A Philosophical Critique of Certitude According to Newman

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A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF CERTITUDE
ACCORDING TO NEWMAN

by

Rev. James W. Lyons

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

February
1975
DEDICATION

To my Father who loved to recite passages from Newman.
To my Mother who was so understanding about this project.
May God grant to them a holy rest, a safe lodging and peace at last.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to Professor Benjamin Llamzon for the guidance and counsel he has given me in the writing of this dissertation. A debt of thanks is also due to Professor Kenneth Thompson and to Professor Thomas Wren for their suggestions in the presentation of this work. Also I extend my thanks to Mary Quinn for her expert typing.

This help in no way indicates that they agree with the contents of this dissertation.
VITA

James William Lyons, the son of Frank J. Lyons and Mary (O'Connor) Lyons was born in Chicago in June 1923.

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CHAPTER I

NEWMAN'S CONCERN WITH CERTITUDE

The Quest for certitude is the central theme in the philosophy of John Henry Newman. All of his investigations have a relation to his philosophy about certitude. Even his relentless pursuit of the idea of development of doctrine is ancillary to his dialogues about certitude, for without a philosophy of certitude there could be no legitimate development. For Newman certitude is a qualitative enhancement to knowledge, to truth, and to understanding. It is, "The perception of a truth with the perception that it is a truth, or the consciousness of knowing, as expressed in the phrase, "I know that I know." When I have certitude I not only know a truth, but I can know the reason for the truth. I can offer a reasonable explanation for my assent.

A. Newman's Attitude

To understand Newman's quest for certitude it is necessary to recall some highlights of his prolonged controversy with liberalism, since this is the movement that denied that there are certitudes in religion. On Monday morning, May 12, 1879, Newman was notified that he had been made a cardinal. In reply to that appointment he made the customary Biglietto speech which is made when the Biglietto or letter of appointment is received. He said, "For thirty, forty, fifty years I have resisted to the best of my powers the spirit of Liberalism in religion. Liberalism in

---

1GA, p. 197.
religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion.\(^2\) According to him not only is there positive truth in religion, but in complete opposition to liberalism he maintains that there is certitude, that is, the consciousness of the positive truth.

Unfortunately the word "liberalism" is replete with confusing connotations. Yet, because of its deep connection with this period of history, we have to use it. Newman was not opposed to all forms of liberalism. For instance, he had no quarrel with scientific progress professed by the liberals. Nor was he opposed to liberalism as a political movement, since in this context liberalism generally means the concession to popular demands chiefly in politics.

Newman accepted what he considered philosophically sound in liberalism, and he recognized that some of its adherents, though misguided, were trying to protect the integrity of religious beliefs. Thus in his Biglietto speech he said,

\[\ldots\text{there is much in the liberalistic theory which is good and true; for example, not to say more, the precepts of justice, truthfulness, sobriety, self-command, benevolence, which, as I have already noted, are among its avowed principles, and the natural laws of society.}\]

What Newman objected to was the segment of Liberalism which attacked religious certitude. "It was not till we find that this array of

\(^2\)Life, 2:458-460. A great number of Newman's sermons and letters concerning philosophy can be found only in this work. Wilfrid Ward was the son of William G. Ward, a close friend of Newman.

\(^3\)Ibid., 2:462.
principles is intended to supersede, to block out, religion, that we pronounce it to be evil."\(^4\) With candid trepidation he looked into the bleak future that Liberalism was attempting to construct. Henry Tristram, former Birmingham Orator, archivist records:

One evening he was talking quietly about the progress of Liberalism and unbelief. He anticipated a time when the world at large would assume that Christianity had been disproved. Those who persisted in believing in it would neither be listened to nor reasoned with. What would be said to them amounted to this. It has been disproved; we cannot disprove it again. The tone of anger and impatience he put into his voice just for the moment it took to say these words, is the reason why a not otherwise remarkable conversation is remembered by one person who was present, nearly a quarter of a century afterwards.\(^5\)

Although few of the adherents of Liberalism professed atheism, Newman felt that Liberalism had become a halfway house on the way to atheism.\(^6\) This mixture of good and evil, of true and false in Liberalism, was well expressed in a poem which Newman wrote as early as 1833 at Palermo. The second verse of the poem, "Ye Cannot halve the Gospel of Christ," is:

> 
> And you have caught some echoes of the love,
> as heralded amid the joyous choirs;  
> Ye mark'd it spoke of peace, chastised desires,  
> Good-will and mercy,—and ye heard no more;  
> But, as for zeal and quick-eyed sanctity,  
> And the dread depths of grace, ye pass'd them by.\(^7\)

\(^4\)Ibid., 2:462.  
\(^6\)Ibid., p. 185.  
\(^7\)Ibid., pp. 144-45.
B. A Description of Liberalism

What then is Liberalism essentially? Is it definable? Rather than define it, Newman in Note A of the Apologia Pro Vita Sua lists a number of propositions which are central to Liberalism. I shall cite only the first seven of these propositions since only they, of the eighteen, have a special reference to the philosophy of religion in regard to the relationship of inference and assent.

1. No religious tenet is important, unless reason shows it to be so. Therefore, e.g. the doctrine of the Athanasian Creed is not to be insisted on, unless it tends to convert the soul; and the doctrine of the Atonement is to be insisted on, if it does convert the soul.

2. No one can believe what he does not understand. Therefore, e.g. there are no mysteries in true religion.

3. No theological doctrine is anything more than an opinion which happens to be held by bodies of men. Therefore, e.g. no creed, as such, is necessary for salvation.

4. It is dishonest in a man to make an act of faith in what he has not had brought home to him by actual proof. Therefore, e.g. the mass of men ought not absolutely to believe in the divine authority of the Bible.

5. It is immoral in a man to believe more than he can spontaneously receive as being congenial to his moral and mental nature. Therefore, e.g. a given individual is not bound to believe in eternal punishment.

6. No revealed doctrines or precepts may reasonably stand in the way of scientific conclusions. Therefore, e.g. Political Economy may reverse Our Lord's declarations about poverty and riches, or a system of Ethics may teach that the highest condition of body is ordinarily essential to the highest state of mind.

7. Christianity is necessarily modified by the growth of civilization and the exigencies of times. Therefore, e.g. The priesthood, though necessary in the Middle Ages, may be superseded now.

Other propositions of Liberalism as Newman understood it state that there is no existing authority competent to aid private judgment; there
is no such thing as a national or state conscience; the civil power may
dispose of church property without sacrilege; the civil power has the
right of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and administration; and it is law­
ful to rise in arms against legitimate princes.\(^8\)

While Newman in one way or another was concerned with all the facets
of Liberalism, our interest here is in his prolonged polemic against
Liberalistic propositions in regard to philosophical certitude. Although
the ramifications of Liberalism are numerous and interminable, those
propositions concerning certitude are reducible to two philosophical roots.

1. There are no certitudes in religion.
2. Demonstration or formal logic is the only basis for any
certitude.

The first tenet that there is no basis for certitude in religion
reduces religion to opinion or personal sentiments. Newman understood
this to be a type of anti-intellectualism in religion which holds that:

- Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste; not
  an objective fact, not miraculous; and it is the right of each
  individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy.\(^9\)

Truth and certitude would thus be foreign to all forms of theology.

Newman will show that certitudes are attained in theology.

The second tenet that demonstration or formal logic is the only
basis for any certitude has been traditionally identified with rationalism.
Long before existential philosophy even appeared, Newman sensed the folly
of restricting all true thought to the language of scientific logic.

\(^8\) Apo., pp. 294-6.
\(^9\) Life, 2:460.
He wrote in irony:

Current language becomes the measure of thought; only such conclusions may be drawn as can produce their reasons; only such reasons are in point as can be exhibited in simple propositions; the multiform and intricate assemblage of considerations, which really lead to judgment and action, must be attenuated or mutilated into a major and minor premiss.\(^{10}\)

Newman will show that there is more to logic than formal logic; there is also natural and informal logic. These two tenets of Liberalism that there are no certitudes in religion, and that demonstration or formal logic is the only basis for any certitude--are dramatically described in the correspondence which Newman held with the non-believer William Froude.

Froude wrote that he was searching for scientific certitude in religion, that is, certitude that is based on formal logic. To this Newman responded that religion is not a science like physics, but rather a devotion to a person. Newman then added, he hoped to develop this, and Froude encouraged him to do so.\(^ {11}\) Although Froude never accepted the Christian faith, he was instrumental, through his skepticism, in urging Newman to make the grand experience of his life available to a larger public than that which he could reach in his private correspondence. This Newman did in his writing of the Grammar of Assent.\(^ {12}\)

We shall now consider how Newman reacted to a Liberalism which limits itself to formal logic and sentimentalism. Newman could not agree with

\(^{10}\)US., p. 230


the first Liberalistic tenet—that religion is mere sentimentalism, and consequently there is no basis for certitude in religious faith.

C. Reason in Religion

For Newman the assent given by religious faith is a rational one, and since faith is open to all men, it follows that all men must be able to justify that faith, and do so in conformity with reason, even if they are incapable of putting their reasons into definite words.

Accordingly, instead of saying that the truths of Revelation depend on those of Natural Religion, it is more pertinent to say that belief in revealed truths depends on belief in natural. Belief is a state of mind; belief generates belief, states of mind correspond to each other; the habits of thought and the reasonings which lead us on to a higher state of belief than one present, are the very same which we already possess in connection with the lower state. ¹³

Newman would not accept that if a person believed simply, he believed without any reason whatsoever. Fideism was alien to his mind. On the other hand he did not hold with the Liberal rationalist that either a believer reasoned through the entire field of faith or else there is no faith. In his delicate "dialogue" with John Locke we shall study how Newman retained reason or inference, and assent, depicting both their relationship to one another and their independence. In all of his writings Newman strove for balance between the natural and the supernatural, between the human and the divine, between what man does and what God does.

He considered Christianity or faith the perfection of nature and is thus like and unlike nature at once. Faith is like nature where it is the same or as much as nature, and unlike it where it is as much and more.

¹³GA, p. 413.
The supernatural is the perfection of nature. Only in the soil of the natural can the supernatural grow. This harmony between the natural and the supernatural relate to the doctrine of the analogy of religion, that is, finding in nature similarities to religious truths.

The assent to revealed truths depends upon the assent to natural truths. One state of mind flows into the other. The solution of the natural or philosophical problem of how the mind of a particular person can reach certitude regarding a practical truth is a reliable criterion of how the mind achieves supernatural truth. It is for this reason that Newman's thought ranges beyond the limits of theology. In his polemics against the Liberalism of his day, he explores many of the regions considered in the philosophies of Locke, Butler and Aristotle concerning inferences and assents in everyday certitudes.

Newman held that for everyone, even for children, the certitude in religion must be in harmony with the nature of man, it must be reasonable. He wrote:

I would affirm that faith must rest on reason, nay, even in the case of children and of the most ignorant and dull peasant, wherever faith is living and loving; and of course in a great many other cases besides. I start then with a deep conviction that that is the case on which the objection I am to answer bases itself; viz, that faith not only ought to rest upon reason as its human basis, but does rest and cannot but so rest, if it deserves the name of faith. Any my task is to elicit and show to the satisfaction of others what those grounds of reason are.14

In greater detail in one of his essays Newman writes about the the function of reason in regard to revealed truth. Here we see how Newman can accept the function of reason without falling into Rationalism.

14Manuscript of Jan. 5, 1860 MS A 46, 3.
i.e., the excessive employment of reason which would usurp the province of faith.

As regards Revealed Truth, it is not Rationalism to set about to ascertain, by the exercise of reason, what things are attainable by reason, and what are not; nor, in the absence of an express Revelation to inquire into the truths of Religion, as they come to us by nature; nor to determine what proofs are necessary for the acceptance of a Revelation on the plea of insufficient proof; nor after recognizing it as divine, to investigate the meaning of its declarations, and to interpret its language; nor to use its doctrines, as far as they can be fairly used, in inquiring into its divinity; nor to compare and connect them with our previous knowledge, with a view of making them parts of a whole; nor to bring them into dependence on each other, to trace their mutual relations, and to pursue them to their legitimate issues. This is not rationalism.\[^{15}\]

While Newman was aware of the role that reason plays in religious matters, he was also keenly sensitive to the limitations of the human mind when it proceeds alone along the narrow paths of formal logic.

**D. The Limits of Formal Logic**

Newman did not accept the second Liberalistic proposition, namely, that demonstration or formal logic is the only basis for all certitude in religion. This was the position of Whately and the Noetics of Oxford who attempted a gnosticisation of the faith, and thus reduce all belief to reason. The Noetics had excessively exalted formal reason, and thus became provincial in their thinking. In their philosophy there was no more place for either free will or for grace.

The Noetics claimed that no one has the right to believe religious doctrines until he has given a formal demonstration of the doctrines patterned after the proof required in mathematics and natural science.

\[^{15}\text{Ess}, 1:32.\]
The sincere and honest believer must apply to the sphere of religious thought the same criteria used by the mathematician and the physicist. If this were not done, he would be guilty of failing to show the rational character of his religious conviction, and his belief would be a sham. Conversely, the Noetics held that when the support of formal logical argument is obtained, it compels the assent of any rightminded person to the claims of revelation and to the articles of Christian belief. The religion of the Noetics would then become as impersonal as a problem in calculus, and would of necessity be limited to the scholarly few.

Newman acutely wrote of the Noetic position which would exact a formal logical demonstration for every revealed truth:

.. it is Rationalism to accept the Revelation, and then to explain it away; to speak of it as the Word of God, and to treat it as the word of man; to refuse to let it speak for itself; to claim to be told the why and the how of God's dealings with us, as therein described, and to assign to Him a motive and a scope of our own. 17

Thus it is wrong to attempt to legitimize the articles of faith with reason alone. Liberalism, therefore, may be termed false liberty of reason. It exercises reason on matters in which the human mind can not be brought to any successful conclusion, i.e., the mysteries of faith.

In the Oxford University Sermons Newman calls this practice the Usurpations of Reason or the Encroachments of Reason. 18

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17Ess, I:32.

18US. pp. 54-75 passim.
Where then is reason to be exercised? Here Newman clearly delineates the area as a natural or human preparation for faith, an area termed in scholasticism as the preambles of the faith.

The crucial point here, when we find Newman demanding a rational basis for faith and a proper use of reason in studying revealed truths, is his refusal to limit all reasoning processes to that of formal logic. In his dialogue with Bishop Joseph Butler about probabilities, we see how by reason he meant a sort of natural, informal logic.

Newman considered that the rigid philosophy of his days at Oxford which focused exclusively upon formal logic was too impersonal and too ethereal. Certitude must be something personal because thinking is a personal activity. On the other hand the Liberal dream was erroneous. All men can not arrive at certitude on the same scientific, logical level, although as we shall see later such explicit logic can be a guide for the implicit logic found in these personal certitudes.

In many ways Newman was more empirical than Locke or any of the English Empiricists. He was not concerned with an empiricism that dictated and structured how men should think. He was interested in how men actually do think. The norm of reasoning is how the mind actually reasons correctly. He based his philosophy upon his experience of living the life of a Christian in an anti-Christian intellectual milieu, and the need he felt of getting behind the accepted theories to the facts. He saw the benefits of thinking in the concrete, not in hypothetical contexts. Facts would lead to the theories, rather than the theories shaping the facts. Thus, he avoided the paper Utopias manufactured by the use of impersonal and unrealistic reason.

Newman saw the need of a new philosophy in this whole matter. He
wanted a more realistic, personal, empirical philosophy. He foresaw that educated laymen would be in sore need in the years to come of a philosophy of the Christian religion to help them to explain the certitude that they have for their faith. On the light of this philosophy Liberalism would be clearly shown up as inadequate.

This audacious hope we find expressed in a poem entitled "The Age to Come." In 1833, early in the life of Newman, this poem was written.

Now I see that men are mad awhile
And joy the Age to come will think with me
'Tis the old history---Truth without a home
Despised and slain, then rising from the tomb.\(^1\)

A large portion of Newman's literary and intellectual life was dedicated to the development of this new philosophy of certitude. When in 1851 a rumor spread that he was to be made a bishop, he wrote to George Talbot in Rome arguing that his great value lay in his literary work, not in canon law. He expressed his fear that by assuming the duties of a bishop the work of a lifetime would be lost. "For twenty years I have been working on towards a philosophical polemic suited to the times."\(^2\) This philosophical polemic was directed against a variety of attacks on Christianity nearly all of which Newman associated with Liberalism.

E. A Larger Logic

Through his philosophical "dialogues" Newman explored this field which consisted in a new view of certitude, and he thus attempted to rectify the errors in Liberalism. The basis for this new view of

\(^1\)See, p. 148.

\(^2\)Letters and Diaries, 14:206.
certitude would be personal rather than general, practical rather than theoretical and open rather than structured. Through his philosophical dialogue with Locke he attempts to manifest the distinction between inference and assent. That such a dialogue be placed at the very beginning of the series of dialogues is most essential and beneficial. For without grasping the acceptance of Newman's view of the distinction between inference and assent the central thrust of the other dialogues would become vapid and inconsequential.

If there were no distinction between inference and assent, then inference would become the assent, and Newman would have to agree that rationalistic Liberalism was correct. Every inference would be an assent. The degrees of inference would become the degrees of assent. There would be no possibility for a group of inferences to be subject to one assent. Then it would of necessity follow that the more intelligent a person is, the deeper his formal logic penetrated, the greater would his assent become. This is the doctrine of rationalistic Liberalism, which confines the reasoning processes to formal logic.

Newman would then be forced to abandon his contention that the ordinary, less educated person can give a meaningful and strong assent to propositions, and thus obtain certitude. This problem will be explored and explained in the next chapter concerning Newman's dialogue with Locke.

Newman describes how he himself saw the need of initiating his pursuit of certitude with the establishment of the distinction between inference and assent. He says that the contemplation of the composition of his last work, the Grammar of Assent, had cost him untold trouble, that he could not find a satisfactory starting-point, and so at various times he had started completely anew.
However, he says, when he spent some time at Glion over the Lake of Geneva, "a thought came into my head as the clue, the open Sesame of the whole subject, and I at once wrote it down, and I pursued it about the Lake of Lucerne. The thought was, 'You are wrong in beginning with certitude--certitude is only a kind of assent. You should begin with contrasting assent and inference.'"\textsuperscript{21}

This discovered distinction between inference and assent became an essential theme in the structure of the Grammar of Assent. Through this distinction Newman points to the excessive claims of liberal rationalism and opens the door to more accessible and natural sources of certitude. We shall meet these sources when we come to Newman's philosophical dialogue with Butler.

In Newman's extensive descriptions concerning natural and informal inferences, we find the key to his understanding of inference. He wrote, "The heart is commonly reached not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us; voices melt us; looks subdue us; deeds inflame us."\textsuperscript{22} Newman claims that it is the whole person that is involved in natural and informal inferences, not merely the intellect in the isolation of its nebulous abstractions. Reason is seen to include a wide range of powers. It will include the feelings, the imagination, the unconscious, the will, as well as the

\textsuperscript{21}Life, 2:245, 278.

\textsuperscript{22}GA, pp. 92-93.
intellect. It is the complete, living responsible person that reasons.  

Again and again Newman states that it is the real, living concrete person who reasons concerning that which is real and concrete, and this is the evident observation of our daily experience.

In these dialogues on inference, Newman also recognizes the importance of a will that is good, and a moral disposition that is correct. The search for truth is a duty to oneself and ultimately a duty toward God. This search for certitude finds its deep roots in the concrete, realistic experiences of daily life. He uses the term "probability," a word borrowed from Butler to express such ordered experiences. To determine the exact meaning of this word in Newman will be an essential part of our task.

While Newman saw the limits of formal logic, he also saw its valid uses toward certitude. On the introductory page of the Grammar of Assent we find St. Ambrose's maxim, "Non in dialectica complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum." Frequently Newman writes about his disenchantment

23Thus, does Newman solve a problem that has plagued scholasticism—the problem of how we attain to the knowledge of the singular. He held that we become acquainted with concrete material things through our bodily senses, memory and imagination. These faculties give us subjective impressions of the appearances of things. They include as their chief element a non-sensible act of synthesis. "By the law of our nature we associate these sensible phenomena with certain units, individuals, substances, whatever they are called, which are outside and out of reach of sense, and we picture them to ourselves in these phenomena."  

24It was not by argumentation that God willed to save his people.
with formal logic which he denounces as "paper logic." Yet he held Aristotle in deep respect and recognized the need for such logic. Unlike the Noetics and the devotees of Liberalism, he refuses to be confined to mechanically manipulated syllogisms, and points out that the logic of Aristotle even with its formality can still act as a guide to inferences which are informal and natural. He also realized that formal logic at times becomes a necessary medium of communication for the sources of certitude.

In these philosophical "dialogues" we find Newman not only opposing the principles of Liberalism in regard to religious certitude, but also presenting a basis of certitude for all fields of knowledge and describing the relationships which the various types of inferences can have with certitude. He can thus be seen as a philosopher not only of religious knowledge, but also a philosopher of human knowledge, engaged in dialogue with such philosophers as Locke, Butler, Aristotle, Pascal, Hume, Plato, St. Augustine, Kant, Bacon, and John Stuart Mill.

However in order to report Newman's response to Liberalism with continuity, development and depth, the subsequent chapters of this work will treat of his dialogue with Locke in regard to the distinction between inference and assent, with Butler in regard to informal and natural inference, and with Aristotle in regard to formal inference. Each chapter in itself would be an ineffectual response to Liberalism. However, together they constitute not only Newman's critique of rationalistic Liberalism, but his synthetic solution to the certitude problem encountered in both the professional philosopher and the average person.

A reader of these dialogues will not fail to note the efforts that Newman makes to understand the position of the other philosopher
accurately and thoroughly, and his readiness to incorporate into his thinking the truths he finds in the study of other thinkers. He believed that many disagreements could be avoided if we but correctly perceived the position of the one with whom we are in dialogue. In writing about the philosophy of an imperial intellect, which is the hospitality of the mind that a university endeavors to develop, Newman said:

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

In the subsequent chapters, we shall see how Newman responded to the liberalistic claim that religion is mere sentimentalism, and it is devoid of all rationality. To do this we shall explore Newman's development of additional forms of logic—natural and informal. In explaining Newman's wider view of logic we shall also show how he responded to the second tenet of liberalism—that formal logic is the only way to certitude. Yet, as we shall see Newman does not de-evaluate formal logic. He acknowledges its rightful place in theology, philosophy and science.

In doing this we shall examine how he developed a more extensive and personal empiricism than Locke and yet retained an objective criterion for the true and the good. We shall observe how Newman combines an evangelical and personal approach to truth in his Butler dialogues with that of a rationalistic approach to truth in his Aristotelian dialogues, and observe how he synthesized the knowledge that springs from the heart with the knowledge that springs from reason.

E. Philosophical Summation

For Newman certitude is not only the knowledge of the truth, but the consciousness of knowing the truth: "I know that I know." Throughout his life Newman was concerned with the quest for certitude. He strongly objected to the position of the Liberals who claimed that in religious matters there was no basis for certitude which reduces religion to mere sentimentalism, and that demonstration or formal logic is the only basis for any certitude, which is a type of rationalism.

Newman always insisted that the assent given by faith should have a rational basis. This is true for everyone, even for children. Never would Newman say that a person believed simply because he believed. Newman strove for a balance between the natural and the supernatural, between the human and the divine, between what man does and what God does. To ignore the natural rational basis for faith would lead to the folly of fideism.

Yet, Newman would not claim that a believer must legitimatize with reason each doctrine of faith. Newman recognized the need for reason in religion and also its limits.

He saw the need of preserving both reason and assent depicting both their relationship and independence on one another.

Newman saw the dangers involved in a philosophy such as liberalism, which would claim that demonstration or formal logic is the only basis for all religious certitude. Such was the teaching of Whately and the Noetics who demanded for religious certitude the rigid demonstrations of mathematics and the natural sciences. It can readily be seen how impersonal such a scientific religion would become.

Newman claimed that reason must be exercised in giving a basis for
the faith, in interpreting and connecting doctrines and in applying doctrines to life. Yet, unlike the rationalistic liberals, Newman does not limit himself to formal logic, but he also includes a sort of natural and informal logic. Through natural and informal logic reasoning becomes personal, concrete, realistic, empirical. To the development of this view of reasoning a huge portion of Newman's literary life was dedicated.

