

## ABSTRACT

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In Newman studies, four current theological issues find resolution and application. Faith emerges as the best mode of reasoning for discerning truth, boosts theology's academic status, and speaks to the felt need in academia to require students to enroll in a course in reason and faith. Objective truth survives as inevitable conclusion of convincing converging probabilities, clarifies the preaching task, and highlights Cicero's style as being best at persuading people. Rhetoric triumphs as inseparable from preaching, points to the path of assent, and identifies antecedent considerations as sermon topics capable of moving congregants toward complex assent. Liberal education emerges as the development of particular intellectual habits and strengths, positions pastors/theologians so trained to re-engagement in public discourse with parity, and gives credibility to recommending that seminary students demonstrate the ability to function in a context featuring indeterminacy of reality.

NEWMAN ON RHETORIC AND PREACHING

By

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## Preface

I am a true seeker, for not only do I constantly ask questions, but also I am ever seeking the answers—especially as they relate to my faith in God. However, at the core of my personal quest for answers to questions involving my faith (in Christianity) burns a more fundamental quest for truth. Though many of my questions are ostensibly religious, ultimately they are part of my more basic quest for understanding. Thus, to me, knowledge gained from the Bible and that which is gained from other sources are necessarily related. In other words, I view knowledge from disparate sources as simply acting upon each other in both mutually correcting and illuminating ways.

By the age of twelve, I had so many questions about Protestant Christianity in general that I literally felt compelled to personally study and search out the answers from an interdisciplinary approach. However, even without a lot of the answers, I declared my faith in God at the age of sixteen, responded to a sense of calling to the pastoral ministry at nineteen, attended college and seminary, served as a pastor in the United Methodist Church pastor for fifteen years and as pastor of an independent church for another five. All the while, my search for understanding of my faith continued but in a haphazard manner.

Fortunately, during recent graduate studies in English literature, I discovered rhetorical studies which finally gave me an approach by which I am able to systematically evaluate and integrate knowledge gained from disparate disciplines. Rhetorical studies, in turn, introduced me to John Henry. Though Newman had a Catholic perspective, his ideas have legitimate application to Protestant theology. Newman's religious insights, for instance, have helped me to maintain faith with integrity in the context of a postmodern critique of truth. His insights also have helped me to see the *insufficiency of analysis alone* in the

acquisition of knowledge. Thus, while the exegetical method is adequate for interpreting Scripture, it has not helped me to integrate the wisdom from Scripture with that gained from other disciplines. The rhetorical method has done just that.

## Some Works by John Henry Newman

*Two Essays on Biblical and on Ecclesiastical Miracles* (1826, 1842)

*The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833)

*Parochial and Plain Sermons* (1834-1843)

*The Via Media* (1837-1841)

*Select Treatises of St Athanasius* (1842)

*Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford* (1843)

*Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day* (1843)

*An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845; rev. ed. 1878)

*Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert* (1848)

*Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* (1850; 1866)

*Present Position of Catholics in England* (1851)

*Sermons Preached on Various Occasions* (1857)

*The Idea of a University* (1852-1859)

*On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (1859)

*Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864)

*Essay in Aid to a Grammar of Assent* (1870)

*Essays Critical and Historical* (1871)

*Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects* (1872)

*The Letter and Dairies of John Henry Newman* (1961)

*The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman* (1969-1970)

*The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Faith and Certainty* (1976)

Dedicated to Albert King Jr., my father, who has been my inspiration since my childhood. He was a great man, a wise father, and a faithful citizen of the world.

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## Table of Contents

Milton King, MA, 2007 .....	i
Preface.....	ii
Some Works by John Henry Newman.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
Biographical Notes on John Henry Newman.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Definitions.....	4
Chapter 1: Faith and Reason.....	7
Defining the Faith-Reason Relationship.....	9
Ranking Faith and Reason .....	13
Proper Limits of Faith and Reason .....	16
Practical Application.....	19
Chapter 2: Faith as Probable Understanding .....	22
Redefining Truth.....	25
Personal Element in the Search for Truth.....	27
Tests for Truth.....	30
Practical Application.....	33
Chapter 3: Rhetoric, Preaching and the Nature of Interpretation .....	35
The Case for Informal Inference.....	37
Principles of Informal Inference .....	40
Personal Experience.....	41
Interpretation by Antecedent Probabilities .....	41
First Principles .....	42
Evaluation of Evidence and Probabilities .....	44
Concept of the Whole Man .....	44
Practical Application.....	47
Chapter 4: Liberal Education and the Seminarian .....	50
The Interdisciplinary Approach .....	53
Enlargement of Mind .....	55
Refinement of Judgment.....	57
Attaining a Connected View .....	60
Practical Application.....	64
Conclusion .....	66
Glossary .....	67

## Biographical Notes on John Henry Newman

John Henry Newman was born in London in 1801. He was educated at Ealing School (a private school) and Trinity College, Oxford, and later was elected a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford in 1822. He was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1824; later (1828) he was appointed to St. Mary's (the university church). Inspired by John Keeble and Richard Froude, he began the Oxford ("Tractarian") Movement in 1833—the movement that attempted to demonstrate a direct link between the Church of England the church established by the Apostles. This same period also witnessed a change in Newman's views on Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. In 1845, in a move that created consternation among and stirred anger within Anglican circles, Newman was received into the Roman Catholic Church. A few years later he founded the Birmingham Oratory. He was appointed the first rector of the Catholic University of Ireland (1851-1858), during which period he produced a series of lectures and articles published in 1870 as *The Idea of a University*. In 1864, in response to an attack on his personal integrity by Charles Kingsley, he wrote *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, which he called the history of his opinions. He finished his most important work, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, in 1870. It features the psychological processes involved in assent. When Newman died August 11, 1890, he was a Cardinal in the Catholic Church. And in 1991, after a thorough examination of his life and work by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, he was proclaimed "Venerable."

## Introduction

This paper will venture a critical application of selected rhetorical insights from Cardinal John Henry Newman to the art of preaching. The insights presented here are especially applicable to issues in the field of contemporary preaching highlighted by Lucy Lind Hogan and Robert Reid in *Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching*. Contrary to previous thinking, many of these issues can be addressed with ideas derived from Newman. The four sections of this paper will demonstrate ways that Newman's ideas, particularly his rhetorical theories, offer insights for contemporary preachers-theologians. First, Newman's success in arguing that faith and reason are two forms of the same faculty of reason in effect restores preaching in general and theology in particular to its former intellectual integrity. Second, Newman's redefining of "truth" offers a compelling way to reconcile the contradiction between Christianity's traditional view of biblical truths as divinely revealed and its use of rhetoric—the method of probability—as the method for presenting truth. Third, his exploration into how the rhetorical method functions provides one of the soundest arguments for rhetoric's architectonic character, thus putting the relationship between rhetoric and theology on an even more solid basis. Fourth, his philosophy of education, featuring the concept of the indeterminacy of reality, offers help to Seminaries in their task of determining what is and what is not adequate preparation for the pastoral preaching and teaching functions. The discussion of these four issues also demonstrates how Newman offers an intellectual defense for the reasonableness of faith that could potentially equip church leaders with a fully integrated system of thought that is its own reward.

This thesis is based on the personal judgment of this writer, and on the judgment of Newman scholars like Nicholas Lash, Walter Jost, Katherine Tillman, Ian Ker, and others, that John Henry Newman has come as close to developing a workable worldview as is possible. His is a worldview taken from an interdisciplinary perspective characterized by stellar intellectual habits and strengths. It is pieced together with knowledge based on a rhetorical method that addresses contradictions and correctly relates ideas to each other. It is founded on theory that is firmly grounded in praxis, rendering that theory as true to the facts as is possible. Besides all of this, Newman's integrity remained as above reproach as is possible; his greatest desire was to know the truth above all else and to follow wherever the search for truth took him, no matter where that search ultimately led. This is not to say he made no mistakes or errors in judgment. It is simply to say that his insights have stood the test of time, making them as correct and useful as is possible.

## Definitions

The two key concepts in this thesis are “rhetoric” and “preaching.” In their anthology *The Rhetorical Tradition*, Bizzell and Herzberg present the broad range of various meanings the term “rhetoric” has taken on over the years: “the practice of oratory; the study of the strategies of effective oratory; the use of language, written or spoken, to inform or persuade; the study of the persuasive effects of language; the study of the relation between language and knowledge; the classification and use of tropes and figures; and, of course, the use of empty promises and half-truths as a form of propaganda (Bizzell 1). In this paper, “rhetoric” primarily refers to the type practiced by Newman: philosophic rhetoric, a “renovated and expanded” version of the “principles and techniques of classical rhetoric” (Jost 5). Newman’s rhetoric is a renovated version of classical rhetoric in that while he makes use of the key elements of classical rhetoric as outlined by Aristotle and Cicero, he does not attempt to make use of every element associated with it. Three of the five “offices” of rhetoric—invention, arrangement, and style—are applicable here. From the store of classical rhetorical features Newman also makes wide use of *topoi*, especially common and special topics, which are usually paired to structure the range of his arguments. Also, the three appeals—*logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*—are important in Newman’s method, for “the kind of contingent questions designated as appropriate for rhetorical discourse involve the beliefs, values, feelings, and so on of those involved” (*Ibid.* 16). While the concept of “first principles” is key to Newman’s explanation of how the mind operates as the individual encounters and interprets reality in its particularity, his combining of theory and practice in a way that allows for adjustment to the exigencies of each individual situation is just as key.

Newman's rhetoric is also an expanded version of classical rhetoric in that, like Kenneth Burke and Richard McKeon, he uses rhetoric as "an architectonic philosophic principle capable of coordinating all of our knowing, doing, and making" (Jost 25). Generally speaking, Newman offers "the first truly modern psychology of persuasion" in that he explores, especially in *Grammar of Assent*, "how we come to be persuaded" (Jost 22). Walter Jost, consequently, describes Newman's rhetoric as "an art of reasoning and argument relative to other arts and methods" (*Ibid.*). Jost summarizes the philosophic rhetoric Newman practiced as rhetoric with "an ontology and epistemology grounded in contingency and directed at redefining truth, knowledge, persuasion, and belief" (Jost 62).

\* \* \* \* \*

The second term to be defined, "preaching," has, like rhetoric, many facets and also has come to be defined in many ways: "proclaiming (*keryssein*), announcing good news (*euangelizesthai*), conversing (*homilien*), witnessing (*martyrein*), teaching (*didaskein*), prophesying (*propheteuein*) and exhorting (*parakalein*)" (Hogan and Reid 33). One's definition depends on one's paradigm of preaching. Hogan and Reid inform us that toward the last quarter of the twentieth century, homileticians identified four major approaches to preaching: the *Traditional*, the *Kerygmatic*, the *Practical Postmodern*, otherwise called *New Homiletic*, and the *Thoroughly Postmodern*, otherwise called *Postliberal*. The Traditional paradigm "[provides] an *Explanation* of biblical truth." The Kerygmatic "[facilitates] an *Encounter* with God/Spirit/the Lord." The Practical Postmodern "[creates] an *Experience* making possible an event of meaning in which "I do not control the final meaning to be derived." The Thoroughly Postmodern

“[explores] ways to *Engage* the storied-identity of Christ or God in a communal conversation that helps bring about Christian formation” (Hogan and Reid 119-121).

Sermonic form for each of these paradigms falls in line with the purposes of each. Also, generally speaking, the first two paradigms operate on rationalistic presuppositions, whereas the last two operate on postmodern presuppositions.

While there is no single approach to preaching, preaching in all settings seems to serve the same function: it serves as one of the primary means of “[extending] through time and space that which has once taken place in history, in Israel, and in Christ [the coming into existence of the church] as well as a primary means of “[renewing] ... people by means of that history, by bringing them into a relationship with God and Christ and so into a new relationship with each other, to life, and to the world” (Berkhof 346). Though the sermon is one among other means by which church people come to participate in this covenantal event, it tends to be the sole means for the many people who do not participate in church activities beyond the worship service. The sermon, therefore, is traditionally the focus of high expectations, which in turn has made it the focus of much reflection and much writing (356).

The sermon or act of preaching, in other words, is not simply something that preachers do; neither is it simply a traditional activity of the church. Preaching epitomizes the meaning of the Christian church in that it is the primary activity that links its members to the historic event called the birth of the church and to the grace of God that transforms them into the new creation. Therefore, it should be the focus of much reflection and writing.

