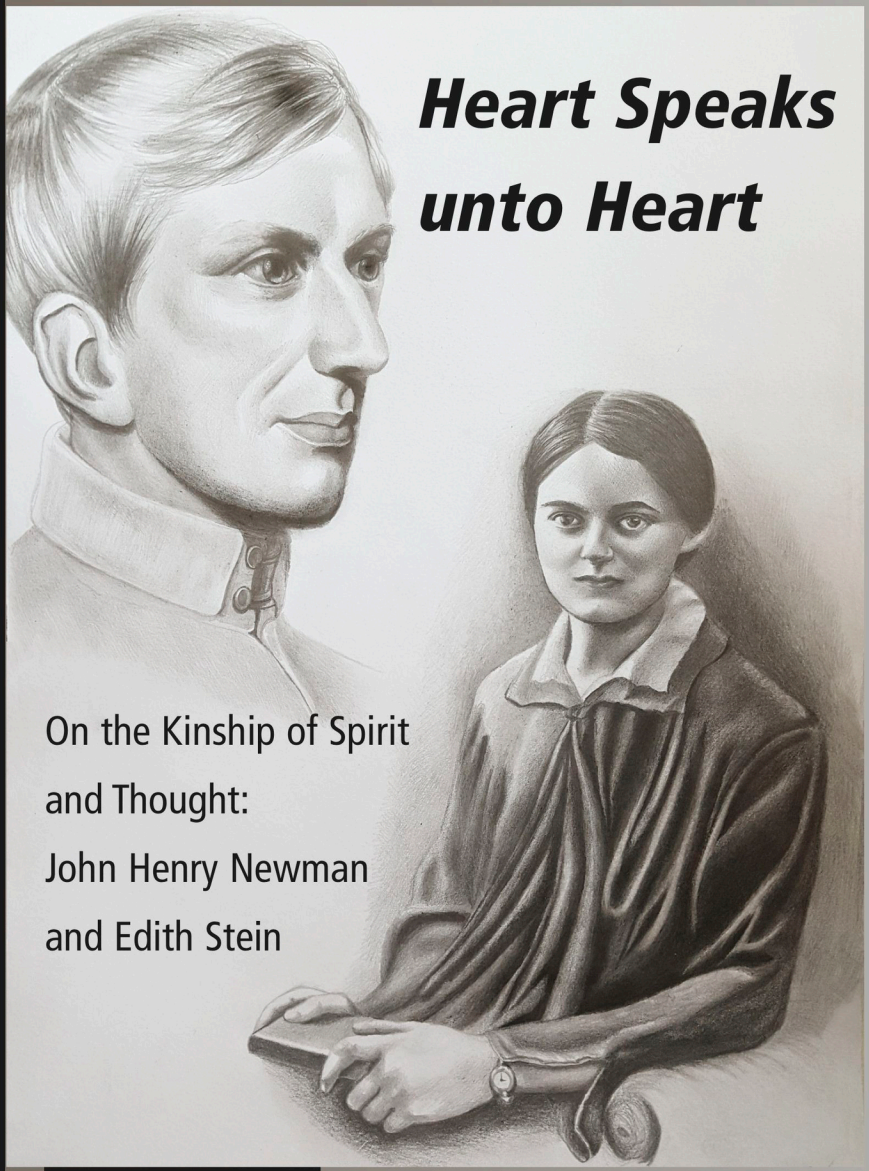
Jan Kłos

Heart Speaks unto Heart



On the Kinship of Spirit and Thought: John Henry Newman and Edith Stein

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By

Jan Kłos

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Preface

Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers … Thus reads the genealogy of the most eminent family in human history, the genealogy of Jesus Christ, as found in the pages of the Gospel according to St Matthew.[1] Genealogy defines the place, time, and development of individual lives, of the faces that look back at us from old photos, redolent of the past and stern, sepia gazes. They come to life when animated by the memories of the living. Children lean over the photos and ask their parents about their ancestors, grandfathers, great grandfathers, their customs, likes and dislikes, what made them happy and what made them sad. At such moments the past assumes the form of an urgent question begging an answer: why am I what I am? or: why am I the way I am?

It is good to remember one's own ancestors who shaped us, who stood by our side when we made efforts to take our first steps or uttered our first words; who told us what is good and what is bad. I remember very well my grandfather with his ever-present pipe dangling between his lips, as he would sit in an armchair with his hands tightly clasped on his walking stick. He would tap it regularly and hum various melodies under his nose. I remember his palms carved with wrinkles and lined with blue veins that bulged and pulsated under the thin skin. He hummed the melody of the passing of time. Like an eternal sage he would gaze into the distance.

Aside from a genealogy that results from natural family ties, we also have genealogies of the spirit and thoughts. We observe them in literary currents and trends, schools of painting, sculpture or architecture. The Middle Ages would draw on antiquity, the Renaissance on the Middle Ages, Romanticism on antiquity and the Renaissance. Shakespeare would draw on ancient drama; likewise, romantic writers drew on this drama and Shakespeare's own endeavours. Plato was Socrates' disciple, and Aristotle spent twenty years as a student at Plato's academy; St Thomas Aquinas adapted Aristotle's philosophy to Catholic doctrine. This heritage can be positive, and then it creates followers, or negative, giving birth to opponents. In the area of the spirit we encounter very powerful influences and ties between disciples and teachers as well. The prophets of the Old Testament had their followers, whom they guided and to whom they taught faith, dedication and unshaken confidence in God. Elijah brought up Elisha. The bereaved Elisha watched his master disappear in a

1 See Mt 1, 1:17.

flaming chariot and be taken up to Heaven on a whirlwind. Christ shaped His disciples. The abandoned Disciples watched their Master as He ascended into Heaven. These are telling signs for the generations to come: remember where your Master has gone and do what He has taught you, as this is the surest way to personal fulfilment.

In this book, I would like to devote my attention to two figures in the area of spirit and thought whose ideas and impact and, above all, their lives, have affected the history of modern Europe: Saint John Henry Newman (1801–1890) and Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein, 1891–1942). Their heritage is again embedded in the intellectual landscape and spiritual inspirations of what has preceded them. Newman, for his part, owed much to the influence of primitive Christianity, ancient philosophy (especially Aristotle), the Alexandrian School of theology (with Athanasius at the head), and British empiricism; he would look up to Christian antiquity and the figure of St Philip Neri (1515–1595) to assuage the turmoil of his inner struggle. Edith Stein first found the gratification of her thirst for knowledge in phenomenology, and then fixed her eyes on St Augustine, St Francis, St John of the Cross, and St Teresa of Avila. It must be noted that they had both gone through a period of rationalistic delusion and even verged on the scepticism and indifference of their eras.

An opportunity for such an inter-generational discourse was Stein's encounter with Newman's writings in which she found consolation. She was commissioned with their translation by the Jesuit priest, philosopher, and theologian Fr Erich Przywara (1889–1972). In a letter to her Polish colleague Roman Ingarden (1893–1970), Edith Stein herself reports: "For the last year, I used these fragments of time, during which my own work is out of the question, to translate Cardinal Newman's *The Idea of a University* for the Theatiner-Verlag in Munich. […] The translation gave me pure pleasure. And in addition, it is very good for me to come in close contact with such a mind as Newman—something that comes along with the translation process. His entire life was a search for religious truth and led him, inevitably, to the Catholic Church."[2] Thus, something that was supposed to be a mere intellectual challenge—as any translation usually is—became her personal experience. And, to use Newmanian parlance, the formal and notional level of the language barrier imperceptibly turned into a genuine communing with its author.

2 E. Stein, *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, trans. H. C. Hunt, Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2014, 208.

The main reason why I decided to embark on combining John Henry Newman with Edith Stein was not only the fact that the Carmelite saint translated the Cardinal's texts, but primarily because they both stood firmly by what they had personally discovered as the truth of their persons: Newman in his Anglican Britain, in which Roman Catholicism was long-held in disrespect as the seat of the gravest of errors, decided to leave his cosy academic position in response to the call of his inner duty; Stein left her Jewish ancestry for Christianity and triumphed amid the inhuman national-socialist terror. Indeed, there is something triumphant in her posture as she stands on the train during her last journey to the concentration camp of Auschwitz. She stood there — and eye-witnesses testified to it — as if she were carved out of some solid matter crushed by the overwhelming sadness and inflicted injustice, and yet, at the same time, untouched by what was going on outside and in a mysterious way triumphant; a participant of the here and now and, simultaneously, a being from another reality. Reposed and majestic in her innermost certitude, Newman might say.

They are exemplars of personal prowess and dignity. The famous Carmelite was an academic scholar with a doctor's degree in philosophy. Therefore, it is all the more interesting to see how this professional philosopher should have been inspired by someone who was from outside the academic world, who directed all his intellectual endeavours to spiritual growth. It is true that Edward Sillem, the editor of Newman's texts published as *Philosophical Notebook*, acquiesces that "Newman has indeed a philosophy to give that is at least of interest [...],"[3] but the famous Briton did not seek a philosophy in the first place, rather a living principle that could become the driving motor of his life.

This is what is meant by living in the context, by being at one with oneself. Edith Stein, in a sense, also had such a personal approach to philosophy, i.e. the way to find the truth. Only after her personal conversion did she realise that this quest for the truth would require a more personal effort and commitment. Both Newman and Stein illustrate the important fact that, despite our common nature as humans, we have our most unique and incommunicable tasks to fulfil.

The choice of such prolific writers as John Henry Newman and Edith Stein must evidently be mitigated by a realistic selection of the material at hand. Otherwise, the unwary author could create too many expectations which he would never be able to satisfy. Newman's lifetime spanned almost the whole

3 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman*, Louvain: Nauwelaerts, vol. 1, 1969, 3. (Further referred to as *The Philosophical Notebook*).

century. He expressed himself in sermons, learned essays, theological treaties, letters, poems, and even novels. Edith Stein wrote philosophical and spiritual works, letters, and translations. Anyone who has decided to write about such authors must confine themselves to certain topics and omit others. In my book, I would like to focus primarily on Newman's theory of knowledge in the area of the phenomenology of religion, how we reach certitude and recognize the borders of *ratio*, the importance of the person, and Stein's conception of primeval life, the knowledge of the heart, and the science of the Cross. Both Newman and Stein stressed the importance of treating the person with their complete endowment, i.e. the personal capacity to know, a capacity that surpasses the limitations of intellectual cognition.

They were both, gradually, coming ever closer to the recognition of the mystery of the believer. He is called upon to assent to the truth that surpasses the confines of his rational cognition. The person is, therefore, a special point of reference, a being who can learn what cannot be demonstrated and what must be left untold. The person can learn the way of science and accept in faith the winding path of mystery. It is fascinating that the more Newman and Stein came to know, the less they felt obliged to talk about it. Newman found a secluded place in the Catholic Church; Stein embraced the cross as her last relief. I used the word "secluded" here, but let me be more specific, for secluded does not mean free from any trouble. Not in the least; secluded here means: I rejoice in the fact that I am in the place where I should be. And one further thing I find in common between them — they both remained faithful to themselves in a special way, despite their revolutionary, and incomprehensible to external observers, decisions. Not in the way that they were obstinate, stubbornly holding to their private views; on the contrary, they were open to radical transformations once they recognized the urge of the truth, the personal call of duty. Since they did not cherish any inflated ambitions to convert people nor intended to save the world, and believed, rather, that their individual beings were in need of conversion and were more precious than proselytising on behalf of some tenets, even though they might "objectively" be true, they remained faithful to, and at peace with, those who surrounded them. Newman left his Anglican circles, but at the same time remained with them at a higher level, at the level of the supreme value of personal dignity and of exemplary truth to oneself. Stein left the members of her Jewish milieu, but never stopped respecting them; paradoxically, she valued them even more after her conversion than before. After her conversion she came to respect the supreme value of each individual human being, and of personal experience that is individually granted as a gift and challenge. I think that this is their common trait, a thesis I am going to prove throughout this book. Obedience to a well-informed

conscience may not endear us to other people, as we make decisions they do not approve of, but it brings us closer to them as real persons.

The two minds were engaged in a symbolical conversation; Edith Stein met Newman through his writings as she embarked on translating them. It is my chief ambition to depict Newman and Stein — to use the words of Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz from her *Introduction* to Edith Stein's *Letters to Roman Ingarden*—as "someone much in demand."[4]

Their separate paths are marked with some key issues. Each book is naturally the author's own choice on which to focus. Let us take a closer look, therefore, at the problem of knowledge (implicit and explicit), the question of assent (notional and real), personal certitude, the language of the cross, and, in general, the solitary personal path. I think that both Newman and Stein focused in their intellectual quest on the terms mentioned here in order to understand the human being and his actions; and they both realized that the person cannot be examined in the same way we examine inanimate objects, that a considerable amount of knowledge must remain untold. Therefore, ultimately, when words abound but senses are wanting, there is their readiness to remain silent. The amazing and, indeed, miraculous fact is that being faithful to oneself has a much more inherent value than forgetting about oneself and being entirely committed to socializing. This faithfulness to oneself has nothing to do with the egoism of the age of privacy or the gradually encroaching age of mass culture. Quite the opposite, Newman and Stein are illuminating examples that every person needs, first and foremost, to fulfil their own personal task, i.e. to carry himself forward through the meanderings of daily life strengthened by his personal integrity, no matter what others' expectations are, or what kind of decorum demands are formulated.

I have said that both Newman and Stein illustrated what we deem to be especially important, i.e. a synthesis of the multifaceted human being. Intellect and morality, faith and reason, should go smoothly together, united in one being. Faith and reason in their mutual effort can guide a harassed being through a complicated forest of emotions, often at variance with what is due, for example inclinations and disinclinations, predilections and animosities, talents and weaknesses, acts of loyalty and betrayal, memories and hopes, expectations and regrets, images and concepts, towards the clearing of certitude; Newman always has in mind the person in concrete circumstances, swayed by hesitations and doubts, and yet capable of accomplishing certitude. The individual daily life does often resemble a journey through a densely overgrown and

4 See H.-B. Gerl-Falkovitz, *Introduction* in: Stein, *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, 2.

barely lit ravine, with no sign with which to guide one's way. As there are few things we apprehend completely, let alone understand perfectly, or recognize by virtue of clear intellectual inspection, we need to muster the faith of the whole of our person; we need to believe even in simple daily affairs, for we take for granted many things rather examine them in detail. We need the faith of a consolidated human being, a faith animated by genuine assent to the Christian tenets and emboldened by personal effort. Both Newman and Stein testify to the mystery of the person who, despite conceptual difficulties and cognitive incommensurability, can apprehend the truth and turn it into his or her guiding principle and driving motor. They themselves were true witnesses to that mystery. And despite their different individual and historical contexts, they managed to fulfil their personal calling.

My principal method in this book, as in all other works I have written so far, is the same. It is to interpret and reinterpret what material there is in order to find some practical guidelines for an interpretation of our present condition. Each age begs for a solution to its mystery, of the way people live and why they live in such a manner. Perhaps it is a truism to say that philosophers have always sought to answer some fundamental questions, and their aspirations have only partly been satisfied. And as philosophy aspires to provide satisfactory answers to the most general and vital issues, its answers indeed resist the flow of time, but the issues must be ever anew taken up and engaged with.

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My sincere gratitude goes out to many people. I would like to thank Prof. Andrew Breeze from the Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona) for introducing me to many Newman scholars and for his interesting insights that opened my mind. I would like to thank Prof. John Crosby from the Franciscan University of Steubenville for sharing with me his books on Newman, for reading the manuscript and guiding my thought to areas I had not hitherto considered. My great thanks go to Dr. Mark Ô Fionnáin from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin for suggesting corrections to the text. And I would like to thank the heroes of my book for their miraculous support throughout my work.

CHAPTER 1

A Gloss to the Biographies

They that are whole can heal others [...].

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

•••

Only the person who renounces self-importance,,
who no longer struggles to defend or assert himself,
can be large enough for God's boundless action.

EDITH STEIN

•••

John Henry Newman lived in the turbulent period of the nineteenth century that saw the rise of socialism and communism, in an era that made people look with awe at the encroachment of science onto the time-honoured territories of, for example, religion (let it suffice to mention the theory of evolution that had seemingly undermined the hitherto beliefs). When analysing the nineteenth century, one cannot forget about two, apparently contradictory, trends. On the one hand, there are the high hopes awakened by scientific endeavours which, in turn, give rise in the romantic era to popular robustness, in political life characterised by the ideas of expansionism and nationalism; but, on the other, it is a time when the human psyche often feels at a loss, when it suffers from emotional inadequacy and fragility. It senses an incongruity amid this inhuman technological milieu of the "brave new world." The modern mind, deprived of the traditional fulcrums of stability and armed solely with individual choice, but no criteria as to which choices are good and which are bad, loses its course like a ship tossed about on a stormy sea. The theory of evolution added momentum to this feeling, especially since the authoritative voice of the institutional Church was long wanting.[1] The British biographer of Newman, Meriol Trevor (1919–2000), rightly observes that it "so shocked and

1 Charles Darwin published his *Origin of Species* in 1859.

alarmed the majority of Christians, who thought it contradicted the truth of the Bible," but Newman was in no way disturbed, for "he had been pondering his own evolutionary theory—of the development of ideas, and especially those ideas which activate the Christian society within the larger society of mankind."[2] One English writer and newspaper columnist has said of Newman "that he was the only Victorian intellectual of the first rank who had not been disabused of Christian faith by the theories of Charles Darwin [...]."[3]

Newman had long been reconciled with the idea of evolution, for the concept of growth, and its attendant changes, were of utmost importance for him. He himself had experienced it in his own life and had long adopted a dynamic view of the world. Obviously, the dynamic nature of life must respect its constant ontic factor. If an octogenarian places in front of him two photos of himself: one aged five and the other aged eighty, he will naturally say: I have changed, but at the same time he must say: it's me, it's the *same* person. Therefore, should one try to stop and scrutinize some moments from one's life, forgetful of its entire continuity or in isolation from others, one will surely fail to understand the person. If growth is the essence of human life, as Newman would often repeat, there is no point in directing one's attention on a selected episode. Such a procedure may be true for the biologist who focuses his microscope on a selected strain of bacteria. But human life in its entirety cannot be fragmented into tiny and disconnected pieces, but should be considered in its integrated whole, if we seek to understand individual human actions.

All of these revolutionary modifications in the scientific picture of the world had started with the birth of modernity. Descartes (together with Galileo and Bacon) broke with the medieval world of spirits and ushered in the mechanical world of physics and chemistry; the world came to be understood as having been constructed rather than found. Just like then, so now in the romantic era it was a task for great minds to effect a religious, moral, and emotional readjustment. We are describing here a world of disenchantment in which "there is no more ontological room" for "demons and spirits." The human being is "in a sense super-buffered."[4] The decomposition of the world in which man and his earth had lost their central position must have been restored at a higher level.

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2 M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, London: MacMillan & Co Ltd, 1962, 4. In one of his prayers, Newman acquiesces: "Through you the earth was brought into its present state, and was matured to be a habitation for man" (J. H. Newman, *A Newman Prayer Book*, Birmingham: The Oratory, 1990, 7). The phrases that the earth "was brought into its present state" and "was matured" undoubtedly suggest a certain evolutionary and temporal development.

3 See S. L. Jaki, *Newman's Challenge*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000, 265.

4 C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, 136.

In the nineteenth century, the task was even more urgent, for the circulation of information was much faster due to the development of the press.

The nineteenth century is a fascinated period to study. I call it a laboratory, in which the intellectual and universal tenets of the Enlightenment clashed with the personal and idiosyncratic elements of Romanticism, creating a very dynamic amalgam. Some elements were modified, some eliminated, and still others formed a unique composite. The advent of Romanticism did not mean a total or immediate permeation by entirely new elements which began to dominate from the start. It was rather a gradual process in which the two rushing currents—the intellect and imagination—flowed side by side, erupting from time to time with their menacing rumbles.

At the dawn of modernity we have two proposals: Cartesian disengaged reason and Locke's punctual self. The first one puts forward the duality of the body and spirit and a distanced relation to the world of the senses; the second carries further this mechanization of the world. In short, the point is that "a human agent [...] is able to remake himself by methodical and disciplined action."[5] Disengagement and rational control became the main driving forces of modernity. In this new approach, the human being employs his instrumental reason to create himself. Disengagement here undoubtedly refers to us being non-judgmental, i.e. to suspend our judgment about reality. We thereby objectify reality and deprive it of its normative force. Reality no longer appeals to us in its aspect of being good or bad, but only as an object of curiosity, an object of investigation and experimentation.

Because Descartes had transferred our experience onto our mind, our secondary qualities are ideas in the mind caused by the properties of the organ or object. We want to gain control over our reservoir of ideas. Therefore "disengagement involves our going outside the first-person stance and taking on board some theory, or at least some supposition, about how things work."[6] Descartes then proposes what Taylor calls radical reflexivity. It is necessary for the reconstruction of the conceptual interior of the mind. Procedural reason is employed, that which suggests the right method. In the face of such conclusions, Newman proposes the restoration of the first-person stance instead of objectification. For Newman, the first-person stance cannot be objectified. Taylor's words, that "it is not always true that the road to surer knowledge lies through disengagement and procedural reason [...]," fit well with Newman's

5 C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, 159.

6 Ibid., 163.

7 Ibid.

message that—if I may paraphrase the previous quote—the road to surer knowledge lies through the person. Indeed, Taylor's criticism continues: "an epistemology which privileges disengagement and control isn't self-evidently right."[8] Newman, for his part, believed in a universe of meaningful order rather than in a mechanism, and God was the foundation of this order.

The main purpose of personal growth is to accomplish certitude. Newman defines certitude, of which we shall be talking at length, as "a deliberate assent given expressly after reasoning."[9] It is true that very often we give assent to things which later on, on reflection, turn out to be false. This fact, however, does not nullify the main purpose, i.e. that it is worthwhile to strive after certitude. What is the difference between Cartesian certainty, when confronted by clear and distinct ideas, and Newmanian certitude? To my mind, the main difference is that, for Descartes, certainty comes, in a sense, from without. I have written "in a sense" because we know that the French philosopher based certainty on innate ideas, but we must remember that these innate ideas have nothing to do with the person's innermost life in Newman's sense. Rather, they respond to the inherent logic of a given proposition that strikes the mind and tolerates no objection; for Newman, certitude results from a personal process, it is the personal response to a given truth. The personal response provides a broader capacity for apprehension. It is not entirely dependent on the accurate rigidity of a proposition. If Descartes sought certitude *more geometrico* (by mode of geometry), Newman sought it *more personae* (by mode of person). Therefore, innate ideas primarily do not belong to the person and his growth, but to the intersubjective structures of logical thinking, whereas Newman sought to ground knowledge on the person and what belongs to the person.

For Descartes, extension and motion became the fundamental reality in the world. Nature became a machine in his world, and spiritual significance was banished. As the American philosopher, John Herman Randall (1899–1980), notes in his classic text on the history of philosophy, the Age of Enlightenment and Reason "led on naturally to the achievements of its predecessor, evolution and relativity."[10] The nineteenth century added Evolution to Nature and Reason, the leading ideas of the previous age. Locke sought to discover a social physics. He "stands as apologist and heir of the great seventeenth-century struggles for constitutional liberties and rights and toleration."[11] Newman, in

8 Ibid., 164.

9 J. H. Newman, *An Aid in a Grammar of Assent,* Garden City: Image Books, 1955, 186. (Further in the text abbreviated as *Grammar of Assent* or *Grammar*).

10 J. H. Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind. A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926, 254.

11 Ibid., 254.

the nineteenth century, stood amid the remnants of this revolution in beliefs and habits of thought. He was not a revolutionary in any sense; nevertheless, we may still call his proposals revolutionary—revolutionary in the philosophical and theological sense.

When these rumbles had reached the twentieth century, they were mature enough to produce destructive ideologies. Edith Stein experienced the practical implementation of bold theories, when the human intellect—liberated, as it seemed, from the rigours of old morality—conceived new methods for the speedy destruction of ill-adapted individuals or sub-humans subjected to the self-acclaimed ruling masters. What the nineteenth century daringly proposed, the twentieth century eagerly applied, and the Nietzschean will to power found an appropriate spawning ground. The human mind, lost in the labyrinth of its own contrivances, fortified by the optimistic Kantian message that practical reason could create universal morality—at the transcendental level freed from the meanderings of ephemeral experience and obviously based on the autonomy of universal laws—would chant the hymn of indefinite progress, international brotherhood, and secular eschatology. The nineteenth century saw the birth of "new men" and "new women," and the twentieth century saw the birth of a "master race," yet another name for the social Darwinism of the previous epoch.

Newman sought to oppose the self-confident rationalistic subject not with yet another abstract theory, but with his analysis of the living person set in operation by faith, and taking a sure hold of the tenets not effected by formal reasoning, but impressed by the living mind. This sure hold relied not only on a personal adherence to the Word of God, but also on intimate contact with the dogmatic treasure of the Church. Such a hold is not satisfied with the mere implications of the formal calculations of the immanent world, but takes the personal being in his integrity. It suffices to mention Newman's concept of conscience, of which we shall talk in greater length, as it opens the enclosed human being to stand in confrontation with the truth heard within, but whose sources, however, come from without. The pure intellect may feel at home amid the milieu of abstract concepts, but the human person should never be reduced to the intellect, for persons live among concrete beings. In his life, the idea of overall unity was the focal point of his intellectual endeavours. The commentator, Meriol Trevor, observes: "To an extraordinary degree Newman's thought and his life were one; his own story is one of development, in ideas, in action and in personality."[12]

12 M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, 4.

Taking unity as a starting point, but in a dynamic combination of its individual aspects, he had set about studying the origins of Christianity. Christianity must also be one, or at one with itself, but revealed gradually over time as successive generations interpret its message in keeping with the Revealed Word and with tradition. Only in its wholeness, as a unique system, can it be rendered meaningful. And only in its evolutionary rendition can it essentially remain the same, while bringing ever new forms by which to accommodate the changing times. The figures of the intellect and the spirit, those who have managed to face the revolutionary turmoil, were those who stood firmly by the profound truthfulness to their own persons.

The decision to write about Newman must come as frustrating at first, or disconcerting, for many scholars, especially those who naturally expect a certain line of philosophical tradition. As Edward Sillem, the editor of Newman's *Philosophical Notebook* affirms, Newman "belongs to no school," and he "never hides himself behind the authority or the word of another he respects as <<the philosopher>>."[13] Of course, the last words refer to Thomas Aquinas and his special indebtedness to Aristotle's philosophy. And a contemporary Newman scholar, Laurence Richardson, adds that Newman "[…] was not dominated by any single influence."[14] Such being the case, Newman apparently emerges as a solitary thinker who refers to no tradition, a thinker by his own merit. Such an interpretation is true only to a certain extent, as with all kinds of generalisations. In his texts, Newman refers to many other philosophers. Some references are critical remarks, like the utilitarians of the nineteenth century, others show sincere sympathy, i.e. Aristotle, Locke and Butler, yet with a note of the independent and lone traveller who knows that he must find his own way; in fact, each person must make his own efforts to arrive at certitude under the given circumstances. And Sillem concludes that "the very name <<Newman>> suggests to most people a personality rather than a philosophy and it scarcely occurs to English Catholic philosophers to ask themselves whether Newman had a philosophy worthy of the name to give them."[15] The twentieth-century French philosopher, Jean Guitton (1901–1999), in fact published a book with the very telling title *La philosophie de Newman* [The Philosophy of Newman] which avowedly contradicts the claim that Newman had nothing to say on philosophy. Richardson entitles one chapter of his book on Newman "The Philosopher." And he enumerates a long list of those "who have considered his philosophical views worthy of serious attention […]." This list includes Etienne

13 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 1, 3.

14 L. Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, Leominster: Gracewing, 2007,14.

15 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 1, 2.

Gilson, Bernard Lonergan, Frederick Copleston, Ian Ker and Stanley L. Jaki.[16] Let us add to this list Alfred North Whitehead and Alasdair MacIntyre. As far as Newman's reading list is concerned, it includes the following names: Aristotle, Joseph Butler, John Locke, Dugald Stewart, Samuel Clarke, and John Stuart Mill. Joseph Butler, for instance, "had sought the rational confirmation of Christian doctrine to which a large part of his own was to be devoted."[17]

Placing someone under this or that category is often an arbitrary decision and, in general, it results from the selection of certain criteria. Newman, for instance, may be enrolled in the circle of realist phenomenologists. Among the members of this group, apart from Edith Stein, Sarah Borden lists Max Scheler, Adolf Reinach, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Roman Ingarden, and Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II).[18] Realist phenomenologists rejected the epoché or transcendental reduction, a method that was borrowed from Descartes. In order to discover the essential structure of an experience, Husserl recommended bracketing from all judgements, preconceptions and assumptions. Phenomenologists also believed that, apart from empirical facts, the human being is capable of grasping essences that are objectively true.[19]

Indeed, Newman suggests no reduction. A person approaches reality together with all he is. The only point is whether he is real in what he says. One should not start with doubt, therefore there is no sense in bracketing claims regarding existence. In fact, what matters most is where the knowing subject is, not where the object is. Stein, as a realist phenomenologist, baulked at Husserl's transcendental idealism. As regards empathy, "in affirming other people as such, empathy was immediate and assured, but their thoughts and feelings could never be directly encountered."[20] And John F. Crosby lists Stein, together with Romano Guardini, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Karol Wojtyła among Christian personalists, a category which may easily include Newman.[21]

Sillem comments further, that "Newman was not a theoretical logician" and his "way of thinking is more personal; it is inseparably and vitally connected with Newman's original way of visualizing himself and his experience of living as a person." And then he adds: "Instead of presenting his ideas and developing

16 L. Richardson, *Newman's Approach to Knowledge*, 1.

17 A. Duncan-Jones, *Butler's Moral Philosophy*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1952, 16.

18 See S. Borden, *Edith Stein*, London-New York: Continuum, 2003, 26.

19 See J. Galarowicz, *Wstęp do antropologii filozoficznej. Podejście fenomenologiczne i personalistyczne* [Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology. A Phenomenological and Personalist Approach], Kęty: Wydawnictwo Marek Derwiecki, 2017, 44–45.

20 M. Gubser, *The Far Reaches*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014, 118.

21 J. F. Crosby, *The Personalism of John Henry Newman*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014, XV-XVI.

them objectively and systematically for their own sake, he is ever present himself in all he has to say."[22] In these two characterisations, the verb "visualize" is especially of significance here. Indeed, for Newman the most important thing was to write about a personal experience, to primarily see and touch rather than understand, for understanding can suggest a mere notional apprehension without any impact on acting; and, in the concrete, we are always dealing individually with something unique. On the other hand, however, Newman—as we shall see—stressed the importance of looking at our knowledge as a system; building a system is important not in the sense of constructing something theoretical and artificial, but in the sense of making a complete and sensible whole of the data of experience. Therefore, even if we stick to the word "understand" in Newman's case, it would mean how the thing is practically comprehended by my own person in relation to other things. Henceforth, the system that is meant here is the integral grasp of the data of experience. Thus, it seems only natural that Newman, who speaks in favour of a system, should, himself, build a system. It is a special system in which universal and personal values overlap and coalesce. Moreover, only in the case of a system, i.e. a meaningful compound of data, can one speak about knowledge, not about a mere accumulation of loosely connected bits of information.

One major problem with interpreting Newman is that—in accordance with his basic principles—he did not lay down in detail any instructions on, e.g. how to become holy; in other words, he avoided giving general counsel on what requires personal effort and engagement. Instead, he would say: such an elaboration that would be attractive and, by its very verbal force, enticing to anyone is impossible. There are so many exemplars of holiness, everyone should practice it for himself, adding yet another example of holiness to the collection of many others. In like manner, in our daily dealings with what we are facing, in practice the situation is the same—reality is our personal task. We may also be misled by those who claim that Newman was entirely non-systematic, a characteristic that might lead us also to the supposition that he was chaotic. How can an author who held, let us repeat, that Christianity is a system, be, himself, non-systematic?[23] Furthermore, how do we understand the word "system"? When it comes to philosophy, there are perhaps as many paradigms by which to pursue it as there are philosophers.

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22 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. I, 1.

23 Gerard Magill writes: "Seeking to systematize the work of a non-systematic writer can present significant difficulties" (G. Magill, *Religious Morality in John Henry Newman. Hermeneutics of the Imagination,* New York: Springer, 2015, 2).

We must admit that Newman had chosen a very difficult task: to grasp the dynamic nature of our fundamental choices. It is almost like counteracting Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy in physics. If we make man static and immobile for the sake of analysis, as botanists do when they pin down rare species to observe them under a microscope, we are no longer dealing with a living creature. And if we accompany man in his action, we feel our inadequacy, for his movements are not ours. We have only external access to them. And because there are so many patterns of the decision-making process, so many contexts and circumstances that build up one upon another, it is impossible to come up with one general theory which manages to embrace them all. To write that Newman's way of writing was more personal is to say very little indeed. We might just as well say that Newman attempted a task that is not possible to carry out. Was Augustine not personal when he was writing his *Confessions*? Or Plato or Descartes, were they not personally involved in what they were writing? Despite these doubts, I would like to show that there is a core of attraction in Newman's thinking and all his elaborations converge towards it. And this is his system, in whose centre one finds what Stein called primeval life, i.e. the mystery of the person hidden deep inside. If I were to sum up the purpose of Newman's writing, I would call it personal encouragement to make individual efforts to enter the path to holiness, which, in his context, means to fulfil one's personal calling.

Speaking about a dialogue of two hearts should not be understood as a temporal or geographical liaison in which, for instance, two people live in the same era or in the same country, exchange correspondence or remain in any form of intellectual contact. It was not the case with Newman and Stein; nevertheless, when Erich Przywara asked Edith Stein in 1925 to translate some of the letters of Cardinal Newman it "was the beginning of a lively intellectual friendship between the two."[24] What I have in mind, therefore, is this spiritual relationship of understanding reality in a similar way or even having a similar experience. Their starting points are as different as the persons in question and their idiosyncratic circumstances. And notwithstanding the differences, there are things in common that must be stressed. Since we focus here on the individual quest for the truth, the theoretical distinctions are less important than their practical results. The person can make use of any instruments (schools, doctrines), sometimes very distant from what we call orthodox, and yet arrive at the destination. The surprising thing is that a person, in his quest for the

24 W. Herbstrith, *Edith Stein: A Bibliography,* trans. by Fr B. Bonowitz, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992, 82.

truth, may often take advantage of a very inappropriate instrument, one that is inadequate theoretically and according to established opinion inadequate, yet, strangely enough, turn it to good use. For it is the concrete person immersed in his own individual circumstances that has to decide. The starting point therefore may be, philosophically speaking, British empiricism and Anglicanism or phenomenology and Judaism, but the outcome, the personal result—to use Newman's term—is the same.

In what sense can the experience of someone living in the nineteenth century be similar to another person living in the twentieth century? In the sense that they both were confronted by the limits of their intellectual knowledge. When reality cannot be explained in simple terms of universal logic, we have to resort to the generosity of the personal, to his or her personal endowment and ability to overcome the difficulties that come to hand and cannot be dismissed. We need to assent to the mystery of reality, to the mystery of the human person, to what Blaise Pascal—in his intellectual confrontation with his French colleague, Descartes—called the reasons of the heart. Is it not interesting, let us note in passing, that the same country, i.e. the same cultural ethos, gave rise to two entirely different languages: the language of reason and the language of the heart?

It must be noted, however, that the language of the heart, at least in the way it was understood by Newman, did not renounce the language of reason. What Newman did was to put reason in its right position, i.e. in a position inferior to the person, in subservience to the person. This is what I called the generosity of the human person.

As regards Newman's and Stein's unique experience, imbued with a similar topos, we must say that they both faced opposition and exposed themselves to various kinds of difficulties. Once we embark on our individual way, it becomes only natural that, sooner or later, we shall be exposed to opposition. Now the point is to act, despite such opposition, and to carry forward—if I may put it somewhat metaphorically—our individual selves to the end, whatever this end might be.

They both had to reorient their long-held views and, as a consequence, found themselves in opposition to their relatives and social milieus: Newman to his Anglican family and intellectual circle; Stein to her Jewish surrounding. In this respect, obviously, Stein's reorientation was considerably more radical. It was like going abroad to a distant country, unlike moving from one region to another within the same country, as was the case with Newman. On the other hand, however, if we look closer at the situation of nineteenth-century Britain and the hostilities between the Anglican Church and Rome from the schism of

Henry VIII onwards, even Newman's decision can be interpreted along more radical terms.

They both, before setting off upon a symbolical journey home, had gone through a short-lived fascination with rationalism, and Edith Stein had even identified herself as an atheist, before it dawned on them that narrow-minded rationalism is destructive to the human being and brings about scepticism rather than certain knowledge. And the thing perchance most important of all—despite their fundamental reorientation—is that they had mysteriously remained faithful to their former relationships, paradoxically even more faithful than before, a point I have signalled in the Preface. This should lead us to the following conclusion: conformism is not the right solution, seeking one's true self in the certitude of one's person is the answer. In other words, the Socratic motto "know thyself" held true throughout their lives. A further idea related to this reads as follows: the improvement of the world begins with the improvement of one's self. I have already mentioned this in the Preface as well—the self-inspection, so typical of the romantic era, had gained a new dimension in the case of Newman and Stein. The journey inside is not a solitary striving for originality, the pretentious and pantheistic aestheticism of American transcendentalists, the deification of Nature, the expressivistic endeavour, but it is a quest to find God inside.

The British historian of ideas, Anthony Gottlieb, put it beautifully when he commented on Augustine in his *Dream of Reason*: "First he looked in the Scriptures, but found that they did not yet speak to him."[25] This is a very Newmanian way of thinking. If there is an obstacle in my apprehension of some proposition, so the fault may be not on the part of the proposition, but on my part. The phrase "not yet" is of key importance here, for Newman and—as it turns out—St Augustine valued the significance of time and individual growth. We know the arduous journey the Saint of Hippo had to make through the meanderings of Manicheism until he arrived Home. Therefore, it is in vain to try to reformulate the message while leaving the agent where we have found him. The agent himself must take the trouble—such would be Newman's conclusion.

In the case of such personalities as Newman's, there are no marks of eccentricity, no signs of enforced originality. He always sought to remain himself because—as he was well aware—if he had failed to be himself, who else could he have been? Currently, the term "innovation" is in fashion. We are taking

25 A. Gottlieb, *The Dream of Reason, A History of Philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance*, Penguin Books, 2016, 391–392.

part in a special race: who shall win in originality? For Newman, the most important condition of originality is being oneself. Each individual is original in himself, hence we do not have to strain our faculties outrunning others. And Stein's considerations on the individual form as the underlying ground of the personality came to prove this point.

1 The Modern Point of Departure

René Descartes (1596–1650) took part in the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). One may only wonder how this man with such a delicate constitution and poor health managed to bear the hardships of war. We know of that special moment which switched European philosophy onto another line of thought. It was during this war that Descartes stopped at an inn and there, while sitting in front of a fireplace, he would now and then doze off. And that was the moment of his revelatory *cogito ergo sum*, like the Augustinian *amo et fac quod vis* or the Einsteinian formula $E=mc^2$. Descartes realized that he had no criterion by which to distinguish a real fire from an imagined one. And that was his turning point, the moment of intellectual revolution for future generations to come—he decided to turn away from the visible world, from sense data, and seek the criterion of reality inside the immanence of his mind. He doubted the existence of the external world, or at least suspended his assent to its reality.

Now let us imagine two armchairs placed in front of the Cartesian fireplace. One is occupied by the French philosopher and the other one by Newman. This picture is not that bizarre after all, since it is the concept of assent that the British clergyman studied in his philosophical writings. Descartes is watching the fire and thinking: does it exist or am I only dreaming? Newman, for his part, is asking: is it really mine? How do I find myself in the surrounding world? Descartes wanted to make sure by resorting to the universal rules of logical thinking, therefore he decided to reject everything that had at least the appearance of doubt. The rational mind can assent only to what is clear and distinct, like geometrical ideas. Newman criticised doubt as the point of departure in thinking. Instead, he suggested a personal approach in which one should discriminate between things that can be scientifically dealt with and things that must be believed. In either case the person remains rational.[26] The well-tried philosophical dilemma—idealism versus realism—was not that important for

26 St Augustine is told to have said: "Now that the Saviour has come […] it is time for philosophers to stop their doubting" (A. Gottlieb, *The Dream of Reason*, 396).

him. It is not of primary significance to decide the reality of the world, as it is more crucial to find out whether I am real in the surrounding world, whether my words are real, i.e. words in harmony with feelings, whether I realize what I say, whether I do what I confess to be true, whether I am in consonance with my conscience.

In this sense, I can assent to a paradox, or, at least, to what for other people sounds a paradox. The agent is called to cross over the barrier of immanence, not to decide whether the world outside is real, but to go into the world with one's own person as the centre of unity, and as the centre of certitude. Conversion is the key word and conversion is about a journey, that is, going from one place to another, e.g. from a false ethos to the true one.

2 The Cultural and Family Contexts—the Ethos

Both Newman and Stein grew up in orthodox religious communities. Newman was born in a happy family, his parents "were musical, fond of plays, of dancing, of reading and of conversation."[27] His parents loved each other and were delighted with their children. They were tolerant and open-minded, allowing their children free development, without imposing on them some inflated ambitions. Therefore, "there was no forcing, moral or intellectual, no strain of living up to high adult standards."[28] Newman's family were attached—according to some—to the Evangelical faith,[29] which meant daily contact with the Bible, reading and commenting on passages and then putting them into practice. John Henry felt secure at home; indeed, his family circle was an excellent milieu for the development of an independent mind. As far as religion is concerned, his father "was conventional, conservative in habit, liberal but not radical in opinion, belonged to the established Church and disliked intensity in religion."[30] In view of such circumstances, Meriol Trevor opposes the commonly-held opinion that the Newmans were Evangelicals. This group of believers back in the day "frowned on theatres and dancing and would have considered the banker's household worldly and frivolous."[31] One thing

27 M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, 7.

28 Ibid.

29 Or, at least, to some elements of Evangelicalism. Newman's adolescent experience of conversion can be interpreted along evangelical lines (cf. F. O'Brien, *Not Peace but a Sword. John Henry Newman*, St Paul Publications, 1990, *passim*.).

30 M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, 7; cf. also M. Brian, *John Henry Newman. His Life & Work*, London-New York: Continuum, 2000, 10.

31 M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, 7.

is certain, namely that we find some traces of Evangelicalism in Newman's approach. This should not surprise us if we take into consideration the fact that Evangelicals struggled against the so-called "nominal Christianity," and "presupposed a strong personal religious experience of faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and the determination to conduct one's life in the light of that experience and the reading of Scripture."[32] At the same time, it must be noted that such a description could fit any religious attitude that seeks authentic faith rather than theoretical deliberations or intellectual demonstrations.

Evangelicals stress the importance of personal holiness, the preaching of the Gospel in its fullness, the message of repentance and justification by faith in Christ's atonement. These elements are more fundamental than good works. The American cultural and intellectual historian, Frank M. Turner (1944–2010), concludes: "In all these respects the evangelical faith was a religion of the heart."[33] Whether or not the Newman family abided by the pattern of Evangelicalism, one thing is certain: the heart was at the centre of the future Cardinal's considerations, i.e. the proper personal disposition for what is required of him. It is evident that there are certain universal elements in Christianity, and it matters little which denomination we put under scrutiny. The British writer and Evangelical moralist Hannah More (1745–1833) published her devotional manual *Practical Piety; or, The Influence of the Religion of the Heart on the Conduct of Life* in 1811. Evangelical piety became the stronghold of reformed Christians. The Evangelicals willingly engaged themselves across denominational lines. They turned to "the institutional churches, […] to the family, Sunday schools, private prayer meetings, and a host of voluntary societies characterized by pan-Protestant memberships to further the world of vital Christianity in the world."[34]

The British linguist, Elizabeth Jay, has distinguished between essential and non-essential Evangelical doctrines. The essential includes original sin, conversion, justification by faith, and the authority of the Bible.[35] Evangelicals preached the necessity to arouse the spirit of the faithful to a more vivid belief, to the religion of the heart. The English pastor, preacher, poet, and hymn writer Isaac Watts (1674–1748) urged his fellow Dissenting ministers to "Try all methods to rouse and awaken the cold, the stupid, the sleepy race of sinners; learn all the language of holy jealousy and terror, to affright the presumptuous; all

32 F. M. Turner, *John Henry Newman. The Challenge to Evangelical Religion,* New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002, 26.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 See ibid., 27.

the compassionate and encouraging manners of speaking, to comfort, encourage, and direct the awakened, the penitent, the willing, and the humble [...]."[36] Watts' promptings resound in Newman's writings, for throughout his literary efforts he wishes to have a more vivid response to Christian faith. Like the Evangelicals, Newman also sought to touch the heart or the affections of the faithful, to inculcate a love of the Holy Spirit. All in all, the purpose of preaching was to revive an authentic belief, so that a person can respond with the whole of his being. At the same time, it must be noted that, unlike Evangelical preachers or Dissenting ministers, Newman distrusted formalistic contrivances. For him, the power of response was not in the words, but in the receptiveness of the listener. The speech is an opportunity, but not a determining factor. The result of teaching, therefore, was not in the method of preaching but in the free human heart.

Another aspect of the Evangelical doctrine was enthusiasm for the Cross. The British historian, Boyd Hilton, has commented that "Enthusiasm for the Cross, rather than mere repression of one's own depravity, was the secret of moderate evangelical religion."[37] Inasmuch as the Tractarians[38] perceived the need of spiritual revival, they decried the Evangelical belief that good works followed, and need not precede, justification by faith in Christ's atonement. The focal point for them was subjective and personal religious experience. No doubt Newman's spectacular "conversion" at the age of sixteen was of an evangelical nature. Later on, however, he disavows the importance of such extraordinary moments. It is, rather, good works that should result from profound personal belief, rather than subjective feelings. As we shall learn from what follows, real assent is not certitude. Generally speaking, the Tractarians were at odds with the belief in instantaneous conversion. It must also be noted that such conversions were not generally accepted, and even within Evangelicalism we have those who fostered personal and social discipline. The latter view would be much more in tune with Newman's position. Moreover, it must be remembered, as I have tried to show, that there were many variations within

36 Quoted after ibid., 28.

37 B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795–1865*, quoted after F. M. Turner, *John Henry Newman*, 29.

38 The term "Tractarians" refers to a group of Oxford dons engaged in the Oxford Movement (1833–1845). Their main goal was to reform the Anglican Church. The expert in Church history Fr. Charles Connor notes that it was rather "a movement of the heart than the head, primarily concerned with the law of prayer and only secondarily with the law of belief" (C. P. Connor, *Classic Catholic Converts*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001, 29). Indeed, its members sourght to elevate the Anglican Church onto a more spiritual level.

Evangelicalism itself, so one can always find a variety with which to associate oneself.

Whatever was the truth—whether the Newmans were genuine Evangelicals or not—I think that the loving atmosphere of John Henry's home and the unobtrusive (unimposing) character of his upbringing could have formed in the future convert and Cardinal this independence of mind, easiness of expression, and subtlety of phrase. Children were given free rein in the development of their talents. His father was entirely unlike James Mill (1773– 1836), the father of John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), whose manner of education was exceptionally oppressive and rigorous.[39] I think that such a benevolent atmosphere at the Newmans could have created in John Henry this cautious suspicion of the danger of excess in religious profession, especially his belief that faith should be practiced without any ostentation, and his principle of reserve. He was irascible or even impetuous after his father, traits which he struggled to control. Despite the fact that he stressed the importance of personal experience and personal response, he was not a recluse, "he loved people and places with extraordinary tenacity; not just one or two, but many."[40] He was affectionate by nature. As Meriol Trevor notes, he "carefully recorded the influence of others upon him [...]."[41]

Newman was a combination of many talents, some of them apparently at opposite poles to each other, for instance, he was "keenly observant of the external world and with the creative imagination which can express the mysterious union between what is outside and what is inside man [...]" and "he had a mind capable of the clearest abstract reasoning, logical and mathematical."[42] Let us observe that such character traits were a splendid melange in someone who embarked on grappling with the most serious problems of his era. Indeed, it was an era of paradoxes and contradictions, which presented a real challenge.

The enlightened aspirations of science and the practical implementations of the Industrial Revolution clashed with the subtlety and delicacy of the romantic mind. The vulnerable self seemed to have lost its sure hold on reality. The materialistic trends of the capitalist economy grew inconsiderate to spiritual needs, and the aspirations of scientism proclaimed the message of a totally secular world. From this point of view, John Henry was the right person in the

39 As his biographers state, John Stuart could read and write at three, and was fluent in Latin and Greek by the age of eight.

40 M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, 9.

41 Ibid., 5.

42 Ibid., 10.

right place and at the right time. He had a good command of logical apparatus and understood all too well that a person infinitely surpasses the narrow scientific and materialistic view of the world. In his comment on evolution, which has already been mentioned in the Preface, Newman deliberates: "I mean that it is as strange that monkeys should be so like men, with no *historical* connexion between them, as [that there should be] <the notion that there was> history <course> of facts by which fossil bones got into rocks. The one idea stands to the other idea as fluxions to differentials. Differentials are fluxions with the element <condition> of time eliminated. I will either go whole hog with Darwin, or, dispensing with time & history altogether, hold, not only the theory of distinct species but that also of the creation of fossil-bearing rocks. If a minute once was equivalent to a million years now relatively to the forces of nature, there would be little difference between the two hypotheses."[43]

Such words could have come only from someone who was not afraid of scholarly speculation, a precondition of scientific work, and, at the same time, someone who was not afraid that his rigorous thinking could lead him astray from the truth of revelation. The fluxions in the above quote are Newton's prototypes of differentials (derivatives) proposed by Leibnitz, who came up with infinitesimal quantities independent of time. Once the infinitesimal quantity was introduced, the world of numbers could somehow be better adjusted to describe reality in its ever-changing form; the infinitesimal, if I may say so, opened up the world of numbers to the imagination. At least, there was a chance to render its dynamic nature and prepare for further development in such areas as quantum physics or theory of relativity.

Indeed, we have here reason in tranquil harmony with faith. Newman trusted reason according to Anselm of Canterbury's principle *fides querens intellectum*. In this world of disengaged reason, as Taylor illuminatingly noted, "disenchantment and instrumental control go closely together."[44] Such an outcome, however, does not satisfy man's hunger for sense.

3 Newman—the Philosopher

There is an ongoing discussion as to whether Newman was a philosopher or not. I have already alluded to this dilemma, if one wishes to call it so. He himself had never displayed any ambitions to be called a philosopher. This debate

43 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 158.

44 C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 136.

reminds us of the two French luminaries of philosophy, René Descartes and Blaise Pascal. In his classic *History of Philosophy*, Frederick Copleston (1907–1994) wonders whether Descartes was a philosopher and Pascal an apologist. To be on the safe side, the historian adds the word "primarily." They were both Catholics and mathematicians, that is for sure, but Descartes "was primarily a philosopher" and Pascal "was primarily an apologist."[45] Without risking a decisive yes or no, let us say that, in the case of Newman, what was of utmost importance was the right hierarchy of things. Once this hierarchy has been realised, it matters little whether one is called a philosopher or an apologist. For if we call Newman a philosopher, we have to add that he did not aspire to arrive at some theoretical doctrine that would attend to the intellectual tastes of his era; now, should we call him an apologist, we must remember that he was at pains to express himself with the precision and rigour usually required of a scholar. This hesitation with regard to categorisation is only natural in the case of John Henry. The human being cannot be fragmented into bits and pieces. The way we define him depends largely on the aspect we have chosen for our analysis. The human being can be considered from the biological, chemical, electrical, and spiritual point of view. The moment a human being is conceived, all these processes gradually come to life. We observe certain chemical reactions, biological effects, even electrical conductivity, and—on top of all that—the spiritual factor. A question may now be posed: where is the essence of the human being? The physical magnitudes can be measured, but no one would claim that the essence of the human being can be expressed by the temperature of the body or the swinging of the needle of a gauge.

Newman enters the philosophical tradition primarily with his discussion on the grammar of "assent" to which he devoted his most philosophical work. Let us remember that in philosophical tradition, we find the Augustianian "*assentior*," the Cartesian "l'assentiment," and the Lockean "assent," terms denoting our judgements. And he is akin to Pascal by virtue of his personal experience and the language of the heart. Pascal's spiritual experience took place in 1654. As Copleston notes, it "gave him a fresh realization of the personal God and of the place of Christ in his life."[46] Obviously, the difference is that Pascal was a mature man of thirty-one at the time of his special religious revelation, and Newman experienced his extraordinary revelation in 1816, when he was merely a lad of fifteen. Both experiences, however, left their indelible traces on both personalities. In the intellectual history of himself, Newman mentions some

45 F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy. Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Leibniz*, Garden City: Image Books, vol. IV, 1963, 161.

46 Ibid., 163.

dates as important turning points in his life. Apart from 1816, we have 1833—the beginning of the Oxford Movement; the periods from 1833 to 1839, from 1839 to 1841, from 1841 to 1845—the year when he eventually joined the Roman Catholic Church; and from 1845 onwards.