In order to comprehend Newman's larger view of logic, it is necessary to recognize the distinction between inferences and assent. If there were no such distinction then the rationalistic liberals would be correct in claiming that a safe assent can only be produced by a formal demonstration. Newman claimed that there can be inferences without assents, assents without concurrent inferences, and---what is especially significant---that there can be true assent without the strictures of formal logic. Thus Newman holds that an ordinary person, untutored in formal logic, can have a secure basis for his assent of certitude.

Newman developed a personal, informal, and natural logic. It is the reasoning processes of the living concrete person. Although Newman saw the limits of formal logic, he recognized its role in the pursuit of certitude. Formal logic can be a guide for informal logic, and it is a helpful medium for logical communication.

We shall now study Newman's dialogue with Locke on certitude.
CHAPTER II

CRITIQUE OF LOCKE ON CERTITUDE

We have seen how a segment of the Liberal school had claimed that there is no certitude but merely opinion in religion. For this school the only basis of certitude is formal inference. In response to this position Newman endeavors to show that certitude exists in religion and in other fields. In effect he shows that the reasoning processes need not be restricted to formal or paper logic. Newman wrote:

We reason, when we hold this by virtue of that; whether we hold it as evident or as approximating or tending to be evident, in either case we do hold it because of holding something else to be evident. In the next place, our reasoning ordinarily presents itself to our mind as a simple act, not a process or series of acts. We apprehend the antecedent and then apprehend the consequent, without explicit recognition of the medium connecting the two, as if by a sort of direct association of the first thought with the second.26

To develop this view of a larger logic Newman realizes he cannot begin with certitude, but must retreat one step and begin by contrasting inference with assent. This has to be done because certitude is a type of assent specially relevant to the question here. In other words while there is a relationship between inference and assent, the assent of certitude is now always essentially dependent upon this relationship.27


27The distinction between inference and assent is, according to Francis Bacchus, one of the three most original and characteristic features of Newman's philosophy. The other two are the distinction between formal, informal, and natural inference, which will be considered in Newman's dialogue with Butler, and the illative sense, which will be considered in Newman's dialogue with Aristotle. Francis Bacchus, "How to Read the
Inference is required for the notional assent of certitude, but inference in itself does not produce this certitude. Newman accepted these basic observations about inference and assent.

Inference is the conditional acceptance of a proposition, Assent is the unconditional; the object of Assent is a truth, the object of Inference is the truth-like or a verisimilitude. The problem which I have undertaken is that of ascertaining how it comes to pass that a conditional act leads to an unconditional.28

In direct philosophical terms the problem here is the "more" seemingly coming out of the "less", namely the unconditional from the conditional.

A. Locke Represents the Liberals

In constructing his philosophy on the assent of certitude, Newman selected John Locke to be the representative of the Liberal school of rationalism. Newman accepted Locke as the reliable representative of the thinking of William Froude with whom he had conducted a lengthy and subtle correspondence on possible paths to certitude.

The first philosophical work Newman read was Lock'e Essay Concerning Human Understanding. This work was read during the summer vacation of

28GA, p. 259.
1818 when he was only seventeen.29

Following his custom in controversy, Newman begins by treating Locke with the highest respect, and as far as he is able finding points on which he can agree with him.

About the personality and achievement of Locke, Newman wrote:

I have so high a respect both for the character and the ability of Locke, for his manly simplicity of mind and his outspoken candour, and there is so much in his remarks upon reasoning and proof in which I fully concur, that I feel no pleasure in considering him in the light of an opponent to views, which I myself have ever cherished as true with an obstinate devotion.30

In general, Newman concurred with Locke's philosophy on a number of points, for instance, that each person is dependent on experience for his knowledge; that since all knowledge arises from experience it is connected in one way or another with experience; that knowing consists in a relation of a knowing subject to an individual object presented in experience. Newman wrote:

The terms of a proposition do or do not stand for things. If they do, then they are singular terms, for all things that are, are units. But if they do not stand for things they must stand for notions, and are common terms. Singular nouns come from experience, common from abstraction. The apprehension

29 Newman possessed the three large and handsome volumes of "The Works of John Locke. Esq." ed. Mr. Desmaizeaux in 1751. They bear his Littlemore book plate and thus came from the library he had built up for himself at Oriel. It is worth noting that there are very few of Newman's pencil markings and marginal remarks to be found in these volumes. What there are come only in the fourth book of the Essay. Furthermore judging by the handwriting these markings look as though they were made at a later date, possibly when he was writing the Grammar of Assent. PN, 1:192.

30 GA, p. 162.
of the former I call real, and of the latter notional.  

Once he has made the distinction between the notional apprehension and the real apprehension, Newman in agreement with Locke displays a persistent predilection for the real, and yet he is not oblivious to the function of the notional. Comparing the two modes of apprehending Newman wrote:

Without the apprehension of notions, we should for ever pace round one small circle of knowledge; without a firm hold upon things, we shall waste ourselves in vague speculations. However, real apprehension has the precedence, as being the scope and end and the test of notional; and the fuller is the mind's hold upon things or what it considers such, the more fertile is it in its aspects of them, and the more practical in its definitions.

Newman was also in agreement with Locke in rejecting innate ideas, and in refusing to accept any a priori metaphysical system which puts mental concepts in the place of existent things as the basic units of reality. Newman approximated Locke's manly simplicity of mind when he wrote, "Let units come first, and (so-called) universals second; let universals minister to units, not units be sacrificed to universals."  

B. Newman vs. Locke on Degrees of Assent

Newman, however, strongly disagreed with Locke's central theme that the lover of truth will render an assent to a proposition that is in proportion to the evidence. Locke clearly held that there are various degrees of assent which are conceived through various degrees of evidence. Now, Newman contended that were this so it would seem that all assents would be absorbed by the inferences, because the assents would be

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31 Ibid., pp. 22-23.  
32 GA, p. 34.  
33 Ibid., p. 279.
identified with the inferences and there would be no distinction between them. Thus it would be impossible to have a group of inferences accepted by one assent.

Newman could agree with Locke that the search for truth is a serious procedure and the person engaged in this search should possess a love for truth. Thus the lover of truth would take great pains to gain it and be concerned if he should fail. Newman, however, would disagree with Locke about the criterion for certitude selected for a lover of truth since Locke's criterion identified inference with assent and results in various degrees of assent. The passage that Newman quoted from Locke reads:

How a man may know, whether he be so, in earnest, is worth inquiry; and I think there is this one unerring mark of it, viz. the not entertaining any proposition with greater assurance than the proofs it is built on will warrant. Whoever goes beyond this measure of assent, it is plain, receives not truth in the love of it, loves not truth for truth's sake, but for some other by-end. For the evidence that any proposition is true (except such as are self-evident) lying only in the proofs a man has of it, whatsoever the degrees of that evidence, it is plain all that surplusage of assurance is owing to some other affection, and not to the love of truth; it being as impossible that the love of truth should carry my assent above the evidence there is to me that it is true, as that the love of truth should make me assent to any proposition for the sake of that evidence which it has not that it is true; which is in affect to love it as a truth, because it is possible or probable that it may not be true.34

After quoting this passage Newman summarizes it by saying that Locke would claim it is not only illogical, but immoral to carry our

assent beyond the evidence that a proposition is true, and to have a surplus of assurance beyond the degrees of that evidence. The only exception to this rule would be self-evident propositions.

C. Locke's Reversal

Newman thinks there are philosophical problems involved with the approach to certitude by Locke, but before that, he cites two additional quotations from Locke which seem directly inconsistent with the above stated principle. On the passage quoted above, Locke said that we should never give a greater assent than the evidence deserves. Now he says that there are propositions that border so close to certainty that we can assent to them with no fear or error.

First he says, in his chapter "On Probability," "Most of the propositions we think, reason, discourse, nay, set upon, are such as we cannot have undoubted knowledge of their truth; yet some of them border so near upon certainty, that we make no doubt at all about them, but assent to them as firmly, and act according to that assent as resolutely, as if they were infallibly demonstrated, and that our knowledge of them was perfect and certain."35

Commenting on this passage Newman notes that Locke is allowing inferences which are so close to certainty, that we can accept them with no fear of doubt, and assent to them as if they were infallibly demonstrated. Newman confesses that this is the very paradox to which he himself has been committed, and which he seeks to clarify. As we shall see later the passage quoted above from Locke expresses quite accurately a phase of Newman's personal approach to certitude.

Newman finds another inconsistency in Locke's original position of

reserving absolute assent only to perfect demonstration. In his chapter on "The Degrees of Assent," Newman points out that Locke claims that when any particular thing constantly is observed by us to occur, and all others give concurrent reports about the event, we receive it easily, and build as firmly upon it, as if it were certain knowledge, and we reason and act upon it as if it were perfectly demonstrated. "These probabilities rise so near to certainty, that they govern our thoughts as absolutely, and influence all our actions as fully, as the most evident demonstration; and in what concerns us, we make little or no difference between them and certain knowledge. Our belief thus grounded rises to assurance." 36

Newman then contrasts this passage from Locke with Locke's statement that the lover of truth will render an assent in proportion to the evidence. Newman wonders how Locke is still consistent with right reason and the love of truth for its own sake, if he allows certain strong probabilities to determine our conclusions, as if they were most evident demonstrations. Does not Locke's statement open the door to an assurance which exceeds the degrees of evidence? If this is done, are we still acting on a strictly rational level? 37 It would seem that we are not.

Newman contends that Locke is guilty here of violating his own principle. Still, Newman attempts to enter into the intimate thoughts

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37GA, p. 163.
of his adversary to see if there might not possibly be ways of resolving this inconsistency. Perhaps, he says, Locke had in view one set of instances, when he implied that demonstration was the condition of what he would term absolute assent, and another set of instances when he said that it was no such condition. But Newman claims this is an unsatisfactory solution. "Locke surely cannot be acquitted of slovenly thinking in thus treating a cardinal subject. A philosopher should so anticipate the application, and guard the enunciation of his principles, as to secure them against the risk of their being made to change places with each other."38

Newman concludes that no matter what one may think about Locke's a priori method and his logical consistency, "his animus, fear, must be understood as hostile to the doctrine which I am going to maintain."39 A basic disagreement about certitude still remains. There can be no doubt that Locke is advocating that there are degrees of evidences which contribute to various degrees of assent. This, Newman rejects.

D. Does Inference Usurp Assent?

Thus far Newman has been in dialogue with Locke by contrasting several inconsistent passages in the Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Next he proceeds to consider the logical implications of Locke's real position that there are indeed degrees of assent.

Newman gives the basis for such a reduction. He claims that if the act of assent can only be viewed as the necessary and immediate repetition

38GA, p. 164.  
39Ibid.
of another act, if both inference and assent say that a proposition is somewhat, or not a little, or a good deal, or very much like a truth, then the two are identical and it well may be doubted that there is any distinct act of assent. Assent would simply be a sort of reproduction and double of an act of inference. 40

Degrees of assent would make an assent a redundancy. Assent would merely become another name for inference or an echo of an inference.

Newman thinks that the best way to settle this question is to inquire empirically into the experience of daily life to determine the relation between inference and assent. This inquiry produces six instances that inference is in fact distinct from assent.

E. Evidences for the Inference-Assent Distinction

First, we know from experience that assents may endure without the presence any longer of the inferential acts upon which they were originally elicited. Sometimes we are fully conscious of them; sometimes they are implicit, or only now and then come directly before our reflective faculty. Still they are assents; and, when we first admitted them, we had some kind of reason, slight or strong, recognized or not, for doing so. Two things, one of which endures while the other ceases, can not be one identical thing. 41

Second, sometimes we give an assent and then it is withdrawn. The assent fails, while the reasons for it and the inferential act which is the recognition of those reasons, are still present. Our reasons may seem to us to be as strong as ever and yet they no longer secure our assent.

40Ibid., p. 165. 41Ibid., p. 167.
Our assent was no longer a true assent; it had become an assertion. Two things, one of which changes while the other remains the same can not be one identical thing.\(^{42}\)

The third example is somewhat similar to the second, with this exception, that here the assent is never given. The arguments are strong and they are convincing, but the assent is checked. There are men who will admire truths which are the result of inference, but they will never profess or assent to these truths. Two things, one of which can be present while the other is absent can not be one identical thing.\(^{43}\)

Fourth, a good argument will either receive our assent, or not receive it. Granted that the argument is good, it may be wondered, if there are degrees of assent as claimed by Locke, why then we do not assent at least a little to such an argument. Two things, one of which can be more or less, while the other is simply absent or present, can not be one identical thing.\(^{44}\)

The fifth experiential evidence takes a slightly different course. To a conclusion which is logically unimpeachable, an assent can be withheld simply on the basis of moral motives. Here Newman employs the ancient addage, "A man convinced against his will, Is of the same opinion still." Two things one of which can enter the domain of the volitional while the other remains as essentially prescinding from the volitional, can not be one identical thing.\(^{45}\)

\(^{42}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 167-68.}\)

\(^{43}\text{GA}, \text{p. 168-169.}\)

\(^{44}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 169.}\)

\(^{45}\text{Ibid.}\)
For his sixth and final example of the difference between inference and assent Newman uses mathematics. While it is true that the evidence of such a distinction may not be manifest in elementary mathematics, on the higher levels a mathematician involved in abstruse calculations could understandably labor under a rule that he would never assent to his conclusions without the corroboration of other judgments besides his own. Two things, therefore, one of which man uses as his practice rule while not so using the other can not be one identical thing. Clearly this assent is distinct and other than inference.

F. Assent Requires Some Inference

At this juncture Newman suspects that in his efforts to refute Locke he may be misunderstood. The reader may think that because he is proving that inference and assent are distinct, Newman is also claiming that between the two there is no relationship whatever, no legitimate or actual connection. To prevent this misunderstanding Newman states that arguments adverse to an assent can hinder an assent, and that assent always implies grounds in reason, implicit or explicit. Assent can not be rightly given without sufficient reasons. Between right assent and inference, therefore, there is always a relationship, although that relationship is not one of identity as we have just seen.

The problem is if there is such a definite distinction between inference and assent, how can an assent have a relationship with inference or a dependence upon inference? Certainly Newman could not claim that a man could assent without reason for this would be fideism in religion and irrationality in philosophy. Hence the discussion is

centered in the connection between inference and right assent.

A possible resolution of this apparent dilemma occurs when Newman employs the expression *conditio sine qua non* in regard to inference. The inference is not the cause of the assent, but it acts as a condition without which the assent can not occur.\(^47\) The relation is like that of a catalyst to a chemical change. That is the condition, the inference, enables the cause, the person making the assent, to produce his effect. The condition or the inference does not actually enter or flow into the being of reality of the affect. It has a negative influence in that it must be present or the cause can not produce its effect. For instance, a father turns on the television set and his four year old daughter watches the late movie. He is a necessary condition but not the cause of her watching the movie.

The inference may be compared to scaffolding which is dismantled once the building is completed. Thus Bacchus wrote:

> When a proposition is being inferred, the direct object before the mind is its relations to the premisses from which it is inferred. But when a proposition is assented to, the premisses disappear from view, just as scaffolding vanishes when a building is completed, and the proposition in itself becomes the direct object before the mind. It is true that acts of inference normally precede an act of assent, and are a sine qua non condition of its being elicited; but they do not form part of the act itself.\(^48\)

Such then is the resolution of the pseudo dilemma.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., p. 41.

G. Conditionality Contrasted with Unconditionality

We come next to what could be termed an internal reason for the difference between inference and assent. In the previous section inference has been considered to be a "conditio sine qua non" in relation to assent. Again we must employ the word "condition" in speaking about the manner in which an inference "arrives" at a proposition. From what has been said about inference it can be seen that a proposition is accepted on the basis of an inference conditionally. In other words to be a necessary condition for something to take place is not necessarily a guarantee that the other will indeed take place since the two are distinct as we have seen. If this is true, it follows that the special characteristic of inference is that it is conditional. It would then be natural to suppose that the special characteristic of assent is by distinct contrast that it is unconditional. Assent excludes the presence of any doubt. A doubt would be a lack of assent, or a suspension of assent; it is confined to the rugged region of inferences.

Now Newman draws a clear distinction between a doubt which is a "suspension of the mind" and a difficulty which does not interfere with an assent. Difficulties can be the result of a number of variant inferences, but an assent could perdure in the face of these contrary inferences, and this is another example of the difference between inference and assent. Difficulties are related to inference; doubts are related to assents. With this in mind it is possible to understand a frequently quoted maxim of Newman. "Ten thousand objections as little make one doubt, as ten thousand ponies make one horse."49

49Apo., p. 214.
In commenting on this maxim Newman says that ambiguity arises because of a double meaning of some key words. For instance "conclusion" means both the proposition drawn from two premisses, and the state of mind in which I find myself after reviewing the argument. By a state of mind Newman is referring to an assent which accepts a proposition unconditionally or an assent which rejects a proposition unconditionally. Newman claims that if the distinction is not made between the conclusion drawn from the premises and the assent, as an unconditional state of mind, a person is beginning to travel on the road to skepticism.

In the summer of 1868 he wrote a letter to Henry Wilberforce in which he said:

A great deal of confusion arises from the double sense of a lot of cognate words--e.g. "conclusion" means both the proposition drawn from two premisses, and the state of mind in which I find myself after reviewing the argument, the relation of my mind to a thing expressed in a certain proposition; and this helps the real intellectual mistake made by sceptical thinkers. If Locke were correct in saying that there are degrees of assent and no distinction between inference and assent, then each new possibly contrary inference would produce a new doubt, and rarely if ever could a secure assent result since inference would be at odds with inference.

In only one sense would Newman permit a doubt to be associated with an assent, mainly the sense in which a person can be said to assent to the fact that he is in a state of doubt. The state of doubt becomes the object of the assent which itself remains unconditional. The doubt itself, however, is not an assent, but it is simply a suspension of the mind.

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50Life, 2:250.
Finally, as if in anticipation of objections formulated by linguistic analysts in defense of Locke, Newman considers such phrases as "half-assent." He says that we speak of half-assents as we also speak of half-truths and here the implication is that the expression is more of a figure of speech than a description of a reality. According to Newman a half-truth is a proposition which in one aspect is a truth, and in another is not. Then he adds "to give a half-assent is to feel drawn towards assent, or to assent one moment and not the next, or to be in the way to assent to it." To speak of half-assent, therefore, simply means that the proposition in question deserves a hearing because it is probable, or attractive, or that it opens important views or is the key to perplexing difficulties.

Newman does concede that it is possible to speak about one assent seeming "keener" than another, but he says that in so doing we are not referring to degrees of assent, but we are simply admitting there can be a variation of vividness in the apprehensions. For instance notional apprehension, which is concerned with ideas, will not be as vivid as a real apprehension, which is concerned with things.

As notions come of abstractions, so images come of experiences; the more fully the mind is occupied by an experience, the keener will be its assent to it, if it assents, and on the other hand, the duller will be its assent and the less operative, the more it is engaged with an abstraction.

51 GA, pp. 175-176.
52 Ibid., p. 35.
I. A. Linguistic Plea for Locke

The English linguistic philosopher H.H. Price in a book based on his Gifford Lectures attempted to take the position of Locke in the Newman-Locke dialogue. Price claims that "if Newman were right and Locke wrong on the main point at issue between them (does assent admit of degrees?) our human condition would be at once more miserable and more intellectually disreputable than we commonly suppose." According to Price degrees of assent enable us to make assents which otherwise could not be made; they save us from an inert intellectual agnosticism. Price would certainly be correct if his argumentation were considered only in the Lockean frame of reference, which is limited to formal logic. But considering his objection in Newman's frame of reference it can be answered with little difficulty. As we shall develop more fully in the following chapters, logic for Newman is larger than formal inference. It also includes informal and natural inference and these present to the human mind a rich banquet for assents.

While Price agrees with Newman's affirmation that Locke is guilty of inconsistencies in demanding a correlation between the value of the inference and the assent, and at the same time permitting probabilities that border on certainty to be the source of a secure assent, he thinks that Newman has misunderstood the use of the word "ought." In Bk IV, Ch. 19, Sect 1 of the Essay Concerning Human Understanding Locke could be understood as saying that men ought not to entertain any proposition with

greater assurance than the proofs it is built on will warrant prescinding from the fact of whether they do or do not. Price offers a distinction which is not directly contained in the passage, but it is a serious interpretation that cannot be ignored. He says, "Locke maintains two distinct, though connected theses. One is concerned with what assent is, the other with what it ought to be." Price says that between the two, Newman does not seem clearly to distinguish. Thus Price would take Locke as probably agreeing with Newman's distinction between inference and assent in men's actual experiences, but would hold that Locke's point was that they ought not to be so distinguished by one who thinks well on this whole matter.

I think, however, that Newman does take this "ought" into consideration in the conclusion of his dialogue with Locke, but with a bluntly different meaning of "ought" which seems to reject Locke's meaning of the word. There Newman states that one ought to act in the manner of a man and the philosopher ought to examine how a man acts and obtains certitudes in daily life. "We must take the constitution of the human mind as we find it, and not as we may judge it ought to be."55

J. Man Ought to be What he is

Newman stresses that the human mind should be accepted as it is, not as we think it should be, or as we would like it to be. He claimed that Locke had an a priori view of the human mind. He took a view of the mind which was theoretical and unreal. Reasonings and convictions which

54Ibid., p. 135. 55GA, p. 216.
according to Newman were natural and legitimate, Locke would seem to call irrational, enthusiastic, perverse and immoral. Newman felt that Locke was too idealistic. He ignored the testimony of psychological facts and refused to accept the human mind as God made it.

. . . he would form men as he thinks they ought to be formed into something better and higher, and calls them irrational and indefensible, if (so to speak) they take to the water, instead of remaining under the narrow wings of his own arbitrary theory.56

Because of his empirical investigations Newman believes that Locke's theory of the duty of assenting more or less according to the degrees of evidence, "is invalidated by the testimony of high and low, young and old, ancient and modern, as continually given in their ordinary sayings and doings."57 In support of such a sweeping statement, Newman offers several illustrations.

It must be remembered that Locke is claiming that an absolute assent can be given only to a series of select intuitions and ideal demonstrations. The illustrations of Newman show that all men do give unconditional assents to propositions which have not grown out of formal demonstrations.

For instance we all believe without any doubt at all that we exist; that we have an individuality and identity all our own. Nor is the assent which we give to facts limited to the range of self-consciousness. We are sure beyond all hazard of a mistake, that our own self is not the only being existing; that there is an external world. We laugh to scorn the idea that we had no parents though we have no memory of our birth; that we shall never depart this life, though we can have no experience of the future. All of these and many other truths have an immediate and an

56GA, p. 164.  
57Ibid., p. 176.
unhesitating hold on our minds. We do not think ourselves guilty of not loving truth for truth's sake because we cannot reach them through a series of intuitive propositions. Assent on reasonings not demonstrative is too widely recognized an act to be irrational, unless man's nature is irrational. Newman admonishes philosophers like Locke about the danger of compounding two things very distinct from one another--a mental act or state which is an interior assent, and a scientific rule or a set of logical formulas which is in the sphere of formal inference.\(^{58}\) Another way of stating this distinction would be to employ the phrases "human logic" and "paper logic" respectively for these two things.

K. Newman's Empiricism

In the light of the above it may be seen why Newman may be regarded as being even more empirical than the empiricist Locke. Newman considered the mind of man as it actually functions. He refused to consider man as an isolated reasoning mechanism. Newman recognized that man reasons abstractly, but he also feels, remembers, imagines, believes and acts. This view would seem to be more in accordance with our own experiences of what we find in ourselves and what we notice in others.

At this point it can be seen why Newman claimed that in the fields of metaphysics and ethics "egotism is true modesty."\(^{59}\) The maxim is not quite so paradoxical if we understand by the word "modesty" humility or honesty, and by "egotism" the complete person,---complete because it not only includes oneself, but also the relationship of the self to others and to God.

\(^{58}\text{Ibid., pp. 177-79.}\)  
\(^{59}\text{Ibid., p. 384.}\)
Newman believed that the first step in his philosophy was to accept himself as he is.