## Chapter 1: Faith and Reason

Newman's success in arguing that faith and reason are two forms of the same faculty of reason in effect restores preaching in general and theology in particular to their former intellectual integrity. By showing, in other words, that theology also can offer grounds and give good reasons for its doctrines, Newman's work positions theology to reclaim the status in academia it enjoyed from roughly the ninth through the twelfth centuries. Though they did little to unveil the intellectual underpinnings of their faith, early Christian apologists, who practiced a Christian form of mysticism, boldly theorized that no contradiction exists between the two orders of truth: the natural order represented by Plato and other Greeks and the supernatural represented by biblical revelation.

The Scholastics of the thirteenth century, on the other hand, using that bold non-contradiction theory as their starting point, used Aristotelian dialectics to explain and establish Christian doctrine. However, it took the genius of St Thomas Aquinas—whose works were preceded by the efforts of John Scotus Eriugena and Abelard—to finally work out the relationship. In his article on “Scholasticism,” William Turner (4), writer for the Catholic encyclopedia *New Advent*, explains that the approach of John Scotus Eriugena, a ninth-century apologist, was that of raising philosophy to the level of theology with his argument that “all truth is a theophany, or showing forth of God.” Moving in the opposite direction, Abelard, a twelfth-century apologist, subsumed theology along with philosophy under a larger rationalistic system. Turner, however, introduces St. Thomas Aquinas as both the greatest of the Scholastics and as the one who, “for all times,” worked out the correct approach to relating the two orders of truth (*Ibid.*). Turner explains that Aquinas approached the two disciplines as sciences that are distinct

but yet in agreement. “They are distinct,” says Aquinas, “because, while philosophy relies on reason alone, theology [also] uses the truths derived from revelation, and also because there are some truths, the mysteries of Faith, which lie completely outside the domain of philosophy and belongs to theology” (*Ibid.*). This insight was used later by Newman.

The fortunes of theology reversed during the age of reason with the ascendancy of rationalism and empiricism as sole arbiters of truth. Its fortunes further suffered with consequent and successive social revolutions. In the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment world, so-called objective and indisputable truths were based on explanations which “appeared to leave no room for divine agency.” Also, the Enlightenment’s paradigm of reason totally “dispensed with appeals to divine revelation and ecclesiastical authority” (McManners 612). In addition, the modern world witnessed social revolutions characterized by a questioning of all authority and by an emphasizing of “individual self-fulfillment and self-expression” (613).

Though Newman and Giambattista Vico, an eighteenth century professor of rhetoric, eloquently pointed out the shortcomings of rationalism’s and empiricism’s assumption of the role of sole arbiters of truth, this secularizing deluge proved to be unstoppable. Theology had little chance of reclaiming its former standing as a legitimate intellectual discipline until a critical reaction “against the hegemony of modern rationalism and empiricism” was successfully mounted in the twentieth century (Cunningham 25). Leading the way was Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca’s *The New Rhetoric* and Kenneth Burke’s *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Though the consequent full reestablishment of an epistemic rhetoric potentially places theology in an excellent

position to reestablish itself as a viable academic discipline and social force (*Ibid.* 25-26), theology has yet to capitalize on these favorable conditions.

With the growing interest in studying Newman, whose work mounts a solid intellectual defense of the Christian faith, Newman again emerges as a figure whose work can position theology to reclaim intellectual integrity. Terrance Merrigan casts the same point in positive and negative results of Newman's work. The positive (positive in the sense he constructs a favorable view) result of Newman's explanation of the faith and reason relationship is his demonstration that the Christian faith is ultimately reasonable; the negative (negative in the sense he destroys the unfavorable view) result is his nullifying a "subtle attack on the very foundations of Christian faith" (Merrigan 5). The point is that Newman's insight into the relationship between faith and reason stymies the prevailing thoroughly secular view that has relegated faith to an "order of experience ...deemed inadmissible as an object of critical reflection" (*Ibid.*) Also, Newman's insight ultimately nullifies a framework of "scientistic rationality" that is "inimical" to faith and that forbids "*a priori* anything beyond a measured assurance of the 'probability' of a proposition" (*Ibid.*).

### ***Defining the Faith-Reason Relationship***

Newman's explanation, in *The Grammar of Assent* [GA] and other writings, of how the relationship between faith and reason actually works gives us a look at their practical, everyday relationship from three angles: definition, ranking, and limitations. The next three sections will take up these three perspectives.

Newman defines faith as a form of rhetorical reasoning. Consequently, while faith is "an acceptance of things (eternal and unseen things) as real, [and] an acceptance

of testimony” (of biblical writers), it is also “an acceptance of things as real or true upon previous grounds” (*Fifteen Sermons* xli). Acceptance “upon previous grounds” is what identifies faith as a form of reasoning, for reasoning is legitimately defined as “a faculty of the mind by which we gain knowledge upon grounds given” (xxxix). Reasoning, in other words, is the thinking process we use to come to an understanding of our new experiences; in that reasoning process, we use what we already know to interpret new experiences and to assimilate them into the rest of our knowledge. Thus to say that faith is a mode of reasoning means that faith makes use of antecedent probabilities (things we have already established as being true) and first principles (assumptions with which we begin the thinking process) (Jost 70). Faith and explicit reasoning, therefore, prove to be simply different modes of reasoning of the same faculty of reason (*Fifteen Sermons* xl).

Though faith is a mode of reasoning, it is much more; it is at the same time an independent act. In other words, though inference is the antecedent to the assent that faith seeks in that one must have grounds or reasons for believing a particular proposition, faith is not simply a conclusion; otherwise, it would be simply a “reproduction and double of an act of inference” (*GA* 140). Inference is a conditional acceptance of a proposition; faith, an “absolute and unconditional” acceptance (*GA* 135). Hume also defines belief as “a holding-fast, an adherence, to a proposition as true, a recognition of and confidence in its claim” (Jost 74). Faith, therefore, is something that even a child can have (*Fifteen Sermons* xli).

Backing-up his argument that assent is an independent act, Newman offers everyday life examples as proof. First, people often forget the reasons for particular assents. Those assents nevertheless continue and become self-sustaining, indicating that

assent should not be confused with concluding and inferring. Second, “sometimes assent fails [and become a mere assertion], while the reasons for it and the inferential act ...are still present, and in force.” This shows that while the one (inference) can be strong, the other (assent) can be weak (*G.A.* 142). Third, sometimes “in spite of strong and convincing arguments, [assent] is never given.” Thus, the two are not always found together—i.e., assent does not necessarily follow inference. Fourth, people do not assent *a little* to what they themselves believe to be a “really good” argument. The fact that they refuse to assent until they are able to *fully* assent shows that neither operation changes its character. Fifth, “party spirit or national feelings or religious prepossessions have...had power to retard the reception of truths of [even] a mathematical [and therefore incontrovertible] character.” This result indicates that the two sometimes are in conflict with each other (*GA* 140-144).

Newman nevertheless concedes that while inference and assent are two separate acts that are made “apart from each other,” there is nevertheless a connection between them. “Arguments adverse to a conclusion,” for instance, do “naturally hinder assent” (*Ibid.* 144). Also, the strength or weakness of the probability expressed in a particular act of inference does impact whether or not the inclination to give assent will be greater or less. Also, where no sufficient grounds are given, assent should be rightly withheld, for assent always requires reasons, whether implicit or explicit. While there is a strong connection between assent and inference, Newman hastens to point out that still the two operate independently:

...but it does not follow from this, that it (assent) may not be withheld in cases when there are good reasons for giving it to a proposition, or may not be withdrawn after it has been given, the reasons remaining, or may

not remain when the reasons are forgotten, or must always vary in strength, as the reasons vary... (GA 145).

Ultimately, assent is about truth; it is about accepting things or propositions as true—again, faith is “an acceptance of things as real or true” (*Ibid.*). Newman also distinguishes between simple and complex assent: the former is primarily uncorroborated and is often “merely expressions of our personal likings, tastes, principles, motives, and opinions...” It is often the result of implicit thinking (GA 157). The latter is corroborated by good reasons as a result of one having conducted an investigation into the grounds for assent. The point here is that truth cannot be accepted conditionally. As he has said:

Again, if assent is acceptance of truth, and truth is the proper object of the intellect, and no one can hold conditionally what by the same act he hold to be truth, here too is a reason for saying that assent is an adhesion without reserve or doubt to the proposition to which it is given” (G.A. 145).

Since assent is linked to what we hold to be true, we cannot talk of degrees, for there are no degrees of truth (*Ibid.* 145-46).

Faith being a form of reason means not only that faith has grounds for its beliefs and is fully capable of establishing adequate grounds for them, it also means that, contrary to opinion in most intellectual circles, even though a system of thought is based on faith, it still can have intellectual integrity. Thus, whether or not the faith-system of a particular faith-perspective has intellectual integrity has to be judged by a critical look at how well its methodological practice can respond to the valid points critics make about the interpretive process in general and about religious interpretation in particular.

## ***Ranking Faith and Reason***

Newman also gives us a look at the working relationship between faith and reason from a second angle: that of their proper ranking. In Newman's thought, faith is a higher form of knowledge; hence, reason serves faith in that it supports faith by establishing the grounds for faith. Newman argues that the relationship between reason and faith is "analogous" to the one between the senses and reason: just as reason advances knowledge beyond what the senses are capable of advancing it, faith advances knowledge beyond what reason is capable of advancing it. Thus the three—sense, reason and faith—operate in separate spheres.

Whereas the senses give us direct knowledge of external things, reason makes up for the deficiency of the senses by allowing us to know things beyond the senses. Likewise, faith—as a form of reasoning—makes up for the deficiency of reason by allowing us to know eternal things, things beyond reason. Also, just as reason is a "higher instrument" than the senses, faith is a higher instrument than reason. As Newman has said, "And as Reason, with its great conclusions, is confessedly a higher instrument than Sense..., so Faith rises above Reason, in its subject-matter...And it is, I say, but agreeable to analogy, that Divine Truth should be attained by so subtle and indirect a method, a method less tangible than others, less open to analysis..." (*Fifteen Sermons* 216).

These three ways of gaining knowledge Newman ranked on the bases of their excellence. He notes that though the senses give us direct knowledge (making its premises more secure) of persons and things—"of their properties and modes, of their relations towards each other, and the courses of action which they carry on"—knowledge from the senses is the least excellent, has the smallest range, and is the least intricate

(*Ibid.* 205). This means that while excellence, range, and intricacy increase progressively as one moves up to reason and then to faith, security of the premises does the opposite. Security decreases for these higher means of knowledge because, on the one hand, both provide indirect knowledge and because, on the other hand, faith seeks to know the eternal. So the premises of the three ways of gaining knowledge grow progressively less secure as one moves up the scale of the means of knowledge; but the “excellence,” “range,” and “intricacy” grow progressively greater. As Newman says,

We are so constituted that if we insist upon being as sure as is conceivable, in every step of our course, we must be content to creep along the ground [using the Senses], and can never soar. If we are intended for great ends [using Reason], we are called to great hazards; and, whereas we are given absolute certainty in nothing [using Faith], we must in all things choose between doubt and inactivity, and the conviction that we are under the eye of One who, for whatever reason, exercises us with the less evidence when He might give us the greater. He has put it into our hands, who loves us; and He bids us examine it, indeed, with our best judgment... (*GA* 215).

The implication of Newman’s ranking system is that the three modes of reason can be placed on a continuum: reason being in the middle, the senses and faith would fall on either side of it respectively. That means that as opposed to being an artificially added dimension of knowledge, faith is a natural mode of reason. It is natural not only because it is an act of reasoning which we do naturally, but also because it is the result of the influence of the natural intimations of the conscience about right and wrong, the ultimate meaning of life, life after death, the inexplicable order of nature, and so on, which started when we are still children. While people’s concept of the conscience might vary, rarely does anyone question whether or not everyone has one. Yet, because of the place Newman gives to the human conscience, no dichotomy between faith and reason can be found in his “essential vision.” In Newman’s thinking, the conscience *adds the moral*

*and religious dimensions* to human existence. That makes these dimensions natural and perhaps even instinctive to human nature. Merrigan explains this aspect of Newman's thought best:

Religion was the leitmotif of his existence. Indeed, for Newman, religious experience was coincident with the experience of one's own existence—God's self-revelation in conscience ranking among the constitutive acts of human consciousness. For Newman, experience is 'naturally' religious, and growth to the fullness of Christian faith the 'natural' issue of faithfulness to our own essential nature (Merrigan 4).