Copleston also presents an excellent recapitulation of the French philosopher that may fit the portrait of Newman. He refutes the charge that Pascal was a Jansenist. He was rather a critique of secular trends undermining God's participation in human history. The historian notes: "In a society impregnated by deistic humanism and by rationalist scepticism and free thought he considered that it was above all the ideas of human corruption and of the necessity and power of divine grace which should be emphasized and that the highest Christian ideals should be maintained in their purity without any compromise or attempt to accommodate them to human weakness."[47] This description might serve just as well as a commentary on Newman's life. The Briton also grappled with deistic humanism, rationalist scepticism, and free thought (free from religion and morality, that is). In the nineteenth century, these trends were translated into utilitarianism, scientism, and sentimentalism.

In his struggle against rationalism, Pascal proposed the language of the heart. Let us note that he does not depreciate reason when it comes to demonstration and deduction, i.e. reason in its narrow sense. Pascal sides with Descartes in this area, just as Newman is well aware that in the area of science, where rigour is required, one finds an appropriate area for the use of reason. The "heart" should not be interpreted in an exclusively emotional sense. Newman was all too aware of the dangers of sentimentalism. There is no room here for an extensive analysis of what is meant by the heart in Pascal. Let it suffice to quote Copleston's summary of his meaning: "[Pascal] does not refer to mere emotion, but rather to the loving apprehension of God which is found in the sincere Christian believer."[48] This statement, again, perfectly fits Newman's intention. Newman also held that a true believer might cherish a living picture of God without being aware of all the metaphysical arguments for His existence, or knowing "historical and empirical arguments in favour of Christianity." And further we read: "the term 'heart' refers to instinctive, immediate, unreasoned apprehension of a truth. And Pascal's point is that we can have certitude (in his opinion legitimate certitude) even when the reason is unable to prove that of which we have certitude. For 'reason' is not the only

47 Ibid., 164.
48 Ibid., 172.

way in which we come to know truth; and it is mere prejudice and pride on the part of the rationalists if they think that it is."[49]

Such being the case, I might even venture to say that the heart could be compared to Newman's illative sense, his method of personation, his natural reasoning and natural thinking, the key elements of his conceptual apparatus. After all, they are all terms designed to render the dynamic nature of the human person. And as is the case with a being that eludes our clear-cut notions, one could hardly level a charge against someone who has proposed certain terms to approximate the human experience, even though not all of them are adequate.

It is not my intention in this book to present in detail a monograph of two personalities. Rather, I wish to dwell on some important turning points in their individual histories which make them akin, and which provide a lesson of human prowess, dignity, and independence. Writing about Newman and William George Ward (1812–1882),[50] the author of *The Ideal of a Christian Church*, Meriol Trevor observes that "Ward thought of the Church as an ideal to be realised, Newman saw it as a fact to be found."[51] Indeed, in his quest for the truth, Newman was open to any solution. He did not take anything for granted. He made a personal resolution to find the true Church as his personal experience, not a theoretical doctrine. To find the Church was a personal task. Let us note in passing that in Trevor's interpretation Newman appears to be Aristotelian rather than Platonic.

We must remember that there were many trends within the Oxford Movement (also called Tractarians), e.g. Evangelicals (Symons), liberals (Whately),[52] and Conservatives. A row was aroused by *Tract XC* in which they

49 Ibid.

50 William George Ward was an English theologian and mathematician, and a Roman Catholic convert. He was especially talented in pure mathematics and the exact sciences. He joined the Tractarian Movement (the Oxford Movement). At first, he distanced himself from Newman, whom he regarded as an antiquary, but when he heard him preach he immediately fell for him. He urged the publication of the celebrated *Tract XC*, and left the Church of England in 1845 (in the same year as Newman). Let me remind the reader that in the aforementioned *Tract* Newman sought to prove that in the thirty-nine articles (the principal tenets of the Anglican faith) "there was nothing contradictory to traditional catholic belief." Ward, called the *enfant terrible* of the Tractarian Movement, went even further, by maintaining "that the articles were protestant in intention and tendency, but that it was possible to give them a catholic interpretation." (See: L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform 1815–1870*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962, 517, 518).

51 M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, 344.

52 Richard Whately (1787–1863), an English rhetorician, logician, economist, and theologian; Newman recollects him in his *Apologia* as "a man of generous and warm heart […], particularly loyal to his friends […]." Newman acknowledges that Whately was "a gentle and

spied too many Romanist elements. Newman himself aligned with the liberals grouped under the category of Noetics.[53] It was under the influence of Noetics that, as he himself admits, he "was beginning to prefer intellectual excellence to moral […]" and "was drifting in the direction of the Liberalism of the day."[54] Owing to his dynamic view of human nature, he did not tire of searching for further confirmation of his assents until the ultimate moment of certitude could be attained.

When he was approaching his decision to join the Roman Catholic Church in 1845, he felt very confused. He intimated to a friend from the Oxford Movement, James Mozley (1813 –1878): "I am, as I was saying last week, […] as though a dead man […]."[55] This confession can be understood in at least two ways: I am a dead man because I don't feel any strength to fight against accusations; I am a dead man because I know I shall have to leave you. This inner necessity for a final decision had grown within him.

4 The Decision

By 1843, when Newman was approaching his weighty decision, many things had crossed his mind. He admits that the "rule of [his] mind" was "to make converts," by "finding disciples rather than seeking them," which means that his primary purpose was to find people of a similar mindset. The picture, therefore, that is being painted before our eyes is the picture of people spontaneously joining one another. We can observe a sort of solidarity of the spirit. The date 1843 was a turning point in this respect, for it was then that he "gave up, as far as was ever possible, the thought of in any respect and in any shape acting upon others." And he added: "Then I myself was simply my own concern."[56] I think it was the turning point of his *metaphysics in the singular*.

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encouraging instructor" who "opened my mind, and taught me to think and to use my reason" and "to think for myself." At the same time, Newman admits that their minds were too different "to remain on line." (J. H. Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua, London: Sheed and Ward,* 1987, 7, 8) Whately took an important part of the revival of Aristotelian logic. At least two points must stressed here, when reflecting on Whately's influence on Newman. He taught him "the existence of the Church, as a substantive body or corporation" and that the Church should be distinct from the State. If the functions of either institution are mixed, we are dealing with "a double usurpation." (See J. H. Newman, *Apologia*, 8).

53 The Oriel Noetics were a group of 19th-century dons at the University of Oxford. They could be called moderate freethinkers, who took a critical stance against Evangelicalism.

54 J. H. Newman, *Apologia*, 9.

55 M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, 346.

56 J. H. Newman, *Apologia*, 146.

John Henry's brother, Frank, urged him to follow his conscience or even start his own religion. Frank's thinking followed an entirely different line than John's, because Frank was a child of modern times in which religion had begun to be considered a more (or entirely) private choice. It is true that the modernist thinkers in the nineteenth century often referred to the conscience, but understood it merely as a private opinion. They simply wanted to stress the claim that the individual has the right to decide in each case; that individual will is autonomous and sovereign, even in the sacred sphere. John Henry was interested in the question of truth and falsehood. He wrote in a comment: "That I could be contemplating questions of Truth and Falsehood never entered into his imagination!" and then went on to explain his position: "I think the English Church in schism. I think the faith of the Roman Church the only true religion. I do not think there is salvation out of the Church of Rome. This of course does not interfere with my thinking an exception is made for those who are in involuntary ignorance … I am no longer in such ignorance."[57] Obviously, Newman recognized that his moment was that of real assent, and it must be followed up with action on his part, or—to be more precise—not only of real assent, but of certitude.

He made efforts to prepare his family and friends for his final decision. They were bewildered and urged him not to take such a step. Their hostile reaction was due to a long period of persecutions, suspicions, and prejudices against the Roman Catholic Church. His sister Harriett lamented the fact, saying: "What can become of Anglicans when they have once joined it, I cannot imagine." And Jemima said, "What can become worse than this? It is like hearing that some dear friend must die. I cannot shut my eyes to this overpowering event that threatens any longer."[58] Newman knew all too well that no matter what his friends and relatives said, the awakened duty within him spurred him on. He wanted them to be open, although he knew their openness would bring no respite, for they would oppose his decision. And the fact that other people are open to me does not relieve my personal tension that it is I who have to make the decision. It seems as if he wanted to feel the pain to the last drop, for he knew there could be no extenuating circumstances for someone who resolved to obey his conscience in view of such a radical outcome.

Jemima felt repulsion for the Roman Catholic Church and even feared that John Henry might have some bad influence on her. For his part, "he had never pressed his views on his family,"[59] an attitude that is the best exposition of his

57 Quoted after M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, 348.
58 See Ibid., 349.
59 Ibid., 349.

doctrine on personal belief. The way of the conscience is the most personal, the man of conscience being a lone wanderer. No one can comprehend this lone wanderer; hardly anyone can give their notional assent to his decision, let alone real assent.

His only explanation was that he felt he was called to do so. And then, in his distress, he confesses to his sister: "I am distressing all I love, unsettling all I have instructed or aided. I am going to those I do not know, and of whom I expect very little. Oh, what can it be but a stern necessity which causes this? Pity me, my dear Jemima. What have I done thus to be deserted, thus to be left to take the wrong course, if it is wrong?"[60] This inner urge thrust him forward. The Roman Catholic Church did not entice him with her splendour or a promise of social elevation. On the contrary, after years of persecution, he must have been ready for ostracism rather than consolation. And that from both sides, i.e. from the Anglican Church because he was going to join the most hated institution and from the Roman Catholic Church because he would come from the camp of persecutors. He might even feel that his salvation was at stake, but this inner urge kept urging him on.

When we read his personal letters, his intimate confessions, we are struck by the intense drama that was played out in their author, to the degree to which we are ready to exert our imaginative compassion. He wrote: "Of course the human heart is mysterious. I may have some deep evil in me which I cannot fathom. … Continually do I pray that He would discover to me if I am under a delusion; what can I do more? What hope have I but in Him? … All is against me — may He not add Himself as an adversary!"[61] Eventually, the claims of truth appeared much stronger than those of human affection.

Newman renders this confusing process correctly in his essay on development where we read: "At first men will not fully realize what it is that moves them, and will express and explain themselves inadequately."[62] And the author of these words, after a long and arduous quest, confessed in a letter to his sister Jemima: "I am giving up a maintenance involving no duties and adequate to all my wants. What in the world am I doing this for (I ask *myself* this) except that I think I am called to do so? I am making a large income by my sermons. I am, to say the very least, risking this; the chance is that my sermons will have no further sale at all. I have a good name with many; I am deliberately sacrificing

60 Quoted after ibid., 350.

61 Ibid.

62 J. H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine,* London New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906, 37. (Further referred to as *The Development of Christian Doctrine*).

it. I have a bad name with more: I am fulfilling all their worst wishes, and giving them their most coveted triumph. I am distressing all I love, unsettling all I have instructed or aided. I am going to those I do not know, and of whom I expect very little. Oh, what can it be but a stern necessity which causes this? […] What have I done thus to be deserted, thus to be left to take the wrong course, if it is wrong?"[63]

He also felt deserted and misunderstood by his friends and relatives. And to this we need to add a unique kind of temptation, which may be paraphrased by the primitive question from the Book of Genesis: "do you really think you are right?" In a letter to a Miss Giberne (who later also joined the Catholic Church), he deplores his bereavement: "Alas! can you point to anyone who has lost more in the way of friendship, whether by death of alienation than I have? […] My mother gone; my sisters nothing to me, or rather foreign to me; of my greatest friends, Froude, Wood, Bowden taken away, all of whom would now be, or be coming to my side. Other dear friends who *are* preserved in life *not* moving with me; Pusey strongly bent on the opposite course; Williams protesting against my conduct as rationalist and dying."[64]

Such was the dramatic social context of Newman's decision. No less dramatic and disconcerting were the circumstances of Stein's experience. And here is another link with the Cardinal. The Roman Catholic Church was harshly criticized throughout his Anglican years. Nevertheless, he stood erect and assented to the truth he had found proclaimed in this Church. In Newman, such a moment of revelation was preceded by his spiritual quest and studies; and Stein had her moment of revelation as well. What I reckon to be the most essential thing here is that one should carry oneself in truth to oneself, in true accord with one's words and feelings. According to Newman, we are not called upon primarily to change the world, but first to change ourselves, to grow, and to transform. Only then can such a centre of unity, of truth to oneself within, become a centre of transformation for the world without. Another thing brought home to the careful reader is that such a genuine centre of oneself, strangely enough, is more in unity with others than someone who is first of all focused on the external world. This regularity has already been mentioned in the Preface.

Newman brought into the Catholic Church an entirely different tradition. After centuries of suspicion and persecution, a gulf was wrought between the hierarchy and the laity. The new convert did not want to be treated like

63 Quoted after M. Trevor, *The Pillar of the Cloud*, 350.

64 Quoted after Trevor, ibid., 373.

"ignorant children."[65] His intellectual background was steeped in the tradition of British empiricism, and in this tradition reason and experience prevailed. The working principle through the Reformation was expressed in the form "think for yourself." At the same time, however, Newman was well aware that pure reason is far too an inadequate instrument to reach the truth. Man must confront it as a whole: the intellect and the heart. Consequently, it was not a theoretical exposition of philosophical or theological issues that made him a name in the world, "but far more than the books which he produced it was the personal spirituality of the man and the example of a life wholly imbued with the love of our Lord that made his impact on the religious world so great."[66] At the same time, we must remember, as Sheppard rightly stresses, that "Newman was not anti-intellectualist [...] nor was he prone to scepticism. But he was certainly more intuitive than deductive [...]."[67] The last point also calls for a more detailed explanation, but in Newman this, let us say, *intuitive bias* can easily be misinterpreted, especially in unwary minds prone to hasty generalizations.

5 Edith Stein and Her Story

Edith Stein had very warm personal contact with her relatives, especially her mother. She was a lively and intelligent child and grew up into an independent woman. The warm atmosphere of her home, as in Newman's case, left an indelible trace in the form of an independent mind. Her biographer, Waltraub Herbstrith, observes that she was "basically unaffected by either her mother's piety or her family's religious practices: any experience of God she had came in the form of her mother's love."[68] Edith was born in Breslau, Germany (now Wrocław, Poland) into an authentically devout Jewish family. Religion, therefore, tasted of spiritual freedom. There was nothing oppressive in it, but rather a benevolent example of good behaviour, hence Edith could gradually recognize "the degradation in compulsive passions that are allowed to operate unchecked" and "developed an amazing frankness of character."[69] As a child of six, she decided to start her primary education, being "enthused about knowledge."[70] This decision to attend school at such young age was just as definite and

65 See L. Sheppard, *Spiritual Writers in Modern Times*, New York: Hawthorn, 1967, 33.
66 Ibid., 34.
67 Ibid., 36.
68 W. Herbstrith, *Edith Stein: A Biography*, 23.
69 Ibid., 23–24.
70 M. L. Hill, *Saint Edith Stein* (*Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross O.C.D.*). *Blessed by the Cross*, Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2000, 24. Edith would then confess "I eat my books."

irreversible as when, after graduation and four semesters at Breslau University, she resolved to study phenomenology in Göttingen under Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), because phenomenology promised to "reach truth by studying reality around us" and "to prepare people who can see through all the errors."[71] Her decisions illustrate a forerunner to the resolute personality of the future Doctor of the Church. This apparently smooth period of education was not without breakdowns.

At the age of thirteen, she suddenly decided to leave school due to mental exhaustion. To recuperate her health, she was sent to the home of her sister Else where she could rest from her school duties and devoted much of her time to practical occupations. Surprisingly, this promising scholar demonstrated commitment and diligence in simple daily chores, just as she was devoted to intellectual assignments. Herbstrith enumerates Edith's traits of character: "a ready intelligence, an iron will, a strong sense of duty, and a natural desire to be of help."[72] We find here the same value of reality which can grow in persons who are allowed to mature amid kind-hearted relatives.

She was a nurse in the Red Cross during World War One and willingly volunteered to serve her country because she felt authentic patriotism for her homeland. She helped the wounded and readily called at the ward for contagious diseases. This practical engagement helped Edith Stein see life in all of its concrete challenges. The German writer and biographer, Christian Feldmann, rightly observes that "[t]he philosopher Stein has never been a mere theoretician. She is involved in the teachers' association, working out the plans of reform and skilfully negotiating with the authorities. She encourages her academic colleagues to enter social problems, encourages them to shoulder women's movements. She promotes pedagogy without gender-specific restrictions, but takes into account the nature of female nature. The teaching material must be chosen in such a way that it corresponds to the female inclination to the living reality and its interest in the concrete person."[73]

We learn much about Stein's trait of character from her *Letters to Roman Ingarden*. She was intellectually aroused to continue her own pursuits, but at the same time sacrificed much of her time for other people. She readily responded to her friends' requests to evaluate their texts. This fact indicates that "her ability to critique, stimulate, clarify, and unselfishly follow someone's train of thought shows itself, and this ability is later very often tested."[74] She

71 Ibid., 32.
72 W. Herbstrith, *Edith Stein: A Biography*, 26.
73 C. Feldmann, *Edith Stein*, Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2019, 82.
74 B.-H. Gerl-Falkovitz, *Introduction*, in: Stein, *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, 15.

was no rugged or isolated individualist and was ready to put "her own career on hold," for, as she herself contended, "*without community*, without social life and therefore without the formation of individuals into members of a community, *the final end of the human being* is *not attainable*."[75] Like Newman, she was very affectionate and considerate towards other people, an attitude that shows in practice respect for the other person's incommunicable selfhood. And yet one thing is crucial here, namely the fact that we learn about others from close contact with them rather than from learned essays about people.

This focus on the concrete person and his experience is typical of both Newman and Stein; in both of them we have the same inclination towards the practical, towards action as a test of the truth residing in the person. Theoretical considerations are always more or less correct approximations to the given circumstances. They never render in a complete and adequate manner the intricacies of the concrete. One has to commit oneself, delve into concrete circumstances and, having done that, one should be aware that his knowledge of the other person is limited.

Stein received her doctor's degree in philosophy in 1917 with the highest possible honours (*summa con laude*), and was then offered an assistantship to Husserl. After a while, however, she grew exasperated with all of this work, and then another opportunity for a profound reflection occurred. Adolf Reinach (1883–1917), Husserl's most outstanding student, died on the battlefield. Edith, who then considered herself an atheist, had surprisingly found Adolf's young widow not in despair or despondency. This example of the Christian testimony to hope in the face of death made Edith rethink her view of religion, in particular of the Cross in human life. It was at the house of her good friend and phenomenologist, Hedwig Conrad-Martius (1888–1966),[76] that she came across *The Life of Saint Teresa of Jesus*. As she was alone there, for the host had left, she sat down to overnight reading. On completing the book on the very next day, she confessed: "This is certainly the truth." This confession can be explained according to some Newmanian interpretation and, in fact, be interpreted as being akin to his moment of conversion. The book was a galvanizing moment for her. What was there in the book that made Stein assent to it with all the reality of this assent? Was there something extraordinary in the sentences she had read? Taking into consideration the whole context, our answer should rather be in the negative. As Newman brilliantly noticed in his Apologia, "a book, after

75 See Borden, *Edith Stein*, 46; the quote comes from Stein's essay *Die theoretische Grundlagen der sozialen Bildungsarbeit*, quoted after Borden, *Edith Stein*, 46.

76 Hedwig Conrad-Martius is yet another example of a German phenomenologist who became a Christian mystic.

all, cannot make a stand against the wild living intellect of man [...]."[77] There must have been something in between, a certain dramatic tension between the reader and the contents she had learnt. Or, to be more precise, something inside Edith Stein responded to something inside Teresa of Avila, which the latter had expressed in words. Stein's reality responded to Teresa's reality. In Newman's parlance, heart spoke unto heart.

Let us note in passing that this extraordinary experience was, in fact, yet one more element in a longer spiritual process that had taken place in Stein. First, she was surprised how Mrs Reinach reacted to her husband's death, how she peacefully bore the blow; Edith was disconcerted by her equanimity in the face of her husband's death. This experience, as Edith herself admitted, "spurred her on the path toward her own religious conversion."[78] Let me add that in 1916, Adolf Reinach, a year prior to his sudden death, wrote the following confession: "My plan is clear to me before my eyes—it is of course quite modest. I want to proceed from the experience of God, the experience of being sheltered in God, and do nothing more than show that one cannot object to it from the perspective of 'objective science.' I want to explain what is included in the sense of those experiences, to what degree it can claim 'objectivity'- even if it presents itself as knowledge in a particular, albeit real sense—and finally to draw conclusions from this. Such a presentation can certainly not grant true piety. But it can bolster the weak that have wavered due to the objections of science, and urge those along for whom these objections have blocked the way to God. I believe that to undertake this work in all humility is today the most important thing, much more important than fighting in this war."[79] The Jewish Reinach and his wife were baptized Protestant.

Another episode happened at a church, where she once observed a simple woman deeply engaged in a spiritual conversation with God. This scene also moved her. Of course, such instances of the individual realization of the truth are elusive and difficult to grasp, but one thing is certain: in Newman and in Stein the moments of conversion were not revolutionary, but rather like persistent drops of an unknown and imperceptible light. In other words, they were not just emotional and shallow stirrings of their psyches, but arduous inner quests whose currents often went unnoticed. If we really wish to understand the inherent drama of those biographical moments, we cannot forget the individual circumstances of their actor. A young Jewish intellectual, identifying herself as an atheist, is ready to give her real assent to the writings of

77 J. H. Newman, *Apologia*, 164.

78 See M. Gubser, *The Far Reaches*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014, 117.

79 Quoted after M. Gubser, ibid., 116–117.

a Christian mystic or is confused by the picture of a simple person's prayer. Her biographer writes that Edith herself "acknowledged years later that from thirteen to twenty-one she could not believe in the existence of a personal God."[80] This acknowledgement does not make it impossible for the person in question to be open to a new experience that may bring about some radical change of attitude. Such a moment of realization cannot be passed by in haste. I shall talk about notional and real assents further on. Here, let it suffice to observe that Edith Stein must have been true to herself throughout her former life, must have been real—to use Newmanian parlance—so that she became ready to really assent. Metaphorically speaking, the real[81] person is like a clean mirror that is always prepared to reflect a clear picture of the image that falls upon it. We have to bear in mind at the same time that some hidden processes, unperceived for bystanders, are taking place inside the subjects of experience. Newman called them "unperceived impressions," of which discussion will be continued further on. Stein was baptized in 1922, and in 1933 decided to enter a Carmelite monastery.

Edith Stein went to great pains to break the news about entering the Carmelite order to her family, especially to her mother. She had already seen her mother Augusta in tears when the woman had learnt about her daughter's resolution to become a Catholic; such a reaction, naturally, had evoked a sense of guilt in Edith. Her close friends rejoiced when, on April 15, 1934, she received the brown habit. Let us note the context. This doctor of philosophy, a person with a subtle intellect naturally inclined to distinctions and debates, proved to be a very cooperative, friendly, and, above all, obedient sister. When Husserl had learned about her clothing ceremony, he remarked jokingly: "I should have been there as a proud father to give her away."[82] The Father Provincial appreciated her previous occupation and her love for books, so he willingly agreed to release her from other occupations and allowed her to continue writing.

In 1933, Edith Stein enters the Carmelite monastery in Cologne; in 1933, Adolph Hitler becomes Chancellor of the Third Reich. Stein is preparing herself for martyrdom; Hitler is preparing the setting for martyrdom. Then the paths of the victim and the perpetrator cross according to some inscrutable plan. Such dramatic lives must be understood as telling examples of our responsibility for individual choices. They are pregnant with further consequences.

As the persecutions of the Jews grew more intensive, Edith Stein was sent in 1938 to the Carmelite monastery in Echt in the Netherlands. After the German

80 W. Herbstrith, *Edith Stein: A Biography*, 26.

81 And the word "real" means here "honest," "true to herself," "sincere," "transparent."

82 See M. L. Hill, *Saint Edith Stein*, 86.

invasion of the Netherlands in 1940 Edith's safety became very uncertain, so she set about making preparations to escape to the monastery in Le Paquier in Switzerland, for she did not want to expose her fellow-sisters to danger. In this period, she was working on her important text *The Science of the Cross*. Edith was getting ready to leave together with her sister Rosa, who had meanwhile settled in Echt where she had become a Third Order Carmelite. The situation for Jews was becoming worse and worse. They were obliged to wear a bright yellow Star of David on their outer clothing, and many other restrictions were being imposed on them.

During the Nazi occupation, Jews were the only nation persecuted for the very fact that they were who they were. There were many ways to relieve their predicaments; one of them was to forge baptism certs. Some of them learned Christian prayers, so that they could recite them when caught. In some quarters, baptism could have been interpreted as a way to find safe refuge. But this kind of safety was illusive, for even Jewish Catholics were not safe or protected from deportation. Baptism did not help in their case. Edith Stein experienced here a unique trial: to deny her origin and save her life or to show her origin in order to demonstrate her kinship with her brethren.

On July 26, 1942, an Episcopal letter was read out that condemned the inhuman practice of deportation. The Dutch bishops decided that they must protest.[83] Edith Stein in vain waited for a Swiss visa. Instead, the secret police called at the gate of the monastery. She was arrested together with her sister. Let us pause for a while at this tragic moment. Edith thought she was going to obtain her visa to freedom and safety, but her hope was extinguished. From her place of detainment, Sister Benedicta sent a telegram to Mother Prioress, which read: "It is only possible to learn the *Science of the Cross* by living it."[84]

In a time of inhuman circumstances and drastic scenarios of calculated elimination, everything is so tragically illusive. Indeed, the world is out of joint. When the distressed passengers descended from the freight train, they must have felt relief after their long and tiring journey. Soon afterwards, however, the fresh August air had brought to their nostrils the nauseating scent of the nearby crematorium. And they were bewildered, and they wondered what could that scent mean. In a world that is reversed, one can never trust one's feelings.

83 See ibid., 106.

84 Ibid., 111.

6 Conversion and Its Personal Sense

For Newman and Stein, the most important thing is to be real, i.e. to be genuinely authentic and in accord with their innermost selves. No wonder, then, that Stein had found in the British Cardinal a soulmate. Because, indeed, to really assent to something that transcends one's actual conceptual world is to go beyond the narrowly understood *ratio*. This also means unconditional obedience to one's conscience. Their lives were true evidence that one can do so, and that real assent is not certitude yet, but it is the beginning of an arduous journey towards certitude. The destination is worth the trouble. In fact, one has to set off on such a journey if one wishes to obtain personal peace.

What do we learn from these moments of conversion? We learn that reality, honesty, and truthfulness are of utmost significance, therefore we can conclude, for instance, that one can be a Saul persecuting Christians and yet, at the moment of trial, cling to the truth. And one can be a Judas, one of the Apostles, and betray. The point of departure, as I have already said, is of minor importance. Evidently, it is better for the integrity of the human person to be the honest persecutor Saul than the hypocrite and double-dealer Apostle Judas. In the former case, man retains, so to say, a personal transparency, his integrity. I am convinced that this moment, in a special way, illustrates what Newman called the situation when a heart speaks unto a heart, i.e. beyond and above what is otherwise highly probable. It is easier to return from reality than from unreality, and the world of hypocrisy means unreality. Therefore, Saul returned, and Judas did not.

Introspection and careful examination of one's conscience helped Newman realize whether he was real (i.e. honest to himself) throughout his life; introspection and purity of motives helped Stein reach her destiny. When one is accused of falsehood and ambiguity, the best way to disavow the accusation is to examine for oneself whether one was real and true in one's intentions. Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* perfectly served this purpose and imparted a deadly blow to his accusers.

Let us observe the following elements. In nineteenth-century Britain, Roman Catholics were still ostracised. Anyone who decided to join their religion was thereby doomed to a second-class category. It was no longer a time of very harsh persecution however, or even the danger of losing one's life, which was the case at the time of the reign of Elizabeth I. Religious persecution was fashionable in Europe. When Newman made his decision to convert, he wanted to join a religious community that had been persecuted since the schism of Henry VIII. Obviously, the emancipation of Catholics relieved their situation to a point. I think that, again, we find here some element of similarity.

When a resolution comes from personal certitude, the person is ready to join the losers, the accused, and the outcast. For Newman, it was the fold of the Roman Catholics, for Stein the community of her persecuted brethren. She was a Christian, it is true, but her personal choice did not close her to the suffering Jews.

John Henry Newman died on August 11, 1890, Edith Stein is said to have died on August 9, 1942. Both died in the season of fruition. John Henry died revered by Anglicans and Catholics alike. Everybody, no matter what religion they adhered to, cherished the precious memories and bemoaned the death of this delicate personality that had endeared himself to the hearts of Christians of all denominations. In one of his last photographs, we can see him portrayed clad in his Cardinal's vestments with a gentle smile of inner joy and fulfilment on his face; Edith died thwarted, amidst the terrified mass of her dear, if unknown, brethren. She could have shouted "Why hath thou abandoned me?" and she had learnt the way of the cross. The logic of the cross is so difficult to understand and accept, as varied as its varied reflections in multitudinous lives. No one is like the other. The ripe fruits of their lifetimes are still with us, waiting for our ever new interpretations and inspirations for the generations to come.

Let us now ponder these two pictures: one real, taken by a photographer, the other only imagined. An elderly man is seated in an armchair with joy on his face. And Edith Stein standing in a gas chamber, surrounded, yet lonely and abandoned. There is one feeling that should accompany us, that should result from our reflection upon these two pictures—that the person can be fulfilled, the circumstances notwithstanding. Newman said in one of his sermons that life provides only the circumstances; they do not determine us, but only try us and provide various opportunities. The circumstances are varied; that which is important is the person integrated, united, perfected and immersed in transitory, tragic, fortunate events, or sad predicaments. And it does not matter much whether there are extraordinary feats of courage, like when one has to face the choice of life and death, or whether it is just the faithful day to day observance of one's duty. The culminating moments come to the same point and can all become an elevation of that person; their value depends on what has preceded them. What is important is whether they come from the depths, from the innermost heart of the person, i.e. whether they are authentically realized. In order to arrive at such conclusions, it is not enough to evaluate external circumstances and judge appearances, rather, we have to delve into individual lifetimes and individual biographies. Trying to understand them we shall never be able to grasp everything as a clear-cut definition, or mathematical formula. We can only approach, we can only reach up to a certain probability. There is more to be imagined and felt than to be demonstratively

penetrated. There are layers in the person which elude the curious eye of the onlookers. The person has his secret dimensions.

What is there significant in personal certitude that we feel admiration and awe when confronted with this person? Newman seated in an armchair, a gentle and peaceful smile on his face; Stein standing amid the dying mass of her brethren, amid faces contorted with pain. Indeed, it almost amounts to an impossibility when one tries to understand the situation, to come round to Newman's understanding of the circumstances. The only thing that should right now stand before us is the great dignity of the person, the power of the integrated person. Newman's biographers tell us that students would lower their voices out of respect when seeing him strolling the corridors of Oxford University. One audience member at Stein's 1930 lecture in Salzburg wrote: "For here one sensed a great power of mind, a rich, yet disciplined inner life, born of utmost self-assurance."[85]

7 Secretum Meum Mihi[86]

The main reasons for conversion were hidden from the eyes of external spectators, or even from the eyes of the convert himself. If human knowledge is composed of explicit and implicit elements, of demonstration and tacit presuppositions—as Newman claimed—one would have to live a certain way of life rather than explain it. There are many important elements that must be left unsaid and unexplained. This may lead some to frustration, but on the whole it is a very realistic approach. No individual life can be treated as a universal prescription for others to follow. Even the acting agent cannot explain why he or she has chosen this particular moment for conversion if we consider this act, for it is the whole person's preparation that matters here, rather than an intellectually appointed moment of time. One feels it, rather than calculates it as a distanced observer.

This famous quote "my secret is mine" was repeated by Bernard Clairvaux, St Philip Neri, and John Henry Newman. The latter quoted it in his conversion account *Apologia pro Vita Sua* and Edith Stein responded in the same when asked about her decision to convert.[87] A biblical quote would have been very much to the point at that moment. Here we live still in the land of shadows, we

85 See S. Borden, *Edith Stein,* 10.

86 "My secret belongs to me." With these words (taken from Is 24:16) Newman opens his *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (p. 1).

87 See S. Borden, *Edith Stein,* 7.

see things distorted, "indistinctly, as in a mirror [...],"[88] therefore we should not pretend that we have complete command of our lives, a full plan for whatever happens.

Both Newman and Stein had to make a very personal, fundamental, and existentially important decision, they both faced the unpleasant consequences of their decisions, and they both, naturally, felt compelled to meditate on their own lives. Therefore, no wonder, that phenomenology appears to be the most appropriate and helpful method of philosophy. For it focuses on human experience and seeks to grasp its essence. In his *Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman*, Edward Sillem notes: "Newman always aimed at situating another person's «prepared position» in experience, and then opening a discussion about it with him, so that, while reading him, we readily feel that we are being forced to examine critically many philosophical theories we have in the light of what Newman shows our human experience of knowing and thinking really is. Newman's genius, in fact, lies in this field of the phenomenological investigation of experience."[89] What we find in Newman, and what I gather as being of utmost value, is his defence of the person's individual path to the truth. In no way is Newman trying to lay down any general and universal rules to a common destination. He is not seeking a transcendental sphere. Rather, he is an indefatigable proponent of one's personal struggle for truth in personal unity in which all the dissipated parts of the personality are brought together in the reality of the conscience's judgement. Therefore, Newman is not an ultramontane defender nor is he even a defender of the Catholic Church, a fact that may sound paradoxical. What he is saying more correctly is this: look at my life; I have examined it carefully and I have found truth in the Catholic Church. In all honesty to my conscience, I have to say that this is the only true flock of Christ. Each person writes his or her own personal history.

In terms of the time, for Newman, it was a longer process to assent to the truth of the Catholic Church. For Edith Stein, apparently, it was something much shorter, something more momentous, but only apparently so. Of course, we are not aware of all these lengthy soliloquies that resulted in this decision, in the assent that this is the truth. From the outside, it looks like a spur of the moment, a blink of an eye, a flash of the intellect, but internally this is the most mysterious element of maturation, of the human decision. Obviously, we may look at such decisions, at such moments as a certain list of chronological events, but then on second thoughts we come to consider them more

88 1 Cor 13:12.

89 E. Sillem (ed), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 1, 19.

profoundly, we ponder them. Then, we can only stand in surprise. We know well that it was preceded by the often-feverish quest for the truth, by a series of explicit and implicit elements of human thought. Who can detect all the moments of demonstrative apprehension and revelational (enlightening) episodes hidden even to oneself? Who can trace the dark alleys of hesitation and uncertainty which one has trodden alone, looking for a glimpse of light?

Both Newman and Stein had gone through a spell of rationalism, as I have said, in which they firmly believed in the prowess of the human intellect—absolutely free in its quests. Then Newman, for his part—as Sillem observes—set his whole mind against any form of radical rationalism.[90] There are many misinterpretations of his position. Franz Willam, in his article *Die Philosophischen Grundpositionen Newmans* [Newman's Basic Philosophical Positions], quotes a long list of labels: "anti-intellectual gnostic, secret sceptic and nominalist, hidden rationalist, wise logician and sophist, sensitive artist, poetic romantic and classic of the English language, religious individualist, liberal Catholic, pioneer of modernism, Christian Platonic, Augustine of the Modern Times, modern mystic, the saint and Church Father of the Modern Times."[91]

Some of these categories are sheer misunderstandings. Others are true. They simply prove that the human person cannot be enclosed within neat categories like an inanimate object of investigation. The rich abundance of the person provides a plethora of aspects. One-sided or reductive interpretations are bound to fall short of a true picture. Obviously, Newman was called a master of English prose, but he was in no way a religious individualist or liberal Catholic—although he valued human liberty—if by these terms we mean a disregard for the authority of the Church or tradition. When Newman stressed the utmost importance of the individual assent to the truth, it in no way meant that everyone was free to interpret the truth in his own way. The main thing he had in mind was the personal effort to assent to the truth and make it the enlivening principle of one's life, the inherent moving principle.

The renowned French historian of philosophy, Étienne Gilson (1884 –1978), notes: "The method of demonstration followed by Newman is characteristic in this respect. From more than one point of view it carries the mark of his personal experience as plainly as the works of St Augustine bear witness to the spiritual history of their author. […] If this method seems somewhat simple, let us remember that what makes its force in the mind of Newman is the

90 Ibid., 21.
91 Ibid., 20.

supernatural power of persuasion with which Christian dogma is endowed, when it is taught in its fullness [...] and in the very words of God Himself or of His Church."[92] Indeed, these two elements are extremely important in Newman's thinking, i.e. God and the tradition of the Church. We are called to respond personally, which is obvious, but it is safe to do so when we are contemplating such important matters as those which concern human nature and the destiny of the human being in the bosom of the Church.

Edith Stein died in utter solitude, the Individual turned into an anonymous number squashed amid other panic-stricken Individuals. Individuals doomed by the unrelenting ideology to annihilation. I do not think it was her Jewishness that she had never renounced that "sentenced" her to death. Rather, it was her personal decision to stand firmly by what she had deemed as right; Jewishness was only her circumstance. The place is a God-given circumstance, as Newman would say. But the circumstances are not deterministic, for it is the person that decides about their role. Thus, the person, in a sense, is always alone, for he always leaves his individual imprints behind. There is no need for extravagance, as John Stuart Mill proposed in his anxiety about the death of individuality in the age of mass culture. By choosing his individuality, that is, by choosing his own person as a self-sufficient point of departure, Newman had long before his death sentenced himself to solitude. Sillem rightly observes "though he was a man who had a peculiarly deep need for human friendship and affection, which he found in the numerous friends who surrounded him throughout the whole of his life, intellectually he was as solitary as a hermit in desert."[93] The person who is aware of his sovereignty and his own responsibility in life is always, in this sense, alone. There are decisions that only I can make, I cannot shoulder the blame onto others.

John Henry Newman, like Edith Stein, accused no one personally. They could have grown despondent and become critical of the political system and institutions, but not of persons. They both knew all too well that, no matter what the circumstances were, they were making personal decisions in which they could not be replaced by anyone else. In other words, they were well aware that the person, placed on his or her own unique stage, acts out an individual role assigned only to this concrete person and not to anyone else. John Henry Newman started his journey towards certitude, that is, towards the truth that he could make his own personal one, in the Anglican Church in which the very

92 E. Gilson, *Introduction*, in: *Grammar of Assent*, 18.

93 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 1, 4.

mention of popery was uttered with disgust. The Roman Catholic Church was despised as a "schismatic erroneous sect" by people the like of Gladstone.[94] Then, gradually, Newman began to realize that his Church was not the true fold. In 1845 he joined the Roman Catholic Church,[95] and in 1879 was promoted to the rank of cardinal. In 2010, he was declared blessed by Benedict XVI, and in 2018 Pope Francis signed the decree of canonization; he was canonized on 13 October, 2019 by Pope Francis. It would seem that Pius XII's words are taking flesh. As the Pope once said to the French philosopher, Jean Guitton, "you may be assured, Mr Guitton, that Newman one day will be declared Doctor of the Church." The beatification process of Edith Stein (Teresa Benedicta of the Cross) began in 1962; she was beatified in 1987 and canonized on October 11, 1998, by Pope John Paul II.[96]

The Polish philosopher, writer, and literary critic, Stanisław Brzozowski[97] (1878–1911), an ardent admirer of Newman's writings, wrote, with a tone of apology: "May the name of my teacher and benefactor be blessed. I almost fear that I insult him in his light by this company of my wretched soul. I do not dare to write more, I do not dare to spin this train of thoughts into words; I entrust my future and my soul to his prayers; I ask the protective spirit for intercession, for understanding mercy and enlivening power. I believe in His existence, I believe that he lives in the blessed sphere of the mighty construction, I believe in the power of intercession, in the blessed power of prayer and communing."[98] It is all the more amazing to read such a confession from someone who identified himself with the leftist movement.

In his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II noted: "We see the same fruitful relationship between philosophy and the word of God in the courageous research pursued by more recent thinkers, among whom I gladly mention, in a Western context, figures such as John Henry Newman, […] and Edith Stein. […] Obviously other names could be cited; and in referring to these I intend not to

94 A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, London: Arrow Books, 2003, 101.

95 His decision was preceded by activity in the Oxford Movement (the Tractarians). Wilson comments that "Newman was the most eminent of those who eventually found too burdensome the strain of defending the indefensible" (A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, 101–102).

96 In 1983, Cardinal Joseph Höffner sent a letter to Rome in which he requested "that she be considered a martyr because of her clear theology of suffering, her willingness to follow the path of the Cross and offer her life as a sacrifice […]" (See S. Borden, *Edith Stein*, 1).

97 It is interesting to note that Brzozowski, whose premature death was caused by consumption, introduced Marxism into Polish thought. In the last months of his life he converted to Catholicism.

98 S. Brzozowski, in: A. Walicki, *Stanisław Brzozowski—drogi myśli* [Stanisław Brzozowski—the Paths of Thought], Kraków: UNIVERSITAS, 2011, 309 (translation mine).

endorse every aspect of their thought, but simply to offer significant examples of a process of philosophical enquiry which was enriched by engaging the data of faith. One thing is certain: attention to the spiritual journey of these masters can only give greater momentum to both the search for truth and the effort to apply the results of that search to the service of humanity. It is to be hoped that now and in the future there will be those who continue to cultivate this great philosophical and theological tradition for the good of both the Church and humanity."[99]

Both Newman and Stein were acute observers of political life and critics of political abuse, excellent proof that, profound thinkers and spiritual writers as they were, they did not lose contact with social reality. And they retained sound judgement of the system in which they lived. Stein personally experienced the practical results of National Socialism, an ideology she "adamantly and consistently" criticized.[100] Newman, for his part, did not suffer the same kind of persecution (the times of Elizabeth I had long gone), although, philosophically, they stemmed from the same modern reorientation. Each time, however, has its own practical implementations. He was well aware that, once he decided to join the Catholic Church, he would be ostracised and deprived of academic positions. It seems, however, that the choice of a political system was not so important for him. The Anglican system could be oppressive, but it was not life-threatening, at least not in the period of Newman's life. Anyway, both Newman and Stein experienced opposition and rejection on the part of either anti-Catholicism in Britain or anti-Semitism in Germany.[101]

In her own private crusade, Edith would greet German officers by saying "Praised be Jesus Christ" instead of the official "Heil Hitler." This modest act of resistance can be interpreted in two ways: 1) it was an example of religious confession, and 2) it was an act of individual freedom, dignity, and courage. Newman referred to the practical consequences of political systems in a general way. He did not have to apply any expedient measures, as there was no state of emergency. The cruel hand of the totalitarian regime lay heavily on the citizens in Nazi Germany. One thing must be stressed, however, that no matter whether we are analysing the situation in nineteenth-century Britain

99 John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, par. 74, www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/papers/fides-et-ratio.html [accessed on 20th March 2019].

100 S. Borden, *Edith Stein*, 12.

101 MacIntyre mentions Stein's "teachers in philosophy and in psychology, Richard Hönigswald and Louis William Stern, who had been denied academic advancement because of their Jewish ancestry." (A. MacIntyre, *Edith Stein. A Philosophical Prologue 1913–1922*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007, 13).

or twentieth-century Germany, since we are dealing with the individual, he is always out of place, always alien to any political system. The individual, viewed as a natural and supernatural being, will never be at home in any system. In other words, no human contrivance can fulfil his destiny. This perception must be born in our minds when pondering over these things. Thus, the human being is forever alienated from all political systems. Obviously, as human beings, we must be somehow politically organized. What National Socialism apparently promised, and failed to fulfil, was the vision of something more than a mere political system. National Socialism was indeed a promise of secular eschatology, with its quasi-religious entourage and ceremonies. All political systems that attempt to redefine and reorganize people, in fact to change human nature—be that socialism, communism or liberalism—promise similar values.

Two biographies, two personal histories, and two meandering paths to the same destination. It was a destination they could hardly discern at the beginning, at times intellectually confused, but accepted with the assent of their very persons. There was one guiding principle, i.e. to be true to oneself, and the rest unfolded gradually. Let us look at the intellectual and spiritual concepts they held as true, and the circumstances under which they rejoiced and suffered, examined and analysed their unique dilemmas, and eventually gave their personal assent to the challenges of their lives. John Henry Newman and Edith Stein have left their writings behind, but primarily their exemplary lives which appeal to us more than the written word. The person, development, and change were strong themes in both of them.

Having outlined these essential moments of their lives, let us proceed now to what I gather to be the key contribution to our understanding of the human being. We shall discuss in turn Newman's theory of knowledge, i.e. how we come to know something and how this knowledge is translated into action, and then we shall focus on Stein's language of the heart and her science of the cross. Let us look at this intriguing interplay of common intuitions in these great personalities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

CHAPTER 2

The Grammar of Knowledge in the Concrete

> Egotism is true modesty.
>
> J. H. NEWMAN

•••

> Each one must examine his own work,
> and then he will have reason to boast with regard to himself alone,
> and not with regard to someone else;
> for each will bear his own load.
>
> Gal 6:4

∴

I think that the most important contribution of Newman to European tradition was that, firstly, he sought to redefine the modern tradition, reaching back to British empiricism and drawing on Christian antiquity. This redefinition meant a revolt against the mechanistic vision of the world in which the individual, within the confines of the independent intellect and limited only by sheer logic, expands the space of his absolutist choices; the individual must subdue himself to the metaphysics of reality and the metaphysics of his own being. There are rules which have not been conceived by the agent and so must be respected. At the time when the applied sciences ruled, traditional views were being undermined, and the revolutionary turmoil seemed to have spread over all the continents, Newman stood up first in defence of the person, and then of the Church with her transcendent claims and her dogmatic structure. Philosophical reflection made him come up with an extended conception of what is rational and personal; a historical reflection on Christianity brought him to the gate of the Catholic Church. It was indeed an enormous task in the nineteenth century, which I have called in this book a laboratory to demonstrate, that the human person can peaceably march the paths of intellectual and moral developments and, above all, be actively engaged in the fascinating world of scientific endeavours and firmly stand by traditional values. In other words, that there is no contradiction between faith and reason, modernity

and tradition, assuming they are properly understood. Newman had no fear of the "brave new world". The human person in his rich abundance covers all dimensions and, in fact, is an inexhaustible source of variety. Generally speaking, as Meriol Trevor stresses, Newman was especially predestined to confront modernity, he "was an expert, perhaps the greatest Christian expert of the modern age." And the author explains why: "All his ventures were undertaken to assist the formation of a truly Catholic mind — the University, the School, the Magazine itself were all part of this campaign; so was the Oratory, since it was meant to mediate to the people understanding in the practice of their faith."[1] I would summarise that as follows: to build a citadel of certitude inside the human person, indeed, inside the Catholic mind. To build a citadel amidst the maelstrom of the rapid panorama of successive events.

The British historian William A. Clebsch counts John Henry as one among the apologists who "expanded the capacity of self-conscious people for assenting to and apprehending a complex of Christian doctrines whose development he traced back to the original, simple idea of Christianity evoked by Christ's incarnation."[2] There were two pillars of this new approach, two pillars designed to buttress the new construction of religious belief in the nineteenth century: real assent (including: personal assent) and historical development. The human person is neither an expressivist paradigm nor Locke's punctual self. Each approach that would assume some individualistic elements and subject them to analysis is bound to fail to comprehend him. The person is capable of amassing all sorts of data and creating a system. Therefore, in this chapter I would like to devote much time to Newman's concept of assent. It must also be noted that in the numerous debates held with a view to decide whether Newman was a philosopher or not, it is the category of assent that should be taken into consideration. With his analysis of assent, Newman enters into the philosophical tradition.

Modernity, as we know, ushered into the history of mankind the problem of certainty of knowledge. How can we make the process of knowing certain and indubitable? The dilemma of rationality-irrationality pertains primarily to our mode of acquiring knowledge. Here the key term since at least the time of Augustine has been "assent." It is at the moment of passing judgements that we are exposed to our errors. And our interpretation of judgements decides our definition of rationality. This is a very crucial point, since the kind of rationality we propose brings forth weighty consequences in the area of religion

1 M. Trevor, *Light in Winter*, London: MacMillan & Co Ltd, 1962, 201.

2 W. A. Clebsch, *Christianity in European History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, 267.

and morality. If, for instance, "rational" is reduced to "demonstrable," religion gets whittled down to a mere naturalistic approach and private opinion. The world becomes an area of mechanistic manipulation in which—as Hegel predicted—the rational can be identified with the real. Therefore, to put it in somewhat simpler terms that may speak to the reader's imagination, as long as something can be logically justified, it can be accepted. The individual history of a single person can then be explained away and ignored by the History of humankind. The age of intellect and the machine naturally has no empathy for the devious paths of personal fortunes. It is in the steady and unrelenting currents of History that our individual histories are immersed and made sense of, but individually and privately they are of no consequence.

As I have already remarked in Chapter 1, we can trace the concept of assent from Augustine's *assentior*, through Descartes' *l'assentiment*, down to Locke's *assent*. In Augustine's works, especially in his dialogue *De Magistro* (On the Teacher), we find this oft-repeated statement "assentior et video" (I assent and I see, I agree completely). The way we define human judgements is informative of our theoretical position: whether we are rationalists, empiricists, or realists. In other words, whether we reduce human freedom to intellectual cognition or we are open to broader personal knowledge. Newman's main problem was not "to pursue the definition, organization, and systematization of theological truth, but, rather, to study the birth, the life, the death, and the revival of real assent to dogmas in the minds of concrete and existing men."[3] In other words, the question was how people really arrive at judgments in the concrete. Indeed, it is worth examining how come, to repeat Stein's example, that a young Jewish intellectual, and an atheist at that, was so ready to assent to the truth of a Christian text, and one written by a mystic. One thing must be noted here: Stein's assent to what she had read in Teresa of Avila was not yet certitude, a remark that is very much in accordance with Newman's explication of real assent. It is not certitude, but may lead to it. This moment of assent can be understood as an initiation in a certain way. It is then followed by reasoning, by scrutinizing what I have assented to, i.e. I examine the object of my assent. Newman went on a path towards the source of his assent, testing whether he could find more confirmation. And Stein, having assented to the truth of the text, set off on a journey to the source of her—most probably even unexpected to herself—assent. At the moment of this assent, she could not yet embrace all the consequences of her decision. She did not yet know what it was to be a Christian, let alone a Carmelite sister, that is, a very committed Christian.

3 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 20.

A radical position on assent is presented by the rationalist (Descartes) and empiricist (Locke) traditions. In the view of these traditions, assent must be well-grounded or else it can be censored as irrational. The history of philosophy calls this process "disenchantment". It is true that a certain amount of disenchantment is found in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, but Locke's disenchantment is radical and thoroughgoing. We read his ferocious criticism of what rationalists called enthusiasm: "How a man may know, whether [he is a lover of truth for truth's sake], 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 it receives not truth in the love of it; loves not for truth-sake, but for some other by-end."[4] Newman, for his part, respected Locke and did not feel like arguing with his fellow-citizen, retorted in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*:

> It does not seem to have struck him that our 'by-end' may be the desire to please our Maker, and that the defect of scientific proof may be made up to our reason by our love of Him. It does not seem to have struck him that such a philosophy as his cut off from the possibility and the privilege of faith all but the educated few, all but the learned, the clear-headed, the men of practised intellects and balanced minds [...]. The 'enthusiasm' against which Locke writes may do much harm, and act at times absurdly; but calculation never made a hero.[5]

It follows clearly from the above that, for the author of these words, man cannot be reduced to a kind of inductive-deductive creature who is triggered to act only by the force of arguments and would never accept anything that cannot be demonstrated. Newman was alarmed by what was happening in the Church of his birth. Religious truths being diluted to several principles of gentleman's conduct and comprehensive belief ended up with a shocking realization: man can establish a church in which there is no need for God. All such dangerous processes of enlightened modernity induced Newman to come up with his own theory of knowledge. The author of *Apologia* seems to be saying: you must be talking about man in general, one that does not exist save in books, but let us actually look closer at what man in concrete circumstances is doing.

4 J. Locke, *Works*, Repr. Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1963, vol. III, chap. XIX, par. 1, 147.

5 J. H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 328.

In the *Introduction* to Newman's *Grammar* we read: "If it is a question of achieving a scientific knowledge of the Christian faith, theology alone, as being notional, can do it; but religion is both personal and real, and, unless we content ourselves with a vague religious sentiment, the only way to restore Christianity in the hearts and minds of men is to teach them how to assent to dogmas as to so many real and particular objects. This lack of real assent which Newman was already deploring in England and in Europe [...] does not seem to have grown less common in our own days. On the contrary, it frequently happens that, in nominally Catholic countries, countless baptized men and women not wholly ignorant of their religion seem to live, to behave and to think as though they were wholly foreign to the truth of Christian dogma. This is precise the evil which Newman has attempted to define and for which he has sought a cure in the notion of assent."[6]

1 Notional versus Real Assent

Before I embark on a characterization of assent (notional and real alike), let me first define its basic trait, which is substantially contradistinctive to the empiricist view. According to Newman, and contrary to Locke, assent is unconditional. As we know, the British empiricist admitted to a gradation in assent: one can assent to something insofar as one is persuaded to it by respective arguments on the part of the object of assent. In the rationalist-empiricist sense therefore, assent would be coequal to inference, whereas for Newman, as we shall see, assent is distinct from inference. Such is the rationalist-empiricist position: a rational man cannot accept more than he can comprehend (i.e. explain, demonstrate), therefore, here is the essential divergence from Locke's rationalist-empiricist view of assent, and the essence of the personalist perspective. Assent (notional and real), in Newman's view, as an act is one and indivisible, and differs essentially from inference. The latter is stronger or weaker, depending on its premises. Externally, for instance, it is difficult to distinguish a notional act from a real one, since, as we consider them from the outside, they look similar, i.e. the subject's verbal response sounds similar. Therefore, in order to examine the true nature of an assent, one would have to embark on introspection, and—naturally—on the practical effects. And this introspection must be carried out by the self itself.

