

**CARDINAL NEWMAN'S NOTION OF ASSENT
AND
SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

**A thesis written in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At no time in history has there been so intense concern over the nature, purposes and effects of education as there is today. Studies such as those which terminated in the Harvard Report on Education, The Purposes of Higher Education and similar analyses testify that educators are in search of universal answers to the basic problems confronting them. Their sincerity is evident and their ability unquestioned. Nevertheless, in many cases wisdom is doubtful for - though there are common areas of agreement among educators generally - there is no trace of unanimity of opinion concerning the most significant issue of all, truth and its proper pursuit. Evident then is the need for a true philosophy of education. Efforts to formulate such a philosophy are increasing. Numerous scholars are probing the works of philosophers and educators who belong to the ages. John Henry Cardinal Newman was both a philosopher and an educator. His works each year draw more students who search them for the answers to modern educational dilemmas. As one of those students I have tried to analyze merely a few factors which are prominent in the intellectual legacy of Newman.

The object of this study is to present certain aspects of the thought of Cardinal Newman which have significance for education and to indicate the extent to which truth is decisive in what he advocated. Because his analysis of judgment is fundamental to his philosophy and thus to all his conclusions concerning the substance and accidents of education, Chapter I deals with this subject. As an example of a particular application of Newman's concept of truth and its communication, his literary theory is considered in Chapter II. Finally, from his writings, a number of ideals for the educator are drawn as the content of Chapter III. Each of these ideals is in complete accordance with his theory of assent which is the core of his approach.

In order that Newman the philosopher-educator may be understood properly, both from a historical and psychological point of view, consideration - however brief - should be given to Newman the man.

Who Was Newman?

John Henry Newman was born in London on February 21, 1801. He lived almost throughout the 19th century. Eldest of the six children of English banker John Newman and Jemima Fourdrinier Newman whose forebears were French, the boy belonged to a family in which ties of affection proved close and enduring. A religious atmosphere permeated his devout Anglican home where Bible reading was part of daily life and where the Mother transmitted to her children traces of a modified Calvinism which was the legacy of her own Huguenot origin. There was neither wealth nor lack of means in the Newman household. The children were given adequate opportunity and encouragement to become educated.

Always the eldest son was considered highly intelligent. His nature was quiet and retiring. His warmth of heart, his humor and his loyalty made him a favorite, respected and sought out by his brothers and sisters. There was early evidence of genius in a rare combination of gifts literary, mathematical and musical. Reading and music were his beloved relaxations. It is interesting to note his fondness for the then current novels of Sir Walter Scott and his frequent preoccupation with interpreting the works of Beethoven and Mozart.

Trinity College, Oxford, was his first school away from home. To it he went at the age of sixteen. Only months later he

had won a scholarship of sixty pounds tenable for nine years at this institution. His early period as a student had its crosses. Not instantly was the frail, ascetic looking youth accepted by his more athletically inclined and boisterous contemporaries. His devotion to study and love of solitude were cause of ridicule which youth is ever prone to aim especially at one not given to caustic retort. Yet even those who at first scoffed began to look to this young man of brilliant mind.

Later, as a fellow of Oriel he became famous not only in the capacity of teacher but as a writer of erudite articles, essays and books. At 25 he was ordained to the Anglican ministry. Subsequently he became Vicar of St. Mary's, the University Church, where throngs went to hear his sermons which - unadorned by gesture or oratorical trick - were noted for their rare insight and eloquence. He seemed almost as an inspired singer, a prophet rapt but self-possessed.

In this era of his life, Newman and his friend Hurrell Froude journeyed to the Mediterranean region visiting many points including Naples, Rome and Sicily. For Newman the visit to Rome was cause of long hours of meditation. Later, in Sicily he contracted a fever which brought him close to death. It was then he said: "I shall not die, I shall not die, for I have not sinned against the light - God has still a work for me to do ... I have a work to do in England." He recovered and resumed his journey homeward across the Mediterranean to France. While in the Straits of Bonifacio where his vessel was becalmed, he composed the hymn "Lead, Kindly Light," a

revelation of a mind questing for the light to find what was its "work to do in England." Just before his death he requested to have sung Faber's "The Eternal Years." He said then: "Many people speak well of my 'Lead, Kindly Light' but this is far more beautiful. Mine is of a soul in darkness - this is of the eternal light."

Home in England he was on July 9, 1833. A few days later the Oxford or Tractarian Movement began when his friends became excited over the government's bill to suppress a number of the Anglican bishoprics in Ireland. It was considered a shocking usurpation by the state and a manifestation that the Church was considered a tool to be used as the secular authorities saw fit. On July 14, 1833, in a sermon, Newman's associate Keble declared war against the measure which he referred to as the "National Apostasy." Another Oxford thinker, Pusey, spread the alarm further. Yet from the beginning, Newman was considered the real leader of the crusade. His gifts of intellect; his deep spiritual nature and his transparent honesty of purpose rendered complete the confidence of hundreds of young men who declared "Credo in Newmanum" as a motto of their Movement. His influence at Oxford was supreme.

Newman advocated an Anglican Via Media. He stood for a church apostolical in origin and doctrine, undivided in teaching, and relying on the teaching of the Fathers whose works absorbed his wholehearted attention. He wrote Arians of the Fourth Century and then the Tracts for the Times through which he sought to secure for the Church of England a definite basis in doctrine and discipline

independent of the state. In 1841 the controversial Tract 90 was published. It revealed Newman's belief that there existed a parallel between the Anglican position and that of the heretics of the early Church. Immediately, he was denounced as a Guy Fawkes of Oxford. His Tract 90 was censored by the Bishop of Oxford who demanded that the Tracts cease. Feeling these rulings to be an ex cathedra judgment against him, he resigned editorship of "The British Critic," gave up St. Mary's, and retired to Littlemore where he wrote the lives of saints and his famous Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine in which he traced the growth of the mustard seed of Apostolic teaching into the mature doctrines of the Catholic Church. This book, written while its author was yet an Anglican minister, is considered one of the great Catholic books of all time. Newman's approach to this famous study was founded on the principle of organic evolution and in this he was ten years ahead of Darwin whose fame rests on application of the same principle to biology.

Clearly, Newman had lost faith in the apostolical character of the Church of England. Soon after he was to say: "I could not without hypocrisy any longer profess myself a teacher and a champion of our Church." On September 25, 1843, he ascended his pulpit at Littlemore for the last time. He asked the prayers of his people that he would ever know the will of God and do it. The agony of Newman was sensed by all who witnessed the physical effects of a soul resolved to follow the path of what he saw as truth.

On October 9, 1843, he became a Catholic. The Anglican Church had lost a jewel in its crown, one of the nation's first rate intellectuals. It was impossible to estimate the enormous effect the loss produced in the academical and clerical world. Two British Prime Ministers, Gladstone and Disraeli, spoke of it as a blow from which England would reel for decades.

In 1846 Newman was ordained a priest in Rome and received a doctor of divinity degree. He returned to England and established the Oratory of St. Philip, a community of religious with simple vows. There he remained the greater part of the next forty years, lecturing occasionally and working almost ceaselessly on his books.

During the early period of those years shadows predominated the life of Newman. But out of the days of his suffering and out of his new comparatively hidden life came several of his greatest works. His genius seemed to break forth with a force never before seen in his efforts. In the Church of his adoption he had found a freedom which released the best of his gifts.

Prior to his conversion he was conscious of the suspicion with which he was viewed and as early as 1842, he had begun to gather biographical and other memoranda waiting for the opportunity to vindicate his career. That opportunity came in the form of public accusations made against him in the press by Charles Kingsley. Newman's answers were in the form of fortnightly articles which were acclaimed by all British classes for their honesty, courage and superior logic.

The sum total of the articles formed the Apologia Pro Vita Sua. The Apologia was written under great emotional stress and at furious speed which kept its author working sometimes twenty hours in a stretch. It has been said that from the date of its publication, the Catholic religion had reentered the national literature. Next Newman turned to formulation of the philosophy which would justify his action. The result was another triumph - the closely reasoned masterpiece known as The Grammar of Assent. Newman, who had always disliked abstract metaphysical speculations, here focused his attention on the problem of concrete affirmation. He examined its motives and its relation to human personality. He revealed that assent to truth is no mechanical echo of the syllogism, but a distinct psychological act in which the will and the moral resonance of the individual are vital.

Christianity and Scientific Investigation is another of Newman's works which has particular significance for modern times. It proves that there is no conflict between theology and the natural sciences. The former is treated as a deductive science while the latter are inductive. Conflict, then, occurs when either the theologian or the scientist invades the domain of the other.

Once Newman said: "poetry is a method of relieving the overburdened mind; it is a channel through which emotion finds expression, and that a safe regulated expression." To poetry Newman often turned because he believed this, and he was a poet in his own right. The Dream of Gerontius, the most beautiful of his poems, is considered a

masterpiece of nineteenth century poetry. It is reminiscent of Dante's Divine Comedy.

One of the many projects of Newman was assigned to him in November, 1851, when he was transferred from the Birmingham Oratory to become Rector of the newly created Catholic University of Ireland. Seven years later, he resigned that post feeling himself to be a complete failure. Lack of organized support from the Irish Bishops, suspicion of the imported intellectual from a disliked neighbour-country, and Newman's own educational theories far in advance of his time - all of these contributed to the fact that his plans never came to fruition. A pioneer chair for Celtic studies was established and a School of Medicine, the first open to Irish Catholics, was developed. These were, in a sense, ironic successes for the man who was concerned above all with the relationships between theology and what he called "liberal education." The result of this seemingly unsuccessful venture, however, was the book The Idea of a University which Walter Pater called "the perfect handling of a theory." For those who would probe the educational theories of John Henry Cardinal Newman, this book is the great source.

However, The Grammar of Assent is, in a sense, the perfect and perfecting complement of The Idea of a University. Its analysis of certitude and assent - especially real assent - is fundamental to understanding what implications the term "education" held for Cardinal Newman. The succeeding Chapter was attempted in this belief.

CHAPTER II

NEWMAN'S ANALYSIS OF JUDGMENT

Of all the characteristics of John Henry Newman as intellectual, educator and priest, there is none more predominant than his ceaseless search for truth. To this search he committed his life. Several of his most significant works are dedicated to a demonstration of what was true of himself (the Apologia Pro Vita Sua), of how the human soul attains truth (Grammar of Assent), and of how a university must commit itself to the guardianship and preservation of truth (The Idea of a University).