So, for Newman, since the moral and religious dimensions of existence are natural, perhaps even instinctive, "irreligion is the foreign body infecting human thought and culture" (*Ibid.*).

The mind, then, as it contemplates the "sensations" and "impressions" otherwise made, is ideally "informed by the most profound religious sentiment and carried along by basic moral principles that are very nearly self-evident" (*Ibid.*). In other words, because of the intimations of the conscience, we naturally and automatically discern moral and religious principles in life, perhaps instinctively. Consequently, reason can only tend toward atheism if it is "truncated, uprooted from its true home in the soil of humanity's ethico-religious consciousness." This uprooted kind of reason is a "falsely autonomous reason" whose operation Newman dedicated his life to exposing and redressing (*Ibid.*).

The implication is that reason and faith are not inherently inimical toward each other. It is true that a certain interpretation of reality extolling reason is inimical to faith. That interpretation, however, does not necessarily reflect an adequate view of human nature. Instead, it can be said to run counter to more reasonable portrayals of the constitution of human nature. Some broader interpretations of reality—especially of human nature—view faith and reason as givens that can potentially work together to

better explain human experience in all of its variety. Such perspectives reveal that faith and reason are inimical only to people who extol reason above all the other operations (emotional, moral, and imaginative) of human nature.

### ***Proper Limits of Faith and Reason***

Finally, Newman also gives us a look at the working relationship between faith and reason from a third angle: that of their proper limits. Reason and faith have their own proper spheres of authority: science and religion respectively. Again, reason here is simply synonymous with intellectual powers. Therefore, it does not generally signify “all in which [humanity] differs from the brutes,’ including in its signification the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong, and the directing principle in conduct” (*Fifteen Sermons* 58). Newman both rejects and reverses the broader view of secular reason as the “characteristic part” of human nature or as the “distinct and chief attribute of mind” (*Ibid.* 56). In his view, the “moral powers” of humanity is the “distinct and chief attribute” of human nature.

Newman considers reason and moral sense to be different faculties of “our compound nature,” different faculties meant to function in different spheres. His view—along with the biblical claim that humankind has been created in the “image of God”—elevates the conscience and the moral sense above secular reason (*Ibid.*). The logical conclusion then is that neither method of knowing should “encroach upon the province of the other.” Both mistakes have been unwittingly made historically when the Church in the past issued decrees that covered, wrongly, the “subjects of the Senses and the Intellect,” and when society, since the Enlightenment, used reason in an attempt to “judge” religious truths. On this subject Newman said:

It would be an absurdity to attempt to find out mathematical truths by the purity and acuteness of the moral sense. It is a form of this mistake which has led men to apply such Scripture communications as are intended for religious purposes to the determination of physical questions....This was an usurpation of the schools of theology in former ages, to issue their decrees to the subjects of the Senses and the Intellect (*Ibid.* 59).

He then notes that the opposite mistake was made during his time by society in general, especially by people who were in awe of reason: “The other cause of disagreement takes place when Reason is the aggressor, and encroaches on the province of Religion, attempting to judge of those truths which are subjected to another part of our nature, the moral sense” (*Ibid.* 59).

Newman locates the cause of such usurpation in the failure of both sides to realize that “each department of thought has its own principles, homogeneous with itself, and necessary *for* reasoning justly in it” (*GA* n1). These principles, which are “homogeneous” to a subject matter, are necessary “for a successful inquiry into that subject-matter” (*GA* 61n.8). In *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, Newman notes that someone asked him to explain what he meant by his characterization of “Liberalism” as the “Anti-dogmatic Principle” (252). He then answers that while he believes liberty of thought to be good, by Liberalism he means “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” (*Ibid.* 254). “Liberalism then,” he says, “is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it” (*Ibid.*). When it comes to religion, then, reason serves a supportive role. We have already discussed above how, in Newman’s thought, reason (primarily implicit reasoning though not to exclude explicit reasoning) precedes faith and often serves as its condition but not its cause.

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From quite a different angle, reason can assist faith but never judge faith because practice must control theory. When it comes to scientists or someone in a different discipline judging religion and theology, Newman points out what should be obvious but often is not. He notes that one who is not intimate with the precepts of religion cannot adequately judge it. On that subject he writes,

It is as little strange that the mind, which has only exercised itself on matters of literature or science, and never submitted itself to the influence of divine perceptions, should be unequal to the contemplation of a moral revelation, as that it should not perform the office of the senses (*Fifteen Sermons* 61).

People who use the talent of their reason, explains Newman, but neglect experiments would be called theorists. Inevitably, theorists would make the “inexpressibly great mistake of being ‘betrayed’ by some treacherous word, which [they would] incautiously explain too fully or dwell too much upon; and we should find that they had been using words without corresponding ideas” (*Fifteen Sermons* 62). Thus Newman’s observation proves to be substantial when we consider again the relationship between theory and practice: theory should always be grounded in and controlled by practice because “...any theory of ‘reasoning’ or ‘believing’ (or any theory for that matter) will be adequate to the ‘facts’ it purports to describe only if it is grounded in those facts [and] is faithful to the practice of (in this case) men and women as they go about reasoning and believing” (Jost 54). Thus, one who does not practice a faith perspective cannot adequately theorize about it. In the case of orthodox Christianity, such theorizing could not adequately reflect how the different aspects of the faith actually function; neither could it faithfully portray the true meaning the faith has for its members.

Nevertheless, one of the most salient facts resulting from this inquiry in to the relationship between faith and reason is that humans are complex beings. Thus, while there are grounds for viewing everything through the eyes of reason only as well as grounds for doing the same when it comes to faith, Newman’s view of human nature as being compound—and thus warranting an approach that sets parameters on the operations of both faith and reason—is the more balanced and more reasonable view. Another advantage of his view is that it is broad enough to incorporate the knowledge that both types of reasoning are capable of. Anything not capable of incorporating both types of knowledge can be legitimately characterized as narrow, and should be so characterized.

### ***Practical Application***

The success of Newman’s faith-reason argument points to a need, within Christianity, for theologians-preachers who have developed the kind of intellect that could defend the faith from false dichotomies to continue the crucial work of apologetics in two arenas: in academia and in the church. By mounting a strong intellectual defense for theology as a legitimate field of knowledge that makes a unique contribution in a liberal education atmosphere, Newman shows what can be done and what needs to be done to help people see that Christian theology has a legitimate role in the well-being of both church and society.

Harvard University’s curriculum committee, which recently proposed that its students should be required to take a course on reason and faith, seems to have experienced the need to revisit that relationship. Though the writers of the *Washington Post* Op-ed “Reason and Faith at Harvard”—The Rev. John I. Jenkins, president of the

University of Notre Dame, and Thomas Burish, provost of the same university—misunderstood the committee’s intent, Jenkins and Burish highlighted the benefits of such a move (Welch). They announced that Notre Dame for a long time has required its students to explore the reasoning that is possible in faith as a means of “integrating their faith with the knowledge and reasoning skills they acquire.” According to these authors, Notre Dame understands that in a world beset by many moral and religious issues, this kind of course has “legitimacy within a core curriculum.” They believe that this kind of effort could help prevent “unreasonable and fanatical forces from gaining influence in communities of faith.” The world thus becomes safer when people integrate the two modes of reasoning.

As Catholics like Newman and educators charged with the responsibility of implementing a holistic view of education, Jenkins and Burish seem very familiar with Newman’s understanding of the faith-reason relationship and with Newman’s works in general. Their arguments, therefore, can be assumed to be based on some of the same Newman insights presented in this thesis. Consequently, Jenkins and Burish are models of theologians who have donned the mantle that scholars like Newman bore proudly as he devoted himself to mounting an intellectual defense of Christian orthodoxy.

Theologians-preachers could follow a similar model in their churches by requiring new members to study the relationship between faith and reason as a means of understanding that faith is not primarily a feeling but a mode of reasoning. This view could also help church members understand that adherents of other religions also have good reason for their respective beliefs. Such a teaching program would inevitably expand, for some congregants will be inspired to begin to investigate the grounds for

other elements of their faith as well as investigate the reasoning involved in other faith perspectives.

## Chapter 2: Faith as Probable Understanding

The second of Newman's insights offers a breakthrough in the problematic relationship between rhetoric and preaching: it offers a way to *reconcile* the standing contradiction between the view of the Bible as divinely revealed and the use of rhetorical methods to communicate these divinely revealed truths. This contradiction is evident in Hogan's and Reid's re-visitation of "the relationship between rhetoric and homiletics." They subsequently argue that all who "do theology" need to make "what is called the 'rhetorical turn'" (Hogan and Reid 19). Theologians, in other words, need to openly "regard rhetoric as fundamental to what they do"; they need to "refuse to be embarrassed by the fact that [the] central claims [of theology] are rhetorically established" (Hogan 18-19). The implication is that contemporary theologians generally have not acknowledged their widespread use of the rhetorical method, perhaps not even to themselves. Another theologian noted the concomitant tendency of preachers to disguise their use of arguments by labeling them otherwise—as propositions, or as commands, or prophecies (Cunningham xiv).

Nevertheless, the rhetorical turn features a "rhetorical stance" as opposed to the "pedant's stance" overemphasizing *logos*, or the "advertiser's stance" overemphasizing *pathos*, or the "entertainer's stance" overemphasizing *ethos*. The rhetorical stance strives for a balance among the three persuasive appeals and openly admits that rhetoric is a method for establishing claims that are based on probability. Ultimately, Hogan and Reid base the need of theologians and preachers to take a rhetorical turn on the argument that preaching is by definition a rhetorical act (18). The problem with their approach is that the claim in itself does not change the problematic nature of the relationship.

However, despite the fact that the relationship between rhetoric and preaching remains problematic and flares up from time to time, generally speaking, since the work of Augustine (*On Christian Doctrine*), the two arts have become companion arts in a relationship that at times is compared to a marriage. The relationship between the two increased around the thirteenth century, but it is no longer acknowledged by everyone in the theological family. Nevertheless, understanding preaching as a rhetorical act emphasizes the nature of their relationship as being inseparable. The history of the relationship has been up and down, and ever on and off. However, a methodological perspective implies a more consistent relationship, one that makes preaching and rhetoric essentially inseparable.

Nevertheless, while everything we say and do can be classified as rhetoric, not everything is a rhetorical act which is “an ‘intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the obstacles in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end” (Campbell 11). Thus, should theologians-pastors see the need to take a rhetorical turn and act accordingly, this open acknowledgement would set them free to be intentional about creating a polished rhetorical product with rhetorical goals. The acknowledgement would set them free to be intentional and open about developing warrants for their beliefs as well as free to set about creating virtual experience, which alters perception, which necessitates fresh explanations, which re-formulates belief, which initiates action, and necessitates maintaining action. The problem theologians-preachers have had in denying use of the rhetorical method is that in disguising their arguments they have also had to skip the step of providing warrants, for warrants imply argument. Skipping that step, however, has left congregants vulnerable to competing

arguments that often are adequately supported by other plausible warrants, leaving many Christians confused about what to believe.

Inseparable though the two arts might be, however, Reid recalls a story that reveals how very much alive their contradictory nature still is. Reid's professor asked a graduate class to take a position on whether Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* is "actually 'a rhetoric.'" Since Augustine's work has been traditionally presented as such, virtually the entire class answered in the affirmative. Then came the instructor's challenge:

...if rhetoric has always been an exercise in the art of persuasion relevant to matters about which the truth cannot be known (matters open to dispute), the *On Christian Doctrine* fails to meet the criteria because Augustine wanted to use it to persuade people to accept "truth." According to this position, the work is not "a rhetoric" because it fails one of the primary tests of the art's assumptions (Hogan and Reid 43).

Augustine, by the way, introduced rhetoric to the art of preaching because in comparison to "engaging" and "entertaining" public orators, preachers were "sluggish, and frigid, and somnolent." He consequently encouraged preachers to use some of the tools of his former profession. Augustine ultimately justified the use of rhetoric to present truth with the argument that the defenders of the faith needed "to be thus armed against falsehood" (*Doctrine* 42). While Hogan and Reid do not attempt to resolve the potential conflict, they do challenge their readers-students to take a position on the question of whether or not preaching should "be about making plausible arguments in support of the probable understanding of faith or valid arguments in support of faith's revealed truths" (Hogan and Reid 44). Thus, while they themselves see preaching as a rhetorical act, they imply the issue is far from having been resolved.