6 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 19–20.

Let us stress this point of absent gradation in assent, for, if such is the case, we realize that there is an essential discrepancy between the knowing subject and the known object; in other words, the subject can accept more than he can comprehend, and his assenting is not entirely exhausted by the amount of arguments brought forth on behalf of the object presented for comprehension. This is a very important statement because it protects human expanded rationality from a narrow rationalism (in which only argumentation and demonstration are valuable instruments of rationality), and, obviously, it provides rational grounds for the Catholic belief in dogmas. Dogmas, as we know, are not objects of free deliberation, but tenets of faith.

All in all, there is no contradiction between Newman's criticism of the Lockean gradation of assent and his claim that assents are unconditional, although they can be weaker or stronger. For Newman, assent either is or is not. Two elements converge here: antecedent probabilities and the agent's personal preparation to assent to them; the agent is *not* determined by the probabilities. It is like shaking someone's hand. There is no denying that I have shaken someone's hand if I have done it. But I can still do it in a stronger or weaker manner.

In this case even mistakes play, paradoxically, their constructive function. They simply prove that the whole construction is grounded on solid foundations because despite centrifugal forces it still persists and resists diverse disruptions. The Church persists despite the so-called modernizing attempts and schisms and apostasies (and defections). So if we cannot assent to something we do not comprehend at first, this is because we are not prepared to fill in this surplusage with personal readiness.

2 Notional Assent

Human beings are very active in formulating opinions, holding views, and declaring something; all such kinds of activity belong to the world of notions. This is how we commonly understand our rationality, i.e. the rational being should be ready to express opinions and hold views on any matter. Notional assents are the weakest types of assent. Among these, Newman enumerates profession, credence, opinion, presumption, and speculation. A notional assent lacks the power to possess the mind, which can distance itself and become disengaged, analyzing the matter at hand the way a scientist looks at an interesting species through a microscope. As Newman rightly observes, while comparing the notional with the real, "It is in human nature to be more

affected by the concrete than by the abstract."[7] Moreover, there is a parallel between the thing apprehended and apprehension, an interrelation that we know from our personal experience.[8] At this point, let us note that because of this nature of notional apprehension, it is Newman's manifest intention to investigate the process of translating the general into the concrete. How and when does the general turn into the concrete? The point is that when a man translates the general into the concrete, he makes it personal; as I have mentioned dogmas above, the question is how a dogma can become a personal principle.

Notional assents are often confused with inferences and, judging from without, we do not know whether one has no doubts about something or whether one is certain. Notional apprehension is congenial to inference, and real apprehension is congenial to assent. And at this point let it be noted that there is a profound discrepancy, even an inverse proportionality, between inference and assent. Newman calls it the true paradox, "that, when Inference is clearest, Assent may be least forcible, and, when Assent is most intense, Inference may be least distinct [...]."[9]

I have already mentioned this basic discrepancy between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge. We could also call this moment a moment of human freedom, or a gap of uncertainty in which a person, confronted with an indubitable inference, gives only a weak assent; and when the same person is presented with a weak inference, his assent is surprisingly stronger. Therefore, Newman concludes in his *Grammar* that we do not automatically assent to something when given a reason, or else that we abstain from assent when strong reasons are provided. On the contrary, assent may be "withheld in cases when there are good reasons for giving it to a proposition, or may not be withdrawn after it has been given, the reasons remaining, or may not remain when the reasons are forgotten, or must always vary in strength, as the reasons vary; and this substantiveness [...]," as Newman calls it, "of the act of assent is the very point which I have wished to establish."[10] In other words, our minds are not always inclined to the conclusions to which inferences point; and there are numerous cases when they incline to conclusions not pointed to by our inferences.

Professions are very weak. Assents are made here upon habit. We follow certain tastes or surrender to stereotypes. We hold that we are behoven to conduct

7 Ibid., 50.
8 Cf. J. H. Newman, ibid., 49.
9 Ibid., 52.
10 Ibid., 145.

ourselves well in good company, or we choose the kind of literature that is fashionable in our day. We tend to share the most popular views because others do the same, or we want to be regarded as sophisticated and well-educated. The beliefs we thus hold are transitory; we take them up one day, and then abandon readily, sooner before we have even realized what they mean. Here comes what Newman called formalism, which happens when one asserts and accepts a view on authority. It is "professing to understand without understanding," and words are used as "war-cries, nicknames, and shibboleths" without a more profound apprehension.[11] The multitude keeps repeating them because they want to be regarded as men of the world or sound well-bred. They are mere assertions.

In credence, we spontaneously assent to the many messages we receive from our daily contacts, from reading newspapers or consulting other media (in Newman's time the press was in its heyday). The kind of assent that is present here furnishes our minds with respective cultural information. It is characteristic of the social milieu in which we grow up. This kind of information makes up our national uniqueness, for instance, by which we can be distinguished from other social and cultural groups. Such assents are notional and, consequently, superficial, because the ideas thus provided are too complex. They provide some practical information for conversations on various topics, but do not make us professional, for their range is too broad. The reality is fragmented into too many pieces for us to master.

While analyzing notional assent, we must be all the time aware of its basic characteristic, i.e. its theoretical distance to reality. In this sense, for instance, religion, just like theology, can be regarded as notional. Theology is a science, therefore it provides theoretical knowledge, but even religion can be a subject of notional assent. In like manner, even here we can find a superficial (a merely theoretical) attitude to religion. Newman approves of Evangelicalism and other denominations which practice the reading of the Bible. Nevertheless, he deems it insufficient to be content with reading and living a correct life, for, as such, "it is not a religion of persons and things, of acts of faith and of direct devotion; but of sacred scenes and pious sentiments."[12]

Opinion is a similar assent to that of credence. It is an explicit assent to the probability of a proposition. Being an assent, it is independent of premises. Therefore, unlike credence—which is implicit—opinion is explicit. We are

11 See J. H. Newman, ibid., 53, 54.

12 Ibid., 63.

forming an opinion when we reflect upon our credence. It is notional because we assent to abstract probability.

In presumption, we assent to first principles. We know that we have certain faculties of reasoning and memory. Newman writes: "We are what we are, and we use, not trust our faculties. [...] Our consciousness of self is prior to all questions of trust or assent. We act according to our nature, by means of ourselves, when we remember or reason."[13] Therefore, trusting the faculties of reason or memory cannot be regarded as a first principle. We simply use ourselves—and this element of his, let us say, realistic theory of knowledge will often be repeated. Therefore, he undertook this meticulous task of examining how a single person comes to know something concrete, or under concrete circumstances. The existence of things external to ourselves can be considered a first principle and such that "is founded on an instinct."[14] We have an instinct that informs us about the existence of the world without. This instinct accompanies each object that is given to us in experience. We then generalize the collection of such instincts and come up with a general statement that the external world exists.

General names are abstractions as they are conclusions from particular experiences. Likewise assents to the so-called first principles are notional assents to the propositions containing abstracts terms. When the question of Newman's alleged nominalism is raised, one must be aware of the fact that he was hardly interested in deciding on behalf of idealism or realism. The problem appeared to him to be fairly theoretical and—as he frequently repeated—his principal interest was man's conduct in the concrete circumstances. In the concrete circumstances, the acting person never considers the reality or unreality of the world, but rather has to grapple with what is good or bad, what is proper or improper to do. From this point of view, we may easily understand that even the first principle of our conscience, i.e. "there is a right and a wrong"—well-known as the principle of synderesis—is notional and theoretical, unless it is followed by a personal struggle towards a concrete choice under given circumstances. Therefore, Newman has a point here, for the general principle does not confront us with the practical choice of a good or a bad action, unless it is potentially, until we are actually confronted with some existential dilemma. In other words, the principle of synderesis is abstract for us before we start to act. We know, theoretically, that there are these two fundamental aspects of reality, but we realize their presence when we are called upon to act.

13 Ibid., 66, 67.
14 Ibid., 67.

As we learn about the external world through our senses, likewise we learn about God through the dictates of our conscience. Here is an analogy between the knowledge thus gained about the external world and the knowledge of God gained through the dictates of conscience. We learn about the existence of a world external to us by way of induction from a recurring experience of objects. In like manner, we realize that there must be a Being superior to us from the recurring dictates of our conscience.

And Newman provides an adequate explanation of the abstract (notional) nature of this principle when he writes that "in proportion as we obey the particular dictates which are its tokens, so are we led on more and more to view it in the association of those particulars, which are real, and virtually to change our notion of it into the image of that objective fact, which in each particular case it undeniably is."[15] Indeed, this is one of those wonderful ways in which Newman brings home to his readers his true meaning of such confusing statements. We may be aware of good and evil in theory, but only our adjustment to the practical claims of our consciences, when theory is translated into an image, makes us actually realize good or evil. Obedience to the dictates of conscience in the aforementioned quote is an excellent example of Newman's key interest, namely, the practical translation of a theoretical tenet into a practical principle of action.

Another example of a notional assent—presumption—is the belief in causation, an example which Newman might have taken from Hume's exposition of the problem. We can understand causation in two senses: when something causes something else to exist and when something follows something else, i.e. when A is prior to B, or when B follows A. We observe a sequence of antecedents and consequents and we "confuse causation with order," but we should rather speak about "a cause to be an effective will; and, by the doctrines of causation [...] or first principle, [Newman means] that all things come of effective will; and the reception of presumption of this notion is a notional assent."[16]

The same goes for causation understood as a temporal succession of antecedents and consequents. If they belong to the order of nature, and we have approved of the thus established causation, there is a notional assent to the repetitive pattern of certain events. On the basis of this homogeneity of nature physicists construct general laws. Naturally, Newman is still referring to the Newtonian vision of nature in which the laws are universal. For the sake of

15 Ibid., 70.
16 Ibid., 71, 72.

our considerations, let us note that it suffices for his argumentation, namely, that he wants to say that, inasmuch as the laws in question are universal and embrace all phenomena that fall under their operation, the phenomena themselves are always unique and individual. Therefore, he claims that the doctrine of the uniformity of the laws of nature is an abstract conception, which is "more perfect than the recurrent phenomenon itself [...], and the variations which accompany the repetition are of the nature of exceptions."[17] His argumentation exhibits the consequence in his thinking. The point he is driving at is to show that there is an essential discrepancy between the general laws and the concrete events which these laws have been designed to describe. Concrete events are always different in their detail from the general outlines.[18] We may speak only about approximations rather than adequate descriptions. Obviously, science accounts for these aberrations by the interaction present in nature. We must not, however, confuse facts with reasoning, for "the confusion is a fact, the reasoning processes are not facts."[19]

We are dealing with hypotheses rather than with experienced phenomenal facts. We take the unfailing uniformity of nature for granted. For Newman, it is not a cause that makes things happen but Will, for "we have no experience of any cause but Will."[20] In view of this, speaking about moral luck is even more absurd. A cause implies a will, and the order of nature implies a purpose. The order of nature can be changed by "that which willed it, [...] and the invariableness of law depends on the unchangeableness of that Will."[21]

It follows from the above considerations that general laws are never adequate tools for the descriptions of individual facts. Rather, they are simplified approximations and should be regarded more as probabilities than exact representations of experienced facts. Particular events happen not by the scheme of some deterministic laws, and yet they still happen, hence they must have been willed by Someone. Newman denounces the modern vision of mechanistic laws that rule over nature; for him, the Creator of nature is ever present in His creation. Is our situation as Newman describes it? We have a network of laws and a complex agglomeration of facts. And now we seek to express these facts by means of those laws. As the network is inadequate, we resemble a fisherman who is trying to catch small fish with a net whose grids are too big.

17 Ibid., 73.

18 From the point of view of contemporary physics, Newman's conclusions are obvious. Today, physicists speak merely about the probability of physical events.

19 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 73.

20 Ibid., 74.

21 Ibid., 74–75.

In speculation, which is another kind of notional assent, we include our conscious acceptance of propositions as true. Here we list some general truths, maxims, mathematical investigations, legal judgements "the determinations of science; [...] the principles, disputations, and doctrines of theology."[22] Because they are expressed as general propositions, they are subjects of notional apprehension. This does not mean that they cannot be received by real assent as well. Generally speaking, all of our notional assents can be made real and assented to in our experience, as I shall try to demonstrate further. Let us now turn to real assent.

3 Real Assent

What is notional and what is real exert a force on the mind, but the real, being concrete, exerts a much more powerful force. In the case of the real, our apprehension is stronger than in the case of the notional. Mere abstract terms or some general knowledge do not stimulate the mind in the same manner and to the same degree as a concrete influence does. General deliberation about death does not have as equally potent an impact as the concrete (and actual) death of a close relative. Inference and notional assent are often treated as one class of concepts, with the exception that assent is always an unconditional acceptance of a proposition, whereas in inference we must first accept its premises and only afterwards the conclusion. In notional assent, the mind contemplates its own creations. In real assent, the mind is directed towards things. They inculcate impressions on the imagination. Things create images, which, in turn, exert influence on individuals. Here, we are talking about minds which have long acquainted themselves with certain subjects. Images need not be true, but they exert a vivid apprehension. Images evoke something in us, they call for a prompt response. They are like anchors holding us fast to a certain reality, like seals on our minds. Come and see for yourself, touch me and see.[23] Images are witnesses to what we have gone through; it does make a difference when we say "I understand it," and "I know because I have seen it." Images leave behind some indelible traces that will not permit us to forget. Images admit no room for deliberation. Let us consider an example.

Several years ago Randy Pausch, the late computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon, published a book entitled *The Last Lecture* (2008). And this

22 Ibid., 76.

23 Cf. Lk 24:39.

book is indeed about his last lecture; it was literally his last lecture. The word "last" was not only the last element in a set of like terms in which there is not any "next." The word "last" meant that the lecturer would not give any further lectures, for he would not exist any longer. Thus, it took on a very radical meaning. The reason was not his retirement (he was still young) or his decision to move to another university, as one might expect, but the diagnosis of his terminal condition (he had been diagnosed with a very malignant type of pancreatic cancer). I think that Pausch's book (and his very idea to deliver this lecture) is a splendid recapitulation of what we are talking here about. Existential philosophers say that the human being is a Being-toward-Death (Heidegger), in itself a clever term that covers our gradual passing away, but the connection between being and death rendered by this term is merely theoretical, and therefore abstract. Likewise, one may consider the death of any representative of *homo sapiens* as a consequence of biological development (birth, growth, and decay). The situation takes on an entirely new turn when one is struck by the sudden realization that his or her death is indeed imminent, that it is—so to speak metaphorically—standing at the threshold. A diagnosis is a visible sign of something concrete, something that has almost been calculated. At that moment, words implode, they appear desperately inadequate to comprehend that truth, they fail to render the meaning, when, safely embedded within semantic and syntactic wholes, they are dimmed by the unknown; do not we express this feeling by saying that we are desperate for words, that words fail us, that we are short of words? Indeed, this is the situation when I learn that it is I who am about to die. And this is what Newman meant by realizing, by assenting to something real. The truth speaks itself, it shines through the human being; we experience the fact that the time for guided discourse has ended. Only real assent is meaningful and effective, although one may hopelessly search for words to describe it. And real assent at such moments may also denote silence.[24]

General truths and great maxims, as Newman says, float on the surface of society. They are waiting to be born, i.e. to be given life by some individuals. First, they are regarded as abstract truths with self-evident acquiescence, but then transformed into practical expression. They are hardly ever realized by society at large. Usually, there is an individual mind, like that of Wilberforce's, that becomes operative in translating the notional into the real. And William Wilberforce (1759–1833), as we know, won a successful battle over the abolition

24 When Job's friends had realized their friend's enormous suffering, they remained silent for seven days and seven nights.

of slavery in Britain in the nineteenth century. Of course, there was general outrage against slavery among many, but only Wilberforce was practically inspired to take concrete steps that proved so successful in Britain.

Many classes of people acquiesce in general truths, but only some minds are aroused to action. To these minds, words speak of things, not merely of notions. Hence, they serve not merely for embellishing our speeches, but for acting. The first thing for something to be real, Newman claims, is that it must be presented in the form of an image. The question as to the reality of images is another matter, for, as we have said, an image may be very impressive yet without being real. Very often we deviate "from the line of reason and duty," especially in the case of "an idiosyncratic sagacity," that is, in the case of men with outstanding intellectual gifts.[25] Such people are prone to be carried off by the lively productions of their concepts. Imagination, let us stress, does not produce assent, but only intensifies it. An image is like, say, a connatural reflection in someone's mind; it is a response of the person, not merely an acquiescence of the intellect.

4 Imagination and Images versus the Response of the Person

The role of the imagination in the nineteenth century became proverbial; it was set in opposition to the intellect of the Enlightenment. Imagination does not cause action, but only stimulates our motive powers "by providing a supply of objects strong enough to stimulate them."[26] When we consider such things as future life, reward or punishment, it matters much whether these objects create some images in us or whether they are mere notions for the construction of propositions. There is a correspondence between a future action and the thought about this action. The latter is initiated on condition that in our minds there is something "congenial to it" or, as Newman explains it, if "there is that preparation of mind, the thought does lead to the act."[27] This is what I call "a connatural reflection." No wonder, then, that we may have a group of people exposed to the same contents, and yet only some of them, or, in fact, only very few of them, are ready to give their real assent. We hardly ever come across a situation in which all the subjects are affected in the same manner. Ultimately, however, it is the person's *fiat* that causes action, not a clear and distinct concept or persuasive reasoning. And this conclusion agrees perfectly

25 See J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 81.
26 Ibid., 82.
27 Ibid.

with Newman's understanding of causation, in which the will is the motivating factor.

Another important trait that has a bearing on real assent is its personal nature. Unlike notional apprehension, which corresponds to our common nature, real assent is always personal. When we turn to abstractions, we can easily establish a common measure between two minds. Thus, learned discussions are plausible because the object of discussion is made intelligible and intersubjectively comprehensible. Real assents in which we assent to images are unique, but we cannot secure the same images in experience for any two persons, or, we should more correctly say we cannot assure the same responses to equivalent images.

The problem of imagination in Newman causes certain doubts. We know that, for him, imagination does not determine action, but can stimulate the agent to action. It provides images and they are more powerful than mere theoretical concepts in initiating action. Insofar as this point is relatively clear, it is difficult to understand the role of imagination in belief and knowledge. In his philosophical notes, the Cardinal writes that "imagination is the habit of the act of making mental *images*." Imaginations, however, "cannot be matter of *judgment*, i.e. of assent or dissent, because you cannot affirm or deny without grounds—and hence there is no basis of knowledge at all. What one cannot assent to &c, one cannot believe or disbelieve; is not the subject of faith."[28] He then makes a distinction between Imagination and Conception. The two should not be mistaken, for "we can imagine things which we cannot conceive."[29] So far so clear, but later on we learn "we can believe what we can imagine, yet cannot conceive [...], you *can* believe what you [-imagine] <cannot conceive>; «understand» means «imagine» and certainly I do not believe (except implicitly) what I do not *imagine*."[30] Are these two pages contradictory? First, we learn that if we cannot assent to imaginations, they cannot be the subject of faith; now we learn that we cannot believe what we cannot imagine. The conclusion is all too clear: we can assent to what we can imagine; and there is another conclusion: we cannot believe if we cannot imagine. Is belief possible at all? We may account for this apparent contradiction by referring to a passage from Newman's *Grammar*. Here, the author relates imagination to experience. Perhaps the best answer to this difficulty would be Newman's method of arriving at the truth, which is a process of development. In the *Grammar of Assent*, the author explains the intrinsic discrepancy between

28 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 152.
29 Ibid., 153.
30 Ibid.

notion and image in favour of the image. Although an image can be incomprehensible, we can still assent to it. This is the case in which indeed "understand" can mean "imagine", but not "to explain." Therefore, when a person says "I see," he, in fact, acquiesces: "I understand." And this is how the phrase is understood in the English language. The interesting fact here is that the verb "see" is naturally used in another context in which it is related to the sense of sight.

Of course, the question is how abundant our imagination is. If our imagination is subdued to the intellect, it is limited only to what can intellectually be conceived. If it is guided by the heart, it is open to much vaster vistas of reality. The heart can see more than that which can be explained, it goes beyond the world of concepts. As if to confirm our suggestions, Newman hastens to explain this in his *Grammar*: "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; and thus a scale of assents is conceivable, either in the instance of one mind upon different subjects, or of many minds upon one subject varying from an assent which looks like mere inference up to a belief both intense and practical [...]."[31]

Indeed, I can imagine what I can experience. Does the Cardinal reduce knowledge to the empiricist view? I think he is simply saying that experience broadens our horizon, and if I want to understand religion in its real—not merely notional—form, I must be deeply immersed in religious life, I must be open to religious experience and religious practice. Religion and morality are not primarily areas of theoretical knowledge. This is what Aristotle understood so perfectly in his exposition of virtue: we need not know what virtue is, but we need to be virtuous people. I can see what I understand, and I can understand what I can see. To be open to religious experience means to be fully aware that, in this encounter between the transcendent and infinite Being on the one hand and the finite on the other, there is much to accept without comprehension. In any case, even the finite being—and I shall elaborate on this—has, deep down, an immeasurable and incommunicable reservoir of mystery. This requirement of being real crops up all the time in Newman's writings, i.e. instead of being satisfied with knowing what virtue is, one should practise virtue. How can a man talk about virtue if he has never sought to be a virtuous man? How can a man talk about religion if he has never attempted to be religious? Therefore, the American Newman

31 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 47.

scholar, John Crosby, is right in saying that Newman "sought rather to make people *realize* the truths that they were so fruitlessly professing. He sought to make the sources of religious experience flow for them again. He sought to awaken the religious imagination. He sought to appeal not only to the intellect but also to the heart, and in this way to stir up his listeners to action. He preached in a way that 'pierced' the existence of his hearers, which means that he energized them existentially. That was the secret of his power."[32] I can only enhance one of these points by adding that Newman primarily sought to appeal to the heart, this enlivening centre of images that may stimulate action. For instance, instead of just talking about suffering we should see those who suffer and rush to their aid.

It is not the act of assenting to something that should be the focus of our criticism, but the object to which we assent. In general, it is good that we are capable of assenting, especially that we are capable of assenting to things we do not comprehend. The fault is in the object, not in the assenting. When we assent to bad things, it is not the act of assenting that is at fault—an act which was the object of criticism for Descartes made him suspend his judgement—but the object to which we assent. The fault is not in the assenting itself, so that it should be self-evident, as if we could withdraw from assenting and become non-judgemental. This is the surest way to non-commitment and scepticism. The rationalist suggests suspending our judgement until the object presents itself as a clear and distinct idea, i.e. as an intellectually clear object. In such a case, we could remain in withdrawal and suspension forever. Assenting has its source in the person as a whole, not only in his intellect; the task of our reason and conscience is to analyse the object of assent. The more integrated we are, the more spontaneous and intuitive such processes are.

When the undivided person is assenting to something, he stands a chance of finding the truth. Therefore when Newman was criticised for being hypocritical, he set about writing "the closely reasoned pages of the *Apologia* where he shows his unerring logic at the best advantage."[33] Its purpose was to prove that he had never intentionally made a mistake, adding simultaneously that he had never "sinned against the light," that is, he had never sinned against his conscience, that his words had never been unreal.

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32 J. F. Crosby, *The Personalism of John Henry Newman*, 34.

33 L. Sheppard, *Spiritual Writers in Modern Times*, 33.

5 Realization

How can we communicate if there is no common measure between us? Let us repeat that we are now talking about real assents in their capacity for communication; in the case of the notional, communication is far more plausible—often superficial, yet plausible; we can observe how scholars notionally communicate. It may happen that their understanding of the terms in question do not match, but they can make up for this by providing respective definitions. What we are doing here, then, is to translate the individual and idiosyncratic into words (into abstract notions), i.e. into a shared linguistic system of communication. Here we have to mention another key word in Newman's "system," namely the word "realize." In notional assents we readily assent to contents we do not realize. In his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Newman describes this situation as follows: "When we are told a thing, we assent to it, we do not doubt it, but we do not feel it to be true, we do not understand it as a fact which must take up a position or station in our thoughts, and must be acted from and acted towards, must be dealt with *as* existing: that is, we do not realize it."[34] In notional assents, we express many lofty words, but "we do not in any good measure realize them."[35] We need to see the reality behind the notions, we need to gradually gain knowledge of ourselves and the world until we realize, that is, until "we shall give up shadows and find the substance."[36]

Obviously it is difficult to grasp what is meant here and put it into a comprehensible definition, for realization will mean something different in each particular case. Our real assent is always personal in terms of its intensity and of its time. The process of growing is of utmost importance for Newman. It must also be stressed that the word "personal" should not be taken to be synonymous with the word "private." If our understanding of a religious matter is personal, this does not mean that everybody can have their own private judgement on religion. Such an outcome would mean that, in fact, religious truth is relative. No, the personal means here that I have to make religious truth my own, and as such it must always be adjusted to my individual life, not in the sense that I tailor it to my life, but that I shape my life according to this truth; such is the ultimate meaning of realization. And this is what, in Newman, can be called subjectivity, as distinct from subjectivism. In other words, the general religious tenets should be apprehended in an individual manner in a concrete person.

34 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987, 1236.
35 Ibid., 1238.
36 Ibid., 1239.

Accidents happen to us according to general laws, but why they happen to this or that person is a mystery. Individual accidents fall within a scheme of contingency we do not understand. Therefore, the same contents may be attached with different images because we have different backgrounds and upbringing, the individual circumstances of our lives. Hence, "the image in the mind, with the experiences out of which it is formed, would be a personal result [...] would in each case be so idiosyncratic in its circumstances, that it would stand by itself, a special formation, unconnected with any law; though at the same time it would necessarily be a principle of sympathy and a bond of intercourse between those whose minds had been thus variously wrought into a common assent [...]."[37] Newman is all the time referring to the fact that, in the process of knowing, we use ourselves as we are, while the universal logical rules are only a part (oftentimes not so decisive) in our personal endowment. At the same time, general schemes are always inadequate instruments to render precisely what is concrete and individual.

Real assents, inasmuch as they are individual and unique, can bring about a common understanding. By way of illustration, we may be attracted by the same view, i.e. a splendid waterfall, and yet in each case the experience is unique. The beauty of the water cascading down a rock is reflected in a hundred mirrors. And the sight of this waterfall is much stronger than a mere literary description of the same event read by a hundred people. Descriptions are abstractions, and "an abstraction can be made at will, and may be the work of a moment; but the moral experiences which perpetuate themselves in images, must be sought after in order to be found, and encouraged and cultivated in order to be appropriated."[38] The teaching of the New Testament is told in stories appealing to listeners. The Samaritan took the wounded traveller, put him on his donkey, then carried him to an inn, and eventually paid for his recovery. All the listeners present could imagine the whole situation. This is an excellent example of a moving story turned into a moral lesson that appealed to the imagination of the listeners.

Real assent, also called belief, can affect our conduct, although it does not lead to action directly. Newman calls it "an intellectual act" whose "object is presented [...] by the imagination" and, as such, can stimulate "those powers of the mind from which action proceeds."[39] Not abstractions or hasty generalizations, but real assents or beliefs have the means to stimulate the mind to action. Real assent or belief lives in images. It is the power of the concrete that

37 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 85.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 86.

appeals to us. The concrete allows for no hesitation, i.e. this concrete suffering human being is in need of help. Belief is like presence, for faith is enlivened by presence, faith lives and feeds on presence. In real assent, we need to apprehend the things believed (apprehension is presupposed), unlike in notional assent or inference. In the latter case, we are dealing with mere surfaces or aspects. In inference, for instance, we simply proceed from premises to conclusions and it suffices to satisfy the formal requirements for an inference to occur. We proceed from premises to conclusion by virtue of the inherent logical procedure of the inference.

The question of what is real would be of particular interest to scholars of the phenomenology of religion, a phenomenology of religious belief. I mean in particular this special, peculiar relationship between a proposition and real assent. What makes us really assent to a proposition? Is it in the proposition, in its formulation, in the recipient of the proposition or in the utterer of the proposition? And, of course, real assent to a religious proposition is entirely different than other propositions, for instance a mathematical proposition. Let us assume that someone tells us that, in a right-angled triangle, the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the two squared legs. The fact of assent depends to a large extent on the recipient of this message. Usually, there is a sort of tension between the proposition and the recipient. Here are the basic conditions for assenting. (1) Let us assume further that I have some general knowledge of mathematics and am acquainted with its basic principles, especially such basic formulae as the Pythagorean theorem. I was a diligent student in college and have a good memory. Therefore, I can simply assent to the truth of this proposition. (2) I am totally ignorant in mathematics, yet at the same time I know that the statement comes from someone who is a well-known mathematician, someone who is knowledgeable about its theorems. In the latter case, I can assent to the theorem on trust, on the grounds of someone's authority. (3) Now let us consider yet another case. This time I meet someone within the premises of an institute. In our example, this may be an Institute of Mathematics. Therefore, it is the authority of the institution that impels me to assent to the given formula.

Now, which of the above conditions is used in the case of a dogma? The situation is more or less similar to the second and third examples. In other words, its truth is guaranteed by the authority of the person and the Church. In the case of mathematics, I may feel encouraged to assent by the authority of a specialist or the authority of an institution. When a dogma is at stake, it is the testimony of a believer and the authority of the Church that provide support. What is originally only felt by many believers as true is later translated into a dogmatic form. Obviously, in the case of religious truths we take into

consideration not only their theoretical wording, but also we look at the lives of those who live them. It follows from the above examples of assent that—as Gilson rightly observed—"real assent does not automatically follow from valid notional inference" and this statement "opens a wide and fruitful field to phenomenological investigation."[40]

The big question that arises in this context is how to turn theoretical principles into living guidelines in individual human beings. In the case of mathematics, we are ready to trust someone who is familiar with mathematics; in the case of a religious truth in a dogmatic form we have the authority of the holy men and the authority of the Church. Of course, there is yet another step that we have to take. And this is something in which Newman is fundamentally interested. Obviously, the acceptance of the Pythagorean formula may have little significance to our real life, whereas the acceptance of certain moral truths is vitally important for us.

In example (1) it is the sheer logic of the proposition that appeals to us. We do not need to refer to other sources. It is enough to understand the categories in question in order to assent to a proposition. Rationalism follows this narrow path. The point is to reduce all the formulae to their most simple constructions, so that their inherent clarity impels us to assent to them. Dogmas have their history, living human principles have their personal circumstances. Therefore, it would be far too little to reduce their force of impact to only their theoretical formulations. More often than not they even lack formulations. The main reason for Newman's opposition was that rationalism, especially narrow rationalism, relies entirely on the speculative products of the immanent self. In this personal quest, when intellectual prowess is the only criterion for investigation, the ultimate outcome is most uncertain. Lost in the intricate interplay of premises, the individual may arrive at any solution, but hardly at the truth.

Thus, we apprehend propositions in two ways: notional and real. Newman says that real apprehension is closer to assent: "Now assent to a real proposition is assent to an imagination, and an imagination, as supplying objects to our emotional and moral nature, is adapted to a principle of action […]."[41]

40 E. Gilson, *Introduction*, in: *Grammar*, 20–21.

41 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 176.

6 Theoretical Knowledge and Action

Newman discussed this issue at length in his *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects*, in which he argued that being enlightened by bookish knowledge does not suffice for moral improvement. A mere theoretical acquaintance with various subjects on ethics does not create an ethical man. Contrary to the positions held by ethical intellectualism, whose source—as we know—is traditionally attributed to Socrates, and the enlightened views of the French *philosophes*, Newman disavows a mere notional apprehension as sufficing for human edification, let alone sufficing for moral action.

Let us observe that such rationalistic views fit well into the picture of a disenchanted world, a world of free choice based on the hypertrophy of the intellect and the atrophy of morality. In this deistic and naturalistic milieu there is no need for any personal conversion or transformation, any personal effort at obedience, let alone liberation from sin. Sin does not exist in the rationalistic vision of the world; there are only errors in reasoning, which can be remedied by the employment of the appropriate method. The human being is formally prepared to think for himself and absolutely free to choose whatever values come in handy. Education is all we need in order to learn about our whereabouts.

The Cardinal summarizes their arguments as follows: "Education is the cultivation of the intellect and heart, and Useful Knowledge is the great instrument of education. It is the parent of virtue, the nurse of religion; it exalts man to his highest perfection, and is the sufficient scope of his most earnest exertions.

Physical and moral science rouses, transports, exalts, enlarges, tranquilizes, and satisfies the mind. Its attractiveness obtains a hold over us; the excitement attending it supersedes grosser excitements; it makes us know our duty, and thereby enables us to do it; by taking the mind off itself, it destroys anxiety; and by providing objects of admiration, it soothes and subdues us.

And, in addition, it is a kind of neutral ground, on which men of every shade of politics and religion may meet together, disabuse each other of their prejudices, form intimacies, and secure co-operation."[42] The ironic overtones are evident here, and the quote perfectly recapitulates the secularized and deistic heritage of the Enlightenment.

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42 J. H. Newman, *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1924, 255–256.

The description of the "brave new world" reads like a joyful message concerning the person's puzzle. If the knowledge of our duty suffices in order to be dutiful, everything else becomes redundant. Knowledge induces us to fulfil our duties. Apparently, Descartes' dream, i.e. the right method, has thus become a reality. Theoretical knowledge elevates us. Indeed, the prospect that is unfolding before our eyes resembles a situation in which a man placed amid a collection of books becomes enlightened by the very presence of this noble company. Newman's critical remarks were actually a reaction to Sir Robert Peel's[43] address on the opening of a reading room at Tamworth in 1841. Newman's critical edge is primarily aimed at Peel's enlightened thesis that, while becoming wiser, we are automatically becoming better. One thing is obviously presupposed in the description above, namely that the human self is a theoretical construction that is ruled by some external, common, universal, and intelligible rules; and in the case of disobedience and unruly behaviour, only sufficient knowledge is wanting. And these rules exhaust whatever we need to know in order to understand the human person. Therefore, the key to learn the self is outside, not inside. Both Newman and Stein held contrary views. It is true that there are certain aspects of the self that can be viewed from outside, analyzed and expressed in some general terms, otherwise we would not be able to say anything sensible about the person at all, but such knowledge is never exhaustive and can never aspire to a complete view of the person.

In such desperately foreshortened beliefs not only is knowledge the key to understanding the person, to know his or her duties, but it also becomes the safeguard of social peace. Religion is definitely deprived of its supernatural dimension, unless it provides some practical rules for the sustenance of social decorum. Useful Knowledge is its nurse. We can understand that the rationalist needs religion as a kind of embellishment. If it fails to play this role, it may be abandoned. After all, what is religion for, if knowledge is designed to cater for all social needs? Indeed, in the enlightened perspective religion becomes co-equal with knowledge, and the latter is sufficient for moral improvement. Human nature has no need of conversion, it suffices to acquire respective knowledge. The latter secures cooperation, forms intimacies, and eliminates prejudices. Newman rightly observes that "to know is one thing, to do is another; the two things are altogether distinct […]" and "the consciousness of a

43 Robert Peel (1788–1850), British prime minister in the years 1834–1835 and 1841–1846; in the 1840s he enacted free-trade regulations which were designed to relieve the then economic crisis.

duty is not all one with the performance of it."[44] Autonomy furnished by mere theoretical knowledge is insufficient.

Providing different theoretical contents in the form of education will not automatically bring about any practical changes in human conduct, because "the human mind is at best in a very unformed or disordered state; passions and conscience, likings and reason, conflicting,—might rising against right, with the prospect of things getting worse."[45] This is what I shall later call chaos; therefore, the first step is to examine one's own self and its circumstances. We may call this introspection or diagnosis of the individual situation. What is significant is inward change, not a change of external objects, "the mere lulling of the passions to rest by turning the course of thought; not a change of character, but a mere removal of temptation."[46] One should not wonder at this proposal by the utilitarians, if their major belief is that true excellence comes from without, not from within. Now that we are living in a culture of advertisements, this "philosophy of expedients"[47] has become even more popular. Once the criteria of good and bad are removed, and each lifestyle finds its proponents, all obstacles must be removed from its path. There is a remedy for every problem.

7 Examples as the Sources of Proper Conduct

In addition, Newman argues that mere theoretical knowledge, notional apprehension, is incapable of changing man. Expedients are no good here; we need to renovate the heart and the will. In our education, we should begin with faith, conscience, and practice. We need common sense and practical experience. We must approve of differences, because differences are the backbone of Christianity, i.e. of faith, but they are subject to judgements. Differences mean to learn to be judgemental. Contrary to the modern trend towards uniformity, man must learn to evaluate. Since we cannot prove every single aspect of our daily lives, since our knowledge is imperfect, we must begin with faith. And faith also means reliance on someone else's words or examples. Examples appeal to the imagination. There is no power in deduction; we must reach the heart, and the heart is reached "through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, the description.

44 J. H. Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, 262.
45 Ibid., 263.
46 Ibid., 264.
47 See ibid., 266.

Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us."[48] And Newman repeats his ever recurrent argument, namely that it is not enough to know something, we must be certain of it, we must realize it. It must not be "a thing which *is*, but which *we are 'certain about'* [...]," people must "realiz[e] their high maxims in the concrete."[49] We can be indifferent to what we know; we must be touched by it from within in order to be moved. We must realize what we are certain of.

Newman ridicules what he calls "a religion of inferences," for "man is *not* a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. He is influenced by what is direct and precise."[50] This does not mean that the author of these words is against reason. He is simply saying that mere intellectual argumentation is insufficient in dealing with such a complex being as the human person. Moreover, we find here the same affective element that is consistent with Edith Stein's writing. As her commentator writes, "The center of the individual [...] lies in the personal layer, the home of the personal care, the will, and our affective life."[51] Therefore, each person is so complex and no external observer can help him, if he does not make efforts to retrieve all the discordant elements of his very being. More often than not, there is no evidence on which to proceed. In his action he cannot start with proof, rather he must act on faith. We should rather rely on images that come from impressions, and these can be drawn from commitment. If we insist on proofs, we shall be doomed to reasoning *ad infinitum*, whereas we are called to act and "to act you must assume, and that assumption is faith."[52]

In line with the new (romantic) spirit of the age, Newman focuses on the concrete, on images that lead to action. Faith is the first principle of our action, something self-evident that the author is not going to demonstrate. We read: "Why we are so constituted that Faith, not Knowledge or Argument, is our principle of action, is a question with which I have nothing to do; but I think it is a fact, and if it be such, we must resign ourselves to it as best we may, unless we take refuge in the intolerable paradox, that the mass of men are created for nothing, and are meant to leave life as they entered it. So well has this practically been understood in all ages of the world, that no Religion has yet been a Religion of physics or of philosophy. It has ever been synonymous with Revelation. It never has been a deduction from what we know: it has ever

48 Ibid., 293, 304.
49 Ibid., 293.
50 Ibid., 294, 295.
51 S. Borden, *Edith Stein*, 41.
52 J. H. Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, 295.

been an assertion of what we are to believe. It has never lived in a conclusion; it has ever been a message, or a history, or a vision. No legislator or priest ever dreamed of educating our moral nature by science or by argument."[53] Examples help us emulate others by giving images and by stirring emotions. As the British writer and playwright William Somerset Maugham (1874 –1965) astutely observed, "emotion speaks a language that all may understand."[54]

This is indeed a very profound recapitulation of Newman's main message. We should rely on instances and patterns, on examples and testimonies. Christianity is a supernatural history, it is almost scenic—as Newman puts it beautifully—in order to appeal to human imagination, in order to touch the human being in all the dimensions of his being. Interestingly enough, Newman is also referring to the dissenters—those Protestants who would not join the Anglican Church. Those radical believers left Britain and set sail for the New World, i.e. America. He rightly observes that dissenting teaching was dissipated because it was based on the speculations of logic rather than on the dogmatism of faith. If there is no centre, no common point, speculations diverge in various directions. They succumb to the centrifugal forces of various centres of attraction. Speculations that have no unifying centre—like the dogmas of the faith—are propagated away in their independent circles and revolve around some temporary forces of attraction. Such transitory centres are, again, short-lived because they are ruled by the same principles of speculation. Newman sets the instruction of the Church in opposition to this pathetic outcome, because this instruction, "with all its defects and mistakes, comes to some end, for it started from some beginning."[55]

8 The Power of the Particular

Science, as it is, does not lead to religion, although in some particular cases it may. This, however, does not come from the nature of science, but from the nature of a concrete human being whose mind is of a religious turn. Henceforth, the science of nature may lead to religion just as much as to atheism. A speculation is ruled by its inherent cohesion of antecedents and consequents, and, as such, can serve any kind of argumentation, for its only criterion is exactitude.

53 Ibid., 296.

54 S. Maugham, *The Moon and Sixpence*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963, 6.

55 J. H. Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, 297.

If we consider a dogma, it can be assented to, and appropriated as a reality "by the religious imagination; it is held as a truth, by the theological intellect,"[56] for theology is primarily occupied with notions. What we need for action is not a mere notional knowledge, but imaginative apprehension. We have a representation of things which is true, but not adequate. We learn about the existence of things that leave impressions on us "by instinct."[57] In this instinctive manner, the existence of physical objects is brought home to us. We learn about the Creator through the sense of moral obligation. It is from our mental phenomena that we deduce the existence of the external world. And from the experience of moral obligation we deduce the existence of some first principle, and this first principle is, for Newman, the fact "that we have by nature a conscience"[58] with its attendant judgments of approbation or blame. And here is the room "for the real apprehension of a Divine Sovereign and Judge."[59]

Newman outlines his position in the *Grammar of Assent* when he attempts to define the difference between theology and religion; in other words, between notional and real assent. We read the following: "Religion has to do with the real, and the real is the particular; theology has to do with what is notional, and the notional is the general and systematic. Hence theology has to do with the dogma of the Holy Trinity as a whole made up of many propositions; but religion has to do with each of those separate propositions which compose it, and lives and thrives in the composition of them. In them it finds the motives for devotions and faithful obedience; while theology on the other hand forms and protects them by virtue of its function of regarding them, not merely one by one, but as a system of truth."[60]

Behind propositions there must be enlivening principles, and it is to these principles that the believer should assent. Newman decided to quit the Anglican Church when he realized that "she had no life."[61] Theology can help us attain a scientific knowledge of the Christian faith, for in theology we acquire notions, "but religion is both personal and real, and, unless we content ourselves with a vague religious sentiment, the only way to restore Christianity

56 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 93.

57 Ibid., 96.

58 Ibid., 98.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 122.

61 Edith Stein, in her remarks on civilization, also notes that "it owes its existence" to individual people and their authentic response to values. When we say that civilization "withers away," we mean that it is individual people who have betrayed "the souls upon whom the civilization should be bestowing life" (E. Stein, *Philosophy and Psychology of the Humanities*, 219).

in the hearts and minds of men is to teach them how to assent to dogmas as to so many real and particular objects."[62] Rather than to propositions, we assent to realities, to images, to people.

The question now is obviously whether we have this religious imagination as our natural endowment or whether we can develop it. Religious imagination makes one capable of grasping theological truths and keep them alive in the novelty of individual expression "by habits of personal religion."[63] In other words, when we practice religion. There is no immediate relationship between religious imagination or the vivid apprehension of supernatural objects and theoretical knowledge; that is why absorbing a considerable amount of knowledge does not necessarily bring about an experience. On the contrary, theoretical speculation may blunt its sharpness, as reflection often does. The same proposition which is expressive of a religious truth may serve two purposes: notional and real. Theology, being a theoretical knowledge, "deals with notional apprehension; religion with imaginative."[64] Hence, there is no contradiction between a dogma and personal belief, even though the rationalists claimed there is, because the real apprehension is in the recipient, not in the proposition. A dogma is only a mediatory stage that proceeds to a vivid grasp of the reality hidden behind the notion. We have no other way but to use propositions in our intellectual intercourse. Otherwise, we would not be able to communicate at all. And, contrary to those who might argue that Newman was an anti-intellectualist, let us put it bluntly "that in religion the imagination and affections should always be under the control of reason."[65] Indeed, this is the Anselmian *fides querens intellectum*. I may admire the lofty and awe-inspiring ceilings of cathedrals with the most solemn and rapturous words, but emotional reaction does not contradict the marble solidity of the columns upon which the ceilings rest. The intricate shapes of the Baroque style must be supported by solid frames. Religion and theology go hand in hand. In other words, we could say that those people who claim that they would accept religion without its institutional garb are naïve.

It is interesting to note that, after so many appreciative words written on behalf of the imagination and its importance for real apprehension, Newman should protect reason. He does this to the extent that he writes that imaginative or emotional sentiment falls "back upon the intellect for its stay, when sense cannot be called into exercise; and it is in this way that devotion falls

62 E. Gilson, *Introduction*, in: J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 19.
63 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 106.
64 Ibid., 108.
65 Ibid., 109.

back upon dogma."[66] The lofty rib-vault ceiling or fan vaulting are our sentiments, and the dogma is the pillar. Or, to take another example, let us consider late medieval altarpieces. For the onlooker, they present a complicated network of geometrical figures, facial grimaces and bodily postures expressive of emotions (e.g. the Veit Stoss altarpiece in Kraków, Poland). They seem to be hanging in the air and living an independent existence, yet their sculptor has pinned them down to their background of larch wood. We have long noticed that Newman uses the words "intellect" and "reason" alternately. In some contexts he treats them synonymously, in others as being different.

Before proceeding further, I would like to turn the reader's attention to a linguistic example which I myself find especially illuminating. This time I shall have to refer to another language. The word "assent" in the Polish language is translated as "przyświadczenie." This word is, in fact, composed of two components: "przy" (at) and "świadczenie" (testimony). Because these two components are, in themselves, meaningful, let us separate them and write it with a separating hyphen, i.e. "przy-świadczenie," and define real assent as "being *at* something in order to *testify* to it." Such a definition, I am convinced, renders exactly the meaning of real assent. If we really assent to something, we are ready to testify to it, since we are drawn to it; the intellect and emotions are united in one action. And here is the power of the particular, the enticing force of an edifying example, of a history, of a message, for they encourage their witnesses to imitate them. And their force surpasses that of arguments.

9 Assent versus Inference

As we have said, assent is unconditional and inference is conditional. This distinction is of the utmost interest, for inference, being conditional, precedes assent, which is unconditional. How come that something that is conditional can precede that which is unconditional? If we wish to carry out a logical proof of Newman's exposition, we shall easily understand it, and the reasoning may run as follows: assent is not the last moment in a series of inferential steps, hence it does not automatically result from a string of antecedents and consequents, but is the agent's own decision, or—to repeat Newman's phrase—is the *personal result*. Ultimately, it is the person who decides, not the logical processes. Inference is a conditional proposition in which, on the basis of premises, a conclusion is implied. A classic example of an inference is the form

66 Ibid.

of implication: if p, then q, which in logical notation is written as p > q. If p occurs, then q takes place; if it rains, I'll take an umbrella. Inference is conditional, because the certainty of the conclusion is measured by the certainty of the premise.[67] Newman makes a definite distinction between inferences and assents. Inference, being conditional, allows for degrees; assent, being unconditional, does not allow for degrees. We have already mentioned that, for Newman, there is no gradation in assent. If assent had degrees, it could only ratify demonstration or induction. And if that were the case, one would be permitted to assent only to such propositions which had strong evidential proof attendant on them, i.e. based either on rationalistic grounds (some self-evident truths) or intuition. Let me put it this way: if there is no gradation in assent, and assent is distinct from inference, then it could be metaphorically understood as a picture of the person at the moment of decision. At the moment of assent the person reveals what he is; it is like a momentary reflection in a mirror, but, of course, preceded by the personal history of maturation.

When man is acquainted with a particular area, his imagination opens up to cover what cannot be demonstrated. Thus, we can speak about mathematical, physical or poetic imagination. Naturally, we are not expected to be specialists in mathematics, physics or poetry, unless we have long been acquainted with the areas in question. No-one is expected to predict what happens when mercury is immersed in water if they do not have respective knowledge. What is interesting to note in this context is the fact that familiarity with some areas expand our imagination. Inasmuch as mathematics and physics can be treated as areas fairly limited to some groups of people, and no-one feels guilty if he cannot answer questions which pertain to these areas, the situation is entirely different when they concern what commonly belongs to all. And such is the case with moral and religious matters. One element, however, is common to, say, physics and morality. In both of them, one needs practice, but of a different kind. Generally, we are not expected to have a specialized knowledge in mathematics or physics unless we are employed as mathematicians or physicists. We lack the respective keenness of the ratiocinative faculty. But, conversely, we are expected to know what is good or bad conduct with our fellow citizens in daily matters.

An interesting example is presented by Jacques Hadamard (1865–1963), a French mathematician and psychologist, in his book *An Essay on the Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field*. He refers to a report on Friedrich Gauss's

67 See P. J. Hurley, *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988, 18 ff.

experience that was mentioned in a Poincaré's[68] lecture. This German "prince of mathematicians," as Gauss (1777 –1855) is commonly called, had unsuccessfully been trying to prove an arithmetical theorem. Seeing all his efforts in vain, the mathematician abandoned his ventures. Then, as Gauss himself reports, "two days ago, I succeeded, not on account of my painful efforts, but by the grace of God. Like a sudden flash of lightning, the riddle happened to be solved. I myself cannot say what was the conducting thread which connected what I previously knew with what made my success possible."[69] I think Gauss's example excellently shows what Newman meant, namely that the human mind always thinks in its own way. Owing to his long acquaintance with the subject, the German mathematician found a solution at the level of his tacit ratiocination. It is not the brain alone, empowered by logical structures, that thinks, but the person. And assent, indeed, was not the last stage of inference. There was rather a gap between the last antecedent and the final conclusion. This is what happens to a mind immersed in a concrete reality—it acquires the ability for a special kind of intuition, the elements of which have no explicit form, of supra-logical judgement, of unperceived impressions. In other words, the mind is drawn into a silent dialogue—if I may express it metaphorically—the ingredients of which unfold to the degree to which it is engaged, being found rather than constructed. These points will be dealt with further on.

Gauss's example exemplifies not only mathematical minds in which "the truth flashes at once [...] and [they] see the truth all of a heap, by one act."[70] In like manner, we think in our own individual way, therefore it is difficult to establish one measure between two minds. The reason why person A views a fact in his own way depends on how he looks at it. Newman identifies reasoning with intuition. He is even willing to relate intuition to our internal acts, to relate it "to our own operations."[71] In this sense, Newman follows Dugald Stewart rather than Locke. What Newman is driving at is the kind of unity that is unmediated. I grasp something with one act instead of being divided into a string of reflections: I think A and reflect on the one who thinks A. Now, if we recall again the example of Gauss, we may come to a similar conclusion. The solution appeared as a flash in Gauss's intellect, but it was preceded by an arduous process of ratiocination. It is an open question and, apparently, impossible

68 Jules Henri Poincaré (1854–1812), French mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher of science.

69 See J. Hadamard, *An Essay on the Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1954, 26.

70 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 73, 75.

71 Ibid., 2, 77.

to answer: what is the relationship between the process and the flash? Is there any causality? The only thing we know is that the process was prior to the flash. We may, certainly, claim that the flash was caused by the process but we would not be able to demonstrate this. As I repeat here and elsewhere, we have these two elements at work: intuition and process (reflection). Intuition seems to be safer and more reliable (depending on the intellectual and moral character).

In abstract matters, it is easier to imagine conclusions that must be unconditionally accepted, but in concrete matters we are dealing with probabilities. If I am going to sign a business contract with person X, I can never be a hundred percent certain that X will agree, or that he interprets the conditions of the contract in the same way as I do, let alone his future conduct.

Locke's view of what is rational is limited to inference, in which the transition from premises is strictly guided and controlled by reason. Let us note in passing that this approach is typical of enlightened modernity, i.e. to have everything under control, to be the master and author of one's life. This guidance and control is, in fact, reduced to a mechanical process in which the conclusion is implied by self-evident premises. Thus, inference is an event within an immanent logic, and there is no effort on the part of the acting agent. Newman criticizes Locke in that he approves of absolute assent only when premises inevitably lead to an infallible conclusion, and he calls someone who would accept something that has no such grounds an enthusiast, but on the other hand he allows a conclusion which rises to the degree of assurance on the basis of probabilities near to certitude. Whatever is added to the conclusion on the part of the agent that rises above evidence is called surplusage.

Leaving the details aside, let it suffice to pinpoint the main difference between the rationalist-empiricist approach and Newman's personalist approach. For Newman, the human person is not determined by the premises in his assent, principally because—as we have said—assent is distinct from inference. It must be separate from the latter if it is not to be merely a superfluous act. For if the person is called upon to assent to something, there must be—and I think we feel it—a kind of effort on the part of the agent, otherwise agreement comes automatically from the mere sequence of premises. Moreover, as we have said before, we often give assent to opinions and views that become the furniture of our minds. Such activity is frequently devoid of any reflection; they are "self-sustained in our minds, and have been so for long years; they are in no sense conclusions; they imply no process of thought."[72]

72 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 142.

Newman's basic contribution to our theory of knowledge is his thoroughgoing analysis of acquisition.