My first elementary lesson of duty is that of resignation to the laws of my nature, whatever they are; my first disobedience is to be impatient at what I am, and to indulge an ambitious aspiration after what I cannot be, to cherish a distrust of my powers, and to desire to change laws which are identical with myself.60

Newman believed that a philosophy should be an experience of our lives and affect our lives, and that our lives should be experienced in our philosophy. He believed that a philosophy should exist not only as a movement or a system, but first and foremost in the individual person, not, of course, the individual isolated from society but the individual in his existential situation. Newman did not ignore the importance of the abstract, the universal, but he realized that great notions such as these are to be reached through the individual person's accepting himself for what he is and being influenced by a multitude of concrete individual objects.

Newman observed that we are in a world of facts, and these facts we must use since there is nothing else for us to use. We do not quarrel with them, but we take them as we find them. He considered it to be out of place to demand of fire, water, earth and air their credentials for acting upon us or ministering to us.61

His approach to certitude could be considered as a deepening and an extension of traditional empiricism. D. M. MacKinnon in his introduction to the *Oxford University Sermons* divides empiricism into two classes.

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60 Ibid., p. 347.  
61 Ibid., p. 346.
The first is the more technical, vis., what we traditionally think about when we hear the word empiricism. Reason for such an empiricist would mean ordered experience, and reasoning would first involve, the process of analyzing our complex sensations and all sense data into the elementary units of which they were held to be composed and then accounting for every idea of the mind in terms of sensations and sense data analyzed into their primitive elements. This would be a brief characterization of the empiricism of Locke.

But MacKinnon also speaks about another type of empiricism. He describes it as "a temper of mind that acknowledges the authority of a vast number of very different sorts of intellectual procedures." This seems to come nearer to a description of Newman's type of empiricism, that clearly goes beyond the empiricism of Locke.

How the mind can go beyond the empiricism of Locke; how there can be a larger logic than formal logic; how the mind passes from the conditionality of inference to the unconditionality of assent; how there can be a basis for the notional assent of certitude which is not in the field of formal logic will be questions for subsequent chapters.

L. Philosophical Summation

As the spokesman for the Liberal school of philosophy which taught that in the field of religion there is no certitude, and that the only basis for certitude is formal logic, Newman chose John Locke. Although Newman admired Locke in many ways, and could agree with him on many philosophical matters, he strongly opposed Locke's statement that there are degrees of assent, and that the degree of assent given to a proposition should be in proportion to the value of the inference.

Newman shows that Locke himself does not consistently accept this principle throughout his writings, for Locke maintains that there are propositions that border so close to certainty that we can accept them as certain. Also he says that there are probabilities accepted by ourselves and by others as if they are certain. In such instances Newman charged Locke with inconsistency.

Newman next claims that if Locke is correct there would be no need to speak about an assent. Assents would have to correspond to the inference and thus become absorbed by the inference itself. Numerous examples from daily experience are given to prove the distinctions of inference and assent. For instance, we can have assents after we have forgotten our inference; we can have a strong inference which will never induce an assent.

While Newman has established a difference between inference and assent he thinks that in so doing he has called our attention to a basic quality of each. Inference is always conditional while assent is always unconditional. Inference is involved with doubt in the sense that a doubt can be the result of conflicts of inferences. Assent excludes all doubt, although it does not exclude all difficulties. A doubt is a suspension
of the mind while an assent is the unconditional acceptance of a proposition.

The distinction between inference and assent should not be stressed to the extent that it may seem there is no relationship between them. At some time or another every assent is based upon some inference of a group of inferences. However, Newman disagrees with Locke as to what the basis must be. Locke claims that an absolute assent demands absolute evidence. Newman endeavors to prove that the ordinary person and the professional philosopher have a larger source for inferences than that of strict formal logic. It can be seen that if there were no distinction between inference and assent Locke would be correct in stating that there are degrees of assent, and Newman would be compelled to be restricted to formal logic. But, claims Newman, the reality is otherwise.

In developing his treatment of a larger logic Newman stresses the importance of accepting ourselves as we are, as we have been made, and as we actually think and act in a world of individual concrete objects. This larger logic will have its own structure and laws, which are quite distinct from those that obtain in formal logic. What informal and natural logic are and how they can become a basis for certitude are questions for consideration in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER III

CRITIQUE OF BUTLER ON CERTITUDE

Newman set out to make a completely new start in philosophy by laying different foundations on which to build a philosophy of certitude. These foundations would obviate the errors in method which had entrapped Locke. The English empiricist, Newman was convinced, had created an artificial need for proving by strict demonstration every natural certitude.

In Chapter II we saw how Newman reasoned that there can be no degrees of assent and that inference and assent are mutually distinct. He thus opened a door to certitude which does not always require formal inference as its basis. Now the assent of certitude can throw light on other types of inferences. The nature, function and scope of these other types of inferences will now be explained as we enter into Newman's dialogue with the Anglican theologian and bishop of Durham, Joseph Butler.

A. Newman's Admiration for Butler

In his Apologia Newman wrote that in 1823, when he was about twenty-two, he read Bishop Butler's Analogy of Religion for the first time, "the study of which has been to so many, as it was to me, an era
in their religious opinion." 63

The works of Butler were treasured by most scholars in England in the nineteenth century. Newman remarked that at the time of the death of his close friend, Hurrell Froude, he was asked to select one of his books as a keepsake. The first book that he selected was Butler's Analogy, but unfortunately someone else had already chosen it. At the suggestion of another friend, Newman picked Hurrell's Breviary. 64

Newman had a deep respect for the creativity and the profundity of Butler's mind. He mentions him in the same vein as Newton, Athanasius, Augustine and Aquinas, and speaks of Butler as a remarkable achievement within the Church. "What a note of the Church is the mere production of a man like Butler, a pregnant fact which must be meditated on!" 65 Not only did Newman reverence the mind of Butler, but he read him with enjoyment. 66

Frequently Newman quotes Butler as an authority on solutions to difficult problems, and in corresponding with a perplexed person, he often suggests that the person resolve the confusion through the reading of Bishop Butler's Analogy or his sermons. For instance in trying to resolve the problem of whether doctrine comes before practice, or vice versa, he accepts the former, and simply states, "Bishop Butler implies


64Apo., p. 76. 65Ess., 2:56-57.

66Letters and Diaries, 21:68.
In a letter which develops the relationship between Revelation and nature, Newman concludes that the reader will find a more complete treatment in the works of Butler.68

B. Insights from Butler

In a general way Butler helped Newman build his doctrinal views on a broad philosophical basis. He helped Newman avoid an excessively emotional religion that was cut off from any type of rational basis. In his Apologia Newman cites several specific insights that he acquired through his reading of the Analogy.

Its inculcation of a visible Church, the oracle of truth, and a pattern of sanctity, of the duties of external religion, and of the historical character of Revelation, are characteristics of this great work which strike the reader at once.

Newman then cites two specific points which especially influenced him.

For myself, if I may attempt to determine what I most gained from it, it lay in two points, which I shall have an opportunity of dwelling on in the sequel; they are the underlying principles of a great portion of my teaching.

First, the very idea of an analogy between the separate works of God leads to the conclusion that the system which is of less importance is economically or sacramentally connected with the more momentous system, and of this conclusion the theory, to which I was inclined as a boy, vis. the unreality of material phenomena, is an ultimate resolution. At this time I did not make the distinction between matter itself and its phenomena, which is so necessary and so obvious in discussing the subject.

Secondly, Butler's doctrine that probability is the guide of life, led me, at least under the teaching to which a few years later I was introduced, to the question of the logical cogency of Faith, on which I have written so much. Thus to Butler I trace those two principles of my teaching, which have led to a charge against me both of fancifulness and of scepticism.69

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68 Ibid., 14:327.
69 Apo., pp. 22-3.
The impression these two points made on Newman become more understandable if we bring out their relationship. To Butler probability was an all pervading idea, and the analogies he discovered between nature and religion seemed to him to be examples of probabilities. We shall now consider how Newman understood these two points.

C. Nature as a Veil

To understand the procedure of Butler in the Analogy let us consider one of his examples. In speaking about the future life, Butler draws an analogy from a child who becomes a grown man. He remarks that all of our life on earth is comparable to that of a child, and our life with God in heaven is comparable to the life of a grown man.70

In giving his opinion of this facet of the Analogy Newman claims that the analogy between nature and faith is beneficial in answering objections to the faith, but he recognizes the limitations of this methodology. It is like a presumption used negatively, that is, once an objection is correctly answered a presumption arises in favor of the proposition under consideration. For instance, there are objections brought against certain characteristics of Christianity, and Butler meets them by showing that the Christian doctrines have parallels which are discoverable in the order of nature. Butler argues that the objections do not tell against the divine origin of Christianity, unless they tell against the divine origin of the natural system also, which obviously they do not. Newman then adds, "But he could not adduce it as a positive

and direct proof of the Divine origin of the Christian doctrines that they had their parallels in nature, or at the most as more than a recommendation of them to the religious inquirer."71 In other words, the argument concludes to no more than a probability. It is merely persuasive.

Newman himself realized that he was charged with being "fanciful" for adopting this method from the Analogy, but he did not think it a serious charge since he saw that Butler was in fact following a Platonic view of the world. Newman describes this view in his essay, "Milman's View of Christianity."

All that is seen,—the world, the Bible, the Church, the civil polity, and man himself,—are types, and, in their degree and place, representatives and organs of an unseen world, truer and higher than themselves.72

A similar view of the world is expressed in one of Newman's Parochial and Plain Sermons.

We know that to remove the world which is seen, will be the manifestation of the world which is not seen. We know that what we see as a screen hiding from us God and Christ, and His Saints and Angels. And we earnestly desire and pray for the dissolution of all that we see, from our longing after that which we do not see.73

It was this type of Platonism in Butler which prepared Newman for the Platonism of the Fathers.

So much for the first important point in the Analogy, the relation of nature with religion which Newman accepted. The other point, namely, probability as the very guide of life, he accepted with a number of qualifications which led eventually to a sharp break between the two

71GA., p. 382. 72Ess., 2:193.
73PS, 4:211.
philosophers of religion.

D. Probability and Doubt

In writing about probability in the opening pages of the Analogy, Butler says that probable evidence is essentially distinguished from demonstration, since probability admits of degrees away from the highest moral certainty down to the very lowest presumption. Probability is chiefly constituted by the word "likely", i.e. "like some truth or true event; like it, in itself, in its evidence, in some more or fewer of its circumstances."74

Butler seemed to recognize both the limitations and the necessity for probability. He wrote:

Probable evidence, in its very nature, affords but an imperfect kind of information; and is to be considered as relative only to beings of limited capacities. For nothing which is the possible object of knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite intelligence; since it cannot be discerned absolutely as it is in itself, certainly true, or certainly false. But to us, probability is the very guide of life.75

In effect Bishop Butler is saying that there is evidence in favor of faith, but one should not expect the exclusion of all doubt. Probability should suffice. Newman had his own theory as to why Butler developed this probable approach to certitude.

He wrote:

I have sometimes thought that Hume's question at the end (I think) of his "Essay on Miracles," 'I would have a man put his hand upon his heart and say whether a speaking serpent and Adam

74Butler, Analogy of Religion, 1:5.
75Ibid., p. 5.
and Eve, an apple, is not so unlike the existing order of things as to make belief impossible except to Christian faith on which our Holy Religion rests; 'twas the stimulus which led to Butler's writing the Analogy. 76

Newman appreciated greatly Bishop Butler's attempt to produce a rational basis for certitude in the field of faith and in other significant fields, and he makes every effort to find points of agreement between himself and the author of the Analogy.

For instance, Newman penetrates a historical problem with the aid of an example found in one of Butler's sermons. Butler wrote, "Supposing that, upon a very slight and partial view which (a spectator) had of (a great) work, several things appeared to his eye as disproportionate and wrong, others just and beautiful...there is a probability that the wrong appearances were." This example Newman transfers to historical facts. He says that "if out of a vast number of historical facts, 9/10ths go to one conclusion, and the remaining 1/10th neither to that one conclusion, nor to any other, the unaccounted and inexplicable 1/10th does not destroy the proof from the 9/10ths?77 Admittedly the residual 1/10 makes it only probable.

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76PN, 2:107-8.
Although this is not a verbatim quotation from Hume, Newman's paraphrase accurately presents what Hume wished to express. Hume in effect is stating that there is no common ground whatsoever between nature and the objects of belief, and that the greatest of all miracles, is not the miracle in itself but the very act of believing in what is impossible to believe. Newman claims that Hume's statement prompted Butler to write the Analogy and to prove that there is not such a vast gulf between our knowledge of nature and our objects of faith. The complete statement as expressed by Hume may be found in David Hume, An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Charles W. Hendel (Indianapolis New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1955), p. 140.

77Letters and Diaries, 14:349.
In giving the example about the spectator, Newman is quoting Butler's sermon "On the Ignorance of Man," Works of Butler. 2:227.
In the Grammar of Assent there is an acceptance of Butler's method on probabilities which at first may seem somewhat astonishing. On the certain and the probable, Newman wrote:

As regards the world invisible and future, we have a direct and conscious knowledge of our Maker, His attributes, His providence, acts, works, and will from nature, and revelation; and, beyond this knowledge lies the large domain of theology, metaphysics and ethics, on which it is not allowed to us to advance beyond probabilities, or to attain to more than an opinion.78

From the context of this passage it is quite evident that Newman is employing the word "probability" in the Butler sense, that is, there is almost the possession of certainty but there remain shadows of doubt. It is not that Newman means that theology, metaphysics and ethics contain only probabilities. He is merely stating that in these subjects there are vast or wide areas for probability.

Just a few pages before Newman made the above remark, he stated that with regard to the maxim "probability is the very guide of life", he could go along some distance with Butler, but not the full distance. Properly explained, this saying is true. But one must not carry a true maxim to an extreme. It is far from true, if we so hold it as to forget that without first principles, there can be no conclusions at all, and that thus probability does in a real sense presuppose and require the existence of truths which are certain. The maxim is especially untrue with respect to the other great department of knowledge, the spiritual,

78GA, pp. 239-240. By the expression "from nature" Newman means that through the medium of conscience God's existence and some of his attributes are known without enduring the labors of formal logic.
if taken to support the doctrine that the first principles and elements of religion, such as God's existence and man's need of God's friendship, which should be universally received are mere matters of opinion or probability. Newman then concedes that in this day religion is considered to be one of those subjects on which truth cannot be discovered, and on which one conclusion is pretty much on a level with another. But for him the initial truths of divine knowledge ought to be viewed as parallel to the initial truths of secular knowledge; as the latter are certain, so too are the former.79

While Newman was deeply sympathetic in regard to the intentions of Bishop Butler, he wondered if Butler, had placed too great a priority on probabilities. He realized that Butler wished to halt the evil of skepticism, but is this to be done by lowering the pegs of certitude, and accepting doubt and probability all the way to first principles?

What especially disturbed Newman about Butler's position on certitude was that it made certainty about historical facts or even about the basis truths of life unattainable and impossible. Newman becomes perplexed when he attempts to apply Butler's theory to the existence of God which should be a basic truth for all men. While attempting to be as tolerant as possible of Butler's views, Newman claims that the author of the Analogy should have recognized the absurdity of saying that his inward apprehension of the being of a God was only a feeling of the greater probability.

79 Ibid., p. 237.
I am sure I never have meant at any time myself to say I was only probably convinced or had an opinion there was a God—"the idea is shocking—What! the object of worship, faith, and obedience all one's life long, for which one acted (with whatever imperfection) day by day and through sorrow and joy, what mind, if ever so little religious would say he only opined Its existence?"

Newman categorically states that there can be no true faith based on probabilities, as Butler was understood to teach. But out of a profound respect for the Bishop, he added the words, "or misunderstood to teach."81

In the Idea of a University Newman claimed that Butler's philosophy of probability which had done so much to bring members of the University of Oxford to religious convictions, "appeared to Pitt and others who had received a different training, to operate only in the direction of infidelity."82 It was seen, by Newman, then that the Analogy for some could become a subtle danger to the very faith it tried to defend. Although it attempted to eradicate rationalism and potential skepticism, it could also engender such movements. While Butler tried to stress the importance of a high degree of probability, it was difficult for Newman to accept his rendezvous with doubt. For clearly, what was probably true, could also be possibly false.

Butler himself seemed to sense that there were problems with his theory, but he said that it was not his design to inquire further into

80Letters and Diaries, 15:456.
81GA, pp. 59-60.
82Idea, p. 100.
the nature, the foundation, and measure of probability. He thought that to determine when probability could lead to a full conviction, or to guard against its errors, belonged to the subject of logic. Then he added that probability has not been thoroughly considered in the field of logic.83

F. Probability and Certitude

Newman takes upon himself the task of probing probabilities, and surveying ways to find the haven of certitude. As he begins his search he makes an important distinction. How it comes about that we can be certain is not his business to determine. For him it is sufficient that certitude is felt. He hopes that like Butler he will be practical and not fall into the field of impersonal metaphysics. The subject of certitude will be treated, in the language of the schoolmen, "in facto esse," in contrast with "in fieri."

But his approach will also be unlike Butler's. Butler treated of probability, doubt, expedience, and duty, while he will confine himself to the truth of things, and to the mind's certitude of that truth.84 Newman in this passage should not be understood as claiming that duty was unimportant. A little later in the Grammar of Assent he lauds Butler who had connected together the moral system with the religious.85 But Newman did believe that the basis of duty and of any moral system would be found in the truth of things, and in the mind's certitude of that truth. Therefore, he set out to probe this prior basis.

84 GA, p. 344. 85 Ibid., p. 361.
In his efforts to develop a philosophy of certitude, Newman considers the solution given by John Keble in his book *The Christian Year*. Before giving Keble's solution he presents once again Butler's teaching, that probability is the very guide of life. He then adds that the danger of this doctrine, in the case of many minds, is, its tendency to destroy in them absolute certainty, leading them to consider every conclusion as doubtful, and, resolving truth into an opinion, which it is safe indeed to obey or to profess, but not possible to embrace with full internal assent. If this were to be allowed, then the celebrated saying, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!" would be the highest measure of devotion--but who can really pray to a Being, about whose existence he is seriously in doubt?

Newman relates that Keble met this problem by ascribing the firmness of assent not to the probabilities which introduced it, but to the living power of faith and love which accepted it. It is faith and love which give to probability a force which it has not in itself. Faith and love are directed toward an Object and it is that Object, received in faith and love, which renders it reasonable to take probability as sufficient for internal conviction. Thus the argument from probability became an argument from personality, which in fact is one form of the argument from authority. In other words Newman is stating that a proposition that is probable is transformed into a certitude not because of a motivating force within the probability, but because a person firmly believes that God who is good wishes him to accept the probability as a certitude.

Although Newman did not care to dispute this approach to certitude,

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86Apo, pp. 29-30.
he was dissatisfied because it did not go to the root of Butler's problem. Although it was beautiful and religious, it did not even profess to be logical. And so Newman presents his own solution for the attainment of certitude.

My argument is in outline as follows: that the absolute certitude which we were able to possess, whether as to the truths of natural theology, or as to the fact of a revelation, was the result of an assemblage of concurring and converging probabilities, and that, both according to the constitution of the human mind and the will of its Maker; that certitude was a habit of mind, that certainty was a quality of propositions; that probabilities which did not reach to logical certainty, might suffice for a mental certitude; that the certitude thus brought about might equal in measure and strength the certitude which was created by the strictest scientific demonstration; and that to possess such certitude might in given cases and to given individuals be a plain duty, though not to others in other circumstances.87

In the above passage it can be noted that although Newman continues to use the same word used by Butler, "probability", the meaning is not the same. A convergence or assemblage of probabilities means an ordered collection of concrete instances with the special quality of strengthening one another.

Why Newman used the word "probability" when he did not intend its general connotation, is difficult to analyze. Perhaps it was because he had a respect for the attempt that Butler made to defeat skepticism through probability. He may have wished to retain a continuity in this project. However, it also should be remembered that in Newman's day "probability" had a wider connotation than it now has.

In a letter to his friend J.D. Dalgairns Newman expressed concern about this confusion, which would identify his doctrine on certitude with

87Ibid., p. 31.
Butler's probability.

Since I wrote, I find the Essay is accused of denying moral certainty and holding with Hermes we cannot get beyond probability in religious questions. This is far from my meaning. I use "probable" in opposition to "demonstrative" and moral certainty is a state of mind.88

This is a crucial distinction. The word "probable" as Newman uses it does not imply any deficiency in the proof. For Butler it does mean somewhat less than certain. For Newman probable only indicates the particular nature of the proof, as distinguished from another species of evidence. It is opposed not to what is certain, but to what admits of being demonstrated after the manner of mathematics.

G. Certitude and Certainty

The significant distinction implied in this letter is the distinction between certitude and certainty. In the next to the final chapter of the Grammar of Assent, Newman explains this distinction in greater detail.

Certitude is a mental state; certainty is a quality of propositions. Those propositions I call certain, which are such that I am certain of them. Certitude is not a passive impression made upon the mind from without, by argumentative compulsion, but in all concrete questions (nay, even in abstract, for though the reasoning is abstract, the mind which judges of it is concrete) it is an active recognition of propositions as true, such as it is the duty of each individual himself to exercise at the bidding of reason, and when reason forbids, to withhold.89

It is well to dwell upon this vital distinction. Certainty is a quality of propositions and when such certainty is received by the mind


89GA, p. 344.
it is received passively. On the other hand, certitude is a state of the mind and demands the active participation of the mind. While it is true that certitude is dependent upon external influences these influences must be actively received by the mind so they become probabilities which can eventually become a basis for certitude.

It is possible to arrive at the certainty of an abstract external proposition through formal logic. But it is through informal logic that we arrive at the certitude of what is concrete. Informal logic consists in the cumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review. These probabilities taken separately would be of no use, and they are too subtle, too circuitous, too numerous and various to be converted into syllogisms. To illustrate the difference between informal and formal logic, Newman selects the example of a man's portrait as compared to a sketch of him. The portrait with all of its details filled in, and with its shades and colors is comparable to informal logic. The sketch, having merely a basic outline, is comparable to syllogistic treatment or formal logic.

Informal inference is the real method of reasoning in concrete matters. It is not intended to supersede the logical form of inference. It differs from formal logic in that it is not an abstraction. Through the momentum of the mass of probabilities, which are ordered concrete reasonings, it drives home to the individual case. Informal logic is semi-conscious and semi-verbal. If the reasoning process is unconscious and non-verbal, it is what Newman terms natural inference. Natural logic will be treated at greater length in the next chapter.
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Informal logic is implicit because it does not have the direct and full advertence of the mind in exercising it. Once again Newman reminds us that although he is contrasting informal inference with formal inference, the inference that he is emphasizing retains its conditioned characteristic. It is still dependent on premisses. In informal inference the premisses are the probabilities.90

In attempting to defend his view of informal reasoning without elaborating each probability into a detailed syllogism, Newman turns to the celebrated lemma with which Newton opens his "Principia." He wrote:

We know that a regular polygon, inscribed in a circle, its sides being continually diminished, tends to become that circle, as its limit; but it vanishes before it has coincided with the circle, so that its tendency to be the circle, though ever nearer fulfilment, never in fact gets beyond a tendency. In like manner, the conclusion in a real or concrete question is foreseen and predicted rather than actually attained; foreseen in the number and direction of accumulated premisses, which all converge to it, and as the result of their combination, approach it more nearly than any assignable difference, yet do not touch it logically (though only not touching it,) on account of the nature of its subject-matter, and the delicate and implicit character of at least part of the reasonings on which it depends.91

To support the logic of this illustration Newman quotes Butler, who said, if the antecedents "could not in reason be supposed to have happened unless it were true," an event is proved.92

Another example that Newman gives to illustrate that out of a convergence of probabilities certitude can be attained is that of the cable. He thought that it was important to respond to certain scholastic critics in regard to his phrase "probable evidence" as the basis for

90GA, pp. 288-293.  
91Ibid., pp. 320-321.  
92Ibid., pp. 321-323.
certitude. He was also challenged on this point by a number of scientific friends who believed that he was employing the word "probable" in Butler's sense. On July 6, 1864 Newman wrote the following thoroughly popular explanation to his friend Canon Walker:

The best illustration of what I hold is that of a cable, which is made up of a number of separate threads, each feeble, yet together as sufficient as an iron rod.

An iron rod represents mathematical or strict demonstration; a cable represents moral demonstration, which is an assemblage of probabilities, separately insufficient for certainty, but, when put together, irrefragable. A man who said 'I cannot trust a cable, I must have an iron bar,' would in certain given cases, be irrational and unreasonable; so too is a man who says 'I must have a rigid demonstration.'