An examination of Grammar of Assent reveals it as a treatise on the qualities, the rules and the laws by which the intellect of man finds its way to the truth a soul must willingly surrender to in order to realize its destiny. It is a study of the certitude demanded for action in life, with the particular purpose of analyzing and justifying the certitude of an average person in his faith as a Christian. In this his only ex professo attempt at a description of his theory and philosophy, Newman explains precisely what are his views on how the mind does function and should function. Thus, his thought cannot be rendered unless this essay is followed closely. Principally, it aims at an exposition to combat and overthrow the snap judgment that you can prove science but you must take religion on faith. The history of Newman's conversion to the Catholic faith is proof that he was a man

who would compromise for nothing short of concrete affirmation. Assent in religion, he maintained, rests on just as solid a foundation as assent anywhere else. In the presentation of this thesis relating to religion, a general system of thought emerges. The result is a difficult study for, quite apart from the author's multiplicity of illustrations, he uses a terminology peculiarly his own. To explain this terminology through a glossary would appear a simple solution to the problem of summary yet to do this would be to omit essential interrelation of terms and to convey false meanings. The necessary connection of terms must then be attempted even by way of summary. Hence the approach in this Chapter which seeks to give a synopsis of Newman's psychology of assent.

Specific Aims of The Grammar of Assent

Newman did not wish to answer by metaphysical or theological arguments the questions as to whether or not human reason can be certain that revelation is divine or whether or not a person can be certain that Christianity is truth. The problem which appealed to him was not one of possibility but of fact. He began with knowledge that Christians assent to the divinely revealed truths known as Christianity. This he accepted as simple fact. What justified the assent? - this was his concern. He took for granted that any truth revealed by God is worthy of man's intellectual commitment but he wanted to demonstrate how a person can KNOW that revelation is divine. The main purpose of both his Oxford University sermons and Grammar of Assent is to show how an ordinary Christian comes to know that Christian

revelation is divine. The attempt is not to prove the teaching of Christ is divine but to prove that every practical Christian, acting according to right reason or human nature, can justly say that doctrine comes from God. It is to demonstrate that the assent called Christian faith is as absolute, and even more so, than ordinary human assents for assents, by a law of nature, result from an implicit process and not from a syllogizing similar to scientific investigation.

Newman's apologetic, then, in this book, is psychological or pedagogical. It attempts to explain the intellectual process which in most men leads to the undoubted acceptance of Christ's message and accounts for such assent. In the Oxford Movement, of which Newman was leader, this matter was a key issue. Ecclesiastical liberty had been threatened. This had given rise to a Movement whose thinkers realized it was closely linked with the question of revelation. Newman saw in the Liberalism which prevailed in England of his day, the causes of the gravest dangers to man's intellect and to his religious sense. In the Apologia Pro Vita Sua, he said:

By Liberalism I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place. Among such matters are first principles of whatever kind; and of these the most sacred and momentous are especially to be reckoned the truths of revelation. Liberalism, then, is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and of claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word.¹

¹John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1921) p. 288.

In this Liberalism Newman recognized the seeds of infidelity, skepticism and atheism. To destroy these seeds was his aim. To lay for Faith the proper intellectual and moral foundations was his method. Such foundations would be indestructible. As an educator, Newman felt a grave responsibility to forewarn and forearm. While he was an Oxford Professor, he struck out against the thought of persons who planted those seeds of Liberalism. He sought to disprove Locke's principle of certitude that "doctrines are only so far to be considered true as they are logically demonstrated."¹ This was the view of the Evidential School of Apologists in England. Another group whose extreme view of certitude he tried to disprove was the Evangelicals for whom faith was not an act or habit of the intellect but a mere sentiment or feeling. The Liberals liked this reasoning for it supported their view that among the uneducated classes, faith was but a mixture of prejudice and sentiment. Both these views and others equally erroneous were fashioning a trend toward reasoning and formal logic as the sole guide of life, even in morals and religion. Those who opposed the trend were considered unenlightened. Those who gave their allegiance to Christianity, the religion of dogma, received ridicule supreme. To this moral and intellectual climate Newman came with his powers of analysis, his sympathy, his fundamental love of religion and his zeal for truth. He insists that "God's will, not human logic, is man's rule of life."²

¹John Henry Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1920) p. 327.

²John Henry Newman, Oxford University Sermons (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909) p. 5.

In his war against Rationalism's crusade for souls, he sought to make men use their reasoning powers; to seek after the last satisfactory answer one could reach in everything; to cultivate a personal belief in God as Creator, Lord and Master, and a conscience to support the conviction that faith in revealed truth is a valid faith. Habitually, he appealed to intelligence, sense and imagination and so it is in Grammar of Assent which was his formal attempt to help teach readers an art he had himself learned with pain - the art of thinking toward unconditional assents to truth. An 'attempt' only he considered it to be, as is clear in these words of a letter he wrote as the Essay was completed: "I have now got up to my highest point - I could not do better did I spend a century on it, but then, it may be bad in the best."¹ He knew that in religious inquiry each of us can speak only for himself. He offered no rounded out treatise on doctrine but merely a practical, personal solution to what appeared to him a fundamental question.

The Plan of Grammar of Assent

There are two general divisions. The first, Part I, is entitled "Assent and Apprehension." Its contents deal with modes of holding and apprehending propositions, assent considered as apprehension, the apprehension of propositions, notional and real assents - in themselves and in comparison, apprehension and assent in the matter of religion. The emphasis is on real assent.

¹Wilfred Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1921), II 262.

The unconditional nature of assent is discussed, first in light of simple assents, then in light of the complex. There follows a chapter which contrasts assent and certitude and then goes on to discuss the indefectibility of certitude. The role of inference is the next consideration and attention is given to three types of inference - formal, informal and natural. What Newman terms "the illative sense" is presented in light of its sanction, its nature and its range. Finally, both inference and assent in the matter of natural religion as revealed religion receive analysis by way of a conclusion. The contrast between assent and inference is to set out in relief the faculty of implicit reasoning, that is the illative sense, as applied to matters of faith or religion. The theory of assent, especially the part occupied in it by the illative sense, is the secret not only of his whole psychology of faith and apologetic, but even of his own personality, style and influence over men.

Assent and Apprehension

Modes of Holding and Apprehending Propositions

Propositions are of three types - interrogative which express doubt, conditional which may present an argument leading to conclusions, and categorical which make assertions.

The act composed of argument and conclusion is called inference; the final assertion is termed assent. Inferences and assents differ in two respects. Because inference concludes, it is conditional. Necessary to it are both arguments or premises, and conclusions. Because assent asserts, it is unconditional. The second

difference is that while assent requires some intelligent apprehension of the terms of a proposition, inference does not. We impose a sense on the terms of the act of assent. Its subject and predicate are classed as notional or real. Unless we know the intrinsic sense in some degree, we only assert; we do not assent for to do so is to make an interior assertion with the mind, to become a believer. A proposition is apprehended when its meaning is grasped. Apprehension of some terms of a proposition is not only necessary to assent, but also gives a distinct character to its acts.

Assent Considered as Apprehensive

To understand the nature of assent, a reader of Newman must grasp clearly the nature of apprehension.

Apprehension is an intelligent acceptance of the idea or fact which a proposition enunciates. It has two subject matters - real, if language expresses things external to us based on experienced concrete facts; notional, if it expresses our own thoughts based on abstractions. The real look at things from without and perpetuates them in images. The notional looks at things from within and perpetuates them in notions. We cannot pass from notional apprehension to the real "by a mere synthesis of qualities, as if any number whatever of abstractions would, by being fused together be equivalent of one concrete."¹ Each of these two uses of apprehension has excellencies and imperfections, still:

¹John Henry Newman, Grammar of Assent (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913) p. 33.

".. real apprehension has the precedence, as being the scope and end test of notional."¹

Either assent is absolute and unconditional. The more fully a mind is occupied by an experience, the keener will be its assent to it, the more it is engaged with one abstraction, the duller and less operative will be its assent. Thus there is a conceivable scale of assents, ranging from acceptance of some casual news of the day to the supernatural, dogmatic faith of the Christian.

Real apprehension is more powerful than notional because its object, its stimulus, the concrete, is so. The mind is always stimulated in proportion to the cause. "It is human nature to be more affected by the concrete than by the abstract."² The real is stronger because things are more impressive than notions. It is the varied apprehension of objects and not the incompleteness of the assent itself which admits of degrees. The highest and most perfect assent is that of propositions which are apprehended as experiences and images of things; the highest and most perfect inference is one of notions, which are creations of the mind. While apprehension strengthens assent, inference often weakens apprehension.

Notional Assent and Apprehension

Notional assent should be considered in relation to apprehension. This introduces the matters of profession, credence, opinion, presumption and speculation.

¹Ibid., p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 37.

Profession is a feeble and superficial assent; it is little more than an assertion.

Credence is accepting a proposition almost without having doubts about it. "It is the sort of assent which we give to those opinions and professed facts, which are ever presenting themselves to us without any effort of ours, and which we commonly take for granted, thereby obtaining a broad foundation of thought for ourselves, and a medium of intercourse between ourselves and others."¹ It is of an "otiose and passive character, accepting whatever comes to hand, from whatever quarter, warranted or not, so that it conveys nothing on the face of it to its own disadvantage."² Credences "constitute the furniture of the mind, and make the difference between its civilized condition and a state of nature."³ They are the necessary matter of useful and liberal knowledge. They give us in a great measure our morality, our politics, our social code, our art of life, our national characteristics. Credences are received with a notional assent. Religion as well as secular knowledge may be a subject of notional assent. Theology is always notional; religion, as being personal, is always real. Newman stressed these latter points in criticizing the general religious atmosphere in the England of his day. "It is not a religion of persons and things,

¹Ibid., p. 53.

²Ibid., p. 53.

³Ibid., p. 53.

of acts of faith and of direct devotion; but of sacred scenes and pious sentiments." Providence, he said, is "nearly the only doctrine held with real assent by the mass of religious Englishmen." ¹

The assents just named credences are often called opinions. Opinions are light, casual, but genuine assent in contrast to conviction. To Newman it meant "an assent to a proposition, not as true, but as probably true, that is, to the probability of that which the proposition enunciates. Probability may vary in strength without limit, so may the cogency and moment of the opinion." ²

Opinion is different from inference because the latter is conditional and opinion is not. It differs also from credence for opinion explicitly assents to probability of a proposition while credence implicitly assents to its truth. "It is in this sense that Catholics speak of a theological opinion, in contrast with faith in dogma." ³ Protestants use it in this sense for conviction; their highest opinion in religion is an assent to a probability, and therefore it is content with toleration of its contradictory.

Presumption is assent to first principles; that is to propositions with which we start in reasoning on any given subject matter.

Speculation is a conjecture or a venture on chances. It is "mental sight; or the contemplation of mental operations and

¹Ibid., p. 51.

³Ibid., p. 59.

²Ibid., p. 58.

their results as opposed to experience, experiment, or sense." ¹ It includes those notional "assents to all reasoning and its conclusions, to all general propositions, to all rules of conduct, to all proverbs, aphorisms, sayings and reflections of men and society," ² to mathematical investigations, legal judgments, the determinations of science, the principles, disputations and doctrines of theology. As far as they can be viewed in the concrete and represent experience, they can be received by real assent also.