Contrary to the rationalist-empiricist view, the depository of our minds is not composed of clear-cut concepts for which we can always account, thus being acquitted of enthusiastic censure, but rather it is a deposit of living moments of our lifetime that gradually (and often imperceptibly) accumulate. We are not perfect or impartial constructivists of our own minds who reign supreme over them and can account for every idea they hold true or are much attached to. We may have clung to some concepts and then discarded them when new reasons appeared. Newman has observed a certain regularity with regard to inference and assent, and if we evaluate his observation in an unbiased manner, we shall admit that he is right. Indeed, we often assent to many things before we deign to examine them. Quite frequently, we stick to views that are contrary to what we otherwise theoretically hold or practically implement. And, in practice, inference works differently than assent. As we know, inference is composed of premises and conclusions, whereas in daily life we assent to propositions, images, persons, and testimonies. Such is our abundant inheritance. And, contrary to Locke's view, the ideas we hold in our minds are not all a close-knit network of elements the self can account for. Each time we rather contact the person who holds certain ideas. The only thing we can say is *secretum meum mihi*.

If we consider this matter historically, we indeed find examples of philosophers who defended views that contradicted their philosophical positions. And I think that this is an evident argument that contradicts Locke's view, namely the fact that we find in our mental repository ideas which are at variance with one another. Plato and Aristotle approved of slavery, and Locke himself supported Britain's imperial ambitions. Even his *Letter Concerning Toleration*, that was supposed to defend religious freedom, in fact only ossified religious intolerance, for he proposed the State Church and the ruler's denomination as the mainstay for social peace, a view that resulted from the rationalist tenets, i.e. one ruler and his religion are like the same idea held by all citizens' minds. It took quite a while for Americans to come to grips with racial discrimination and slavery. Many a time Christians could be accused of hypocrisy throughout their history, and the scribes and Pharisees were called outright hypocrites. In our own twentieth-century, Stein's colleague and Husserl's disciple, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), was an ardent proponent of Nazi ideology.

Such being the case with inference versus assent, therefore Newman rightfully underwent a careful study of the grammar of assent, i.e. how we come round to accepting certain truths and how we hold them in our minds. It is not so rare a case when the inferential reasons for the recognition of our assent

remain, but the assent dies down. We seem to have lost our belief in what can still, logically, be defended. Sometimes our convictions change imperceptibly, so even we cannot account for this rapid change. In this context, let me make a digression that is very supportive of the heroes of my book. In view of what I have said so far about the distinction between inference and assent, it seems clear that both Newman and Stein had to reformulate their assents. They arrived at a turning point in their lives where they had to take an entire new direction much to their surprise, and yet in line with their inner calls. As new circumstances appear, the reasons for the old arguments remain the same, nevertheless we feel obliged to make a new assent. There are frequent cases where people loudly profess truths they have never thought of practicing. They "may believe without practising."[73] Ratiocination does not always lead to a belief. Arguments may be as strong as ever, but they do not secure assent. We hold a truth, for we do not find arguments to refute it, or, conversely, we may refute a truth, but cannot muster arguments to explain why, or else we come to accept it after a long while.

All the time, therefore, we have been talking about a certain inherent incongruity between arguments and minds. There is much more to an argument to be assented to than its mere logical cohesion. For Stein, we remember, the moment when she might have started to ponder Christianity was the way Reinach's wife reacted to her husband's untimely death. She demonstrated no despondency or despair, yet braved the predicament with composure. Stein did not know what it was, or whence this unexpected and dignified peace came from.

Even strong arguments may prove futile in inclining our minds to assent to them, even though we can find no fault with them from the logical point of view. In the area of mathematics, we come across truths that are irrefutable for the sake of their self-evidence (as, for instance, in geometry). Nevertheless, one can find people who still resist assenting to them, although they cannot counter them. In the case of elementary mathematical theorems, the situation is much simpler, and it usually elicits our prompt assent. Newman suggests, however, "long and intricate mathematical investigations" in which "every step […] requires a specially sustained attention and an effort of memory to have in the mind all at once all the steps of the proof, with their bearings on each other, and the antecedents which they severally involve […]."[74] At this point we may refer to Gauss's example. I have been constantly repeating

73 Ibid., 142–143.

74 Ibid., 144.

Newman's perception that the nature of assent, unlike as Descartes believed it to be, is primarily personal, not logical. I do not want to say thereby that it is straightforwardly illogical, but that it calls for some personal logic, a subjective context, an implicit mode of thinking, not merely its explicit form for its explanation.

Let us take another example. We may find some primitive tribes who still hold to their own belief, long refuted by modern science. Medieval man believed that the Earth was flat and that the stars were quite near. The Copernican revolutionary ideas, despite abundant and convincing evidence, were long opposed by those who had assented to the view that the Earth was in the centre of the universe. Or let us think about the advent of new technology in farming. The new equipment that appeared undoubtedly facilitated the job, but was opposed due to the attachment to manual work. Distinct though inference and assent are, it is true that they have something in common. Arguments in favour of a certain conclusion, which naturally lead to the latter, naturally facilitate assent; they do not determine it, but facilitate it. Newman himself is in favour of such a view, that there must be some preliminary reasons for assenting. Therefore, he makes a distinction between apprehension and understanding; we can apprehend things we do not understand. But assent may be withdrawn despite the fact that the reasons still remain and hold water, or may be sustained, as I have already mentioned, when the reasons are missing.

And then we arrive at the final definition of assent, which reads that "assent is the acceptance of truth, and truth is the proper object of the intellect, and no one can hold conditionally what by the same act he holds to be true, here too is a reason for saying that assent is an adhesion without reserve or doubt to the proposition to which it is given."[75] I think this definition is clear. We hold something as true, which does not mean that our belief is infallible, and that when new evidence comes the old beliefs may be abandoned. Newman is simply trying to illustrate the activity of life in which we are performing numerous acts of assent, some of them are just passing experiences, others stay longer in our minds. Frequently, we do not reflect upon our acts; we behave spontaneously, rather than, like in inferences, ponder on the premises. Indeed, we adhere "without reserve or doubt" to a given proposition, although, naturally, we submit those acts of assent to reflective evaluation. It appears, then, that they can either be confirmed, or must be abandoned on a careful analysis; they do not hold up to criticism.

75 Ibid., 145.

There are many cases where we do not assent at all. Hence, Newman claims that assent, if it does exist, is always unconditional, as I have already said. We naturally assent to things which are reasonings, not demonstrative, for our nature makes us "think or act [with] the acceptance of truths, not intuitive, not demonstrated, yet sovereign." They "lie outside the narrow range of conclusions to which logic, formal or virtual, is tethered; nor has any philosophical theory the power to force on us a rule which will not work for a day."[76] Thus, we can daily assent to things which do not follow from intuition or demonstration; we naturally take them for granted. We need to distinguish between a mental act—the unconditional assent—and a scientific rule, e.g. a reflection on the act of assent. Newman is trying to grasp and elaborate on what the mind is actually doing when assenting. And he holds that there is nothing mediating between the mind and the object of assent. There is only a dynamic tension between the person that is supposed to acquire a belief, and the belief itself. Therefore, the most important thing is the position of the mind towards the proposition, not the relationship between a conclusion and its premises. In any case, there are concomitant circumstances attendant on each assent, but these should be distinguished from assent itself. When assent is associated with some strong emotions, like love or hatred, we express it respectively, but the attendant emotions have nothing to do with the alleged degrees of assent.

We assent to propositions differently, which does not mean that there is a gradation in assent, but that assent is relative to our preparation. This preparation may result from external circumstances or concomitant factors of our character, e.g. "in the emotions, in the ratiocinative faculty, or in the imagination."[77] We may, for instance, be prejudiced towards certain things presented for our assent. After all, as Newman summarizes his stance on human nature, "man is *not* a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. He is influenced by what is direct and precise."[78] Therefore, assenting is not merely an intellectual act, and if so, it is an intellectual act of a special kind. Even in the case of notional assent, we, living in concrete circumstances, are surrounded by a complicated network of sentiments and resentments, likings and dislikings, so that the outcome can never be taken for granted and must at each time be attempted anew.

76 Ibid., 150.
77 Ibid., 154.
78 J. H. Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, 294.

10 Simple Assents versus Complex Assents

Simple assents are distinct from complex assents, and the force of assent depends very much on whether it is impressed upon the imagination or entertained by the intellect. Newman summarizes what he understands by simple assent as "the mental assertion of an intelligible proposition, [...] an act of the intellect direct, absolute, complete in itself, unconditional, arbitrary, yet not incompatible with an appeal to argument, and at least in many cases exercised unconsciously."[79] It turns out that many of our assents result from habit, from our nature. We agree to proposals because they are conducive to our self. Newman is not satisfied with that stage of assenting. Many assents are unconscious because we are ignorant of our selves, i.e. we have not reflected yet on what truths we are going to hold. One might say that, for instance, we mechanically agree to numerous things which we find pleasurable. Here, again, the ancient principle "know thyself" acts as a precondition for comprehending assent. In other words, know yourself if you wish to understand why you assent to A rather than B.

Complex or reflex assents are made consciously and deliberately. In complex assent, we reflect upon something we have previously assented to. We investigate our assent, trying to prove it. The whole structure that Newman is now laying open before our eyes reminds us of Locke's primary and secondary ideas. Inference may lead to an assent and may follow it as a kind of feedback upon its truth. There is no incompatibility between assenting and demonstrating, but there is a distinction between inquiry and investigation. Inquiry contradicts assent, for it denotes doubt. We cannot doubt something we are assenting to. We may assent to something, which we hold as true, and then investigate the grounds of our assent. Eventually, we can reflectively assent again to that which we have previously spontaneously assented. Hence, there is no inconsistency between assenting to something as being true and trying to prove it at the same time. Indeed, when Edith Stein assented to the truth of Teresa of Avila's book, she embarked on investigating it afterwards. Let us observe that the first step is assent, although I may not yet know why. Then, I take the next step and ponder over what I have read and found myself compelled to assent to.

What is typical of Newman's exposition here, is his stress on impression and image. Firstly, I can *see* the truth, or I find myself obliged (though I do not yet comprehend the cause of my obligation) to assent to it, and then I feel

79 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 157.

naturally compelled to ask: what is it that has stirred my emotions? I found it true. What is the nature of this truth? Why do I feel obliged to pay attention to it? It is all the more interesting when we assent to propositions we would have not even considered worthy of our slightest attention before. What is in them that we find so appealing?

We cannot be, as Newman writes, "believers and inquirers" at the same time, we cannot "be both inside and outside of the Church," and if we are "seeking" we have "not found."[80] This point is interesting in the context of comparing Newman with Stein. In a sense, he was in a more complicated situation because, when he began to doubt that the Anglican Church was the true Church, he was an insider and outsider simultaneously. Stein's position was entirely different. She was not a Christian; therefore, she was a radical outsider, even more radical for her declaration of disbelief. Perhaps Newman was an inquirer when he began to doubt the truth about the Anglican Church. And when the truth about the Catholic Church gradually began to dawn on him, he turned from an inquirer into an investigator.

I hope that the reader will understand my reservations that I am constantly making when positing some conclusions about Newman's intentions. He himself is full of such reservations, knowing that when we are considering something in theory, i.e. abstractly, focusing on certain aspects, we are always in danger of simplifications and generalizations. Such being the case, then it is possible that there are people on the borderline in individual cases, both inquirers and investigators, as if they were standing on the threshold without making any resolution either to enter or to leave. It seems to me that the situation of being in-between is becoming all too common a case, rather than a rarity. We are living in a world where inconsistency and hesitation have become the rule; there are many people who state something one day and deny it another. Being non-judgmental has become the rule, for such a position seems to satisfy political correctness.

The truth and the conclusion are two aspects of a given proposition. A conclusion does not need to be true, and we may try to find the conclusion of a true proposition. Newman is constantly reminding us that inference and assent are distinct acts, for he proposes a nineteenth-century paradigm aimed against its enlightened predecessor; nevertheless, they are not contradictory or exclusive, i.e. we may set about inferring a proposition in order to prove it to someone who disagrees with us, while at the same time we assent to its truth. Thus, inference and assent are two aspects of the same proposition, consistent

80 Ibid., 159.

with each other. Only "inquiry is inconsistent with assent,"[81] whereas investigation is a plausible procedure.

The individual is often besieged by incompatibilities and inconsistencies, so this is why Newman rightly considers observing the individual in concrete circumstances. We may investigate the credibility of a doctrine whose truth we assent to, for, in an investigation, there are no doubts as in an inquiry. It seems that we need to realize what we have assented to, and realization can be carried out through investigation. What is characteristic of belief is "the utter absence of all thought, or expectation, or fear of changing" and "a spontaneous resolution never to change is inconsistent with the idea of belief; for the very force and absoluteness of the act of assent precludes any such resolutions."[82] In like manner, Newman consistently defends his idea of development and evolution, because to live means to change. And we must remember that throughout all this Newman does not want to solve a merely theoretical problem, but is constantly probing into the phenomenon of assent; he is constantly wondering what we are actually doing when we are assenting to something. We need to revise our first assents; such is the logic of our growth, to examine their grounds, since they are very often nothing more than prejudices. A complex assent, i.e. an assent to an assent, becomes a conviction.

11 The Lazarus Case

In order to exemplify once more the distinction between inference and assent and to demonstrate that there is no gradation of assent, i.e. we either assent to something or we do not, but assent can be stronger or weaker, I propose the following illustration. Let us consider the three sentences below:

1) Lazarus came to work very early today.
2) Lazarus did not come to work today because he died yesterday.
3) Lazarus died yesterday, but Jesus visited his home and brought him back to life, so he came to work today as usual.

We can assent to all three sentences, but the force of our assent varies according to their attendant probabilities; we, at least, apprehend them. Naturally, our assent is strongest in sentence (1) because here the antecedent probabilities are the most numerous. We know Lazarus, we know that he is very committed and conscientious; he likes his job and he usually arrives early. He is

81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 160–161.

a punctual person with a natural sense of duty. Sentence (2) is still probable, though subjectively less plausible. We only saw Lazarus yesterday and he was in good form. Generally, he is not obese and we have no information of any history of crippling or dangerous diseases in his family. He loves sport and has healthy eating habits. When we saw him yesterday, he emanated enthusiasm. He was full of energy and kept telling us about his future plans. He could not help waiting to see them realized. Now, sentence (3) to which we are invited to assent, seems least likely. It is true, human beings are mortal, so that—even though we know that Lazarus is very fit—we can still accept the message as probable, but very unlikely. Therefore, we think it highly incredible, as our general knowledge concerning human nature tells us that people die, their otherwise healthy constitution notwithstanding. The fact, however, that someone came to Lazarus and brought him back to life is very improbable. People do not rise from the dead after they die. We have not heard of any like events. Nevertheless, we can still assent to it, but this assent presupposes our belief in Jesus' power over death, His power restoring other people's lives.

Let us take other examples that we know so well. I am constantly trying to show this specific character of notional apprehension versus real apprehension. There are numerous mysterious encounters in the New Testament which, however, are understood only notionally. Otherwise, they should bewilder us rather than create a comfortable acquiescence. It suffices to visualize one such scene. A stranger approaches two men casting their nets into the sea. And he addresses them thus: "Come, follow me," and they immediately leave their nets and follow him, just like other two who are mending their nets—they leave their job and their father at the stranger's calls and comply with the proposal.[83] Is this not amazing? Should it not be read with one eyebrow raised? They might have heard about the stranger. There have been widespread rumours about his extraordinary deeds and his outlandish teaching; nevertheless, this all seems insufficient for such a radical decision. The moment we assent to it, and perhaps whisper in bewilderment "I don't understand," this is paradoxically the moment of real apprehension. In all other cases, we try to rationalize and extrapolate some events we know about that particular encounter from before the ages. And it is in such cases that we begin to comprehend the difference between notional and real assent. When one ceases to argue and begins to feel, imagine, and *see* the event, then one is open to accepting the reality. In such cases, we can observe the essence of real assent, and that it is distinct from notional assent, i.e. from speculation and from inference.

83 See Mk 1:16–20.

In one of his university sermons, Newman writes: "All is dreary till we believe, what our hearts tell us, that we are subjects of His Governance […]."[84] We must bear in mind that Newman understood the term "believe" in a very broad sense, not merely reduced to the sphere of religion. For him, believing was the fundamental element of our being in the world, our basic attitude in knowing the world. Inasmuch as our knowledge is imperfect and our ignorance irremediable, we need to take many things for granted, i.e. to believe that they are as they present themselves to us. This "belief attitude" is not in the least our surrender to some kind of irrational or antirational positions. On the contrary, it is merely the result of the sober estimation of our human condition. Let us observe in passing that we find this kind of attitude as the anthropological foundation of the twentieth-century Austrian School of Economics. In the writings of one of its prominent representatives, the economist Friedrich von Hayek, we read these memorable words: "our whole civilization in consequence rests, and must rest, on our *believing* much that we cannot *know* to be true in the Cartesian sense."[85] In other words, Hayek, like Newman, propounds the modification of the enlightened paradigm of human knowledge. Let us note that they are both opponents of the authoritarian vision of society. If each person is the special centre of his own actions and master of his own knowledge, any external attempts at general planning should be regarded as unjustified usurpations. Such is the romantic heritage and remodelling of seventeenth-century rationalism. The person is a centre in himself, striving to gain knowledge, and making use of all his personal endowments. Limited as he is, he can still possess certitude.

12 Certitude—the Goal of Personal Effort

There are two conditions with which to prove certitude: *a priori*—from the nature of the case, and *a posteriori*—from experience. As regards the former, certitude results from a reflex act of assent which pronounces that the proposition is "objectively and subjectively true:—then the assent may be called a *perception*," 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

84 J. H. Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1872, 348. (Further referred to as *University Sermons*).

85 F. Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, vol. 1, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, 12. Let us also observe that Hayek is more identified with the liberal position in philosophical thinking.

I know'."[86] We arrive at the moment of seeing something, of which mention has already been made. I cannot deny what I have seen with my own eyes or heard with my own ears. On the other hand, we are all too familiar with the not-so-rare experience that the same fact is interpreted in entirely different ways. At times, we are even shocked that others baulk at what we take as only obvious and natural; they find it hard to understand or believe. There are four elements that come to point at certitude: perception; the one who perceives (I perceive something to be true); conviction that a proposition is certain; and knowledge (I know that it is true).

Newman characterizes the true nature of certitude in the following manner: its characteristic is that we are "confident indeed that that certitude will last" and "if it did fail [...] [,] the thing itself, whatever it is, of which we are certain, will remain just as it is, true and irreversible."[87] Thus, if we shrink away from any speculation on the topics we hold as false or even dangerous, it is not that we are uncertain about their being false or dangerous, but because we are afraid of ourselves lest we should be fooled into accepting them. Therefore, it is not a mark of certitude if we hold on to something, but then, when confronted by the opinion of another person, we hesitate and become unsteady in our views. One basic feature of certitude is tranquility of the mind and an unwillingness to become engaged in controversies, or to be drawn into proving that which we hold to be true. People who are certain are reluctant disputants. The intellectual anxiety that we may feel, however, is the opposite of certitude. If we are really certain, we do not have to assure ourselves by multiplying ever newer arguments on behalf of our alleged certitude.

Newman emphasizes the role of the imagination, but in his argumentation he seems to assign a greater role to the intellect. The imagination is powerful, but the intellect is more reliable. Here is how he beautifully describes it, in words worthy of sublime poetry, there are vacillations of someone who has not yet reached the stage of certitude: "anxieties and alarms may be merely emotional and from the imagination, not intellectual; parallel to the beating of the heart, [...] that trembling of the limbs, of even the bravest men, before a battle, when standing still to receive the first attack of the enemy [...], that palpitating self-interrogation, that trouble of the mind lest it should not believe strongly enough [...]."[88] All these symptoms are evident proofs that the individual mind has not yet reposed in certitude. Newman calls them "the meteorological phenomena of the mind," which interfere with certitude because "to be certain of

86 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 162, 163.
87 Ibid., 165.
88 Ibid., 167.

a truth is to be careless of objections to it [...]."[89] Such being the nature of our certitude, we may legitimately ask whether Newman, at the time when he was an Anglican, was certain of the truths he held and which were in contrast to his later views. One explanation that can be proposed would read as follows: it was a time of assenting, not yet of certitude, and we know that assent is distinct from certitude. Thus, the fact that Newman joined the Oxford Movement is the best proof that he had not found certitude yet, the many truths he kept assenting to notwithstanding.

Certitude is different from assent, as we have noted. It is more like a reflection on assent, or a complex assent, a series of assents. Like in a mathematical series, we come closer and closer to the ultimate conclusion, a conclusion that is unlike the conclusion in inference. In certitude, not only do we assent to something, but we are aware of ourselves as assenting. Apart from tranquility, of which mention has already been made, there are other symptoms of certitude, such as "a feeling of satisfaction and self-gratulation, of intellectual security [...], a sense of success, attainment, possession, finality"; it is "united to a sentiment *sui generis* in which it lives and is manifested."[90] Therefore, certitude is not spontaneous, on the spur of the moment; rather, it is an arduous process of going somewhere, travelling to an unknown harbour. Through a tangle of successive assents followed by reflections, I eventually reach my goal. We have this double meaning in certitude, i.e. reaching something and the awareness of having reached it. I arrive at a goal and feel satisfaction from having arrived. In other words, I have not reached the truth until I feel satisfaction, but satisfaction in the form of intellectual security is entirely distinct from the truth. I do not seek the truth in order to feel satisfaction, for the latter is attendant on my having arrived at the truth. We can see, therefore, in certitude both the intellectual and emotional moments. This conclusion is important, especially when we consider Edith Stein and her concept of empathy. For the Carmelite saint, our intellectual life depends on how we respond to values. Therefore, as Sarah Borden notes, "It is not our thoughts which reveal most intimately our person, but our affective life."[91] This is an excellent recapitulation of Newman's heritage in Stein's doctrine, or at least could be understood as such. And I have already alluded here to the importance of the affective side of our personhood as being a strong theme both in Newman and Stein. The person unites the mental and sensate levels in his cognitive relationship with the world.

89 Ibid., 168.
90 Ibid.
91 S. Borden, *Edith Stein*, 40.

And here is the difference between certitude and mere knowledge. Certitude is "the repose in self and in its object," it is "the consciousness of having that knowledge."[92] In other words, I am certain of *something*, and I know that it is *I* who am certain of it. For Newman, then, the subject is present in the moment of knowledge; certitude is not an external relationship and correspondence between the object and the subject. It is not a theoretical distance from the object under consideration, but rather a commitment to what I am certain of. In the classical philosophy of Thomism, the proper object of the intellect is to know the truth, and Newman goes further: the second element is the sense of possession. I perceive the truth and this truth becomes mine; I can see the truth and I am in the truth. This is like being embraced by the object of knowledge. It is interesting to note that Newman also uses such terms as "a half-assent," "a faint and languid assent," phrases which seem contradictory to his claim as to the unconditional character of assent. We must remember, however, that when we call something "a half-assent" we mean the circumstances of a given assent rather than its nature. It is the specific condition of the knower, not the object.

There is yet another issue that calls for a commentary. One may wonder what is the difference between the acquisition of ideas in Locke's empiricism and Newman. Locke argued that man could furnish his mind only with such ideas that he can account for, i.e. the ideas that can be elicited from inferences. And because indubitable premises lead to certain conclusions, the rational man must be aware of what he allows to enter the composition of his mind. In both Locke and Newman we are masters of our mental possessions. The main difference between the two British scholars we find in the nature of our acquisition. In Locke, the appeal is made to some universal logic, whereas in Newman we refer to a personal acquisition. Therefore, if, for Locke, those who hold something they cannot prove are censored as enthusiasts deprived of toleration, for Newman, they are governed by their personal logic, the logic of the heart in which the acquisition is more subtle and hidden, and therefore hard to expose. To sum up, there is this experience of possession in Locke and in Newman, but there is a marked difference when the mind is considered to be a universal construction or a personal centre. In Newman, the person not only possesses the truth, but is also possessed by it, or in fact primarily possessed by it.

The main point of Newman's analysis of certitude was that it is a natural state of mind. At times, he seems to be inconsequent in his claim that certitude

92 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 169.

is distinct from assent. In the *Grammar of Assent* we read: "That Certitude is a natural and normal state of mind, and not (as sometimes objected) one of its extravagances or infirmities, is proved indeed by the remarks which I have made above on the same objection, as directed against Assent; for Certitude is only one of its forms."[93] How can assent be distinct from certitude if it is "only one of its forms"? On the other hand, Newman would have a point here, if we say—following his way of thinking—that there are some common elements between assent and certitude. We know that certitude is the endpoint of many assents, therefore although assent as such is not certitude, an accumulation of assents is. Certitude, therefore, is an assent at the meta level. Numerous assents followed by reflections, hence a complex assent, bring about certitude. To be precise, assent, especially complex assent, is the core of a certain network of reflections. They revolve around this assent, feed on it, trying to raise something solid on its grounds. Assent is not yet certitude, nevertheless there are some common traits. The person who has assented to something real is then on a quest for the source of this object of assent.

13 The Power of Simple Assent as Confronted with Certitude

Simple assent, for instance, may also be called virtual, material or interpretative certitude.[94] It is true that assents can turn into certitude, but it is also true—Newman argues—that certitude is of a permanent nature, whereas assents may come and go. They may disappear when subjected to reflection. Then we can withdraw our assent. At the same time, we have to observe that simple assent, although it is not certitude, is more powerful than complex assent, which is notional. Newman is therefore inclined to approve of simple assent as the more apt to lead to action because "the force of simple assent can be, viewed apart from its reflex confirmation," a real operative force when it is, for instance, "exemplified in the primitive Martyrs, in the youths who defied the pagan tyrant, or the maidens who were silent under his tortures." Here we have assent, "pure and simple, which is the motive cause of great achievements; it is a confidence, growing out of instincts rather than arguments, stayed upon a vivid apprehension, and animated by a transcendent logic, more concentrated in will and in deed for the very reason that it has not been subjected to any intellectual development."[95] I think that we find here a very important

93 Ibid., 172.
94 See ibid., 174.
95 Ibid., 177.

phenomenological moment, which, for Edmund Husserl, meant to "get at the being of things through an intuitive perception of their essence."[96] Of course, the crucial addition introduced by Newman is the aforementioned "transcendent logic."

We must admit that Newman has indeed taken us through the very complex labyrinth of his intricate thoughts. We can even feel somewhat confused. He suggests that we aim at certitude and that the person is capable of attaining it, and it is true that simple assent is not certitude, it calls for a reflex act, and only the latter leads to certitude, which seems to be the proper purpose of our mental activity; nevertheless we now learn that simple assent is the most suitable and efficient state that leads to action. This apparent contradiction notwithstanding, we may attempt to account for it. I think that Newman'a reasoning runs as follows: rather than relying on the capacity of our minds for reflection, we should strive towards the prompt readiness of our persons. Reflection can blunt this readiness and lead us astray from respective action. We learn from the above quotation that we need an instinctive knowledge, a "vivid apprehension" and a "transcendent logic," phrases that are very imprecise. They appeal to our intuition rather than demonstrative argumentation or to a kind of spiritual readiness when illumined by the splendor of the truth. There are different kinds of definition. Here, we can propose a demonstrative (ostensive) definition, i.e. the kind of definition in which we define something by pointing at examples.[97] Our apprehension of suffering is most vivid when we are dealing with concrete people who suffer. The suffering of humankind, for that matter, is most vague because the object of suffering is too large and anonymous. The suffering of a close relative is more vivid. And the suffering of someone who is lying in front of me, and at the same time is my close relative must be most vivid. We are called to respond to these circumstances; and we respond to them to the degree we are engaged in them. Now we may have problems with defining "transcendent logic." In our postmodern and disenchanted world transcendent logic would denote the use of terms that go beyond the explicit form of argumentation, or, rather, transcendent logic is akin to such a mode of conduct which cannot be accounted for by reference to well-tried schemes of behaviour.

To use a negative example, Locke's criticism of enthusiasm smacks of anti-transcendent logic. I think the Bible is full of such transcendent logic in which, for instance, to save one's life means to lose it, and thus it is apparently illogical.[98]

96 W. Herbstrith, *Edith Stein: A Biography*, 34.
97 See P. J. Hurley, *Logic*, 88.
98 Cf. Lk 9, 24.

Simple assent, when given to an imagination, is real. Such is Newman's main message, as we already know. The reflex assent, "which is characteristic of certitude, does not immediately touch us; it is purely intellectual, and, taken by itself, has scarcely more force than the recording of a conclusion."[99] The vividness of an assent is personalized and usually takes place in the case of those who are well-acquainted with the subject. As regards religious matters, Newman observes that those who approach them in a theoretical manner are often "too intellectual to be spiritual," although we may find examples to the contrary.[100] It seems that we cannot have both, i.e. depth and vividness; that is, to be occupied with reality rather than with a theory of reality.

Newman is indeed undertaking a very difficult task, for on the one hand he encourages introspection, but on the other he seems to be saying that too much introspection is misleading. He is trying, so to say, to reconcile fire with water. Simple assent is not certitude, yet we need complex assent, i.e. reflection upon simple assent, whereas it is simple assent that exhibits more personal alertness to a positive response. Certitude is to be sought after, but it seems to blunt the force and freshness of simplicity. The question arises: how to reach certitude and retain this readiness for simple assents? Especially since that certitude is a result of reflection and argumentation. Newman is wary of too much reflection and argumentation, for he is writing about "the litter of an argumentative habit" which "may beset and obstruct the intellect," and, when we are thus beset, we need "the exercise of good sense and [...] strength of will to put down [difficulties] with a high hand, as irrational and preposterous."[101]

14 The Conditions of Certitude—Indefectibility versus Infallibility

Certitude is important because it gives us persistence; assent is crucial because it signifies freshness. Or, to attempt yet another interpretation of Newman's analysis, we could say that certitude should be like preparation for a vivid assent, "a lifelong belief should be changed into sight, and things should be so near me, which hitherto had been visions."[102] Assents change, but certitudes endure. What we are talking about here is a special kind of dialectic which is composed of two elements: assent and certitude, i.e. change and duration. Assent is the readiness to respond to a truth, and certitude is the repose in

99 J. H. Newman, *Grammar,* 176.
100 Ibid., 177.
101 Ibid., 178.
102 Ibid., 180.

possessing it. Certitude is indefectible; once certitude, always certitude. Certitude, as we already know, is not a spontaneous reaction but a thinking process related to respective faculties. And Newman, as previously mentioned, is not precise in this respect; sometimes two different terms mean the same. Once, he writes that the human mind is made for truth, and on the same page we find that it is the intellect that is made for truth.[103]

Indefectible as certitude can be, the problem is that there are true and false certitudes. It is impossible to discriminate between true certitudes and apparent certitudes. First of all, certitude is not the same as infallibility. Certitude is concerned with some concrete propositions, but infallibility—as regards persons—is a general faculty and concerns all propositions. We carry ourselves at times like a burden, especially when we know what we should be doing and our inclinations drive us from our duty, and at times we experience an easiness that carries us forward to its completion. Certitude is the relationship between the mind and the given propositions, the additional factor being "a sense of security and of repose."[104] We might say that the main criterion of a certitude's truthfulness is the satisfaction of these two factors: the person who experiences genuine certitude reposes in serene tranquility. Let me note in passing that one should never consider Newman's vision of certitude in isolation from other crucial elements of human integrity. Therefore, we cannot, for instance, imagine certitude without its attendant peace of mind.

It often happens, however, that what we once were certain of we now find as doubtful, or straightforwardly false. Whatever the outcome, we can do nothing but use ourselves as we are and use whatever faculties we have, i.e. there are no external authorities to which we can have recourse. I mean that we should naturally look up to good examples and great characters, but we cannot replace our personal decisions for theirs, we cannot replace our selves for theirs! Such seems to be Newman's lesson, especially that the purpose is to possess and enjoy the truth—an exceptionally individual task. In other words, there is no general certitude; certitude is always someone's. Let us stress that certitude, which is a deliberate assent, follows the process of reasoning; hence, if certitude is false, then it is reasoning that is at fault, not assent. Therefore, as we can deduce from this statement, if I feel certain of something, then I feel certain; it would be futile to grow frustrated because of what we feel and we cannot help feeling it. Rather, let us examine the concrete steps that have led to this feeling. Our nature induces us to assent to something with proof attendant

103 Ibid., 181.
104 Ibid., 186.

on it. Newman advises circumspection in assenting, and people are often rash and thoughtless (especially in notional assents). Assent is a valuable personal act, despite the fact that people may often assent to something that is different than they originally thought, therefore "antecedent objections to an act are not sufficient of themselves to prohibit its exercise; they may demand of us an increased circumspection before committing ourselves to it, but may be met with reasons more than sufficient to overcome them."[105]

Newman holds the accumulative structure of our knowledge, therefore he was so committed to historical studies. Knowledge is passed on from one generation to another, and knowledge not only in the sense of data. In his historical approach, he goes counter to the rationalist-empiricist position of Locke's punctual self in the case of which our identity is primarily created by our momentous consciousness, not by our historical duration. Generally speaking, Newman's attitude is a revolt against the enlightened ahistorical approach. In his interpretation of Locke, Charles Taylor came up with this conception of the punctual self as an ability to objectify and distance oneself from one's self. This presupposes a disengagement from himself or herself, rational control, and "the re-creation of our habits, and hence of ourselves."[106] In Newman, there is no such distance from oneself, for here we use ourselves, i.e. we move forward together with the whole of our being. The person is not a consciousness liberated from the body and let loose to float in the vacuum of indefinite existence.

This anti-teleological objectifying, or even reifying conception of the mind is destructive for the ultimate calling of the person. Locke treated the mind as being composed of simple ideas, like building blocks out of which the human being is free to build whatever construction it wishes. The mechanistic world proposed by the Enlightenment and the sentimental world proposed by Romanticism are both destructive for the human person. In the former the human being is a great constructor with an abandoned final cause and no blueprint of what is worth building, except the immanent project. In the latter, the human being is lost amidst a blind quest for ever new expressions of his insatiate psyche. The so-called "new men" and "new women" are excellent examples of what we are talking about. The lone wanderer, treading the ruins of foregone traditions, cannot build anything lasting when deprived of the transcendent foundations.

The human being liberated from the meanderings of his own self, subdued to Reason, becomes a master of his world. He sets off to rebuild it on a

105 Ibid.

106 C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 171.

more solid foundation, "by following reliable rules of concatenation," based on "probable evidence [...] we wrest the control of our thinking and outlook away from passion or custom or authority and assume responsibility for it ourselves." Here we have "an ideal of independence and self-responsibility, a notion of reason as free from established custom and locally dominant authority."[107] Here is the essence of rationalist reasoning: pure reason, the transcendental I floating in the void, free from what might thwart it: passion, custom, authority. The question is whether such a human being exists, or whether it is just another ideal type.

If we have made a mistake in our past, we are obliged to reason with greater caution, not to abandon reasoning (and suspend our assents) in general. As in Descartes, assent is an act of the intellect, which should be measured or, to be more precise, portioned out in line with what is clear and distinct; in Newman, assent is "a free act, a personal act for which the doer is responsible [...]."[108] In the latter case, therefore, we take assent as it is in the concrete being. The initial situation, however, is that of chaos, of what our author calls "functional disarrangement," which is characterized by "disorder" in which man's "faculties have their rudimental and inchoate state," and they must be "gradually carried on by practice and experience to their perfection."[109] Reason is always someone's reason, not Reason (which, in the rationalist-empiricist context, is often capitalized) armed with universal rules of logic. The human being is in the process of growing. He must bring himself round to true knowledge, i.e. to the harmony between the inner self and assent to the object of knowing. This is what we have already called the state of preparedness. In his metaphorical description, Newman calls the sense of certitude "the bell of the intellect" which may at times strike when it should not.[110] This fact, however, is not a sign that the clock should be rejected, but that it should be adjusted. In this sense of a need for regulation, both the intellect and conscience are similar, i.e. they need adjustment. The moral and intellectual "sanction[s] are liable to be biassed by personal inclinations and motives; both require and admit of discipline; and, as it is no disproof of the authority of conscience that false consciences abound, neither does it destroy the importance and the uses of certitude, because even educated minds, who are earnest in their inquiries after the truth, in many cases remain under the power of prejudices or delusion."[111]

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107 Ibid., 167.
108 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 189.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid., 190.
111 Ibid.

As we can see from the above, Newman does not consider man's faculties as such, in their ideal disposition, but considers them as they are found in the concrete human beings entangled in their idiosyncratic circumstances. Our mindsets all too often depart from what is required of us and we fail to live up to the standard, that is, what we recognize as our duty. People can barely precisely distinguish between various types of notional assent and what is only credence or opinion they take for certitude, or else they rarely feel any need to do so.

Let us repeat: certitude is indefectible, which does not mean that it is infallible. Once certitude, always certitude, and those who claim they have lost their certitude are simply proving they have never had it. As Newman writes: "Certitude ought to stand all trials, or it is not certitude."[112] Assent given to something can often be understood as a prejudice. In such a case, we are obviously in danger of making a mistake. Certitude, we must remember, is "an assent given expressly after careful examination."[113] Naturally, we can always ask: what if, despite careful examination, I fail in my certitude? Newman provides three conditions of certitude: "that it follows on investigation and proof, that it is accompanied by a specific sense of intellectual satisfaction and repose, and that it is irreversible."[114] This point is yet another counterargument to all those who claim that Newman was anti-intellectual; such a claim is especially contradicted by the fact that the Cardinal constantly stressed the importance of rational grounds.

Let us emphasize again one important moment. Sometimes, people claim to have been certain of a doctrine, but in fact they have not accepted this doctrine in its entirety. For instance, some converts from Protestantism to Catholicism, especially in the nineteenth century, left the Catholic Church when new dogmas appeared, i.e. the dogma of the Immaculate conception and the dogma of papal infallibility. Newman rightly observed that they had never had certitude with regard to the Catholic Church, if they had been selective as to her doctrine. What they held, rather, was their private opinion about the Church. Therefore, indeed certitudes remain unimpaired while people may move from one religion to another, the problem being that these certitudes may be placed within different wholes. The Catholic Church, Newman intimates, contains all the truths, which is why she attracts so many converts. Thus, those certitudes found in other regions in Catholicism are found in their integral composition—complete melody, yet still developing—if I may say

112 Ibid., 206.
113 Ibid., 207.
114 Ibid.

so. Newman is also trying to account, I guess, for his decision to convert from Anglicanism—without losing his certitudes, but gaining others because this admixture of truth is found in all religions. We may say that, eventually, he found the right system.

Now, why do some certitudes perish if, while being certitudes, they should remain? How is that possible, if Newman claims that the inherent property of certitudes is that they remain? I understand it that the formal conditions for certitude always remain, and then they must be filled with material certitude. And he must have been thinking about himself when he wrote that one might travel through the landscapes of many religions without losing his certitudes, "but with a continual accumulation of truths, which claimed from him and elicited in his intellect fresh and fresh certitudes."[115] We may explain this apparent contradiction—that certitudes perish—by referring to systems in which they function (I shall write about this further on). They perish not in the sense they were not subjectively felt, but that they were placed within "distinct wholes." When we build a wall, we use bricks. Bricks in themselves are just bricks, yet I may replace one with another, without this particular brick being replaced ceasing to be a brick. Bricks do not perish, although they may be—and often are—differently arranged. We should not, therefore, concentrate on one brick, if we wish to learn the whole construction of a building, of its designer's idea, or—as in our case here—of a system.

If I make a mistake, argues Newman, and "my certitude is unfounded, it is the reasoning that is in fault, not my assent to it."[116] This experience of unfounded assent should be all too familiar to any reader of these words. Yet, the fault is not in the personal process of giving assent, but in the object to which one has decided to give assent. This kind of reasoning shows Newman as a critic of scepticism, because a sceptic, as we commonly define him, is someone who, having failed to reach the truth, says that the truth does not exist.

When we look briefly at the Carmelite saint's individual path, we can observe a similar growing in certitude. In quest of her inner certainty (certitude) Edith Stein documented her path in letters which "show the gradual confluence of a painfully sought solution to the problem of inner uncertainty, the problem of friendship with Ingarden, and the emergence of a different kind of peace."[117]

Perhaps we could summarily understand Newman as follows: looking at various religions we can indeed find the same truths, but in different contexts—in distinct wholes. The point is not to focus on one truth in isolation from others,

115 Ibid., 202.
116 Ibid., 186.
117 H.-B. Gerl-Falkovitz, *Introduction*, in: E. Stein, *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, 2.

that is, in isolation from the whole of the system. Only then can one feel at ease, in repose when one can sink into safe ground. It is like sinking into a comfortable armchair, without having to look back in fear of finding sharp stones which might hurt us. Finding the right system, as I have already said, has, in itself, both intellectual and emotional components.

15 Religion as a System

Newman argues on behalf of the existence of certitude in the following manner. First of all, the fact that a true doctrine is not generally received is not proof against certainty. When I accept something as certain, I cannot expect other people to do the same. Reception is not a proof or a condition *sine qua non* of a doctrine's truth. The teaching of the Catholic Church then, just like the truths of modern science, may continue, although neither the Church nor science is universally received. The validity and legitimacy of the truth is distinct from its acceptance. We must focus rather on the certainty of truth, for the problem is not in the variety of religions, "but in the contradiction, conflict, and change of religious certitudes."[118] The truth must be certain in order to endure, but it does not have to be universally received. Our assents to propositions vary, as we have been arguing throughout this work; they can be weak or strong, premeditated or emotionally biased, but just as the human being cannot be considered under one aspect, likewise "a religion is not a proposition, but a system; it is a rite, a creed, a philosophy, a rule of duty, all at once; and to accept a religion is neither a simple assent to it nor a complex, neither a conviction nor a prejudice, neither a notional assent nor a real, not a mere act of profession, nor of credence, nor of opinion, nor of speculation, but it is a collection of all these various kinds of assents, at once and together, some of one description, some of another [...]."[119]

I think that this conception of religion as a system that I am now putting forward and to which I have already alluded can be well defended. The human being does not exhaust his essence in one proposition; he is multifaceted and should be considered from many sides. In like manner, no one aspect exhausts a religion; indeed, it is "a rite, a creed, a philosophy, [and] a rule of duty." The point is that man starts from a different element he has assented to, and then endeavours a free variation focused on that element; we learn about reality

118 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 196.
119 Ibid., 197.

by studying its various aspects. It can be an opinion, credence, or profession. In other words, one starts from various places of a certain doctrine. These places taken together, which often requires a considerable amount of time and patience, make up the whole of the doctrine, but taken separately they fall short of it (one element does not make up the whole of it). Therefore, from the same element some become Catholics, Protestants, or subscribe to atheism. This single aspect, isolated from the rest, and developed into a series of variations, leads to the oblivion of the others, i.e. to the oblivion of the whole system from which they have been abstracted. Let me remind the reader that the human being is originally immersed in "functional disarrangement"; each individual person must come to grips with himself. A single aspect is only a reflection of a larger whole, but the inchoate self may try to use this aspect to build up his own theory that suits him, rather than the truth of the religion in question. Therefore, these variations are easily carried out by man's free deliberation in which one conclusion follows another. Without a fulcrum, they come to a dissipation. Such a fulcrum could be the Church, with her solid dogmatic system. Newman is excellently showing his stance on evolution in like manner. Inasmuch as science calls for development, personal certitude in the area of religion is subject to the same, *mutatis mutandis*, principles of evolution. In this process, the human person must embrace all the implicit and explicit elements always seeking to accommodate what can separately be understood as a conglomeration of loosely connected pieces.

Or let us take another example. Human life can also be imagined as a system composed of a series of episodes unfolding throughout its course. Now, if you pick one episode, and forget that it is just an element of a larger whole, you are in danger of making a fatal mistake. Separate episodes are often in glaring contradiction to each other. Rudolf Höss was the notorious commandant of the concentration camp of Auschwitz.[120] He lived with his family in a comfortable and spacious house surrounded by a large garden adjacent to the fence of the camp. Therefore, each morning he would open the gate to his place of work where oppression, pain, hatred and death ruled; and each afternoon he would go back through the same gate into a world of flowers, music, and paintings. Like a ghastly Alice in Wonderland, he switched his life back and forth. Should someone pick one frame of his life's film and concentrate on it, they would say: here is a tender father, a connoisseur of paintings, and a lover of music; but then another person might pick another frame and say: here is a

120 He was commandant of Auschwitz-Birkenau in the years of 1940–1943, i.e. at the time when Edith Stein was brought to Birkenau in the memorable year of 1942.

bloody torturer, a blind ideologue, and cold executioner. And they would both exclaim: these two frames certainly do not show the same person! But they do, and the solution is that we should not focus on isolated episodes and generalize them.

Any discovery or invention can be interpreted with regard to its effects on those who are vitally interested in it. A new discovery in science may, in itself, be just a solution to a concrete problem, but in combination with other discoveries it can bring about a long-awaited remedy against, say, a series disease; what was not originally planned then resulted in unexpected offshoots. Not only in religion, then, do we need to approach it as a system whose specific elements emerge in time and are revealed to successive generations. The same is true about science, a fact that should be a lesson of humility to individual scientists. A concrete discovery is only one aspect; we do not yet know what other practical results will be brought to reality in the future. This approach in the area of science is, at the same time, a warrant that individual scientists will not give up when their personal endeavours fail. It may happen that only future generations will cherish the unveiling of a scientific mystery. Above all, we should avoid rash generalizations; in the past, they often resulted in anathemas or revolts.

In like manner, the same truth in different individuals may produce different results. Therefore, the three people described by Newman who ended up being a Catholic, a Protestant, or an atheist started from one certitude and carried it into a new system. Nevertheless, the original certitude remained, but with other elements being added; it was placed within a transformed whole. To use another metaphor, we can imagine a patch of colour which in itself is just a patch, but may become part of Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* or Modigliani's *Gypsy Woman with Baby*. The same shade of green, for instance, can remain as it is, but be placed in different surroundings. Or, to take still another example, the same sequence of notes can be found in various melodies. Now, the point is that when one loses his certitude, it turns out that, in fact, he never had it. Likewise, in each religion there is something in common with other religions. Therefore, it may happen that "a man might travel in his religious profession all the way from heathenism to Catholicity, through Mahometanism, Judaism, Unitarianism, Protestantism, and Anglicanism, without any one certitude lost, but with a continual accumulation of truths, which claimed from him and elicited in his intellect fresh and fresh certitudes."[121] The sad point about this unfortunate outcome is that, once we cling

121 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 202.

to one aspect and make it the central one while ignoring the others, we may in like manner, go in turn from one religion to another, and never reach the right one; in fact, never become a religious person. Let us note in passing, speaking somewhat metaphorically, that the example of a single note can be compared to a simple assent, but then we need to find the whole of the melody. Or we may have a string of notes that are in perfect harmony. In that case, we still need to place them within their melody, i.e. within their system.

And just like in the case of the patch being a part of different paintings, the same certitude may be an element of a different whole. Indeed, a similar example can be taken from language. We have the same words placed in various contexts and syntactic wholes. Various truths are incorporated in individual systems in which they occupy different places. The same word, say, expressive of friendship may be incorporated into various systems.

16 Probability—the Guide of Life

The area of certitude is fairly limited. In many spheres, we are satisfied with mere opinions that vary, that keep us adrift with what is generally shared by our community at large. Therefore, here comes another of Newman's principles which reads that "probability [i.e. not certitude] is the guide of life."[122] (Let us note in passing that John Henry Newman might just as well be considered a philosopher of language. His analyses in this area have brought many new insights. Later on, they were developed by professional analytical philosophers.)

Because the province of certitude is so limited, it is commonly assumed that "probability is the guide of life," that we are satisfied with what is only probable. Newman stipulates, however, that we should not carry this maxim to an extreme. Generally, then, the claim that probability as the guide of life should be treated as a kind of intuitive generalization on the basis of daily empirical data.[123] I understand this claim as follows: it is presupposed in probability itself that truth does exist, for we call something probable in relation to what is certain, otherwise we would not be able to call something probable. Probability therefore in its essence is an approximation to the truth. Moreover, we need more than probability, than the weighing of arguments, to be committed to religious devotion, to endure and stand firm amidst adversities; we

122 Ibid., 192.

123 Let us observe that this conclusion is very much in line with what contemporary physics declares about the nature of subatomic structures.

are inclined to know what is certain. Here is the difference between what he called nominal Christianity and vital Christianity.[124] In other words, one needs the firm ground of certitude to be a real Christian in whom words are consistent with deeds. The earnestness of our religious life must be animated by certitude. Hence, the perception that "probability is the guide of life" should be treated as a kind of popular belief on the basis of daily experience.

Another argument against certainty comes from the area of science. Because there are numerous creeds and religions, hence—some argue—there is no truth, there are only subjective opinions. Rationalists hold that religious truth should be laid down like a scientific truth—universal and generally accepted. Newman says that there is a common agreement as to the certainty of universal and cardinal truths. But even here one could argue that there was a time when philosophers held different opinions with regard to the origins of the universe, i.e. when they, for instance, sought the *arche* of the world. This would contradict the common intuition concerning the first principles, namely that they are commonly shared. I wonder if we could apply the same principle in the area of morals. Conscience is said to be composed of three elements: synderesis, *sapientia*, and *scientia*. Now, if synderesis can rightly be called the first principle, for it announces that there is a right and a wrong, so perhaps we could say that there is at least certainty with regard to this principle shared by all rational human beings.

The fact that we have so many religions and numerous creeds is perhaps proof that certitude does not exist, in the same way as it was missing in the origins of human learned development. One cannot deny that there are dedicated upholders among those who stick to false doctrines. Thus, perhaps the question of certitude should still be held as a disputable matter. The Cardinal, however, renounces such a conclusion. We acquire reality by learning its numerous aspects. The thing is to place them within the right system, i.e. the system to which we are not only subjectively attached, but which has historically evolved in its complete (and still open to be completed) entirety.

17 Formal Inference

It is natural that in our formal reasoning we seek to fix a common standard between one mind and another. Otherwise, we would not be able to maintain communication, let alone learned communication. The common standard is a

124 See J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 193.

precondition for our intelligibility. Like Descartes, Newman finds the epitome of such a standard in mathematics, which, by its self-evident symbols, holds all considerations together. In language, this role is played by words; each language being a different system. Therefore, words in turn can be organized into meaningful structures by the inherent logic of the system, one model of which is Aristotelian syllogistics. Such a logic is adequate within the milieu of very general and abstract terms, and thus departs from concrete things. Hence, it can correctly be used in the case of notional apprehension. Formal inference feels at home, if we may say so, amid abstract symbols.

Logic, then, simplifies reasoning, so that it is not led astray by the idiosyncratic nature of the concrete objects; it substitutes words for symbols in order to "circumscribe and stint their import as much as possible, lest perchance A should not always exactly mean A, and B mean B; and to make them, as much as possible, the *calculi* of notions, which are in our absolute power, as meaning just what we choose them to mean, and as little as possible the tokens of real things, which are outside of us […]."[125] This is the price we have to pay for precision, i.e. the departure from reality. Symbols are easier to handle. We need to have deprived the words—to use Newman's metaphorical parlance—of "their poetry, their rhetoric, and their historical life, to have starved each term down till it has become the ghost of itself, and everywhere one and the same ghost […]."[126] Indeed, the same ghost because we want to be intelligible and comprehended. Logicians put reality into well-ordered and ideal structures, i.e. into "ghosts," so that concrete objects can be efficiently manipulated. In like manner, we use such terms as suitable for mathematical equations.

Newman points to the fact that, out of necessity, we have to abstract names from reality for the purpose of logical requirements. Thus "man" is only "man in general"—turned into one aspect or taken for granted as one, indistinct, mass, a mere representative of the set of elements, or, to take another illustration, only a sketchy outline of a human figure. It is true that, in order to communicate ideas, we have to translate them into a language devoid of real references. Then, by way of this universal tool of communication, we can exist

125 Ibid., 214.

126 Ibid. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry with a brilliant touch of his pen painted a beautiful picture of the nonsensical decomposition of reality when man seeks in vain to find sense in separate elements. We read in his *Wisdom of the Sands*, "Too well I know that the man who has anatomized a body and weighed the bones and entrails is none the wiser, for bones and entrails serve no purpose in themselves—no more than ink or paper. What counts is the wisdom the book bestows, which is of an essence different from that of these material things." (A. Saint-Exupéry, *The Wisdom of the Sands*, trans. by S. Gilbert, London: Hollis & Carter, 1952, 20).

within the world of science, but cannot reach into reality, for "abstract can only conduct to abstract; but we have need to attain by our reasonings to what is concrete; and the margin between the abstract conclusions of the science, and the concrete facts which we wish to ascertain, will be found to reduce the force of the inferential method from demonstration to the mere determination of the probable."[127] Quite naturally then, we need a kind of personal reasoning—a point I have been all the time driving at in this book—a subtle instrument which resonates with reality.

