is, for many scholars, the unifying theme of his works. Conscience became central to Newman when he was fifteen years old and realized the existence of “two and two only supreme and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator”⁴¹. From his earliest sermons preached in Oxford, he argued that “obedience to our conscience, in all things, great and small, is the way to know the Truth”⁴² and developed the rich nuances of his theory of conscience through the next five decades, up to its culmination in the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*.

As has been noted, Newman worked carefully to avoid fundamentalism (understood as the doctrine which claims that some of our beliefs cannot be wrong) and skepticism (understood as the doctrine which claims that all of our beliefs cannot be wrong)⁴³. In this context, fallibilism could be considered a *via media*. Although the term was coined after his time and Newman, therefore, did not subscribe to this doctrine he does sustain its central claim: *some* of our beliefs *can* be wrong.

³⁹ GA, 384.

⁴⁰ Galecki, “Newman Versus Objectivism,” 37.

⁴¹ *Apo*, 108.

⁴² *PS*, i 227. Sermon preached on October 24, 1830.

⁴³ Cf. Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” 172.

Newman understands that truth is gradually discovered through time, and thus, can never be said to be possessed in full by any one person: “It is not often the fortune of any one man to live through an investigation; the process is one of not only many stages, but of many minds”⁴⁴. This assertion leads him to conclude that “this being the case, we are obliged, under circumstances, to bear for a while with what we feel to be error, in consideration of the truth in which it is eventually to issue”⁴⁵. These lines show a fallibilistic understanding of the interplay between inquiry, truth and error.

Further, Newman’s belief that two people “differ from each other in all that they are, in identity, in incommunicability, in personality”⁴⁶ allows for the consideration of the relationship between his philosophical principles and pluralism, understood as the claim that there are distinct ways, better and worse ways, to apprehend and deal with reality. Newman believed that by considering reality’s diverse aspects, persons “will not only create a variety of interpretations, but [they] will also be able to recognise [an] underlying harmony”⁴⁷.

The harmony found in Newman’s assessment of the philosophical currents he encountered and the means he proposed to help his contemporaries face them is still melodious and enriching today. He wrote in 1875: “In centuries to come, there may be found out some way of uniting what is free in the new structure of society with what is authoritative in the old”⁴⁸. It could be said that Newman distilled what was authoritative, authentic and valuable in his own time and presented it in such a way that it has become a strong asset to strengthen our commitment to truth in contemporary times.

⁴⁴ *Idea*, 474.

⁴⁵ *Idea*, 475.

⁴⁶ *GA*, 282.

⁴⁷ Magill, “Newman on Liberal Education and Moral Pluralism,” 59.

⁴⁸ *Diff*, ii 268.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this investigation has been to deepen the understanding and appreciation of John Henry Newman as a philosopher. Particularly it has attempted to bring light to his theory of knowledge and other themes related to truth and inquiry, which he developed in his writings. Newman did not consider himself a philosopher and wrote in a very unsystematic, yet prolific, way. However, the systematic study of his works reveals solid, consistent and fruitful philosophical lines, which have been explored for over a century and demand further examination. The interest in the contributions he made in the area of philosophy is gaining momentum, and his writings are being studied from the vantage point of diverse philosophical traditions.

An initial and cursory exploration of Newman's understanding of the Illative Sense revealed several affinities with C. S. Peirce's theory of abductive reasoning. This led me to consider the possibility of focusing my research on Newman's commitment to the truth and using pragmatism as a foil, or point of access, to study his thought and evaluate the feasibility of incorporating him within the history of philosophy as a forerunner of this tradition. As I advanced in my research, I realized that others, such as Wilfrid Ward, Ferdinand Schiller and Cyprus Mitchell, had advocated for this consideration.

In order to do so myself, I delved into Newman's writings, paying recourse to thirty-two of his published works, but focusing on his *Oxford University Sermons*, the *Idea of a University* and the *Grammar of Assent* and relying heavily upon his self-understanding as expressed in the *Apologia* and *Letters and Diaries*. Slightly over a third of my citations, 600 of them, are from Newman's own works. I also

paid special attention to authors who discussed Newman as a contemporary, such as Wilfrid Ward, who gave a conference on Newman's philosophy in 1914, and to the most recent scholarship, as the 2018 *Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman*, which offers several essays related to Newman's philosophical thought.