Real Assent and Apprehension

In real assents the mind "is directed toward things, represented by the impressions which they have left on the imagination. These images, when assented to, have an influence both on the individual and on society, which mere notions cannot exert." ³ Imagination leads "to practice indirectly by the action of its object upon the affections." ⁴ Real assents are personal; notional assents are acts of our common nature. Real assents depend on personal experience which differs in men. This might be called the personality of real assent; it is precisely the characteristic of faith and the evidences of credibility in Newman's theory. Real assent may truly be called beliefs, convictions and certitudes.

¹Ibid., p. 73.

³Ibid., p. 75.

²Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 83.

"Till we have them, in spite of full apprehension and assent in the field of notions, we have no intellectual, moorings, and are at the mercy of impulses, fancies and wandering lights, whether as regards personal conduct, social and political action, or religion."¹

Hence the differences between notional and real assent. Notional assent and inference do not affect conduct. Real assent, which is an act of belief and certitude, does affect conduct. It has the power of the concrete upon the affections and passions and by means of these, it indirectly becomes operative. Real assent thus presupposes some apprehension of the things believed. Belief leads the way to action of every kind. It has the power of persuasion. Newman's convictions concerning the significance of real assent become clear in the following words of his:

The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions and by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us.

Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion.

No one, I say, will die for his own conclusions: he dies for realities . . .

Logic makes but a sorry rhetoric with the multitude; first shoot around corners, and you may not despair of converting by a syllogism.

After all, man is not a reasoning animal: he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. He is influenced by what direct and precise . . .

¹Ibid., p. 88.

Impressions lead to action, reasoning leads from it.

If we commence with scientific knowledge and argumentative proof, or lay any great stress upon it as the basis of personal Christianity; or attempt to make man moral and religious by libraries and museums, let us in consistency take chemists for our cooks, and mineralogists for our masons.

We are so constituted that faith, not knowledge or argument, is our principle of action, is a question with which I have nothing to do; but I think it is a fact, and, if it be such, we must resign ourselves to it as best we may.

No religion yet has been a religion of physics or of philosophy. It has ever been synonymous with revelation. It has never been a deduction from what we know; it has ever been an assertion of what we are to believe. It has never lived in a conclusion; it has ever been a message, a history, or a vision.

Moses was instructed not to reason from the creation, but to work miracles.

Christianity is a history supernatural, and almost scenic: it tells us what its Author is, by telling us what He has done.¹

Assent and Inference

Assent as Unconditional

Assent is not relative but absolute. It is unconditional. As apprehension is needed for both kinds of assent, so in inference - either formal or informal - the usual antecedent of both. Newman makes it clear that neither apprehension nor inference interfere with the unconditional character of assent in itself.

The problem that lies before Newman when he asserts that assent is in its nature unconditional, though it is at the same time dependent on a previous inference for its very existence is:

¹Ibid., pp. 93-96.

how can a conditional acceptance of a proposition such as an act of inference which cannot be demonstrated (e.g. "I shall die". Even this statement is not absolute for an exception to the law of nature could occur.) lead to an unconditional acceptance of it. The problem might also be stated as that of how one grasps the unconditioned. An understanding of the difference between abstract and concrete judgment helps solve it. One does not have to have an existential reference for the premises in order to conclude. The conclusion is merely a judgment that the conditions required for the conclusion to follow from the premises have been fulfilled. Since there is a question only of real assent, he must show how what we call moral certitude is as real a certitude as mathematical certitude; how a person can give unqualified assent to a proposition which cannot be demonstrated.

The problem is answered in a three-fold manner. First, the act of assent to a proposition is an unconditional and distinct act. We either assent or we do not. There is no middleground, Newman believed, just as there are no degrees between being and non-being. "Assent is an act distinct from inference." ¹ "...assents may endure without the presence of the inferential acts upon which they were originally elicited." ² Whatever the reasons which warranted our first assent, they are forgotten and the assent is self-sustained in the mind.

¹Ibid., p. 165.

²Ibid., p. 16.

"Sometimes assent fails while the reasons for it and the inferential act, which is the recognition of those reasons, are still present and in force." ¹ Sometimes too, assent - in spite of strong, convincing arguments - is never given. Thus, men may believe without practising. A man may see a conclusion but embrace it as a truth only after years. Likewise, we may recognize good arguments which do not win the mind to the conclusion at which they point. "We refuse assent to it at all, unless we can assent to it altogether." ² Moral matters may hinder assents to conclusions which are logically unimpeachable. Even in mathematics demonstrative arguments do not force assent. This is especially true if the demonstrations are long and intricate.

In his second approach to the problem, Newman says that inference is conditional and assent is not. Inference implies conditional acceptance of a proposition. This acceptance is expressed by way of a conclusion. Assent is the acceptance of a truth. This acceptance is expressed by way of an assertion. No one can hold conditionally what by the same act he holds to be true. Therefore, assent is unconditional. So called degrees of assent are merely suspicion, conjecture, conviction, moral certainty or conclusion. Degrees of assent are no assents at all but simply inferences. "We might as well talk of degrees of truth

¹Ibid., p. 167.

²Ibid., p. 169.

as of degrees of assent." ¹ Nor is there assent according to the degree of evidence. Thus, Newman preached a doctrine of the integrity and indivisibility of assent.

Simple Assent, Complex Assent and Certitude

Just as simple assents are unconditional, so too are complex assents. Simple assent is ^emade without analysis or explicit consciousness of the evidence of its truth. Complex assent is conscious deliberate consent, based on explicit reflection which points up both the subjective certainty and the objective aspect. It is conducive to investigation which is proving an assent that continues. Finally, it might be said that complex assent implies firm adhesion to an object as true and explicitly recognized as such. This will frequently result in "an assent to an assent or what is commonly called a conviction." ² Certitude is conviction. ".it is the perception of a truth with the perception of a truth with the perception that it is truth." ³

What are the characteristics of true certitude?

Certitude is intolerant of the contrary, confident in face of difficulties or opposition. It is the knowledge of the truth of a thing and is thus accompanied by a "feeling of satisfaction and

¹Ibid., p. 174.

²Ibid., p. 195.

³Ibid.

self-congratulation, of intellectual attainment, possession, finality, as regards the matter which has been in question." ¹ It is to know that one knows. The reward of perception of certainty is a peace of mind. On the otherhand, false certitude leads only to intolerance and an attitude of cocksureness. Certitudes are necessarily fewer than assents and they are more persistent and enduring. They bring about a habit of introspection into our intellectual operation. This often induces hesitation and vague thoughts which are no more than "temptations robbing certitude of its normal peacefulness." ² "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt." ³ Certitudes rarely fail for the intellect created for truth can recognize and preserve truth. This is not to suggest infallibility, however. It is merely to point out a factual, general characteristic. Finally, certitude is not prejudice. A prejudiced person may present an air of certitude but it is only an air. Prejudice is simply assent given previous to rational grounds, whereas certitude is assent after careful examination, investigation, proof. It is something absolute and unconditional.

¹Ibid., p. 204.

²Ibid., p. 221.

John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1921) p. 239.

Inference

The act of inference which precedes assent is conditional. It is not a felt reality. There are, according to Newman, three kinds of inference.

Natural Inference. - For this no reflection is required. It is almost something which comes by nature. For example - a farmer predicts the weather.

Formal Inference. - It is logic - a verbal inference drawn up in scientific form.

"The first step in the inferential method is to throw the question to be decided into the form of a proposition; then to throw the proof itself into a proposition, the force of the proof lying in the comparison of these propositions with each other. When the analysis is carried out fully and put into form, it becomes the Aristotelic syllogism."¹

Such reasoning can be only partially successful. It can succeed only "so far as words can in fact be found for representing the countless varieties and subtleties of human thought, failing on account of the fallacy of the original assumption, that whatever can be thought can be adequately expressed in words."²

This belief accounted for Newman's disrespect for argument, for his diffuseness in exposing any views that his exact meaning

¹John Henry Newman, Grammar of Assent (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913) p. 263.

²Ibid., p. 264.

might be conveyed, for his illustrative imagery and his Ciceronian approach to a thought as considered from many sides. He did concede and highly approve the usefulness of logic as the principle of ordered thought, a test for conclusions and a beacon as to "the direction in which truth lies."¹ Nevertheless, his teaching as to its merits warned that logic "does not really prove . . . for genuine proof in concrete matters we require an organon more delicate, more versatile, and elastic than verbal argumentation."² By this he is suggesting the illative sense which will be discussed in greater detail later in this Chapter.

In further illustrations as to the inadequacy of logic, Newman stated: "Arguments about the abstract cannot handle and determine the concrete. They may approximate to proof but they only reach the probable because they cannot reach the particular."³ "In this world of sense we have to do with things far more than with notions."⁴ "Science, working by itself, reaches truth in the abstract, and probability in the concrete; but what we aim at is truth in the concrete."⁵ Thus the need of an "organon" far better than formal logic. "For how is an exercise of the mind, which is

¹Ibid., p. 285.

³Ibid., p. 277.

⁵Ibid., p. 279.

²Ibid., p. 271.

⁴Ibid., p. 278.

for the most part occupied with notions, not things, competent to deal with things, except partially and indirectly. This is the main reason why an inference, however fully worded, never can reach so far as to ascertain fact." ¹

Common sense approves this notion of Newman. This is why prudent persons distrust generally inexperienced specialists or mere theorists in any field, for their speculations are "dead to the necessity of personal prudence and judgment to qualify and complete their logic." ²

So much for formal inference or logic.

Informal Inference. - This is concluding from a cumulation of converging probabilities which are independently arising out of the nature and circumstances of the specific case considered. It differs from natural inference, which also reaches concrete certitude, only in that it is recognized as a process. It consists of several acts whereas natural inference is simple, direct, implicit, immediately passing from antecedents to conclusions. They both deal for the most part, with the real, the concrete, whereas formal inference deals with the notional, the abstract.

Informal inference has three chief characteristics:

- a) It deals with the concrete, not the abstract. It does not supersede formal inference; they work in different spheres.
- b) It is more or less implicit, that is, it acts without direct

¹Ibid., p. 278.

²Ibid., p. 279.

and full advertance of the mind.

c) It is dependent on premises.

Thus, it is real and concrete certitude arising from a cumulation of arguments.

" . . . many of our most obstinate and most reasonable certitudes depend on proofs which are informal and personal, which baffle our powers of analysis, and cannot be brought under logical rule, because they cannot be submitted to logical statistics . . . This recognition of the correlation between certitude and implicit proofs seem to me a law of our minds." ¹

Unity is a quality of informal inference - "we grasp the full tale of premisses and the conclusion by a sort of instinctive perception of the legitimate conclusion in and through the premisses, not by a formal juxtaposition of propositions" ² as in formal logic.