Newman claims that the convergence of probabilities is the source of most of our most obstinate and reasonable certitudes. He mentions various examples: England being an island; I was born; I will die. These are accepted on the basis of informal inference, since a formal demonstration of these truths is impossible.

Taking an example from astronomy Newman shows how informal inference can be a means of acquiring certitude even in the sciences. He notes that S. Vince, the eighteenth century mathematician and astronomer, in his treatise on astronomy after speaking of the proofs of the earth's rotatory motion remarks, "when these reasons, all upon different principles, are considered, they amount to a proof of the earth's rotation about its axis, which is as satisfactory to the mind as the most direct demonstration could be." The astronomer is speaking about independent probabilities in cumulation, that is, informal inference. By the phrase "amount to a proof," Newman understood that Vince meant that the mind

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93Life, 2:43.

94GA, pp. 294-301.
feels as if the matter was strictly proved, that is, there is the
equivalent of proof.

Immediately Newman compares this passage with a passage from
Butler. Butler wrote:

Probable proofs by being added, not only increase the
evidence, but multiply it. The truth of our religion, like the
truth of common matters, is to be judged by the whole evidence
taken together...in like manner as, if in any common case
numerous events acknowledged were to be alleged in proof of any
other event disputed, the truth of the disputed event would be
proved, not only if any one of the acknowledged ones did of it-
self clearly imply it, but though no one of them singly did so,
if the whole of the acknowledged events taken together could not
in reason be supposed to have happened, unless the disputed one
were true.95

Although Newman gives no commentary on this quotation from Butler,
from the context it is evident that he felt that it gave a vague support
to his own approach to the convergence of probabilities. It is interest-
ing to note that Butler mentioned that probable proofs not only "increase"
the evidence but "multiply" it. Note also how the texts from Vince,
Butler and Newman himself are loaded with quantitative, numerical terms
like "numerous" etc. The key term seems to be "whole"--at once quanti-
tative and with Newman clearly qualitative. For the nub of the problem
is how the transformation is made from quantity and accumulation to a
higher state (not just to a higher grade of mind).

So, it seems that between Butler and Newman there is still a vast
difference. Butler is still maintaining that a number of probabilities
is merely a likeness of the truth; mingled with them is still the element
of doubt. The enhancement of evidence merely increases the degree of

According to Newman with the increase of the number of probabilities there is more than an increase in the degree of probability; there is not just a quantitative change but a qualitative change. There is not only a difference in degree, but a difference in kind, and this occurs each time a convergence of probabilities is perceived by a person as a certitude. In such a case the various "parts" converge towards a qualitatively different whole—something for which there seems to be no completely satisfactory analogy in the realm of non-mental realities. In non-mental beings "more of the same" results in exactly that "more of the same." How then does it happen that in mental reality "more of the same", namely probabilities, end up in a different reality, namely, certitude? Just what is this "informal inference" that enables the mind to move on and transform the parts into a higher whole?

As Newman speaks about informal inference, two characteristics come into view again and again. First, that informal inferences are composed of concrete components. Second, that there is not merely one concrete instance, but a multitude of them.

H. The Concrete

Newman approached certitude through the person apprehending what is individual. Butler's approach to a high degree of probability was on a lofty intellectual basis. It involved the weighing of probabilities; it involved the consideration of doubt. Newman was convinced that truth is reached by a person living in an existential situation.

He claimed that the heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions. By direct impressions Newman means real apprehensions, i.e. an experience
or an information about the concrete. These impressions are presented to us by our bodily senses. Direct impressions are the testimony of facts and events.

Newman felt that no one would die for his own calculations, but he would die for realities. A life which is completely devoted to the pursuit of formal inferences and conclusions, would become a life of inaction. Life is for action. If we insist on formal proofs for everything, we shall never come to action. It is necessary to assume and to accept the insights of informal inferences which lead to action. And man does act since he "is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. He is influenced by what is direct and precise."96

It is this character of man as a contemplating animal who surges forward to action that provides the key to understanding why he moves from "probabilities" to certitude. Here we should recall that in Newman the discussion is about certitude as factus esse, not its fieri.

I. A Multiplicity of Instances

The second point to be considered about informal inference is that it consists in not just one instance but in a number of instances and circumstances of probabilities converging to engender certitude. It is true that Butler mentions a number of examples which are bound together to constitute a strong probability. But in Butler these examples are external, they are on paper, they are outside the person. For instance Butler writes in this manner about evidence.

96GA, p. 94.
Now in the evidence of Christianity there seems to be several things of great weight, not reducible to the head, either of miracles or of the completion of prophecy in the common acceptance of the words. But these two are its direct and fundamental proofs; and those other things, however considerable they are, yet ought never to be urged apart from its direct proofs, but always be joined to them.97

In Newman the concrete instances are personal, minute and numerous. He wrote, "Conviction for the most part follows not upon any one great and decisive proof or token of the point in debate, but upon a number of very minute circumstances together, which the mind is quite unable to count up and methodize in an argumentative form."98

A significant distinction is made by Newman between the original process of reasoning and a subsequent process of investigating those original processes of reasonings themselves. All men reason. For to reason is nothing more than to gain truth from former truth. However, all men do not necessarily always reflect upon their own reasonings, so as to do justice to their own meaning. In other words, all men have a reason, but not all men factually speaking, can give a reason.99 Why? Because informal reasoning or inference is implicit, and since we are only partially conscious of its numerous labyrinths, we can express this type of inference with words only with great difficulty, or not at all. This shows, as Newman wrote, that "The human mind in its present state is unequal to its own powers of apprehension. It embraces more than it can master."100

98 Us, p. 274. 99 Ibid., pp. 258-259.
100 Mox, 2:311.
Newman thought it unwise to attempt to measure thought with language alone. Language is a sort of analysis of thought. Ideas are infinite, and infinitely combined, and infinitely modified, while language is a method which is definite and limited, and confined to an arbitrary selection of a certain number of materials. Newman claimed that, "multitudes of ideas expressed in one language do not even enter into the other languages, and can only be conveyed by some economy, or accommodation, by circumlocutions, phrases, limiting words, figures, or some bold expedient."101

On the level of informal inferences people could be in agreement. But we see every day how when they attempt to express in words what is in their hearts, disagreements often arise. The trouble is clearly language.

Half the controversies in the world are verbal ones; and could they be brought to plain issue, they would be brought to a prompt termination. Parties engaged in them would then perceive, either that in substance they agreed together, or that their difference was one of first principles.102

In the light of all this, we begin to see why Newman chose as the motto for his coat of arms, Cor ad cor loquitur.

Newman then has gone beyond Butler. Butler made many efforts to explain the attainment of certitude, but at best he reached a high degree of probability, and his methods for the most part were limited to the erudite and trained minds. Newman, on the other hand, through informal inference and a convergence of probabilities, not only presented a means for reaching certitude; but made that means accessible to both the

101Us., p. 341-2. 
102Ibid., p. 200.
educated and to the uneducated, to the professional philosopher and to the ordinary person.

Newman has thus made progress in solving the question of how a person acquires certitude. He must, however, still explain how a convergence of probabilities can be changed from a degree of high probability to a certitude. What is it in man that enables him to do this? Also if a man is guided by these probabilities, does this mean that he is abandoning the superiority of his intellect? In the terminology of Newman, do real apprehensions of concrete things leading to real assents entail a detour of intellectual activity? The answers to these problems will be sought in Newman's dialogue with Aristotle in the following chapter.

K. Philosophical Summation

The writings of Bishop Butler had a profound influence on the thinking of Cardinal Newman. The crux of Butler's philosophy is found in the maxim, probability is our very guide of life. By probability Butler meant that which is like some truth; or that for which we almost have complete evidence. Probability always included doubt, but Butler attempted to prove that every doubt included some evidence to assent.

Newman was convinced that the great issues in our life should not be founded on probability. Butler may speak of a high degree of probability, but Newman still believed that man's life should be founded on certitudes.

According to Newman man did have certitude about such basic truths as England is an island, I was born, I shall die. These certitudes were not the result of a process of formal demonstration. They were the re-
sult of informal demonstration; that is a number of probabilities converging as a proof.

While Newman uses the same word as Butler, "probability," he does not use it in the same sense. Newman does not use probability as opposed to what is certain, but as opposed to formal demonstration.

Probabilities are based on concrete facts. Because they are personal and therefore real, they are impressions which lead to action. Formal inferences on the other hand being impersonal and notional, usually do not lead to action; they lead to more formal inferences.

Because these probabilities are so numerous, so involved, and so minute it is difficult to express them with words. Yet they remain a valid, rational methodology, which is accessible to both the educated and the uneducated.

The probabilities of Butler do not lead to certitude, nor would they lead to action, nor are they accessible to the average person.

Among the questions which still remain are how does man find certitude in these assemblies of probabilities? Is there any intellectual action involved? These problems will be considered in Newman's dialogue with Aristotle.
CHAPTER IV

CRITIQUE OF ARISTOTLE ON CERTITUDE

In the previous chapter Newman claimed that through an ordered convergence of probabilities certitude can be attained. That theory produced two problems. 1. Does such a reliance on probabilities result in an anti-intellectual approach to certitude? 2. How does the accumulation of probabilities produce certitude? Through Newman's dialogue with Aristotle we shall face up to these problems.

A. Newman's Contact With Aristotle

Aristotle was a significant influence on Newman as he shaped the foundations of his own philosophy during his early Oxford years. This is a fact that has been overlooked until quite recently.

Newman made his first acquaintance with Aristotle when he was an undergraduate at Trinity College. There he did source readings in both the speculative and the practical parts of Aristotle's philosophy, but unlike the Schoolmen, he did not focus mainly upon the Aristotelian logic.

103P N, 1:150. The influence of Aristotle was recognized by various authors (e.g. Boekraad, Cronin, and Harrold) and the harmony between Newman and St. Thomas was considered by Zeno. But the first Newmanist to write extensively on this subject was Franz Michel William in his book Aristotelische Erkenntnislehre bei Whately und Newman, (Freiburg: Herder, 1960.) William believed that Newman preserved throughout his life the basic Aristotelian outlook he had absorbed during his days at Trinity College, and his early years at Oriel under Dr. Whately. However, a misleading implication in this work is that in Newman's writings there is no Platonic influence via Butler. William rectified this erroneous impression in a later work, Die Erkenntnislehre Kardinal Newman, (Bergen-Enkheim bei Frankfurt: Verlag Gerhard Kaffke, 1969).
philosophy of nature and metaphysics. Rather he became engrossed with
Aristotle's practical philosophy--specifically the Nicomachean Ethics,
Poetics, and Rhetoric--not only for its own sake, but also for whatever
hints it might furnish about the general structure of human knowledge. In
preparation for a degree Oxford students were required to have a
thorough knowledge of these books.

In 1822 Newman became a Fellow of Oriel College, and for the next
six years he was working in close collaboration with Dr. Richard Whately,
who at that time was nearing the height of his influence as the leader of
a group intent on restoring the philosophy of Aristotle to a position of
honor and respect in the university curriculum.

B. Admiration for Aristotle

Some of the finest acclamations ever paid to Aristotle are found in
the works of Newman. In one of his Oxford University sermons, preached
in 1840, he paid tribute to Aristotle as a logician, for he gave the
world, "the boldest, simplest, and most comprehensive theory which has
been invented for the analysis of the reasoning process."106

104 Collins, Philosophical Readings in Newman, p. 15.

105 p N, 1:150-53. Among the most valuable volumes preserved in
Newman's Library are his Greek and Latin text of the Nicomachean Ethics,
The blank pages opposite each page of the Greek text are filled with
notes that show that Newman had studied the entire text from cover to
cover. Also in his library are the Poetics and the Rhetoric, both of
which are copiously annotated.

106 US, p. 258.
We find that, when Newman became a Catholic in 1845, his regard for Aristotle became even more intense and extensive.

For instance, in the fifth Discourse in *The Idea of a University* he wrote:

While we are men, we cannot help, to a great extent, being Aristotelians, for the great master does but analyse the thoughts, feelings, views, and opinions of human kind. He has told us the meaning of our own words and ideas, before we were born. In many subject-matters, to think correctly, is to think like Aristotle, and we are his disciples whether we will nor no, though we may not know it.\(^\text{107}\)

In his lecture on "Christianity and Scientific Investigation", written for the School of Science at Dublin, he wrote of the manner in which St. Thomas had changed the view of theologians towards Aristotle:

From Tertullian and Calus to the two Gregories of Cappadocia, from them to Anastasius Sinaita, from him to the School of Paris, Aristotle was a word of offense; at length St. Thomas Aquinas made him a hewer of wood and a drawer of water to the Church. A strong slave he is; and the Church herself has given sanction to the use in theology of the ideas and terms of his philosophy.\(^\text{108}\)

In his Essay on Abelard he praised the depth and the extension of Aristotle's analysis of knowledge:

As the inductive method rose in Bacon, so did the logical in the medieval schoolmen; and Aristotle, the most comprehensive intellect of Antiquity, as the one who had conceived the sublime idea of mapping the whole field of knowledge, and subjecting all things to one profound analysis, became the presiding master in their lecture halls.\(^\text{109}\)

Concerning the construction of his own doctrine about certitude, Newman wrote, "as to the intellectual position from which I have contemplated the subject (of human knowledge), Aristotle has been my master."\(^\text{110}\)

Yet, although Newman respected the numerous and profound contributions of Aristotle, he had serious reservations about confining philosophical investigations to Aristotelian formal logic. This was one of the tenets of Liberalism, which we previously saw him challenge.

C. Anti-Intellectual?

We are here led to the first problem of this chapter: Does Newman's attitude towards Aristotelian formal logic and his reliance on informal logic indicate that he is anti-intellectual? In other words does Newman categorically eschew formal logic in his search for certitude?

Newman identified formal logic with the logic of Aristotle. By formal logic Newman meant the Aristotelian syllogism. This type of inference must be verbal and it requires two propositions compared to each other so that an inevitable conclusion results. This is a prime example of "intellectualism."

Newman described the syllogism in this way.

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 propositions, 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. However, an inference need not be expressed thus technically; and enthymeme fulfills the requirements of what I have called inference. So does any other form of words with the mere grammatical expressions, "for," "therefore," "supposing," "so that," "similarly," and the like.

In this procedure the syllogistic process becomes the most influential factor in the determination of truth. About this Newman wrote: "Let the authority of nature, common sense, experience, genius, go for nothing.

III

GA, p. 263.
Ratiocination thus restricted and put into grooves, is what I have called inference, and the science which is its regulating principle is logic.\textsuperscript{112} It is important to note that when Newman uses the word "ratiocination" he is speaking about a mental process which is far more extensive and richer than formal reasoning. He cites the advantages and the disadvantages of formal logic.

D. Benefits of Formal Logic

In praise of formal logic Newman wrote:

It is the great principle of order in our thinking; it reduces a chaos into harmony; it catalogues the accumulations of knowledge; it maps out for us the relations of its separate departments; it puts us in the way to correct its own mistakes. It enables the independent intellects of many, acting and reacting on each other, to bring their collective force to bear upon one and the same subject-matter, or the same question. If language is an inestimable gift to man, the logical faculty prepares it for our use.\textsuperscript{113}

Two further specific advantages of formal logic are cited,

1. Formal logic is a test for truth. It "secures us against hopeless mistakes and the capricious ipse dixit of authority."\textsuperscript{114} 2. Formal logic is an effective and satisfying means for communication. It is natural to place thoughts in words and to think logically for our own satisfaction and for our justification with others.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., p. 263. \textsuperscript{113}GA, pp. 285-86. \textsuperscript{114}Ibid., p. 262. Cf. p. 264. \textsuperscript{115}Ibid., p. 286.
E. Limits of Formal Logic

Newman then grants that formal logic proposes to be a test for truth and a common measure for reasoning. Yet, he is still concerned about its limitations. He says that even as it renders these services, it partly succeeds and partly fails. It can succeed only so far as words can be found for representing the endless varieties and subtleties of human thought. It would be an erroneous assumption to claim that whatever can be thought can be adequately expressed in words.\(^{116}\) Since formal logic mechanically places thought into words, and words into impersonal premisses and conclusions, it can only reach probabilities in the concrete because its premisses are assumed and its conclusions are abstract.\(^{117}\)

This is true no matter how correct its procedures may be. Newman thus indicated two weaknesses of formal logic. 1. It assumes its premisses. 2. Its conclusions do not reach certitude in the concrete. Each of these points calls for some consideration.

F. Assumed Premises

Newman's first objection to the syllogism is that formal inference comes short of proof in concrete matters because it has not complete command over the objects to which it relates. It merely assumes its principles. To complete the proof, we must move to a previous syllogism.

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\(^{116}\)GA, p. 264. In a different context Ludwig Wittgenstein writes regarding the limits of language. He wrote, "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical." Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Proposition 6.522 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 51.

\(^{117}\)GA, 268-69.
or syllogisms in an attempt to prove the assumptions. This results in new assumptions in the second order of syllogisms, and they too must be proven. Attempts to prove these assumptions lead us on to a multitude of separate and divergent paths. At length, there are a number of propositions all of which are to be proven by propositions more evident than themselves.

To this Newman added:

But even now the difficulty is not at an end; it would be something to arrive at length at premisses which are undeniable, however long we might be in arriving at them; but in this case the long retrospection lodges us at length at what are called first principles, the recondite sources of all knowledge, as to which logic provides no common measure of minds,—which are accepted by some, rejected by others,—in which, and not in the syllogistic exhibitions, lies the whole problem of attaining to truth,—and which are called self-evident by their respective advocates because they are evident in no other way. 118

These self-evident propositions, Newman claims, can not be proven through syllogisms, but they do prepare the way for syllogisms, and perform the major function in attaining truth. Syllogisms while they have their use do only the minutest and easiest part of the work in the investigation of truth. When there is a difficulty, that difficulty usually lies in determining the first principles. The difficulty seldom is concerned with the argumentation or proofs. The conclusions of a syllogism, therefore, to a great extent depends on assumptions which may or may not be reliable. If they are reliable, the question of just how their reliability is seen still persists—the verdict of "self-evidence"

118Ibid., pp. 269-270.
notwithstanding.

Thus Newman claims that no matter how direct or severe an argument may be there must be assumptions involved. These assumptions can be both subtle and numerous and accompany the course of reasoning step by step. The basis for these assumptions are often hidden deep in our nature, not necessarily always in the finished form of articulated propositions. Thus they may simply be the personal peculiarities of age, country, religion, social habits, and ideas. At times they could be objective, if really based on human nature. But then too at times they could be quite subjective if based on personal peculiarities.\textsuperscript{119}

Under the general heading of notional assents Newman refers to these assumptions as professions, if they are so feeble and superficial as to be little more than assertions. Examples of professions would be such shallow slogans and jargon as, "He is a liberal." "This music is relevant."\textsuperscript{120} The assumptions are termed credence, if they are the spontaneous acceptance of propositions, which are presented to us as the common property of modern civilization. Examples of credence would be informations received from conversations, discussions, newspapers, and travels, which comprise the furniture of the mind.\textsuperscript{121} Opinion would be an assent to a proposition not as true, but as probably true. For instance, I can be of the opinion that we shall have a fine hay-harvest this year. This assent is based upon the inference that there has been pleasant weather. While credence is an implicit, non-reflective assent

\textsuperscript{119}Ibid., p. 270.  
\textsuperscript{120}Ibid., pp. 42-52.  
\textsuperscript{121}Ibid., pp. 53-58.
to the truth of a proposition, opinion is a reflexive assent to the probability of a proposition.\textsuperscript{122}

Newman refers to these notional assents as presumptions, if they have as their objects first principles, viz., the propositions with which we start in reasoning on any given subject. For instance examples of such first principles would be our trust of our reasoning powers and memory, our instinctive acceptance of the external world, our awareness of the beautiful and the deformed.\textsuperscript{123}

Finally these assumptions are termed speculations if they are mental insights, viz., the contemplation of mental operations and their results as opposed to experience, experiment or sense. Here there is a firm and conscious acceptance of propositions as true. Examples of speculation are proverbs, aphorisms, and mathematical truths.\textsuperscript{124} These five classes of assumptions are notional assents and not inferences; that is, they are maintained on their own merits and not conditionally, as depending on previous propositions.

The chart on the next page will help in understanding and comparing these divisions.

\textsuperscript{122}Ibid., pp. 58-60.

\textsuperscript{123}Ibid., pp. 60-72.

\textsuperscript{124}Ibid., pp. 73-74.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSUMPTIONS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIONS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professions</td>
<td>So feeble and superficial as to be little more than assertions.</td>
<td>Rock music is relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credence</td>
<td>The spontaneous acceptance of propositions which are presented to us as the common property of modern civilization. This notional assent is non-reflective.</td>
<td>I am informed by a newspaper that there is a war in India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>The assent to a probability as true. This notional assent is reflective.</td>
<td>We shall have a fine hay-harvest for the weather has been mild.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presumption</td>
<td>An assent to first principles.</td>
<td>Trusting my reasoning powers and memory. Trusting my experience of the external world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speculation</td>
<td>Mental insights</td>
<td>Proverbs, aphorisms, mathematical truths.</td>
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Newman consolidates his view about assumptions thus:

How little syllogisms have to do with the formation of opinion; how little depends upon the inferential proofs, and how much upon those pre-existing beliefs and views, in which men either already agree with each other or hopelessly differ before they begin to dispute, and which are hidden deep in our nature, or, it may be, in our personal peculiarities. 125

We move now to consider the second limitation that Newman finds in the Aristotelian syllogism--its conclusions do not lead to certitude in the concrete.

G. Abstract Conclusions

Newman contends that the Aristotelian syllogistic conclusions are not concrete and thus are wanting in precision. To prove this contention Newman reminds us that in this world of sense we have to do with things far more than with notions. We do not live alone in a world of our ideas. We reason in order to increase our knowledge of matters which do not depend upon ourselves for being what they are; they are beyond us.

The syllogism which is for the most part occupied with notions, not things, is not competent to deal with these matters, except partially and indirectly. Newman states, "As I have already said, arguments about the abstract cannot handle and determine the concrete. They may approximate to a proof, but they only reach the probable, because they cannot reach the particular." 126

Newman grants that abstract reasoning can arrive at certitude in the concrete, but always there is the possibility of error. He gives the

example of the planet Neptune being discovered.

It was deservedly considered a triumph of science that abstract reasonings had done so much towards determining the planet and its orbit. There would have been no triumph in success had there been no hazard of failure.127

He concedes that, "Science working by itself reaches truth in the abstract, and probability in the concrete, but what we aim at is truth in the concrete."128 This assertion applies not only to mathematical inferences but also to all formal inferences.

For instance in the syllogism, "All men have their price; Fabricus is a man; he has his price." Yet, as a matter of concrete fact, Fabricus did not have his price. He was in the concrete an exception. To avoid nebulous universals, therefore, Newman counsels, "Let units come first, and (so-called) universals second; let universals minister to units, not units be sacrificed to universals."129 In other words, Fabricus should be the starting point, not a syllogistic major proposition as the starting point.

It may seem that Newman's position about abstract conclusions can be refuted through the employment of inductions and analogies. In other words, some may claim that through the use of inductions and analogies concrete conclusions may be reached; the inductions and the analogies will specify the conclusion in time and in place. But Newman makes it clear that the principle he is stating is, on the contrary, also applicable to inductions and analogies.

127Ibid., p. 278.  
128Ibid., p. 279.  
129Ibid., p. 279.
He argues, "'This place will have the cholera, unless it is drained, for there are a number of well-ascertained cases which point to this conclusion;' or, 'The sun will rise tomorrow for it rose today;' in either method of reasoning I appeal in order to prove a particular case, to a general principle or law, which has not force enough to warrant more than a probable conclusion." Newman, therefore, is saying that although inductions and analogies can aid in establishing a general principle or law, exceptions can be expected on the ground level of concrete cases. In other words inductions and analogies can produce a general principle, but when this principle is later employed to discern certitude in concrete instances, exceptions can occur. This can happen in propositional or formal logic, but not in informal or natural logic, since the living mind supplies more than the propositions.