The path I pursued in my research can be synthesized as follows:

1. First I embarked in an exploration of Newman's life, paying particular attention to his personal commitment to truth in each stage of his multifaceted journey. I identified five periods, which provided a framework for my analysis: (1) A formative period (1801-1833) in which I investigated what Newman calls his "first conversion", the most considerable influences he received as he obtained his fellowship, and his early career decisions, such as his project to reform the tutoring system in Oxford, which shaped him for the rest of his life. (2) The years of Oxford Movement (1833-1841), characterized by an intense intellectual development as Newman deepened into the Catholic doctrines of the Anglican Church, a process that he did not live in an isolated manner, but as part of a community of fellow inquirers, which led him to a place he was not expecting at all upon beginning. (3) The period of his crisis and conversion (1841-1847) in which I study Newman's reception into the Catholic Church as a lengthy process, which gave him the personal experience and the intellectual resources to base the elements of his theory of knowledge as presented in the *Grammar of Assent*. (4) His first years in the Catholic Church (1847-1864) in which Newman undertook several projects that provided him with the platform and focus for his philosophical reflection, along with much contradiction which forced him to express his thought in a very nuanced and rich way. (5) Lastly, a period where he was able to gather the fruits of his labor (1864-1890), in which he received recognition from Oxford and from the Catholic Church, continued to write prolifically and revised most of his previous works.

2. After the consideration of these crucial moments in Newman's life, which proved to be highly consequential for his philosophical development, I explored some of the most significant influences he received in this regard. I singled out his acquaintance with five British thinkers to whom he paid particular attention and some of his contemporaries who influenced his theory of knowledge in a significant way. Following Newman's own understanding of the centrality of personal influence, I showed how specific people shaped his philosophical understanding.

I began by exploring the Aristotelian roots of Newman's thought, which he developed thanks to the mentorship he received from Richard Whately. The collaboration with Whately in the composition of *Elements of Logic* provided Newman with a firm foundation in Aristotelian logic and rhetoric, which is reflected in his philosophical realism. I also argued how Newman's acquaintance with thinkers who specialized in a broad range of subjects as Francis Bacon, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Joseph Butler and David Hume enriched his thought and provided him with the varied resources he used to develop his understanding of truth, inquiry, knowledge and assent.

Afterward, I explored how Newman's correspondence with Catherine and William Froude, which he sustained over four decades, kept him grounded in the real concerns of his contemporaries, allowed him to gradually develop and test his philosophical insights and became the genesis of the *Grammar of Assent*. Finally, I presented the manner in which Newman's philosophical insights have been received by philosophers who ascribe to pragmatism, phenomenology and personalism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, along with some affinities which have been recognized between their approaches and topics and Newman's, showing the fruitfulness and contemporary relevance of Newman's philosophical thought.

3. Having explored the context of Newman's philosophical insights and opened up the possibility of accessing them from the vantage point of pragmatism, I proceeded to describe the particular understanding of pragmatism which I hold in this dissertation. I grounded myself in the developments brought forth by the three classical pragmatists: Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey, and gave particular attention to the Peirce's thought, as the founder of pragmatism. I followed Cheryl Misak's research regarding the commitments pragmatists tend to share, which she identifies as a historical attitude towards objectivity, a fallibilist epistemology and a commitment to keeping philosophy rooted in real-life experience. Afterward, I discussed the nuances with which Newman upheld each of these commitments.