Hogan and Reid view the disparaging of the use of rhetoric by early church fathers like Basil of Caesarea and Jerome as an unfortunate reaction to rhetoric's emphasis then on "stylistic contrivance and sophisticated ornamentation." Consequently, they see Augustine as simply tearing down an "artificial wall" between these two arts and "reclaiming the value of rhetorical principles for preaching" (34). Hogan and Reid's challenge to homiletics students to take a position as to whether or not the subject of preaching is probable understanding of faith or truth (revealed truths) does help preachers and teachers clarify their task as either demonstration or argument. We are left, however, with the original problem: a method that is at odds with the claim that the Bible is revealed truth and the consequent problem of divinity students having to choose for themselves what the preaching task should be. At stake here is the view of reality that provides the context for interpreting the Bible: Should it be the indeterminate or the determinate view of reality?

### ***Redefining Truth***

Fortunately, Newman can help with this problem. He was a preacher, a rhetorical theorist, and an orthodox Catholic priest. He resolves this mismatch between his belief in objective reality and his use of rhetoric as the method for explaining truth by redefining truth. Actually, the rhetorical method, in so far as it features the concept of the indeterminacy of reality, which concept Newman was in thorough agreement with, necessitates a redefining of truth. Thus, truth for Newman is "neither fixed nor determinate *simpliciter*, but emerges from conflict 'with how many swayings to the right and to the left' (Jost 53). Truth here becomes "a matter of discerning patterns within complex sets of interpreted structures" (Jost 96-97), patterns specific enough to suggest

that truths do exist beyond the patterns, or on what Walter J. Ong calls the “higher level of intelligibility” (Jost 263n92). Newman’s view of truth is based on his theory of proof by converging probabilities, the clearest explanation of which is given in *Grammar of Assent*:

...the conclusion in a real or concrete question is foreseen and predicted rather than attained; foreseen in the number and direction of accumulated premises, which all converge to it, and as a result of their combination, approach it more nearly than any assignable difference, yet do not touch it logically (254).

What we do not have here are facts [proofs] that lead to an inductive generalization about a class; we have rather converging proofs leading to a singular claim, which converging proofs are like the strands in a rope or in a cable (Jost 96). Also, the term “converging probabilities” refers not simply to a few probabilities, but to a number significant enough to be convincing. At times, Newman even speaks of a “mass of probabilities” that “act upon each other in correction and confirmation” and lead to a definite conclusion in the individual case (*GA*. 233). Also, since the reasoning process often includes implicit reasoning, much of which proceeds without words, the number of probabilities can be assumed to be relatively significant. Hence, in Newman’s thought, universal truths, among other truths, are “inferred” “much in the way we infer that it’s raining...” (Jost 54).

Newman models his argument of converging probabilities after both Samuel Vince’s—Samuel Vince was an eighteenth century astronomer—“cumulation of probabilities” that supported his argument for the earth’s rotation and Newton’s example of the polygon demonstrating the same principle of converging probabilities (*G.A.* 252). Vince acknowledges that the reasons he offers as proof that the earth rotates as it revolves

around the sun all rest on different principles, but when taken together, “they amount to proof of the earth’s rotation about its axis, which is as satisfactory to the mind as the most direct demonstration could be” (*Ibid.* 253). Newman also uses Newton’s example of the polygon, which directly precedes his statement about converging probabilities, to show that this method of reasoning about the concrete is “parallel” to methods used in other types of reasoning:

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, as that its tendency to be the circle, though ever nearer fulfillment, never in fact gets beyond a tendency. In like manner, the conclusion in a real or concrete question is foreseen and predicted... (*Ibid.* 253-54).

Redefining truth as the result of successive, converging probabilities bridges the divide between the method of probability and biblical truths as objective truth, for while this definition takes into consideration the indeterminacy of reality, it also maintains the notion of reality as one, fixed whole. This definition of truth, rhetorical though it is, allows Bible teachers to claim that biblical truths do somehow correspond to reality—which is one definition of truth (Adler 4). This perspective also prevents religious assent from being reduced to mere opinion, and it prevents other disciplines from reducing biblical truths to the status of being simply “social” truths.

### ***Personal Element in the Search for Truth***

Any argument for objective truth must consider the personal element involved because ultimately, people judge for themselves what truth is. Thus the personal element seems to make null and void any idea or discussion of objective truth. Hence the

conviction of deconstructionists that there is no objective truth but many truths seems credible and even more expressive of reality. For Newman and all similarly thinking people, this scenario is true as far as it goes, but he still argues that objective truth can be known and should be sought. While acknowledging that two people can hear the same line of argument and come to two different conclusions, he offers an insight that can be considered the proper approach to the disconnect between an objective notion of truth and the personal judgment involved in determining what is true. Newman asks,

Shall we say that there is no such thing as truth and error, but that anything is truth to man which he troweth: and not rather, as the solution of a great mystery, that truth there is, and attainable it is, but that its rays stream in upon us through the medium of our moral as well as our intellectual being; and in the consequence that perception of its first principles which is natural to us is enfeebled, obstructed, perverted, by allurements of sense and the supremacy of self, and on the other hand, quickened by aspirations after the supernatural; so that at length two characters of mind are brought out into shape, and two standards and systems of thought—each logical, when analyzed, yet contradictory of each other, and only not antagonistic because they have no common ground on which they can conflict (*GA* 247)?

Newman makes it clear here and elsewhere that truth taking the form of personal judgment is not only normal but also not *the problem*, at least, not the main factor in human inability to agree on what the truth happens to be in a given situation. As he says elsewhere, “an intellectual question may strike two minds very differently, may awaken in them distinct associations, may be invested by them in contrary characteristics, and lead them to opposite conclusion...” (*GA* 240). The main problem is the character, personality, moral state of the parties involved in a debate (*GA* 253). Persons involved must enter the debate-discussion earnestly: i.e., they must be capable of being convinced one way or the other. If they are not capable of being convinced of the opposing view *under any circumstances*, the problem is not personal judgment, it is prejudice.

John Hick, former professor of divinity at Cambridge University, categorizes the mental process of “willful moral blindness” as an exercise of cognitive freedom. He explains that very few humans refuse outright to perform moral obligations. Instead, in the “frontier of awareness” or “the outer defense of our personality,” we choose not to recognize what would be otherwise obligatory. According to Hick, at the “prior stage of cognition,” we have the power to “turn a blind eye to the moral facts of the situation.” He explains that “we juggle with the ethical weights, seeking to shift the balance from one side to the other.” “We rethink the problem, bringing forward those factors which support the conclusion at which we are determined to arrive, and relegating to the background those which tell against it.” This way we safeguard our personal integrity and liberty while predetermining the outcome (Hick 126-127). Again, the problem of agreeing to what is truth—or about what is even possible—lies not necessarily in the fact that truth in the end is a matter of personal judgment, but in the character or moral state of the parties involved.

Newman’s focus on the potential problematic nature of character in debate can be understood as one considers the status of “character” as the element in an argument that is most resistant to change. Other problems, those involving intellectual ability and range of experience for instance, can be taken into account. Within reason, the rhetorical act can be adjusted and designed to overcome problems in other areas. However, speakers and writers can do virtually nothing about the listener’s and reader’s lack of personal integrity, lack of openness and earnestness, and harboring of ulterior motives or of conflicting interests. Other problems only present obstacles that need to be overcome; character issues, however, totally undermine discourse. The most problematic aspect of

all here is that character issues tend to be hidden behind otherwise legitimate differences. Legitimate differences, though they present problems, can be discussed and perhaps successfully neutralized. However, when they simply serve as disguises for character issues, argument ends in stalemate for no apparent reasons.

While the personal element in the search for truth can present problems, even serious problem, theoretically, speakers and writers have a chance to overcome such problems. If that were not true, then discourse would be essentially untenable. And discourse does become untenable in instances involving character issues, character issues that disguise themselves as legitimate issues. Presumably, such instances are relatively isolated occurrences as opposed to common occurrences. Nevertheless, we who participate in group or public discourse must and do *assume* that the problems surrounding a particular subject of discussion are apparent and that speakers and writers have a chance to overcome such problems. Hence, theoretically, public discourse remains a viable practice.

### ***Tests for Truth***

In support of his argument for the existence of objective reality, Newman developed a number of tests for truth. Jost gathers them from disparate sources and lists them for us with commentary (103-105). First is the well-conceived argument, which is an argument that has an internal integrity of its own. The well-conceived argument “must account for the facts, possess scope and coherence, and in general ‘work’ in the way that William James suggests”—“True ideas lead us into useful verbal and conceptual quarters as well as directly up to sensible termini. They lead to consistency, stability and

flowing human intercourse. They lead away from eccentricity and isolation, from foiled and barren thinking” (Jost 104). Newman shares a similar perception of argument:

It is by the strength, variety, or multiplicity of premises, which are only probable, not by invincible syllogisms,--by objections overcome, by adverse theories neutralized, by difficulties gradually clearing up, by exceptions proving the rule, by unlooked-for-correlations found with received truths, by suspense and delay in the process issuing in triumphant reactions,--by all these ways, and many others, it is that the practiced and experienced mind is able to make a sure divination that a conclusion is inevitable, of which his lines of reasoning do not actually put him in possession (*GA* 254).

It is by the illative sense with its method of “oscillative” movement, or method of antagonism, that these tasks of right deliberation are accomplished. And when a specific argument has accomplished these tasks, it can be said to pass a test of truth.

Newman does not set determinate criteria beyond the well-conceived argument; he does address the issue, however, in an indirect and incomplete manner. For instance, while he does not directly address the issue of commensurability between paradigms, he does so indirectly. According to Jost, Newman “seems to assume commensurability” (*Ibid.* 102). In other words, his handling of questions that arise “within any theory, paradigm, or fiduciary framework of belief, social practice, value” seems to address the level at which questions fall “between paradigms.” This tendency of Newman’s resembles philosopher Van A. Harvey’s rejection of “hard perspectivism” for “soft perspectivism.” These authors agree with hard perspectivists that facts are theory-laden, but not with their conclusion that facts are “always already’ interpreted artifacts.”

According to Jost,

Harvey argues what Newman only implies that while all facts may rightly be said to be theory-laden, still it is possible and necessary to distinguish, for example, certain *events* (facts) from their interpretations. There is, in other words, a *common reality*, interpreted but nonetheless common,

which helps to explain why we choose one interpretation over a *really* arbitrary set of codes, meanings, or myths; it is because, in James's language, they "work." (*Ibid.* 105)

The subject here is "unrefusable" facts or "brute facts" "which cross-check successfully with so many possible paradigms and conflict with so few of those that we have yet encountered that we feel safe in concluding that they correspond to the way things are" (*Ibid.*).

Consensus is the third test of truth in Newman thought. Like William James among others, Newman uses "agreement 'with reality and with others'" as a test as to whether or not one is in "possession of true thoughts." Newman appeals to consensus in Sermon XIII of his Oxford sermons, in *Via Media*, and in *On Consulting the Faithful*. In each instance, consensus provides control against errors in reasoning—controls, however, that were themselves "rooted in the reasons and values of community and tradition..." (*Ibid.* 103-104)

Ethos and Conscience also factor in as interpersonal elements that serve to test the truth of propositions. Newman, in *Grammar*, not only quotes from Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*—"we are bound to give heed to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of the experienced and aged..."—but he also "repeatedly appeals to the authority of those who know" (*Ibid.*). Also, not only is conscience a first principle in Newman's thought, but conscience is "not the uninformed individual conscience, or the individual conscience in isolation, but the individual conscience informed and influenced by others that constitutes *one* test for truth." Jost sums up his discussion on tests of truth by observing that Newman not only argues for testing the truth of first principles with

“unrefusable” facts, “but according also to their self-consistency, their scope, their ability to withstand time, their universality, and their extent of reception” (*Ibid.* 105)

Argument is not the sole tool that orthodox theologians have to make their case against the critique that says there is no objective truth but many truths. Newman’s point that truth has a reality that error does not have (Crowley 88) is not only well-taken, it also adds substance to the claim for the existence of objective truth. If truth did not have a unique reality that somehow could be tested, then one would have to question whether or not the objective reality that orthodox Christians believe in is nothing more than a verbal construction. Besides, that truth has a reality that can be tested is anticipated by the very claim for the existence of objective truth. For the claim would indeed simply be a verbal construction if there were no tests for truth’s objective reality.