Thus we have seen that Newman disapproves of a complete and unreserved reliance on the syllogism of the Aristotelians because (1) its premises are not proven, and (2) its conclusions do not reach certitude in the concrete. He summarizes his contention about this type of Aristotelian logic by writing:

As to logic, its chain of conclusions hangs loose at both ends; both the point from which the proof should start, and the points at which it should arrive, are beyond its reach; it comes short both of first principles and concrete issues.131

As a final verification of his views on formal logic failing to arrive at certitude in the concrete, Newman cites the attitudes and claims of the very men who are almost constantly engaged in this type of argumentation. He has no intention of disparaging the proper value of

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130 Ibid., pp. 283-284.  
131 Ibid., p. 284.
formal reasonings. That they cannot proceed beyond probabilities is readily admitted by those who use them frequently. Philosophers, scientists, and lawyers have the reputation of being hard of belief. They are accustomed to proceed by the analytical method of verbal inference. Thus, they find within these limits no sufficient resources for attaining a conclusion. Even when within their hearts they have no doubt about a conclusion, still often from the habit of their minds, they are reluctant to accept it. They dwell upon the deficiencies of the evidence, or the possibility of error. While they speak by rules and books, they judge and determine by common-sense. 132

Newman has thus stated that logic does not really prove on the level of the concrete, but it does enable us to communicate argumentatively with others. It suggests ideas; it opens views; it maps out for us the lines of thought; it verifies negatively; it determines when differences of opinion are hopeless, and when and how far conclusions are probable. At this point he presents a salient solution. "For genuine proof in concrete matters we require an organon more delicate, versatile, and elastic than verbal argumentation."133 This organon is the illative sense. And here we finally enter into the second question under consideration in this chapter. How does the ordered accumulation of probabilities produce certitude? How does this new organon enable the mind to account for certitude in concrete matter?

132Ibid., pp. 284-85. 133Ibid.
The new organon as we have said is the illative sense. "Illative" is taken from the Latin "inferre" from which the adjective "illative" means "to conclude". Newman explains his use of the word sense. It is parallel to our use of sense in "good sense", "common sense", and a "sense of beauty".134

It is important to note that Newman begins his remarks about the illative sense in relation to inference by saying that ordinarily it is a simple, spontaneous, unconscious, instinctive act. He wrote:

I commenced my remarks upon inference by saying that reasoning ordinarily shows as a simple act, not as a process, as if there were no medium interposed between antecedent and consequent, and the transition from one to the other were of the nature of an instinct.--that is, the process is altogether unconscious and implicit.135

Here Newman is speaking about what he terms natural inference which differs from the illative sense only as the act differs from the faculty. The act is the illative sense, and the faculty is natural inference. After giving various examples of natural inference such as a peasant who is able to predict the weather; a physician who excels in the diagnosis of complaints; Napoleon who could at a glance through a telescope immediately form a clear conception of the position, forces, and intention of the whole hostile army; Newman remarks that it is difficult to avoid calling such clear presentiments by the name of "instinct."

His counsellor in scholastic philosophy, Dr. Meynell of Oscott, often objected to the use of the word "instinct." Newman, however, was

reluctant to relinquish this word. When Newman described the action of the illative sense as an instinct he simply meant that it acted spontaneously in bringing us to a realization of things in the concrete. He had no intention of excluding intellectual activity when he used this word. He wrote that instinct "is a force which spontaneously impels us, not only to bodily movements, but to mental acts." He also said that the word instinct means "a spontaneous impulse physical or intelligent, in the individual, leading to a result without assignable or recognizable intellectual media."

The intellectual character of the illative sense is really nothing but the capacity of the mind to think naturally and spontaneously about real, concrete things in the light of laws of being, and it is due to the higher logic of such real thinking that we so often obtain a certitude on matters of fact which we find the greatest difficulty to justify by an abstract process of analysis and demonstration. We shall now analyze this description of the illative sense by considering its sanction, nature and scope. In so doing we shall consider its relationships with the formal logic of the Aristotelians.

137 GA, p. 260.
138 Ibid., p. 62.
I. Sanction of the Illative Sense

As Newman describes the illative sense the question occurs, how can we be sure of its credentials? Whence comes its authority? What is its guarantee?

To answer this question Newman points out some obvious facts—so obvious that they could be ignored. First of all I must accept myself as I am, not as I think I am, or wish that I could be. He wrote, "I am what I am, or I am nothing...I cannot avoid being sufficient for myself, for I cannot make myself anything else."\(^{141}\) He next contrasts man with animals and claims that what is peculiar to our nature is that man is a being of progress. "Though man cannot change what he is born with, he is a being of progress with relation to his perfection and characteristic good."\(^{142}\)

This law of progress is carried out by the acquisition of knowledge. Newman concludes that the acquisition of knowledge occurs through the operation of the illative sense, and not through some complex, indirect, and recondite science such as formal syllogistic reasoning.

...There is no ultimate test of truth besides the testimony born to truth by the mind itself, and that this phenomenon perplexing as we may find it, is a normal and inevitable characteristic of the mental constitution of a being like man on a stage such as the world. His progress is a living growth, not a mechanism, and its instruments are mental acts, not the formulas and contrivances of language.\(^{143}\)

Newman is thus stating that man fulfills his role as a being in progress not through a daily diet of the formal syllogisms of the Aristotelians, but through the activity and cultivation of the illative sense. By so doing man is not only accepting the laws of his mind as an

\(^{141}\)GA, p. 347.

\(^{142}\)Ibid., p. 349.

\(^{143}\)Ibid., p. 350.
expression of the constituted order of nature, but also he is accepting the plan of God who created and constituted the laws of the mind.\textsuperscript{144}

It would seem, therefore, that the sanction for the illative sense is quite similar to the sanction for formal logic, viz. this is the way the mind of man functions.

\textbf{J. The Nature of the Illative Sense}

To explain the nature of the illative sense Newman has recourse to what he terms "parallel faculties" which can be recognized without difficulty. He considers operations of the mind in social intercourse such as the caring for one's family, or the debating of a case in parliament in which there is a need for sagacity, skill, tact or prudence. Another parallel faculty he considers is that which is involved in the fine arts. For such acts it is possible to present true and scientific rules. Yet, how much more necessary and significant are subtle standards of taste such as a Raphael possessed and the versatile power of embodying such taste in works of art.\textsuperscript{145}

He also considers proficiency in engineering, engraving, singing, playing instruments, acting, or gymnastic exercises. In such useful arts what is important is instinct or inspiration and not obedience to external rules of criticism or of science.

Newman categorically disagrees with the Aristotelians who would make formal logic an instrumental art for all of one's activities. Genuine reasoning is not an instrumental art but formal reasoning might be.

\textsuperscript{144}Ibid., p. 351. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{145}Ibid., pp. 357-58.
He believed that ratiocination should be identified with particular subject-matters.

It is natural, then, to ask the question, why ratiocination should be an exception to a general law which attaches to the intellectual exercises of the mind; why it is held to be commensurate with logical science; and why logic is made an instrumental art sufficient for determining every sort of truth, while no one would dream of making any one formula, however generalized, a working rule at once for poetry, the art of medicine, and political warfare?146

On this topic he also remarked, "In spite of Aristotle, I will not allow that genuine reasoning is an instrumental art."147 The ratiocinative faculty has its province, it is "departmental." It is not so much one faculty, as a collection of similar or analogous faculties under one name. There are as many faculties as there are distinct subject matters. He grants that one person could possess several of these faculties. In fact some men may have a literary power in arguing in all subject-matters, but only in a style that is superficial and unreal. This is the conclusion to which we are brought by our ordinary experience with men.

For instance, a hard-headed mathematician may have no appreciation whatsoever for the delicate beauty of poetry. A successful scientist may have no talent for playing a musical instrument. A shrewd business man

146Ibid., p. 358.

147Ibid., p. 338. By the expression "instrumental art" Newman means that in the abstract reasoning could be studied as a tool for attaining truth in every field of knowledge. But in practice Newman believes that reasoning is attached to definite subjects.
may have an inept perception for philosophical questions. And it is
notorious how ridiculous a clever man may make himself, when he ventures
to argue with professed philosophers, lawyers, or geologists. In these
instances the defect lay, not so much in an ignorance of facts, as in an
inability to handle those facts suitably. A specific talent, and an
ability to exercise the talent is lacking.

In order to illustrate the point that reasoning in practice is
departmental Newman offers an analogy from the faculty of memory. While
it is possible to speak in the abstract about universal memory, in practice
the ability to remember is departmental. Memory, as a talent, is not one
individible faculty, but a power of retaining and recalling the past in
this or that department of our experience. Two memories, which are both
specially retentive, may also be incommensurate. For instance, a man can
recite a lengthy poem, or a good part of a speech, after once reading it,
but he has no memory for dates. Another man may have a great capacity for
the vocabulary of languages, but recollect nothing of the small occurrences
of the day. Others never forget any statement which they have read, and
can give volume and page, but have no memory for faces.

Newman concludes the comparison with departmentalized memory by
writing, "So it is with ratiocination, and as we should betake ourselves
to Newton for physical, not for theological conclusions, and to Wellington
for his military experience, not for statesmanship, so the maxim holds good
generally, 'Each person is to be believed in his own speciality.'" 148

148 GA, 339-341. "Each person is to be believed in his own speciality." The Latin for this expression as quoted by Newman is, "Cuique in arte sua
credendum est." This expression also appears in ibid., p. 45.
Although the illative sense is in fact attached to definite subject-matters, so that a given individual may possess it in one department of thought and not in another, "viewed in its exercise it is one and the same in all concrete matters, though employed in them in different measures." 149

K. Phronesis

Finally Newman considers judgment in moral duty as a parallel faculty to the illative sense. Just as in social intercourse and in the fine arts the individual is supreme and responsible to himself, so also with moral duty. The rules obtained through syllogistic reasoning, authority and assumptions are helpful for the formation of a moral judgment, but they can only go so far. In his consideration of moral duty Newman turn to but one author, Aristotle. He explores the analysis of phronesis presented by Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics. Phronesis or moral judgment according to Aristotle is the faculty which guides the mind in matters of conduct. 150

149 Ibid., pp. 358-59.

150 Aristotle describes phronesis or practical wisdom in this way. "That practical wisdom is not scientific knowledge is evident, for it is, as has been said, concerned with the ultimate particular fact, since the thing to be done is of this nature." Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1142a, 23-25. St. Thomas Aquinas commenting on this passage, writes about an "inner sense". "It was previously pointed out that understanding concerns certain principles or ultimates, that is, indemonstrables for which there is no proof, because they cannot be established by reason but immediately become known by themselves. But prudence is concerned with an ultimate, i.e., a singular practicable that must be taken as a principal in things to be done. Yet there is no scientific knowledge of the singular ultimate, for it is not proved by reason; there is, though sensitive knowledge of it because this ultimate is perceived by one of the senses. However, it is not apprehended by that sense which perceives the species of proper sensibles (for instance color, sound, and so on--that
In just a few sentences Newman explains Aristotle's philosophy of ethics as it is centered in phronesis.

This (phronesis) is the directing, controlling, and determining principle in such matters, personal and social. What it is to be virtuous, how we are to gain the just idea and standard of virtue, how we are to approximate in practice to our own standard, what is right and wrong in a particular case, and similar questions, the philosopher refers to no code of laws, to no moral treatise, because no science of life, applicable to the case of an individual, has been or can be written.¹⁵¹

For an illustration of this principle Newman reiterates Aristotle's description of a mason's rule or lesbos. State or public law, Aristotle observes, is inflexible. Not so the mental rule of phronesis which has an elasticity. Just as the mason's rule is made not of wood or iron but of lead, so as to allow adjustments to uneven surfaces, so does equity possess a quality of individual elasticity in relation to law, and phronesis possesses the same quality in relation to moral principles.¹⁵²

Newman has no quarrel with Aristotle's doctrine on phronesis. He acknowledges that an ethical system may supply laws, general rules, even examples, suggestions, landmarks, limitations, cautions, distinctions, solutions of critical problems. But in a particular case, the final

¹⁵¹ GA, p. 354.
appeal must be made to our living intellect. The authoritative oracle is seated in the mind of the individual, who is his own law, his own teacher, his own inspiration, and his own judge in those special cases of duty which are personal to him. It comes as an acquired habit, though it has its first origin in nature itself, and it is formed and measured by practice and experience.

L. Phronesis and Experience

Newman agrees with Aristotle on the importance of experience for the development of phronesis. He wrote, “Instead of trusting logical science, we must trust persons, namely, those who by long acquaintance with their subject have a right to judge.” With approval Newman quotes Aristotle's observation about how wise it is to trust older persons, rather than the young, in matters of practical judgment.

Newman concedes that young men can become expert mathematicians, but they cannot possess practical judgment. To have wisdom in practical judgment requires a talent for individual facts, and this is acquired only through long experience. Thus a boy may become skilled at mathematics which merely deals with abstractions, but not in philosophy which requires the data of experience. While youths can make assertions about philosophy, they are unable to give assents.

To emphasize the value of experience in the development of phronesis that leads to certitude in moral duty Newman selects another quote from


Aristotle's Ethics which shows the advantage the elderly have in making practical judgments. "We are bound to give heed to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of the experienced and aged, not less than to demonstrations; because, from their having the eye of experience, they behold the principles of things."\textsuperscript{155}

Notice in the passage cited that Aristotle contrasts the sayings and opinions of the experienced seen through phronesis with the conclusions obtained through demonstrative logic. While the correct types of experiences can enrich phronesis, experiences have but little or nothing to do with demonstrative logic.

Comparisons between Aristotle's phronesis and the illative sense are a remarkable aid in understanding Newman's higher logic. Yet, there is a difference between phronesis and the illative sense.

\textbf{M. Ethical Certitude and Beyond}

The phronesis treated by Aristotle in the Ethics is limited to practical moral judgments. Newman's illative sense, however, is the organon for attaining certitude in all fields of knowledge.

In a letter to William Froude Newman said:

There is a faculty in the mind which I think I have called inductive (illative) sense, which, when properly cultivated and used, answers to Aristotle's phronesis, its province being, not virtue, but the "inquisitio veri," which decides for us, beyond any technical rules, when, how, etc. to pass from inference to assent, and when and under what circumstances, etc. etc. not.\textsuperscript{156}


In this letter Newman emphasizes two points. First, that while there are similarities between phronesis as described in Aristotle's *Ethics* and the illative sense, there is one definite difference. Aristotle in the *Ethics* limits phronesis to practical moral judgments. While the illative sense can be employed in practical moral judgments, it also functions in the attainment of convictions and certitude in every area of investigation. Secondly, Newman states that the illative sense decides how we are to pass from inference to assent. This is the chief function of the illative sense. It is the determining organon in moving the mind from a varied array of informal and formal inferences to a state of assent.

Newman also notes that there is a specious difference between a law of truth and a law of duty. While duties can change, the assent of certitude is immutable. But he stresses that he is not comparing the two assents, but rather the various types of inferences which, in ethical matters, lead to the assent of practical judgment called phronesis, and the various types of inferences which, through the work of the illative sense, lead to the assent of certitude.\(^{157}\)

We shall now examine the range of the illative sense in the entire field of certitude.

\(^{157}\)GA, p. 355-56.
N. The Range of the Illative Sense

First of all the illative sense is employed in conducting an argument. It aids in determining the course of the thesis. For instance, prehistoric Grecian and Roman scholars must determine from what point of view they will treat the question, they must ascertain the types of arguments in the inquiry, and what collateral aids will be used. Such assumptions are the function of the illative sense.\textsuperscript{158}

Next, it is the illative sense that reaches first principles. It sees at a glance what to accept or to reject, what is a safe or a perilous assumption, what premisses can be joined and which are unrelated.

It is the action of the mind or the illative sense which selects the first elements of thought which in all reasoning are assumptions, principles, tastes and opinions. Often these are of a very personal character, but they are half the battle in the inference with which the reasoning is to terminate. The mind does this without the use of words, by a process that can not be analyzed.

About this extensive action of the illative sense Newman wrote:

Thus the illative sense, that is, the reasoning faculty, as exercised by gifted, or by educated or otherwise well-prepared minds, has its function in the beginning, middle, and the end of all verbal discussion and inquiry, and in every step of the process.\textsuperscript{159}

When speaking about this function of the illative sense or the moral sense, Newman compares it to the \textit{nous} of Aristotle. He says that while the faculty of reasoning is remarkable, it is from its very nature

\textsuperscript{158}GA, pp. 363-71.  \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{159}Ibid., p. 361.
dependent upon other faculties. These faculties give to the reasoning faculty the antecedents with which its action starts. The independent faculty which is mainly necessary for the reasoning faculty to operate, and the ultimate warrant of the reasoning act is the illative sense. Included in the scope of the illative sense are intuitions and it is what Aristotle calls the nous.160

0. Material Certitude

Newman has thus described how the illative sense functions throughout formal logic. Finally, as we have seen the illative sense is required in informal logic. The illative sense is the faculty which enables the mind to pass from the ordered convergence of probabilities in informal inference to assent. Thus the illative sense enables the mind to move from a flux of inferences to a simple act of assent. This is what Newman calls material or interpretative certitude. This occurs when certitude is present, but it is not recognized.161

He claimed that "All men reason, for reason is nothing more than to gain a truth from a former truth without the intervention of sense to which brutes are limited, but all men do not reflect upon their reasons, much less reflect truly and accurately as to judge their own meaning."162

Once again Newman is emphasizing that a person can make an assent which is based on valid inferences, but he may be unable to put his reasons into words. His reasons are potent, and he can appreciate them, but he lacks the ability to express them in logical formulae.

160 SE, p. 98.  
161 GA, p. 211.  
162 US, pp. 258-59.
For instance, a mechanic may be strongly opposed to the death penalty, but he can not say precisely why he opposes it. He may merely remark, "After all we are dealing with human lives."

P. Actual Certitude

If after possessing material or interpretative certitude a man enters into a complex assent which is the result of a reflection upon the initial act of assent, he will be in possession of formal and actual certitude. Truly then he can say "I know that I know." Again it is with the aid of the illative sense that he makes this second assent which is not a real assent but a notional assent for it has as its object notions or ideas. The reflection may include a view of the probabilities, formal inferences, parallel, cases, testimonies, authorities, circumstantial evidencies, associations, and memories.

About this complex, varied but organized activity of the mind Newman wrote:

The mind ranges to and fro, and spreads out, and advances forward with a quickness which has become a proverb, and a subtlety and versatility which baffle investigation. It passes on from point to point, gaining one by some indication: another on a probability; then availing itself of an association; then falling back on some received law; next seizing on testimony; then committing itself to some popular impression, or some inward instinct, or some obscure memory; and thus it makes progress not unlike a climber on a steep cliff, who, by quick eye, prompt hand, and firm foot, ascends how he knows not himself, by personal endowments and by practice, rather than by rule, leaving no track behind him, and unable to teach another. It is not too much to say that the stepping by which great geniuses scale the mountains of truth is as unsafe and precarious to men in general, as the ascent of a skilful mountaineer up a literal crag. It is a way which they alone can take; and its justification lies in their success. And such mainly is the way in which all men, gifted or not gifted, commonly reason,—not by rule, but by an inward faculty.163

163Us, 257-58.
In attempting to analyze the various types of inferences contributing to the reflex act of certitude it must be remembered that there is a definite relationship between informal inference and formal inference. Newman claimed that verbal reasoning differed from mental because of its scientific form. "Verbal reasoning of whatever kind, as opposed to mental is what I mean by (formal) inference, which differs from logic only inasmuch as logic is its scientific form." In other words it would be erroneous to think of these two types of reasoning as being entirely distinct and independent. Because informal reasoning by being placed in a scientific form becomes formal reason, it can be seen why there is a rational basis in all informal acts of reasoning. Thus it can be understood that informal reasoning because of its nexus with formal reasoning is not mere emotionalism.

In Sermon XIII of the Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford, Newman stressed the intimate connection between Aristotelian formal logic and informal or natural inference. He called the former explicit reasoning and the latter implicit reasoning.  

164 GA, 263-64.

165 US, pp. 251-77. For instance, in this section Newman writes about reasons for faith "which, though practically persuasive, are weak when set forth as the argumentative grounds of conviction. Faith, then, though in all cases a reasonable process, is not necessarily founded on investigation, argument, or proof; these processes being but the explicit form which the reasoning takes in the case of particular minds." p. 262.
Q. Three Characteristics of Certitude

Once there is a reflection on the various inferences and certitude is attained, three characteristics will be in explicit evidence. First, certitude follows investigation and proof. It has a rational basis. Second, it is accompanied by a specific sense of intellectual satisfaction and repose. Third, it is indefectible or irreversible. Newman pointed out the contribution made by each of these characteristics by stating:

If the assent is made without rational grounds, it is a rash judgment, a fancy, or a prejudice; if without the sense of finality, it is scarcely more than an inference; if without permanence, it is a mere conviction.\(^1\)

An example of an assent being made without reason would be the assent to the proposition that a woman should never become the president of the United States. Since no reasonable basis can be produced for the assent, it is a prejudice.

An example of an assent made without finality would be the assent to the proposition that if a traveller from the United States is planning to spend a month in Europe he should try to visit as many countries as possible since he may not return to Europe for a number of years. But there is another inference. If he visits just a few cities in one country, he will have the opportunity to obtain a more profound understanding of that country. A person planning a European vacation can vacillate from inference to inference. There is no sense of finality and each assent is barely distinguishable from the inference.

An example of a conviction would be the assent to the proposition

\(^{166}\)GA, p. 258.
that at times nations must resort to war to preserve the lives and the
liberties of their citizens. Yet, there can be a lack of permanence in
such a conviction. It is not a certitude. A generation later the
person who made such an assent may assent to the proposition that a war
does not solve problems, but, in fact, it creates more problems.

R. Reliable Certitude

Now that we have examined Newman's attitude about formal logic and
the manner in which the illative sense functions throughout reasoning,
another problem appears. How reliable is this certitude? Does it seem
too personal, too subjective? Could it lead to relativism or skepticism?
What criterion do we have for it?

Perhaps it may be alleged that the above mentioned characteristics
of certitude may serve as criteria. But could a person at times be
deceived about the rationality of his certitude, about his serenity,
about the indefectibility of his certitude?

Perhaps the criterion is the formal logic of Aristotle. Is this an
adequate test?

Newman stated that formal logic proposes to be a test,\textsuperscript{167} but it is
not a test.\textsuperscript{168} This is not a contradiction. Although formal logic does
not arrive at truth in the concrete, it can act as a negative test. It
may not tell us where truth is, but it can tell us where truth is not.
Newman wrote, "It (formal logic) was better adapted to baffle an adversary
or at most detect error, rather than establish truth."\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{167}GA, p. 264. \hfill \textsuperscript{168}Ibid., p. 287.
\textsuperscript{169}Ari., p. 29.
Aristotle.

Newman identified formal logic with the syllogism of Aristotle. He acknowledged several benefits in this form of reasoning. It can act as a test for certitude, and it is a medium for communication.

However he also cited several problems with formal inference. It assumes its premises and it can not arrive at certitude in the concrete. Newman claimed that to obtain genuine certitude in concrete matters we require a special organon, the illative sense. He refers to the illative sense as an instinct, but in so doing he includes intellectual activity.

The sanction for the illative sense is simply that the mind works in that manner. This is the way God created the mind of man. Man progresses through the proper employment of his illative sense.

Parallel faculties aid us in understanding the nature of the illative sense. Among these faculties are debating and a taste for the fine arts, but the chief faculty cited by Newman is moral duty.

Formal rules can help these faculties to operate, but the final judgment rests with the individual. In regard to ethical decisions Newman turns to Aristotle's ethics for support. There Aristotle speaks about phronesis as the faculty which enables a person to make a moral judgment about a definite problem at a specific time and place. The person has many rules, authorities, and suggestions, but the final judgment for moral duty in the concrete is made by the faculty of phronesis.

The illative sense is similar to phronesis. However, in the range of the illative sense Newman includes not just truth about moral duty, but all truth and certitude.

The illative sense is also similar to the nous of Aristotle. It is
the illative sense that decides the course of an argument, accepts or rejects assumptions. It is involved in formal and informal reasoning.

When the illative sense acts in informal reasoning it moves the mind from an occupation with inferences to a real assent. When this occurs a person is in possession of material or interpretative certitude. Certitude is present but it is not recognized.

It is then possible to move from interpretative certitude to actual certitude. This occurs when a person enters into a complex assent by reflecting on the probabilities, inferences, and associations in his mind and making a notional assent. Now he can say, "I know that I know." He has formal and actual certitude.

There are three characteristics of this certitude. It is rational; it is accompanied by a state of serenity, and it is indefectible.