In view of the above, indeed, our formal inferences can only reach what is probable in the concrete (i.e. probability is the guide of life). They are adequate tools for the consideration of abstract thinking. What has been found as a general conclusion, when applied to a particular case, is only probable. I think that an example in point here may be found in medicine. Let us say that, as a result of scientific research, a drug has been found to cure a lot of diseases. It is composed of active substances whose results are well-tested; nevertheless, the person to whom this drug is supposed to be administered is always concrete. And the effect upon his expected recovery can only be probable, or it may fail entirely. There are many elements that we take for granted, i.e. we treat them as premises, in order to facilitate our reasoning. And if we go back to the sources of our knowledge, we arrive at the recondite first principles—truths that we need to accept—without "any common measure of minds,"[128] which is a very strong theme in Newman. We are all linked by a thin network of humanity with each element deeply immersed in our individual worlds. And this is the main problem for Newman, namely, that we fail to accept the original truths from which we individually depart. Then, when formal inferences are carried out from those truths to a conclusion, we renounce the conclusion because we have rejected the reality from which it started. Thus, for instance, if someone fails to respect the sanctity of human life from its conception till its natural death, any argumentations against abortion, providing ever newer data, are of no use because there is fundamental disagreement from the very beginning.

Let us refer here to Stein's revelatory remark made in her letter to Ingarden about the "limits of reason" (which I shall be discussing further in the next chapter), which can be interpreted as the barrier of formal inference when applied to the concrete. For in the concrete, the human being must employ something more adequate and specialized than mere abstract formulas. The sources of knowledge are recondite, i.e. they are hidden in the abyss of

127 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 215.
128 Ibid., 216.

primeval life, as Stein called them. The direction of Newman's analysis seems all too obvious. We must go back to the point from which we start. If we miss this point of departure, there is no sense bewailing the wrong conclusions.

Let me remind the reader that all this time we are discussing the romantic response to rationalism and sentimentalism, all of them—as we can understand our heroes—reductive views of the human being. The responses were sought in existentialism and phenomenology, and, above all, in personalism. Such were the romantic revisions of the enlightened quest for universalism. The nineteenth century focused on the incompatibility between conceptual knowledge and personal experience, and the twentieth century followed suit. While analyzing Newman, we touch upon the component elements of personalism, phenomenology, and existentialism. Generally, we stand in confrontation with the romantic revision of the enlightened quest for universalism. We stop in respect before the limits of our *ratio*, and have to subdue ourselves to the mystery of the human person who can accept more than he can comprehend or demonstrate. Edith Stein, who herself experienced the mystery of her own person, naturally must have felt endeared to Newman's thinking. The point was to observe that social life is carried out on the one hand within the confines of a legal (i.e. logical) order, i.e. the rational construction of any political system, and on the other it is buttressed in human daily endeavours by non-political institutions, enmeshed in a complicated and powerful network of traditions, customs, and religions. If we rely only on the state and its law, which is general, we find it inadequate to cope with the dynamic variety of the concrete. One needs something more akin to, and connatural, with the idiosyncrasies of individual circumstances and that pertains to one's personal character. Something that, from within, empowers the person to action. In essence, we need a metaphysics in the singular—*metaphysics translated into the singular fortune of the person*. In the *Philosophical Notebook* we read: "Granting that the whole science of metaphysics is esoteric [...] treatises on it should always be written in the first person singular, still it may be true that a continuous meditation may bring out to a particular mind a truth in the way of intuition, I mean as something perceived without reason of middle term — as eyes long accustomed to gaze upon darkness see objects for which others would require more light."[129] Newman is indeed consequential in his thinking, as we shall see here. There is something fascinating in his hesitation between simple assent—which comes from a spontaneous response to a given value, and certitude—which is the effect of reflection. It seems that this spontaneous reaction is more important,

129 E Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 29.

yet it depends on someone's spiritual preparation. Spiritual preparation also denotes a readiness to act duly. (Let us note in passing that the biblical stories about the call of the first Apostles, mentioned before, are very much to the point).

Therefore Newman defends the individual (egotistic) position—examining one's own self. And he goes on to explain that "[i]n most departments of writing, to speak of self is egotistical — not so in metaphysics. In it the writer cannot propose to do more than record his own opinions, the phenomena to which he appeals and the principles which he assumes being within his own breasts. He has nothing in common with others in the sense in which he may assume a community with others as regards external objects. His hermit spirit dwells in his own sphere. All then I propose to do is testify my own notions, as a psychological fact, & a contribution to psychological science.

All I aim at is to draw out a *case*, or a «probable —» and I think this enough, because there is very little teaching in this subject matter, which is much more than probable, though one system or theory may be more probable than another. I am not speaking of *particular* doctrines, but of a system or philosophy.

Why I think it enough <worth while> to aim at what is probable, is, because, if I am only recognised so far, unbelievers & others who hold false views, or Catholics who hold views which I do not relish, cannot put me down."[130] We start from our selves as from facts, with which we are most familiar. If we begin with a general theory, its application to a concrete event only reaches probability.

Metaphysics—because Newman is all the time referring to facts and reality (i.e. the way the person is), and the singular—because the general must be translated into the particular. In order to understand this, I propose the following example: "love thy neighbour" is part of metaphysics, and an answer to the question: "who is my neighbour?" is the singular.[131] Newman's message, therefore, is also an authentic apology on behalf of human freedom. He himself found in his own person an example of a very intricate and meandering path to personal growth which no external system could preplan or outline in detail.

Logical reasoning must admit a multiplicity of assumptions and the uncertainty of its conclusions. Each person's act bears its own personal mark. Notional arguments, being general, can never reach the particular, therefore there is nothing personal in them; what in abstract looks like proof, in the

130 Ibid., vol. 2, 87.

131 Cf. Lk 10:25–37.

concrete reaches only as far as the probable. What can thus be shown as true in inanimate matter can hardly be identified with animate objects. Here we need the living mind to detect what is otherwise hidden in obscurity. I think Newman makes this area of discreteness the special object of his interest. There are things that rely on individual expertise and personal endowment, rather than judgement by rule. Newman seems to find no reason to praise someone for their theoretical predictions when they turn out to be true. The movements of planets, for that matter, must have been prearranged and then they were only reflected in mathematical equations. Therefore, his well-known conclusion reads as follows: "Science, working by itself, reaches truth in the abstract, and probability in the concrete; but what we aim at is truth in the concrete."[132]

18 Units before Universals

Units should come first before universals. Concrete things are alike, not identical. Therefore, although all human beings share one trait, namely humanity, they are different in their personal individuality, in their sameness, and in their selfhood. Abstract sameness does not exist, and even as regards rationality—the trait we often treat as common and identical to all men—is, in each case, entirely different.[133] Thus, Newman was a personalist who stressed the incommunicability and incomprehensibility of each human being. God the Creator is incommunicable and incomprehensible, so likewise His creatures are incommunicable and incomprehensible; we, so to say, inherit the traits of incommunicability and incomprehensibility from the Creator. I mean that we may understand certain aspects of their being, but we never completely reach someone's mind, or enter someone's interior. We have access only to what is externally manifested. And even the acting agents, who, naturally, are in touch with their own interior, can only imperfectly grasp the full meaning of their own beings. Newman is often accused of nominalism, but we should not think that he decides about the existence or non-existence of universals. He merely states, and rightly so, that there is a discrepancy between general notions (universals, i.e. man) and concrete beings (this here John). And in our daily experience concrete units have priority over universals; we are dealing with units, not universals.

132 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 223.

133 This conclusion refers us to MacIntyre's text *Whose Rationality?*

In the sciences, we form abstractions, but we begin with things, and they are treated as wholes. Only then are we able to understand them. "The individual man before my mind may be viewed in relation to his anatomy, his organic nature, his intellectuality, his religiousness, but in each case it is *he* who is viewed, and he is one. Each abstraction then retains with it the idea of unity."[134] We experience ourselves as wholes, a unity, and this knowledge is "gained from sight," and this idea of unity "acts upon the mind, and kindles the thought or discovery «Why, I declare, *I* am one, *I* am one and the same,» [- when I am] <as seen in my> consciousness, in thinking, in existing."[135] The elementary and primary principles of thought are not innate, the soul would not think without some external stimulus, and—having been roused—it reflects upon itself. "And first, when it contemplates itself, it will at once gain the notion of unity — and of individuality — and of independent existence."[136] Newman defines his starting point as follows: "My point is, not to deny that our knowledge comes from experience, not to advocate innate forms, but to say that our experience is not so much of external things, but of our own minds."[137] Indeed, external objects are like images in our minds. And each mind views them differently. Each mind, so to say, touches upon them in its own individual manner.

Our originality consists not in how we can appear to other people, but how differently we look at different things. And abstraction, of necessity, must simplify what is incommunicable and immeasurable.

If we thus inherit incommunicability and incomprehensibility from God, we must approach each human being, including our own self, accordingly, i.e. never taking it for granted, but always with respect to his or her individual history and development. Taking something for granted is the natural feature of all inferential processes as expressed in language. We are doomed to use general terms, otherwise we would not be able to communicate at all, nor would we be able to construct general knowledge. And when such reasoning, which uses general terms, is applied to concrete situations, the knowledge that is thus gained is—as we already know—only probable.

Newman's considerations obviously touch upon a well-known distinction between entropy and redundancy. What is individual is often entropic, for it contains information that is highly unpredictable; and what is general contains predictable information, that is redundant. Since our knowledge about reality is never perfect and complete, but is composed of various aspects, we can only

134 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 17–18.
135 Ibid., vol. 2, 97–99.
136 Ibid., vol. 2, 23.
137 Ibid., vol. 2, 22.

therefore be satisfied with the accumulation of aspects. They cannot be converted into syllogisms because they are too circuitous and elusive; we have to give them abstract names. Newman rightly observes that, in order to grasp the human being in the concrete, we need a more adequate and more sensitive instrument, namely another human being. Thus, we arrive at this mysterious principle which reads *cor ad cor loquitur* (heart speaks unto heart); only one heart can speak unto another heart. If heart, as we shall see further, denotes the broader (and more adequate) faculty of the person, it can enter into fruitful communing only with another heart—this conclusion sounds logical. And, naturally, a conversation of hearts metaphorically symbolizes here a conversation of persons who are not reduced to intellects, i.e. an exchange of general information. The intellect merely uses the general notions and addresses the general processes. They express only certain aspects of the general character of the individual being, but are never exhaustive or complete. They resemble a sketchy portrait of a person. Now, in order to consider Newman's personal decision we can ask: how did he come to know that the Catholic Church was the true Church and that he should join it? How did Edith Stein come to know that Christianity was the true way for her even up to the moment of entering a contemplative order? From Newman's biographic facts we learn that he studied the primitive Church, yet—as he himself noted—there is a discrepancy between the knowledge we gain and the formal inference we employ to elicit some conclusions and a personal decision we make. There is a discrepancy between the mere statement that a proposal holds true and the decision that I should follow it. Therefore his studies could have prepared him for his final decision, but, ultimately, he was the only person to make it not on the basis of self-evident premises, but on the basis of his *personal result*, on his personal *fiat*.

19 Informal Inference

Let us now consider the characterization of Newman's informal inference. He was well aware that, in order to reach the complexity of the concrete, one needs to find a much more subtle instrument, a point I have already stressed, than the general method of syllogistic reasoning, which makes use of general terms. Rather than summing up all the aspects, we need to approach the being in its wholeness. This conclusion reminds us of the manner in which we understand the transcendental sphere (in Rousseau or Kant), i.e. the general will (Rousseau) and the transcendental I are not a mere enumeration of particular cases; the general will and the transcendental I are rational hypotheses.

They suffice in general considerations; therefore, the main fruit of modernity is the independent and autonomous being in the context of negative liberty, i.e. liberated from any arbitrary intrusions. The thinking and acting agent would rather get lost amid all the minute aspects and would find the conclusion lacking. He needs to grasp "by a clear and rapid act of the intellect, always, however, by an unwritten summing-up, something like the summation of the terms, *plus* and *minus* of an algebraical series."[138] This quote shows the constant tension in Newman's writings between what results from the tedious process of reasoning and what is due to an intuitive grasp. Reasoning can be understood as formal and informal: the formal is subjected to some external and universal rules, the informal pertains to the person. Intuition is natural, which does not mean that it is not subject to development. To the degree to which the person grows in obedience to internal duty and conscience, the intuitive instrument is made more sensitive to assenting to moral values.

Newman calls reasoning "the very breath of my existence."[139] Consciousness and reasoning are essentially bound up with the idea of existence. I cannot *be conscious* of something that does not exist. Obviously, we may dream, especially daydream, about something that does not exist, but what Newman understands by the phrase "to be conscious" is that something operates somehow on our mind and sets it in motion, i.e. into thinking and reasoning. In other words, operation speaks of existence.

As we can see, the intuitive grasp is not a physical summation of well-defined units, but rather a hidden process by which we get to know the concrete. It must be remembered that, as we have said, this knowledge is not formal, but personal—which means that it lacks an explicit form, and remains only implicit. We reach the concrete by way of a kind of instinct. Informal inference does not replace formal inference—as I have remarked above, the two currents—formal and informal—coexist in the one person. If I were to portray its essence, I would compare it to a visit to some friends or relatives. The visit has its formal elements such as a concrete appointment, knocking at the door, greeting the person, and the informal elements are composed of all the words and gestures that can never be predicted beforehand, so they are informal. They are responsive to individual circumstances (assuming that we are sincere in this encounter). Or, to take another example, let us look at surgery. The surgeon knows the general principles of surgery, but in each case it is different, so he must apply or modify his general knowledge to this particular

138 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 232.

139 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 37.

case. His successive conduct then relies not so much on his theoretical acquaintance with medical rules, at least not exclusively, but very often on his intuitive and implicit experience. Instead of following the individual elements of his medical knowledge, resultant from other cases and made general, the surgeon *knows* what to do with the internal and implicit certitude which depends on his personal acquaintance with the case in question and his intuition of what should be done. For some, this particular procedure may arouse in a concrete case to certitude and proof depending on the constitution of the individual mind. The surgeon's knowledge can here be identified with what he *feels* that is right at a given moment. This *feeling* should not be mistaken for an emotional state. Rather, it is his mental and personal certitude as to what should be done. Let me remind the reader of Gauss's example. Indeed, the mathematician's inference in one act grasped the conclusion.

20 Personal Knowledge versus Inference

Thus, our procedure in knowing reality is an intricate intermixture of explicit elements—the conditional inferences from which we arrive at conclusions from premises—and implicit elements, from which we unconditionally assent to given propositions. Aside from principal knowledge, we need personal experience of the matter at hand in order to issue the right judgements. Instead of focusing, for that matter, on the objective truth of the Church, Newman emphasizes the fact that in his honest, inward-looking approach, man is capable of grasping this truth in his person. Therefore, he concentrates on our personal endowment, on our instinctive acquaintance with a particular case and the testimonies of others, rather than on formal argumentation. This is the groundwork of our belief. We should adhere to this personal faculty of our very person and trust it, rather than try to seek general knowledge and then apply it to our lives. Newman proposes that the person rely on his "own living personal reasoning, [his] good sense, which is the healthy condition of such personal reasoning, but which cannot adequately express itself in words […]."[140]

Thus, for the person who is steeped in practical knowledge, a formal *ergo* in a conclusion comes to life with reality. This term, *ergo* (i.e. then) in implication, has a different meaning in each case, depending on who is undertaking the reasoning. Speaking somewhat metaphorically, *ergo* can be alive and creative, arousing the individual to action, or else dead and formal, hardly ever

140 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 239.

personally efficient (see the case of my Lazarus). In an abstract and formal situation, when we consider the well-known logical implication that if X is greater than Y and Y greater than Z, then (*ergo*) X is greater than Z, we may find it difficult to resist the obvious or else may become personally involved. The personal manner of understanding *ergo* in an implication does indeed deserve a more thorough examination, for—judging by the external manifestations—it is not at all easy to discriminate between notional assent and a real one. A person engaged in the subject in question grasps the whole proposition with one act; a person who is only theoretically acquainted with it follows the formal procedures. For such a person, the word *ergo* is a mere logical symbol, like the symbol "+" in a series of numbers. He is simply *arbitrarily told* that the element that follows *ergo* results from the element that precedes it, but, unless he really understands the reality of the components, the *ergo* has no power of conviction, no power of eliciting real assent. Recapitulating what we have said so far, we can come up with two meanings of the word *ergo*: logical and existential (or personal). The logical meaning is a mere inference on the basis of the premises in question (inference inherent in the terms under consideration), the existential (personal) meaning is the response of the person. Obviously, we may be dealing with both meanings, and for the external observer it is difficult to discern which of them is present. Only introspection can provide an answer and a respective action.

The main point of our considerations here is to stress the intrinsic relationship between action and its author, i.e. whether I am myself really and truly the agent. If *ergo* is a mere repetition of implication, I can be completely absent from what I (notionally) declare an implication. On the contrary, I am a self, an effective person in whom acts originate; they do not pass through me as if they were passing through an inanimate object, but they emerge from me. Let me observe in passing that the problem of understanding *ergo* is similar to the word "last" from Randy Pausch's "last lecture." We have here the same, let us say, transition from notion to reality, from a mere notional apprehension to the *illumination of reality*. This is what we describe in English as *dawning*, i.e. it dawned on me.

We do not have to prove our existence by formulating *cogito ergo sum*. "I am conscious that I am,"[141] argues Newman. I learn about my existence through the operations of my faculties: "I feel pain. I have not faith in the feeling, but the feeling is part of me, or bound up in my «I am». Consciousness indeed is not of simple being, but of action or passion, of which pain is one form. I am

141 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 33.

conscious that I am, because I am conscious I am thinking (cogito ergo sum) or feeling, or remembering, or comparing, or ≤exercising≥ *discourse*.

I repeat, if it be improper to speak of «*faith* in one's being», it is improper to speak of faith in <certain> other things besides being — being is not known directly, but indirectly through its states (just as the eyes do not see the substance of bodies, but the qualities) and these states, which convey the notion of being, are such as feeling, thinking, remembering &c. Certain faculties then, or rather their operations, are a part of the initial idea of existence.

This view of the subject brings us a step further, as revealing an important principle. Sentio ergo sum. To call this an act of argumentation or deduction, and that it implies faith in that reasoning process which is denoted by the symbol of «ergo» seems to me a fallacy. I do not advance from one proposition to another, when I know [- am conscious] my existence from being conscious of my feeling but one and the same act of consciousness brings home to me that which afterwards at leisure I draw out into two propositions, denoting two out of many aspects of the one thing. What is called reasoning then is in its essence not a deduction, but it is the perception of certain complex ideas, or the modes or the dress of things. Thought and being, or sensation & being, are brought home to me by one act of consciousness, prior to any exercise of ratiocination, though I may afterward, if I wish, survey the complex idea by means of that exercise."[142] Newman suggests that the word "ergo" should be replaced by "for," e.g. "I am *for* I think," "I am *for* I reason." It is not deduction in the form of that well-known scheme of implication: if p, then q → if I think, then I exist. Rather, I grasp my existence by one act. My consciousness informs me about my existence through sensations.

In reality, therefore, the circumstances are entirely different. Reality, so to say, opens up to this particular person. If we resolve, however, to apply some formal rules to individual cases, we are in danger of falling victim to circuitous arguments and never reaching a satisfactory conclusion. There is a correlation between certitude and implicit proof and such is "a law of our minds."[143] Newman always stresses this requirement of a connatural relationship between the mind and the thing that this mind is supposed to consider. Understanding, in its primary sense, is a personal effort, not a logical puzzle, especially in concrete circumstances. Therefore, apart from our general knowledge of some problems, we need to have personal experience with the objects under consideration.

142 Ibid., vol. 2, 34–35.

143 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 239.

In concrete reasonings, we cannot help but rely on ourselves; we have to use ourselves, as we have often repeated here, "judge for ourselves, by our own lights, and on our own principles," or, in other words, the criterion of truth is "not so much the manipulation of propositions, as the intellectual and moral character of the person maintaining them and the ultimate silent effect of his arguments or conclusions upon our minds."[144] Newman always stresses this living faculty of judgement in the individual person: not only intellectually, but also morally. This is another strong theme in Newman which shows his view of human integrity. And this is also an excellent reference to St Augustine, namely the fact that morality, or the purity of the heart, is a precondition for our correct thinking. Newman stresses this personal and practical endowment in which "an ounce of common-sense goes farther than many cartloads of logic [...]."[145] The processes of reasoning that lead to action and assent are multiform, subtle and omnigenous in the concrete, so they cannot be measured by rules; they are personal. Here, verbal argumentation must become subordinate "to a higher logic."[146] And this higher logic comes from the person, the person who must be prepared intellectually *and* morally to face the challenges of reality.

All in all, Newman intimates that it is personal knowledge—a combination of logic, personal experience, and historical encounters with the subjects in question—that can assess the value of some practical implications. All of these elements come together to form this higher logic of the person. In this logic, the explicit and implicit elements appear to be on the same footing, and in concrete judgements the implicit ones become prevalent.

This silent incorporation (of implicit knowledge) is of the utmost importance. The mind should not be garrulous and noisy, a phenomenon which often takes place when ignorance is clumsily masked with a proliferation of words. It becomes so when it is involved in a busy consideration of arguments which happens when a person thinks he is master and constructor of reality (the mechanistic treatment of reality). When reasons are measured out, and appear to be of equal value, what conclusion is there to result from this strenuous job if moral character is lacking? The condition of silence smacks of contemplation. We repose in certitude as we repose in reality. And this repose is stronger than any formal conclusion which can be demonstrated. The person feels at home, a feeling that is difficult to lay out in formal terms. I have often repeated the feelings of repose and contentment, manifest signs of

144 Ibid., 240.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.

certitude. For both Newman and Stein, their personal choices were associated with peace and contentment; let us remember that the aforementioned states of mind have nothing to do with some passive and Stoic acquiescence. Once she arrived at her new spiritual home, i.e. feeling certain about her decision, Stein "found complete peace and contentment in her hidden life of prayer and sacrifice."[147] She found herself within a spiritual castle and "difficult concepts" became simple, and the Carmelite Rule was "all alive in her own person."[148] What originally, with her natural reason, could have been approached only with reluctance or pitifulness, was now accepted without any reservations. The virtue of obedience was viewed through the eyes of her renowned spirit. And, likewise, Newman, when he joined the Roman Catholic Church. He had to concede that another kind of logic must be at work in the person's individual life.

In concrete matters, verbal logic is subordinated to, say, personal logic, i.e. to what kind of character we are. Two minds may, and often do, look at the same thing in two different ways, for they approach them with their different intellectual and moral beings. As I have already said, Newman doubts the plausibility of sudden conversions. He believes, instead, in a gradual process in which knowledge is mingled with the ingredients of character. It is a process which resembles the spontaneous accumulation of data rather than enforced deductions, "a calm contemplation and gradual understanding of their premisses."[149]

The person must grow in understanding. It is the kind of knowledge that becomes one with the person who holds it, or is even held by it (as we remember about being possessed by an idea), rather than being a mere manipulation of notions. The knowledge that is meant here is like the Image of God that comes via the conscience. Newman compares it to the process in which the eyes become accommodated to the details of a landscape. Layers upon layers settle in the mind, thereby allowing the person to grow in individuality. This process of settling and growth is characteristic of Newman's and Stein's developments. Newman refers to "the trained imagination," which is capable of seeing "the representations of things" behind the notions.[150] Indeed, when we understand reality and concrete events as being messages from someone, through their authors we make them personalized. All human acts are marked with personal intentions. We should be able to read them as personal communication, and transmit them in the same way we send communiques to other persons. And he eventually concludes "that methodical processes of inference,

147 M. L. Hill, *Saint Edith Stein*, 91.
148 Ibid., 93.
149 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 249.
150 See ibid., 250.

useful as they are, as far as they go, are only instruments of the mind, and need, in order to their due exercise, that real ratiocination and present imagination which gives them a sense beyond their letter, and which, while acting through them, reaches to conclusions beyond and above them. Such a living *organon* is a personal gift, and not a mere method or calculus."[151] Edith Stein also has this practical bias, as I have pointed out in Chapter 1, i.e. knowledge translated into practical acts on behalf of others, as an important element to create a personality, not a mere way to accumulate information.

Following Locke's suggestion, Newman agrees that there are cases which are sufficient for scientific proof, although they rise only to probability. But what are these propositions which rise to probability? And Newman proposes an answer, namely that they are to be found in concrete matters. It is here that we are guided by supra-logical judgment, and this judgment—as Newman intimates—"is not mere common-sense, but the true healthy action of our ratiocinative powers, an action more subtle and more comprehensive than the mere appreciation of syllogistic argument."[152] Obviously, we arrive here at the world of the virtue of prudence. And prudence is "a personal endowment"; indeed, virtue, according to Aristotle, is not part of our nature, but something that we accomplish as a result of hard work. After all, virtue is the outcome of what we do *against* our natural inclinations. This *personal logic* does not exclude logic in abstract matters, but supplements it.

Thus, we have outlined—speaking in political terms—a conservative context of human action in which there are legal structures within which is placed a virtuous man, contrary to, for instance, the theological principle of *ex opera operato*, which means that the sacraments are valid, irrespective of the agent, but depending on our own minds, "by our own individual perception of the truth in question, under a sense of duty to those conclusions and with an intellectual conscientiousness."[153] Newman's approach is clearly laid out in these words—we use ourselves in our integrity, the intellect and the will united together to bring forth a personal result, that well-known phrase from the Cardinal's *University Sermons* that has already been mentioned here. The person, thereby, is a living cognitive institution, if I may use such a phrase. All faculties of this institution are of high value, for they all participate in cognition and action. The only kind of certitude we can attain is moral certitude and moral evidence, and that—as the British Cardinal claims—not only in spiritual subjects but also in other, terrestrial, questions. Newman claims that

151 Ibid.
152 Ibid., 251.
153 Ibid., 252.

even in mathematical science the principles of concrete reasoning—in which the intellectual prowess must go hand in hand with the moral character—are valid. And he compares this case to the famous lemma from Newton's *Principia*. As we know, if we multiply the number of sides on a regular polygon inscribed in a circle, it will ultimately (i.e. in infinity) become a circle. But, in fact, it disappears before it becomes a circle. Likewise, in reasoning we accumulate premises, so that they ultimately turn into a conclusion. We anticipate and predict the conclusion in concrete matters, rather than attain it by way of accumulation. The arguments converge, but do not translate into the conclusion, for, after all, they only lead to it, and no single argument is a conclusion, since, in such a case, the conclusion would be illogical. Therefore, it is not the *ergo* in an invincible syllogism that brings about the conclusion, but the personal absorption of the numerous (uncalculated) premises which are laid out in their complicated relationships.

A good example of the coalescence of explicit and implicit reasons can be taken from the area of criminal cases. Judges must rely not only on the evidence to bring in a verdict of guilty, especially if the evidence is only circumstantial. The point is that in concrete matters we often are certain, but fail to provide respective argumentation on behalf of our certitude. The reasons are too subtle and invisible to be demonstrated as we proceed from conditional inference to unconditional assent.

To sum up my considerations on personal knowledge and informal inference, let me go back to Newman and quote an important statement. In the *Philosophical Notebook* we find his personal reflection: "I doubt whether what is called reasoning be in its essence a process."[154] This depicts his basic hesitation between intuition and reflection as the fundamental sources of knowledge. Indeed, when we compare thinking with reasoning, the former term is broader than the latter. Now, if reasoning is a process, it is subjected to the well-known rules of logic, i.e. we pass from indubitable and incontrovertible premises to a conclusion. We can thus suspect Newman's reservations and his fundamental anxiety about the intervention of the imperfect intellect with its natural predilection for speculation. Newman even writes about "the wild living intellect of man"[155] and goes on to outline his great programme of Catholic defence—by outlining his concept of the person. The intellect is at home with the explicit elements of our knowledge. Newman recapitulates all the typical accusations that were levelled against him as follows: "[I make] profession

154 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 73.

155 J. H. Newman, *Apologia*, 164.

to hold doctrines which I cannot possibly believe in my heart, but that I also believe in the existence of a power on earth, which at its own will imposes upon men any new set of *credenda*, when it pleases, by a claim to infallibility; in consequence, that my own thoughts are not my own property; that I cannot tell that to-morrow I may not have to give up what I hold to-day, and that the necessary effect of such a condition of mind must be a degrading bondage, or a bitter inward rebellion relieving itself in secret infidelity, or the necessity of ignoring the whole subject of religion in a sort of disgust, and of mechanically saying every thing that the Church says, and leaving to others the defence of it."[156] All of these are simply the main items on the deistic agenda and inspired by Locke's modern philosophy: the Church is like a foreign idea imposed on the mind; man holds ideas he cannot account for; the claim to infallibility is against human autonomy; and the ultimate conclusion that, under such a state of affairs, the individual mind must either secretly (i.e. slavishly) revolt or yield submissively to it. The result is, as we know, enthusiasm or irrationality. (Interestingly enough, let us observe that it somehow did not occur to Locke and his followers that being forced to join the state (Anglican) Church could lead to the same line of accusations). And the solution for Newman is very simple—you pick up only certain aspects out of something which is a whole. Only by learning the whole system can you understand its separate elements.

21 Faith versus Intuition

Newman understands faith in two ways: religious and natural. Naturally, we have to believe in many things we cannot, nor do we feel any necessity to, check. There are things within us and without us. He applies the word "faith" to "our reliance <certainty> of things without and not within us."[157] Hence, the world within us is what we actually feel. Intuition is prior to faith. In the *Grammar of Assent* he writes about instinct. It would be absurd to say that we have faith in intuition, hence intuition is the real starting point, and it concerns the things within us. Intuition pertains to three things that precede the knowledge of myself: (1) consciousness, (2) thought, (3) a certain analysis, which becomes, afterwards, the principle of reasoning. The knowledge of my existence is the fourth act. All of them are "one complex act of intuition. Here we have real intuition, but I have faith, not intuition, of the external world."[158]

156 Ibid., 165.
157 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 71.
158 Ibid.

The phrase "cogito ergo sum" is therefore a complex act consisting of four elements. First, I intuit about my consciousness, then about my thinking, then I reflect on my thinking, and ultimately combine them into a complex idea, a complex intuition.

The original point in Newman's approach is that ratiocination can be treated as an act of the mind rather than a psychological process. Let us recall Stein's confession after having read the mystic text. At the same time, however, before we lay a charge against Newman for his inconsequence (between ratiocination as an act and as a process), we must observe that certain processes in the mind are tacit. Consequently, even though a decision may sound like an act of the mind, it has, nevertheless, been preceded by some implicit and hidden internal process. Thinking is a personal life. Even the subject involved finds it difficult to trace all its paths. Saint-Exupéry puts it beautifully in his *Wisdom of the Sands* where we read: "inasmuch as the heart and soul have no concern with the rules of logic or the science of numbers—this is where I step in and impose my will."[159]

22 The Illative Sense—Practical Wisdom

Newman argues, as I have already alluded to, that reasoning in the concrete can be understood as a simple act that has the nature of instinct. He calls it natural inference. And thus we have arrived at the key point of Newman's doctrine. The human person integrates within himself the intellectual and moral resources to arrive at an instinctive manner in which to accept the truth. We may call this informal inference, natural inference, or Illative Sense. These terms describe the mode in which we react to reality, i.e. we react according to the way we are. And we are a coalescence and convergence of various personal faculties. The person opens himself to truth inasmuch as he has worked on his true self; the true self is responsive to the truth of reality. In this sense, it becomes clear that *cor ad cor loquitur* (heart speaks unto heart), and in this personal communing we descend on to the firmer and more solid ground of understanding than when we are involved in argumentative exchange. This communing is conscious and unconscious, explicit and implicit, relies on what is told and what is untold, it ultimately refers to the primeval depth which Edith Stein discussed and of which we shall be talking further. The human person makes use of his illative faculty and thus grasps the truth in the way of

159 A. Saint-Exupéry, *The Wisdom of the Sands*, 21.

unconditional assent, instead of following the external rules. Such rules subdue the intellect, but they hardly reach the innermost centre of the person.

Our most natural mode of reasoning is ultimately "not from propositions to propositions, but from things to things, from concrete to concrete, from wholes to wholes."[160] We deal with them with our intrinsic and personal power, for we can never learn all the aspects of the objects in question. We may say that Newman proposes a most "democratic" endowment of the human person, for it does not depend on the amount of theoretical knowledge we have acquired. Newman advocates this spontaneous activity. Some of his comments, however, may initially raise some doubts, but on second thoughts they become clear. He is writing, for instance, that true poetry is "a spontaneous outpouring of thought" and that "no one becomes a poet merely by the canons of criticism."[161] It is true that by reading critical essays on poetry no one becomes a poet, but it is also true that a mere spontaneous outpouring of thought will not make one a poet. These quotes are examples which show Newman at his best, that is, they depict his consequence and cohesion. Poetry understood as "a spontaneous outpouring of thought" reminds us of simple assent, and reading "canons of criticism" resembles certitude. And we know that, for Newman, assent is a precondition of certitude.

At the same time, however, let us observe that Newman is right in claiming that anyone, irrespective of his intellectual capacity, may learn the truth and act accordingly. Such a person may know what to do without being able to formulate the reasons why, because his knowledge is implicit. He may not be able to give intelligible reasons. He feels all at once that he is certain of what he says or does. We have here natural acuteness and personal idiosyncratic modes of recognition. People well-acquainted with the matter in question instinctively grasp the solution without going from antecedents to consequents. Indeed, we even deal with this kind of spontaneous knowledge improved by practice and habit in the area of the natural sciences. There were truths in the past predicted by scholars which could not be proved, let alone demonstrated. The examples we could mention here are gravitational radiation or the fact that bodies of enormous masses can bend light. It must be noted that Newman's instinct should not be treated as a natural sense, one and the same in every person, "but a perception of facts without assignable media of perceiving."[162] It is a spontaneous perception of the truth. Obviously, there are cases of supernatural intervention in which someone is suddenly struck

160 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 260.
161 See ibid., 261.
162 Ibid., 263.

by the inappropriateness of his behaviour. Such was St Paul's conversion. We have to admit, however, that we do not know anything about some hidden processes of doubt that might have made their way into Saul's mind before he was struck by supernatural intervention. In the case of Saul, it was like a revelation, like light that had broken in upon him. But before the final act of his personal drama had taken place, however, he might have become astonished by the manner in which Christians faced persecution. All these moments of heroism that seemed to have defied suffering were indeed mind-boggling for pagans throughout the Old Testament and for Pharisees at the threshold of the New. That experience of wonder at the other person's inexplicable conduct would parallel the situation of Reinach's widow that I have already described and the way Edith Stein perceived it.

Newman is seeking to provide natural grounds for apprehending and holding fundamental truths. It seems that, for him, the whole of human nature is inclined to these truths and the more we try to demonstrate them by means of logical rules, the more we meddle with the natural sources of their accommodation. In fact, when subjected to analysis we distance ourselves from them, since we can never convey the contents of our internal experience, nor is it necessary. The point is to open up the natural avenues to the human inmost centre, the avenues each person must walk himself. They spring up from the very constitution of our minds. This point must be properly understood, because we have already said that knowledge is acquired like virtue, i.e. we have to grow to learn. In personalism, we understood the person as the being which is and, at the same time, is becoming. Now we learn that it is the natural constitution of the mind to be open to knowledge; nature and art seem to enter into combat. Our natural view of things is connatural to our minds; Newman means "a power of looking at things in some particular aspect, and of determining their internal and external relations thereby."[163] We are potentially endowed to know the truth by personal acquaintance with a certain subject. This gift can be subtle and versatile, and it is peculiar to some minds. They gain this natural and spontaneous gift of ratiocination. Newton, therefore, was inclined to different matters than Napoleon. The reader may be reminded of Gauss's example mentioned before. Newman seems to be pointing at Aristotle's *phronesis*, but for him it is not an instrumental art.[164]

We make use of this spontaneous cognition via a sense that is proper to ourselves. In other words, our discretion and judgment are exerted spontaneously

163 Ibid., 265–266.

164 See ibid., 266.

and we cannot give an account of how they proceed or whence they proceed. It is an act in which the agent and the observer become one; they move forward in much the same way as they breathe. Obviously, we may analyze them afterwards. Discretion and judgement proceed from concrete to concrete and are attached to a definite subject-matter. This is the key point in Newman's theory of knowledge in the concrete, where our natural and spontaneous ratiocinations are at work. They resemble taste and invention in other contexts.

Newman wants man to be transparent. In concrete matters, the question of good and bad is often at stake, and it is here that "yes" (a word) must mean yes (reality) and "no" must mean no. Otherwise, the person becomes unreal (the question of real and unreal words will be dealt with further on). This ratiocinative faculty is not a general instrument of knowledge; rather, it can be called departmental. It is, in fact, a collection of faculties. A good example in point here would be memory, which, in respect of different persons, varies. We should trust persons then, not logical science, since, apart from their specialized knowledge, they have personal experience of the matter in question. Aristotle intimates the same idea in his *Nicomachean Ethics*: "Therefore we ought to attend to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced and older people or of people of practical wisdom not less than to demonstrations; for because experience has given them an eye they see aright."[165]

In Aristotle, *phronesis* (practical wisdom) characterizes the sagacious man, a man of practical wisdom able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, e.g. about what sort of things are conducive to our health or strength, "but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general."[166] So, it seems that we can establish a common measure between two persons endowed with practical wisdom, something that is not possible for Newman. Two minds are incommensurate. In concrete circumstances, two minds are working entirely differently. One may pose a question here. Namely, if we are to trust persons on account of their long acquaintance with the subject-matter under consideration, how do we know that their view is not biased, for instance, by political expedience? How are we supposed to know that their intentions are morally noble? Are they not leading us astray? Therefore, without the issue of conscience these questions rightly give rise to doubts. And, let us add, consciences are shaped under appropriate conditions. Yet another thing is of utmost importance—Newman points to the individual histories of those who are supposed to be consulted. If we follow

165 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W. D. Ross, Kitchener: Batoche Books, 1999, ch. VI, 102.

166 Ibid., Bk. VI, ch. V.

their history and find them wanting in honesty or impartiality, we are evidently right to abandon them. We take the person together with his history, in case we might spot some false steps. After all, we need to obtain a clear picture of what we are looking at. In that case, it is someone's life that is speaking to us. By following our masters we become prepared to lean on ourselves and draw on our intellectual and moral resources. Thus, judgement is not merely a result of skill in argumentation, but it is—as Newman calls it—"the architectonic faculty" with the Illative Sense (right judgement in ratiocination) as its branch.

Newman is constantly trying to show that, despite the fact that experience leads to probabilities when put in the form of a syllogism, certitude does exist. People feel certain. He is obviously referring to Kant when he writes that there are philosophers who "grant the *à priori* principle assumed in the argument, and in consequence are obliged, in order to vindicate the certainty of knowledge, to have recourse to the hypothesis of intuitions, intellectual forms, and the like, which belong to us by nature, and may be considered to elevate our experience into something more than it is in itself."[167] The intellectual forms, however, were designed by Kant to arrive at pure knowledge, the kind of knowledge that is independent of experience. In the Kantian option, man arrives at certainty in a world distilled from the erroneous testimony of the senses, in the area of the transcendental I. For Newman, the very fact of certitude, to which those who experience it testify, is sufficient for its existence. His aim is practical and he does not want to be a metaphysician, i.e. he shrinks from appealing to some theoretical premises.[168] The mental state of certitude is enough for the truth of a proposition because the most important thing is that something is true to this particular person; in other words, that this person is living the truth. The person may "objectively" be wrong, but there is no denying that he *does* experience something as true and about which he is *certain*. Let us remember that certitude is not passive, it does not come from outside but from within, 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."[169]

As we have already shown, there is no common measure between minds. We are our own centres when we reason. We have at our disposal the ratiocinative faculty whose perfection is the Illative Sense.

167 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 270.
168 See ibid., 271.
169 Ibid.

23 The Sanction, Nature, and Range of the Illative Sense, or the Power of Integration

We live among various things and we have to use ourselves to know them, i.e. our faculties and our abilities. As Newman writes: "I am what I am, or I am nothing."[170] I need to suffice myself, but the main purpose is to ascertain myself. We need to know who we are in order to put ourselves to use. Obviously, there are many faculties in man whose capacity is still not fully realized and ready to develop. Man is, therefore, somewhat incomplete and open to perfection, a point I have already alluded to. In this sense, Newman is a realist. He takes reality as it is. We are potential beings. There are many inchoate and rudimental elements in our nature which we gradually, by recurrent efforts, seek to bring to perfection. The human being, as Newman observes, is "the creator of his own sufficiency; and to be emphatically self-made."[171] And, let me repeat, we have this great task of integration at work here. I, a person, am a very complicated instrument whose principles of operation I learn throughout my life. In other words, I am given to myself as a concrete being and at the same time am assigned to myself as a concrete task. There are infinite dimensions inside and infinite perspectives outside I have to master. The explicit and implicit zones are mingled together. As the implicit zone is, naturally, not well-defined—I believe in it rather than know it by way of intellect—the explicit instrument is often abstract and inadequate to precisely describe the interior. I need to master the elusive world of emotions, rules, and requirements. Therefore, in order not to be lost amidst the intricate paths of argumentation, as seems to be Newman's claim, it is safer to develop a habit of correct thinking, in which we accept the truth in much the same way as we breathe. Real assent then comes out naturally from man.

What we obtain, let us repeat, is a personal result. In this process, nothing is deterministic or mechanical. It is a personal task. We acquire knowledge by means of inference and assent. Newman reads like a metaphysical realist when he writes that we must appeal to man and his nature as a fact. I have already mentioned this point when writing about metaphysics in the singular. It is of no use attempting to devise a science of reasoning in the concrete, i.e. a kind of universal logic which would bring any mind, in the form of a mechanistic procedure, to the required solution. We need to rely on ourselves and "confess that there is no ultimate test of truth besides the testimony born to truth by

170 Ibid., 272.
171 Ibid., 274.

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."[172]

Newman does not seek universal schemes of knowledge, which anyone could master at the bidding of some expediency; rather, he takes aim at persons capable of gaining certitude. Thus, it is not structures from outside, as it were, which decide for us, but it is the personal inside that paves the way. Certitude grows together with the person in whom questions, decisions, and actions form a deposit—if I may say so—thereby creating character (personhood). We gain knowledge by the rightful use of inference and assent. Inference is obscure and assent is distinct and definite. And we can see how the mental and sensate levels coalesce in Newman's proposal, as they coalesce in Stein's.

The personal knowledge thus gained relies on the integrated capacities of the person, explicit and implicit. This integration resembles a kind of readiness worked out in a person to respond to the demands of the truth. I think that the best instantiation of what we are talking about here is Edith Stein's testimony of her experience of certitude. She writes in the book *Jüdische Familie*: "I could not proceed with anything except on the basis of some inner drive. My decisions emerged from a level of depth which I myself was unable to grasp clearly. But once something had emerged into consciousness and taken on a definite shape in my mind, then nothing could hold me back. Then it became almost a game to accomplish the apparently impossible."[173]

This process of "emerging from a level of depth" addresses exactly the implicit character of human knowledge. The internal truth of the human person renders him a living instrument of certitude. Certitude is not co-equal to understanding. I may be certain of something as a whole, although I cannot explain the detailed grounds of my certitude.[174] There is something powerful in the human person, in respect of his degree of integrity, that, despite the intricacy of verbal argumentation which he may be too awkward to render, he can stand firmly by what he claims as certain. We are talking here about the law of progress that man gains in real assent and action. It is a living growth, in which man is "born to truth." There are different paths to it, all of them connatural to us, whether we call them demonstration, testimony, speculation or

172 Ibid., 275.

173 E. Stein, *Judische Familie*, quoted in: W. Herbstrith, *Edith Stein. A Biography*, 30–31.

174 Cf. J. R. Connolly, *John Henry Newman. A View of Catholic Faith for the New Millennium*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005, 56.

evidence. The point is to discern at which moment we find ourselves. Newman then steps in with his, naturally Augustinian, proposal, i.e. we need overruling Providence to guide us safely through all these intricate paths. I understand this as follows: man should not place too much hope in his solitary efforts in finding the way. I mean it is our personal task, but we are never alone, we are surrounded by numerous exemplars and inspirations in the bosom of the Church.

And the final stage of our faculty of judging and concluding is the Illative Sense. In his rendition of the latter, Newman not only refers to Aristotle's *phronesis*, but also to the logic of transcendental phenomenology. As we know, in phenomenology we focus on a double manner of understanding objects. First, we have the natural world, that thing of nature that is "one and the same for all individuals who encounter it," and then "the thing as it presents itself to the individual encountering it at the moment."[175] I think there is a parallel between what Stein calls the coherence of constituting consciousness and constituted objects and what Newman called connaturality. This coherence or connaturality exists differently with respect to whether the mind is considering the physical world or the spiritual world. Newman rightly observed, apart from the objective existence of a given object, there is, parallel to it, its subjective presentation, i.e. the object is somehow present to me, and its presentation (not to be mistaken with its existence) is unlike that to someone else.

Newman defines this personal path in the following manner: "The authoritative oracle, which is to decide our path, is something more searching and manifold than such jejune generalizations as treatises can give, which are most distinct and clear when we least need them. It is seated in the mind of the individual, who is thus his own law, his own teacher, and his own judge in those special cases of duty which are personal to him."[176] The Illative Sense is akin to an acquired habit. This habit, matured by practice and experience, is not a theory of what duty is and how it should be understood, but "it is a capacity sufficient for the occasion, deciding what ought to be done here and now, by this given person, under these given circumstances."[177] Therefore, it is very personal, concrete, and individual. Each individual has this ruling principle in himself, and if he is still uncertain, he appeals to someone else. Newman claims that we follow living examples rather than theoretical conclusions. There are as many kinds of *phronesis* as there are occupations. One person may excel in

175 E. Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, trans. M. C. Baseheart, M. Sawicki, Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 2000, 4.

176 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 278.

177 Ibid.

one area and turn out to be a complete failure in another (and we remember the examples of Newton and Napoleon, as given by the Cardinal). As Newman rightly observed: "A good man may make a bad king; profligates have been great statesmen, or magnanimous political leaders."[178] In all these areas of practical activity, we use our skills and sagacity. He even calls them instinct or inspiration. In concrete matters, we follow the logic of thought rather than the logic of language, the logic of thought being more subtle and elastic. And Newman compares its procedure to modern mathematical calculus. The essence of the latter is that we sum up the infinitesimal parts (those elements that cannot be measured) into one whole.

24 Intuition versus Reasoning

I think that we may be right in claiming that there are similarities between the way Newman interprets intuition, simple assent, and conscience. I would like to put this forward as a kind of thesis, namely, that there is a parallel between obedience to conscience and intuition. In conscience, the first thought is always right, says Newman, and in intuition we grasp the matter at hand in one moment. I do not want to say that intuition is always right, but in like manner Newman does not hold that conscience is infallible, either. The similarity between intuition and conscience consists in their *functional immediacy*. In intuition, we grasp something in one act, and in conscience we should instantly obey; the main point is the danger of reflection and its attendant rationalization. We know that in conscience rationalization eliminates its dictates and categorical character. The thing is that the person should grow in such functional immediacy, in such readiness to the call of what is right. Any intrusions from reflection may interfere with this readiness. We read in his *Philosophical Notebook* "that one man sees what another does, that A & B are alike arises from no comparison & discrimination of outlines, complexion, feature etc. but it arises from *the* way in which he, (& not another perhaps) looks at them. It is a kind of intuition, and hence it is very difficult to separate what is called reasoning from intuition."[179] Hence, we are constantly reminded that we think and reason with the whole of our person. It is not merely an individual intellect that sifts through separate elements of the problem being studied, but the whole person who intuits about it.

178 Ibid., 279.

179 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 75.

Counter to the rationalist-empiricist view, Newman observes that minds are exposed to "unperceived impressions" (I shall talk about these further on) and such impressions often constitute their composition. Indeed, we have in our minds unperceived impressions which we cannot explain, as well as concepts which we can account for. The religious idea, the living idea, appears in our mind not primarily as a concept, but as a reality. For example, we could say that the situation resembles a hurried glance at something: we have seen it, but do not know precisely what it was. Certainly, we know it was real. We come to meet it half-way by being open to it, via an intensive quest for that which we have thus cursorily perceived. Something impresses our mind, arouses it, alarms it, and takes possession of it. The living idea touches the mind, penetrates the mind from the inside and is entirely different from a mere report of sense data, or from a response to sense data. It is profound, it is reliable, although we may not be able to give an account of it. Even Edith Stein, after having assented to the truth of what she had read, would not have been able to explain why, or to define what actually was the truth. Growth in this sense would mean a readiness and openness to be thus possessed. In order to avoid misunderstandings, as the word "openness" has become very fashionable these days, that openness in Newman's context is openness to God's words.

The "activity of our reflexive powers" implies a process by which to arrive at secondary ideas, i.e. the creation of our minds, but, unlike for the empiricist, for Newman an explicit form is not necessary. Locke would call it enthusiasm and, in fact, an irrational attitude. Newman thereby postulated his own form of the objectivity of the religious idea: it is objective although not conceptually apprehended. What is necessary for true growth in religious matters is realisation and possession on the part of man. The religious state of mind, if I may say so, is thus akin to mysticism and poetry. It seems that Newman alludes to the mystic experience of the desert, of emptiness, and of impenetrable darkness. Despite this state of confusion and conceptual obscurity, the religious person moves forward.

Our inward knowledge is real and permanent and distant from confession, it "unconsciously supplies the mind with spiritual life and peace."[180] An unperceived impression, we may infer, stands in opposition to a perceived impression. The latter is an impression that is derived from a well-known experience and has been processed by our reflexive power. Newman challenges the well-known rationalist-empiricist paradigm of the origin of knowledge reduced only to scientific knowledge, which is especially inadequate when applied to

180 J. H. Newman, *University Sermons*, 322.

human nature. Such principal terms as "Person," "Substance," "Incarnation" are hidden to us, that is, we use them in our language, but their contents are hidden. We come to anticipate them darkly through our senses, but we can never entirely grasp their meaning. For Kant, as we know, they are also hidden and incomprehensible, therefore he postulated them as categories of practical reason. Kant's proposal is, here, a special kind of ruse. The sphere which theoretical reason fails to reach can become a postulate of practical reason. When Newman distances himself from reason, he does not refer to that which is irrational, but rather he is aware that, due to the insufficiency of reason, the reality of the person transcends what pertains to reason. Thus, Newman distinguishes the world of notions and the world of reality, not in order to set these two worlds in opposition, but in order to show their essential otherness and, at the same time, complementariness. Man uses notions he defines since, otherwise, he would not be able to develop science. Science, by its nature, should be an area of intersubjective comprehension or intelligibility, as the metaphysician would say. Otherwise, common research would not be possible for those people who pursue science; it would not be possible to know it.

25 Faith and Reason

The world of reality is different than the world of science and theory, especially in the area of faith and morality. It eludes the reductive function of notions; it calls not so much for knowledge and definition, as for an answer, action, experience, and commitment. It is a world that cannot be ignored with aloof or despondent neutrality, a world that has absolute claims to its truths, for it concerns the whole of man, his ultimate goal and destiny. There are realities here that are impressed on our minds, but not in the form of clear-cut concepts, categories or judgements in the first place. Rather, we approach them when we react like children, "for what is short of truth in the letter may be to them the most perfect truth […]."[181] If we were to compare Kant and Newman in this respect, we might imagine that Newman's response to Kant's dilemma would be the following: yes, this is true, our reason is helpless to conceive of such things, but it is not reason that confronts them but the person. We do not have to posit anything, we have to open our minds and hearts. It is not the capacity of our mind, or the vastness of our imperatives that make up for the insufficiency of our knowledge in religious and moral matters, but the extent to which we

181 Ibid., 341.

can confide in Him who is the Person. It matters much to what extent we can unfold ourselves and allow ourselves to be possessed. Likewise, we are always called upon not to reason, but to trust, to follow, and to bear witness. Reason is ultimately guided by Faith, when "it is content to be a little child [...]."[182] The line of progress in Newman runs towards simplicity. His concept of simplicity, however, is completely different to Rousseau's. Newman does not assume that human beings are primarily pure and innocent. On the contrary, man is primarily weak and sinful, a creature that is apt to rebellion and in need of conversion. Conversion is supposed to occur not by dismantling the whole social order in a revolutionary coup, but through self-transformation. Metaphorically speaking, Rousseau is presented as starting as a child; Newman is ending as a child. In his view, man strives towards childhood till the end of his life. I think we may call Rousseau's ideal childishness, and Newman's humility.

This is a very interesting point. As we can see, for Newman, unlike for Enlightenment thinkers, we arrive at certain knowledge—in practical matters—individually, not when we rise to the universal level of reasoned notions. And certain knowledge is co-equal in Newman with persons who are certain of something, and this, in turn, does not mean that they rise to the point of clarity and distinctness of concepts. On the contrary, they often fail the test of notional clarity and distinctness, as we expect them to give reasons why they hold to some truths. Therefore in our interpersonal relationships we have to always take it as a matter of fact that, aside from the universal fabric of what is commonly shared by virtue of universal logic, there are principles and values which other people hold, but which are incommunicable and yet remain the source of their inner life. In reasoning, they then appear more important than impersonal rules. (If two people from the same house or the same street are so different, so much more different are those who belong to two different cultures). The end-process of progress for Newman would be persons who are certain of how to act well, not persons who can define a good act. Newman's reasoning in these matters borrowed much from the romantic school, the Alexandrian Fathers, Augustine, the Oriel Noetics, and, above all, the *phronesis* tradition that went back to Aristotle. In this tradition was grounded Newman's illative sense, which has already been mentioned, according to which, in our thinking, we rely on "implicit reasoning" and "implicit inference," "natural inference." To be more precise, we might even speak of *personal reasoning* and *personal inference*.[183] Newman literary calls it "personal reasoning" in his

182 Ibid., 351.

183 Cf. E. E. Kelly, *Identity and Discourse*, in: G. Magill, *Discourse and Context*, Southern Illinois University, 1993, 47.