"Our criterion of truth is not so much the manifestation of propositions as the intellectual and moral character of the person maintaining them, and the ultimate silent effect of his arguments or conclusions, upon our minds." ³ Concrete arguments are grasped as a whole, they form a mass, a combination of many experiences that are felt rather than produced in words. Informal inference does not try to compel through the syllogism. The force of the argument will depend on the listener who "is guided by implicit processes of the reasoning faculty, not by the manufacture of arguments forcing their way to an irrefragable conclusion." ⁴ The "organon" of these implicit processes

¹Ibid., p. 301.

³Ibid.

²Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 310.

is "a personal gift and not a mere method." ¹

Despite its unity, informal inference is as broad in range as the field of concrete matter. Newman insists that through the whole range of concrete matter in speculative as well as practical questions, where there is sufficient evidence for assent and certitude but not for strict scientific proof.

Always informal inference is personal. ". . . a proof, except in abstract demonstration, has always in it, more or less an element of the personal, because 'prudence' is not a constituent part of our nature but a personal endowment. . ." We decide not that the conclusion must be, but that it cannot be otherwise." ² Such language is foreign to abstract science for it indicates conclusions have not been reached "by a scientific necessity independent of ourselves - but by the action of our own minds, by our own individual perception of the truth in question, under a sense of duty to those conclusions and with an intellectual conscientiousness." ³ The mind acts under such a sense of duty and then "this certitude and this evidence are often called moral . . . moral evidence and moral certitude are all that we can attain, not only in the case of ethical and spiritual subjects, such as religion, but of terrestrial and cosmical questions also." ⁴

¹Ibid., p. 316.

³Ibid., p. 318.

²Ibid., p. 317.

⁴Ibid.

Illative Sense

This is the organ of informal inference which Newman says leads to concrete assent.

To summarize the points of Grammar of Assent thus far used in reference, four statements might be made.

- 1) Assent and Inference, or Conclusion, are distinct acts.
- 2) Assent is always preceded by Inference.
- 3) Notional (Abstract) and Reflex Assent, or Certitude, are preceded by Formal Inference.
- 4) Real (Concrete) or Simple Assent is preceded by Natural or by Informal Inference.

It remains to explain Newman's view of that faculty of the human mind from which natural and informal inference proceed and which is thereupon possessed of material certitude in concrete things. This involves the matter of converging probabilities. In the process of reasoning, these probabilities must be cumulative to the point where the insights present force either assent or denial of a probability. This power, faculty or organon, is what Newman calls Illative Sense. It is common sense, prudence, limited to the particular field of quest for truth. Newman considered it superior to logic in that - "for genuine proof in concrete matters we require an organon more delicate, versatile, and elastic than verbal argumentation."¹ He calls it "the perfection or virtue

¹Ibid., p. 271.

of the ratiocinative faculty."¹ It is right judgment in ratiocination. And again, he says of it, it is "the reasoning faculty, as exercised by gifted, .. or otherwise. well informed persons."

Newman considered the illative sense to act by minute, continuous and experiential reasoning which led to an overwhelming accumulation of truth. He felt it to be a spontaneous power of the intellect enabling it to draw conclusions from premisses of which it might not be explicitly conscious, and to judge these conclusions just. To Aristotle's 'prudence' he compared it but not without saying that it is the same virtue except that its sphere is truth alone, and the quest for truth. It is as personal as conscience and taste. It is what might be said to give beauty to judgment. The Illative Sense has many lights. A man may possess it with respect to his reasoning in one field of endeavour while he may show marked inadequacies in another. "A good man may make a bad king."² Thus, Newman considers the nature of the Illative Sense.

What is its "sanction"? Just as conscience directs us in moral matters, the illative sense tells a person to give or withhold assent to a particular proposition. It assures the individual that a conclusion, not logically complete, is as good as proved. Thus it is a rational faculty which is part of our natural endowment. A means given us to judge the accuracy of an inference. Thus,

¹Ibid., p. 361.

²Ibid., p. 357.

the illative sense "is a rule to itself, and appeals to no judgment beyond its own." ¹

To summarize - the exercise of the Illative Sense is one and the same in all concrete matters; it is attached to definite subject matters; its method from converging probabilities to material certitude or assent; it is the ultimate test of truth or error in every class of reasoning whether in science, the humanities or religion.

What is its "range"? It does not exclude logic; rather, it supplements it. Its influence is exercised throughout the whole process of thought from first principles to conclusions. The illative sense assumes its first principles which are the fundamental elements in all reasoning whether in verbal argument or formal logic. Nevertheless, they require the implicit action of the illative sense in abstraction and generalization into notions. The Illative Sense is the measure of first principles; logic cannot be so. This is its most important function for if first principles are right, the whole problem of attaining to truth will be rendered possible of solution. Once having served in regard to first principles, the illative sense conducts the argument in a personal way which makes conclusions possible. As a personal gift, it supplies no common measure between mind and mind for that is the task of logic. Finally, it masses the proofs and concludes by simple assent and this is moral certitude, the personal conviction that one's judgment is valid with respect to

¹Ibid., pp.358-359.

the act of recognition of the conclusion of the converging probabilities presented to the intellect in the form of insights.

The Illative Sense is the core in Newman's entire psychology of assent. It is his contribution to modern psychology and his key point in demonstration of how the mind can reach certitude in religion.

The Illative Sense and Real Assent

In the achievement of real assent, the Illative Sense could almost be said to act as the light of the mind illuminating its insights and converging probabilities and acting as its highest perfection in judgment and correlation. It concerns itself with principles, doctrine, facts, memories, experiences, testimonies, in order to attain insights too delicate and subtle for logical analysis. It draws its conclusions from premises of which it is only partly explicitly conscious, and judges these conclusions to be warranted. Its minute, continuous, experimental reasoning cannot be demonstrated yet, it is what makes the result, real assent or complete certitude possible. It is that instrument or organon without which logic and the scientific method would be barren in their effects. Within it lies the bridge between the rational grounds for concrete judgment and the subjective, psychological grounds which are imperative for such judgment.

The Significance of Real Assent in Newman's Thesis of "The Grammar"

Throughout Grammar Assent it becomes obvious that Newman's true concern was with real assent. This is not to deny that he knew and demonstrated the importance of notional assent which is so frequently in man's behaviour. It would be well to indicate here the substance of his views concerning it. He discussed notional assent under five headings, namely: a profession which is an assent made without reflection and based on habit; credence which is having no doubt about a proposition, such as one finds in the greater part of morality, politics, or social codes; opinion which is an assent to a proposition which will probably be true independent of the premises (e.g. - "I am of the opinion that we shall have an early spring"); presumption which assumes or postulates as in the assent to the propositions with which we start in reasoning on any given subject (e.g. - "There are existing certitudes"); speculation which is the contemplation of mental operations and their results as opposed to experience, experiment or sense (e.g. - our assents to all general rules of conduct, proverbs etc.) Such are the forms of notional assent, distinct from inference by being unconditional, and from real assent by the absence of the force and distinctness of apprehension which accompanies our knowledge of particular things and images. In notional assent the mind contemplates its own creations of things, whether they be unreasoned opinion or mathematical speculation.

The perfect course of human reason occurs when notional assents pass into the real. This occurs in daily life. Newman illustrates by citing the boy who acquits himself poorly in school but in a particular adult calling theory learned later becomes reality and he succeeds. Numerous truths seem to float over the surface of society until an experience brings them home, by real assent, to individuals. Notional beliefs and convictions are necessary but it is for real assents "to form the mind out of which they grow . . . they create, as the case may be, heroes, and saints, great leaders, statesmen, preachers and reformers. They have given to the world men of one idea, of immense energy, of adamantive will, of revolutionary power." ¹

It is indeed imperative that knowledge and conviction leave the merely notional state if men are to live rather than waste action in inconclusive abstraction. Real assent in religious matters was Newman's personal goal. To make it so for people generally was, he believed, the only hope of achieving true spirituality and even intellectual repose. Through his sermons he taught that when men begin and end all their works with the thought of God, living according to the dictates of conscience, "they are brought into His presence as that of a living person, and are able to hold converse with Him." The real then becomes the moral, the spiritual, the living. Hence Newman's great

¹John Henry Newman, Grammar of Assent (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913) pp. 40-41.

repugnance both for a religion of abstractions which ^{he} condemned as little more than superstition, and for materialistic religion - that is a philosophical type which is prone to issue in skepticism. ". . . assents may and do change; certitudes endure. Without certitude in religion and faith there may be decency of profession and of observance, but there can be no habit of prayer, no directness of devotion, no intercourse with the unseen, no generosity of self-sacrifice." ¹

In such discussion of religious matters, Newman makes his meaning of real assent most clear. To him such assent in any area of life was the well-spring of action, a guarantee against introspection and doubt. Thus it naturally must proceed from investigation and proof, be accompanied by intellectual satisfaction and repose, and be irreversible. "If the assent is made without rational grounds, it is rash judgment; if without a sense of finality, it is scarcely more than an inference; if without permanence, it is mere conviction." ²

The secret of Newman's system is within three guiding principles of his. He believed that life is for action, that it thus needs a guiding faith and certitude. He believed, secondly, that the whole mind reasons, not merely the formal intellect. For him thought is personal, ^{as} well as universal. In contrast to Aristotelian logic (an unvarying instrument of thought) and Plato's

¹Ibid., p. 220.

²Ibid., p. 258.

logic (a system based on taking a look at knowledge and in so doing become virtuous, a part of "the good"), Newman set up a living reality of immediate life, as someone called it. In the Apologia he declared that the concrete being reasons. Thus his theory of knowledge takes into account such facts as prejudices, extraneous influences, and above all the will. A good will, the right mood and disposition are necessary to preserve men from skepticism and to enable them to attain certitudes never attainable by the speculative reason which deals in notional assents. The third guiding principle is that reasoning should be treated as it actually is found in life, not as men are told it should be. Abstract reasoning alone, Newman regarded as dangerous since it has little to do with life as it really is. Individual, concrete fact was what he preferred.

The Newman theory of real assent is a perfect culmination of the implications of these three guiding principles. What does this theory signify?

Real assent, to Newman, was not a mere mechanical echo of the syllogism, but a distinct psychological act in which the will and the moral resonance of the individual play vital and important parts. It is an act which engages the whole of man - his imagination, his emotions, his senses, his will. Only such an act has power to overcome by the sheer force of its total conviction, the passions and habits and pride which are the giant enemies of the intellect when that faculty of abstraction is not engaged in a total commitment

of the person. Real assent is vivid and forcible. It stimulates toward action.

A modern educator, Huston Smith, in Aims of Higher Education comments:

Freedom is the spontaneous expression of one authentic self. If the action truly expresses the self it will not stem from external dictation. If it is spontaneous, it will not be the mechanical product of some internal dictate such as a habit of compulsion. If the self is authentic, its thoughts and feelings will be objectively related to reality.¹

What does authenticity imply?

Authenticity has as its basis the assent to truth which is the object of the intellect. Depth of personality implied by the term authenticity depends entirely on whether or not this assent has been made, to what extent it has been made and how the will has been trained to love what the intellect accepts as reality.