Regarding a historical attitude towards objectivity I argued that in Newman's thought, the multiplicity of angles under which an idea presents itself, the variety of opinions it causes and, moreover, its own change over time, provide evidence to its truthfulness, not to the contrary. Second, the distinction he makes in the *Grammar* between an all-encompassing skepticism and specific well-founded questions provides the context where fallibilism can find a place in his epistemology, as Newman recognizes that the process which the human mind follows in its acquisition of truth is circuitous and consists of many stages. Finally, the commitment to keeping philosophy rooted in real-life experience is easily discerned amidst Newman's philosophical endeavors as he did not ground his insights in formulas nor theories; instead, he based them on the lives of those with whom he walked through the years. The identification of these characteristics in Newman's philosophical thought, which fit well with the commitments pragmatists tend to share according to Misak, showed that studying Newman within the framework of pragmatism, thus understood, is a legitimate undertaking.

4. Subsequently I identified five affinities between Newman's philosophical insights and pragmatism. First, I explained how Newman and the classical pragmatists were well acquainted with the methods of inquiry in the natural sciences, subscribed to a realist epistemology and reconnected to the Aristotelian tradition, which helped them overcome a reductive conception of reason and open up fresh avenues for the understanding of human knowledge, inquiry and truth. Second, I discussed the understanding which Newman and Peirce held regarding the unity of knowledge and explained that both placed as the axis of their considerations the human subjects who possess knowledge (or advance the sciences) and, grounded in this perspective, presented the unity of knowledge as something possible and desirable, while respecting the inherent particularities of each science.

Third, I studied the search for truth as a communal pursuit through time as yet another affinity between Newman and pragmatism: Newman placed great emphasis on the efficacy of individuals working together, balancing each other's views and contributing to a common pursuit and, for his part, Peirce wrote that truth could only be sought within a community of inquirers. Fourth, I showed how Newman and pragmatists recognize the crucial role that doubt and error play in the pursuit of truth, and see them as building blocks in the edifice of knowledge; in this regard, Newman sustained that truth can only be discovered through a laborious process of inquiry, a thesis which finds ample resonance in pragmatism. Fifth, I displayed the clear affinity between Newman's Illative Sense and Peirce's Abductive Reasoning; both thinkers present this faculty as an individual's natural inheritance, which nevertheless requires training; they also acknowledge that both, the Illative Sense and Abductive Reasoning, show that the person's mind is naturally attuned to the truth of things.

In short, Newman and the classical pragmatists paid recourse to Aristotelian philosophy in order to overcome the modern rationalism that was dominant in the philosophical scene of their time, both were influenced by empiricism but found it lacking, and both offered a fresh alternative. The ways in which Newman shares the core commitments of pragmatists, together with these affinities between his philosophical project and the pragmatic tradition, leads me to consider Newman as a forerunner and anticipator of pragmatism.

5. Once the legitimacy of recognizing Newman as a forerunner of pragmatism was established, I proceeded to study his insights regarding the reductionist philosophical positions he encountered during his lifetime. He challenged the growing understanding of reason as a self-enclosed principle and proposed his theory of personal reason as a possible alternative, centering his reflections on the questions of the certainty of knowledge and faith, which he understood in a complementary manner.

When Newman critiqued rationalism he referred to a misuse of reason, due to excess by its exaltation over the moral sense, or due to defect by its constraint to an explicit mode of reasoning limited to the application of the rules of logic to the exclusion of other habits of the mind. Being cautious of the overreaching attempts of reason, Newman argued that certitude could also be attained through the accumulation of probabilities and the Illative Sense. Regarding liberalism, I argued that Newman's attitude was particularly nuanced and underwent a steady evolution, which mirrored the evolution of the world around him. When he alluded to his fight against liberalism, Newman explicitly stated that he opposed liberalism in religion, referring to the philosophical theory which sustained that there is no legitimate way of attaining knowledge of the truth except by formal argumentation or empirical demonstration. However, he also asserted that this was

brought about by an inevitable political and cultural liberalism, which he recognized, in itself, as good and true.

Newman acknowledged and integrated into his theory of knowledge the limitations of human thought. This recognition, paired with his awareness of the person's natural orientation towards the truth, allowed him to find a balanced and clear pathway between rationalism on one end, and skepticism and fundamentalism on the other, and present a fruitful and coherent integration of reason and faith.