### ***Practical Application***

By making it clear that preaching should be about “making plausible arguments in support of a probable understanding of the Bible,” Newman’s redefinition of truth strongly suggests a possible argument style—his own style. Newman’s method of judging truth suggests his own powerfully persuasive style of argument in that both are informed by the psychological process. A comparison between a statement about Newman’s method with one about his style reveals that they mirror each other. For the sake of comparison, we repeat here his statement about his own method:

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...yet do not touch it logically...It is by the strength, variety, or multiplicity of premises which are only probable, not by invincible syllogisms,—by objections overcome, by adverse theories neutralized, by difficulties gradually clearing up, by exceptions proving the rule, by unlooked for correlations—by all these ways, and many others, it is that the practiced and experienced

mind is able to make a sure divination that a conclusion is inevitable of which his lines of reasoning do not actually put him in possession (*G. A.* 254).

Of Cicero's style, which he closely imitated, Newman himself said,

Here he goes (as it were) round and round his object; surveys it in every light; examines it in all its parts; retires, and then advances; turns and returns to it; compares and contrasts it; illustrates, confirms, enforces his view of the question, till at last the hearer feels ashamed of doubting a position which seems built on a foundation so strictly argumentative (*Corbett* 403).

The implication here is that if one's methodology features converging and accumulating premises that point to the truth, then one's style of persuasion should seek to persuade by the same means. In other words, if the mind operates in a certain way from antecedent considerations, many of which we are not even consciously aware, then we should use this and similar psychological principles behind persuasion to create a verbal style. If theologians-preachers used this style, they would find themselves in a situation similar to Newman's—never in want for an audience.

### Chapter 3: Rhetoric, Preaching and the Nature of Interpretation

Third, Newman had a deep interest in discovering the psychological processes behind human reasoning; this interest was fueled primarily by the prospect of understanding the mysterious path of assent. Newman, in other words, wanted to do more than find a method that would free everyone from reliance on both “the talent and experience of the few” and “the common sense of the many,” as well as from the confusion and uncertainty generated by contradictory conclusions by the experts (211). These were important goals, but as suggested by the full title of his seminal work, *Essay in Aid to a Grammar of Assent*, his main goal was to describe what the mind does in the process of coming to assent (230), a process he came to identify as “informal inference.” Ultimately, his aim was to “show that you can believe what you cannot understand (as theologians understand) ...[and that] you can believe what you cannot absolutely prove” (GA 12). The success of his project would support the idea that the faith of the uneducated and of children is as legitimate and authentic as that of the educated who can understand what they believe (GA 32-35).

Thus, assuming that Newman achieves his goal—re-presenting the way people really encounter and interpret truth or reality rhetorically through converging probabilities (again, a process he calls informal inference)—rhetoric would prove to be “architectonic,” an overall approach to reality people naturally and instinctively use. And considering how closely allied faith is with implicit reasoning (the most basic form of informal inference), the relationship between rhetoric and preaching would also prove to be truly natural in that they both are based on the same psychological principles.

Normally, the relationship between preaching and rhetoric is established in two ways: by dusting off and unveiling the fact that the relationship has a long tradition and by resting on the fact that rhetoric is architectonic and therefore includes all of our acts of communication. The norm, in other words, is tracing the relationship historically, extending it back to rhetorically trained church fathers like Augustine and noting that the relationship was more or less cemented by the thirteenth century; and arguing by definition: i.e., if rhetoric is architectonic, then by definition, preaching is a discourse of rhetoric. Newman, however, adds another dimension that bonds the relationship on a deeper more visceral level: he argues that the architectonic character of rhetoric is built primarily into the very nature of human interpretation of reality. Consequently, all but mathematics and the physical sciences fall within rhetoric's jurisdiction.

Newman's insights into how the mind works as it comes to assent are original. Although Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and others understood and promulgated the use of lines of reasoning in rhetoric, they did not uncover the laws and principles behind the process. From this original work come concepts like *implicit reasoning*, *informal inference*, *antecedent probabilities and considerations*, and *first principles*. These are all key elements in Newman's version of classical rhetoric, elements which make his rhetoric epistemic, capable of coordinating all of our knowledge.

Unprecedented as Newman's contribution to the field is, what is even more noteworthy is that his originality supplies a standard that can be used to assess the quality of particular instances of rhetorical thinking. For his theory of informal inference can combine the communal and more objective elements with the personal element of reasoning in such a way that one can legitimately speak of excellence in reasoning (his

illative sense has this dimension). Excellence in reasoning in rhetorical situations becomes possible because our knowledge of the laws by which the mind operates enables us to intentionally use those laws to guide and assess our thinking in such situations. Newman thus not only anticipates Stephen Toulmin, philosopher and rhetorician whose model for argument has been widely used in rhetorical reasoning; he also exceeds him in that even Toulmin did not uncover the psychological principles of reasoning.

We best understand Newman's case for informal inference being the way people really approach and interpret reality by examining first a general explanation of informal inference, next the principles of informal inference, and finally Newman's whole man concept. Again, for our purposes, the relationship between rhetoric and preaching can be shown to be based on natural psychological processes.

### ***The Case for Informal Inference***

First, Newman presents informal inference as the natural way people approach and make sense of the realities they encounter. He claims, in other words, that it reflects the steps people instinctively take when they encounter both familiar and unfamiliar objects and events. Two of Newman's examples of "real apprehension" (apprehension of objects external to us) illustrate his premise that informal inference is built into the nature of human interpretation. Regarding the first, Newman says,

...all things that are, are units...experience tells us only of individual things....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 and vague object, which is before us" (G.A. 29, 44).

The second scenario is similar:

When two people meet, each begins at once to draw on his useable past to select, arrange, and interpret experience. To the extent that he relies on

personal familiarity with “facts,” with the lived experience of the person before him as it intersects his own previous lived experience, beliefs, values—to that extent apprehension of the other person will be “real” (G.A. 47).

Newman then takes his line of thought to its logical conclusion: “it follows that real apprehension is the more basic mode of encountering reality, at once more engaging of who we are as *people*, as well as more powerful emotionally, because dealing with ‘things,’ not abstractions...” (Jost 65). The implication of this being the way we naturally approach phenomena is that it would be next to impossible for almost anyone to consistently restrict him or herself to the use of logic or the scientific method in an attempt to understand a particular object or event.

Note that when presented with an object or a proposition, we *at once* draw on our usable past to select, arrange, and interpret that experience. Drawing on our useable past (relevant knowledge we already have) to interpret experience refers to the “antecedent considerations” that characterize informal inference, which, again, is the method that represents how humans naturally reason. It is the method by which we gain knowledge based on previous knowledge (GA 210). Note again that we do this “at once.” Newman also uses terms like “instinctively” and “spontaneously” to indicate that this operation of the mind is automatic (GA 44). Informal inference, then, is conceived of here as being second nature to humans and therefore reflective of the laws of human psychology.

That informal inference is second nature to us also can be seen in how mysteriously it operates: it strikes us as being a simple act as opposed to a process or a series of acts. According to Newman, “We reason without effort and intention, or any necessary consciousness of the path which the mind takes in passing from antecedent to conclusion” (GA 209). In coming to conclusions, usually we are not aware of the mind

appealing to antecedent considerations; i.e., stored memories, stored emotions, previous views, stored information. Left unexamined, how the mind performs these operations seems quite mysterious. However, the fact that the mind is able to bring so many resources to bear on each of our experiences time after time implies that the process of reasoning is complex and that “it must be constructed on definite principles and laws” (GA 210). Once discovered, Newman knew these laws would not only give us insight into how the mind itself works and how individuals can best use these laws, but also how we can organize these laws into a method which could “act as a common measure between mind and mind, as a means of joint investigation, and as a recognized intellectual standard” (GA 211).

Newman’s most basic view is that what we have in terms of the constitution of human nature is all that we have to work with to make our lives what they can potentially be. Therefore, to develop ourselves (our reasoning ability for instance), we must first come to understand the laws that govern human nature and then work along with our nature. As Newman himself explains,

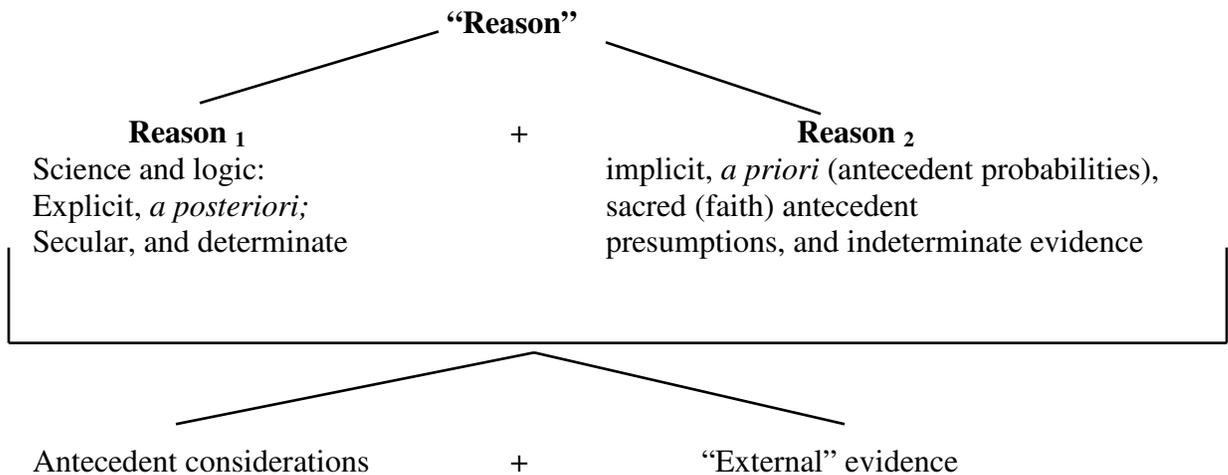
My first elementary lesson of duty is that of resignation to the laws of my nature, whatever they are; my first disobedience is to be impatient at what I am, and to indulge an ambitious aspiration after what I cannot be, to cherish a distrust of my powers, and to desire to change laws which are identical with myself (GA 273).

In another place, Newman indicates that humankind needs to follow Bacon’s lead in terms of his philosophy of subduing nature by inquiring into the laws of nature and then co-operating with nature” (*Ibid.* 275). In other words, we subdue physical nature by our knowledge of its laws with which we then cooperate. We do the same with human nature; we improve ourselves by our knowledge of the laws by which human nature

operates, and then co-operate with our natures, using its own laws, laws that lead to development. This is the principle by which informal inference operates.

### ***Principles of Informal Inference***

Informal inference proves to be the more natural human approach to reality because its principles reflect the principles by which the mind operates in coming to assent. Jost explains that Newman conceived of informal inference as a type of reasoning that “makes selected use of explicit forms (logic and the scientific method) and external evidence, but which *features* the use of antecedent considerations of a nonscientific kind, to be employed on problems not admitting scientific and strictly logical calculation” (Jost: 57).



Jost developed the schema in this figure as a visual of Newman’s concept of reason.  
**Figure 1.**

While describing Newman’s method in another place, Jost announces its three elements: his method is “one in which personal experience, the interpretation of facts and truths by ‘antecedent considerations,’ and the personal and interpersonal evaluation of evidence

and ‘converging probabilities were the tests of any theory’ (Jost 4). Thus, his method consists primarily of three key elements: personal experience, interpretation by antecedent probabilities, and evaluation of evidence and probabilities—we must add a fourth, “first principles,” because of its identification with antecedent considerations. These principles reflect the natural workings of the mind as it achieves assent.

### **Personal Experience**

We have already discussed how the mind uses personal experience: it draws from past experiences any information that can be used to select, arrange, and interpret the facts of a current experience. For instance, if we were in a fairly isolated place and saw something unusual in the distance, we would first try to determine what it is: animal or inanimate object. Upon determining it is an animal, we would then try to determine what type. Should we determine it is human, we would then probably attempt to ascertain its gender. If we determine the person is male, we probably would attempt to discern whether or not he poses a threat to our safety. Upon discovering he is friendly, we might attempt to ascertain whether or not he is injured and needs help. If he does not need help, then we naturally begin to wonder why he is in the area. Even before the two people get close enough to each other to communicate, nearly all of these things can be determined fairly accurately by drawing on the understandings of self and of people in general previously acquired. The mind seems to do this naturally. And the broader one’s experience happens to be, the more accurate one’s interpretation is likely to be.