How reliable is this certitude? Are the above three criteria a reliable test? Perhaps we could be deceived about them. Is formal logic an adequate test for certitude? It can tell us where certitude is not, but it can not give us certitude in the concrete.

There is only one final test for certitude--the illative sense. Can the illative sense be developed and perfected? These are questions for the next chapter--Newman's dialogue with God acting in conscience.
CHAPTER V

DIALOGUE WITH GOD IN CONSCIENCE

In the previous chapter we have seen how a convergence of probabilities can lead to a real assent, and the assent after a reflection can lead to certitude. The question was raised, what is the test for this certitude?

We saw that the test could not be formal logic since it is merely negative. It tells us where certitude is not. It does not bring us to where certitude can be found in the concrete.

We saw that the test for certitude would not be the characteristics of rationality, serenity and indefectibility, since a person at times could be deceived about these criteria.

We concluded that the ultimate test for any certitude was the illative sense. However, the question remains. How reliable is the illative sense? Can it lead us into error? Is it likely to be correct about some issues and erroneous about others? Is it static, or is it perfectible?

According to Newman the illative sense can progress or regress. He admonishes that the illative sense in ordinary minds can become "biased and degraded, by prejudice, passion, and self-interest." But the illative sense can also be improved. Commenting about the instinctive, spontaneous judgments of weather prophets, lawyers, physicians, and

172 GA, p. 331.
military strategists, Newman says that the illative sense is capable of cultivation. Although it is similar to an instinct, its susceptibility to cultivation gives it an additional characteristic. About this Newman wrote:

It is difficult to avoid calling such clear presentiments by the name of instinct; and I think they may so be called, if by instinct be understood, not a natural sense, one and the same in all, and incapable of cultivation, but a perception of facts without assignable media of perceiving. 173

It is through proper and correct practice that the illative sense is improved and perfected. "It comes of an acquired habit, though it has its first origin in nature itself, and it is formed and matured by practice and experience." 174

However, the question remains, what aids the illative sense in its journey towards certitude? It would seem that the safeguards and monitors for the illative sense are the promptings in conscience, and a person actively accepting these promptings. Newman, as we shall see, will find these promptings to be the voice of God in our nature.

173 Ibid., p. 334. Newman defines instinct as "a force which spontaneously impels us, not only to bodily movements, but also to mental acts." GA, p. 62. It is a "spontaneous impulse with no assignable nor, recognizable intellectual media." Life, 2:258. It should be noted that Newman's use of instinct definitely included mental acts as well as bodily actions. This is contrary to the meaning of "instinct" in the works of a number of contemporary psychologists who would limit its scope to bodily actions and reactions.

A. The Argument from Conscience

Newman sought an approach to God which would not be impersonal, irrelevant, and notional—viz., the result of a syllogistic conclusion. He wanted to obtain a way to God which would be personal, practical, and real. The question that Newman wished to solve was, how are we able to obtain a personal, practical, and real assent to God?

Newman wanted to realize what God was. He wished to obtain a personal knowledge of God through a real apprehension of the activities within his conscience. He had a fear of not coming to grips with reality—especially with the reality of God in existential ethical decisions. He wanted to realize things. 175

In attaining a realization of God, Newman will not only arrive at the certitude of God's existence, but also attain certitude about some of God's attributes, certitude about basic ethical problems, and an endless desire and a correct disposition for the attainment of certitude in all fields of knowledge. This can be accomplished through awareness of conscience.

B. A Description of Conscience

For Newman consciousness of conscience is one of the basic aspects of our being. It is possible to reflect upon conscience and to reason about it. As Newman points out in the Oxford University Sermons, "Its operations admit of being surveyed and scrutinized by reason." 176 To show that conscience was at the very core of our being Newman made an extensive and

profound analysis of its varied functions. He described conscience as "the discriminator of acts as worthy of praise or blame. Now such praise or blame is a phenomenon of my existence, one of those phenomena, through which as I have said, my existence is brought home to me."\textsuperscript{177}

Conscience for Newman has a legitimate place among our mental acts. To deny conscience is tantamount to a denial of a part of our nature. Just as we have the action of memory, of reasoning, of imagination, or the sense of the beautiful, so also are there actions of conscience which we call right or wrong, and which excite in us approbation or blame. Such actions enkindle in us pleasure or pain, and are customarily referred to as a good or a bad conscience. This being so Newman says that he will "attempt to show that in this special feeling, which follows on the commission of what we call right or wrong, lie the materials for the real apprehension of a Divine Sovereign and Judge."\textsuperscript{178}

C. Moral Sense and Sanction

In his analysis of the actions of conscience which carries with them a certain keen sensibility either pleasant or painful, Newman finds two aspects. Conscience is a moral sense and a sanction. By moral sense Newman means that conscience exercises a critical office, it is a judgment of reason, a rule of right conduct. By sanction Newman means that conscience exercises a judicial office, it expresses a magisterial dictate, it is a ratification of right conduct, or a disapproval of wrong conduct. It is essential to note that these denotations are two aspects.

\textsuperscript{177}PN, 2:47. \textsuperscript{178}GA, p. 105.
of a single act; the act itself is indivisible.

Father Boekraad offers an interesting insight about this distinction. He states that if we stress the sense of duty in such a way that the moral sense is neglected we would arrive at an empty categorical imperative, which cannot really direct our lives. If, on the other hand, we stress the moral sense and neglect the sense of duty we have nothing left, but that superficial morality, which Newman found so characteristic of rationalism. The ethics of rationalism "creeps, struts, or frets on the earth level without wings to rise." 

To explicate these two aspects of conscience Newman wrote:

Thus conscience has both a critical and a judicial office, and though its promptings, in the breasts of the millions of human beings to whom it is given, are not in all cases correct, that does not necessarily interfere with the force of its testimony and of its sanction: its testimony that there is a right and a wrong, and its sanction to that testimony conveyed in the feelings which attend on right or wrong conduct. Here I have to speak of conscience in the latter point of view, not as supplying us, by means of its various acts, with the elements of morals, such as may be developed by the intellect into an ethical code, but simply as the dictate of an authoritative monitor bearing upon the details of conduct as they come before us, and complete in its several acts, one by one.

What Newman means is that conscience not only tells me what is right or wrong in specific instances but also forces me onwards to greater goodness by threats and promises, and in the attainment of greater goodness I acquire greater certitude. A bad conscience fills me with anxiety, insecurity, self-reproach, compunction, and a haunting remorse. A good

179A. Boekraad, Unpublished mimeographed notes, p. 20.
180DA, p. 272.
conscience, on the other hand, would fill me with self-approval, equanimity, and serenity.

While conscience under the aspect of a moral sense or a rule of conduct can err, its other aspect is never absent; the sanction and the magisterial dictate always remains. About this Newman wrote, "conscience is far more imperative in enforcing duty than successful in determining duty in particular cases."\textsuperscript{182}

Here Newman is emphasizing that conscience as a sanction or a magisterial dictate brings into the mind various perturbations, or approbations. These feelings we can not control.

Because conscience in this sense transcends ourselves its sanction and magisterial dictate will always be present regardless of our attitude towards it.

It is more than a man's own self. The man himself has no power over it, or only with extreme difficulty; he did not make it, he can not destroy it...He can disobey it, he may refuse to use it, but it remains.\textsuperscript{183}

D. From Conscience to God

To illustrate how the activities of conscience can bring us to an encounter with God, Newman takes as his analogy the method by which we arrive at a certitude of the external world.

As from a multitude of instinctive perceptions, acting in particular instances, of something beyond the senses, we generalize the notion of an external world, and then picture that world in and according to those particular phenomena from which we started, so from the perceptive power which identifies the intimations of conscience with the reverberations or echoes (so to say) of an external admonition, we

\textsuperscript{182}one, p. 361. \textsuperscript{183}os, p. 73.
proceed on to the notion of a Supreme Ruler and Judge, and then again we imagine Him and His attributes in those recurring intimations, out of which, as mental phenomena, our recognition of His existence was originally gained.\textsuperscript{184}

Newman would therefore claim that although in the conscience argument formal inference is not involved, there is an informal or natural inference. From the intimations of conscience the mind under the direction of the illative sense assents to the existence of God. What is found in conscience is like the shadow of God indicating the substance. "My conscience is to me a proof of God just as the shadow is of the substance."\textsuperscript{185}

Giving additional examples Newman says that, "As the sunshine implies that the sun is in the heavens, though we may see it not, as a knocking at our doors at night implies the presence of one outside in the dark who asks for admittance," so does conscience direct us to God.\textsuperscript{186}

Perhaps the finest description of the conscience argument is found in the statement from the novel \textit{Callista} in which the leading character remarks:

\begin{quote}
I feel that God within my heart. I feel myself in His presence. He says to me, "Do this; don't do that." You may tell me that this dictate is a mere law of my nature, as is to joy or to grieve. I cannot understand this. No, it is the echo of a person speaking to me. Nothing shall persuade me
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{184}GA, p. 104.


\textsuperscript{186}OS, p. 74.
that it does not ultimately proceed from a person external to me. It carries with it its proof of its divine origin. My nature feels towards it as towards a person. When I obey it, I feel a satisfaction; when I disobey, a soreness--just like that which I feel in pleasing or offending some revered friend... An echo implies a voice; a voice a speaker. That speaker I love and I fear. 187

Once the mind assents to the existence of God it can reflect on the evidence presented by conscience, and thus attain to the certitude that God exists.

E. God's Attributes

Conscience not only directs us to God, but it also manifests to us some of His attributes. Newman wrote:

...Thus the phenomena of conscience as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive, and is the creative principle of religion, as the Moral Sense is the principle of ethics. 188

Conscience brings us into contact with a person who is infinite. It brings us into the presence of a person because "inanimate things cannot stir our affections; these are correlative with persons." 189 This person is infinite. If we are faithful to our consciences, we become aware that we are in contact with a dynamism which continues to become richer and richer in its contents, both in extension i.e. as affecting more and more concrete situations of our human existence, and in its intensity, i.e. in accuracy regarding each single occurrence. Newman describes this infinite dynamism:


And since the more closely this inward monitor is respected and followed, the clearer, the more exalted, and the more varied its dictates become, and the standard of excellence is ever outstripping while it guides our obedience; a moral conviction is thus at length obtained of the unapproachable nature as well as the supreme authority of That whatever it is which is the object of the mind's contemplation.\textsuperscript{190}

A number of advantages can be found in the argument from conscience. Writing about what he termed his chosen proof, Newman said that he was led to it by its great convenience and appositeness for his time. He cited its several advantages.

1. It is a proof common to all, high and low, from earliest infancy. It is carried about in a compact form in every soul. It is ever available—it requires no learning—it is possessed by pagans as well as Christians.
2. And next, it is intimately combined with practice. It is not some abstract truth wrought out by the pure intellect, or wrought out theoretically, as that from design. It goes to the root of the matter, and is the source of practical religion as well as speculative.
3. It explains and refutes the supposed "philosophical sin" which, according to it, will be the conversion into a mere taste, of that which is the voice of God directing or rewarding.\textsuperscript{191}

To these advantages that Newman explicitly cites, some other ones may be inferred. Conscience not only proves God's existence, but also tells us about His attributes; it helps us to understand ourselves; and as we shall see it provides a guide for certitudes in the field of ethics, prepares the mind for certitudes in all fields of knowledge, and disposes the mind to expect and to accept divine revelation.

Newman was convinced that the metaphysical proofs lacked the convenience and appositeness of the conscience argument.

\textsuperscript{190}\textit{US}, pp. 18-19. \textsuperscript{191}\textit{PN}, 2:67.
Newman granted that there was a need for the metaphysical proofs for God's existence. It is through the metaphysical arguments that the real and personal encounter with God in conscience can be developed. At times Newman employed these proofs in his works. For instance he wrote:

Now first consider that reason teaches you there must be a God, else how was this all wonderful universe made? It could not make itself, man could not make it, he is but a part of it; each man has a beginning, there must have been a first man and who made him. 192

But Newman concluded that no matter how coherent and persuasive such proofs may be, they are always preceded by a more basic proof—God acting in conscience. He wrote:

Or what, again, as others hold, is the popular argument from final causes but an 'Economia' suited to the practical wants of the multitude, as teaching them in the simplest way the active presence of Him, who after all dwells intelligibly, prior to argument, in their heart and conscience? 193

He perceived that syllogistic pronouncements about physical phenomena reminded us of the Being of God, rather than logically taught us His existence. "The question is whether physical phenomena logically teach us, or on the other hand logically remind us of the Being of God." 194

The weakness that Newman found in the formal proofs was that a person relying solely on these proofs was likely to become more enamored with his own mental achievements, rather than concerned with his personal relationships with God. Newman comments on the merely academic study of God in nature. "So this is the religion we are to gain from the study of Nature; how miserable the God we attain in our own mind, our

192Mix., p. 285-6; Ch. p. 294; and PS, 6:308.
193Aril., p. 76. 194US, p. 194
veneration is ever professedly the worship of self. 195

Newman recognized the dangers of such argumentation if it obviated conscience and was used in syllogistic isolation. Writing about the metaphysical arguments in his Sermon Notes, he said:

About the argument from the external world and why it is dangerous at this day; it (the world) was made before sin. Conscience has been silenced. The only information that they have received concerning God has been from Natural Theology, and that speaks only of benevolence and harmony. 196

Newman was convinced that physical theology in itself was too impersonal, ethereal, and jejune to produce vital philosophical certitudes. He claimed:

And in the next place, what on the contrary, are those special attributes which are the immediate correlatives of religious sentiment? Sanctity, omniscience, justice, mercy, faithfulness. What does Physical Theology, what does the argument from Design, what do fine disquisitions about final causes, teach us except very indirectly, faintly, enigmatically, of these transcendently important, these essential portions

195 Of A, p. 301. With this Pascal would agree. Contrasting the view of God that the heathens and Epicureans had, with the view of God held by the Jews and Christians, Pascal wrote, "But the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Christians, is a God of love and of comfort, a God who fills the soul and heart of those whom He possesses, a God who makes them conscious of Himself to their inmost soul, who fills it with humility and joy, with confidence and love, who renders them incapable of any other end than Himself" Blaise Pascal, Pensees (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1958) pp. 153-54. (Fragment 555).

196 SN, p. 29. Cf. pp. 1:317-19. Yet it should be remembered that in the spirit of modern phenomenology the viewer can see the world only through his own subjective intentionality, which are those of a sinner. The consciousness of his sins would, of course, result from his awareness of the disturbances within his conscience. Newman, however realized that it was possible to look at the world as a metaphysical object, and while doing so be devoid of any consciousness of conscience.

of the idea of Religion? Religion is more than theology; it is something relative to us; and it includes our relation towards the Object of it. What does Physical Theology tell us of duty and conscience? Of a particular providence?197

To attain basic philosophical certitudes with personal appropriation Newman presented his argument from conscience. Conscience for Newman was the means of gaining a real assent to God's existence, and also the means by which ethical certitudes can be acquired through the perfection of the illative sense. The illative sense, we recall, is my mind working with all the data that I discover, viz., the probable, the probabilities, and all of the natural, informal, and formal inferences. Under a sense of duty I exercise the illative sense, while conscience continues to demand a greater fidelity to this sense.

G. Conscience and Ethical Certitudes

It is through our response to the voice of God in conscience that the illative sense progresses and is improved so that a person arrives at ethical certitudes. Newman describes the pedagogical, regal, and sanctifying role of conscience as "The Messenger from Him, the aboriginal Vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas."198

He also speaks about the voice of God in conscience as an unseen Teacher. If this voice is heard and followed we continue to learn more and more about correct conduct, and become more skilled in our judgments. Thus our ethical certitudes are deepened. He wrote that the voice of God within us

198Diff., 2:248.
"Necessarily" raises our minds to the idea of a Teacher, an unseen Teacher; and in proportion as we listen to that Word, and use it, not only do we learn from it, not only do its dictates become clearer and its lessons broader, and its principles more consistent, but its very tone is louder and more authoritative and constraining. And thus it is, that to those who use what they have, more is given. 199

On this way for Newman God became the source of all ethical certitudes. He, of course, is not referring to a distant almighty power, but to a God of love who in His infinitely wise providence acts as a monitor towards the illative sense as it discovers certitudes among a convergence of probabilities and other inferences. If the illative sense were in error about a proposition, it is subject to correction by God's voice in conscience. If the illative sense is correct about a proposition it is subject to the approval of conscience. In speculation and in practice there can be no better teacher. Newman wrote:

For what is a higher guide for us in speculation and in practice than that conscience of right and wrong, of truths and falsehoods, those sentiments of what is decorous, consistent and noble, which our Creator has made a part of our original nature. 200

If a person accepts the manner that God made his mind and is alert to God's voice in conscience he will make continual progress in the attainment of ethical certitudes.

He wrote:

When once the mind is broken in as it must be, to the belief of a Power above it, when once it understands that it is not itself the measure of all things in heaven and earth, it will have little difficulty in going forth. 201


201 GA, p. 497.
"Breaking the mind in" means that reason is to be exercised not arbitrarily, but in accordance with obedience to conscience. All certitudes about ethics according to Newman are finally founded in God and concerning these certitudes God is the ultimate teacher. Conscience "is the law of God as apprehended in the minds of men."\textsuperscript{202}

Newman explains this point in a letter that he wrote on July 25, 1870 to Moynell. "Hence those instincts (of conscience) come from God... and as the moral law is an influence or generalization from these instincts, the moral law is ultimately taught us from God, whose nature it is."\textsuperscript{203} An ethics completely devoid of the divine would be termed by Newman "the philosophical sin".\textsuperscript{204}

Thus it can be noticed how God-centered Newman's ethics is. He felt that one of the grave errors of his age was to cut ethics away from God, and then to construct an ethical system on the basis of mere taste, expediency, or utilitarianism.

Unless this point is properly understood it is impossible to appreciate Newman's subtle and adroit definition of a gentleman. While the gentleman has attained the highest degree of gracious living on the rationalistic level, he is guilty of the philosophical sin. He has separated ethics from God. He is a great humanist, an outstanding altruist, but he lacks the multiple advantages that accrue when one finds ethical certitudes by being attentive to the voice of conscience. For the superficial gentleman certitude in morality is found in what is expedient, in utilitarianism, or in what promotes the welfare of the state.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[202]\textit{Diff.}, 2:247.
\item[203]\textit{Life}, 2:257.
\item[204]\textit{PN}, 2:67.
\end{footnotes}
For this gentleman the crime is not the sin. Rather, it is the public knowledge of the crime which constitutes the sin. "It is detection, not the sin, which is the crime." 205

Newman wrote that for the mere gentleman, "To seem becomes to be; what looks fair will be good, what causes offense will be evil; virtue will be what pleases, vice what pains. As well may we measure virtue by utility as by such a rule." 206

While Newman found many points for admiration in the gentleman and felt that his life presented a possible and proper openness to the voice of God as found in conscience, he fully recognized the limitations of the gentleman's criteria for morality. Newman realized that the ways of the gentleman, "partly assist and partly distort the development of a Christian." 207

Morality had to be more than good taste; it could not be consistently and correctly dictated by social customs. He realized that obedience to God in conscience was a duty regardless of whether it is socially

205 Idea, p. 201. Glaucon in Plato's Republic dramatically illustrates this point by relating the story about the ring of Gyges. When the collet of the ring was turned, a person became invisible. Glaucon then argues, contrary to Newman, that if you could imagine any one obtaining this power of becoming invisible, and never doing anything wrong, he would be thought by the general public to be a fool. Republic 2.360. In response to this Newman would contend that whether we are visible or invisible, we still must answer to our consciences. From conscience there is no escape.

206 Idea, p. 201.

207 Ibid., p. 208-11.
He has a lively sense of responsibility and guilt, though the act be no offense against society,--of distress and apprehension, even though it may be of present service to him,--of compunction and regret, though in itself it be most pleasurable--of confusion of face, though it may have no witnesses. 208

Thus it can be seen that although there are grounds to respect an ethics of good taste, it is difficult to obtain and to retain certitude in such an ethic. To acquire certitude it is necessary for ethics to have a solid basis, a criterion, a guide, a sanction, a monitor. These are provided by the promptings of God in conscience.

H. Errors in Conscience

As we contrast the ethics of good taste, with the ethics of conscience and maintain that certitudes are found in the ethics of conscience while it is perilous to expect certitudes in an ethics of good taste, the question arises, are there not also errors in an ethics based on conscience? Is it not possible for a person to accept a certitude about an ethical position one week, and then drastically to alter that position the next week? If ethical certitudes are attained by listening to the voice of God in conscience, why is there not a perfect unanimity among people who attempt to follow their consciences?

Newman would concede that at times we can be mistaken about certitude in ethical matters. This would result when we attribute the title of certitude to a jejune statement because of a lack of proper preparation, or to a prejudice or a bias. On this topic Newman wrote, that the multitude of men "make little distinction between credence, opinion, and

208 GA, p. 108.
profession; at various times they give them all perhaps the name of certitude and accordingly, when they change their minds, they fancy they have given up points of which they had a true conviction. 209

Thus Newman is saying that God acting in conscience gives us certitudes about ethical questions, but we can mistake a credence, an opinion, or a profession for a truth. This mistake can be engendered by "pride, self-trust, unbelief, human affection, narrow self-interest, bad education, or other mental agencies, which are found in the world and in the individual." 210

In the Idea of a University Newman presents a dramatic illustration of how conscience can fail, and then become rejuvenated.

The reflection of the sky and mountains in the lake is a proof that sky and mountains are around it, but the twilight, or the mist, or the sudden storm hurries away the beautiful image, which leaves behind it no memorial of what it was. Something like this are the moral law and the informations of faith, as they present themselves to individual minds. Who can deny the existence of Conscience? Who does not feel the force of its injunctions? but how dim is the illumination in which it is invested, and how feeble its influence, compared with that evidence of sight and touch which is the foundation of physical science!

Newman in the above text is speaking about the new and obvious data presented by the physical sciences. As he continues he considers what happens to conscience when it encounters reckless rationalism.

How easily can we be talked out of our clearest views of duty! How does this or that moral precept crumble into nothing when we rudely handle it! How does the fear of sin pass off from us, as quickly as the glow of modesty dies away from the countenance! And then we say, 'It is all superstition.'

209 Ibid., p. 234. 210 SE, p. 100.
Finally Newman concludes this passage by describing how conscience is restored to its proper position, and the result is a serene stability.

However, after a time we look round, and then to our surprise we see, as before, the same law of duty, the same moral precepts, the same protests against sin, appearing over against us, in their old places, as if they never had been brushed away, like the divine handwriting upon the wall at the banquet.211

While Newman grants that a particular conscience, i.e. as a moral judgment, not as an imperial dictate, can fail, and fall into error, he nevertheless holds that even when a conscience is in error, the complex assent is enacted on the basis of some certitude. In the Philosophical Notebook Newman claims that even if a conscience is in error there can be present in it an element of certitude. "It may be asked, How can an oracle be divine, which is not infallible in its answer? But conscience errs, not in principle, but in details. There is always something true in its dictates."212

It would then seem that when we are in error about an ethical question, God is still preserving some certitude in that error and through that certitude eventually the error may be extricated if we are faithful to our consciences.

For instance, a person is wrong in advocating the destruction of all books which contain any statement in opposition to his system of thought, but he nevertheless attains certitudes when he assents to the propositions that truth would be preserved and propagated, that a really

significant intellectual error is more serious than any physical
disease, and that falsehoods propagate additional falsehoods. He is,
however, in error and lacks certitudes when he assents to the proposi-
tions that falsehood can be destroyed through physical force, that the
average person is allergic to the light of truth, and that a select group
should be permitted to become the gate-keepers for certitudes.

Newman is confident that if a person is sensitive and dedicated to
the promptings of his conscience, his certitudes about ethical questions
will become clarified and improved and eventually there will be greater
agreement among such good people. About the voice of conscience he wrote:

...we believe on the whole, and even in those cases where it
is ill-instructed if its voice be diligently obeyed, it will
gradually be cleared, simplified and perfected, so that minds,
starting differently will, if honest, in course of time con­
verge to one and the same truth.213

I. Aids for Conscience

When writing about the manner in which the voice of God in con-
science helps to produce certitudes about ethical matters, Newman recog-
nized that a conscience is not perfected in isolation, but is helped by
individuals and communities. Such extrinsic sources, he says assist a
person in the avoidance of philosophical errors.