Grammar of Assent, of which mention has already been made. As we can see, we are elaborating here on Newman's phenomenology (or hermeneutics) of thinking.

This spontaneous process of development that has been discussed here is derived from the fact that, as individual persons, each of us reasons differently. We have different, "cogitative methods," as Newman called it, and "the territory of thought is portioned out in a hundred different ways."[184] Much of our mental endowment depends on the principles we hold, rather than on the universal rules of reasoning. Thus, different people may interpret the same facts of experience differently. This does not mean that we are completely in the dark as to what is true or false in development, that our cogitative method cannot be put to the test. In other words, much can be said about the value of life, but words are always inadequate and far inferior to one simple deed of courage when, for instance, someone offers his life for someone else.

This state of affairs is aptly rendered by Edith Stein's phenomenological analysis. I mean here especially her thoughts on the relationship between *belief* and *faith* (*fides*) and this particular situation where *belief* is transformed into conviction and becomes close to *fides*. The latter term means to take a stance, one's own act, a thing that ideally corresponds with Newman's term *realize*; it is not an established opinion, but a personal response.

26 The Explicit versus the Implicit and Being Possessed

This thrust of ideas and their realization are closely related to another of Newman's term, namely that of *possession*, or rather of *being possessed*. The state of being possessed is, in turn, related to the two levels existent in the person: explicit and implicit. I have already alluded to this issue numerous times in this work. I mean the essential discrepancy between the person's belief and his capacity to account for this belief in an intersubjectively comprehensive message.

As we know from this text, in order to assent to the truth we do not have to acquire a complete command of the idea that is presented, for the obvious reason that the idea is often too complex to be grasped *in toto*; furthermore, it may be of a dynamic nature and, under the process of development, it contains elements which *are there* and elements *which are to become*. Certain aspects *wait* to become unfolded by personal experience, discovered rather than conceived.

184 J. H. Newman, *University Sermons*, 344.

It is not the intellectual structure of the idea, however, that determines our assent, but its *life*—such is Newman's definite conclusion. Undoubtedly, Christianity is such an idea, therefore it is capable of possessing people's minds, to enflame them and to be conveyed from one person to another. Our comprehension, being more or less clear, can facilitate our assent, but does not necessitate it. If it did, only those who were intellectually knowledgeable would stand a chance at accepting what is presented to them. Newman is obviously referring to his text about consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine.[185] This consulting does not mean actually asking the faithful, but rather observing their genuine experience of faith, especially in its historical context. Newman was amazed at the fact that in the past, when various heresies would put the educated divines off their orthodoxical doctrine, the simple believers could stand firmly by their faith.

In his *University Sermons*, he observes that "the inward idea of divine truth [...] passes into explicit form by the activity of our reflective powers, still such an actual delineation is not essential to its genuineness and perfection."[186] A simple and uneducated believer may not be able, and he often is not, to provide a formal demonstration on behalf of that to which he has assented. Newman adds a yet more radical characterization: "But what is remarkable at first sight is this, that there is good reason for saying that the impression made upon the mind need not even be recognized by the parties possessing it. It is not proof that persons are not possessed, because they are not conscious, of an idea. Nothing is of more frequent occurrence, whether in things sensible or intellectual, than the existence of such unperceived impressions."[187] And here we arrive at yet another key term in Newman, i.e. *being possessed*. When we possess something, we can retain a certain safe distance between the thing possessed and the possessor. It is an intellectual distance filled in by reflection. But in the case of being possessed by something, such a distance disappears. We are in the hands of an idea, if I may say so somewhat metaphorically. Indeed, Stein's confusion after having read Teresa of Avila's book or seen Mrs

185 I mean the revolutionary text published in the *Rambler* (July, 1859 — interestingly enough, in the year of Darwin's publication), entitled *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*. Monsignor George Talbot (1816–1886) should be especially mentioned here as the person always rushing to report to Rome on what was going on in England. The Church was not ready yet for the elevated role of the laity (she had to wait until the Second Vatican Council). And to Bishop Ullathorne's impertinent (with a marked aloofness) question "Who are the Laity?" Newman answered "that the Church would look foolish without them" (See M. Trevor, *Light in Winter*, 201).

186 J. H. Newman, *University Sermons*, 320.

187 Ibid., 321.

Reinach or noticed the simple woman praying in the church—all of which are *unperceived impressions*—leaves the reader, the onlooker perplexed but not knowing why. A living idea exerts such impressions; they are powerful but not comprehensible, because they are not products of an individual mind!

When a living idea gets into one's mind, it begins to operate within, but it is too rich to be grasped. It is "commensurate with the sum total of its possible aspects," which vary "in the separate consciousness of individuals."[188] Various minds react to it in different ways. In respect of this idiosyncratic compliance, the idea, for some minds, appears to be real, for others, not. Indeed, we perceive an individual mind inasmuch as we perceive an object, i.e. from its various sides. Then, after an examination of its numerous aspects, they are consolidated and brought into one object, i.e. the dogmatic structure of the Catholic faith, for instance.

A real idea cannot be exhausted. If it is complex and contains many aspects, they can be, in turn, analysed separately. Christianity, for instance, contains a plethora of aspects, as I have already said, for it is "dogmatical, devotional, practical all at once; it is esoteric and exoteric; it is indulgent and strict; it is light and dark; it is love, and it is fear."[189] A living idea may contain elements which, on analysis, are even contradictory; its task is to give life, not to satisfy the intellect. When an idea is capable of arresting and possessing the mind, it is said to have life, "to live in the mind which is its recipient."[190] Mathematical ideas cannot be said to be called living, although—let us admit—there are mathematical problems, e.g. the theory of prime numbers, which have held many minds in their grip. Newman claims that only great ideas which concern human nature can be called living. He writes: "when some great enunciation, whether true or false, about human nature, or present good, or government, or duty, or religion, is carried forward into the public throng of men and draws attention, then it is not merely received passively in this or that form into many minds, but it becomes an active principle within them, leading them to an ever-new contemplation of itself, to an application of it in various directions, and a propagation of it on every side."[191]

Only to such ideas are we ready to devote much time by returning to their original thrust in contemplation. Such are the great philosophical ideas on human nature or the rights of man. They arouse interest and stir up emotions; in a word, they create commotion. Let us look at how the author beautifully

188 J. H. Newman, *The Development of Christian Doctrine*, 34.
189 Ibid., 36.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.

characterises Christianity which—as he says—"differs from other religions and philosophies, in what is superadded to earth from heaven; not in kind, but in origin; not in its nature, but in its personal characteristics; being informed and quickened by what is more than intellect, but a divine spirit."[192]

Persons are often baffled about the ideas they have. Their minds remain under a gradual and tranquil expansion. There is no abrupt revolution, but a steady process of "the development, in explicit form, of what was already latent within it."[193] Indeed, our hesitation about Newman's being a mystic or not can readily be solved by this quotation from his *University Sermons*, in which the future Cardinal describes what is otherwise well-known from mystical experience: "Moreover, it is a question whether that strange and painful feeling of unreality, which religious men experience from time to time, when nothing seems true, or good, or right, or profitable, when Faith seems a name, and duty a mockery, and all endeavours to do right, absurd and hopeless, and all things forlorn and dreary, as if religion were wiped out from the world, may not be the direct effect of the temporary obscuration of some master vision, which unconsciously supplies the mind with spiritual life and peace."[194] This picture perfectly fits that which, in other contexts, is described as the mystical night. A person who is supposed to assent to the truth is actually going through darkness in his life. Therefore, Newman concludes that "the reality and permanence of inward knowledge [is] distinct from explicit confession."[195]

Let us also observe in passing that in the case of divine truth, all minds are simple and uneducated. This seems to me to be simply a logical conclusion drawn from the consideration of the nature of what is divine. If a finite being is confronted with what is infinite, there is no gradation. No matter how many steps a person takes towards the palace of knowledge, he has barely managed to comprehend it. Therefore, I would like to put forward the following theses: when Edith Stein really assented to what she had read, it was not her intellectual prowess that helped her assent, but the simplicity of her personality. It was not her educational preparation that had set the scene for acquiescence, but her personal transparency. This point will be discussed at greater length when we talk about the abyss of existence.

192 Ibid., 57.
193 J. H. Newman, *University Sermons*, 321.
194 Ibid., 322.
195 Ibid., 323.

27 Faith Above, Not against, Reason

Edith Stein excellently and succinctly explained how she understood the place of reason in concrete matters in her letter to Roman Ingarden. We read in this letter: "It seems that first, using the intellect, you have to approach the limits of reason and then come to the door of mystery. Perhaps Newman can help you with it, although his point of departure is quite different. In any case, I will send *Letters and Diaries* as soon as it is printed.

I hope it is perfectly clear that it is *not* my intention to describe my way as *the* way. I am fundamentally convinced that there are as many ways to Rome as there are human minds and hearts. Perhaps the intellectual way comes off badly with the representation of my way. In the years of preparation for my conversion it had a strong influence on me. However, realistically considered, not 'feelings' but real events, along with the concrete image of Christianity in the words of witnesses (Augustine, Francis, Teresa), were decisive for me. However, how shall I describe for you in a few words an image of each 'real event'? An infinite world opens up something entirely new when you once begin to live the interior instead of the exterior life. All prior realities become transparent; the genuine sustaining and motivating strengths become perceptible. Previous conflicts become trivial! The individual comes to understand a life filled with passion and blessedness that those living a worldly life do not know and cannot grasp, something that from the outside appears as the most uneventful day in a totally inconspicuous human existence. And how strange it appears when you live among those who see only the superficial and never notice anything else in the world around them."[196]

Let me stress several points from Stein's letter. First, she does not want "to describe her way" as "*the way*." This is a very Newmanian approach in which every person is responsible for his own choice, which he must *realize* in himself, rather than blindly following someone. Second, despite the importance of the affective side of the human being, it is not "feeling" that drove her on, but a "real event," another beautiful recapitulation of the strong theme shared by Newman and Stein. And, third, the "real event" can hardly be rendered in the form of an intellectual representation. Indeed, Newman expressed his helplessness to describe what drove him on by simply asking: "What have I done thus to be deserted, thus to be left to take the wrong course, if it is wrong?"; nor was Stein able to explain why her emotions were aroused on seeing peace in Reinach's widow's face, the simple woman sunk in prayer, or when reading

196 E. Stein, *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, 259–260.

Teresa of Avila's text. Such were their *real events* and such were their personal responses, but it would be impossible to precisely account for their place and time. They were lone wanderers under the burden of their personal responsibilities. Of course, she could not describe in words what struck here as unperceived impressions—it was real, but incomprehensible.

Newman, for his part, reflected on the question of reason and its limits in the *Philosophical Notebook*. There is an entry under the symbolical date of 1859, the year in which Charles Darwin published his renowned *Origin of Species*. The point was to distinguish between things which are *against* reason and those which are *beyond* reason. He opens his considerations with a quote from St Thomas Aquinas. Things that are against reason cannot be "*repelled*," and things that are beyond (above) reason cannot be "*solved* or *explained*." Now, an objection that is unrepellible is *against* reason, and a question that is insoluble is *above* reason. We need to distinguish between the questions that are unrepellible and those that are insoluble. The insoluble question is above reason. There is nothing in the Christian Faith that is against reason, therefore there are no objections against it which cannot be repelled. At the same time, there are many things which are above reason, therefore there are many questions about it "which cannot be *solved* or *explained*."[197] Moreover, Newman argues that we need to distinguish between "unanswerable" and "perplexity." There are no questions which cannot be answered, hence there is nothing in Christianity that is repelling, although it may be difficult to understand. Here, again, we meet the fundamental word "system." When talking about Christianity, we should not be dealing with its fragmented elements in isolation from the whole of it. Therefore, in the sense of "answer" any objections against Christianity can be "answered." If it were not possible to "answer" them, they would be against reason. At the same time, "there are many [...] <questions about> the Christian faith which cannot possibly be answered, and if they all could be answered, there would be nothing in the Christian Faith *above* reason." This problem results from the imperfection of our human intellect. The intellect cannot reach "those truths by which the questions about the Faith are duly explained or solved." Therefore, Christianity is not against, but rather above, reason: supra and *non contra rationem*, the token of the *insoluble question* and the *untenable objection*.[198]

197 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 101.

198 Ibid., vol. 2, 103.

28 The Infinite Abyss of Existence

We have inside us this "instinctive sense" of, or faith in, other testimonies "on which to ground our certitude."[199] The reason for this is that we confide in what we hear, rather than doubt everything until a clear and distinct demonstration is granted. Our natural condition is that we are not faced with clear or distinct ideas, but with antecedent probabilities, as we have already said. We can assent to truth despite mere probabilities, owing to our personal sense of integrity. Chaos or disintegration is not necessarily something entirely negative. We can always treat it as a chance to grow, to pull ourselves together no matter what happens, because we can confront the unpredictability of events with the vastness of the abyss of our existence.

Newman has often been accused of egocentrism, that he is writing only about himself. I think such an objection is incredibly oversimplified and based on a complete misunderstanding. I would rather talk about his, almost religious, respect for the sanctuary of the human person and regard for human limitations. How could he have learned respect if he had ignored his own limitations? And, examining his own life, he had learned patience and humility. We can most adequately summarize his position in the following question: *what could we be, if we only realized what we are?* But the point is that each person is placed within his own ethos. He needs to comprehend it in order to respond to a given circumstance. Because we do not know exactly the basic structure of someone else's ethos, we may rightly call it a shadow or a being hidden in his own shadow. Therefore, Newman writes "that every being in that great concourse is his own centre, and all things about him are but shades […]. He has his own hopes and fears, desires, judgments, and aims; he is everything to himself, and no one else is really any thing. He has a depth within him unfathomable, an infinite abyss of existence; and the scene in which he bears part for the moment is but like a gleam of sunshine upon its surface."[200] This beautiful passage perfectly renders what Edith Stein defined as primeval life, and of which I shall talk later. What is this centre from which decisions come? Is it our good nature, as Rousseau put it? Is it practical reason, as Kant wanted it?

If the individual is "the abyss of existence," as Newman claims he is, how can this abyss express itself through a concrete form? And how can the infinite find a concrete form? A form that is, of necessity, finite. The abyss of freedom is in quest for a form. Only through a frame, imposed on chaos, can the individual

199 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 237.

200 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 779.

make his or her life meaningful. And if the individual is "an abyss," nothing short of an abyss can give it the form. The abyss, by definition, is unnameable. It is indeed a great challenge to place the abyss of existence within frames. They must be co-equal to the task at hand. The conclusion is logical enough: the human abyss of existence must be placed within the frames of God's abyss. Otherwise, the infinite can never be squeezed into a finite form. Man is a mystery to himself. This mystery can be grasped only by Someone who is capable of penetrating all the intricate, idiosyncratic pathways of the unfathomable human abyss.

The American Newman scholar, John Crosby, who comments on this passage in his book *The Personalism of John Henry Newman*, refers to the infinite number, in itself a proper analogy in the context of Newman, as the Cardinal was interested in mathematics. Nothing can be added or deduced from the infinite number. Therefore, the human being, in his relationship with the world, is like the infinite number in relation to the finite numbers. Everything that we experience, everything within the range of the empirical I—to use Kantian parlance—is indeed nothing in relation to human infinity. It is "like a gleam of sunshine." In order to bring this infinity round to action the centre must rule over the vast area of hidden (implicit) shadows. Speaking somewhat metaphorically, we can say that the infinite actor plays a finite role. How can one rule over infinity? Or, does one have to? Not by accomplishing certainty from without, but by arriving at certitude within. Infinity, by its nature, cannot be placed within finitude. We are surrounded by a set of infinite existences. For matters of simplicity, we treat each human being as a set whole, but it is a composite rather than a solid figure (a well-defined exemplar of a larger whole). When Newman uses the word "whole" in the context of the human being, what he means is that man can make himself a whole when integrated. Again, let me resort to mathematical or even physical analogies. We are dealing here with quantum mechanics, with infinitesimal magnitudes. They can be expressed by mathematical formulae but cannot be measured.

Certainty cannot grasp "an infinite abyss of existence," because the former contains a rigid formula; it is the Newtonian world. The abyss, for its part, flows out, exceeding the limited frames; it belongs to the medium of infinitesimal magnitudes. Its shapes overflow.

Which of these cases fits Stein's assent to the Christian truth after she had read Teresa's book? What is the precondition for her assent? I think that the foundation is the fundamental simplicity and inherent reality that create the potency for the act of real assent. Any person who has been real has a chance to thus assent. I understand inherent reality as internal undividedness.

And the phrase "has been real" must be understood as "using real words" in Newman's sense.

29 The Real versus Unreal Words

This section studies the discrepancy between the words and images, between the notions and reality. Jean Guitton perfectly characterises our times when he writes: "Our civilisation oversaturated with knowledge and means of knowledge offers so many masks and false supports that man no longer knows what he knows and does not know."[201] The French philosopher is naturally writing about the twentieth century, but these negative tendencies diagnosed then are even more pronounced today. The old revolutionary battle cry *écrasez l'enfâme*, which, during the French Revolution, was aimed at the absolutist aristocracy, in the twentieth century was turned against the bourgeoisie and erupted in the 1968 revolt. As it usually happens with all revolutions, they are based on several naïve presumptions among which one prevails: it is enough to remove the wrong form in order to dig out the good man from under the rubble of falsehood and pretence. Such is Rousseau's immortal illusion. Newman's response to that would be simple: it will do no good to change the external form, man must bring out his true self. The revolutionaries go by way of opposites, which is hardly ever a good solution. If the old (bourgeois) society respected certain codes of behaviour, let us have no codes; if they venerated tact, shame, and secrecy, let us proclaim openness and shamelessness. If they insisted on limitations, let us opt for absolute freedom (even though they call it licence). In such circumstances, false words abound, and lofty declarations are plentiful. It is true that abuses must be denounced, there is no doubt about it, but they cannot be cured by the method of substitutive oppositions.

Since we are immersed in shadows, it is only right to ask about our real whereabouts: where are you talking to me from? Are you really there? And the words you are formulating, are they really yours? Do they belong to your interior, to your true self, or are you merely repeating foreign words? What do the words reflect? Are they *someone's* words or merely general opinions? What is their context? Their ethos? Does the speaker live in reality, or only aphoristically—to use Kierkegaard's term? Such are the words designed to test the reality and place of the speaker. They tend to settle whether the speaker is

201 J. Guitton, *Le travail intellectuel : conseils a ceux qui étudient et a ceux qui écrivent*, Paris: Aubier, 1951, l, 14.

really present in the reality he is telling us about. Or else he is merely looking at something which, for him, is inaccessible because he himself does not believe that he could stand by the reality he is talking about. And even if he criticizes something, i.e. he is expressing a negative opinion about a reality in which he would not like to participate, we still do not know whether he means what he is saying. When we speak words that give lie to what we really think, we pronounce unreal words.

The history of mankind can be viewed in this way that, for instance, original sin, the first fall, can be regarded as the first moment of unreality. The story of the first fall is paradigmatic unreality—the ideal type of all unrealities. The first man wrought a kind of cleavage between words and their meaning—the essence of how Newman understands unreality. Adam heard the question: 'Adam, where are you?'. And he answered, contrary to the facts: 'I have hidden myself because I am naked.'[202] Such is the origin of paradigmatic unreality and paradigmatic lying for all the future generations to come. Adam knew that nakedness was not the main reason for his hiding (as if man could hide from God!), nor did he know the meaning of nakedness, that it was something to be ashamed of, something that should be hidden. With this unreality, man came to the false conclusion that he could cover all embarrassing situations with unreal words. Thus, he ushered onto the stage of human history deception, distortion, and equivocation. As his behaviour was censored for that, he ultimately invented a non-judgmental attitude and political correctness as the mark of obligatory decorum. And he learnt not to treat his life too seriously. Life is just a game to be played for others or for oneself. To have fun, to amuse oneself, and to amuse others, other actors. In this manner, the story of unreality unfolded.

The gap between the real and unreal words may come from the fact that we often hear that sublime doctrines should correspond to the like feelings. And, in this context, the Romantic poet writes down the accusation of the false poet: "Thou playest to strange ears of unconceived delights … Thou drawest forth tears. But thou thyself, what feelest thou? What dost thou create? Through thee floweth a stream of beauty, but thou art not beauty. Woe unto thee! The child that weeps on its nurse's bosom, the flower of the fields that is unconscious of its fragrance, have more merit before the Lord than thou."[203]

202 Cf. Gn 3:8–10.

203 Z. Krasiński, *The Undivine Comedy*, quoted after Monica M. Gardner, *The Anonymous Poet of Poland Zygmunt Krasinski*, Cambridge: At the University Press, 1919, 95–96. A classic example here is Jean Jacques Rousseau, who sent all five of his children to an orphanage, whereas, at the same time, he produced sublime, noble treaties on education in which he stressed the importance of sacrifice, self-sacrifice. And no wonder that Rousseau comes

These words come from the pen of one of the great Polish romantic poets, Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–1859). In his *The Undivine Comedy* we find this clash, this inadequacy between words and deeds. The Philosopher from Krasiński's drama is a porte-parole of the Enlightenment encyclopaedists who ardently believed in human progress. It is interesting that the Polish romantic poet calls his belief "self-willed belief,"[204] a phrase that emphasises human self-will, rather than religious belief.[205] We must remember that, for Newman (and this places him outside the circle of fideists), the act of faith is a special (personal) intellectual act.

We sooner learn the doctrines than their attendant feelings. Newman was well aware of this psychological regularity. This is one of the reasons why professions are often not accompanied by attendant feelings. In the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* we read that man knows about the necessary association between doctrines and feelings. "But in truth he perhaps does *not* really believe them absolutely, because such absolute belief is the work of a long time, and therefore his profession of feeling outruns the real inward existence of feeling, or he becomes unreal." And then the author formulates his warning: "Let us never lose sight of two truths,—that we ought to have our hearts penetrated with the love of Christ and full of self-renunciation; but that if they be not, professing that they are does not make them so."[206] In like manner, people speak about the shortness and vanity of life, using commonplaces because so they think this is expected of them. Profession outruns our emotions because real feelings take time. We should look at things, not words. "There is but one right way; it is the way in which God looks at the world."[207] This conclusion is very Augustianian in nature. Newman calls for sincerity and authenticity, in which we say what we mean and we mean what we say: "Let us aim at meaning

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across here as a negative example, because he himself stressed the importance of loving the group at the expense of the individual.

204 Ibid., 203.

205 I am proposing here the phrase "self-willed belief," because the 1875 English translation "intuitive conviction" does not render exactly the meaning of the Polish phrase, which is "samowolna wiara." This phrase perfectly fits Newman's criticism of the general tendency to be guided by pain or pleasure, and his criticism of the counterfeit of conscience, which has already been mentioned. Furthermore, the phrase "wilful belief" may suggest here the Protestant understanding of Christian faith in which the principle of *sola fide* is dominant and the process of the privatisation of religion is well under way. The "self-willed belief" can only be present where the individual relies on his own private opinion rather than on the teaching of the Church. It was extremely important for Newman to always think within the bosom of the Church.

206 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 975.

207 Ibid., 978.

what we say, and saying what we mean; let us aim at knowing when we understand a truth, and when we do not."[208] In *Grammar of Assent*, Newman's accusatory voice resounds in his words when he writes: "We sometimes find men loud in their admiration of truths which they never profess."[209] And in one of his sermons he notes that people "do not really dwell on what they profess to believe."[210] There are two reasons for this: we can blame the agent for his superficiality and ignorance, or else this inadequacy results from the very nature of the matter given to consideration. What we can deduce from the importance of real words is that the most important thing is to avoid the dubiousness that sneaks in between the subject and the object. The subject can be in error, but should never be divided inside, i.e. he should never intentionally lie as to his real attitude. Inasmuch as we elaborate on the sacrifice of expiation and account for it in many words, we still do not know why this was necessary.

I would like to explain what I mean by way of illustration. Let us imagine a ladder. Each rung of the ladder denotes a word. The real word is the rung on which we are actually putting our foot. This rung is my reality. Not only do I pronounce a single word, as I am ascending the ladder, but I am physically touching it, feeling it or, rather, feeling the reality hidden behind it. Some rungs are below me—they are no longer mine; some rungs are above me—they are not yet mine. The past should not be mixed with the future, and the present must be acknowledged. Obviously, the past is present in memory; the future is present in hope. Memory and hope must not be replaced. The difference between real and unreal words resembles our considerations on the use of the word *ergo* in inference. When *ergo* is used merely in its logical sense, barely touching the person, it can be actual without being real; it is formally present, but is devoid of any substance. Therefore, *ergo* (like the unreal word) can be only superficial (notional) without being real.

That is why he delved into himself, devoted himself to writing letters, and committed his literary talent to *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. This particular introspection into oneself had nothing of a display or a showcase. Rather, Newman sought to probe whether he was real in what he was saying, whether he had realized what he decided to teach. Newman wrote his *Apologia* not to prove he had never made any mistakes; such a task would be futile and, in fact, dangerous, for it would bring forth the poisonous fruit of pride. He wrote in order to find out whether he had been hypocritical in his words or deeds. And he found no guilt in his conduct (which does not mean that it was infallible); let

208 Ibid., 979.
209 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 142.
210 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1227.

us repeat again that it is better to be the sincere persecutor Saul than the false apostle Judas.

John Henry is thus trying to bring this message home to his former Anglican brethren who accused him of betrayal and opportunism, and to his actual Catholic fellow-believers who might doubt his sincerity.[211] Prison wardens say that the most difficult thing is to witness change in petty thieves; it is easier for murderers. The thieves have a tendency to belittle their guilt, to explain it away, or even justify it. After all, they stole from those who had too much, as they themselves reckoned. Therefore, in the New Testament those who are most harshly reproved are not, if I may say so, sincere sinners, but hypocritical devotees, those who falsely regret what they have done.

30 Real Adherence (Not Notional), Personal Adherence to the Word of God

The worst thing is when we use unreal words, an outcome typical of the situation in which one says words contrary to the actual state of one's mind. In one of Fulton Sheen's books we find an apt description of this condition: "Very harmful effects can follow accepting the philosophy which denies personal guilt or sin and thereby makes everyone *nice*. By denying sin, the nice people make a cure impossible. [...] By refusing to admit to personal guilt, the nice people are made into scandalmongers, gossips, talebearers, and supercritics, for they must project their real if unrecognized guilt to others. This, again, gives them a new illusion of goodness: the increase of faultfinding is in direct ratio and proportion to the denial of sin. [...] It is a fact of human experience that the more experience we have with sin—our own sin—the less we are conscious of it. In all other things, we learn by experience; in sin, we unlearn by experience."[212]

Contemporary man, to use the Kierkegaardian metaphor, is always shrinking from his tomb, from the tomb of his duty, of his authentic existence. He can fulfil his fortune, but he shuns it, always finding excuses. The tomb is the way of the cross for the individual, not Hegelian History or the State. That is the essence of human despair. Hegel claimed that man can fulfil his destiny by

211 When Newman claimed that the Thirty-Nine Articles (the Anglican creed) could be interpreted in a "Catholic" sense, he thereby declared open apostasy and invited revolt on the part of the queen. (See G. St Aubyn, *Queen Victoria. A Portrait*, London: Sinclair-Stevenson Ltd., 1991, 310).

212 F. J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul*, New York: Permabooks, 1954, 64.

being buried in the objective being of the State, i.e. his whimsical individuality can be mastered and controlled within the confines of the objective legal system. Does it suffice? Kierkegaard (1813–1855) protested against this outcome. In order to fulfil our destiny, we need to enter the tomb of our individual fortune, and we can do this. That is why the tomb in the East is filled and happy and the tomb in the West is empty and unhappy. Kierkegaard, therefore, had an excellent insight into all the consequences of what we are confronting at the moment. As Alasdair MacIntyre mentions, the attempts are made "to diminish central Christian doctrine in a way that would make it acceptable to post-Enlightenment culture, the culture of encyclopedia." Such was the post-Cartesian and post-Kantian heritage which, in the late-nineteenth century, sought to subject theology to rationalist standards; this subjection meant "rejecting, modifying, and truncating theism until it became a doctrine acceptable within the framework imposed by the encyclopaedist's unitary and ahistorical conception of rationality [...]." Such attempts must have been taken seriously by Kierkegaard in the first half of the nineteenth century and by Newman almost throughout the whole century. MacIntyre writes: "these recurrent attempts evoked a variety of theological restatements, of which Kierkegaard's and Newman's were among the most notable."[213]

Let me present an example of this ahistorical approach, an example that appears to be quite common today. There are people who are silent about the orthodoxy within the Catholic Church—for the sake of fear or political correctness—a tendency that is characteristic of a peculiar type of *aggiornamento*, especially popular with some parts of the western hierarchies in their openness to the contemporary world. Therefore, they resort to some linguistic games instead. Because the word "Catholic" is derived from the Latin "catholicus," they say, and the latter means "general," then "Catholic" can be reduced to "all-inclusiveness," "instant culture," "latitudinarianism," "comprehensiveness of belief." It must be noted that such an attitude had brought the Anglican Church to a deadly standstill in the nineteenth century and created what was later labeled as the "Broad Church." And we come to a paradoxical hybrid, a strange *qui pro quo*, where all opinions are accepted and the question of truth is suspended. Like in Macbeth, we have a mixture of many elements: fair is foul and foul is fair. A mere linguistic foundation for the Church seems to be a very insecure foundation for a solid edifice as the Church undoubtedly should be. Too broad an approach may certainly satisfy the requirements of a fashionable

213 A. MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry. Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006, 68, 69.

tolerance, but shall not establish a dogmatic institution. In this maelstrom of proposals, set against the vast panorama of ideas, skepticism may have the final say.

The notional assent introduces us into what Kierkegaard called the aphoristical way of living. He called it "the religion of the aphoristical and the accidental"; we "live aphoristically, we who live withdrawn and *segregate*, like aphorisms in life, without community of men, without sharing their griefs and their joys; we who are not consonantal sounds in the alarums of life, but solitary birds in the stillness of night, gathering together only occasionally, to be edified by considering the wretchedness of life, the length of the day, and the endless permanence of time; we [...], who have no faith in the game of happiness or the luck of fools, who believe in nothing save misfortune."[214] Living in aphorisms is living a non-committal life, as Michael Novak calls it. Those who are forever absent live either in hope or in memory. Only those who are present to themselves are happy. The unhappy man can be absent in his hope or in his memory. This penetrating psychological insight into the human psyche is indeed worthy of the most profound consideration.

The most important purpose of our life is to "obtain a correct knowledge of [ourselves]"—such is the fundamental direction of our life.[215] When we profess great doctrines, we must be well aware whether we really mean what we thus pronounce, for "all those who neglect the duty of habitual self-examination are using words without meaning."[216] The point is then to *know*, i.e. to realize, the language I am using. Otherwise, "assent to a form of words which declares those doctrines [...] is the same as a real *holding of* them, and belief in them, then it is equally possible to believe in a proposition the terms of which belong to some foreign language, which is obviously absurd."[217] Nevertheless, similar situations are very common. People think that when "they are familiar with words, they understand the ideas they stand for."[218] In like manner, some think that the mere repetition of the word "conscience," a word which belongs to common language, makes those who repeat it people of conscience. Self-knowledge is especially crucial in the case of religion and morals. Newman stresses the fundamental importance of examining one's heart first in order to use these words with meaning. He explains it thus: "For it is in proportion

214 S. Kierkegaard, *Either/ or. A Fragment of Life*, trans. D. F. and L. M. Swenson, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949, 179–180.

215 See J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 31.

216 Ibid.

217 Ibid.

218 Ibid.

as we search our hearts and understand our own nature, that we understand what is meant by an Infinite Governor and Judge; in proportion as we comprehend the nature of disobedience and our actual sinfulness, that we feel what is the blessing of the removal of sin, redemption, pardon, sanctification, which otherwise are mere words."[219] We should go inside and "read ourselves," to set about a profound introspection. To know oneself is to plant religion inside. We should rather believe things, than words; "without self-knowledge you have no root in yourselves personally,"[220] and to know oneself does not mean to achieve the transcendental level. Professing without understanding is of no avail, and the correct form of understanding is realizing. I shall talk about this at greater length when writing about Stein's primeval life and man's inmost depth. Now let us focus on the question of conscience, one of the strongest themes in Newman, and, naturally, an important point in the issue of the reality-unreality of words.

31 The Voice of Conscience

Our natural experience does not lead us automatically to belief, because it may just as well lead us to unbelief. We must start from faith, unless we wish to claim that external circumstances are capable of determining our belief. Therefore, Clive S. Lewis (1898–1963), in the introduction to his book *The Problem of Pain*, brilliantly recapitulates the time when he was an atheist. Then, his interpretation of the world was entirely different than when he became a believer. And the interesting turning point was the moment of belief, which helped him gain a totally different view of the same experience. The conclusion for Lewis was obvious: it was not his experience that had brought about this change, but his transformed approach. And he notes: "The spectacle of the universe as revealed by experience can never have been the ground of religion: it must always have been something in spite of which religion, acquired from a different source, was held."[221]

Conscience, for Newman, is such a mysterious faculty that, while heard inside the agent, it is, at the same time, a telling sign of the supernatural. And the conscience is concerned with the particular. Any considerations of Newman are incomplete if there is nothing about the pivotal role of conscience in his pursuits. Conscience is this special place where the natural is

219 Ibid., 32.
220 Ibid., 39.
221 C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, London and Glasgow: Collins Fontana Books, 1965, 3.

mysteriously combined with the supernatural, and it is the place of personal encounter, in fact, the most important encounter between man and God.

Conscience is not "a rule of right conduct, but [...] a sanction of right conduct."[222] It does not say how to do something, but evaluates whether our action is good or bad. Therefore, conscience does not provide any general rule on how to behave, but is a judgement attendant on our behaviour. We can make errors in our judgements, but this does not mean that we always behave in the same way. The sense of moral obligation and duty is shared by all, but it may be associated with different actions. As Newman stresses, the knowledge that there is a right and wrong is notional, but its application is practical. Conscience depicted as a triangle with the innate element of synderesis and two acquired elements—science and wisdom—is individualized in each case. In other words, as Newman explains, "this sense of a particular judgment or sanction on the quality of [an] action is part of myself in the same way that existence, in the same that sensation, consciousness, reasoning, memory are part of myself, and it is as unmeaning to say that I have faith in it, or blind faith in it, or that it is a law of the mind, as to say that existence is a law of the mind. It is bound up in the very idea or fact of my existence." And the author is not interested in individual differences, with regard to the acquired elements, but in it being "a sanction or command."[223]

Conscience is primarily a faculty of judging. Newman enumerates its characteristic features, among which we find "a phenomenon of <my> existence, one of those phenomena, thro' which as I have said, my existence is brought home to me." But, unlike existence, which is brought home to us by virtue of faith, "the accuracy or truth of the praise or blame in the particular case, is a matter not of faith, but of judgment." And he concludes by discriminating two senses of conscience: "the act of moral judgment, or for the particular judgement formed." And, consequently, we have "the foundation of religion" (when the act of moral judgement is meant) and ethics (when the particular judgement is formed).[224]

The moral sense differs from the sense of beautifulness, for instance, for the moral sense is primarily concerned with persons. Yet one more fundamental characteristic of conscience must be mentioned here, namely, the fact that its ultimate authority reaches beyond the self, i.e. the voice of conscience, although it is heard within the self, does not come from the self. Therefore, we commonly speak of conscience as a voice, which is uncommon in the case of

222 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 99.
223 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 49; see also J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 98.
224 See, E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 47.

some aesthetic judgements. Here, the voice usually comes from someone. The voice of our conscience in our decisions "dimly discerns a sanction higher than self for its decisions, as is evidence in that keen sense of obligation and responsibility which informs them."[225]

Another fundamental element of conscience is that its voice dictates and commands. The voice of conscience has nothing to do with the sense of the expedient or the beautiful. It is authoritative and minatory. Conscience considered as the moral sense is unlike the sense of the beautiful because it is always emotional, whereas the sense of the beautiful is emotional only in some cases. It fills us with awe, remorse and shame. It is something more than a moral sense. In its dictates it is interpersonal, i.e. another person is always presupposed. Conscience stirs our affections, because in its voice another person is being revealed to us, "this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible, before whom we are ashamed, whose claims upon us we fear."[226] In the voice of conscience, we have within us the image of some person; we listen to someone speaking inside.

The existence of moral obligation, therefore, is conditioned by the existence of God: "there is a God, because there is a moral obligation."[227] In the same manner, he examines the existence of conscience. "I have a certain feeling on my mind, which I call conscience. When I analyse this, I feel it involves the idea of a Father & Judge — of one who sees my heart &c. &c."[228] In like manner, conscience is not impersonal—there is Someone speaking to us—nor is it my private point of view—how could I feel ashamed of my own private opinion?

Indeed, Newman's intuition seems correct here. It would be rather odd to experience any remorse when hearing sounds echoing from somewhere and having no personal sender. And we feel remorse even when in solitude, when there is actually no one around to talk to us. We may even have some Platonic associations when we read in Newman that "the presence of unseen individual beings is discerned under the shifting shapes and colours of the visible world."[229]

Newman holds that we have this initial knowledge of God, and it is present in children. This knowledge is latent in the mind, it is pre-reflective, but it is difficult to determine how much of it comes from within or without. It depends on each individual and individual circumstances whether this primordial

225 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 99.
226 Ibid., 101.
227 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 31.
228 Ibid., 2, 31.
229 J. H. Newman, *Grammar*, 102.

(residual) knowledge will be strengthened or distorted and obliterated. And even though distortion or obliteration might not take place, these initial sentiments could still turn into mere notional apprehension. The point is, therefore, how to keep this premeditated image of God alive.

As in the case of conscience, we combine fear with shame—the elements present in its voice—so here we seek to join strength with delicacy. Dogma symbolizes strength; it is a stronghold around which there may revolve a personal response. This personal response is obviously called upon to be translated into certitude, and this response is strength, but unlike the original and objective strength; certitude—as we have seen—calls for time. In this sense, it may be identified with virtue. And here we have arrived yet one more time at the point that is most intriguing for Newman, i.e. how is a dogma in each particular case given a personal shape. As in the example with the fan vaulting (in Chapter 2), this dogma is capable of upholding different personal constructions without changing its essence. Each person is constructing his or her personal shapes throughout his or her lifetime. Reason and the heart are conjoined in a most spectacular dialogue. They are placed under one roof—yet another of Newman's metaphor.

We must constantly bear in our mind that Newman is always striving for the integral view of the human person. He is neither inclined towards a rationalism of modernity nor towards a sentimentalism of romanticism. As I have already said, imagination (the power creating images) is important as the initiator of action, but nothing here comes about automatically. Reason is not rejected, but it must be placed within all other personal dimensions. As the Cardinal concisely summarizes his point: "Impassioned thoughts, high aspirations, sublime imaginings, have no strength in them. They can no more make a man obey constantly, than they can move mountains. […] Conscience, and Reason in subjection to Conscience, *these* are those powerful instruments (under grace) which change a man. But you will observe, that though Conscience and Reason lead us to resolve on and to attempt a new life, they cannot at once make us *love* it."[230] Thinking, and whatever results from its processes, is an area of open options in which when it can be argued in favour of something, it can be made real. Reason is subdued to conscience. Indeed, in his way of comprehending Conscience is not the voice of practical reason (since in that case we would have reason subjected to reason, which would make a tautology), but the voice of God, who is seeking to bring the person onto the right path.

230 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Play Sermons*, 76.

By calling conscience the voice of God, Newman wishes to stress that it is not "a creation of man."[231] Conscience is in us as a judgement, but at the same time not out of us when we evaluate something convenient, fit or beautiful. Newman criticises the claims of psychoanalysis that conscience is but a twist in primitive people, that it is irrational, that the very sense of guiltiness is irrational. If man is but an element in a deterministic series of causes and effects, there is no talking about freedom of will. And if such is the case, there is no responsibility. Consequently, conscience cannot make man responsible for his acts. Certainly, Newman's view of conscience stands in glaring contradiction to conscience viewed as our private and sovereign opinion which cannot be subjected to any sanction. And Newman states that "Conscience has rights because it has duties […]."[232] This is a very important point, for it says that conscience is not a mere private opinion, that it does not refer to itself but to Something else, or, to be more precise, to Someone else. Private opinions have no duties; their duties are enclosed in themselves, and they refer to no one except the self. Conscience, understood in this manner, brings the self back to order; the order that is not conceived nor invented by the self. Conscience therefore, as I have already said, is a sanction because it does not confirm the individual in his belief, i.e. in no way is it a sense of self-complacency. Obviously, since it has duties, it must be reared in duties. And the best context of rearing the conscience in duties is, for Newman, the Decalogue, the Bible, the Sacraments, and the tradition of the Church. But even in this context, conscience, as the voice of God, is not limited or determined. I mean, for instance, those situations of heresy, when lay people saw in their conscience that the hierarchs were wrong.

Conscience's worst enemy is its counterfeit, which Newman calls "the right of self-will."[233] And Newman defends Pope Pius IX who, in his encyclical *Quanta cura*, criticises the so-called "liberty of conscience." The Pope obviously did not mean literary conscience, but its counterfeit; therefore, in fact, licence which in certain circles was (intentionally or ignorantly) called conscience.

Newman holds that conscience reigns supreme even when set up against the Pope's infallibility, because the "Pope is not infallible in that subject-matter in which conscience is of supreme authority […]."[234] Moreover, conscience "is not a judgment upon any speculative truth, any abstract doctrine, but bears immediately on conduct," whereas the Pope's infallibility "is engaged on

231 J. H. Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891, 247.

232 Ibid., vol. II, 250.

233 Ibid. The term "self-will" reminds us of "self-willed belief." (see a previous footnote).

234 Ibid., 257.

general propositions and given errors."[235] Outside of this area, the Pope may announce his decisions, e.g. administrative, but they are not infallible.

Yet one more thing must be mentioned in this characterisation of conscience, as we find it in the pages of Newman's writings. He observes that each science has its certainty in itself. We proceed from undeniable premises to general truths by way of induction. Indeed, this *is* what we do, in particular in the natural sciences. The sense of right and wrong, another name for conscience, "is the first element in religion, is so delicate, so fitful, so easily puzzled, obscured, perverted, so subtle in its argumentative methods, so impressible by education, so biassed by pride and passion, so unsteady in its course, that, in the struggle for existence, amid the various exercises and triumphs of the human intellect, this sense is at once the highest of all teachers, yet the least luminous [...]."[236]

This is an excellent diagnosis of conscience and an insightful analysis of its position in human moral knowledge. Important as conscience is, Newman realistically assesses its capacity, and, therefore, the Church and her institutions in supplementing its inadequacies. Conscience does play an essential role in Newman's grammar of knowledge, but we are constantly reminded—as we can see in this quote—that many other elements must come into play for human integrity to prevail. We can understand his hesitation with regard to certitude and intuition, his concession on the part of conscience—as he jokingly remarked that he would drink a toast first to conscience and only afterwards to the Pope—and at the same time his claim that conscience is the least luminous. In order to avoid confusion, let me remind the reader that Newman is always concerned with a concrete, real, and unpredictable being in a concrete situation. Therefore, few things can be theoretically decided in advance. And conscience is the last candidate for a thorough theoretical description.

Let us turn now to the question of habit. All of Newman's analyses seem to converge on this point—the person's habitual readiness to promptly respond to the call of the good of a given situation.

32 Habit—the Way of Action

Newman clearly draws on Aristotle when he describes virtue as "a mean,—that is, as considering it to lie between things that are wrong. We know what is

235 Ibid., 256.
236 Ibid., 253–254.

right, not positively, but negatively;—we do not see the truth at once and make towards it, but we fall upon and try error, and find it is *not* the truth. We grope about by touch, not by sight, and so by a miserable experience exhaust the possible modes of acting till nought is left, but truth, remaining. Such is the process by which we succeed; we walk to heaven backward; we drive our arrows at a mark, and think him most skilful whose shortcomings are the least."[237]

It follows from the above passage that the way to the truth is hard work. We need to try and show discipline. "We do not know what we mean by a habit, except as a state or quality of mind *under* which we act in this or that particular way; it is a permanent power in the mind [...]."[238] This power in the mind is not effected by merely intellectual activity.

It is important because unreal words bring us away from our personal growth, from the true unity of our persons. Being true to oneself is of utmost importance. Being true also means to be at peace with one's conscience. Therefore, this does not mean to primarily have one's own way. Another thing is that when we apply the Aristotelian way to virtue we act in a negative manner—by avoiding extremes, i.e. by saying "no" to each extreme. By going back and rejecting all the extremes, we finally arrive at the truth. In other words, we first departed from the truth at the moment when we took for the truth something that was merely its false reflection.

Habit as a permanent state of mind can be positive or negative. In other words, it acts in such a way as to prompt the agent to good deeds or to deaden him to the awareness that he is doing something bad. Therefore, Newman resorted to introspection, that phenomenological tool with which to examine one's mind and find out where it is located in relation to the matters at hand and how it evaluates them. The mind can be, respectively, resolute on something good or in the grips of doing wrong. He lay down his individual model of introspection in *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, a very personal diary on someone's spiritual and intellectual journey, an attempt at a justification of one's life. What kind of justification was it? For sure, it was not a justification with a view to some objective criteria. This type of justification would be especially foreign to Newman, and would go against the grain of his guiding principle that "egotism is true modesty." His justification was meant to show his personal consistency between his person and the choices he had made throughout his life. The most important thing is to be real, i.e. not to rationalize one's conscience. It is better, one might conclude, to act and make mistakes than to pretend.

237 J. H: Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1019.
238 Ibid.

The negative aspect of habit has the following effects upon the acting agent. It blurs his ability to assess his condition and entail despair. Fulton Sheen (1895–1979) put it wonderfully when he wrote: "The condition of despair induced by unrepented sin often reaches a point where there is a positive fanaticism against religion and morality. He who has fallen away from the spiritual order will hate it, because religion is the reminder of his guilt. Husbands who are unfaithful will beat their wives who are faithful. Wives who are unfaithful will accuse their husbands of infidelity."[239] Is it not here that we find the contemporary interest in the gloomy recesses of one's mind? People like watching negative characters on television because, by way of contrast, they can think of themselves as someone better; and because they are given an opportunity for worse actions. Newman speaks about "secret faults" (secret sins). Conscience ceases "to upbraid us" when we refuse to listen to its reproaches. We can thereby become accustomed to sins (or faults) and desensitized, i.e. "the more guilty we are, the less we know it; for the oftener we sin, the less we are distressed at it." And the Cardinal adds his own practical observation: "I think many of us may, on reflection, recollect instances, in our experience of ourselves, of our gradually forgetting things to be wrong which once shocked us. Such is the force of habit. By it (for instance) men contrive to allow themselves in various kinds of dishonesty. They bring themselves to affirm what is untrue, or what they are not sure is true, in the course of business. They overreach and cheat; and still more are they likely to fall into low and selfish ways without their observing it, and all the while to continue careful in their attendance on the Christian ordinances, and bear about them a form of religion. Or, again, they will live in self-indulgent habits; eat and drink more than is right; display a needless pomp and splendour in their domestic arrangements, without any misgiving; much less do they think of simplicity of manners and abstinence as Christian duties."[240]

In the quotation above we can see two elements. First, we find Newman's consistency in carrying out his introspection. Second, his acute sense of observation. All the aforementioned negative symptoms of human behaviour can, in turn, be enhanced by the ethos in which we live. Once certain shameful deeds are accepted, let alone recommended, the agents readily resort to soothing excuses. Newman does not propose any revolutionary solutions. If one cannot change the ethos, one should leave it. Ethos can be related to what Newman calls custom. Habit is what comes from within, and custom is what

239 F. J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul*, 66.

240 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 37.

comes from without. Certain bad practices may grow very deep roots. People have a tendency to look with an approving eye at what should be eliminated. They "will feel the sway of the fashion of their age,"[241] Hence Newman was right in claiming that one should be jealous of one's own person.

Newman, for his part, stresses the fact that my primary responsibility is myself. I carry myself throughout my life, e.g. through the political ostracism of Great Britain in the case of Newman, and through the suffering of the Holocaust in the case of Edith Stein. I am not called upon to save the world, nor capable of doing so. My first and foremost duty is to save myself. This is an individual and a social task at the same time. It is social in the sense that each authentic human being remains a pattern of behaviour for the generations to come. Here is someone who has managed to retain his personhood. Then, in his unique introspection, he tested his own position, whether he committed himself, whether he was real in what he was saying and doing.

In 1859, Newman rejected Ward's view that we have to trust our faculties first, as it is our first speculative certainty. Therefore, his later philosophy is "no mere psychologism — it is a metaphysics of being as known in experience."[242]

241 Ibid., 38.

242 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 33. See also A. J. Boekraad, *The Personal Conquest of Truth According to J. H. Newman*, Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1955, 255–272.

CHAPTER 3

The Cross as a Source of Knowledge and the Language of the Heart

> The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know.
>
> BLAISE PASCAL

•••

> It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;
> what is essential is invisible to the eye.
>
> ANTOINE DE SAINT-ÉXUPERY

⁘

We have already defined the main purposes of Newman's quest—to analyse how man thinks under concrete circumstances and how he assents to propositions (notional assent) or to reality (real assent), and, ultimately, whether he can arrive at certitude in the concrete. In Chapter 2 I sought to characterise Newman's theory of knowledge in the concrete, i.e. how we come to assent in our daily experience and whether we can accomplish certitude. His principal position was that of "metaphysics in the singular," in which selfhood rises to the point of being the main cognitive centre. Therefore, Newman uses such terms as *personal result*, *cogitative method*. This centre is, at the same time, very unsteady and unreliable, for it is the living centre of the human being that undergoes all the contingencies of the living entity, but at the same time the only one we have immediate access to. We have to use ourselves, however, all these shortcomings—hesitations, prejudices, uncertainties, weaknesses—notwithstanding.

In one of his sermons, Newman characterises our existential situation. He writes that people willingly follow their inclinations, "they are guided by pleasure and pain, not by reason, principle, or conscience; and they do not attempt to *interpret* this world, to determine what it means, or to reduce what they see and feel to system. But when persons, either from thoughtfulness of mind, or from intellectual activity, begin to contemplate the visible state of things into

which they are born, then forthwith they find it a maze and a perplexity. It is a riddle which they cannot solve. It seems full of contradictions and without a drift. Why it is, and what it is to issue in, and how it is what it is, and how we come to be introduced into it, and what is our destiny, are all mysteries."[1] Thus, we can see that the author of these words is well aware of at least two distinct states of our existence: the theoretical one in which we are engaged in intellectual activity and can assume a safe distance towards the vibrant current of events, and the actual one when we commonly decide about matters that personally concern us. In this sense, Newman's message goes counter to the universalizing tendencies of the Enlightenment, especially the secular trends of the epoch of reason and experience. John Henry sought to restore the person and his idiosyncratic thinking to their right position. His method did not concentrate on coming up with some overall theory, but rather on accompanying the human being in his concrete struggle with daily reality. At the same time, such a being is called upon to respond to duties that go beyond what is experiential and reach the supernatural. Such a being, spread between the here and now and the metaphysical beyond, must find personal resources to brave this predicament. In my interpretation of Newman I have constantly made recourse to Edith Stein, especially at the moments of their mutual inspiration.

In order to render the special position of the person, his tension between the truth and personal assent to it, Newman attempts first a thorough study of the theory of knowledge, bearing in mind all the time the specific human condition. He is therefore aware that the original "functional disarrangement"—as we called it after him in Chapter 2—is a very unwelcome situation, but, at the same time, something that we have to take into account, if we aspire to portray a realistic picture of the human being. Doomed to his contingent fortune, the person must come to grips with his individual (internal and external) circumstances, for—weak as he is—he is endowed with respective faculties to accomplish that which he is called to accomplish. He is endowed with reason, conscience, and the capability of abiding by principles. He is like a tree bending under the strong gusts of wind, firmly holding the ground with its roots. Reason, as the natural personal faculty, must be understood in its proper context. It is true that Newman in the quote above emphasizes the role of reason in overcoming chaos, but reason must be accepted as it is in the person himself. We should rely on it, but not place too much confidence in it, we should mind its limitations. Let us note that, in the quote above, reason is placed side by side with conscience.

1 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1229.

Newman explains his understanding of reason in the *Apologia*. He agrees with the stance of classical philosophy that the primary object of reason is to attain truth. At the same time, he is aware that it is right reason that is meant here. Therefore, he explains his position: "I have no intention at all of denying, that truth is the real object of our reason, and that, if it does not attain to truth, either the premiss or the process is in fault; but I am not speaking here of right reason, but of reason as it acts in fact and concretely in fallen man [...]; I am considering the faculty of reason actually and historically; and in this point of view, I do not think I am wrong in saying that its tendency is towards a simple unbelief in matters of religion."[2] Newman is constantly asking about reason in a concrete human being surrounded by his changing circumstances. That is why, the Cardinal proposes a more apt instrument to cope with them.