To a point, the thought process for all persons is identical. From perception follows image; from image follows inquiry; from inquiry follows the act of understanding, insight, by which potential intellect becomes actual. It is precisely at this stage in thinking that each individual chooses for himself a path which will lead him toward the unreal or the real, the inauthentic or the authentic.²

The person who is authentic accepts insights if the facts upon which they rest have been verified as part of the order of reality. Where this is so and there follows reflection, valid

¹Huston Smith, The Purposes of Higher Education (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955), p. 77.

²Rev. B.J.F. Lonergan, S.J., Insight (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957).

concepts will result for if evidence of reality is present the unconditioned is grasped. Notional assent or judgment must be made or else the person thinking would imitate Descartes in the denial of his own rationality. In the authentic individual such denial is impossible.

The unauthentic person has a different approach to evidence. His is not the same reverence for facts nor is his thirst for the real as great. Receiving sometimes the warrant of his senses, other times that of his emotions, he is willing to accept as real his past and present insights however coloured these are by prejudice and self-will. The misleading authority of others, the inadequacy of his own observation, the poverty of his reflection - all these go into the poor underpinning of the previous erroneous judgments he often is lazily content to accept. Because he does not see them in their true light as the false security they are, often he holds to these judgments despite every appeal of the real - of the true insights he obstinately rejects.

Just as the true judgment is an authentic commitment of self which adds depth to personality, so the false judgment devaluates personality and renders the individual who posits it inauthentic in proportion to the seriousness of the judgment he makes.

The authentic person withholds notional assent until in reflection he finds certainty of the unconditioned upon which it must be based. This "type" of authenticity might also be termed

sincerity or intellectual honesty. It is authenticity acceptable but yet imperfect.

Cardinal Newman in his Grammar of Assent stated: "We sometimes find men loud in their admiration of truths which they never profess . . . as obedience is distinct from faith, and men may believe without practicing, so is assent also independent of our acts of inference." ¹ Etienne Gilson says similarly: "We all know from bitter experience what difference there is between presenting a perfectly valid demonstration of the existence of God and eliciting assent to it from a mind willing to concede its reality." ²

These words of great philosophers point out the cause of so called degrees of authenticity. Where there is notional assent given by a man of good will there is authenticity which elicits respect and trust. Where real assent is given there must follow self-appropriation - that is, the wilful, purposeful shaping of every aspect of life so that living is in conformity to the concept of reality which the person has accepted as the explanation of being.

The authentic person, in the fullest sense of the term, continually deepens that characteristic of his being because he accepts reality and seeks the grace to strengthen his will so that he may live in accordance with it. Having tasted the freedom of

¹John Henry Newman, Grammar of Assent (New York: Image Books, 1955), Introduction by Etienne Gilson, p. 142.

²Ibid., p. 20.

truth, he pursues till the end the vocation of mankind - the possession of Truth for all eternity.

Newman appreciated the intellect as a tremendous spiritual power for the knowledge of truth. He realized that virtue comes from within and can never be imposed from without, for it must be simply the effect of a personality which has become totally engaged in the contemplation of a truth. Virtue is not the result of the Platonic concept of "taking a look." Rather it is a vision which involves the total reaction of man to what he has seen.¹

Newman's great aim in life was to present to the world the truth as he saw it.² He said once: "We must change the world. We must manifest the kingdom of heaven upon earth. The light of Divine truth must proceed from our hearts, and shine out upon everything we are, and everything we do."³ If that light is to shine from the heart it must be from a heart which has appropriated itself to truth firmly grasped by an intellect whose assent is real. To give such assent is to have psychological insight of a high order and he who has it indeed shares a great work to do in the world, by way of presenting truth. All mental and physical disorder in the world

¹Canon G. Emmett Carter, "Education for Contemplation," *Spiritual Life*, V, No. 1 (March, 1959), 43-48.

²J. J. Reilly, Newman as a Man of Letters, (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1931), p. 275.

³John Henry Newman, Parochial and Plain Sermons, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1841), pp. 304-305.

results from what the philosopher Lonergan calls "flights from insight,"¹ and from the love which is self-commitment to the fruits of insight. The strength and happiness and normality of an individual move toward perfection in a line parallel to his progress toward authenticity - a state of involvement of mind, will and heart which has already been discussed briefly. It is for education to dedicate itself to the development of the person whose logical thinking will mark him as a man of insight. Such a one is led, through clusters of insights, to sound judgment. If he commits himself to this judgment, if he gives what Newman calls "real assent" to it, then he is also a man of character - a person who knows the truth, who loves it by means of personal commitment, and who consequently experiences that freedom of spirit in which true happiness consists. Man was created for Truth. To its pursuit he must be taught to ply himself all the days of his life. If he learns to commit his whole being to his judgment as he recognizes those portions in the unity of truth, in the order of reality, which his heredity and environment enable him to discover, then his will be a service of love. A service of love is the greatest a person can offer for it is the fulfillment of his nature as a social being destined to share his developed talents from an overflowing heart. The fundamental solution to all problems, both individual and social, is love. The vocation of every man is to know the Truth which generates this love and which

¹ B. J. F. Lonergan, Insight (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), pp. 199-200.

terminates in the service which makes one's assent a reality.

These, I believe, are the implications of Cardinal Newman's analysis of judgment and of his general views concerning education.

From Grammar of Assent one should turn to The Idea Of a University for specific facts for the educator's consideration. Chapter III will attempt to expose the literary analysis expressed in "The Idea." It is an example of what Newman's theory of knowledge and especially the factor of real assent have to do with a specific subject for the education of humanity. It is appropriate that this subject should be literature which is always - for good or for evil - a revelation of man's soul.

CHAPTER III

NEWMAN'S THEORY OF LITERATURE

To study the literary theories of John Henry Cardinal Newman is to discover principles worthy of guiding the educator. From the days of his youth, Newman grew toward that high literary position he yet holds. Not only was he known as a man steeped in the riches of Greek and Roman classics but as one deeply appreciative of the best in French, medieval and English Protestant literature. His fondness for the classics was a lifelong characteristic. It is said that daily he translated at least a sentence of Cicero. His familiarity with Greek works was equally revealing. Could he, then, be called a pure classicist? It seems doubtful, because Newman searched for beauty in the literary forms of every age. For many a reason both classicists and romanticists would like to claim him as their own. By virtue of his nature and intellectual gifts, both groups would in some ways be justified.

Of the Cardinal, Dr. J. J. Reilly, author of The Fine God of Newman said:

Newman is one of the four great 'prophets' of nineteenth century English literature and beyond any of the others he is significant for our generation. His interest in the human heart; his appreciation of the meaning of great movements; his unswerving belief in unchanging truths; his detestation of cowardice, moral compromises, pharisaism, and prejudice;

his reasoned wisdom in higher education; his belief in the unseen realities as the only abiding realities; his conviction that duty is personal, not vicarious; his poetic imagination; his own spiritual odyssey revealed in one of the world's greatest autobiographies; and, finally, his unerring sense of all that is exquisite in style have combined to keep Newman where his own contemporaries placed him - among the great masters of the written word and the great spiritual leaders of the race.¹

Charles F. Harrold in his John Henry Newman pays this tribute:

As a writer of English prose Newman stands for the perfect embodiment of Oxford, deriving from Cicero the lucid and leisurely art of exposition, from the Greek tragedians a thoughtful refinement, from the Fathers a preference for personal above scientific teaching, from Shakespeare, Hooker, and that older school, the use of idiom at its best. He refused to acquire German; he was unacquainted with Goethe as with Hegel; he took some principle from Coleridge, perhaps indirectly; and, on the whole, he never went beyond Aristotle in his general views of education.²

Such glimpses of Newman render more understandable his insight into what literature should express concerning life in all its facets. Much of what he wrote was based upon learning and experience profoundly felt and thus more easily expressed. Newman's mind was wide enough to absorb tremendous quantities of facts, powerful enough to wring wisdom from them, artistic enough to make the wisdom sing. His own writing was frequently characterized by a powerful imaginative appeal, a bold sweep and an intellectual music. He was a master rhetorician who used all his resources in

¹J. J. Reilly, The Fine Gold of Newman, (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1931).

Charles F. Harrold, John Henry Newman, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1946).

bringing the reader's mind into harmony with his own. It is interesting to note that he loved music "as a help to the soul in its journey."¹ This man who in the 1820's continued playing the violin when a messenger told him he had been appointed a Fellow of Oriel, was to write in the 1860's: "I could find solace in music from week to week's end - if I get a qualm of conscience - - - in penance for the violin, I suddenly rush into work."² The best writing he ever did, he said, was done after listening to music or playing the violin. It is not surprising that he mused: "Perhaps thought is the music of the soul."³

Such was the mind of the man who produced literary theories which are to be found chiefly within the essays on literature in The Idea of a University. They represent Newman at the peak of his mastery in literary appreciation. Indirectly, another golden source of information is Grammar of Assent. A complete essay on literary criticism he never wrote. Nor were his early references to literature always sound. It would be as much an error to deny his importance as a literary critic on the grounds of the former fact as it would be to make judgments of Newman on the basis of essays such as "Poetry, with Reference to Aristotle's Poetics" and "The Tamworth Reading Room" - both of which are excerpts from Essays, Critical and Historical. These

¹Edward Bellasis, *Coram Cardinali*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1917).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

essays contain mere traces of their author's future critical abilities. They are replete with opinions and standards which were later to mellow or change in maturity. Reference to them is thus deliberately omitted in this commentary. One line in Newman's Ancient Saints says: "Cyril, I know is a saint . . . but it does not follow that he was a saint in the year 412." When Newman, the literary theorist, is considered it should be with a similar fair objectivity. "Growth is the only evidence of life" . . . this was a favorite motto of his. His own personal growth reached its zenith when the warring factors of his soul merged into the calm of his final power. It was at that stage that he wrote The Idea of a University. Now - to that source for a consideration of literature as it should be viewed by the educator -

Newman's Definition of Literature

"Literature" (a lecture in the school of philosophy and letters) seeks to define "letters" and to discuss its nature. In an approach common to Newman's writings, he begins to enumerate what the predominant conceptions are and wherein these are erroneous. He mentions the varieties in what is called literature - ancient, modern, sacred, light, classical, English. Continuing, he asserts that literature cannot be taken to mean books alone, nor mere composition either. Then he tries to pry his listeners loose from other misconceptions. Literature, he assures them must not be equated with styles, studied or artificial, with the faults people

sometimes repute to certain of the classics and especially to the writings of sophists. Here he refers to the writer Sterne who maintained that there are two kinds of eloquence. One kind which scarce deserves the name, consists in polish, artificiality, gaudy glitter of words which "convey little or not light to the understanding." This kind of writing is for the most part much affected and admired by the people of weak judgment and vicious taste . . . below the great geniuses of all ages." ¹ The second kind of eloquence, real eloquence, Sterne believed, consists in a mixture of the simplicity and majesty which should ever clothe truth. The Scriptures exemplify such eloquence. With this Newman agreed. However, when the same author went on to state that the beauties of the classics consist mainly in externals, Newman insisted that "the classics are, as human compositions, simple and majestic and natural too." ² What then is his own conception of writing literature true to the essentials?