We all suffer for each other, and gain by each other's
sufferings, for man never stands alone here, though he will
stand by himself one day hereafter; but here is a social
being, and goes forward to his long home as one of a large
company.214


Many of the certitudes we possess today are the result of our rapport with the written and the oral treasures of the past. Newman fully realized how important it was to acknowledge our debt to our fathers and to our forefathers who have handed down to us a variety of certitudes.

It has sometimes been remarked when men have boasted of the knowledge of modern times, that no wonder we see more than the ancients, because we are mounted upon their shoulders. The conclusions of one generation are the truths of the next. We are able, it is our duty, deliberately to take things for granted which our forefathers had a duty to doubt about; and unless we summarily put down disputation on points which have already been proved and ruled, we shall waste our time, and make no advances.\textsuperscript{215}

However, the principle remains, that the individual conscience is the highest court in deciding what to accept or what to reject from the wisdom of the past and the present. Newman claimed that conscience is an ultimate since any appeal beyond conscience would have to be submitted to conscience again. Conscience can not be "resolved into any combination of principles more elementary than itself."\textsuperscript{216}

If a person is docile to the promptings of the internal monitor, viz., his conscience, he would eventually be led to the external monitor, viz., divine revelation.

The gift of conscience raises a desire for what it does not itself fully supply. It inspires in them the idea of authoritative guidance, of a divine law; and the desire of possessing it in its fulness, not in mere fragmentary portions or indirect suggestions. It creates in them a thirst, an impatience, for the knowledge of that Unseen Lord, and Governor, and Judge, who as yet speaks to them only secretly, who whispers in their heart, who tells them something, but not nearly so much as they wish and as they need. Thus you see, my brethren, a religious man, who has

not the blessing of the infallible teaching of revelation, is led to look out for it, for the very reason that he is religious. He has something, but not all; and if he did not desire more, it would be a proof that he had not used, that he had not profited by, what he had. Hence he will be on the look-out... It (conscience) suggests to him a future judgment; it does not tell him how he can avoid it. Moreover, it does not tell him how he is to get better; he feels himself very sinful at the best; he feels himself in bondage to a tyranny which, alas! he loves too well, even while he hates it... For all of these reasons then,---because he feels his ignorance, because he feels his bondage, because he feels his guilt and danger,--a religious man who has not the blessing of revelation, will be on the look-out for revelation.217

Conscience and revelation coming from the same author are not to be viewed as in conflict, but in harmony with one another.

Beginning then the subject very far back, I observe that the guide of life, implanted in our nature, discriminating right from wrong and investing right with authority and sway is our conscience, which revelation does but enlighten, strengthen and refine. Coming from the same author, these internal and external monitors of course recognize and bear witness to each other. Nature warrants without anticipating the supernatural, the supernatural completes without superseding nature.218

J. Certitudes Beyond Ethics

Thus far we have considered that God acting in conscience can guide the illative sense in the attainment of certitudes in the field of ethics. Let us now consider a further question. Can God acting in conscience aid the illative sense in arriving at certitudes beyond the field of ethics?

Within the framework of Newman's philosophy this is not an easy question to probe. It must be recalled that Newman primarily was concerned with certitudes in the area of the philosophy of religion. He

217OS, M 75-77.
endeavoured to acquire certitudes about God's existence, the attributes of God, and certitudes about ethical problems. It was these crucial questions of life which chiefly attracted him. It is for this reason that the question of certitude beyond these ethical regions and into the area of general certitudes should be considered with some caution.

However, it would seem that if a person is alert to God's voice acting within his conscience, he will be properly disposed to the reception of certitudes in all fields of knowledge. It would seem too that conscience would teach a person that he should not only be receptive to certitudes in religious matters, but also in secular matters.

He wrote, "Obedience to our conscience, in all things, great and small, is the way to know the truth."219 He also remarked. "Even the ordinary matters of life are an exercise of conscientiousness."220

The word "conscientiousness" appears only a few times but it harbors a wealth of meaning. It means that a person is not only aware of his thinking and his actions, but he is aware of them in his conscience. It is not merely his body, mind, and feelings which are involved in his life, but all of his activity is centered in his conscience. Conscience is the very core of life for a conscientious man, and this can not help but be an aid in the attainment of certitude in all fields of knowledge.

In two ways conscience can help a person to acquire certitudes in all fields of knowledge, and thus extend the number of certitudes in his possession.


First, conscience presents the obligation to search for and to inquire about additional certitudes. Conscience exhorts a person not to become isolated from further certitudes through indolence. Newman admonishes us about people "who make excuse for stifling an enquiry which conscience tells them they ought to pursue."221

Second, conscience obliges us to accept conclusions that are valid; it urges us to accept the action of the illative sense as it arrives at a conclusion.

Newman cites several examples of this. In speaking about such truths as 25 being the mean proportional between 5 and 125; or that a tangent to a circle at the extremity of the radius makes an acute angle with it, or that Great Britain is an island, Newman claims that we have accepted such certitudes by the action of our minds, viz., by informal inferences and then he adds, "under a sense of duty to those conclusions and with an intellectual conscientiousness."222

Thus a conscientious person always tries to remove prejudices or biases which will obviate his quest for certitude; he is ever open to certitudes in all fields of knowledge. Through his fidelity to conscience and his responsibility towards the moral imperative of God's promptings in conscience, his illative sense is continually being developed and improved and among his formal, informal and natural inferences there is always a harmony. "Then the house is at peace."223 He is listening to the voice of God.

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222GA, p. 318. 223SE, p. 74.
"It is He who teaches us all knowledge; and the way by which we acquire it is His way."224 Thus have we seen how God's Kindly Light in conscience aids in the cultivation of the illative sense, and enables us to attain certitudes about Himself, about ourselves, about ethics and exhorts us to search for and to accept certitudes in all fields of knowledge. It also leads us to expect a divine revelation.

In this chapter I have considered Newman's dialogue with God in conscience. How would Newman respond to an atheist who would reject such a dialogue? Could an atheist have certitude? In the next chapter I shall consider these questions.

K. Philosophical Summation

The ultimate criterion for certitude is the illative sense. But is there any way in which the illative sense can be perfected and improved?

It can be established that in the philosophy of Newman, God is the source of all certitude. When Newman speaks about God in this context, he does not refer to the type of contact we have with God as a result of the syllogisms of metaphysics. Newman would not deny the validity of such proofs, but what he questioned was their practical value--do they awaken in people an awareness of their duties towards God? Newman believed that they failed to do this.

The chosen proof for Newman about God's existence was the argument from conscience. It is through this proof that a person is able to attain to a real apprehension and a real assent to the existence of God, and to His attributes. This is the most basic approach to God.

224 GA, p. 351.
Consciousness of conscience is in every person. Although the activity of conscience is indivisible it can be considered under two aspects.

Conscience is a moral sense and a sanction. It is a moral sense in that it declares whether specific action is right or wrong. It is a sanction in that it is a magisterial dictate; it threatens or it promises.

From the actions of conscience we become aware of God. Newman uses the analogy of a person receiving a number of sensations which make him aware of the external world. It is from the movements of conscience that our minds are directed to God. Conscience directs us to a person, because such emotions could not be caused by inanimate objects. This person must be infinite because the dynamic activity of conscience is infinite.

It is through the faithful following of God's promptings in our consciences that we are able to attain certitudes in ethics. God's voice in conscience perfects and improves the illative sense, through His clear and broad lessons.

For Newman ethics is theocentric. An ethics devoid of God constitutes the philosophical sin which eventually terminates in an ethics of chaos.

Due to prejudices and a lack of preparation on our part, conscience can err. But even in the midst of errors there can be present an element of certitudes, and if that conscience is followed the certitudes can be developed and the errors eradicated.

Conscience is also dependent on extrinsic sources as it helps to develop the illative sense in the attainment of certitudes. Among these extrinsic sources are oral and written traditions. If a person pursues
certitudes and is faithful to the moral imperatives of his conscience, he will be on the look-out for still another extrinsic aid—Divine Revelation.

Can conscience help us to arrive at certitudes beyond the field of ethics? While Newman was chiefly concerned with basic philosophical questions, it would seem that a fidelity to conscience would lead us to search for additional certitudes and dispose us to accept certitudes in all fields of knowledge. A person should be conscientious. All of his life would be directed by his conscience and in that way he has God guiding and strengthening his illative sense so that he can acquire certitudes.

What would Newman's response be to an atheist who claimed certitude for atheism? This question will be considered in the next chapter.
CHAPTER VI

DIALOGUE WITH THE ATHEIST

We have seen how the dialogue with God through conscience is central in the philosophy of Newman. All that he wrote about real and notional apprehensions, the distinction between inference and assent, informal, natural, and formal reason, and the illative sense depend upon his certitude for God's existence. Should he be in error on this crucial issue the rest of his philosophy would be nothing but a collection of superficial opinions.

Newman has claimed that he is aware of "intimations," "promptings," "definite impressions," and "dictates and commands" in his conscience.\(^\text{225}\) He can reflect on these phenomena and say, "I have certitude that God exists."

To have certitude means that I know that I know. Certitude is a reflective act. I not only know, but I can reflect upon the reasons for my assent. The atheist therefore in order to be certain, must know and reflect on his reasons for denying the existence of God. Let us examine his reasons as Newman sees them.

A. The Atheist's Objections

Newman presents two objections in support of the atheist's position ---evil in the world, and the claim that the world requires no further explanation.

\(^{225}\text{GA, pp. 104-10.}\)
The atheist sees an abundance of evil in the world. He laments the wars, the bigotry, the hatreds, the destitution, the sicknesses, the hunger, and deaths, and asks: how can a good God be the author of such evils? Newman claims that the atheist would say, "You tell me that there is one God; and you tell me to look around into the world, and I shall see proofs of it. I do look abroad, and I see good and evil. I see the proof, then, of two gods, a good God, and another, evil. I see two principles struggling with each other." The atheist is thus saying that if there is evil in the world, God is not infinitely good, and if he is not infinitely good, he is not God. To Newman this means that the atheist denies that a providential God can draw good out of evil.

The atheist also claims that when he looks around at the physical world, he does not see any scientific proof at all for the existence of God. "It seemed to him that all things would go on quite as well as at present, without the Divine hypothesis as with it." The atheist denies the proposition that everything in the world must be explained by a cause which requires no further explanation. He denies that the sufficient reason for the world is God.

The atheist demands a scientific proof for God's existence. He will accept God's existence if he finds a strict formal proof; he wants definite, undeniable evidence for the existence of God.

In dealing with these objections and the search for a strict formal proof, Newman readily admits that he has no simple and satisfactory solution for the atheist. He wrote, "Now I do not see how such an objector can be answered satisfactorily, if he is pertinacious."
B. Newman’s Response

Now Newman held that a strict formal proof for God’s existence may teach divine power, necessity, skill, and goodness, but it says nothing about our duties towards Him. Too, formal physical proofs for the existence of God can be of help for some people, but such proofs are too deep, subtle, complex, indirect, and delicate to be analyzed and brought out into formal argument on a level that can be comprehended by the multitude of men. Such strict formal proofs require time for reflection and study accompanied by learning and cultivation of mind.

Newman suggests therefore that the atheist, whether highly or simply educated, should understand himself reflectively, and become attentive to the movements within his conscience, for it is in this way that we can all believe there is a God. The activities of conscience may be difficult to put into words but the experience is there and available for reflection.

He wrote:

There is a voice within us, which assures us that there is something higher than earth. We cannot analyze, define, contemplate what it is that thus whispers to us. It has no shape or material form. There is that in our hearts which prompts us to religion, and which condemns and chastises sin.229

This is a claim then that in every person there is a conscience which is the voice of God. No one can escape this phenomenon. It is beyond one’s control. It consistently directs a person to God.

Still the question could persist: if, as Newman claims, the promptings of conscience are present in every person, why does not an atheist acknowledge the presence of God in these promptings? If Newman

229 Ps, 6:339-40.
and theists recognize and accept the evidence, why do atheists fail to find the same evidence? Indeed, why does the atheist claim the evidence points in fact to God's non-existence? It seems there is evidence here from one and the selfsame source for contradictory certitudes. This requires an explanation.

Newman claimed that the atheist cannot help but be conscious of "promptings" in his conscience, only he fails to attribute these promptings to God.

But then it occurred to him, that this inward moral law was there within his breast, whether there was a God or not, and that it was a round-about way of enforcing that law to say that it came from God, and simply unnecessary, considering it carried with it its own sacred and sovereign authority as our feelings instinctively testified.230

How can this be? How is it that the atheist can be aware of these promptings in his conscience and not attribute them to God?

Considering the conscience of an atheist Newman wrote, "Conscience tends to become what is called a moral sense; the command of duty is a sort of taste; sin is not an offense against God, but against human nature."231

By the phrase "moral sense" Newman means that conscience exercises a critical office; it is a rule of right conduct. By the phrase "command of duty" he means that conscience is a sanction; it exercises a judicial office of approval or disapproval. This sanction involves the approval or disapproval of God. It does not merely mean a disharmony within ourselves, or a conflict with social customs.


231Idea., p. 191.
The conscience of an atheist is, so to speak, kept within itself. It senses no divine influence. Newman wrote:

Conscience to them is not the word of a lawgiver, as it ought to be, but the dictate of their own minds and nothing more; it is because they do not look through and beyond their own minds to their Maker, but are engrossed in notions of what is due to themselves, to their own dignity, and their own consistency. Their conscience has become a mere self-respect.232

Thus, the atheist can act in accordance with his conscience, and merely accept conscience as a moral sense. His conscience tells him what is right or wrong in a given situation. However, in place of the sanction which should direct him to God, he is being directed by self-respect, personal dignity, and respect for social customs and opinions.

It can be noted that the ethics of the atheist is similar to that of the gentleman which Newman describes in the Idea of a University. The atheist and the gentleman have this in common; they have separated ethics from God. This is not to say that the gentleman is necessarily an atheist, but simply to say that if he does believe in God, his belief does not enter into his ethical life.

Yet, the problem remains. The atheistic humanist does not attribute the intimations in his conscience to God. He claims to have certitude that God does not exist, while Newman claims that he has certitude that the promptings in his conscience direct him to God.

C. The Problem of Conflicting Certitudes

This is an instance of conflicting and contradictory certitudes. Both Newman and the atheist have made the assent of certitude, and have advanced reflective reasons for their certitudes. How is this explained in the light of Newman's philosophy?

Newman acknowledges that there can be conflicting certitudes, and that two persons can possess opposite certitudes. He gives a number of examples:

Rival philosophers seize on new discoveries, each as being in favour of his own hypotheses; it is not indeed, many instances which are critical and decisive. Are we told of some strange appearance at night in some solitary place? Those who are fond of the marvelous, think of an apparition; those who live in the rational and tangible, decide that it has been some gleam of the moonbeam, or some wayfarer or beggar, or some trick intended to frighten the passer-by. Thus history also reads in one way to one, in another to another. There are those who think the French at the bottom of all the mischief which happens to England and Ireland, others lay it to the Russians.233

Furthermore, Newman observed that there can even be contradictory certitudes about God's existence. He wrote about a professed science of atheism whose adherents would claim certitude.

We have a professed science of Atheism, another of Deism, a Pantheistic, ever so many Christian theologies, to say nothing of Judaism, Islamism, and the Oriental religions. Each of these creeds has its own upholders, it may happen, presently giving it up, and then taking up some other creed, and being certain again, as they profess, that it and it only is the truth, these various so-called truths being incompatible with each other.234

He realized that not only could there be conflicting certitudes among several persons, but there could also be conflicting certitudes

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within the same person. He wrote:

That I am certain of this proposition today, is no ground for thinking that I shall have a right to be certain of that proposition to-morrow, and that I am wrong in my convictions about to-day's proposition, does not hinder my having a true conviction, a genuine certitude about to-morrow's proposition.\textsuperscript{235}

He recognized the perplexing problem. If certitude is indefectible, if it can never fail, if it possesses perfection, how can it ever be erroneous, and if it has failed how can I ever trust in what I consider to be certitude?

He delineated the problem:

Now how can security be mine,—without which certitude is not,—if I know as I know too well, that before now I have thought myself certain, when I was certain after all of an untruth? Is not the very possibility of certitude lost to me for ever by that one mistake? What happened once, may happen again. All my certitudes before and after are henceforth destroyed by the introduction of a reasonable doubt, underlying them all. Ipso facto they cease to be certitudes,—they come short of unconditional assents by the measure of that counterfeit assurance. They are nothing more to me than opinions or anticipations, judgments on the verisimilitude of intellectual views, not the possession and enjoyment of truths. And who has not thus been balked by false certitudes a hundred times in the course of his experience? And how can certitude have a legitimate place in our mental constitution, when it thus manifestly ministers to error and to scepticism?\textsuperscript{236}

D. Solutions Rejected by Newman

The problem is clear and at this juncture it may seem to some that a possible solution would be simply to deny the possibility of objective certitude. If there were no objective truths then both sides of contradictory propositions could be correct. Newman, however, never doubted

\textsuperscript{235}Ibid., p. 227. Cf. p. 222.

\textsuperscript{236}GA, p. 228. Cf. Apo., p. 205.
that there were objective certitudes. He stated:

This, then from the nature of the case, is a main characteristic of certitude in any matter, to be confident indeed that that certitude will last, but to be confident of this also, that if it did fail, nevertheless, the thing itself, whatever it is, of which we are certain, will remain just as it is, true and irreversible.237

If Newman does not elect to resolve the problem of conflicting and contradictory certitudes by a denial of objective certitude, how does he resolve the difficulty? Could he simply deny the possibility of contradictory certitudes both objectively true? He could then consistently say both the atheist and the theist have subjective certitude seeing they both have studied and personal reasons for their respective positions, but that only one would have both subjective and objective certitude. This, interestingly enough, is not Newman's solution. This would be more of an adroit evasion of the problem rather than the solution. In regard to such an irrelevant approach Newman wrote:

I will not urge (lest I should be accused of quibbling), that certitude is a conviction of what is true, and that these so-called certitudes have come to naught, because, their objects being errors, not truths, they were not certitudes at all; now will I insist, as I might, that they ought to be proved first to be something more than mere prejudices, assents without reason and judgment, before they can be taken as instances of the defectibility of certitude.238

Newman, therefore, acknowledges that the problem can not be solved simply by saying that one person is objectively correct and possesses certitude, while the other person is objectively wrong and possesses a


238GA, p. 252.
prejudice, an opinion or a probability. The problem is deeper and goes beyond this point. The problematic is how can a person be in error about a certitude when certitude is considered to be indefectible? The problem occurs because a person who is in error is sincerely convinced that he possesses a certitude.

E. Newman’s Solution to the Problem

Newman accepts the full significance of the problem. He admits that there are true certitudes and there are false certitudes. He wrote, "I have defined certitude as a conviction of what is true. When a conviction of what is not true is considered as if it was a conviction of what is true, I have called it a false certitude."239

Newman concedes that a person can possess a certitude that is erroneous. For if certitude lacked the possibility of error, it would be...

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239 Letters and Diaries, 24:375. Certitude or a conviction of what is true is also called a true certitude or a genuine certitude. Its object is a proposition that is actually true. If the word "certitude" is used without any modifier Newman means a true certitude. When he defines certitude as a conviction of what is true, he does not mean that certitude is equivalent to universal infallibility. He does not use this definition as a universal principle from which he unerringly deduces the existence of particular certitudes. The response given to the ontological argument can be given here. It would be an illicit transit from the logical to the real order. The certitudes treated by Newman are based upon real apprehensions experienced by a person. For a detailed discussion of this matter see pp. 29, 85-7 above. Certitudes resulting from these experiences are, as we shall see later in this chapter, generally true. A conviction of what is not true is termed a false, mistaken, putative, wrong, supposed or so-called certitude. Its object is an error. We might also note that while it is possible to speak of a true or a false certitude, it would be redundant to speak of a true certainty, and a contradiction to speak of a false certainty, since although certitude is a state of the mind, certainty is a quality of propositions. GA, pp. 221 - 58.
identified with infallibility. This would be inconceivable. Through a series of rhetorical questions he proves his point. If we are to insist upon certitude in every case being free from the possibility of error, he then asked:

Is certitude then ever possible without the attendant gift of infallibility? Can we know what is right in one case, unless we are secured against error in any? Further, if one man is infallible, why is he different from his brethren? unless he is distinctly marked out for the prerogative? Must not all men be infallible by consequence, if any man is to be considered to be certain?240

Thus Newman makes a clear distinction between certitude and infallibility. Infallibility "is a faculty or gift, and relates, not to some one truth in particular, but to all possible propositions in a given subject-matter."241 Infallibility does not allow for any failure in regard to truth.

This he would not claim for his assent to certitude.

If indeed I claimed to be infallible, one failure would shiver my claim to pieces; but I may claim to be certain of the truth to which I have already attained, though I should arrive at no new truths in addition as long as I live.242

Newman explains how his assent to certitude can be fallible. Such errors are the result of faulty reasoning.

It must be recollected that certitude is a deliberate assent given expressly after reasoning. If then my certitude is unfounded it is the reasoning that is in fault, not my assent to it. It is the law of my mind to seal up the conclusions to which ratiocination has brought me, by that formal assent which I have called a certitude. I could indeed have withheld my assent, but I should have acted against my nature, had I done so when there was what I considered a proof; and I did only what was fitting, what was

240GA, pp. 222-3.  
241Ibid., p. 224.  
242Ibid., p. 227.  
incumbent on me, upon those existing conditions, in giving it.\textsuperscript{243}

Though the idea of an erroneous certitude should perhaps have discomfitted Newman, we find that it did not. Instead, he views the situation positively. He reminds us that even after ailing from the discovery of a putative certitude there can be certitude in the process. He points out, "Because I have been mistaken in my first certitude, may I not at least be certain that I have been mistaken?"\textsuperscript{244} Here Newman is stating that even an erroneous certitude can eventually reside at the oasis of true certitude. It is the certitude that occurs with the recognition of the error.

In addition to faulty reasoning he offers another explanation for an erroneous certitude. This would be a failure to reason at all, and thus to assent arbitrarily.

He wrote, "The multitude of men confuse together the probable, the possible, and the certain, and apply these terms to doctrines and statements almost at random. They only assert."\textsuperscript{245} The above indicates that the word "certitude" has several uses. This is described in the chart below.

Although Newman grants that there can be putative certitudes, he claims that this factor should not be a motive for relinquishing our hopes of attaining genuine certitudes and growing in them. He states that such errors should induce us to reason with more circumspection. He wrote, "Errors in reasoning are lessons and warnings not to give up reasoning, but to reason with greater caution."\textsuperscript{246}

\textsuperscript{243}GA, p. 229  \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{244}Ibid., p. 231.
\textsuperscript{245}Ibid., p. 234.  \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{246}Ibid., p. 230.
Schematic of Certitudes

I. A. Correct Reasoning
   B. True Conclusion
   C. Simple Assent
   D. Complex Assent--Reflection
   E. True Certitude regarding I. B.

II. A. Erroneous*Reasoning
    B. False Conclusion
    C. Simple Assent
    D. Complex Assent--Reflection
    E. False Certitude regarding II.B.

III. A. No Reasoning
     B. True Proposition
     C. Simple Assent
     D. Complex Assent--Reflection
     E. Pseudo "Certitude" regarding III B. Right by accident.

IV. A. No Reasoning
    B. False Proposition
    C. Simple Assent
    D. Complex Assent--Reflection
    E. False "Certitude" regarding IV.B.