The reference to "pleasure and pain" in the quote above obviously makes us think of nineteenth-century utilitarianism. For Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), pleasure and pain were the two masters which guided human nature. Thus, man was reduced to two reactions placed at two extremes: either to seek pleasure or to avoid pain. The abandonment of this simplistic philosophy would mean creating a system, i.e. turning all our sense data into a coherent whole, seeking a more profound interpretation of what we can experience. We need to approach the surrounding world not only with what we transitorily feel as enticing, what is pressing on us at the moment, what is expedient, but constantly attempt to create one overall sense from that which appeals to us. For that, theoretical comprehension is insufficient, as I have been trying to prove; we need to gain personal command of the sense data at hand. Let me remind the reader how challenging this task is. We have to confront the *abyss of existence* in which only some elements are explicit, others being implicit, i.e. unnamed. Indeed, this personal command we wish to gain calls for a more sensitive and adequate instrument than a general knowledge of physical processes. We can find the source of this knowledge inside us. This path inside—which will be dealt with at greater length in Chapter 4—will warrant, on the one hand, an authentic pledge of individuality and, on the other, a steady core of personality. For Newman and Stein, the soul is the core, the heart is the measure, and the cross is the ultimate point of reference. And these are the areas in which the two thinkers are particularly integrated. And the heart is guided by what Newman called "higher logic."

Let us note that the logic of the heart was propounded in the nineteenth century as an opposition to the equalizing transcendental tendencies, i.e.

2 J. H. Newman, *Apologia*, 163.

constructivism feels at home in the divorce from reality, when man apparently free from all obstacles can create his world anew. Surprisingly, if he wishes to plan everything, the plans turn into their opposite. The so-called ideal political systems then become systems of the worst oppression. And why should we wonder? Reality translated into concepts is no longer reality, when words are only words—conventional markers—starved of their real and nutrient contents. The illusion is that only the explicit level exists, and the implicit depth is neglected. It is true that the explicit constitutes only a part, and not a very large part, of the person. To grasp the implicit area, we need a more adequate instrument.

1 Going Inside—Meeting God

The soul is the life-giving form of the body. It is at home in its innermost region. When the soul ascends to God, it reaches out to something outside, but, at the same time, goes inside. God is a mystery which "attracts us constantly." This mystery reveals itself to us, but never completely. A created spirit can ascend to God—we read in Edith Stein—only by transcending itself and sinking "by this very fact into a secure position of rest."[3] This sinking into "a secure position of rest" reminds us of Newman's understanding of certitude, for being at tranquil rest is the main characteristic of certitude. Let us remember, however, this most intriguing (indeed, there is something powerfully beautiful in it) hesitation between certitude and simple assent, i.e. the person's immediate response to value; Newman, as we remember, was inclined to emphasize simple assent. Since St John of the Cross "calls God the deepest centre or point of rest of the soul," the striving after certitude is striving after God, but above all striving after the self is such. Indeed, if we have the right to understand Newman's certitude as finding one's true self, in like manner we can surmise that, in his view, this discovery must be identical with finding God. How else can it be, if reposing in certitude is coequal to one's principal task?

According to Newman, the doctrine of the Cross is "the true interpretation of this world," a statement which is in accordance with his claim that the Cross is the measure of the world. And the Cross is the fulcrum for *the abyss of existence* to find its orientation in the world. The message of the Cross is not theoretical knowledge, therefore it is "not on the surface of the world […]; it is

3 E. Stein, *The Science of the Cross: A Study of St. John of the Cross*, trans. by H. Graef, London: Burns & Oates, 1960, 115.

a hidden doctrine; it lies under a veil […]." I gather that the conclusion from these words is all too obvious—the doctrine of the Cross must be accepted by the person and realized. As Newman explains, "when received into the faithful heart, there it abides as a living principle, but deep, and hidden from observation."[4] This remark is an excellent corroboration of our former analysis. I think we may, for instance, identify the Cross and the kind of knowledge it conveys with the implicit part of our cognition; after all, its knowledge is deep and hidden from observation. Let us note the inherent cohesion of Newman's thinking and how he comes forward to meet his German Carmelite translator. I am always fascinated by the way the initially muddled paths ultimately converge and form a wider current. They seem to have found this sensitive and adequate instrument in the doctrine of the Cross and the heart.

Our experience would testify to the contrary, for it seems that suffering—which is symbolised by the Cross—is ubiquitous, that, in fact, there are more sorrowful than joyful moments. Therefore, the true doctrine of the Cross, as depicted in the aforementioned quotes, must denote something else, something much more profound than the visible aspect of suffering, "for truth is not on the surface of things, but in the depths."[5] The author of these words then goes on to appeal to "the language of figure, the *heart* of religion." In other words, the essence of religion is as hidden as personal experience, or, rather, the person's individual response to experience. The message of the Cross and the heart seems to converge and express something essentially profound—the core of Christian religion. Let me remind the reader what Edith Stein wrote about the Cross to Mother Prioress, namely, that one can learn it by living it. This is something analogous to Newman's realization or his simple real assent. Is that not the essence of religion—to move forward in confidence and faithfulness to God?

By way of analogy, Newman explains that "the heart may be considered as the seat of life; it is the principle of motion, heat, and activity; from it the blood goes to and fro to the extreme parts of the body. It sustains the man in his powers and faculties; it enables the brain to think; and when it is touched, man dies."[6] As the physical heart sets the whole of the body in motion and makes the blood circulate, "the sacred doctrine of Christ's Atoning Sacrifice is the vital principle on which the Christian lives, and without which Christianity is not."[7] In his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Newman is writing about "spiritual

4 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1232.
5 Ibid., 1232.
6 Ibid., 1233.
7 Ibid., 1233.

knowledge," that is, faith, which "carries with it its own evidence, and admits of no mistaking the true spiritual conviction being unlike all others."[8]

Just as inanimate matter is drawn to the centre of the earth by the power of gravity, so too the spiritual beings are drawn to God. A material object retains its gravitational (centripetal) motion as long as it is at a distance from the centre. In like manner, the spiritual being is under the power of attraction so long as it is far away from God. Stein uses the term "ladder," the same word used by Newman, we remember, in his analysis of real words. The Jewish author notes: "The soul ascends to God, that is, to union with him, by the steps of a ladder. The higher it ascends to him, the deeper it descends into itself: the union takes place in the innermost sphere of the soul, in its deepest ground. If this seems contradictory it should be remembered that these are only different spatial images supplementing each other and intended to indicate something utterly remote from space, which cannot be adequately represented by anything taken from the realm of natural experience."[9] This parallel between going to God and going inside oneself is most amazing here. For it means that going to God is not equal to losing oneself. On the contrary, by approaching God the human being approaches his true self. Such is the message from Newman and Stein. And this message is in accordance with St Augustine and his mystical teaching.

But unlike the physical heart—we read in Newman—the spiritual heart is "hidden from view; it is carefully and securely guarded; it is not like the eye set in the forehead, commanding all, and seen of all: and so in like manner the sacred doctrine of the Atoning Sacrifice is not one to be talked of, but to be lived upon; not to be put forth irreverently, but to be adored secretly; not to be used as a necessary instrument in the conversion of the ungodly, or for the satisfaction of reasoners of this world, but to be unfolded to the docile and obedient; to young children, whom the world has not corrupted; to the sorrowful, who need comfort; to the sincere and earnest, who need a rule of life; to the innocent, who need warning; and to the established, who have earned the knowledge of it."[10] Let us note that the purpose of all the components enumerated here is primarily to effect a certain practical result, and not to satisfy theoretical curiosity, i.e. to be lived upon, to convert, to bring comfort, to give a rule of life, to warn. And let us observe two important elements in this quote. The doctrine of the Cross (the Atoning Sacrifice) is "to be lived upon"—Edith Stein came to the same conclusion—and it is "to be unfolded to the docile

8 Ibid., 322, 323.

9 E. Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 116.

10 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1233.

and obedient." Indeed, here again we can see in practice the consistency of Newman's thinking, namely the importance of the intellectual and moral united in the person. Intellectual prowess is incapable of assenting to something that may otherwise be logically clear and distinct.

Here, the doctrine of the Cross or the science of the Cross is the Atoning Sacrifice. Hence, it is not the mere visible signs of suffering that matter, but their profound sense of Atonement. And here, again, is the true individuality emphasised, for it draws on its true form from the depth of (primeval) life. True individuality resides not in some spectacular feats of individual expressions, like images of an object reflected in numerous mirrors. The images are aspects of the object, but taken in their singular character they do not exhaust the whole of the object. We need to turn from the images and direct our eyes on to the object. Therefore, in our dealing with the world we should behave likewise, i.e. "begin with the world unseen. They alone enjoy [the visible world], who have first abstained from it. They alone can truly feast, who have first fasted; they alone are able to use the world, who have learned not to abuse it; they alone inherit it, who take it as a shadow of the world to come, and who for that world to come relinquish it."[11]

The true world, i.e. the world to come, is like the object hanging in front of the mirrors. Newman's figure resembles Plato's well-known vision of the people chained in a cave. They also need to turn their eyes from the images on the wall and direct them on to the object. In Plato, it is the true idea. In this world, we are doomed to live in the shadows. In the world to come they will flit away. Our task is not to be offended by what we learn as a world of shadows, but to be clearly aware that we learn only aspects. Moreover, the true knowledge resides in the invisible world.

2 Newman and Stein—Mystics

The process of ascending, the actual climbing up the ladder, in the form of its physical metaphor is, indeed, like going away from oneself, or at least a solitary and individual journey. In fact, however, each step forward, if it is made in reality, authenticity, and conscientious honesty is like coming closer to the centre, i.e. to oneself and to God.

In his book on Newman, Stanley L. Jaki placed a question mark after the word "mystic." Newman's biographers shy away from calling him a mystic.

11 Ibid., 1235.

I think that, at least, some conditions are fulfilled. And there are other elements that smack of mysticism in Newman. Let me remind the reader of his simple assent as a readiness to respond to God's call. There is, in Newman, this tension between intuition and certitude. Intuition is most directly related to the purity of intention, and certitude is superimposed on reflection, and therefore may be prone to rationalization. Intuition is akin to the person's moral character. Indeed, Newman's ultimate goal seemed to be certitude, but even more than that it was important to attain this fresh and ever-new alertness to assent to the truth of values. In other words, to what God may demand of man. In one of his prayers we read: "Give me that true wisdom, which seeks your will by prayer and meditation, by direct intercourse with you, more than by reading and reasoning."[12] Newman's hesitation between the serenity of certitude and the promptness of assent indeed results from the believer's feeling that assent is his manifest response to the call of a concrete situation. At the same time, when pondering on these two attitudes, we may conclude that there is no contradiction between them—they are like two sides of the same person.

It is the essential element of mysticism to seek this transparent, spiritual, and unmediated communing with a deity. Edith Stein observes in her comments on St John of the Cross that he "says little about the converse of human souls with each other [...], he is not interested in the notional means by which the communication is effected."[13] Judging by what she has written, we find it only natural that in her phenomenological quests she met a kindred spirit in St John of the Cross and John Henry Newman. Let it suffice to remind the reader of the essential concepts of the Cardinal's theory of knowledge: natural reasoning, informal inference, implicit thinking, personal result—they all point to the spiritual dimension of the person. They all stress the solitary—indeed, mystic—path inside, not to become a recluse or misanthrope, but to be *more personally present* in the world and to be more responsive to God's calls. As we know, the "notional means" of communication Stein is writing about, for Newman belong to the weakest and, hence, least trusted because they are superficial and, consequently, the least personal.

If the soul is engaged only in this notional distance from the Creator, argues Stein, it is in danger of becoming distorted. This is something mystics stress, that the night is for human sense cognition, for the human senses. Verbal communication is subject to errors, "it exposes the soul to manifold deceptions and errors: it may regard a mere delusion or phantasm as the apparition of

12 J. H. Newman, *A Newman Prayer Book*, 15.

13 E. Stein, *The Science of Cross*, 116.

a spirit [...]."[14] The rationalists, as we know, proposed methodical doubt as a remedy against deception, the suspension of judgement. But we need to act when called to action. By keeping a distance from the object of our cognition, we place ourselves in danger of losing some important messages. Besides, this is not our natural condition.

I think that even in Newman's concept of conscience there is something mystical, especially when he stresses the danger of the interposition of reasoning between the voice of conscience and action.

3 Selfhood—the Essence of Originality

It suffices to be ourselves in order to be individual, i.e. to save our individuality; and this turn to the self in quest of selfhood has something of the quality of an intrinsic dialogue with God inside man. As individuals, we are not products of one mechanistic and replicable template, so we do not have to prove that we are unique. On the contrary, we easily fall into the trap of collective awareness and collective thinking once we decide to search for individuality outside. For it is then that we fall under the spell of stereotypes and limitations, or else pursue the unknown tracks laid down by others, as we seek to hold on to the experimentation with foreign lifestyles. There is one song that is especially fashionable at the moment, namely, the song of diversity. This kind of diversity, however, does not result from the discovery of individuality, but apparently from a frantic quest for difference. The more different I am from others, the better. But then it appears that this feverish quest for difference pushes us into the old rut of the stereotype. Newman follows Augustine in his belief that real individuality resides in inwardness, not in outward manifestations. He learned from Augustine a total reliance on God and the importance of introspection, which Gottlieb describes as looking "into his own mind to see the truths that God had left there for him."[15] But Newman did not limit himself to pondering the contents of his mind, he also contemplated his own attitudes toward the revealed truths. Unlike Augustine, he was interested—after the Aristotelian fashion—in man in action. Like Augustine, however, Newman decided that it was time to stop doubting. His cause against doubting is anti-sceptical just like Augustine's was. Which house looks more unique: the one inhabited by its owner or the one abandoned by its owner? It is the owner present in his own

14 Ibid., 117.

15 A. Gottlieb, *The Dream of Reason*, 395.

house that renders it as something special and unique. Therefore, the person inside his selfhood is the person at home. And this is the essence of originality at the same time.

Newman's and Stein's decisions could only come from a mature personality, from their profound selfhoods, where no one makes others responsible for his own fortunes. Therefore, in a sense, they both died in similar circumstances—as solitary and fulfilled selves. Newman, surrounded by friends but, at the same time, safely enclosed in his personal certitude, in which his heart conversed with the Heart of the Lord; Stein, surrounded by her fellow believers and filled with her personal certitude that this must be the incomprehensible way chosen by the Lord for her. She did not know at the moment of her personal revelation, when she confessed "This is the truth," what might be the destination of this new journey she was gradually undertaking. And the external form of destination may be as different as different are two lives: Newman, reposed in his armchair, as we remember the last picture of him, and Stein holding tightly to the cross of suffering.

4 The Thoughts of the Heart

What are the thoughts of the heart in Stein's interpretation? They "signify the original life of the soul in the ground of its being, in a depth that is beyond the division into diverse powers and influences." It is the inmost part and the dwelling-place of God. Because this place is so hidden, it becomes mysterious even to the soul itself. This inmost sphere is "primeval life […] without form."[16] I think we may identify this form of life as Stein understood individual form. I understand thoughts of the heart as reflections of this form. They are true expressions of the person, but they are not notions. They have no forms, they are no creations of the thinking intellect, and they are beyond rational knowledge; indeed, they are implicit (Newman). Stein writes that our sensing of these thoughts of the heart "lacks the clarity of purely rational understanding; on the other hand, it is richer than this."[17] In like manner, the heart rather *is* than *speaks*. Newman, for his part, places the doctrine of the Cross, which he calls "great and awful," in "the *heart* of religion." And he goes on to explain what he means by the heart by analogy with the biological organ quoted previously. We must bear in mind this analogy between the spiritual heart and the

16 E. Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 118.

17 Ibid.

physical heart, when analysing the language of the heart in the context of the Cross. Inasmuch as the physical heart supports our vital functions, the spiritual heart supports our personal life. And what supports our physical life is therefore not intellectual, hence it is not explicit, only implicit. It is in the heart that we realize what we are assenting to. We keep in the heart the treasure of our very person. The most important things are not on the surface, they are kept in the heart; therefore, the doctrine of the Cross is "not one to be talked of, but to be lived upon." This is incredibly interesting, as I think, that we have found common ground between the two thinkers. And this common ground is unlike a set of shared opinions, but common participation in something that is beyond theoretical views.

The thoughts of the (spiritual) heart are implicit, so they can hardly be translated into the explicit form. At the same time, we learn that they are "richer." I understand by this that they are much more imbued with what is personal, and what is truly personal is incommunicable. More imbued with the personal, because they are free from reflective intrusions. Hence, it is quite logical to claim that which is incommunicable is not explicit. And any efforts at making it explicit are doomed to failure. The real person is inside, i.e. in the heart. As we recall Newman's "unperceived impressions," we can now say that they arise in the heart.

5 Interior Perception

This is a very interesting point and very much in accordance with Newman's intuitions. As I have said, he elaborated much on natural reasoning, natural inference, and a kind of internal conversation. The soul is set aside from the mind and decisions of the will. Owing to our personal faculties, the primeval life that resides in the depth is brought to light; to be more precise, only its glimpses, it is apprehended by interior perception. Interior perception is different from the first sensing. Who can perceive these first motions? Stein answers thus: "Only a person living perfectly recollected in his inner being watches faithfully even those first movements."[18] And here we are brought again to Newman's perception that only those who are whole can heal others.[19] Let us add more elements that characterise such a person. He is one whose words are real, who lives in obedience to his own conscience. In other words,

18 E. Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 119.

19 See J. H. Newman, *Apologia*, 147.

one who lives in the unity of his being—the intellect and morality under one roof. Such a person is "perfectly recollected"—I am assenting to something and I know that it is I who is assenting to it.

The Carmelite Saint observes:

> This brings us to the second reason why a man's inmost being is hidden from him. As has been said, here the soul is truly at home. But, strange though it may sound, it is normally *not* at home. There are but few souls that live in and from their inmost being; and even far fewer that are constantly living in and from it. Naturally, i.e. according to their *fallen* nature, men stay in the outer rooms of the castle of their soul. Whatever comes to them from outside draws them outward.[20]

In this beautiful quotation we again notice some (intentional or non-intentional) Newmanian tracks. Those who do not live in their depth are not at home, that is, they remain in chaos. They are torn between pleasure and pain, but because they do not live inside neither of these can bring them gratification—neither the satisfaction of pleasure, nor the evasion of pain. Indeed, they live at the Kierkegaardian aesthetic stage. And the main reason for this is that they treat pleasure and pain in isolation from everything else, primarily from their true selves, forgetful of the necessity to bring any dissipated elements into a whole, i.e. into a system. They go and return, as the occasion might be, without trying to find any sense of either direction. They remind us of homeless vagabonds, deprived of any set goal in their lives. Existentialists and writers provide plenty of examples of such types. A classic example is the hero from Camus's novel *The Stranger*. They remain temporarily satisfied with what is expedient and what brings them fleeting satisfaction. Indeed, if certitude is a journey towards a certain goal, it is not yet accomplished. There are few persons who live in their depth, who are so simple and undivided inside. More often than not, all the processes of rationalization are at work, which thwart the realization of the inmost being. I presume that the reader may feel somewhat confused now. If the inmost depth is unknown and implicit, how can we reach it at all, or, better still, how can we learn whether we have reached it, we have come closer to it or we have gone a long way from it?

The answer is surprisingly simple: we can learn about it only indirectly. We can pass judgement on it based on external manifestations. I have already mentioned some of them: reality, simplicity, conscientiousness, purity of motives,

20 E. Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 119.

personal integrity—such are the clear signs of our residing in the centre of our inmost being. In general, going inside is a lifelong process, the process of growing.

The soul can move inside due to its being an ego. It is in its inmost sphere that the soul can truly be free, i.e. at the source of what primarily emanates from its depth without any interfering mediations. The interference may come from the inside (rationalization triggered by conceit, envy, greed) or from the outside (false authorities, temptations). In this "deepest point [...] it can decide on its own being." The decisions that are made from a more distant point are superficial and inadequate, for "it is mere chance if a decision turns out to be adequate, for only in the most profound point are we capable of judging all things by their ultimate standards."[21] The more distanced we are from our inmost beings, the less perfectly free we are, because, inasmuch as we are distanced, we are not wholly masters of ourselves, we are subject to external influences, we are, so to say, distracted. Man's destiny is "to live in his inmost being and to master himself in a way that is possible only from this inmost sphere."[22] Who am I when I am distanced from my centre? Who am I when I am coming ever closer to it? What are the criteria by which we can judge the distance from the centre? Such questions may naturally arise. We may attempt to answer them. If, in our inmost depth, we are most truly free, and we know that it is implicit, then it is beyond any conceptualisation. Therefore, inside we are, so to say, naked—without plans, schemes, memories, or anticipations. We are where we are, and what we really are. This state indeed reminds us of a mystic state. We find in St John of the Cross detailed descriptions of how the soul should purify itself of any concepts. And in philosophy we have the picture of Kierkegaard's two tombs. The aesthetic character is always somewhere else than where he should be—and this is the essence of his despair. He recalls things he should hope for, and he hopes for the things he should recall. Therefore, he is never in his true inmost depth.

It is only from this inmost sphere that the person can have a true relationship with the world because only there is he at one with his true self, is he truly himself, "and only from here will he be able to find the place in the world that is allotted to him."[23] No wonder, then, that Newman, rather than trying to change the Anglican Church, set out on his journey in quest of his true ethos, of his genuine place. He realized that it was not the outside that must be transformed, that the true sanctuary is his own self.

21 E. Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 120.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

6 The Implicit and the Logic of the Heart

Since the thoughts of the heart take the implicit form, they are hardly accessible to the self itself, unless vaguely, as only God knows them. Edith Stein stresses the fact that the question of the relationship of freedom to its inmost sphere does not come from St John of the Cross. It is suggested, therefore, that it is her own addition.[24] We have to understand that, for mystics, but also for Stein and Newman, freedom does not mean in the first place the free expression of one's self, let alone totally free choice in the sense of free options (as is viewed in the negative aspect of liberty). In their case, freedom in its primary sense means a readiness to surrender the whole of one's being to God in obedience, i.e. to the duty that results from man's obedience; hence, the Cross is, for Newman, the measure of the world and for Stein the special science. Therefore, Stein concludes, "with regard to this highest stage of the personal life there is perfect agreement between the mystical doctrine of the two founders of the reformed Carmel [St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross] and the view that the inmost region of the soul is the sphere of the most perfect freedom."[25] It is in this inmost region that I am truly myself, that I have myself at my disposal. Not in the sense that I understand everything, and can communicate it to others. It appears that the person is most free in the implicit sphere of his mind. First of all, because this sphere eludes conceptualization, and therefore it simultaneously eludes rationalization. We can even say that it is good for us that the implicit contents of our very being are beyond our reach. Therefore, they can become, firstly, the goal of our constant struggle, the ultimate point of reference; and, secondly, they are indestructible—one can kill and torture an individual, but one cannot touch the person. I know that this statement may sound somewhat paradoxical, as we have already said "know thyself." On second thoughts, however, it is not paradoxical at all. It is true that the implicit sphere eludes our conceptualization, but nor do we need to know it in this conceptual, explicit, form.

In view of the above, and of what I have said so far, I would like to put forward the following thesis: the heart is composed of what is invisible and unmeasurable, it is akin to the abyss of existence and primeval life. The heart is the sphere of true existence. If, as Newman claims, man can really assent to something he does not understand, therefore, in like manner something that is unnameable, or cannot be described, can exert a visible effect on man's

24 See E. Stein, ibid., 121.

25 Ibid., 122.

actions. In this sense, we may speak of the intransitive effects of our actions, i.e. their results remain in the agent.[26] The person, throughout his lifetime, amasses not merely experiential data out of which he constructs theoretical knowledge. Equally important, or even more so, is his moral experience, his decisions concerning moral good or evil, that come to constitute the implicit abundance of his person. And, aside from theoretical knowledge that any person has, there remains this powerful, invisible, unnameable spiritual core that is brought to light by the person's simple and real assent to values. I think we can call this vital space the heart. Thus, the heart, as the unnameable sphere, indeed becomes Newman's personal result. Personal, because it surpasses whatever belongs to our general acquisition of information. The heart then resembles the freshness of the simple assent. And the heart is the personal pulsating and vibrating organ with which the person responds to values. In like manner, Newman's and Stein's spiritual paths cross together. The more we respond to values, the more sensitive the heart becomes, for the fabric of the heart is composed of our decisions and acts, of the good we have assented to and realized. In other words, it is composed of facts, not of mere plans or dreams. Its power does not reside in anything sentimental. It becomes powerful, although its power does not consist in arguments. Consequently, in his confrontation with reality the person is empowered not only with a capacity to methodically analyse problematic issues, formulate theorems and solve tasks, but is additionally empowered by the spiritual dimension that is powerful, yet indescribable; it does not even seek its manifestation in arguments.

Indeed, there is something mysterious in this logic of the heart. It is the logic of the person who has realized the truth. It is not composed of knowledge which can be given an explicit form, and yet it is a knowledge! In this sense, the science of the Cross can also be the science of the heart. And the personal result is the result of the heart! The power of the heart comes from reality, i.e. from the personal realization of reality. Therefore, it is indeed a personal result, not a general statement on some universal truths.

The saint Carmelite author asks about other people if they are capable of this mystical marriage, i.e. a close relationship with God without any demonstrative knowledge. We can reformulate this question in the context of Newman and say: are all people capable of personal certitude? Are they capable of real assent? And to either question our answer must be in the positive. If each soul has this inmost sphere, and it is only natural that each soul should have it, for it

26 Cf. Karol Wojtyła's discussion on the transitive and intransitive effects of human acts (K. Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. A. Potocki, Dordrecht: R. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979, 149 ff.

is their ontic endowment, then the only problem is where the soul has decided to cover the distance (in each case individual) from its inmost sphere.

And here Edith Stein mentions the sensual man who is further from this sphere, for he is occupied with sensual enjoyment. I have already given the example of Kierkegaard's aesthetic man, the epitome of whom for the Danish philosopher was Don Juan. Then we have the seeker of the truth. Much depends on what kind of truth this person is seeking: the truth of science, or only a mere amassing of "particular kinds of knowledge." If such a man seeks the Truth of his life, say, wisdom in its most fundamental manner, he is closer to the inmost sphere. Looking at the matter in question from the Newmanian point of view, we would say that the person who gives his real assent to the truth, who realizes it—all of these terms belong to his vocabulary—is closer to his inmost sphere than he who considers these matters only in a theoretical manner, the mere subject of learned deliberation. I have tried to explain this point above, i.e. to show the indirect way we learn our whereabouts in relation to the inmost sphere.

Newman, however, does anticipate that there is a passage to the inmost depth inasmuch as there is a passage from notional to real assent. And because such a passage exists (always individual as to its space and time), man is not bound to his place; in like manner, there is a chance for transition and, consequently, growth. At times, it is like a sudden awakening: where am I? Is this my place? Any event may occasion such alertness. A casual conversation about death, for instance, can be confronted with the sudden realization of its reality, like the example of Randy Pausch I gave in Chapter 2. Or a mere theoretical discussion about suffering can suddenly turn into a willingness to help someone close who suffers, even in the case of the sensual man, "for no type is tied exclusively to one sphere, only one will always be more powerful than the other."[27] In the case of the sensual man, however, such a prompt decision to act may take much more effort. Depending on our, say, primary character, we may find it more or less difficult to approach the inmost sphere. When man is naturally attached to a self-indulgent lifestyle, he will only reluctantly consent to discipline and rigour. In other words, the path inside can suddenly open up to us. The Cross is a great symbol of the domination of reality over theory, and it is, indeed, the measure of the world as it brings a totally external point of view. The Atoning Sacrifice that it denotes introduces an entirely new logic—a higher logic, Newman would say—a totally disinterested offer for those who do not deserve it.

27 E. Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 123.

We could even say that human beings are systems composed of aspects, but we cannot reduce them to these aspects, nor abstract from them towards some general terms. In both cases there is always a danger of depersonalization.[28] We must also constantly bear in mind that if all the contents of the human mind were explicit, then the precondition of reconciliation between different minds would be a discussion (between the one who knows and the one who does not know). It would suffice to add more arguments to those available; in this manner, a mere accumulation of arguments would be sufficient to bring someone round to our point of view. But the mind is a reservoir of an indefinite number of unknown elements that should be subject to the higher logic of the Cross. Its microworld ultimately requires conversion, not merely discussion. In other words, certain components of personal life must be discarded, some ethos must be abandoned. Furthermore, it is not the immanent logic of the intellect, active in the creation of ever new forms and styles, that can pave a safe path, but the unrelenting and permanent principles of the Cross. The Cross is a substantial testimony that calls for a respective response, if not equal in its form, then at least equal to its meaningful contents.

Man immersed in pleasure may find it especially difficult to go outside of himself in order to abandon his lifestyle. And here, again, we find an aspect of Newman's analysis in which, we remember, he stressed the importance of intellectual and moral character. We need the integral development of both in order to overcome the original state of chaos, the contingent fortune of each man. Theoretically, i.e. notionally, the sensual man may understand what is being said, but he fails to see the reality behind the words and act accordingly. In the case of a suffering person, when his assistance is in demand he may simply fail to notice the person. Edith Stein puts this discrepancy between theory and practice superbly when she notes: "The words are heard, perhaps their immediate meaning is still understood, but the deeper region where their true sense would be grasped is in ruins."[29] Indeed, Newman was also well aware of this intrinsic incompatibility between words and deeds. Comprehension does not entail action. We are talking here about a fragmented man, a man who is so enslaved to one single sphere of his, e.g. the sphere of pleasure, that he cannot muster himself to action, although, theoretically, he has a perfect command of what should be done. Newman would say that he is not at one with himself.

In his analysis of the heart vis-à-vis reason, inspired by the traumatic events during the war, the Austrian psychologist Bruno Bettelheim (1903–1990) put it

28 J. Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996, 10 ff.

29 E. Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 123.

beautifully in his book where we read that "heart and reason can no longer be kept in their separate places. Work and art, family and society, can no longer develop in isolation from each other. The daring heart must invade reason with its own living warmth, even if the symmetry of reason must give way to admit love and the pulsation of life.

No longer can we be satisfied with a life where the heart has its reasons, which reason cannot know. Our hearts must know the world of reason, and reason must be guided by an informed heart."[30]

Bettelheim wrote these words in his 1960 book, fifteen years after the hecatomb of World War Two, the German concentration camps, the Holocaust, and the Soviet camps. The war can be explained (if it can be explained at all) in philosophical terms by referring to the atrophy of the intellect, an intellect that came to the conclusion that some races are superior to other races. The superior races are masters with the only right to live, to reproduce, and to develop. The appropriate place for the subordinate races, thus arbitrarily determined, is to serve the master race. Torture and gas chambers are only consequences of such presuppositions. Stein had long predicted the suffering of her Jewish nation. She was an intellectual, she found no difficulty in bringing such thinking into its consequences. Whenever the human being decides to remain disintegrated and decomposed, with atrophy and dystrophy as incompatible elements of his very being, he must face the negative consequences. And Bettelheim knew very well what he was writing about, as he was a prisoner of the concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald. We can only imagine what kind of book Edith Stein would have written if she had survived Auschwitz. I have no doubt that she would have followed similar lines: the heart informs reason, and reason teaches the heart. We find the same elements in the encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate* (Benedict XVI). The human being must develop in the harmonious unity between heart (love) and reason (truth), otherwise he is in danger of becoming a beast.

The American Bishop Fulton J. Sheen put it excellently when he wrote: "Finally, totalitarianism came on the scene to say that, since man is intrinsically corrupt, he cannot be justified by faith, or by works, or by the Sovereign Will of God, but only by the collectivity which absorbs man; this, we are told, will do away with human depravity by substituting state conscience for individual conscience and a dictator for God."[31] Immersing the human being in the Pan-rationalistic reality (the State, History) in a Hegelian manner

30 B. Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart. Autonomy in a Mass Age*, New York: Avon Books, 1960, VIII.

31 F. J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul*, 72.

is no remedy against the individual vices which cause social unrest. We need to address the human being in his integral unity. Dealing with individual parts separately serves only further decomposition and brings no repose in return. Sheen rightly observes: "To uncover the motives of sin, by studying the patient's past, is no cure: sin is not in the understanding alone, nor in the instincts; sin is in the will. Hence it cannot be broken up as another complex may be broken up by dragging it into the consciousness."[32] Naturally, we sense here a very strong anti-Freudian element. At the same time, let us note that this integral view of the human being fits the similar attempts we find in medicine very well. It has long been affirmed that the patient should not be resolved into his constituent parts. If he suffers from indigestion, it does not follow that he himself has become the stomach or the liver (as can be often heard in medical jargon).

7 True Personality Comes from the Depths

For Edith Stein, not only is the inmost depth the seat of our true self, but—above all—"an ultimately adequate decision is possible only in the very depths of the personality." And then she continues by saying that man is not "master of himself," if "he has not yet realized the depths of his own interior being."[33] Words float on the surface and verbal communication is often superficial. And "realization" has its important place in Newman's vocabulary. Indeed, in the case of notional assents we rarely *realize* what we are assenting to. Frequently, we become excited and enthusiastic about opinions we support one day and abandon another, or we casually imitate others, thinking that we are manifesting our own views. Therefore, realization must come about no sooner than I realize who I really am, i.e. whether it is really I who formulates concrete beliefs. An act is genuinely personal when the person is genuinely, i.e. not only physically, present in it—when the person realises what he is doing.

Like Søren Kierkegaard, to whom I have frequently referred in this text, Stein observes that the sensual man can move to the ethical stage. In such a case, especially if this primary stage is permanently fixed and has turned into a habit, man may need an extraordinary awakening: "no man is naturally capable of surveying *all* reasons for and against which influence his decisions."[34] The sense of this quote can be interpreted as the difference between inference

32 Ibid., 74.
33 E. Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 124.
34 Ibid.

and assent—that well-known issue Newman discussed. In his analyses, he came to the same conclusion, namely, that man's natural assent is not the result of formal inference in which the human mind undertakes this tedious process of a meticulous inspection of all premises; John Henry writes, as previously quoted, about one act with which we give assent to a given truth, an act which resembles "an unwritten summing-up [...] of an algebraical series." Stein is, therefore, alluding to Newman's distinction between inference and assent. Henceforth the leap from the aesthetic stage to the ethical stage is like the leap from notional assent to real assent. We are struck by an image rather than go through a long series of inferential calculus. Instead weighing all the pros and cons we make a decision and action follows. Such is our natural conduct in concrete matters. This is our informal inference and natural (personal) reasoning. Only God knows all reasons, all these interior vacillations as the pros are weighed against the cons. Man can only live "in this certainty of faith," so he can repose in this faith and "must strive to recognize what is right in God's eyes." This conclusion "implies that only the religious attitude is truly ethical."[35] Because the matter is too complicated, therefore it is safer to hold on to religious tenets which provide guiding rules.

And here we have arrived at the Augustinian moment, for the natural seeking and longing is the divine will. The consciousness of doing right is not coequal with actually doing right, but the decision to do right is the precondition of justification. In other words, my knowledge about what is right is never perfect, and to attempt to attain perfection is doomed to failure. We do not have to resume a detailed analysis in order to act, neither is it necessary. Thus our procedures in daily acting—we already know it from Newman—is that of belief; the attitude of belief is our natural mode of acting. Stein continues: "If a man seeks what is right only here and now and decides according to his lights he is by this very fact on this way to God and to himself, even though he may not know it."[36] As we remember, this is what Newman described as using oneself; we have to use ourselves as we have no one else to use. (Let us note in passing that the quotations here resemble Adam Smith's invisible hand, although for the Scottish philosopher it was the mechanism to be employed in the economic sphere. The logic, however, is the same: be satisfied with the modest I-perspective and do right what you have recognised by your reason and with the approval of your conscience—the impartial spectator. Man does

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.

not know the mind of God. He may, however, believe to have approached it in his righteousness.)

Naturally, we are not left alone in this journey inside. Only the man united with God can become master of himself. Edith Stein follows the same paths Newman has defined in his sermon: reason, principle, and conscience. Since we cannot elaborate an overall scheme that would satisfy all, we have to rely on the individual person and his potential ability to do right, for he is endowed to act respectively. The saint Carmelite explains: "If a man seeks to do the right thing on principle, i.e. if he wills to do it always and everywhere, he has decided about himself and placed his will within the divine will, even if it should not yet be clear to him that right is identical with what God wills. But if he is not clear about this, he has not yet found the safe way to what is right; and he has disposed of himself as if he were already master of himself, though he has not yet realized the depths of his own interior being. The ultimate decision is possible only before God."[37] We find in this quote the basic Newmanian tenets like acting on principle and realization. Only the person who lives truly in himself, i.e. who knows what he is doing and wills to do it and experiences certitude about doing it, is acting in his own person. And another crucial point is that such a person may rightly believe that he is fulfilling his personal task entrusted to him by God. Ultimately, that he is doing what God wants him to do.

The man whose will is surrendered to God strives for what is right in God's eyes. And for the person who is thus united with God "this question is solved once and for all."[38] We could paraphrase Newman's words here: he knows what he knows. He realizes the truth.

Man can dispose of his innermost being and he is also called to preserve it. Man can be internally divided, so he can be internally far from his depths. He is not, then, master of himself. The function of understanding does not come from the depths of one's interior, says Stein, and this is a very profound remark, for the function of understanding is akin to what we all commonly grasp when using the logical apparatus. But it is "those depths" that "do awaken in affective and dispositional life. Then your *soul* opens itself with that which is proper to it when it's at home with itself."[39] I think we can easily find the kin traces with Newman's image which can be a connatural reflection in the mind. But the soul must be "at home with itself," in Newman's parlance the person must be whole, united, and integrated. It must be noted that not all affections issue

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 E. Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, trans. M. C. Baseheart, M. Sawicki, Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 2000, 228.

from the core of the person, i.e. from the soul, not all of them are "core-valent." There are values which pertain to the unity of our psyche, but our "soul is not implicated in [this experiencing]."[40] They are, so to say, "soul-less."

Let us note that the description so far boils down to introspection. In order to retain individuality one must go inside rather than be dispersed in external forms, some of which are weird. Expressivism is not a remedy to rescue individuality, a fact that has already been stressed in this book. The conclusions we have arrived at sound indeed logical: the inside must be genuinely most individual and original because it is perfectly inaccessible to anyone beyond the self. We do not need to struggle and prove the external world how original we are, for the most original is one who remains inside. Newman enumerates the main elements of this kind of wisdom: "innocence, simplicity, implicit obedience to God, tranquillity of mind, contentment [...] because God works for those who do not work for themselves [...]."[41] Individuality and, consequently, originality consist not in pouring oneself out, but in remaining inside. All this comes down to being wary of ostentation.

The fear of ostentation, or in other words the form that triumphs over the contents, thus making man unreal, is constantly on Newman's mind. This danger echoes in romantic poetry as a warning against inauthenticity. Man should witness to God "without pretension, or affectation, or rude and indecent ostentation."[42] After all it matters little how people censure the believer, but what counts is "whether in *God's* judgement he *deserves* the censure [...]."[43] Newman was always ready to subdue to the authority of the Church, even when he was member of the Anglican Church in which the individual attitude was more prominent; when he found the ethos of his Church false, he decided to quit. His main purpose, however, was not to undermine authority, but rather to enforce it. The more so when he joined the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore he bids his fellow believers "to shelter our personal profession under the authority of the general body."[44] What we need is secrecy and humility because—philosophically speaking, as Newman is always trying to proof—such is the nature of our knowledge, much of which is implicit and tacit. Rather than professing the truth as self-proclaimed prophets we shall do much better if we remain within the bosom of, and obey, the Church. Newman

40 Ibid., 229.
41 J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891, 299.
42 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 98.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 99.

bets that our profession should rather be a spontaneous process, words flowing from us without premeditation, and deeds following words; ultimately, deeds suffice. Newman shunned ostentation. Let us observe how coherent his thinking is. He is always on his guard when individual speculation intrudes in doctrinal matters; when speculation seeks to get the upper hand. This mediation of the imperfect intellect is in constant danger of making mistakes.

Let us note in passing that some people say today that clergymen should stay out of politics, a very popular claim at the moment. What does Newman have to say? Obviously, they should not covet high places or be ambitious, but to demand that they "should not express an opinion and exert an influence one way rather than another, it is plainly unscriptural."[45] Here again he stresses the importance of being judgmental, an attitude which in Stein would mean being responsive to values. And like in the case of being non-ostentatious but moderate, gentle, and humble, avoiding contentious words, we should nevertheless pass judgments on the reality around us. It is good or bad, not neutral in any sense.

8 Primeval Life Accessible Yet Not Comprehensible

Following Edith Stein, the most original in us is the primeval life, not the external forms that we choose for the sake of self-expression. Now the problem is that we have no direct access to this inmost centre of our selves, we cannot examine it, let alone perceive it with our senses or render it in an intersubjective and communicable form, yet nevertheless it remains the ever-present source of individual emanation. We should draw on the inside for what is outside. It is in contact with the primeval and non-conceptualised life where the human being is free with the utmost freedom that we can attain what is truly personal and truly individual. This point is in agreement with what I have said before. The inside is composed also of the non-conceptualized (resp. implicit) sphere and yet it beams with life, but we do not have to (nor can) put it in explicit forms. Indeed it is enough, as we said, if our intentions are pure, then we come close to what is expected of us, i.e. what is in accord with the inside. This is logical, while belief is unlike theoretical knowledge that can be demonstrated.

Therefore primeval life is not deterministic, hence when its impact is released and transformed into many internal forms and external expressions, one can become an Anglican or a Roman Catholic, for—as I have already

45 Ibid., 101.

said—in all religions one finds some common elements. The point is, however, that one should strive after what is truly his, what he can realize, and he cannot do it unless in his inmost self. Edith Stein notes, as I have already quoted it before, that "man is destined to live in his inmost being and to master himself in a way that is possible only from this inmost sphere." This fundamental choice is carried out amidst various circumstances, what we generally call ethos, other people's choices, and the historical background. Going inside resembles the Husserlian "zurick zu den Sachen [back to the things]," and John Paul II's poetic vision portrayed it as going to the source of the stream.

Since primeval life is not given to us for analysis, we can only describe certain attitudes as demonstrative of our proximity or distance from it. Newman focuses on "simplicity in act, purity in motive, honesty in aim,"[46] they altogether make up the essence of innocence and frankness. In other words there are modes of behaviour that bring us closer to the self. Such is the way of life that the believer should follow. John Paul II in his meditation *Roman Triptych* notes the memorable words:

> If you want to find the source,
> you have to go up, against the current,
> tear through, seek, don't give up,
> you know it must be somewhat here.[47]

Primeval life is like an unquenchable fire that radiates with personal truth and authenticity; we need to remember that "personal" does not mean here someone's "personal secrets". No, rather it denotes the ontic sphere, something that belongs to my very being, not something that belongs to the conscious part of my being. Then it depends on the individual person, on his simplicity, purity of motives, and honesty whether the truth and authenticity will manage to be conveyed outside in individual acts. Or whether they die down in artful and artificial behaviour. And it matters little if some believers are accused of being artful and artificial, but it does matter what they really are. Let us invoke the metaphor of transparency again, the clean mirror that portrays perfectly the reflections of objects on its surface. Inasmuch as the person grows in the truth of his very being, so he is ready to give real (spontaneous) assent to real values.

There is a difference between outward obedience, and interior assent. This issue is important not only from the point of view of its historical

46 J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, 299.

47 John Paul II, *The Roman Triptych*, archive.org/details/poetryofjohnpaul100john [accessed on 10 August 2019].

considerations, when concrete examples of persecutions are examined. The persecution of people on account of their religious beliefs is not a thing of the past. When Christians comply, for the reasons of meekness and humbleness, to the authorities they should renounce, they fall under the severe judgement of being inoffensive.[48] But, Newman argues, they only "yield outwardly; to assent inwardly would be to betray the faith; yet they are called deceitful and double-dealing, because they do as much as they can, and not more than they may."[49] Hence the science of the Cross and the language of the heart are rendered as the mystery of the person, especially the believer who can hardly be understood unless we learn the Christian system. The individual person has his unique imprint on whatever he is doing, the more so the person as believer is united in his inmost centre.

We are dealing with the complex unity of the person on the one hand, and the pluralism of sciences designed to study the person on the other. These sciences have divided the person into various aspects which they thereafter attempt to examine. In order, however, to render an adequate picture of the whole person one must not forget that we are studying the person as one system, with the various aspects thereof being merely minute elements of the overall system.

Christians resume silence when persecuted, for the doctrine of the Cross imparts its specific logic on this renunciation of the world. And Newman's words testify to his mystic attitude when he says: "Do nothing, and you have done everything."[50] Such words naturally agree with Stein's analysis of St John of the Cross's writings, for "the truth has in itself the gift of spreading, without instruments; it makes its way in the world, under God's blessing, by its own persuasiveness and excellence [...]."[51] It is intriguing that to the degree to which we approach our innermost sanctuary, we become open to the "higher logic" of which Newman wrote. Going inside means—if I may call it that way—more apprehension but less communication.

The Carmelite mystic to whom Edith Stein devoted some much time and effort ran the similar paths of thought. We read in St John of the Cross that "faith and love are the two guides for the blind; they will lead you, by a way you know not, to the secret chamber of God. Faith, the secret of which I am speaking, is the foot that journeys onwards to God, and love is the guide that

48 This criticism is in some places of the world translated into liberation theology that seeks to marry the rosary with the gun.

49 J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, 302.

50 Ibid., 303.

51 Ibid.

directs its steps."[52] Lack of self-knowledge creates nominal Christianity; self-knowledge is the precept to the word of Scripture.

Jean Guitton wrote in this same vein in his text *Le clair et l'obscur* [The Clear and the Obscure] where we read: "If everything could be clear and if it were possible to make every essence transparent, we would not have research or obscurity. And conversely, if we were thrown into the incomprehensible, no action would be possible: we would resemble exegetes placed in front of a message written down in an unknown language. The chaos of clear ideas, the chaos of opaque existences are not made for us. And, to the truth, neither the clear nor the obscure has ever existed. Our climate is the mélange of the light and the shadow. In this temperate light, in this clear shadow we need to accommodate ourselves."[53] We live in chiaroscuro. The British writer of the twentieth century, Graham Greene, placed all his heroes against the backdrop of chiaroscuro, like Caravaggio's figures. This is perhaps the main reason why Greene loved reading Newman, for the latter had no fear of a mystery. We are doomed to live in between, hence neither absolute reason nor total ignorance is the right diagnosis of the human condition. Faith and reason go hand in hand.

Now it seems only natural that Stein should have suggested reading Newman to her colleague Roman Ingarden. Indeed implicit thinking—actually, not only implicit thinking but also implicit faith—is beyond *ratio*, as it is personal yet beyond conceptualisation. The steps of our personal reasoning were meticulously elaborated in the *Grammar of Assent*. We need the power of the person to adequately cope with given circumstances. Ultimately, however, the person must resort to God as the One who hides His will behind the visible curtain of phenomena. Enlightened speculation is of no avail to shed light on what is thus hidden, nor does man need to comprehend it. It is God who designs, and the human being can somewhat approach Him by going inside because God is not in the external manifestation of events. If God is the ultimate agent, obedience of the believer becomes the most important virtue. When this recognition—that God is acting—comes from the heart of the believers, as it should, "it approves itself to their reason, and they are able to recognize the expedience of obedience."[54] And, as Newman stressed in his critique of the enlightened view with its emphasis on the intellect: "The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of

52 St John of the Cross, *A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and the Bridegroom Christ*, trans. by D. Lewis, Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000, 22 (http://www.ccel.org/ccel/john_cross/canticle.html).

53 J. Guitton, *Le clair and l'obscur*, Aubier-Montaigne: Éditions Aubier-Montaigne, 1964, 11.

54 J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, 305.

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."[55]

Let us note how important such considerations are when we, for instance, discuss the peculiarity of the relationship between the State and the Church. Christians have always seemed maladjusted to the world. Therefore if one wants to understand their behaviour, one needs to understand the Christian system in which the person is living in the world as a stranger. Newman makes some clever remarks. When bishops wish to avoid a popular movement, they subdue to the civil authorities and become "hypocritical again, if they did their best to repress it."[56]

55 J. H. Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, 293.
56 J. H. Newman, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, 306.

CHAPTER 4

The Interior—the Source of the Truth and Individuality of the Person

> And yet it is a true doctrine;
> for truth is not on the surface of things,
> but in the depths.
>
> JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

•••

> This implies that only the religious attitude
> is truly ethical.
>
> EDITH STEIN

•••

Edith Stein studies the sphere of individuation in her monumental book *Finite and Eternal Being*. What makes an individual being individual? What are the elements that are shared by all beings and what are the distinctive features that can be ascribed to this being only and not to others? An answer to these questions is of utmost importance especially for such a being as person. As we have seen the solution here is crucial for Newman, for it decides about our notional or real cognition. Person is a human being, one of many other human beings, when we consider his shared features. Nevertheless, "what the individual thing is above and beyond its universally conceivable nature is its exclusive and immediate property." In other words there is infinitely more to the person than his shared properties, therefore "individuality as such has been designated as *noncommunicability*."[1] I have already written about individuality that is attendant on each individual being as such, irrespective of his capability of expression. Besides, in view of the above statement, the attempts to

1 E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent To the Meaning of Being*, trans. K. F. Reinhardt, Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2002, 469.

show individuality, let alone to impress others with our individuality, are futile because in its deep sense it is incommunicable!

John Crosby describes it precisely when he writes: "Insofar as we live as incommunicable persons, we live in a way hidden from others. I live in my interiority, or subjectivity, to which others do not have access as I do, I am present to myself at the center of my subjectivity in a way in which no other person can be present to me, just as any other person is present to himself in a way in which I can never be present to him. Another person would have to be me if he were to stand in that place where I stand in experiencing myself."[2] I may obviously inform others about myself, but this does not change the fact that they learn about me through the mediation of the language. And I am the one who controls what I want to say, I am the interpreter of myself.

1 Individuality versus the Transcendental Area

We share with other beings the universal essence or nature. "But what is that," asks Stein, "which the individual thing shares with no other thing, that which makes it an *individual thing*?"[3] I think that here we encroach upon the sphere of Newman's egotism, of his natural reasoning and inference, the idiosyncratic perception and personal result. They are best reflected in real assent. For it is in real assent that we observe an individual symmetry between the knowing subject and the object of knowing. Stein speaks about "inner non-dividedness" and "unity or oneness." We must remember, however, that we are referring here to the transcendental area in which all other beings share, i.e. they share in undividedness as being separate from other meaningful structures. What every human being participates in does not make him different from other human beings in the sense of this human being. In Newman's terms, we are still on the notional level, and Edith Stein rightly concludes that "this is why the transcendental unity does not suffice to define and determine the nature of individual being."[4]

The transcendental unity does not suffice to display the uniqueness of this concrete being, neither does it suffice to point at numerical unity. Indeed this kind of unity is opposite to multiplicity, which is composed of numerical units. Each human being expects to be respected in his or her individuality rather

2 J. Crosby, *Personalist Papers*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004, 33–34.

3 E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 470.

4 Ibid.

than universality. Stein notes that "The generic nature of matter as such makes possible the co-existence [Nebeneinander] of things that are alike. However, this generic nature is not the ground or the root principle of individual being, but that which is required by the form.

Not the essential form but only the pure form or the essence [...] of which things 'partake' by their essential form is what is 'communicable' to a multitude of individual things."[5] And it is not matter that can be translated into a means of communication. Stein continues her description: "Matter as such, to be sure, is not communicable at all. In itself and by itself it has neither meaning nor efficacy—neither *something* which could be communicated nor the power to communicate. It is simply that which receives, partakes, and is divisible."[6] The essential form is incommunicable, it is individual 'in itself'. Edith Stein further explains: "But the mere being-individual of one thing—as far as the content is concerned—differs not at all from the being individual of another thing. The being individual pertains to the *empty form* of the thing. If two individual things are to be distinguished as this or that, they must have something distinctive above and beyond their being individual. In the case of material things that are alike, this element of distinction is their share in matter [*Stoffanteil*] by which they differ spatially from each other. We have to ponder the question whether in the case of individual things of a different genus this share in matter is replaced by something else."[7]

Stein attributes individual being also to the form, for the form cannot be without matter. The meaning of the form is the forming of matter.

If essential form is incommunicable, then there is no point in exerting oneself in communicating what cannot thus be communicated. After all what one does manage to communicate must be something else than essential form. Ideal objects, like triangles, can only be distinguished by their position in space. The triangle is not an individual thing because its being a triangle is shared by all other triangles. It has a meaningful structure, for it can be distinguished from other meaningful structures, but "it lacks the full determinateness which is required for independence."[8]

Let us make use of some literary examples. We know the story of the Little Prince from a world-famous booklet by Antoine de Saint-Éxupery. The Little Prince looked at the roses in a garden and wept in sorrow because he looked at them merely as instances of the same species, i.e. the individual form that

5 Ibid., 486.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 487.

was empty. He looked at them theoretically and notionally without noticing any distinctive feature that could guide him onward to a personal attachment. Indeed there is no attachment in transcendental acquiescence. All flowers of the same species are the same and all shapes are the same, therefore they are of no distinction. And the Little Prince sought something distinctly individual.

He desperately searched for some distinctive signs in what was visible and external, and found nothing. There might have been some variations, e.g. some petals were larger than others, the contours of their outlines curved at different angles, and the shades of colours differed. But these were minor differences; they were, so to say, quantitative and countable differences. The lesson he received from the Fox suggests to reverse perception, to look within rather than without, to look at the traces of mutual experience left inside. Even the relationship between two individual beings is rooted within because it is not a relationship between two inanimate objects, related to each other in terms of spatial and temporal positions. Transcendental perspective leads to frustration and scepticism; personal perception leads to attachment and suffering. And suffering is the main ingredient of human life. If there is no personal commitment, everything seems dull.