### **Interpretation by Antecedent Probabilities**

Next, the “interpretation of facts and truths by ‘antecedent considerations’” refers to the fact that the meaning people tend to assign to the facts in current situations is

strongly influenced by the meanings they have assigned to similar facts in past situations. Newman himself used the same principle but with a twist: instead of simply thinking of one universal meaning for a term, fact, concept, etc., he tended to think in terms of a range of meanings which was determined by what meanings had been variously associated with the fact or term. Jost gives the concept of “reason” as an example. He said, “For Newman, ‘reason’ is

- (1) *explicit*, but also *implicit*;
- (2) built on “*external*” and *a posteriori*, but also on *internal* and *a priori*, facts and reason;
- (3) based on *secular*, but also on *sacred*, assumptions (e.g., God as a final cause); and
- (4) concerned with *determinate* system, order, and method, but also with *indeterminate* “genius” and similar personal abilities and dispositions of inquirers (56).

Newman’s range of meanings allowed him to start where people were and move them forward by showing them that their thinking might have been right as far as it went, but in so far as it had not taken into consideration other pertinent meanings falling within the range of possible meanings, their conclusion was flawed. Nevertheless, the point is that people tend to export meanings from past scenarios into current exigencies because those meanings work best for them. Also, meanings that people associate with terms, facts, and truths have been integrated into their value system and carry emotional import. People keep using the same meanings in part because, all things being equal, they also feel right.

### **First Principles**

Antecedent probabilities and considerations also lead to a discussion of “first principles” because questions inevitably arise about the *source* of antecedent considerations, their “nature and function as instruments of discovery and proof,” and their “truth-status” (Jost 46). Part of the problem is that antecedent probabilities are

equally available for both that which can be considered to be true and that which can be considered to be false. Competing probabilities, therefore, are inevitable, and no rule exists—scientific or otherwise—by which we can distinguish true antecedent probabilities from false ones. The result is “proverbial”: “persons believe what they wish to be true” (46). Reverting to the premises that underlie probabilities is not the full answer: the result could be and often is an infinite regressing to premises. The concept that seems compatible with the way mind works and that allows escape from such an infinite regress is that of first principles: which are a set of “first premises” that can serve as grounds for judging other premises.

Jost said that “first principles” for Newman is “an analogical concept ranging from irreducible ungroundable inferences to any concept or proposition that is logically first in an inquiry” (53). First principles, in other words, are assumptions that we use as first or basic premises. Newman’s comments from his *The Present Position of Catholics* give us a better sense of his thinking on the subject:

They are the means of proof, and not themselves proved; they rule and are not ruled; they are sovereign on the one hand, irresponsible on the other: they are absolute monarchs, and if they are true, they act like the best and wisest of fathers to us: but, if they are false, they are the most cruel and baneful of tyrants... They are our guides and standards in speculating, reasoning, judging, deliberating, deciding, and acting (*Ibid.*).

It’s important to understand that these are not strict rules or scientific rules, nor are they meant to be used as strict rules. They are guides. For a sample list of first principles—which are often identical to antecedent probabilities—see page forty eight of this thesis. The point is that when confronted with the prospect of infinite regressing to premises, the mind seems to be satisfied with using certain assumptions as first principles during the reasoning process.

## **Evaluation of Evidence and Probabilities**

“The personal and interpersonal evaluation of evidence and ‘converging probabilities’” refers to reaching a judgment to either withhold assent or to actually assent to the truth of a proposition or to the correctness of a particular interpretation of a given experience. Evaluation refers to the final destination of deliberation or of the reasoning process: namely a decision to doubt, infer, or assent, and eventually to act accordingly. Evaluation is often automatic. At other times, it is reached through a very deliberate process. Deliberate assessments are usually initiated in order to ascertain that the grounds for a particular judgment are as sure as possible; this, of course, would involve interpersonal as well as objective criteria. Nevertheless, all evaluations are destined to end in a judgment about the claims of propositions or about the implications of facts or about the interpretation of events that are before us. The point is the mind eventually and naturally makes a judgment about things presented to it. Thus, these four principles of informal inference reflect the paths the mind naturally takes to reach its goal of assent.

### ***Concept of the Whole Man***

Finally, in a broader sense, informal inference is the more natural approach to reality because, ultimately, it is grounded in the concept of the “whole man.” According to Jost, the “whole man” or “whole person” concept highlights the role of the knower in the epistemological process: the knower is an “enabling” factor in all knowing. Assuming that truth is a reality and that it is attainable, again, Newman would have us understand that its “rays stream upon us through the medium of our moral as well as our intellectual being...” (qtd in Jost 77). Another well-known Newman saying expressing the same idea is “the whole man moves”:

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 myself in a new place; how? The whole man moves; paper logic is but the record of it (qtd in Jost 77).

Behind Newman's whole person concept is the idea of the "unity" of an individual's "emotional, cognitive, moral, and imaginative nature." Individuals draw upon, not simply their intellect, but the entire range of the "powers and resources" of their being as they "locate and evaluate the concrete" (*Ibid.*).

Since we draw upon these resources in the process of forming judgments, our emotional, moral, cognitive, and imaginative nature must be understood to color our judgments in various ways. For instance, we could have a strong emotional reaction—favorable or adverse—to a situation. On the other hand, we could moralize a situation by viewing its outcome as punishment or reward for the immorality or morality of the individuals involved. We could, of course, over-think a situation and get completely thrown off-track by being too attentive to detail. We could also be guilty of "letting our imaginations run away with us" in terms of reading too much into a situation. If a past experience has made an unusually strong and somewhat peculiar impression on us, a new experience, similar in nature to the past experience, could easily spark a somewhat idiosyncratic response. Thus achieving a balanced view of a new experience sometimes proves to be a little complicated. But that is human nature.

Our emotional, moral, cognitive, imaginative nature also highlights the "knower" as having a direct bearing on his or her preparedness for understanding. As Newman has said, "...our preparation for understanding...will be the general state of our mental discipline and cultivation, our own experiences, or appreciation of religious ideas, [and]

the perspicacity and steadiness of our intellectual vision” (*Ibid.*). “Mental discipline and cultivation” refers to the thinking skills that only liberal education can cultivate (discussed thoroughly in the last chapter). The reference to “experiences” conjures up Newman’s portrayal of one’s travel experience and one’s general engagement with the world as channels for broadening one’s knowledge of different cultures, views, races, religions (*Idea* 99). “Appreciation of religious ideas” refers to the necessity of developing one’s moral sense and conscience (natural aspects of human nature) as one develops intellect, emotions, and imagination (*GA* 308). Perversion of moral sense and conscience takes place when one develops only one side of one’s nature—the intellect—at the expense of the other aspects (*Ibid.*). “Perspicacity and steadiness of our intellectual vision” refers to whether or not one has cultivated a view of reality that can pull all of one’s knowledge together into one system (*Idea* 101). These insights are part and parcel of Newman’s philosophy of education (discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis).

Newman’s point here is well taken: how well we interpret new experiences depends on how well we have prepared ourselves to do so. This depends primarily on individual effort because developing the inchoate natures we all are born with can only be done by mental acts: i.e., “the acquisition of knowledge...,” knowledge of nature and human nature, knowledge of the principles of science and mathematics, and of the principles by which our compound human nature operates. Then we cooperate with our natures through those principles (*GA* 274). At the level of right reasoning, however, preparing one’s self means developing, not simply the intellect, but the whole person or the whole of one’s compound nature: the emotional, cognitive, moral, and imaginative aspects. While any level of reasoning involves the whole person, excellent reasoning, the

highest level, entails “a clear conscious view of [one’s] own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them” (*Idea* 134). Right reasoning, in other words, means one has to function at the highest level emotionally, intellectually, morally, and imaginatively. For each of these operations of human nature colors our judgments in its own unique way.

Nevertheless, if we will transform the re-presentation of the way people naturally think into a reliable means of joint investigation and into a recognized intellectual standard, we must first learn and then apply its laws and principles. In other words, attempting to artificially impose a method of reasoning onto our new experiences is counterproductive, for human nature would subvert the process every time, emotionally or otherwise. To transform informal inference into a trustworthy standard for judgment, we must make human nature an ally in the reasoning process. This insight is Newman’s genius. This insight also points to informal inference as the method that most re-presents the way people naturally approach and interpret reality.

### ***Practical Application***

The knowledge that informal inference is the way people naturally think provides the preacher and catechist with material to move congregants toward a very worthy goal: they can use antecedent considerations of individuals as sermon topics to move constituents toward complex assent. Thus congregants’ own antecedent considerations can provide the opportunity to move them toward becoming more sophisticated in their thinking about faith issues. Of course, for those who are already at a sophisticated level, this kind of teaching would confirm their good reasoning and even broaden it. In Newman’s thought, antecedent considerations (which can double as first principles), are

all previous or prior beliefs and conclusions that influence our thinking in a given case. They refer to those “views, theories, principles, previous notices, prepossessions, prejudices (which can be good), presumptions, implications, associations,” etc., “that influence an individual’s assessment of a concrete case or claim” (Jost 41).

On this subject, Newman said, “A great many of our assents are merely expressions of our personal likings, tastes, principles, motives, and opinions, as dictated by nature, or resulting from habit...” Too many of our assents, in other words, are simply not thought through. Newman calls such assents “simple assents,” complex assents being those we have thought through and have established grounds for (*GA* 157-158). Antecedent considerations, then, could include items in the unfounded category: opinions, metaphors, conventional sayings, popular thinking. They could also include items that we have simply accepted on authority. A lot of the information that we assent to without thinking comes from conversations, discussions, friends, strangers, newspapers, novels, movies, unique experiences, much of which often turns out to be misinformation. In the form of antecedent considerations, preachers and catechists have countless resources they can use to help congregants explore unexamined notions that could distort judgment.

One simple example is the saying, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Many people, including those who attend church regularly, believe the source of this saying to be the Bible. The source is really conventional wisdom, which, depending on the particular likes and habits of the individual, could have not only unchristian effects, but could end in disaster. The correct Christian view to take toward others is that of loving others as Christ has loved us. The effects of this teaching can

never have unchristian results. Church goers have many unfounded views, some of which contradict their professed faith in the God of the Bible. These views include inadequate views of sin and salvation, gender and race, God and love, etc. Pastors need to understand that these are antecedent considerations that can distort their judgment in important areas of Christian living.

## Chapter 4: Liberal Education and the Seminarian

An education based on Newman's educational philosophy would enable the theologian-preacher to *re-engage* in public discourse with intellectual integrity. Because Newman's educational philosophy advocates interdisciplinary training, it would equip theologians-preachers with sophisticated reasoning skills on an intellectual par with those offered by some of the other sciences. That would in turn prevent those sciences from easily dismissing theology on the grounds that it is not a legitimate field of knowledge.

Newman wrote *The Idea of a University* when higher education was in the early stages of "its long trend toward secularism and . . . utilitarian specialization" (*Idea* viii). The trend toward secularism eventually spawned the view that religion consists, not in knowledge, but in feeling or sentiment. Ironically, many Christian denominations had a similar view: it was common for religious leaders to portray religion as a deep human need, an almost irresistible human desire that only the church can fill. Newman observes that consequently, "the connection of faith with Truth and Knowledge that was traditional in Catholic theology more and more either [was] forgotten or denied" (*Idea* 21). Newman's *Idea* was his argument against the subsequent move in academia to eliminate theology altogether from the higher-education curriculum.

Kenneth Burke's "parlor scene" depicting the world of human discourse is an imaginative representation of the public forum in which advocates of every perspective must make their case. For theologians, however, it also represents a forum that has become virtually inaccessible in the sense that Christian ideas are not taken seriously there:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion vigorously in progress (Burke qtd in Cunningham 2).

A major implication of the parlor scene is clear: How well the claims of a particular world-view fair among those of competing world-views is a crucial public indicator of the legitimacy of its claims. Also, that the process of asserting and supporting one's claims is a never-ending process is also clear. Thus, if they will alter public perception about Christianity, apologists for Christianity have no choice but to fully re-engage in public discourse in a manner that guarantees they will be heard. Also, after changing public perception, if they will maintain a favorable public perception of Christianity, again, these apologists have no choice but to remain engaged in public discourse in a manner that guarantees they will be heard. Besides, in the final analysis, no world-view is exempt from this process. Advocates of a particular world-view could opt out, but isolation and perhaps not being taken seriously would be the consequences.

In his insightful analysis of why the claims of Christianity are vulnerable to competing claims, David Cunningham—assistant professor of theology—strongly implies that the public will continue to disassociate religion with knowledge. Cunningham first points out the tendency of theologians to label what are really theological arguments as *propositions, commands, or prophecies*. He then points out that

though in the short run, this re-labeling technique makes Christian claims appear to be more certain, in the long run, they are still only arguments—arguments without adequate support—which fact eventually becomes clear to congregants:

As soon as the audience has left the comfortable surroundings in which the claims are made, its members may discover a number of competing claims—and may then realize that what had appeared to be definitive statements were actually *arguments* for a particular position. But because the arguments were put forward without warrants and examples, they suddenly seem bereft of support (Cunningham xiv).