*Erroneous reasoning means that either the premises are false or the logical process is incorrect. This may be due to biased antecedent probabilities, i.e. prejudicial expectations.
He believed that as man proceeds through life he will continue to acquire more certitudes in spite of occasional errors. In substance he is stating that "the abuse of a process should not prevent its use."\textsuperscript{247}

He compared errors in certitude to clocks that give the wrong time. Just as we do not dispense with clocks, but attempt to correct them, so do we not abandon our quest for certitude. He wrote:

The sense of certitude may be called the bell of the intellect; and that it strikes when it should not is a proof that the clock is out of order, no proof that the bell will be untrustworthy and useless, when it comes to us adjusted and regulated from the hands of the clock-maker.\textsuperscript{248}

While all this may seem to have deviated from our point at issue, it really has not. For the crux of Newman's response to the problem of conflicting certitudes is that ordinarily the bell of the intellect, the sense of certitude, has a basis in solid reasoning and does strike at the correct times. This is a very important point. While Newman grants that due to a lack of proper reasoning or an utter neglect of reasoning, erroneous certitudes will arise, certitude generally is attained or in any case is attainable. Thus it can be stated that certitude as a general rule is correct in each of us. He would admit that if failures to gain certitude often happened, a person would always be doubtful about his ability to find serenity and finality in certitudes. He wrote:

If certitude in any matter be the termination of all doubt or fear about its truth, and an unconditional conscious adherence to it, it carries with it an inward assurance,\textsuperscript{247}\textsuperscript{248}

\textsuperscript{247}Ibid., p. 232. \textit{Usum non tollit abusus.}

\textsuperscript{248}GA, p. 233.
strong though implicit, that it shall never fail. Indefectibility almost enters into its very idea, enters into it at least so far as this, that its failure, if of frequent occurrence, would prove that certitude was after all and in fact an impossible act, and that what looked like it was a mere extravagance of the intellect. Truth would still be truth, but the knowledge of it would be beyond us and unattainable.249

It is of great importance, therefore, to realize that as a general rule, certitude does not fail; that failures of what was mistaken for certitude are clearly the exception; that the intellect, which is made for truth, can attain truth, and, having attained it, can keep it, can recognize it, and preserve the recognition.

F. The Atheist Replies

But if as Newman has stated there is objective certitude, and as a general rule a person can acquire indefectible certitude, would such a response be acceptable to an atheist? It would seem that the educated atheist's claim to a counter-certitude has not been answered at all by all these lengthly explanations.

Is it not possible for the atheist to say to Newman, as a general rule your certitudes are correct, but not in regard to God's existence? Could not the atheist say to Newman, "You possess a great number of certitudes about such subjects as your existence, the informations you receive from your sense and your memory, your knowledge of the external world, your awareness that England is an island, that you shall die, that man is a being in progress, but you still lack certitude about God's existence? Your certitude about God's existence is supposed, putative and false. Show me why your certitude is not provincial, prejudicial and thus

249 Ibid., p. 221. p. 255.
unconvincing."

G. Newman's Answer

To this segment of the objection Newman could respond that while his approach to certitude is personal he has made a sincere effort not to be provincial nor prejudicial. He would hope that he was convincing about his personal approach to God's existence since this truth is within a narrow area in which certitude is readily attainable. In this confined area, according to Newman, can be found certitudes about God's existence, our own existence, and the existence of the external world. In this area Newman would find it impossible to conceive the presence of false certitudes even by way of exception for here the evidence is overwhelming. Newman would not expect to be convincing about every certitude, but about these and other basic certitudes he would hope to be convincing.

At this juncture it is important to note that Newman admitted that there is a huge area of philosophical exploration in which there are opinions, probabilities, convictions, and certitudes. In that vast area it is possible at times to be in error about certitudes. In this large area it can be said that a person generally attains certitude. But also there is a much more constricted area, and within that area are general, basic and primary truths for human and divine knowledge.

He wrote:

Hence it is that--the province of certitude being so constricted, and that of opinion so large--it is common to call probability the guide of life. This saying, when properly explained, is true; however, we must not suffer ourselves to carry a true maxim to an extreme; it is far from true, if we so hold it as to forget that without first principles there can be no conclusions at all, and that thus probability does in some sense presuppose and require the existence of truths which are certain. Especially is the maxim untrue, in respect to the other great department of knowledge, the spiritual, if taken to support the
doctrine, that the first principles and elements of religion, which are universally received, are mere matter of opinion; though in this day, it is too often taken for granted that religion is one of those subjects on which truth cannot be discovered, and on which one conclusion is pretty much on a level with another. But on the contrary, the initial truths of divine knowledge ought to be viewed as parallel to the initial truths of secular: as the latter are certain, so too are the former.250

Newman has stated that even probabilities in some sense depend on certitudes, and that just as there are certitudes for the secular sciences, there are certitudes in the field of religion. What are these initial and basic certitudes? He specified what they are:

It is no probability that we are constantly receiving the informations and dictates of sense and memory, of our intellectual instincts, of the moral sense, and of the logical faculty. It is no probability that we receive the generalizations of science, and the great outlines of history. These are certain truths; and from them each of us forms his own judgments and directs his own course, according to the probabilities which they suggest to him, as the navigator applies his observations and his charts for the determination of his course. Such is the main view to be taken of the separate provinces of probability and certainty in matters of this world; and so, as regards the world invisible and future, we have a direct and conscious knowledge of our Maker, His attributes, His providences, acts, works, and will, from nature, and revelation.251

It will be noted that while Newman concedes that there is a large area of probability in philosophy, there still remains that narrow area in which along with other truths we have a direct and conscious knowledge of the dictates and commands of God in our conscience. It should be recalled that for Newman the awareness of God in conscience was as evident to him as his own existence and as certain. To deny the existence of God was comparable to a denial of his own existence. In his Apologia Pro Vita Sua he wrote:

And if I am asked why I believe in a God I answer that it is because I believe in myself, for I feel it impossible to believe in my own existence (and of that fact I am quite sure) without believing also in the existence of Him, who lives as a Personal, All-seeing, All-judging Being in my conscience. Now I dare say, I have not expressed myself with philosophical correctness, because I have not given myself to the study of what metaphysicians have said on the subject; but I think I have a strong true meaning in what I say which will stand examination. 252

He also stated that God's existence was for him as evident as the external world. He wrote, "We may, by means of that induction from particular experiences of conscience, have as good a warrant for concluding the Ubiquitous Presence of One Supreme Master, as we have, from parallel experience of sense, for assenting to the fact of a multiform and vast world material and mental." 253 He maintained that as we have our initial knowledge of the universe through sense, so do we in the first instance begin to learn about God's sanction from conscience which is indelible. So great was the evidence for God's existence that to deny the existence of God was comparable to a denial of the external world for Newman.

The atheist may still question whether there is a constricted area of certitudes in which the existence of God is found; he may still question whether there is such a direct, conscious and certain knowledge of God through conscience, but all that Newman can reply to these objections is that he has honestly and accurately related his own experience which

252 Apo., p. 18, p. 198; Cf. p. 241.
may or may not be the experience of others.

Here Newman is illustrating his contention that in the philosophy of religion, metaphysics and ethics, egotism is true modesty. He wrote:

In religious inquiry each of us can speak only for himself, and for himself he has a right to speak. His own experiences are enough for himself, but he cannot speak for others; he cannot lay down the law; he can only bring his own experiences to the common stock of psychological facts. He knows what has satisfied and satisfies himself; if it satisfies him, it is likely to satisfy others; if, as he believes and is sure, it is true, it will approve itself to others also, for there is but one truth. And doubtless he does find in fact, that, allowing for the difference of minds and of modes of speech, what convinces him, does convince other also.²⁵⁴

Newman speaks about his own experiences as the basis for his religious inquiry. The objection could be raised is he merely speaking about his own emotions and feelings? If his experience is merely appetitive it would be singular. No relations could be developed among his various experiences. His experience would then become nothing but a number of isolated concrete incidents. This, however, is not Newman's meaning for experience. It must be recalled that when Newman speaks about his experiences he is not only speaking about his sensations and feelings, but he is also speaking about a temper of the mind that acknowledges the authority of a vast number of intellectual procedures. While the probabilities—the ordered assemblage of concrete instances—are based on experience, they are under the direction of the illative sense which has an intellectual character. It is not easy to express this activity in words, nor to analyze it philosophically, but nevertheless the illative

²⁵⁴GA, 384-5. For a detailed discussion of this type of empiricism see pp. 36-46 above. Also note the intellectual aspect of the illative sense pp. 82-3 above. Finally note the relationships between informal and formal logic pp. 57-67, pp. 98-9 above.
sense organizes, correlates, and interprets the confluence of these concrete instances. The result is subject to an assent which may or may not be given. Whether the mind accepts or rejects this convergence of probabilities is the prerogative of the illative sense. Also it should be recalled that formal inference acts as a guide and a test for natural and informal inferences. Due to these intellectual procedures experience as considered by Newman goes beyond the singularity of the sensitive and the appetitive; it possesses the attributes of the common and the universal, and in that sense can be termed transpersonal.

H. Newman Admits his Limitations

Newman realized that he had embarked on an arduous philosophical journey. To the best of his ability he has recorded his experiences, his feelings, his reasoning processes, and his certitudes. He regretted that he was unable to be more helpful to others as they sincerely searched for certitude. He lamented the fact that he was unable to present a better essay on an aid to certitude. He confessed the great difficulties he had in writing his philosophy of certitude, and he expressed distress that his investigations were not all that he had hoped they would be. In a letter to his close friend Edward Bellasis he wrote:

Each book took a great deal of time and tried me very much. This (my work on certitude), has tried me most of all. I have written and rewritten it more times that I can count. I have now got up to the highest point--I mean, I could not do better did I spend a century on it, but then, it may be 'bad is the best.'

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Newman felt that he had made a good beginning in a significant field. He did not expect universal acceptance from his readers. He realized that there was more to be done. In describing his project he said, "It is like a military reconnaissance, or a party in undress, or a house in Committee; it is a preliminary opening of the ground, which must be done at one's ease, if it is done at all."256

Yet, despite his own reservations and acknowledged limitations, Newman has described a simple, direct, practical and accessible method for acquiring certitude about God's existence, and also for acquiring certitude about other basic truths.

I. Newman's Criterion for Certitude

The question finally may be raised, what criterion does Newman employ that enables him to be certain he is right and the atheist in error on the question of God's existence? How is he able to move from the many probabilities produced by the real apprehensions of the promptings in his conscience to an unconditional assent which then is sure it has the truth, not the contradictory proposition?

His criterion is not merely an examination of the inferences and the evidences which can lead to a complex assent and an actual certitude. Although a critical examination of the natural, informal and formal inferences is required in disputations, as we have seen in the dialogue with atheism, there must be a step beyond the scrutiny of the inferences, important though this be, since as we have stated, Newman has claimed that

there is a distinction between the conclusion resulting from an inference and an unconditional assent.

His faculty for moving from inference to assent, as we have seen in Chapter Four, is the illative sense. The illative sense is the giver of certitude and the norm. The estimation of the evidence in its entirety is the function of the illative sense. It is the illative sense that enables the individual mind to move from the probabilities, which are an ordered assemblage of concrete instances having the special quality of strengthening one another, to the unconditional acceptance or assent to God's existence. Thus it is not merely through faith, nor through opinion, that we affirm that God exists, but through implicit and explicit reasoning which is not always easy to express verbally since at a certain point language languishes.

It must be acknowledged that the illative sense functioning also in the atheist leads him to assent to the conclusion that there is no God. The atheist's and Newman's personal circumstances, experiences, and reasons may be analyzed and compared as we have attempted to do in this section, but eventually it is the illative sense in each which brings them to their respective verdicts. This, as far as I can find out in Newman's writings, is his final word on this matter. There is, one must finally admit, no other test and therefore no other resolution possible between these opposing certitudes.

257 For a detailed discussion of this matter see pp. 82-91.
It is the spontaneous and natural activity of the illative sense which is the final court of appeal for all certitudes in the concrete. In Chapter Five we have seen that the illative sense can be perfected and strengthened through an awareness and fidelity to God's intimations in conscience.\(^{258}\) It should also be acknowledged that if the promptings in conscience are rejected the illative sense can regress and be more likely to err. However, when speaking about acquiring certitude for God's existence, it would be illogical and improper to say that God strengthens and perfects the illative sense so that the organon can accurately function. This would be begging the question. In effect, we would be claiming that the illative sense enables us to have certitude that God exists, and God enables the illative sense to be reliable.

But once the existence of God has been established it is impossible to state that the divine commands and dictates communicated through conscience improve and strengthen the illative sense with regard to ethical certitudes and also non-ethical certitudes.

Newman would maintain that if a person were faithful to God's promptings in his conscience he would deepen and perfect his certitudes and enlarge the field of his certitudes. His life would not remain stagnant in skepticism nor paralyzed by doubts, but with each day there would be experiences that would challenge him to reexamine, to change or to enhance, to decrease or to expand his certitudes. He would continually acquire certitudes which possess the characteristics of rationality, serenity and indefectibility.

The pertinent and unavoidable question to be considered in the next

\(^{258}\)See pp. 113-20.
and concluding chapter is, what is the relevance of Newman's dialogues today? Are they dated? Are they simply a work of beauty for the scholars in English literature? Can they be of any assistance whatsoever in solving contemporary philosophical problems?

J. Philosophical Summation

According to Newman there are two reasons why the atheist will not assent to God's existence---evil in the world, and the claim that the world requires no further explanation. He remarks that because of evil in the world God is not infinitely good, and if he is not infinitely good, he is not God. To Newman this means that the atheist denies that a providential God can draw good out of evil. The atheist also claims that the world requires no further explanation. He denies that the sufficient reason for the world is God.

Although Newman sees a value in strict, formal proofs for God's existence, he does not answer the atheist with such complexities. He chooses the proof from conscience which not only leads us to God, but also enables us to understand our duties towards Him through its dictates and commands.

While the atheist also has dictates and commands in his conscience, he does not recognize God as their source. For the atheist conscience is a mere moral sense; its sanction is not God but merely a self-respect, personal dignity, a respect for social customs. This is an instance of the problem of conflicting certitudes.

What is the solution? Objective certitude could be denied, then the result would be that both the theist and the atheist could be correct. Newman, however, consistently claimed that there were objective certitudes.
Could Newman simply say that in the event of conflicting certitudes one proposition is subjectively and objectively true, while the other proposition is only subjectively true? This for Newman would be an evasion of the question, since the grave problematic is how can there be false certitudes when certitude is indefectible?

Newman admits that there are false certitudes. If there were no false certitudes, then every person would possess the gift of infallibility in all subjects. Certitude can be fallible because of faulty reasoning or an utter failure to reason. Such errors in reasoning should not cause a person to relinquish reason, but to reason with greater caution. Newman compared errors in certitude to clocks that strike at the wrong time. Clocks are not abandoned, but adjusted. The crucial point about such errors is that they are the exception. As a general rule certitude is indefectible. But could the atheist respond that he could accept the claim that certitude in general is indefectible, but one of its exceptions is the certitude about God's existence?

While Newman admits that there is a large area of philosophy in which there are opinions, probabilities, and convictions, God's existence is not found in that area. Certitude for God's existence is found within a constricted area in which there are general, basic, and primary truths for human and divine knowledge. In this area it is impossible to conceive of a false certitude. For Newman to deny God's existence was tantamount to a denial of his own existence and the existence of the external world.

If the atheist were to deny that there is such a constricted area in which some certitudes are readily attainable, Newman could only reply that he is relating his own experiences to the best of his ability.
A final question may be raised. What is Newman's criterion for moving from the many probabilities produced by a reflection on the real apprehensions of the promptings in his conscience to the unconditional assent to God's existence? It is the illative sense which estimates the evidence in its entirety and enables the individual mind to move from the probabilities, which are an ordered assemblage of concrete instances having the special quality of strengthening one another, to the unconditional assent to God's existence.

It must also be acknowledged that it is the illative sense in the atheist that leads him to assert to the conclusion that God does not exist. The circumstances, experiences, and the reasons of the theist and the atheist may be analyzed and compared, but it is the illative sense in each which brings them to their verdicts.

Once the existence of God has been established it is possible to state that the divine communications in conscience improves and strengthens the illative sense with regard to the recognition of ethical certitudes and certitudes even beyond the field of ethics. In the final chapter we shall consider the current relevance of Newman's philosophy.
It was Newman's intention to respond to Liberalism which holds that demonstration or formal logic is the only basis for any certitude, and that there is no basis for certitude in religion. Newman has shown that the processes of ratiocination involve more than formal logic. There is also informal and natural logic. It is through this larger view of logic that a basis for certitude is found in religion, and such a basis can be extended to all fields of knowledge.

Today the problem of certitude is still with us. In fact it may be more of a problem now than in the time of Newman. Today there are thinkers who maintain that in religion there can be no certitude, and some will even go so far as to accept fideism, and thus really deny the requirement of any certitudes for religion.

Currently too there are still some philosophers who will claim that formal logic or demonstration is the only road to certitude, and there are still others who accept the position that certitude can not be found anywhere. For them the only certitude is their ceaseless claim that there is no certitude. Thus either positively or negatively all contemporary philosophers are concerned with this basic issue of certitude.

As we have seen Newman answered this philosophy of "Liberalism" through his dialogues with Locke, Butler, Aristotle, and the voice of God in conscience.

In these dialogues we noted agreement and disagreement with each
philosopher. Newman had the rare ability of entering into the mind of a philosopher, understanding the crux of his position, appropriating what he could accept, and then rectifying and restating the philosopher's position in accordance with his own views.

A. Locke

We noted how Newman in his quest for certitude could agree with Locke's direct, immediate, simple, and personal approach to empirical truths. But the personal empiricism of Newman meant far more than the limited and esoteric experience of Locke. Newman saw the need for studying all of the activities of the living mind. He explored the cognitive operations of the whole man.

Empiricism for Newman meant all of the sensitive, imaginative, and intellectual processes; it meant consciousness and conscientiousness. This extensive empiricism could not be reduced to how a man ought to think on Locke's lofty level, but rather how he actually thought. He refused to be manipulated by a priori or authoritarian assumptions. It was through his wider empirical investigations that Newman found that there was a definite difference between inference and assent.

Unfortunately in Locke's philosophy and in much of our current philosophy, the act of assent is frequently forgotten, ignored, or identified with inference. Newman examined both inferences and assents. He observed that men could have inferences without assents, and retain assents about forgotten inferences. Thus Newman showed that there was a difference between inference and assent. He was aware that after a review of a number of inferences, we finally seal up our ratiocinational labors with a new and distinct act, an assent to a definite conclusion.
On this subject he found it necessary to disagree with Locke who claimed that there were degrees of assent; that each assent was secured to an inference, and only with the conscious and verbal expression of formal inference could there be the assent of absolute certainty. From his own empirical observations Newman knew that the average person, untutored in formal logic, and, in fact, incapable of mastering its intricacies and subtle patterns, does validly arrive at certitudes.

Newman believed that Locke demanded too much from mankind, especially from the ordinary person. Philosophy for Newman was not a mere classroom discipline. Although he was at home in the university and cherished the wisdom he found in books, he recognized the need of additional data—in particular the data acquired through the study of living minds.

He claimed that all of us live with a number of philosophical certitudes produced by the activities of our living minds. While certainty is the product of strict formal demonstrations, certitudes are the results of informal and natural inferences. The objects of these informal and natural inferences are the probabilities and eventually certitude is found through a convergence of these probabilities.

**B. Butler**

With Butler, Newman could agree that probabilities are the guide of life; but he would not employ the word "probabilities" in the same sense. Probabilities according to Newman do not mean propositions which are likely to be true. In the concrete they are based on facts, on which a "higher logic" is to be exercised in order to arrive at viable certitudes. This "higher logic" is produced by the illative sense. Under the discernment
of the illative sense the probabilities are ordered and related so that an interpretative certitude is attained, and if this interpretative certitude is reflected upon, an actual certitude is discovered.

It is possible to have a real assent to a truth, but to remain unconscious or only semi-conscious of the reasons for the assent. This is an interpretative certitude. After a reflection upon the evidences and the reasons an actual certitude is attained. With this reflection I can not only say that I know, but I know that I know.

While the results of such mental activity are evident, there is an element of mystery in the movements of the unconscious and the semi-conscious mind. From the operation of the unconscious and the semi-conscious mind, natural and informal inferences occur, and a basis for certitude is found. The results are evident, but how this occurs is difficult to state. It should be recalled that Newman was more concerned with these mental phenomena in facto esse than in fieri.

C. Aristotle

With Aristotle, Newman could agree about the grandeur of formal logic, but he also perceived its limitations. While it can be a guide for informal and natural inferences, it assumes its premises, and it does not present certitude in the concrete. Newman had but little enthusiasm for formal, impersonal, and abstract procedures. Although he recognized the value of notional apprehensions and assents, he had a persistent predilection for real apprehensions and assents. He feared that if we become immoderately dedicated to abstractions, we may fly too high and become oblivious to both the time and place of our departure and to our destiny.

He was not merely concerned with propositions; his constant concern
was with their real objects. This is why he placed such intense emphasis on experience and feelings which are involved in the probabilities. He wanted to attain certitude in the concrete, in the here and now, in the existential objects.

How can man obtain certitude in the concrete? This was Newman's constant concern. Certitude in the concrete is discovered through the operation of the illative sense. While Newman compared the illative sense to the phronesis of Aristotle, he goes beyond him. Aristotle seemed to limit phronesis to the attainment of ethical certitudes. The scope of the illative sense, however, is all fields of knowledge. The ultimate court of appeal for any certitude, principle, assumption or conclusion is the illative sense.

The illative sense can move the mind to assent to a false certitude but in general it is indefectible. In regard to God's existence and basic certitudes Newman excludes any possibility or error. For him to deny God's existence was comparable to a denial of his own existence, or to a denial of the external world.

D. Conscience

But what assurance do we have that the illative sense can produce reliable certitudes? Newman at this point avoids the bottomless pit of subjectivism, skepticism, and relativism through his consistent emphasis on conscience as the crux of human existence. God's voice in conscience is the guide and monitor for the illative sense.

If a person is faithful and honest to the promptings of the voice of God in his conscience, his illative sense, which orders a multitude of probabilities to form an assent, will be perfected and strengthened, not
only in depth but also in extension. God's promptings in conscience can encourage and improve the illative sense when it is acting properly, and correct it when it is errant.

It is conscience that informs us of our duty to accept our mental powers as God has created them, helps us to arrive at correct ethical judgments, and constantly reminds us of our obligation to be open to certitudes even in non-ethical areas. To blot out conscience and God from philosophy would be to deny a person human dignity in its full sense. It would be tantamount to taking the spring from out of the year.  

Conscience itself working with the illative sense can receive help from dialogues with others, and as it continues to move towards perfection, it cannot help but live in the expectation of a formal revelation from God.

Conscience continually urges us to retain a reverence for truth, to search for any sign of truth and for certitudes, and to accept valid conclusions. It constrains us to eschew the inclination to avoid proven conclusions. It urges us not to become caught in a stringent system, nor to become enclosed in a revolving door of narrow certitudes. New certitudes are usually challenging, but they should be examined conscientiously in order to attain a more complete and perfect vision of life.

259While it is true that an atheist can display keen and brilliant judgments about some ethical problems, his certitudes will lack the stable basis, and the permanence which can only occur when a person is responsive to the promptings of God in conscience. On the other hand a religious fanatic has an intense devotion to a restricted cause, but he is uncritical of his position. He is unreceptive to the voice of God in his conscience which would open his mind to new certitudes and enable him to have a more complete and integrated view of life.
Thus it can be appreciated that among the hallmarks of Newman's philosophy are its completeness and consistent balance. His philosophy is not limited to thought; it is not limited to existence; it is not limited to action; it is not limited to consciousness; it is not limited to impressions. It is all of these and more. Newman's philosophy can be described as the total man using all of his powers to understand and to explain reality in its fullness. It is the total experience of the total person. It is the full philosophy of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Newman's philosophy includes the experiential and the intellectual; the activity of man and the activity of God; the importance of language and the limits of language; the anchor of the objective and the dynamics of the subjective; the notionalism of reason and the realization of the imagination; the grandeur of the thought and the need for action; the wonders of consciousness and the influences of the semi-conscious and the unconscious; the supremacy of conscience and the treasures of traditions; the need for stability and the recognition of development; the reverence and the security of the old, and the enchantment and the excitement of the new.

In an age of skepticism, insecurity, confusion, frustration, randomness and doubt he has presented through his extensive and profound philosophy, a path to certitude for God's existence and for the basic and crucial values involving our friendship with Him and with others.

While Newman offers a method for acquiring philosophical certitudes, he saw the futility of attempting to construct a complete and closed system. He understood the limitations of his work and the need for others
to continue his investigations. He recognized the need for a constant philosophical development in the here and the now—in the existential order. He understood that our lives though built upon reliable and solid certitudes, are lives that are always in a dynamic state of growth as we are being led on to additional certitudes by the Kindly Light of conscience.

This he expressed when he wrote:

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

I was not ever thus, nor pray'd that Thou
Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path, but now
Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone:
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

June 16, 1833.260

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Articles, Essays and Dissertations


Reviews of the Grammar of Assent by various anonymous authors:

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