St Thomas Aquinas wrote in his *Summa*: "For it is clear that whatever is received into something is received according to the condition of the recipient. Now a thing is known as far as its form is in the knower."[9] Aquinas means the metaphysical mode of reception. In like manner it is metaphysical in the sense of unity. And this sense is notional and theoretical.

Indeed the sense of a detail is in the whole to which the detail serves. It is likewise with Christianity or any other great idea—it must be considered in its overall integrity, in its historical development. Only then can the individual elements be accounted for.

2 Communicability versus Non-communicability

In the case of material and individual objects "we must distinguish between the being-different […] and the being-distinguishable-in-its-difference […]. […] The knowability of differences rests, in the case of material things, on their participation in matter, and in the case of pure geometrical structures it rests on their position or location in space. In both instances this knowability has its

9 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947, q. 75, art. 5.

foundation in the spatial nature of objects."[10] It is the nature of the carrier that is the ground or foundation of individual being. For Thomas Aquinas, the root principle of differentiation is matter. Now for Stein, "the personal carrier is the ground or root principle of individual being. And since we do not find the root principle of individual being in the 'communication' or, more precisely, in the self-molding of the form into space-filling matter, but see in this a kind of communication […], rather than the unfolding of the essence of a definite genus of forms, the 'non-communicability' […] of spiritual forms to space-filling matter constitutes […] no proof of the non-communicability of the determinateness of the species to a multiplicity of individuals."[11]

Edith Stein compares human life to a melody which, when played, each sounds differently. The melody is a person's "<course of life> as a time structure."[12] It cannot be played exactly in the same manner, for at each time it springs uniquely. "The person is a *carrier* in a different sense than any impersonal something. The life of the person 'springs' from personal being as from a source, and it is conceivable that this life might end without the person itself being annihilated, and the person might then begin a new life."[13] I find this musical metaphor particularly attractive when used as an analogy to human life.

The root principle of individual being is found in the formal structure of objects "and especially in the fact that the carrier which confines or sets apart the essence or nature of objects as their empty form is not communicable."[14] The carrier is like an abyss from which the essence springs forth. Under the external influences material individual things manifest differences. Together with the determinateness of the species they are "responsible for the 'fate' of individual things and their particular actual *formal structure*."[15]

3 The Human Being

Now with regard to human beings, the situation becomes much more complicated. The human being is also a composite of form and matter, hence in this respect he is "an essence or nature that is always and everywhere the

10 E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal*, 492.
11 Ibid., 493.
12 Ibid., 494.
13 Ibid., 495.
14 Ibid., 496.
15 Ibid., 497.

same."[16] At the same time one concrete human being is entirely unlike other human beings. What makes him distinct from other human beings? Edith Stein answers: "The individuals are carriers of the particularity of the species and of the specific formation which is achieved with the aid of external circumstances. The material constitution of the individual being and of the *environment* into which the individual is integrated are co-determining factors."[17] This concrete individual results from its natural endowment—matter shaped by form—and the interaction of the environment, interrelations, i.e. ethos. In other words, we perceive this peculiar duality in each human being, i.e. it follows the mode of development of animals and plants, and at the same time there is something infinitely more that is being added to it. Aside to this "natural" aspect shared by all beings, human life is "a spiritual, personal, internal life that discloses itself to fellow humans and that is ever renewed from these sources; and, lastly, a life that is freely determined by the I—then we must ask whether this radical dichotomy of human life is not also of major significance for the individual being and the individual particularity of human beings."[18]

Obviously today we know much more about this natural fortune of all beings than it was known in the time of Edith Stein. We have decoded the human genotype and we know that as far as the biological aspect of our nature is concerned we do not differ much from animals. The conclusion is henceforth obvious: it is not in biology that one should seek the root principle of human peculiarity and individuation. And here we arrive at what Newman called the infinite abyss of our existence, as we have already quoted it here.

4 The Life-Emanating I

Life "emanates from the I and […] the personal I holds command over it in a dual sense: so as to become conscious of it as of a life that is set apart from everything else; and so as to mold this life freely."[19] The I is not a *pure ego*. Stein rises to the heights of phenomenological description that borders on poetry when she writes that "the pure ego is, as it were, only the portal through which the life of the human person passes on its way from the depth of the soul to the lucidity of consciousness. And the inmost center of the soul, its most authentic and most spiritual part, is not colorless and shapeless, but has a particular form

16 Ibid., 500.
17 Ibid., 501.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.

of its own."[20] Sarah Borden recapitulates this essential element of Stein's elaboration on individual form. From her interpretation we learn that "each human being has an a priori content-rich individual form [...], a form which provides a structure for our individual development and therefore limits our individual possibilities."[21] Then the commentator goes on to characterise the personalism of her heroine as follows: "Stein insists that each of us has a unique personal core that characterizes us and is permanent, abiding unchanged throughout our lives under any and all circumstances. It does, however, unfold and imprint our actions and lives ever more deeply. We could return to the image of the flower. Just as a flower begins closed and only gradually opens to the sun, so our personal core begins tucked within itself and only gradually blooms out in our mental, sentient and physical life."[22]

This fountain of internal life is marked with personal uniqueness and it is the undying source of individual life. Not only do we find inside the source of our personal life, but also the source of our individual responsibilities. There is always something unique for men and women, for husbands and wives. Individually, they tend to be dispersed in quest of a lifetime career, not because they find it inside, but because they can see others fervently seeking their perfection in careers.

The real centre of individual life is inside, in the innermost part of the human being. It is not a shapeless source, it is somehow—mysteriously—primordially shaped and imparts its individual character on the human being. Deep down inside every human being is a pure light and then it radiates gushes forth outside. Now when man retains authenticity and reality in his life the ray of light is clear. It is like a system of mirrors. As long as they are clean they convey the ray to the surface. Not only are they clean but also tilted at correct angles. It is like breathing deeply. I think that now we understand better Newman's idea of the first thoughts and their importance, especially when they concern obedience to conscience. He is afraid of any negative intrusions from outside, any attempts at rationalization that may blur the original clear message from inside, that may contaminate the purity of the source. Or, to use another image, it is like a cluttered flat in which it is difficult to move around. You can only wobble unsteadily to the entrance.

Therefore when Stein writes about the soul that is most authentic when "self-collected," this term immediately refers us to Newman's wholeness. And it

20 Ibid.

21 E. Stein, *Thine Own Self. Individuality in Edith Stein's Later Writings*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010, 201.

22 S. Borden, *Edith Stein*, 38.

is inside, in this innermost centre of the soul that is composed the root principle of our individuation. It "cannot be grasped in such a manner that it could be given a universal name, nor can it be compared with anything else."[23] This is what I have already written before. We become our true self and genuinely individual not when we go out and translate our selves in numerous expressivist forms, but rather when we go inside. The centre lies deeper than character traits, therefore it cannot be reduced to them. A conclusion that we can draw from this fact is clear: what we learn about the human person mediation of his or her character traits is still not his or her true self.

The innermost centre impresses its stamp on every trait of character. Hence there are some vestiges of this centre in the outer expression. We find it in someone's character and attitudes. In our encounters with others we must be aware that behind what appears on the surface there is this deeper stratum, which is "the key that unlocks the mystery of the structural formation of the character of a human being."[24] Behind the words and appearances there appears the abyss of the person's mystery. Newman's motto *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem* renders the situation I am talking about perfectly. We somewhat feel "the ineffable of the soul's essence also in our communication with others."[25]

Another thing that is interesting in this context is that very often one person behaves in a similar manner to another person. This happens especially in the relationship with some model characters or strong personalities in which case one tends to imitate someone else. Although the essential difference in, say, two individuals cannot be grasped, "each of these persons feels himself in his innermost essence as an 'authentic individual' and is so regarded by those who have truly 'grasped' or 'apprehended' the nature of his personality."[26] This feeling here is of a special kind, for it has a cognitive value. It is "a spiritual *act*, a spiritual *apperception*." And Stein continues that this act is called a feeling because it is "a 'dim' apprehension, an apprehension that lacks the clarity and distinctness of a conceptually expressible, rational insight, and because it is an 'apperception in which the heart is engaged'."[27] The cognitive feeling is an efficient response to values. The Samaritan saw the wounded man and *took pity on him*. The Samaritan was moved, yet it was not a mere emotion, but an experience that led to action. It was not a superficial excitement, but an encounter

23 E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal*, 501.
24 Ibid., 502.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 503.

which effected the mobilization of the person.[28] There is an essential cooperation in the integrated person between the two cognitive faculties: the intellect and the heart. The heart recognizes what *should* be done and the intellect suggests *how* it is to be done. The integrated person—which is another phrase for being united, using real words, and acting in conformity with a well-informed conscience—rushes to apply the means to what he has recognized as his call for duty.

And here we arrive at the core of this intellectual kinship between Newman and Stein, for we are in the sphere of implicit thinking, in the language of the heart. This is the land in which *cor ad cor loquitur*, not with words but with internal feelings. It is here that the inwardness of one soul—to use Stein's vocabulary—speaks to the inwardness of another soul. This is what I said in another context: the conceptual apprehension becomes inadequate hence we turn to apperception, for we need to see. What is apprehended is something unique and spiritual. It is not accessible to the senses although it pertains to them. And it may be deceptive, just like sense data, but we have to accept it as it is. Therefore, like for Newman, the attitude of doubt is out of place because to dispense with this apperception "altogether […] would be just as unreasonable as to renounce completely the use of the senses as a means of knowledge on account of the fact that the senses are 'delusive'."[29]

5 The Personal Imprint of the I

For Newman, too, to dispense with sense perception on account of the senses being at times deceptive would be of no use. In like manner we have arrived at something of universal validity. Edith Stein proposes to formulate this universality. We feel that our own essence of nature as well as the essences of others are thus constituted. And this "thus" has universal validity. "The reason for this lies in the formal structure of the person: in the uniqueness of the I as such that is conscious of its own self, that embraces the particularity of its own essence as its 'very own', and that ascribes to every other I the same uniqueness and individual *particularity*."[30] We cannot apprehend the content of the "thus." When the heart speaks unto the heart it is the dialogue of interrelation rather than an intellectual intercourse.

28 See Lk 10:25–37.

29 E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal*, 503.

30 Ibid.

Let us draw in passing yet one more important conclusion. If the root principle of our individuation is inside in primeval life, it is inherently counterrevolutionary. The true self is inside, not in external forms, therefore the external forms cannot essentially thwart the outward expression of the self. This is the moment of positive freedom—people can be inwardly free irrespective of the political system in which they live. Consequently, the self cannot lay the blame of its inadequacy on social institutions. They are merely—as Newman would say—the circumstances. In concrete situations they may become hindrances, but never determining factors. It would be futile to demolish the external institutions in order to help the self unfold its potentialities and its individuality, for its individual core resides in its innermost recess where the outside has no access. And even if we found some good models for us to imitate, it would be of no help unless we have made an internal reconciliation with the inside.

Newman found his decision to join the Catholic Church in 1845 as personally irresistible, but he would never recommend it to his followers. There is no objective form that can be applied by every person. What is objective must be made personal by the individual work of each person. The practical implementation of this requirement is indeed fascinating both in Newman and Stein, i.e. how to translate the objective into the personal, how a dogma can become a personal principle. The truth flows from inside and from any outside promptings; and even if there are external promptings, they must be sifted through the personal I. Here Newman's sermons on ostentation should be recalled again. Newman suggested acting within the scope of the Church authority as a safeguard against ostentation, for we read: "[God] bids us unite together in one, and to shelter our personal profession under the authority of the general body. Thus, while we show ourselves as lights to the world far more effectively than if we glimmered separately in the lone wilderness without communication with others, at the same time we do so with far greater secrecy and humility."[31]

This is not to say that we should be recluses. Efforts to become recluses would boil down to ostentation—an outcome that Newman definitely rejected. If our true difference is inside, then individuality should show up as a spontaneous process. Therefore the main activity here is not to run away from other people, that would definitely be wrong, but to go inside; so that even amidst fervent activities we can hold on to the emanating source of our selves. It is like sitting and warming up at our private fires. After all, Newman elucidates, the first duties of a Christian in the order of duties are "to repent and to believe."[32] We

31 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 99.

32 Ibid., 103.

should for instance discountenance evil by silence and be very cautious when called to pass judgements. This primeval (personal) life inside is like a serene and undisturbed source of stream. By analogy, we may compare this internal journey to the sources from which the imagination of the heart emanates to Newman's journey to the sources of Christianity.

Primeval life has no form—this formula denotes that we cannot account for all the contents of our selfhood in explicit terms, therefore it runs counter the modern tendency. To acquiesce to the return to primordial life means to consent "that essential difference [*Wesenunterschied*] in individuals cannot be grasped."[33] This is what in other words means incommunicability. Now to refer to Newman—when he says "I am one," in this word "one" he grasps the implicit and explicit elements of the person, therefore things that can be understood (and communicated) and things that cannot be understood (or communicated). Argumentation is needed in discourse and marks the power. It creates an elusive impression that one rules over reality, whereas what we are dealing with in naming is only the verbal trace of reality, abstracted from its essence. The true reality is in the hidden space, in the unnamed depth where man lives rather than speaks about life. Therefore in this interpersonal communication between two hearts we are so close to a mystic experience. In mystic experience, we go contrariwise, i.e. we abstain from touching, consuming, and feeding the senses. It is like shutting the camera and putting it aside.

The real difference between two people is hidden, any resemblance being only external. Our selves are "unrepeatable."[34] Now the interesting point is that this innermost difference, that cannot be grasped, is in fact what makes authentically individual. In other words we are not different from other people in the way we describe ourselves and say how different we are, but we are different with regard to the profound ontic sphere of our very being. There is "radical difference of individual essences" and these essences are not placed in matter.

What Newman called real apprehension, Stein names apperception. The relation between apprehension and apperception is such that the latter denotes that "something spiritual and as such not accessible to the senses, even though it manifests itself by means of sensible signs [...]."[35] And apperception may be deceptive, just like assent is sometimes deceptive. But Stein, just as Newman, does not dispense with the senses although they at times are erroneous. She does not propose bracketing on that account. Let me remind the reader that Newman opposes doubt as an instrument to arrive at what is indubitable. In

33 E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 502.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., 503.

the *Philosophical Notebook* we read: "If our consciousness <perception> of our existence is to be taken as true and trusted, then our consciousness <perception> of something external to us, answering both to phenomena & to typical principles or ideas is true and to be trusted. We must take ourselves for what we are — we cannot divide between the mind & its gifts — we only know the mind *through* its gifts & powers."[36] We have to use ourselves, our faculties, in learning about the world because in the concrete we do not find any generalized conception of the human being, but this living creature in whom all the dimensions and faculties are placed together. Newman opposes any duality between the soul and the body.

The I is unique, for it imposes unity on the person. The I "is conscious of its own self [...], embraces the particularity of its own essence as its 'very own', and that ascribes to every other I the same uniqueness and individual *particularity* [*Eigenheit*]."[37] But we cannot apprehend and express the content of the "thus" in the phrase "thus constituted," as I have written in the previous paragraph. I think we have some reason to identify the word "thus" with the analysis of "ergo" in Chapter 2. As we remember "ergo" used in implication can be grasped intuitively, say, implicitly. The "ergo" is not merely an intellectual element, nor the "thus" is.

In view of all this we arrive at personalism in Newman and Stein because for personalists—as John Crosby rightly observed—"a human person [is] a creature of interiority, does not exist just to provide an instance of the human kind, but exists as *this* unrepeatable person and so stands in a sense above the human kind, being always more than an instance of it."[38] Another thing of capital importance is that Newman speaks about the mind of the Church. There are truths in this mind in their latent and implicit form, which it takes time to be explicitly formulated. The ideas that have life hardly ever have their explicit form, but nevertheless they actuate their reality by influencing people, "so that we shrink from principles in substance, which we acknowledge in influence."[39] This is an interesting point in Newman. Logically speaking, if these ideas are latent one can hardly expect them to be well-defined. They exert their influence by possessing and guiding, as I have said before.

It must be noted that this turn to the subject means precisely the turn to what is profoundly hidden in the subject, not to what can be externally displayed by the subject. The external may be dissipation what God planted in us.

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36 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 30.

37 E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 503.

38 J. Crosby, *The Personalism of John Henry Newman*, XX-XXI.

39 J. H. Newman, *University Sermons*, 325.

It is safe to start this inward journey armed with the armoury of the teaching of the Church and personal endowment. Otherwise we can get lost in ostentation and display, i.e. in the same artificial forms. It is like groping in the dark for some indefinite objects.

The difference between the modern turn to the subject and Newman's turn is that modernity rested on the logical structures of thinking with which to define and render the subjective contents in explicit forms. Only these contents are rational in the subject which can thus be rendered. Newman proposes to go further down.

The Little Prince, to use our literary illustration, is on an inward journey with some simple rules as his guiding principles: friendship and love. On his journey inside he meets various inauthentic characters who like shipwrecks sank on the shallow ground of conceit, pride, and addiction. The true (genuine) source of variety is deep down inside the person, in the impenetrable and ineffable abyss. The point is not to give voice to one's private opinion, but to the true self inside. This is the main idea of subjectivity in Newman and Stein, which is put forward by the Fox in Exupéry's novel: "What is essential is invisible to the eye."[40]

6 The Source of the Person's Dignity

In his discussion with Paul Ramsey, I agree with John Crosby that the dignity of "the human persons is in part grounded in their immanent makeup."[41] This position converges with Newman's implicit knowledge and Stein's innermost source of the human mystery. And for Crosby this is the main source of dignity; it is not "that treatment of a person which is appropriate to him or her as person, but rather that in a person in virtue of which some treatment is appropriate and other treatment is inappropriate."[42] This dignity is related to the person's self-possession, not in the sense of being aware of this self-possession, so Crosby does not mean "this consciousness of one's dignity but with the dignity of which one is conscious."[43]

This dignity emanates from the depth of the human person. I also agree with Crosby—in view of what I have read about Newman's and Stein's personal approach—that rationality varies from one being to another. Thinking is a personal process. We are not of one replicable template. Crosby notes: "This

40 See A. de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. K. Woods, London: Heinemann, 1974, 72.
41 J. Crosby, *Personalist Papers*, 4.
42 Ibid., 5.
43 Ibid.

commonness goes so far that human beings are plural only through their bodies, as if the rational spirit in them were literally one, so that each human being does not have his or her own reason in the same way that each has his or her own body. As against this view we have of course to say that each human being has his or her own intellect and rational powers, no less than each has his or her own body."[44] And here again we find confirmation of Newman's claim that thinking is a living process, for it is not logical structures that think, but persons who make use of them. The essential difference between two human beings is therefore not in their outlook and external features, but in their innermost sphere.

It is true that in some most abstract areas our rational activities may converge. And Descartes opened his *Discourse on Method* with the well-known declaration that "good sense is, of all things among men, the most equally distributed," after all he propounded his method for the solution of mathematical problems.[45] There are two sources of human dignity: one is common that we share with others our rational nature; the other one is hidden and incommunicable. And I think it is the latter that is addressed by Newman and Stein. It is like a mark, a sign deep down hidden in our innermost nature. This inward direction gains yet another confirmation: the only way to save one's individuality is to seek it inside not outside; the only way to enrich the world without with one's individual character is build it up inside. And let us say something that may sound paradoxical: the genuine way to save the world is to turn away from the world; the only way to be truly present in the world is to be absent from it.

7 Others—Empathy

Incommunicability then is common to all people, but the idiosyncratic character of this incommunicability is what makes us different. Empathy is not primordial in content, that is, we do not know the content of one's consciousness. "Empathy […] is the experience of foreign consciousness in general, irrespective of the kind of experiencing subject or of the subject whose consciousness is experienced."[46] The perceived world and the empathetic world belong to the

44 Ibid., 7.

45 See Descartes, *A Discourse on Method. Meditations and Principles*, trans. by J. Veitch, London and Melbourne: Everyman's Library, 1984, 3.

46 E. Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. W. Stein, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964, 11.

same world. As McCullogh observes, "empathy becomes the foundation for all intersubjective experience."[47]

Edith Stein argues that values are objective and we respond to values. We need to comprehend them in order to respond. Values motivate our actions and our responses. In a way, then, values act like imagination. They motivate action, but do not cause it. As Sarah Borden writes: "We cannot 'see' certain values without feeling them."[48] And this is what Newman called real apprehension and Stein apperception. And let us note that this unfolding of the individual form into a concrete selfhood is safeguarded, in Newman's doctrine, by the obedience to the dogmatic structure of the Catholic Church. This is a very important but complicated point. On the one hand the true believer (real in his words and deeds) is like the point of reference; on the other this believer is open in conscience to the overall Christian system. His selfhood therefore is not a self-willed licence but a resultant of these two elements. According to Stein, those "who possess the eyes open to the world of values" should "be living as members of the community, in live interaction with its other components."[49]

Indeed she is talking here about Newman's real assent and the personal readiness to assent to what is real, i.e. to real values. Such a person naturally must "become efficacious outwardly," must become the core of society, the centre of attraction. The centre which does not focus on itself, but on the world of values. Our response to values is "the <most natural> behavior for the person" and it is by the recognition of the values the person approves of that we learn what kind of person she is.[50] The same was true for Newman. In his view, emotions are a more authentic and immediate portrait of our selfhood than intellectual concepts, which usually constitute a certain safe distance to the world of experience known in experience. Therefore his later philosophy is "no mere psychologism — it is a metaphysics of being as known in experience."[51]

The prerequisite of empathy is the cultivation of profound interpersonal relations. For Newman, the right circumstances of social charity are cultivated in private spheres. Now the requirement of having private relationships as the practical lesson for social charity is very Aristotelian. Newman does not fear that concentration upon individuals will thwart our love of many. Love

47 McCullogh, *Edith Stein and Intersubjectivity*, in: R. Feist, W. Sweet (eds.), *Husserl and Stein*, Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2003, 130.

48 See S. Borden, *Edith Stein*, 39.

49 E. Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 219.

50 Ibid., 227, 228.

51 E. Sillem (ed.), *The Philosophical Notebook*, vol. 2, 33. See also A. J. Boekraad, *The Personal Conquest of Truth*, 255–272.

of many is not superior to the love of individuals. Moreover, once we neglect the latter kind of love, being involved "in the schemes of an expansive benevolence" we shall certainly fail to prepare ourselves for a proper practice of the love of many. Therefore Newman concludes "that the best preparation for loving the world at large, and loving it duly and wisely, is to cultivate an intimate friendship and affection towards those who are immediately about us."[52]

8 The Person and Soul Life

All we have said so far has brought us to some fundamental conclusions with regard to such a varied, complex, and united being as the person. Both Newman and Stein sought to grasp the true nature of the human person. They realized that the proposals, which modern philosophy had provided, were either reductive or, at best, insufficient and, taking into consideration a more profound understanding of the person, were inadequate. In his quest, however, Newman focused on epistemology, at least in his most philosophical endeavour, for he was primarily interested in learning and presenting the way in which the person actually arrives at true knowledge. It can be surmised that even already in his Anglican years Newman felt that the empiricist view, fostered by British empiricism and its proponents, conveyed an incomplete picture of the human person.

What Newman originally, intuitively grasped was later, in the 1860s, given the form of an extensive study, particularly in his *Grammar of Assent*. One might ask: why did this come so late? Such a question, however, would be wrong; each inquirer is on his own individual track towards the truth, no step can be bypassed or borrowed from someone else. Besides, Newman primarily did not deem it fitting to put forward a theoretical investigation when *sensus fidelium* sufficed. Or perhaps he did not feel ready for the task yet. Stein, for her part, focused on ontology, on what the person is, and how the person comes to acquire knowledge. Like all phenomenologists she strove to come to grips with human experience, i.e. how the person experiences himself and how the person is experienced by others. Newman grappled with British empiricism and the heritage thereof, or in general with modern philosophy and its destructive encroachment upon the area of theology under the guise of liberalism. He noticed how reductive and devastating this intrusion was. This is why he undertook a thorough analysis of the process of knowledge and its basic

52 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 258.

distinction between certainty and certitude. The conclusion Newman arrived at was that the person surpasses intellectual barriers and is capable of assenting to the truth that is beyond comprehension. This investigation was of vital importance, first of all for Newman himself, particularly with the awkwardness he felt towards his Anglican ethos and subsequent realization that there was something wrong with it, especially when this ethos opened the door to liberal intrusions into theology.

Edith Stein, who was a newcomer, or to be precise, a convert to Christianity did not experience this kind of existential need. She was, therefore, if I may put it in this way, inclined to adopt a more investigative approach, indeed the approach of a professional philosopher. Both Newman and Stein, as should be stressed strongly, had grown to a point of being able to witness, with their career or lives, that which they had assented to as the only truth—with this truth being at one with their consciences. Newman desperately needed an answer for his questions as to the genuine depository of Apostolic succession, he even felt compelled to embark upon a thorough historical analysis; Stein, as a philosopher, investigated the ontological grounds of the person. Surprisingly, their divergent paths converged.

In her *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, Stein listed the four layers inherent in the person: the physical, the sensory (sentient), the mental, and the personal. These all remain in a dynamic relationship with one another, but the personal layer is of central importance. As Sarah Borden rightly observes, "[t]he most central layer is the person or the personal realm."[53] The spiritual is the fundamental aspect, and overrules the others, for all these dimensions suggest of the ineffable depth of the spirit. The intriguing element, however, is that the spiritual, while being so decisive, is hidden from view. It lies deeply hidden below what is explicit and visible. Our persons need to awaken what is thus deeply hidden. The difference between the visible and invisible aspects of our very persons can be seen in the difference between causality and motivation. These are two distinct aspects of our knowledge: causality comes from propositions and motivation pertains to persons.

When Newman arrived at Oriel College he noticed, to his horror, that the Christian life of the students was thoroughly neglected.[54] Such an attitude was a legacy of modernity and the prevailing model of individual choice which had been given a primary position. Oxford University lived in the illusion that the

53 S. Borden, *Thine Own Self*, 10.

54 And yet he was dismissed by the authorities (especially Provost Hawkins), which was strange as Newman only demanded that there be a coherence between theory and practice.

intellect can assent to religious truths irrespective of how the person who is called upon to give this assent lives. Newman realized that individual choice, this jewel in the modern treasury, bore practical consequences, some of which remained in glaring contradiction to the life of a believer. And if practical conduct was wrong, knowledge also became depraved, for Newman firmly believed that the person is a unity. We cannot think in isolation from what we are.

In a way, Newman and Stein share one intuition, namely, they seek to understand the person, i.e. the finite being, by referring him to the infinite being. Stein expressed her hope in the *Finite and Eternal Being* that by thorough studying revelation she might gain "a deeper knowledge of finite being."[55] Thus in order to understand the finite being we should begin with the infinite.

Stein uses the metaphor of light to describe our conscious life, a procedure Newman often employed. Conscious life "resembles the lit surface that covers an obscure depth, a depth which manifests itself in and through the medium of the surface. If, then, we want to understand the human being-person, we must penetrate this obscure depth."[56] Our conscious life is like a window that furnishes us with a fairly limited view. We may look inside through it, but we can see only a part of the room, not the whole of the flat, for the window is a conceptual structure, of necessity simplified and generalized.

Human beings carry their being-human. Stein elaborated on this significant issue in her *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*. We learn in this work that the spirit resides in the soul. The sentient aspect of our being may give hints as to the deep seated soul, but the soul "does not yet emerge at the outset of the sentient development of an individual, but becomes visible only little by little." The soul "is ripening and imprinting that development with its trademark, without the soul's being determined itself by the sentient development. The ripening itself is to be distinguished from [its] showing up within the actuality of living and within character development." In other words, what is apparent on the surface is not exactly what is inside. There is no, if we may put it this way, literary translation of the inside into the soul's expression without. The soul may be awakened by some external circumstances (this is what Newman called the transformation of the notional into the real), therefore "[a]nything and everything can suddenly strike in the depths, to where nothing was able to make headway before."[57] This is what Stein means to be awakened to soul life.

55 Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 355.

56 Ibid., 364.

57 Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 233.

Now if the soul is not awakened yet, we are living, so to say, on the outskirts of our very beings. We are absorbed "into peripheral experiences if the depth of [our] soul hasn't yet awakened. […] There's an escaping from the depths to the periphery at the point when a person's soul life turns into torment for her, when the soul is filled with distress."[58] This state is torment and chaos, for it signifies one's living outside of oneself, or of one's true self; Stein holds that one can continue existing on a mere sentient level.

We may be living in a way as if we had no soul and in total oblivion of what is deeply inside. As this kind of life is continued in the periphery, it resembles the Kierkegaardian aesthetic stage. While living in the periphery (not in oneself) the ego "gets the feeling that it's missing its soul, that it's only a shadow of itself detached from its ownmost being" because when the ego descends into its depth, it "meets up a gaping void in there."[59] Living in the periphery recalls the Newmanian living in notional assents, i.e. in superficial existence. This experience of emptiness must indeed be a terrifying and mind-boggling experience. This state can be called soullessness.

We need to live from out of our soul, thereby illuminating matter; this is how this term "be-souled" should be understood. We need to live an active life. Life is for action, as Newman would say, i.e. the person is present in his acts. It is in action that our life "*pours out* [our] soul and is *its* life. [Our soul] itself is a source of life."[60] The individual should be living out of the depths, out of his soul. Otherwise we lose the powers of our life. We may be psychologically involved in some activity, taking part in various modes of communication, but without the vital connection with our depth the flow of personal powers begins to trickle and dies down. Wherever our soul is disconnected from the actuality of living, the individual is missing "from behavior and from the visible being of the individual […] the individual flair or […] the 'personal touch'." The individual's living then does not come out of the centre of his or her own being, "it is lacking the originality and authenticity of 'core-valent' living."[61] Thus, such an individual loses a genuine personality and individuality, loses himself and partakes in 'soul-less' behaviour.

Our personality has its qualitative distinctiveness "that is fashioned out of a core, a formative root. It takes shape in soul, body, and mind; but only in your soul does the individuality achieve clear and unambiguous expression. Neither the material body nor the psyche, as the substantial unity of all the individual's

58 Ibid., 234.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 235.

sensuous and soul-mind being and living, is determined through and through by the core. The core certainly supports accessibility for the world of values to whose gradations its depth levels correspond, and with that, the 'character' in the specific sense."[62] The personal core—writes Sarah Borden—"is central to our being, we are most at home in the world of values."[63] Our core is human and individual—these two elements must be stressed because not only do we belong to a certain species, but we are above all individuals. We are unlike trees of a same kind.

In the *Finite and Eternal Being*, Stein views the human being as a composition of body, soul, and spirit.[64] The essence of human beings, however, is spiritual. This is so, primarily, "because personal life is going out of oneself and simultaneously being and abiding within oneself, and because both of these characteristics pertain to the nature of spirit, personal being must always denote spiritual being."[65] The human person carries the body and the soul and is carried by them. Stein finds the source of spiritual life inside the human being, but this interior is not conceptual so that it could be shown and explained. I have already elaborated on this element earlier. The blessed Carmelite says that "[t]he spiritual life of the human person rises from a dark ground." And she elaborates on this further: "It rises like a flame that illumines, but it is a flame that is nourished by non-luminous matter. And it emits light without being light through and through. The human spirit is visible to itself without, however, being thoroughly transparent. It is capable of illuminating other things without being able to penetrate completely into their being."[66]

This dark ground is therefore implicit, which means that the human being cannot conceptualize his innermost centre. The body and soul are interconnected. Our physical body is, as was mentioned earlier, be-souled. Edith Stein follows Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of the relationship of the soul as a form of the body. The soul animates the body. The question that is often raised is whether our inner life is only sensory or is it also spiritual. If our inner life were merely sensory, it would be only receptive and responsive to external stimuli which feed the brain with information.

The human being is and is becoming at the same time, for he contains in himself an unfolding form that allows for self-formation. The inner form creates conditions for the bringing of the being to its perfected structure. Thus

62 Ibid., 238.
63 S. Borden, *Thine Own Self*, 10.
64 See Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 363.
65 Ibid., 362.
66 Ibid., 364.

the soul can be regarded as a forming-of-matter and also as a being-in-itself.[67] Stein stresses "a balance between the external and the internal [...], in people the soul has a meaningful life even apart from the body."[68] That is why the human being can make free and authentic choices in response to stimuli which come from without.

If our being is contingent, as it is, it is a "fleeting being," and therefore, as such, it cannot possess its existence. Our being's existence is a gift, and "only he who truly possesses being and who is thus the Lord of being can present such a gift. And only a *person* can be Lord [...], not Lord of being if anything were exempt from his ontological might, if without him or independent of him there could be either being or not-being."[69] Stein defines the relation between temporal being and eternal being as follows: "Within itself, eternal being molds (in a non-temporal process) those eternal forms in whose image and likeness it creates the world in time and with time."[70] The eternal being is the Lord of being and the Lord of meaning.

Another phrase that Stein uses to make the human person an exceptional being is "personal erectness." The personal being has been awakened, as she masterfully remarked, to a two-directional movement: both outward and inward. The person goes outward when he studies the world, makes use of material objects for his own benefit; and goes inward when he strives to know himself. Newman, as we remember, wrote that only those who are "whole can heal others," with this meaning that we are in possession of ourselves. Stein puts this succinctly when she writes that people can respond to external impressions of freedom because they transcend these impressions; people are "spiritual persons, i.e., *carriers* of their own lives in a preeminent sense of a personal 'having-oneself-at-hand'."[71] The problem is that human beings often abandon this exceptional position they possess among other beings, and remain responsive to impressions, a situation Newman would define as living inside shadows and images, with this denoting a being responsive primarily to what comes from without. In this situation the sentient aspect of our being prevails.

In accord with Thomistic Doctrine, Stein holds that created pure spirits are not "the authors of their own being, but have received their being and receive it again and again as an ever-renewed gift during the entire course of their

67 See ibid., 369.
68 Ibid., 370.
69 Ibid., 106.
70 Ibid., 106.
71 Ibid., 370.

existence."[72] Personal life is therefore free, but limited, relative, and conditioned. The main role of the soul is to mediate "between spirituality and bodily sentient being."[73] The soul is not a third external element in the triune composition (tri-partition) of body-soul-spirit, but is the site in which body and spirit meet and interact. People, therefore, are both brutes and angels, rather than being either of the two. The soul, so to say, is the room which both body and spirit inhabit.

The I is capable of transcending the sensorial part of the human being and can disengage from it and rise above to a higher sphere. We need not understand this process of disengagement as a kind of isolation, but rather as a mastering of the life of sense. This creating of self by the I is not absolute or unconditioned, for the "I has *received* the freedom of self-determination as a gift."[74] This mastering is indeed the system meant by Newman, of which mention has already been made. In like manner the personal life is created and formed by the human person. What is implicitly given as a gift is translated into something explicit. Stein puts it excellently when she writes that the sentient life is for a "dark ground," which awaits personal illumination and being turned into a personal form. I have called the soul here a room, or else it can be called a special site of encounter between body and spirit. The character of the soul is such that it is not "point-like" but rather "spatial." This is an extremely interesting element, for it shows Stein's thought which runs counter to modern thinking, especially counter to Lockean empiricism with its conception of the punctual self that I have already mentioned previously. If the soul in Stein's view is a space, then it is a history. It is not the *pure ego*. This space is not empty and has its own nature and essence. Thus what has explicitly appeared on the surface is not everything that makes up the person. Each explicit act is accompanied by its implicit (dark) surrounding. There is always much more to the human person than what we can see on the surface. By appropriating to itself what is needed for its own destiny, the soul creates a history for a particular human person whose "essence or nature streams forth from the body and from all personal spiritual acts in a nonconscious and nonvoluntary manner."[75]

The person carries his perfection within himself. The person "carries its life out of the fullness of the essence which is resplendent in the awakeness of life, without ever being fully illumined or fully mastered. The person carries

72 Ibid., 370–371.
73 Ibid., 371.
74 Ibid., 372.
75 Ibid., 374.

this fullness and is simultaneously carried or sustained by this dark and deep ground."[76] I have already discussed this element of the innermost and dark interior of the person. It is brought to light by conscious (rational and voluntary) acts of the person. Therefore the human person "resembles pure spirits in its free and conscious mode of life, a life which encompasses and carries its own fullness, but it lags behind them because it arises from and is carried by a dark ground and is incapable of personally forming, illumining, and sovereignly governing the totality of its 'self'."[77] Whatever the person does is only a momentary revelation of some fullness hidden inside, the full revelation of which will come to existence in the life to come. This ever-present evolution of the person, this constant movement, and this self-changing nature are also consonant with Newman's thought. Stein holds that all material structure is penetrated by the spirit. Likewise we come again to the point of form molding matter.

In order to recapitulate, let us say that Stein regards "the *person* as a carrier in a preeminent sense because a person not only has and embraces, but 'possesses' its essence or nature, which means that a person is master of its own self in several ways."[78] Stein, like Newman, stressed the importance of reaching oneself, being faithful to oneself, using oneself because the most one can lose is oneself. Subsequently, it becomes apparent that we need to realize our personal vocation in ourselves and with ourselves.

The person is fully self-dependent and endowed with a rational nature. This trait of self-dependence determines the parts of the whole. Self-dependence is inherently combined with incommunicability and subsistence. Thus, the fundamental part of the person is hidden from view, and is implicitly sojourned in oneself. What is fully self-independent is "something that is," with this being "the fullness of the essence."[79] The person is both "the carrier of the essence and the composite of carrier and that which is carried—form and fullness."[80] It is interesting to note that the person is complete in his ontic entity and at the same time is becoming towards perfection. Thus we need to stress the static and dynamic aspects of the human person. At the same time let us stress that this perfection is the subsistence which imparts independence.

The carrier of nature is separated from nature. As Stein stresses, "the thus completed and confined whole—is capable of carrying the properties accruing

76 Ibid., 377.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 408.
79 Ibid., 476.
80 Ibid.

to the essence because in this composite whole the *carrier* of the nature or essence can and must be distinguished from the essence or nature."[81]

Subsistence does not accrue to the individual substance, but inwardly pertains to the individual substance. Each individual thing has its essence. This essence is shared by all other members of the same species. For instance, Socrates' being human is shared with other humans. Nevertheless Socrates as a human being is, in his particularity, unlike other human beings. Therefore, Stein stresses, "that this essence differs not only numerically but by virtue of a special particularity from the essence of any other human being."[82]

Stein is writing about "primordial confusion," a phrase that echoes Newman's functional disarrangement. In her interpretation, however, this confusion concerns the cosmic mixture (chaos) out of which order emerges. I have already written that the personal carrier is the ground or root principle of the individual being. The person carriers in himself eternity. The course of life of a human being is something unique and unrepeatable. The person is unlike any impersonal something; his life springs from personal being as from a source—as was referenced in Stein earlier. Together with this source the whole individual life is annihilated. Stein seems to be suggesting that the same source of life that springs forth may then be taken on by another individual. Thus, to conclude, the most important difference between two persons is their difference in content. The person imparts his unique particularity, but this root principle is found in the formal structure of the carrier, and this form, as has already been observed, is not communicable.

Human beings are unlike transitory material things, for the former shapes come from the centre of life and the latter objects are in accordance with their species. The role of the individual is of primary importance in relation to species. Unlike lifeless things, humans are under the process of the self-formation "that issues from a vital center" in which "each individual structure is an articulate unity with a meaning and expressive worth of its own, and not merely a transitional stage with respect to the actual end structures […]."[83] Animate creatures, e.g. human beings, undergo self-formation "in the sense of a forming of the individual structure from its vital center and not merely an unfolding of the particularity of the species under the influence of forces effective from the outside. And proportionate to this is a collected power and, springing from it, a stronger activity and efficacy of the self."[84]

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81 Ibid., 476–477.
82 Ibid., 478.
83 Ibid., 498.
84 Ibid., 498–499.

Human beings are thus active centres and creators of their own selves. They are responsible for their very beings like artists are responsible for the forms they impart to the objects of their artistic expression. Humans are not determined by a historical process, rather they actively participate in it. They can give, to use Newmanian parlance, real assents of their very beings, especially in that "the essential forms of animate beings are living forms and as such capable of unfolding and transformation."[85]

Every human being, indeed, shares the same nature with regard to their genus and at the same time, as we have already said, this nature is spiritual, personal, an internal life, self-contained, and is yet self-transcending; it is a world-embracing life that discloses itself to fellow humans. This life is always renewed from these aforementioned sources and determined by the I. Indeed persons are entire worlds. The material aspect of the person brings us closer to the lives of animals and plants, whereas the spiritual aspect transcends these material aspects. The I is an emanating life: it commands over the person, as was noted, by being conscious of the person and molding him freely. The personal I is not a pure ego, as Stein stresses, it is—let us repeat "the portal through which the life of the human person passes on its way from the depth of the soul to the lucidity of consciousness."[86] In other words, the implicit part of the I emerges to its explicit form. This innermost centre, of which mention has already been made, is not shapeless. It is the true and most genuine part of our selves. Thus, when we are self-centred and self-collected we reach the true centres of our beings. This cannot be given a universal name, notes Stein, and therefore our centres are individualized. Besides, our innermost centre always transcends the explicit form that is given to it. In like manner, we could say that this process of the unfolding of the true essence of the person is never-ending and can never be completed here on earth. Such a process calls for a continuation in the life to come.

Here Stein touches upon the same points Newman mentioned. For him, as we remember, in this world we can only obtain that which has a relative perfection, but once started this process seeks to be continued thereafter; otherwise the very initiation would be nonsensical. The soul has its manifestations, but its essence is ineffable. With a view to this ineffable innermost centre two persons can hardly be compared or their traits enumerated. Hence Stein concludes that "the essential difference in individuals cannot be grasped."[87]

85 Ibid., 500.
86 Ibid., 501.
87 Ibid., 502.

I have already discussed this important point in Edith Stein, namely the fact that the most genuine part of the person is inside in the innermost centre. It resides in the human soul and then embraces the person, "insofar as the person receives its form from this deepest interiority."[88] The conscious I is unique with its individual particularity which cannot be communicated in its entirety.

The soul is immortal as a purely spiritual form and as a spiritual personal substance it is "capable of a supernatural augmentation and elevation of its life [...]."[89] The essence of the person, which resides in the soul, is mostly hidden (it is implicit). Let us therefore stress again that the innermost and most authentic nature of human beings remains hidden. In the course of his life the human being assumes, explicitly, a certain style of character. The essence thereof, however, is hidden beneath what is visible. The innermost sphere is hidden in darkness and eludes words in its ineffability. Newman, for his part, calls the soul "the invisible principle which thinks,"[90] with the soul being this principle that makes the person one; a person's oneness is unlike material bodies which are composed of many parts.

Thus, the human being has a dual nature: he is "a spiritual person and he is shaped as a body."[91] Besides, although the human being holds a dual nature, the person is one being—is spiritual and corporeal together. The person is in a process of development which is on earth forever incomplete. This calls for the completion of undeveloped potentialities, an element that we have already found in Newman and—drawing on St. Thomas—could call a way of imperfection. Stein intimates that "it pertains to the essence of the human being that the individual is a *member* of the human race and that this individual realizes himself as a whole [...] in a *humankind*."[92] It is the spiritual nature of humankind that makes humankind called to a communal life, with this being a very strong theme in Newman. This historical aspect of development was extremely important for him. The forms of Christian life, in their course, are combined together to issue in a system. Stein indeed rises to the height of sublime poetry when she writes that in this process "the individual soul comes to bloom in a place prepared for it—prepared by the historical evolution of the people of its earthly homeland and by the generations of its earthly family—and since, after its pure and full unfolding at its predesigned place, the soul is to be inserted as a flower in an eternally imperishable wreath, it does not seem

88 Ibid., 504.
89 Ibid.
90 Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 907.
91 Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 506.
92 Ibid., 507.

fitting to see in its essence or nature a *species* that can be *individualized* in a multiplicity of alike structures."[93]

All this comes together to denote what Newman called ethos. He himself was reared in his family, circle of friends, university, and in the Church. We develop our potentialities in our individual ways, but never to the degree of perfection. We use ourselves, as Newman opined, for we have been endowed with what we need in our way of development. We must be self-contained and collected, for our true essence is in our innermost depth. There God resides, and hence in finding ourselves we find God. This is vitally important because "those who do not find themselves do not find God either, and do not attain to eternal life."[94]

Thus the personal is at the same time divine, for it is in the most intimate part of the human core that the source of personal life resides. Here is the human soul which gives unity to the body. Stein observes: "The *living soul* of natural man has the power to form those material elements which are at its disposal for the building up of its body into a unity, and to maintain and animate this unity in its own structure for a certain length of time. Beyond this, the soul has its *inner* being and the capacity to receive into itself new life from extraneous sources and thereby to experience an increase, a strengthening, and a heightening of its own life."[95]

Edith Stein concludes on a mystic note. In sharing our individuality with humankind, we do not lose our distinctive difference, and therefore we can establish the Mystical Body with each part playing a different function. In like manner every individual person, concentrated in soul life, adds to the perfection and beauty of this Body. Stein notes:

> In this manner, by the cooperation of nature, freedom, and grace, the body of Christ is built up. Every individual human being is created to be a member of this body. And this is the reason why even on the purely natural level no human being is like the other—we recall that these reflections on the Mystical Body were to aid our understanding of the meaning of human individuality—but every human individual is a variation of the common human essence or nature, an individual structural unit, and simultaneously a constructive part of a structural totality.[96]

93 Ibid., 508.
94 Ibid., 509.
95 Ibid., 519.
96 Ibid., 526.

While going into the core of our depth, we acquire the modes of our soul life, with this meaning that inasmuch as we sojourn in our depth we truly live in ourselves. Metaphorically speaking, the ship of our very being meanders between the rocks of images and shadows (to use the Newmanian parlance) on its way to the harbour. The interesting thing here is that living inside does not take on any concrete form, for the life-springing source is an empty form which—in the process of self-formation—takes on a concrete shape. Living the soul life is to be free from attachment to external modes of life, which may draw us away from our true selves; it is to live within one's self. The individual immersing in the soul must constantly free himself from the external forms which revolt for the sake of becoming an individual's essence, thereby postponing or completely disabling one from reaching the source, i.e. the soul life, the personal core vibrating with essential life. I use the term "essential life" because in the innermost centre of our beings is the true residence of the person, not some accidental life styles which our beings may imitate.

Conclusion

In this book we have walked the paths of two well-known European thinkers: John Henry Newman and Edith Stein. The main common characteristic of either of them is that they are both exemplars how the human being in the heart of modernity, with its emphasis on individual choice and negative liberty, can regain the lost world of dogmatic religion. There are two modes of reflection: philosophical and religious. Philosophy helps us define the person; religion places the person within the horizon of transcendence.

By reading John Henry Newman and Edith Stein I have understood one thing of utmost importance: the way to save our individuality is to go inside ourselves rather than to go outside in a variety of expressions. Individuality is not to shock but to remain in oneself. Such is the main lesson from both authors. After all it is heart that speaks to heart, not mouth that speaks to mouth. Persons who live inside can communicate on a considerably more profound level. Thus Newman's and Stein's contribution is even more urgent now than in their days when the opportunities for dissipation in trifles were not so abundant. At the same time they are both ardent defenders of individual freedom and responsibility because they lived under adverse circumstances, and yet managed to face up the adversities and realize what they had assented to as true.

The phrase "heart speaks unto heart" denotes two things which in a special way combine John Henry Newman and Edith Stein. First, as we have learnt from his theory of knowledge, our knowing is composed of explicit and implicit elements. What we formulate and express in the explicit form of arguments is only a part—and that not decisive—of our knowledge. The implicit dimension of our minds is a component of our personal conscious endowment. It is a kind of reality created in us as a personal result. And it is manifested by our assents. Second, there is a sphere in the person, Stein's primeval life, which is not ruled by this person, and if ruled, then not by means of the shared logical apparatus, but by virtue of higher logic, of personal influence. And at this higher level of communication indeed we can say that a heart speaks to a heart, a reality speaks to another reality; in like manner we enter a special kind of communing. Our unperceived impressions, decisions motivated by conscience, and good deeds become the building blocks of the heart.

When we consider the human person, we have to take into account two directions: inside and outside. Both directions are related to their attendant attractions. We are drawn outside if we want to investigate the world and are guided by our own conceptions; or else we are enticed to something external

by someone else, by some other lifestyles and proposals. We often turn away from the world and go inside when we feel at a loss, we are disillusioned by the world, or we are engaged in some spiritual quest. The crucial element of these two directions is that no matter how far we go outside, the self must be present. Going out cannot be carried out in oblivion of what is inside. And this is what is meant by selfhood, by subjectivity.

In this book, I have been trying to show John Henry Newman as an original thinker of the nineteenth century whose writings inspired the twentieth-century phenomenologist Edith Stein. The paths of their thinking converge, although the starting points were different; and the point of convergence is the person. The person, living in his idiosyncratic circumstances, is naturally endowed to come to grips with individual problems. For that, he has his natural reasoning which seeks to adjust solutions and the self that is born in the depths of the person. Edith Stein found in Newman a kindred spirit because they were both fascinated with the mystery of the person. Phenomenology seemed to be especially predestined to examine the visible traces of this mystery in their concrete exemplifications.

We find in Newman, if not phenomenology itself, then at least some basic phenomenological elements like, first and foremost, the quest after the intuitive perception of beings. For Newman, however, unlike in Husserl, this intuitive grasp bore the intellectual and moral dimensions. Husserl sought a pure point of departure; Newman focused on the person as his apprehensive grasp in the concrete develops. Every individual is the bearer of his own judgement, there is no external reference by which to measure the appropriateness of heroism. In general considerations we can reach only inasmuch as probability, there is no end to the end of the accumulation of probabilities. It is then the person, the power of the person that steps in and chooses the right moment of a final decision. The ratiocinative mind, the thinking mind of the person determines the natural results. Here Newman means not only such conclusions that, for example, we cannot endure too long without eating, but also that a moving body when left to itself will never stop, which is Newton's first law of motion. Indeed if we imagine a moving body without any resistance, any counteractive force, it will go on moving without end. We do not have to turn to physicists to arrive at such a conclusion.

Our ultimate point of reference is the living mind. We can even speak about the miracle of the living mind and what it can attain when it is on the right track. This mind may have some innate talent or genius, or else be duly formed by mental formation or practice. And again we arrive at what I have already stressed, drawing on Newman, that we should rely on the whole of the system, that in order to evaluate we need to be acquainted with the system, to make

our mind connatural (coherent) with the truth of the system. The living mind can grasp all the minute recesses of any reasoning, the first principles just like the last terms. The first principles are often of a very personal character, tainted by one's intellectual complexion. People are in essential and irremediable variance with one another.

Obviously, Newman and Stein are interested objects of analysis for one principal reason. I have written above that their starting points were different. It is true, from the theoretical point of view they were different, but practically they were similar. They both experienced their own beings as a mystery that called for a response. I mean their moments of revelation that the truth might be, surprisingly, in the area where they least expected it. Such were the moments of conversions. They started first with some puzzling experiences, and then evolved, through an internal and hidden process, into certitude. Both Newman and Stein journeyed towards their personal certitudes. Therefore I used Newman's motto: "cor ad cor loquitur" [heart speaks unto heart] to entitle this book. We know the ultimate results of these hidden processes, but we can never trace the details of their sheltered courses. We can believe what we cannot understand or what we cannot prove.

The leading motto: *secretum meum mihi* [my secret is mine] naturally has proved a working principle in Newman's and Stein's life. They have themselves experienced that each person has inexhaustible resources to stand up to his life's challenges. In the purity of intentions, using real words, and under the guidance of conscience each person can return from a waste land to his proper destination. Because many of our resources are implicit and hidden, we have to make use of our hearts in the interpersonal communication.

And seclusion does not denote any aesthetic or emotional dimension, but rather primarily metaphysical and moral. The aesthetic and emotional aspect can occur as concomitant elements that result from the experience of certitude that penetrates through the whole being. Newman, for his part, had a similar experience when he joined the Catholic community, the community he formerly regarded as the seat of the gravest mistake.

In the examples of these two personages we find a confirmatory case of their claim that the process of knowledge is not a mere matter of intellect. In order to understand one often needs to change, to grow up to the point of understanding. Comprehension is a personal process, very complicated in itself, and such that cannot be reduced to understanding the propositions at hand. It appears from the two examples that the person empowered with intellectual and spiritual prowess can always return from his "waste land." Newman returned from the land that was held in disrepute and Stein from the land of unbelief—both of them, however, felt a strong personal urge to reorient their

personhood. We are not absolute masters of our conceptual endowment, as we are often exposed to influences we cannot explain, nevertheless they subdue us.

In the nineteenth century Newman proclaimed a harmony between reason and faith, science and religion. His famous premise is that Christianity is a system, just like science is a system. Now these systems have their own idiosyncratic characters. They grow in their individual way, they have their individual history. The common trait of John Henry Newman and Edith Stein is the amazement with their own personal experiences. They resulted in a conclusion that the person does exhaust his essences in what can be intellectually comprehended. There are implicit dimensions, the abyss of existence, primeval life—the authors sought to find adequate phrases—which go beyond reason and can be approached with the heart. In this area we need a moral preparation.

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