Because these religious “arguments” are “bereft of support,” they become simply assertions at best and personal opinions at worst. Thus, they are disassociated from knowledge.

In his “Introduction” in *Idea*, Martin J. Svaglic, professor of English Literature, notes that the secular trends marginalizing Christianity have been challenged and even partially checked by the social sciences in general (*Idea* viii). However, in the particular case of Christianity, the bias against the legitimacy of biblical truths is still very formidable in Western thought. As George Barna, a Christian church researcher in America, recently has documented, not only non-Christians, but also Christians in America believe that “truth can be discovered only through logic, human reason and personal experience” (Barna, *Diverse*, p. 3). This finding can only mean that Christianity has not yet adequately responded to the damaging intellectual critique leveled against it so long ago.

However, an education based on Newman’s theory of knowledge and philosophy of education, could make the issue virtually a mute point in that theologians-preachers so trained will not only be able to offer an adequate intellectual defense of Christian orthodoxy; they will also be able to make substantial contributions otherwise to the on-

going public debates of their times. This becomes evident as we look at the mental abilities that each of the four hallmarks of liberal education—its interdisciplinary approach and its three-fold goal of enlargement of mind, refinement of judgment, and attainment of a connected view—are designed to cultivate in students.

### ***The Interdisciplinary Approach***

The first hallmark of liberal education is its interdisciplinary approach. Newman advocates an interdisciplinary approach to education for at least two reasons: because different disciplines develop different thinking skills and because the different sciences add different but unique and necessary points of view on truth. On the subject of developing reasoning skills, Newman said, "...the elements of general reason are not to be found fully and truly expressed in any one kind of study and that he who would wish to know her idiom, must read it in many books" (*Idea* 133). He then proceeded to designate religion, ethics, history, eloquence, poetry, theories of general speculation, the fine arts, and works of wit as good for developing judgment. Supposedly, they are "all quarried out of the same great subject of man's moral, social, and feeling nature." Also, they all fall under the jurisdiction of rhetorical reasoning (*Idea* 132). More specifically, "fullness" is associated with history, "strength" with philosophy, and "elevation" of the understanding with poetry" (*Idea* 133). Elsewhere, Newman credits history with giving the mind the power to judge not only "passing events" but all events. While Newman does not comment much on the place and value of mathematics or of the physical sciences, he does characterize the physical sciences as presenting the exuberant riches and resources of the "Universe" as well as its orderliness (*Idea* 99).

Perhaps Newman is silent about the strengths offered by mathematics and the physical sciences because they are associated with formal inference—logic and the scientific method—whereas the other sciences are associated with informal inference featuring antecedent probabilities: namely “values,” “views,” “theories,” “principles,” “previous notices,” “prepossessions,” “prejudices,” “that large outfit of existing thoughts, likings, desires, and hopes” (Jost 41). Or perhaps he does not concern himself with the exact sciences because they deal more with determinate matters, whereas he is concerned with the kind of education that prepares students to deal with indeterminacies—situations and issues having no fixed meanings or interpretations but that may be legitimately interpreted in many different ways, even in conflicting ways. Newman favors this kind of education because the reality that all but scientists seek to know is more or less indeterminate (*Development* 168).

While most seminaries require a liberal arts degree of applicants and thus, as a matter of record, favor liberal education, actual preparedness for dealing with indeterminacies varies among incoming students from well-prepared to ill-prepared. Most are ill-prepared. Jost noted that most interdisciplinary studies during Newman’s times, as well as our own, amount to offering students an “Irish stew of subject matters, superficially mixed together and dignified with the title interdisciplinary”; such an approach amounts to “the mere yoking together of disparate subject matters” (Jost 286n.73). However, achieving what Newman called enlargement of the mind requires “a careful planning of integrated series of courses, held together by a central program or ‘core’ that changes as significant circumstances (of many different sorts) change.” Jost states that this kind of programming even might be necessarily “anti-elective,”

presumably in order to achieve its goal (*Ibid.*). While it is obvious that Newman is addressing education on the undergraduate level, we must presume that these principles apply also to the master's level and above. Certainly, in light of his argument for the inclusion of a Chair of Theology in every university, presumably, the principles and goals of liberal education apply to seminary education.

### ***Enlargement of Mind***

The second hallmark of liberal education is enlargement of mind or the increased ability to reason well in any kind of circumstances. Most of Newman's educational philosophy can be found in his *The Idea of a University* which, again, argues for the establishment of a Chair of Theology in every university that does not have one. However, ascertaining that theology takes its place in the circle of sciences only creates a proper atmosphere for cultivating the intellect. Actual "cultivation of the intellect" is the primary endeavor of liberal education. Ideally, the end product will be individuals with a nimbleness of mind that enables them to properly handle any situation they encounter in academia or in the world outside of academia. Thus, the interdisciplinary education that Newman envisions is just the kind of education that would produce theologians-preachers who could reverse the damage Christianity has suffered from the secular intellectual critique of religion.

While Newman advocates liberal education along with supplemental training that has useful application in a specific field or vocation, he gives priority to liberal education. His description of the strengths it develops reveals why:

It [liberal education] is the education which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It teaches him to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of

thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant. It prepares him to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility (*Ibid.* 134-135).

Moving in the opposite direction, his description of the deficits of those who have been otherwise educated—i.e., educated according to a philosophy that mixes the principle of utility with a superficial interdisciplinary approach, resulting in “a thorough knowledge of one science and a superficial acquaintance with many”—exposes the alternative as undesirable:

There are authors who are as pointless as they are inexhaustible in their literary resources. They measure knowledge by bulk, as it lies in the rude block, without symmetry, without design. How many commentators are there on the Classics, how many on Holy Scripture, from whom we rise up, wondering at the learning which has passed before us, and wondering why it passed! How many writers are there of Ecclesiastical History such as Mosheim or Du Pin, who, breaking up their subject into details, destroy its life, and defraud us of the whole by their anxiety about the parts! The Sermons, again, of the English Divines in the seventeenth century, how often are they mere repertories of miscellaneous and officious learning (*Idea* 107).

Because Newman defines education as cultivation of the intellect or “enlargement of the mind,” the second example, which argumentatively is typical of education then and now, does not meet Newman’s criteria for true liberal education, for it does not produce a mind that can, in Newman’s words, disentangle a skein of thought, detect what is sophistical, and discard what is irrelevant.

Generally speaking, enlargement of mind involves cultivating the “talent for speculation and original inquiry” as well as the “habit of pushing things up to their first principles” (*Idea* 123). Therefore, while enlargement of mind includes learning new facts and ideas, it primarily refers to the ability to reason well: i.e., the ability to compare, discriminate, analyze (125) and systematize ideas (103). It also includes the processes of

refining taste, forming judgments, and sharpening vision (125). The primary objective of higher education, then, is not simply learning new things, but cultivating special mental abilities as one learns new things so as to properly relate disparate ideas and make judgments about them. These abilities, consequently, describe a person who has been trained to think, one who has been equipped with the principles and standards for making sound judgments.

Newman characterizes the person who leaves an educational environment without these skills as a person who is possessed by his knowledge as opposed to one who possesses his knowledge (*Ibid.* 106). He says of those whose minds are possessed by his knowledge (a person of one discipline), that they “take exaggerated views of its importance, are feverish in the pursuit of it, make it the measure of things which are utterly foreign to it, and are startled and desponded if it happens to fail them” (*Idea* 104). The upshot is that educated people without broad skills not only do not know the limits of their own disciplines but also are not able to respond adequately to the various critiques of their field by other disciplines. Neither are they equipped to adequately critique the facts and views of other disciplines that sometimes contradict those which belong to their own.

### ***Refinement of Judgment***

A third hallmark of liberal education is quality of judgment or refinement of judgment. In Discourse Seven of *Idea*, Newman finally announces “judgment” as the aim or goal of education (*Idea* 132), which he comments on and defines with these words:

Judgment does not stand here for a certain homely, useful quality of intellect that guards a person from committing mistakes to the injury of his

fortunes or common reputation; but for that master-principle of business, literature, and talent, which gives him strength in any subject he chooses to grapple with, and enables him to *seize the strong point* in it. Whether this definition be metaphysically correct or not, it comes home to the substance of our inquiry. It describes the power that every one desires to possess when he comes to act in a profession, or elsewhere; and corresponds with our best idea of a cultivated mind (*Ibid.*).

Jost explains that Newman's concept of judgment "includes but reaches beyond the sense of *krisis* or *judicatio*—the decision rendered at the terminus of inquiry by the spectators or judges—to oversee *all* the stages of inquiry and thought" (Jost 198). This form of judgment, better known in Newman's writings as the "illative sense" or "the excellence of the faculty of judging" or "the reasoning faculty as exercised by gifted or ...well prepared minds," functions at the beginning, middle, and end of all inquiry, which is to say throughout the inquiry process. Thus, judgment is the architectonic faculty, and the illative sense is one branch of it (*Ibid.*).

The quality of judgment which liberal education seeks to develop is comparable to or actually falls within the *phronesis* tradition. In the Republic, Plato defined *phronesis* as "the science of right choice," hailing it as the most important kind of knowledge to pursue (*ER* 47). According to Aristotle, the *phronimos* is "the one 'who is without qualification good at deliberating'" (*Ibid.* 46). Though Aristotle limits *phronesis* to the realm of moral conduct where moral virtue is achieved when reason directs desire toward good ends, Newman extends this Aristotelian concept "to that of actional thought in concrete matters" (Jost 198); thus, *phronesis* is equated with Newman's illative sense, which, again, he generally defines as "the reasoning faculty as exercised by gifted, or by educated, or by otherwise well prepared minds." When this extended version of *phronesis* is applied to all knowing, judgment becomes architectonic. So though the

illative sense is technically personal interpretation of a concrete situation, it is also the art of right interpretation because it entails a rigorous intellectual search for good reasons and solid grounds which also includes objective and interpersonal evidence for claims made.

The primary blame for the failure to develop the intellect of students to the level of the illative sense, Newman would place on the universities. For such deficiencies are the results of universities misunderstanding their educational mission. Ideally, the university creates the type of intellectual environment that enables students to learn both by direct study of a few chosen sciences and by immersing themselves in the constant, living sharing that should characterize such an environment. Newman refers to it as “a pure and clear atmosphere of thought” (*Idea 76*). It is an environment created by mutual respect, mutual consultation, and mutual aid among the learned professors. Also, instructors not only guide students in their choices of sciences to study, they interpret for them those that they choose. Consequently, “[The student] apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that [her] education is called ‘Liberal’” (*Idea 76*).

While universities are primarily to blame for deficiencies in their students reasoning skills, students must bear part of the blame because in the final analysis, these skills cannot be taught. Philosophizing, a Newman term for the *application* of reasoning power, is an active principle. Thus it is a personal power—“it is a habit, a personal possession, and an inward endowment” (*Idea 85*). In Newman’s own words:

The enlargement consists, not merely in the passive reception into the mind of a number of ideas hitherto unknown to it, but in the mind’s

energetic and simultaneous action upon and towards and among those new ideas, which are rushing in upon it. It is the action of a formative power, reducing to order and meaning the matter of our acquisitions; it is a making the objects of our knowledge subjectively our own, or, to use a familiar word, it is a digestion of what we receive, into the substance of our previous state of thought; and without this no enlargement is said to follow (*Idea 101*).

Jost explains this personal application of reason in similar terms: “Students...must resituate and redefine the importance of the work for their own time” (Jost 178). This is something students themselves must do, which is the reason Newman noted that the university should be referred to as a *place of education* as opposed to *place of instruction*. While the school can supply new ideas and views, fresh matter of thought, distinct principles for judging and acting, and situations conducive to practicing (*Idea 110*), students must make the ideas and principles their own by digesting and applying them to current exigencies.