6. Lastly, after the presentation of Newman's criticism of the reductionist philosophical positions he confronted, I explored five resources he developed to counter these positions and uphold his commitment to the truth. I spoke of a liberal education as the essential means identified by Newman to strengthen and enrich the intellectual powers of the individual; he did not describe a liberal education through its contents, rather he spoke about a method that privileged leisure and inquiry, dialogue and community. I also argued that for Newman this communal aspect of education was an essential means in the formation of the individual and for the discovery and transmission of the truth, as he believed that truth is best communicated from person to person and effective only when incarnated in concrete gestures in every-day life.

This realization led Newman to develop his theory of personal influence and his understanding of conscience. It also prompted him to advocate for the efficacy of personal testimony over that of rules, committees or books. Newman believed that only personal influence could bring the individual to real assent and allow him to internalize the truth, discern and own his decisions. In this regard, Newman was a firm defender of personal conscience as the way to know the truth.

Further, I argued that Newman understood that truth is gradually discovered through time, and thus, it can never be possessed in full by any one person. As a consequence, he offered a fallibilistic

understanding of the interplay between inquiry, error and truth, which I perceive as a *via media* between fundamentalism and skepticism to help the person uphold her commitment to truth. Newman's recognition of the uniqueness of each person allows for the consideration of the relationship between his philosophical principles and pluralism, pluralism understood as the belief that there are distinct ways, better and worse ways, to understand and deal with reality.

This exploration of Newman's rich and nuanced understanding of inquiry and truth has led me to the following convictions:

1. Newman has an undeniable place in the history of philosophy, the value of which is only beginning to be discovered. The different angles from which he considers the possibilities and limitations of the human intellect, advocating for the search of truth as a communal task while upholding the primacy of the individual conscience, provide us with fruitful avenues to continue deepening in the understanding of truth.

2. Classical pragmatism, particularly the line of study that developed from the writings of Charles Peirce and has been taken up by Hilary Putnam, Susan Haack and Cheryl Misak, among others, is compatible with a realist metaphysics and epistemology and with a firm commitment to the truth. Further, it incorporates the liabilities of human reason and offers substantial resources for the exercise of philosophy that can prove to be very fruitful if undertaken with an open mind and a trusting heart.

3. Newman can be considered a forerunner of pragmatism as he overcame the modern philosophy of his time by reconnecting to the Aristotelian tradition in a very similar way to the manner in which C. S. Peirce did it fifty years later, and the new pragmatists a century after. Further, he found similar insights to the ones that characterize pragmatism, which comprise a useful incentive and tool to strengthen our commitment to truth in contemporary times. This allows us to

conclude that those who seem to be on the margins of the philosophical discourse, often prove to be precursors of later developments.

4. A commitment to the truth is a life-long engagement that expresses itself externally in different ways throughout the diverse stages of one's life. It allows for flexibility and adaptation to life's changing circumstances, and above all, it allows for personal growth and development. If a person is committed to the truth, she will necessarily change as she attunes her ideas and behaviors, ever more perfectly, to the truth she gradually discovers.

Although Newman was led by one single objective, to follow the truth wherever it led him, some unjustly criticized him as duplicitous. As he deepened in his understanding of the truth he adjusted his course, displaying much humility and simplicity. Although his intellectual qualities were remarkable, he knew and accepted their limitations, and thus was guided not only by his reason but also by his conscience, or moral sense, and never stopped in his life-long journey of living in the truth.

5. A commitment to the truth must be lived in constant dialogue with others and with reality itself. Although truth is a personal possession, it is not found nor acquired by pure introspection, but through encounters, dialogue, inquiry and engagement with the external world. This search will be more fruitful if one's dialogue connects with a variety of perspectives and opinions. While these perspectives may be diverse or even contradictory to each other, they can enrich and deepen one's understanding of the truth, which by its nature is multifaceted, ever-expanding and infinite.

Newman lived his commitment to the truth, not as an isolated nor isolating endeavor but in constant dialogue with others and with reality itself. He was fully aware of the social nature of the person and recognized the importance of personal influence, while delicately respecting his own conscience and that of those with whom he

journeyed. All his works were intentional in nature. They were written to provide answers to specific quandaries of specific people; it is precisely this engagement with others and with reality which makes them fruitful.