"Literature," he says, "from the derivation of the word, implies writing the permanent record of speech," ³ and it is thus a personal work. It "must proceed from some one given individual as the expression of that one person's ideas and feelings . . .

¹J. H. Newman, The Idea of a University, (New York: Image Books, 1959), pp. 264-265.

²Ibid., p. 266.

³Ibid., p. 266-267.

proper to himself in the same sense as his voice, his air, his countenance, his carriage, and his action." ¹ Thus, maintained Newman, "literature expresses, not objective truth . . . but subjective; not things, but thoughts." ²

The distinction made here between the use of words in expression of truth, objective and subjective, becomes clear when its author illustrates that words used to express scientific facts are "symbols rather than language." ³ "Thus," Newman says, "methaphysics, ethics, law, political economy, chemistry, theology cease to be literature in the same degree as they are capable of a severe scientific treatment. And hence it is that Aristotle's words . . . though at first sight literature, approach in character, at least a great number of them, to mere science..." ⁴

To sum up:

Science . . . has to do with things, literature with thoughts; science is universal, literature is personal; science uses words merely as symbols, but literature uses language in its full compass, as including phraseology, idiom, style, composition, rhythm, eloquence, and whatever other properties are included in it. ⁵

Literature, then has to do with personal thoughts, thoughts expressed through the personal exercise of language which in itself can be traced to individuals whose unique turn of phrase has, through time, given it character. Even slang is highly personal.

¹Ibid., p. 267.

²Ibid., p. 268.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 268-269.

Cardinal Newman has an effective passage concerning the way language should take birth. Here it is:

. . . while the many use language as they find it, the man of genius uses it indeed, but subjects it withal to his own purposes, and moulds it according to his own peculiarities. The throng and succession of ideas, thoughts, feelings, imaginations, aspirations, which pass within him, the abstractions, the juxtapositions, the comparisons, the discriminations, the conceptions, which are so original in him, his views of external things, his judgments upon life, manners, and history, the exercises of his wit, of his humour, of his depth, of his sagacity, all these innumerable and incessant creations, the very pulsation and throbbing of his intellect, does he image forth, to all does he give utterance, in a corresponding language, which is as multiform as this inward mental action itself and analogous to it, the faithful expression of his intense personality, attending on his own inward world of thought as its very shadow: so that we might as well say that one man's shadow is another's as that the style of a really gifted mind can belong to any but himself. It follows him about AS a shadow. His thought and feeling are personal, and so his language is personal.¹

To those who think carefully and are careless of speech, to those who write carefully but are careless of thought, Newman would say: "Thought and speech are inseparable . . . Matter and expression are parts of one: style is a thinking out into language . . . literature is thoughts expressed in language."²

He gives further evidence of the connection between thought and language in literary composition. In so doing he completely dispels the unphilosophical assumption that the two are separable in anything worthy of the term "literature." The Greek term expressive of man's intelligence is "Logos," which stands for

¹Ibid., p. 269.

²Ibid.

reason and speech. This is so, Newman explains, because

. . . When we can separate light and illumination, life and motion, the convex and the concave of the curve, then will it be possible for thought to tread speech under foot, and to hope to do without it - then will it be conceivable that the vigorous and fertile intellect should renounce its own double, its instrument of expression, and the channel of its speculations and emotions. ¹

No critic or educator, then should dare lay down canons of taste which ignore the essential interrelation between personality, thought and speech. The idea so common in the modern world, that one person can do the thought and another the style, that there can be division of labor between thinker and speaker or writer, cannot but be the origin of much that is weak, inadequate, insincere, and misleading in our communication with one another. To separate thought and composition is to make language "a trick and a trade . . . the hired servant, the mere mistress of the reason, and not the lawful wife in her own house." ²

The astute critic will recognize greatness in a writer precisely by the way he uses language, not for its own sake, but as the natural (even if studied) matter for communicating the thoughts which inspire him so that he wants to share them with others. The richness of an author's language will reveal, in Newman's words, "his mental attitude and bearing, the beauty of

¹Ibid., p. 270.

²Ibid., p. 271.

his moral countenance, the force and keenness of his logic." ¹
 Thought inspiration must ever direct the true use of language.
 Thus, in a sense, poems and all great literary works are "born,
 not framed; they are a strain rather than a composition; and
 their perfection is the monument not so much of (an author's)
 skill as of his power." ²

Will that same astute critic condemn an author whose
 language perhaps tends toward the ornate and the elaborate?
 Will he term anything beyond the strict canons of simplicity
 as verbiage? If he does, he will be - according to Newman
 standards - "narrow." Why so? Let Newman answer -

. . . since the thoughts and reasonings of an author
 have . . . a personal character, no wonder . . . his style
 is not only the image of his subject but of his mind. That
 pomp of language, that full and tuneful diction, that
 felicitousness in the choice and exquisiteness in the
 collocation of words, which to prosaic writers seems
 artificial, is nothing else but the mere habit and way of
 a lofty intellect. Aristotle, in his sketch of the
 magnanimous man, tells us that his voice is deep, his
 emotions slow, and his stature commanding. In like
 manner, the elocution of a great intellect is great. His
 language expresses not only his great thoughts but his
 great self. Certainly he might use fewer words than he
 uses; but he fertilizes his simplest ideas, and germinates
 into a multitude of details, and prolongs the march of his
 sentences, and sweeps round to the full diapason of his
 harmony . . . rejoicing in his own vigour and richness of
 resource . . . really it is a sort of fullness of heart,
 parallel to that which makes the merry boy whistle as he
 walks, or the strong man, like the smith in the novel,
 flourish his club when there is no one to fight with. ³

¹Ibid., p. 272.

³Ibid., pp. 272-273.

²Ibid.

There is Newman the artist, the musician, speaking. He would certainly insist that a good critic of literature needs the understanding which comes even from a scant appreciation of what the fine arts truly are. No sound critic, Newman stated, would accuse Shakespeare or Cicero of "gorgeousness of phraseology or diffuseness of style."¹ Authors of greatness may be permitted the copious, majestic, musical flow of language which is the "development of the inner man."² Authors who are great are the voice of a people and portray their souls just as surely as Cicero wrote large what was Roman spirit.

What should be the critic's view of studied language? Should he equate it with unnaturalness and lack of spontaneity? Certainly not. What artist, indeed what genius, "never need take pains?"³

"Take the instance of the painter or the sculptor; he has a conception in his mind which he wishes to represent in the medium of his art . . . Do you mean to say that he does not study his subject? does he not make sketches? does he not even call them 'studies'? does he not call his workroom a studio? is he not ever designing, rejecting, adopting, correcting, perfecting?"⁴

Every piece of art which is good must be conception elaborated into its "proper perfection."⁵

"Why may not that be true of literary composition which is true of painting, sculpture, architecture, and music? Why may not language be wrought as well as the clay of the modeller? Why may not words be worked up as well as colours? Why should not skill in diction be simply subservient and instrumental to the great prototypal ideas which are the contemplation of a Plato or a Virgil?"⁶

¹Ibid., p. 273.

³Ibid., p. 275.

⁵Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 274.

⁴Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

Newman cites Addison's writings as an example of graceful, natural, happy negligence of style. This was the same Addison who was notorious for "artistic fastidiousness" ¹ - who once, it is said, "was too late in his issue of an important state paper, from his habit of revision and re-composition." ² His "happy negligence of style" came by chance - as a simple overflow of the spirit - did it? ³ In this there is both warning for the critic and comfort for the aspiring writer. Great authors work by a model before "the eyes of their intellect" ⁴ and labor to say what they have to say so that it will "most exactly and suitably express it." ⁵ They are thinkers; they possess the writer's requisite virtue of literary diligence. It is well to remember that "Virgil wishes his Aeneid to be burned, elaborate as is its composition, because he felt it needed more labour still, in order to make it perfect." ⁶ Gibbon was a gifted writer of history not because of his fidelity to truth but because of the "feeling that he had to bring out into words for the comprehension of his readers a great and complicated scene." ⁷ Of Gibbon and Milton, Newman said: "They are great English authors, each breathing hatred to the Catholic Church in his own way, each a proud and rebellious creature of God, each gifted with incomparable gifts." ⁸ These gifts were nourished in thought and effort.

¹Ibid., p. 275.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 294.

Just as thought and effort must be the handmaidens of the artist writer, so too must they be for his critics. Otherwise, critics will frequently mistake the "mere dealer in words" for the artist whose "great or rich visions before him" are given substance that they may become the food of other minds and hearts.

Literature, A Revelation of Humanity

What must be the interrelation between writers, critics and nations? Every nation needs its own authors to reveal its identity to all generations unto posterity. Every nation which has its own national language has an advantage in that that language is in itself an expression of character national; this, of course, does not lessen the writer's responsibility to use it in a personal way. "A great author takes his native language, masters it, partly throws himself into it, partly moulds and adapts it, and pours out his multitude of ideas through the variously ramified and delicately minute channels of expression which he has found and framed." ¹ This "personal presence" ² of an author in a language cannot ever be fully felt through the medium of a translation. Thus, each nation requires its own literary critics who will give an appreciation so complete that what is missed by the foreign mind will be understood at least through the medium of literary criticism. It would seem to follow that persons with literary and critical talents advisedly should commit themselves to writing or interpreting their

¹Ibid., p. 278.

²Ibid., p. 292.

own language. The writer artist should commit himself to his native tongue if he is to scan the heights. Finally, in the case of the literary critic, his greatest service will be interpretation of his own language masters for the benefit of the world.

Necessarily, he may have to use a different dialect but if his understanding is deep, that circumstance will not much impede his service . . . service in explanation of literature "in its highest and most genuine sense . . . as an historical and national fact."

Literature is the language revelation of personality both individual and social.

Beyond the personal, the linguistic, the thought characteristics true literature must possess, what should the critic seek? Are there purposes, particular and universal, literature should fulfill? Newman emphatically states that there are. The writer who would presume to speak as a representative of others must be one who "has something to say and knows how to say it He is a master of the twofold Logos, the thought and the word." ¹ He need not have great depth of thought, or breadth of view, or sagacity, or knowledge of human nature, or experience of human life, though these additional gifts he may have, and the more he has of them the greater he is." ² But he must have the strong motivation of an inner force to express what is within him. This will produce earnestness conducive to the simplicity which must

¹John Cardinal Newman, Idea of a University, (New York: Image Books, 1959.) p. 282.