### ***Attaining a Connected View***

The crowning principle in Newman’s explanation of liberal education, the fourth hallmark of liberal education, is the attainment of a connected view (*Idea 101*), which is the ability to discern how all facts, ideas, and experiences are related. Newman said, “...if we would improve the intellect, first of all, we must ascend: we cannot gain real knowledge on a level; we must generalize, we must reduce to method, we must have a grasp of principles, and group and shape our acquisitions by means of them” (105). He compared this ascending to “mounting some high hill” from which we can observe and gather an understanding of how an area is laid out. The idea of being *above* or *under* your knowledge is similar to that of possessing knowledge or being possessed by it. In the one instance it is your master and determines how you approach all other knowledge;

in the other instance you are its master and keep it in perspective in terms of your knowing its value and its limits. This connected view also serves the same purpose in one's exposure to knowledge from other disciplines because, again, one surveys all knowledge "from a height" (*Idea* 126). This ability to view things from a height is the consequence of a philosophy that belongs, not to the study of a particular science, but to one's liberal education. The result is that students end up with a "connected view of old and new, past and present, far and near" (101), which view is ultimately a consequence of students digesting communicated knowledge and making it their own.

The view that Newman himself takes is that of the *essential connectedness of the universe*. From his perspective, all knowledge forms one whole, "because its subject-matter is one; for the universe in its length and breadth is so intimately knit together that we cannot separate off portion from portion, and operation from operation, except by a mental abstraction..." (*Idea* 38). The different sciences, then, are the result of mental abstractions, the implication being that they are essentially related because they each are simply aspects of the one "whole subject-matter of knowledge" (38). They, therefore, need each other because they are incomplete in that they do not and cannot describe the whole of reality alone. They also need feedback from each other, feedback that helps them to make corrections to their views, because dwelling on the study of one aspect of reality could easily lead one astray in some of one's conclusions. Also, the presence of every science, including theology, is needed because the absence of any one of the sciences would distort the educational process, for each discipline offers facts and ideas of an aspect of reality that the others cannot offer. Besides, when one science such as theology is left out, one or several of the other disciplines naturally attempt to usurp the

role of that missing science and thus extend its own sphere of operation. These disciplines, in other words, begin to operate illegitimately outside of their rightful sphere, in an area about which they are not equipped to adequately theorize; thus, they inevitably get some things wrong (*Idea* 38-39).

Some might object that this kind of overarching philosophy is passé because the world today is more complex and values pluralism and freedom above this kind of idealistic unity. To practice this kind of thinking, however, is to forget Einstein's attempt to unify all of knowledge with his "Theory of Everything." It is also to forget the current attempt to do the same in physics by producing a quantum theory of gravity and perhaps a theory of everything with string theory. It is characteristic of genius to see connections where others do not and cannot. Not only that, but according to Alan Crowley, a professor of English, both Paul Ricoeur's theory of interpretation of texts and Newman's works in general—but especially his *Grammar of Assent*—rightly reject the sufficiency of analysis as a means of "breaking open language and experience" to achieve freedom from ideology. Crowley argues that the personal commitment Ricoeur's and Newman's works call for has a heuristic dimension and can do what analysis has not been able to do (Crowley 86-89).

According to Crowley, unlike the deconstructionist's "hammer of analysis" which became "idolized" or idealized, Newman's use of antecedent probabilities and considerations, a method of gaining knowledge based upon grounds given, escapes co-option by ideology because the assent that Newman's writings encourages involves a "re-writing of the text's meanings" as one appropriates that meaning, thus making it one's own. This re-writing of a text's meaning requires reflection on the implications of what

has been presented. Thus co-option by ideology is escaped in that tradition is always answerable to on-going reflection. Crowley quotes from *Grammar of Assent* to show that Newman is very explicit about starting out assenting to what is offered as the best method of learning, for in the process of reflection, “we [who have enough ability and honest purpose] soon discover and discard what is contradictory to itself.” We also discover error which always has some portion of truth in it, and discover the truth which has a reality that error does not (Crowley 88). In this way, we move forward, the errors falling away, the truth remaining and developing. This is how Ricoeur and Newman transform language into an “exploratory tool for engagement with the text of the world” (81). Crowley’s view is certainly descriptive of the way education takes place in a university setting. How else can the educational process even begin?

This brings us to the object of knowledge, which is truth. Newman defines truth here provisionally as “facts and their relations, which stand toward each other pretty much as subjects and predicates in logic” (*Idea* 33). Using syntax as a metaphor for how all knowledge is inter-connected and speaks of truth, Newman proceeds to say, “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” (*Ibid.*). All of these facts are simply portions of the whole, and of course, countless types of relationships are formed. This vision of truth cannot be gained directly, intuitively, instantly; neither can it be gained through epiphanies. Rather, we gain this ultimate vision of truth “by piecemeal and accumulation, by a mental process, by going round an object, by the comparison, the combination, by mutual correction, the continual

adaptation, of many partial notions, by the employment, concentration, and joint action of many faculties and exercises of the mind” (*Idea 114*).

The process Newman describes here is the academic process. It also resembles the rhetorical and psychological processes described in other sections of this thesis, using assent to and appropriation of ideas as a heuristic model for exploring the truth of propositions. It is the process of “familiar intercourse” used by learned instructors of the different sciences “to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation” (*Idea 76*). Ideally, the result is a shared vision of truth to which all the sciences have made their respective individual contributions. In the end, Newman identifies truth with Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular. While it is possible to talk about truth solely in terms of the universe being intimately knitted together, for Newman, such a universe implies a Creator (*Idea 38*).

It is clear that an education that so equips theologians-preachers with new ideas and views, fresh matter for thought, distinct principles for judging and acting, and situations conducive to practicing will not only be able to offer an adequate intellectual defense of Christian orthodoxy, but those so trained will also be able to make positive contributions to the religious-intellectual culture of their times.

### ***Practical Application***

Newman’s educational ideal suggests that courses that teach seminarians to view their field from an interdisciplinary perspective need to be added to the standard Masters of Divinity curriculum. These courses could fill up the slots slated for electives and added beyond those slots as necessary in order to meet the interdisciplinary educational goal. On the other hand, a year could simply be added to the typical three-year program

for Masters of Divinity. The idea is that seminarians should be required to demonstrate the ability to take into consideration the kind of indeterminate reality within which they will be required to function as trained professionals. If they are not capable of the kind of thinking that can neutralize false dichotomies, push things up to their first principles, gradually clear up difficulties, prove the rule by exceptions, make unlooked for correlations, their congregations have no chance of developing a world-view that can account for and explain both their Christian experience and human experience in general.

Newman's own perspective on the contribution of the other sciences to the process of Christian assent demonstrates the kind of thinking a well-prepared mind is capable of:

Science gives us the grounds or premises from which religious truths are to be inferred; but it does not set about inferring them, much less does it reach the inference—that is not its province. It brings before us phenomena, and it leaves us, if we will, to call them works of design, wisdom, or benevolence; and further still, if we will, to proceed to confess an Intelligent Creator. We have to take the facts, and give them meaning, and to draw our own conclusions from them. First comes knowledge, then a view, then reasoning, and then belief. This is why science has so little of a religious tendency; deductions have no power of persuasion (*GA 89*).

The additions to the seminary curriculum discussed above are necessary because seminaries have no way of ascertaining whether or not the previous education of incoming students actually achieved a true interdisciplinary education with its three-fold goal of enlargement of mind, refinement of judgment, and attainment of a connected view. At the least, seminaries should require that students demonstrate the ability to generalize, to reduce to method, to have a grasp of principles, and to group and shape their acquisitions by means of them.

## Conclusion

The church has given inadequate attention to the intellectual dimension of faith. It has done a great job in tending to the spiritual and emotional needs of its constituents—it has been great at developing spiritual disciplines that deepen congregant's spirituality, and it has been great at meeting their deeper needs of forgiveness, belonging, and so on. It has also been good at articulating values that resonate with congregants' own personally held values. However, too many believers who search out the intellectual grounds of faith as a means of unifying disparate world-views they hold and as a way of clearing up personal doubts are left to their own resources. Also, often when they turn to the church, the answers they receive are unsatisfactory. Plus, not only do few church people seem to be concerned about this deficiency, but also few seem to grasp the dire implications.

By failing to integrate with other partial views of reality its own view which highlights the conscience as the distinctive feature of human nature, the church has, in part, abdicated its responsibility. By not offering its constituents and society a viable alternative to explicit reason's appointment of itself as primary arbiter of truth, no one speaks the word that only the church can speak. No one speaks in public the wisdom it has developed over thousands of years. Thus, it is high time that the church fully develops and offers publicly its world-view which can unite intellect, emotions, and spirit. The church needs to realize that taking its rightful place in the public forum is obligatory, for in as far as it has answers and wisdom that only its perspective can offer, it must speak, and speak in a way that guarantees that it will be heard.

## Glossary

**Antecedent Considerations:** all previous or prior beliefs and conclusions that influence our thinking in a given case: namely “views, theories, principles, previous notices, prepossessions, prejudices (which can be good), presumptions, implications, associations,” etc.

**Architectonic Faculty:** refers to judgment or human reasoning ability that actively oversee all the stages of inquiry and thought—the beginning, the middle, and the end. It includes the abilities to compare, discriminate, analyze, and systematize, and evaluate ideas

**Argument:** an attempt to persuade or move a person (or audience) from his or her point of view to that of the speaker or arguer.

**Assent:** an absolute and unconditional acceptance of a claim or a proposition as true. Inferences are usually antecedents for assents, but inferences are always conditional conclusions.

**Simple Assent:** assents which are uncorroborated and is often merely expressions of our personal likings, tastes, principles, motives, and opinions and which are usually exercised unconsciously.

**Complex Assent:** assents which are made consciously and deliberately, assents for which one has usually taken the time to establish adequate grounds.

**Co-option by Ideology:** perception of an idea, method, point of view as being rooted in a particular political, psychological, or religious perspective and thus serving the ends of that ideology.

**Commensurability between paradigms:** realities or facts that all paradigms have in common. It is generally agreed that facts or events are theory-laden. Some conclude then that facts are always already interpreted artifacts and cannot be used in other paradigms. Others, like Newman, believe that it is still possible to distinguish certain facts from their interpretations. Thus there is a *common reality*, interpreted but nonetheless common.

**Converging Probabilities:** converging is the coming together of separate ideas and their pointing in a common direction; probabilities are premises offered as non-scientific proofs supporting a claim; thus converging probabilities are accumulating premises that together point to a definite conclusion.

**Deconstruction’s Hammer of Analysis:** a postmodern methodology of perpetual critique as a means of achieving intellectual authenticity. Deconstructionists believe that at the heart of Western thought lie assumptions that actually undermine the intentions of

the text; thus texts need to be demythologized and demystified to expose the self-conflicting areas in the text.

**Faith:** a mode of reasoning that employs primarily implicit reasoning (the automatic non-reflective reasoning of the mind), though sometimes it also employs aspects of explicit reasoning. In other words, people have reasons (conscious or subconscious, explicit or implicit) for believing what they believe. In fact, that is just the way the mind operates.

**First Principles:** premises that can serve as grounds for judging other premises; assumptions that we use as first premises. Ultimately, they prevent one from falling into the trap of “infinite regressing to premises” in an effort to find solid grounds for claims, which happens when one is not allowed to assume anything. Every field of knowledge, including religion, has its own set of first principles.

**Heuristic:** anything used as an exploratory tool, an approach or an activity designed to allow one to explore and therefore gain knowledge of a subject or field of inquiry.

**Illative Sense:** a Newman term for the reasoning ability as exercised by gifted, or by educated, or by otherwise well prepared minds. It is a branch of judgment, but it is a special kind of judgment in that it is considered to be right reasoning or right deliberation as opposed to general reasoning which at best is an admixture of good and bad reasoning.

**Implicit Reasoning:** the automatic, non-reflective, unfathomable reasoning of the mind which takes place as much without words as with words. Newman identifies latent and implicit reasoning with faith and defines faith as a form of implicit reasoning.

**Indeterminacy of Reality:** situations and issues having no fixed meanings or interpretations but that may be legitimately interpreted in many different ways, even in conflicting ways.

**Informal Inference:** “an exercise of *personal interpretation* and induction from particulars consisting of ‘the cumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review; probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be convertible into syllogisms, too numerous and various for conversion, even were they convertible.’”

**Probabilities:** premises offered as non-scientific proofs to support a claim. They refer to probable truths as opposed to absolute truths.

**Reason:** refers to explicit as opposed to implicit reasoning.

**Real Apprehension:** the subject of real apprehension is anything that has external reality; apprehension of it refers to having a partial understanding of the thing in the sense that one understands a statement about it well enough to assent to the truth of a statement.

**Rhetoric:** the faculty for finding or the ability to find the available means of persuasion in a concrete situation.

**Syllogism:** a deductive argument having three parts: major premise, minor premise, and a conclusion which must follow.

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