6. A commitment to the truth is built on the understanding of the search for truth as a communal pursuit through time. The search for truth is more effective when it brings together people with diverse experiences who are willing and able to build upon that which was previously discovered, from the mistakes and successes of the past, and make available their discoveries to others, so these can be enriched through further inquiry.

For his part, Newman believed that “it is the very law of the human mind in its inquiry after and acquisition of truth to make its advances by a process which consists of many stages, and is circuitous. There are no short cuts to knowledge; nor does the road to it always lie in the direction in which it terminates, nor are we able to see the end on starting [...] Moreover, it is not often the fortune of any one man to live through an investigation; the process is one of not only many stages, but of many minds. What one begins another finishes; and a true conclusion is at length worked out by the co-operation of independent schools and the perseverance of successive generations”.

7. A commitment to the truth acknowledges that certainty does not result from the complete exclusion of every doubt, but rather from the accumulation of probabilities that, when put together become irrefutable. A person who is committed to the truth admits to being challenged by others, and by her own development, and does not see in these questions a threat, but rather an opportunity for further growth.

This understanding of the foundation of certainty as the accumulation of probabilities is the basic idea behind Newman’s Illative Sense. To illustrate this principle, Newman used the image of a cord made up of a number of threads, each feeble in itself, but when

bound together sufficient as an iron rod. Peirce used a remarkably similar image, speaking of truth as a cable whose fibers may be slender and fragile, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected with one another.

8. A commitment to the truth embraces the unity and universality of knowledge while recognizing that each science is ruled by its proper methodology and that some principles cannot be set universally, but sciences must respect and aid each other. This does not imply independence, but rather interdependence among the sciences, which, when working together, can provide a fuller and more comprehensive picture of reality.

Newman writes that diverse sciences are to complement and correct each other, without intruding into each other's field of knowledge. He also recognizes that principles that apply to one science, do not necessarily apply to another; for instance, while he was very critical of liberalism in religion, he praised its effects in the cultural and political spheres, acknowledging that each discipline had a distinct object and methodology and was informed by different principles.

9. A commitment to the truth is compatible with fallibilism, when understood as a doctrine regarding the person as a cognitive agent and her cognitive methods, not as a doctrine about truth and knowledge as objective realities. A pragmatic understanding of fallibilism does not lead to a denial of the existence of truth, rather it leads to its assertion, as the conviction that truth will eventually be found is the motive that keeps inquiry going.

Newman was aware of the inherent limitations of human reason and recognized that in many instances error might be the only way to a truth that will eventually become clear. He invited his contemporaries to embrace doubt as a pathway to truth and not to be disconcerted by detours in their processes of inquiry.

10. A commitment to the truth is compatible with pluralism. Since reality is multifaceted and has an unlimited multiplicity of aspects, truth cannot be exhausted by any particular human sphere of knowledge, but always remains open to new formulations. In itself, the possibility of the development of more accurate formulations, instead of proving the denial of the existence of truth, points to its existence since it shows that there is an objective reality to which the formulations are getting closer.

Newman's life was a constant search for new and better ways to bring the truth to his contemporaries, aware that each of them would need a different, and personal, approach to truth in order to reach real assent. Time and again, he expressed that notional assent was not enough for a life committed to the truth, and he sought to bring each person, with all her particularities, closer to this commitment, and thus opened the possibility to a plural understanding of the truth.

Not only through his writings, but especially through his actions, John Henry Newman provides a clear, valuable and relevant testimony of a life that integrates the lights and shadows, the dissonances and harmonies of our human existence and remains firmly and joyfully committed to the truth. May his witness strengthen us to do the same.

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The bibliography is divided in two sections.

The first section includes the works of J. H. Newman, organized by chronological order according to the date of first publication. Most of Newman's works are available in the website of the National Institute of Newman Studies (newmanreader.org).

The second section includes the works by other authors, organized according to the guidelines of the 17th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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