²Ibid.

characterize great writing. If he feels keenly, he will write with passion; if he "conceives vividly," he will write with force that never tolerates vagueness; if he analyzes his subject, he will be rich in expression of insights and strong in consistency. "He always has the right word for the right idea, and never a word too much." ¹ He will thus speak authentically for his people. Such an author was Shakespeare for English speaking peoples; such was Virgil for the Latins.

The Reverence Due to Language

Literary critics should, above all, come to revere language as did Newman who considered it a gift nothing short of divine since by it:

1) "secrets of the heart are brought to light, pain of soul relieved, hidden grief is carried off, sympathy conveyed, counsel imparted, experience recorded, and wisdom perpetuated;" ²

2) "the many are drawn up into unity, national character is fixed, a people speaks, the past and the future, the East and the West are brought into communication with each other by . . . the spokesmen and prophets of the human family;" ³

3) as we master literature it ministers to us and aids us, in turn, to minister unto others.

¹Ibid., p. 283.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

The Vital Role of Literary Criticism

What should be the expectations of literary critics in any age? Should they anticipate that theirs is to interpret a literature one day to be considered great or classic? Hardly! Yet, they should have minds and hearts ever alert for every trace of greatness which their trained senses know from literary experiences rich and varied. If their standards and expectations are exceptionally high (and they should be shoulders above the average accepted), theirs may be the good fortune of helping develop writers who are attentive to the needs of their generation as made known by their critics of literature. They may help develop but force they cannot. As Newman said,

"First-rate excellence in literature, as in other matters, is either an accident or the outcome of a process; and in either case demands a course of years to secure. We cannot reckon on a Plato, we cannot force an Aristotle, any more than we can command a fine harvest, or create a coal field. If a literature be, as I have said, the voice of a particular nation, it requires a territory and a period, as large as that nation's extent and history, to mature in . . . It is the result of mutual action of a hundred simultaneous influences . . . operations. . . it is the scanty compensating produce of the wild discipline of the world and of life, so fruitful in failures; and it is the concentration of those rare manifestations of intellectual power, which no one can account for." ¹

In a sense every great writer must be a man of his age, the type of his generation, or the interpreter of a crisis. "He is made for his day, and his day for him." ² The greatest writers the world has ever known were such types and interpreters.

¹Ibid., pp. 295-296.

²Ibid., p. 296.

The Moral Canons of Literature

Of the moral canons of literature, Newman directly says little. From some comments he made, one can surmise that he was himself a critic who realized that a work can be "a great work of man, when it is not work of God's." ¹ Already references have been made to his attitudes toward Milton and Gibbon whose writings he admired in certain of their aspects though not always for their commitment to truth nor for their adherence to authentic principles. Voltaire, he described as a writer important, copious, versatile and brilliant but also as "an open scoffer at everything sacred, venerable, or high-minded." ² Here again, Newman is an example to the literary critic who out of personal prejudice, ignorance, emotional repugnance and other factors is apt to reject totally what are characteristics of genuine worth. Newman had an eye for truth as well as beauty. He would be the last to condemn realism which serves truth, necessity, good taste. He would condemn that type of realism which, particularly in modern forms of literature perhaps, does so much militant work to the detriment of the spirit and the eventual loss of souls. The Cardinal who maintained that the world overcomes us by appealing to our reason, by exciting our passions, but by imposing on our imagination, . . . would certainly condemn writing which flaunts its weapons against man's intellect and will. In his University Sermons he stated that no truth can

¹Ibid., p. 298.

²Ibid., p. 299.

really exist external to Christianity. That is the test for a literary critic who is a Christian. Was Newman so much of an idealist that he failed to recognize reality? that he expected too much? Far from it. This is how much of a realist he was:

One literature may be better than another, but bad will be the best, when weighed in the balance of truth and morality. It cannot be otherwise; human nature is in all ages and all countries the same; and its literature, therefore, will ever and everywhere be one and the same also. Man's work will savour of man; in his elements and power excellent and admirable, but prone to disorder and excess, to error and sin. (Such too will be his literature; it will have the beauty and the fierceness, the sweetness and the rankness, of the natural man, and with all its richness and greatness, will necessarily offend the senses of those, who, in the Apostle's words, are 'exercised to discerned between good and evil.' It is a contradiction in point to attempt a sinless literature of sinful man.¹

National Literature

To conclude comments on what The Idea of a University says about Literature, it might be well to mention the Cardinal's views on national literature in its total aspects.

National literature . . . is the untutored movements of the reason, imagination, passions, and affections of the natural man, the leapings and the friskings, the plungings and the bufoonings, the clumsy play and the sinless toil, of the noble, lawless savage of God's intellectual creation.²

Mind and Heart

There are those who would leven at Newman's view of

¹Ibid., p. 300.

²Ibid.

literature the charge of "cold intellectualism." In answer one might consider the motto of his Cardinalate - "Cor ad cor loquitur." Newman realized that love and not intellect is the secret of mankind. Nevertheless, he made it clear that "intellect without heart is barren; just as heart without intellect must go astray."¹ Critics would do well to remember that in the greatest literature, one heart always speaks to another.

It has been said of Newman: "He was always true to his own definition of style - 'thinking out into language' - and "he worked with words as an artist who knew and valued each shade of meaning and of suggestion."² What Newman said of Cicero could be said of himself, and should be said to an extent of every literary critic: -

"Cicero goes round and round his subject; surveys it in every light; examines it in all its parts; retires and then advances; turns and returns; compares and contrasts; illustrates, confirms, enforces."³

Thus The idea of a University in its essays on literature represents what Newman considered to be the nature, the canons of development, and the purposes of his great form of communicative art. From this presentation may be deduced principles for the educator. What are these principles?

¹Sister Marie Agnes, I Believe in Newman (a pamphlet published in 1955 for Halifax Newman Club), p.27.

²Neilson and Thorndike, A History of English Literature (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1952).

³Op. cit.

Newman's Literary - Some Implications for Education
Theory

1. He who would teach any aspect of his native tongue - be it grammar, rhetoric, journalism or literary appreciation - must continually seek to foster an understanding of the widest implications of his subject. "In proportion as we master it in whatever language, and imbibe its spirit; we shall ourselves become in our own measure the ministers of like benefits to others."¹ The teacher must have an appreciation and love of literature as a vehicle of truth - [objective truth but viewed subjectively and personally by a writer whose own being is expressed in the very style of what he writes while he, at the same time, reveals life in his own era.] The teacher must have the insight to discern what is genuine literature - to recognize what has the force which can exist only when [thought serves as the guiding power while style and adornment serve as accessories which flow into the perfecting of a tide of language which has a message to impart. In such qualities of the educator lie his personal and real assent to truth which it is his duty to guard and share. In such qualities lies inspiration for his students to do likewise.

2. He who would teach language must have the ability to train his students' taste in literature toward that astuteness which will help them, in so far as their ability permits them, to commit themselves to revealing that truth and reality which should be the core of all thinking, the force behind speech and the light assisting persons to reveal the riches of their personalities.

¹Ibid., p.282.

What should be the ideal achieved by each individual student? Each should have a knowledge of literary criticism which will enable him to derive both pleasure and benefit from what he reads. Should he have that rarer talent necessary to interpretation of literature for the wider community, then his training must be all the more intense. Each should have a knowledge of the language which will enable him to develop and use whatever may be his talent for expressing himself through the written word. To literature the individual, as a writer, should be prepared to commit himself fully while he contributes to one of the arts which are the language of insight and understanding.¹ To literature the individual, as a critic, should be prepared to bring an objective love of truth which he is willing to seek in the context of the literature of every age - provided that what is presented is not detrimental to the development of the intellectual and moral virtues of man.

3. He who would teach language would do well to note the strengths which explain the power of Cardinal Newman himself as a writer.

There was the strength of Newman's logic. True, his mind was gifted but its development was shaped in no small way by his application to detail and his self-discipline in searching so deeply that he found the finer shades of meaning in whatever subject lay before him. Newman's love of and indulgence in music helped him to achieve that quiet yet forcefully tense state of mind which often results in the best writing. The patience Newman had, from his

¹H. J. Labelle, S. J., Philosophy of Education (a monograph published by St. Mary's University, Halifax, 1957).

early years, acquired through the bent of his studies and his contemplation of nature gave him a determined, serene approach conducive to the artistry which though seemingly effortless was the result of repeated efforts and long hours of labour. He admitted to writing the Chapters of Grammar of Assent more than ten times. Newman's eminence as a writer was as much a matter of thought, experience and effort as it was of native ability. So it always will be both with the greatest writers and the greatest literary critics. Any student who is led to believe otherwise is done an injustice which can seldom be rectified.

4. He who would teach any aspect of literature should have a clear concept of what his effort will mean to his nation. Every nation needs voices of its people - voices to reveal, voices to console, voices to reform, voices to inspire. The educator must give all that he has to guide the intellects of his students toward truth - and to produce in their wills a passion for its discovery, a love for its service. The greater his success, the greater will be writers who serve in the world of tomorrow whose survival unquestionably depends upon comprehension of what is truth, communication of its messages in every field of endeavour throughout the world, and commitment of the human family to its service in the loving freedom wherein lies salvation.

CHAPTER IV

IDEALS FOR THE EDUCATOR

Previous chapters of this thesis have included a number of implications Newman's theories hold for education. Most of these implications have been suggestive of ideals for the educator. This Chapter does not presume to list nor to summarize what its topic indicates by way of a presentation of the Cardinal's views for such a presentation would be matter for a separate thesis. Rather, it aims to comment briefly on what his theory of real assent to truth implies at the level of university education; what it implies by way of the qualities an educator should possess as well as some of the methods he should make his own; and what it implies with respect to the vocation of a student.

The University - Seat of Wisdom

The Idea of a University is believed to be the only standard treatise on university education in the English language. Cardinal Newman wrote it to:

indicate the part which theology should occupy in a university curriculum; to justify knowledge as worth pursuing for its own sake; to prove that the aim of a university course should be the equipping of its students to be broad-gauged, well-poised and cultural men; and to define what he conceived to be the duties of the Church toward science and literature.¹

To him, a university was a school of universal learning

¹Joseph Reilly, Newman as a Man of Letters (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1925), pp. 226-227.

dedicated to giving a liberal education whose crown would be intellectual excellence. To teach universal knowledge and not merely to advance knowledge should be its aim. Huston Smith, a modern advocate of liberal education - in The Purposes of Higher Education - sounds like Newman when he maintains that knowledge must be cast in the form of activating principles supported and illustrated by relevant facts, with knowledge that is true, significant and having carry-over into conduct and outlook.

Professor Smith explains:

Maximum self-realization generally involves, though it is not completely defined by, an understanding of one's physical, biological, and social environment, and the processes through which personal and group satisfactions can be obtained; the ability to use language and reasoning processes effectively in social situations. It calls for wonder and appreciation of beauty, people, difference, and the potentialities of man. It involves motivations toward increased value clarification, constructive orientation, self-confidence, social participation, largeness of heart, and self-fulfilment.¹

It is perhaps Newman's motivating ideas, as explained in the previous Chapters, which mark him as being different from the modern advocate of a non-utilitarian education, different from leaders such as Robert Hutchins, Mark Van Doren and others to whom he is sometimes compared.² He had no interest in educating for freedom (in the modern sense of the term), or in specifying the necessity of the hundred great classics as an answer to the intellectual infidelity he dedicated his life to oppose. Nor was he interested in educating for 'citizenship.' The latter, he would argue, is the natural result of good education, and of the

¹Huston Smith, The Purposes of Higher Education (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955), p. 204.

²Charles F. Harrold, John Henry Newman (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1946).

real assents to truth which a man of character makes. With the liberal educators of today, he would deplore the degradation of real education to the level of specialized knowledge or training, the socialization of education to the detriment of individuality, and the tendency to teach too little about too much - to load the mind with undigested facts. He would praise their emphasis on 'the whole man' and he would add his characteristic insistence that involvement of the whole man is a requisite to any genuine adherence to truth.

Education in the best sense, Newman believed would lead to:

true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence . . . Possessed of this real illumination the mind never views any part of the extended subject-matter of knowledge without recollecting that it is but a part, or without the associations which spring from this recollection. It makes everything in some sort lead to everything else; it would communicate the image of the whole to every separate portion, till that whole becomes in imagination like a spirit, everywhere pervading its component parts, and giving them one definite meaning.¹

The intellect, Newman said, was to be cultivated for its own sake and for the perception of its proper object - the unity of truth to which he referred in the preceding quotation. Education is indeed no more than a gathering of the continuous fruits of a dedicated search for truth. It should, by these fruits, locate a person in history by opening the way and methods to a discovery of self and the relation of that self to all reality.

¹John Henry Newman, The Idea of a University (New York: Image Books, 1959).

The Teacher - Inspiration of Youth

Men persuade themselves with little difficulty, to scoff at principles, to ridicule books, to make sport of the names of good men but they cannot bear their presence; it is holiness embodied in personal form, which they cannot steadily confront and bear down; so that the silent conduct of a conscientious man secures for him from beholders a feeling different in kind from any which is created by mere versatile and garrulous reason . . . the consistency of virtue is another gift which gradually checks the rudeness of the world . . . it is difficult to estimate the moral power which a single individual, trained to practice what he teaches, may acquire in his own circle, in the course of years. . .¹

These words of Newman demonstrate the value he placed on the influence of the teacher whom he would wish to be as excellent in character as the models mentioned above. He envisioned an academical system without teachers to be as barren as an arctic winter. He once said you learn general principles of any study alone, if you wish, but the detail, tone, air and what will make it live - these can be caught only from those in whom it lives already.

Mutual education . . . is one of the great and incessant occupations of human society. . . One generation forms another . . . collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge.²

One of the greatest formative factors in university life, Newman considered to be the influence students have upon their fellows. This concept of "mutual education" could be effectively applied to the teacher-student relationship as well. It is a relationship particularly important by way of the teacher's exemplification of those virtues which should mark the student, in his vocation of pursuing truth.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 280.

One Chapter of The Idea of a University is entitled "University Preaching." This topic would seem to indicate a subject matter with scant bearing on general education. Close examination, however, discloses a number of truths - psychological and pedagogical - which deserve analysis by way of suggested applications to teaching.

The author begins with a definition of what is the preacher's object. It is, he says, "the spiritual good of his hearers."¹ This object is removed from the category of pious generalities later when Newman proceeds to give detailed explanation of how it can be realized when motivation, content, technique and attitudes meet the canons by which a preacher may be judged. In almost every instance, the advice given is as applicable to lesson or lecture as it is to sermon. With this possibility in mind, it is well to consider each of the requirements stated.

Aims Must Mold Message Content

Newman stresses the necessity of a definite aim within a definite subject intended for definite hearers. "As a marksman aims at the target and its bull's eye, and at nothing else, so the preacher must have a definite point before him, which he has to hit."² With yet stronger emphasis, the writer later says: "... I would go the length of recommending a

¹Ibid., p. 372.

²Ibid., p. 372.

preacher to place a distinct categorical proposition before him, such as he can write down in a form of words, and to guide at least his preparation by it, and to aim in all he says to bring it out, and nothing else.¹ He who would teach effectively must seek a vivid and minute mastery of his topic so that, filled with understanding and conviction, he may hand over to others the fruits of his study and meditation.²

As the message content is molded in careful preparation, no extraneous material, however interesting or impressive, will be included. This rule should apply not only to the written word but to all audio-visual aids and other media a teacher may employ in the communication of insights.³ "The more exact and precise is the subject which he treats, the more impressive and practical will he be."⁴ No remarks, no techniques of emphasis should be allowed to mar the intellectual tapestry which must present only the distinct proposition chosen. Newman argues for this single-minded type of approach. He strengthens his case with a reference to the meaning of preaching the word as is mentioned in Scripture. This preaching, he says, means the making of propositions to the intellect. As a perfect example of single-mindedness, there is mention of Christ, the Teacher, who said: "The words which Thou gavest Me, I have

¹Ibid., p. 376.

²Ibid., p. 377.

³Bernard Longmans, S. J., Insight (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957).

⁴Op. Cit., p. 375.

given to them, and they have received them..and now I come to
 Thee."¹ The definite aim, then, must be guiding principle as
 to content if the teacher would achieve the end of "imprinting
 on the heart what will never leave it."²

Essential Characteristics of the Message-Bearer

The effects of the proper approach to subject matter will almost certainly be attitudes which win the minds and hearts of those being instructed. Strength and effectiveness will increase in proportion to the teacher's fidelity to pedagogical aims which absorb his skill and resources.

One essential characteristic of the pedagogue is earnestness. The latter is a powerful natural instrument which can never be cultivated in and of itself. It must be a by-product of one's personal commitment to truth - in the specific and in the general sense of the word. "Earnestness creates earnestness in others by sympathy; and the more a preacher loses and is lost to himself, the more does he gain his brethren."³ "As a distinct image before the mind makes a preacher earnest, so it will give him something which is worthwhile to communicate to others."⁴ There is logic in this reaction for people are won to that which is powerful enough to possess persons whom they respect as men of character. It was Aristotle's teaching that there are

¹
²Op. Cit., p. 373.

³Ibid., p. 373.
⁴Ibid., p. 376.

"three modes of persuasion available to a speaker: the use of his character to make his speech credible, the excitation of desired emotions in the audience, and proof or apparent proof."¹ Of the three modes, the Philosopher considered the most authoritative to be personal traits of an ethical nature. Newman believed likewise. It is evident from the reaction of congregations to his own preaching that he must have, in some measure at least, exemplified his stated canons of genuine effectiveness. Earnestness, then Newman considered second only to devotion to one subject, a quality necessary to turn the art of persuading into the art of convincing. These two requisites, when combined, render an instructor natural, unstudied and self-forgetting. Sometimes the result is eloquence born, as it were, of the soul's glow from the warmth of truth recognized and communicated. But true eloquence must come from the heart. It can never be a matter of native talent alone.

Earnestness, eloquence, rhetorical power - all these are effective instruments but should a preacher or a teacher attempt to make them the substance and not the accidents of his efforts, then the product will be worthless and its effect shallow.

A second essential characteristic of the teacher is² understanding of the persons he addresses. To teach one

¹Richard McKeon (ED.), Introduction of Aristotle (New York: The Modern Library, 1957), p. 620.

²Op. Cit., p. 381.

must have a clear concept of the background, ability, environment, general emotions and necessities of those who are to receive the communication. Thus will be avoided "what may offend, or mislead, or disappoint, or fail to profit."¹

Tact is another requirement for those who instruct. "When he addresses himself to some special danger or probable deficiency or need of his hearers, he should do so covertly."² Implied here is the necessity of gentleness, consideration and intuitive respect for the feelings of others. Newman's general approach to the matter of corrective teaching would seem to be a positive presentation of the virtue lacking so that attraction to this virtue would replace the void, weakness or error requiring attention. Always he would recommend as profitable some of the most obvious truths concerning life.

The need of control is great for anyone seeking to influence minds. "The more ardent a man is, and the greater power he has of affecting his hearers, so the more will he need self-control and sustained recollection"³ as well as commitment to previous intentions for the lesson. Enthusiasm in a teacher is a means of inspiration but it can also be a danger in that it lures the speaker from a basic

¹Op. cit., p. 383.

²Ibid., p. 383.

³Ibid., p. 385.

course of specific objectives. Control engenders confidence, trust and respect. Without it, mutual sympathy cannot long exist. The strength and influence of a teacher require such sympathy if mind is to speak to mind and heart to heart.

Perhaps the golden road to self-mastery in either the pulpit or the class room is preparation. It is preparation which gives self-confidence and ultimately control. As has been mentioned, study and meditation are imperative. Newman recommends a particular form of study when he says: "I think that writing is a stimulus to the mental faculties, to the logical talent, to originality, to the power of illustration, to the arrangement of topics, ¹ second to none." Putting down one's thoughts on a subject reveals what is known and what is not known. It is also an incentive to proper expression, a means of encouragement to the flow of thoughts. Because personal inadequacies are clearly brought to light, such study should give rise to a deeper simplicity and humility. In this way will be avoided the tendency to energy and thought consuming display which is never more than a worthless addition. Persistent recourse to written practice will aid in development in all who have not passed the age of learning, "...such fluency in expressing their thoughts as will enable them to convey and manifest to their audience that earnestness and devotion to their object, which is the life of preaching..."² and the life of teaching as well.

¹Ibid., p. 385.

²Ibid., p. 389.

Preparation is also a safeguard against causing mistakes in the lives of others.

The surest safeguard against that is to ask how your ideas could possibly be misused or misunderstood and to think, not of yourself, but of your friends and brothers and sisters whom you are trying to teach.¹

A final quality every teacher needs is empathy. Today there is much emphasis upon this gift. Newman understood its importance as the following indicates:

They are versed in human knowledge; they are busy in human society; they understand the human heart; they can throw themselves into the minds of other men.²

The Student - Potential Light of the World

The vocation of every student is to give a dedicated and courageous response to the call to dedicate himself to the quest for truth and reality. For this vocation there are two virtues which he needs in great measure. One is a reverent love for what is truth. The other is humility. Intellectual arrogance, exclusiveness, isolationism, prejudice and refusal to communicate will not characterize the student motivated by love for he will realize that, with open mind, he must be willing to seek the unity of truth in every quarter. He must - in the modern world especially - fight against pragmatic values and conformity. He must turn away from shadows of all kinds and, in the words of Newman's epitaph, go "out of the shadows into the truth." He must ever realize that in our increasingly socialized world where it is so easy to pass on one's obligations to others and to the state, that responsibility is individual and to it every man must commit himself.

¹ John Henry Newman, Sermons on Various Occasions (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1918).

² Ibid.

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