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Newman's Theory Of Conscience

John D. Ryan

“Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart,” Newman wrote in his *Apologia* describing the importance of conscience in his personal life, “I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world.”¹ This voice of conscience appears as a central reality and the organizing theme in Newman’s religious thought and writings. Threading its way through his many works, conscience presents itself as the natural link between man and God, the light directing the whole life of thought and therefore immanent principle of personal self-realization, the primary source of that natural religion which prepares man for Christianity, and, finally, “the aboriginal Vicar of Christ”² in the individual’s life within the Christian community.

This paper will briefly examine Newman’s analysis of conscience. Part one treats certain aspects of Newman’s psychological description of knowledge necessary for an understanding of his theory of conscience; part two deals with Newman’s definition of conscience; and part three reconstructs his informal inference to God from conscience. Various sources, especially the *Grammar of Assent*, have been used for this reconstruction since Newman himself never fully detailed in writing his argument to God. Little reliance, however, has been placed on Newman’s commentators, who show wide divergences both in their understanding of his inference from conscience and in their corresponding conclusions about its value.

I. NEWMAN'S ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE

For Newman, man is a being whose nature is initially incomplete and must be realized through personal appropriation of knowledge³ by acts of inference and assent. The mental powers or senses of inference and assent, like the other mental powers, for example, the moral sense or conscience, the aesthetic sense or taste, and the sense of memory, begin in the same rudimentary state as does the nature which is their principle but are strengthened and matured as one exercises them by growing in knowledge.⁴

Man is instinctively aware of two sources of experience from which he gains his knowledge, the external world of particular existents beyond the senses and the interior world of the mind. The data from both worlds corroborate and serve to interpret each other. But, although external data has an absolute primacy insofar as it sets the mind in motion,⁵ the interior data of the mind has a certain interpretative primacy, especially in religious and ethical inquiry.⁶

Growth in knowledge, according to Newman, involves a temporally incompletable process of reduplicating subjectively the intelligible harmony of the total universe, visible and invisible. By means of various mental acts mediated by fidelity to conscience, the individual intellectually transforms his imaginative experience and gradually constructs, even on a pre-reflective level of thought, abstract physical and ethico-religious world systems which he must continually realize again in experience if he is to attain ordered truth and fulfill himself according to this truth.

Herein lies Newman's fundamental distinction between real and notional apprehension. Real apprehension begins as a kind of instinctive interpreting perception which grasps existential reality and dimly apprehends a total, non-generalized significance in particular concrete images unified and presented by acts of the imagination.⁷ Notional apprehension, on the other hand, is generalized interpretation; reflection on the image-objects grasped in perceptual acts of real apprehension leads to abstract formulations or notions which are subsequently set in order by reasoning processes and enunciated in verbal propositions to which one can give notional assents.⁸ In such acts of notional transformation or intellectualization, the mind abstracts an aspect of the total implicitly significant content of a real apprehension while at the same time generalizing it in comparison and contrast to other apprehended images or notions.⁹

Both kinds of apprehension are necessary and complete each other;¹⁰ but only a union of the two in acts of inferential intuition, the act which realizes the general in the particular and forms a notionally impregnated image, contributes to the full knowledge which is subjectively appropriated in acts of real assent and certitude. Newman's analysis of the thought process prior to assent thus involves three stages of development: first the thesis, imaginative perception of particular concrete existents; secondly the antithesis, generalization into notions and propositions by inductive abstraction and inductive inference; and finally the realization of the general in the particular whereby the notional and the real are united in a living synthesis. The assent given to such a synthesis tends to involve the total personality and be an act of commitment leading to love, action, and practice.

This process of thought in its development and final appropriation in assent moves, moreover, on two connected and interpenetrating levels, the one pre-reflective or implicit, the other reflective or explicit.¹¹ The pre-reflective process of thought, one's ordinary kind of thinking, relies primarily on the reasoning process which Newman calls natural inference. Natural inference moves from things to things, from concrete wholes to concrete wholes, rather than from proposition to proposition.¹² Natural inference usually appears as a simple act, as if there were no medium coming between antecedent and consequence;¹³ the transition involved seems spontaneous and is mostly subconscious and therefore difficult to explain verbally. The perfection and precision of this natural reasoning power in concluding to truth varies with the person according to his moral and intellectual qualities and depth of experience.¹⁴

On the reflective level of thought, in contrast, one moves to truth more consciously and deliberately by proceeding forward to new knowledge and backward to the

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correction or confirmation of the images and notions to which one's first assents were given.¹⁵ The proper mode of reasoning, which, on this level, concludes to truth by means of converging or cumulating probabilities, Newman calls informal inference.¹⁶ Informal inference, the actual method of investigation in most areas of technical and non-technical thought,¹⁷ synthesizes the subtlety of natural inference and some of the conscious explicitness of syllogistic reasoning. A primary task of the reflective thinker beyond his inquiry into the physical world lies in analyzing the spontaneous pre-reflective life or consciousness, in unfolding and clarifying as much as possible, what prior to reflection was already present obscurely and implicitly in the very activity of conscious thought.

This Newman attempts to do by proceeding from various verbal judgments or enunciated propositions to the corresponding acts of the mind whose structures and intended objects man pre-reflectively apprehends in use. Two of Newman's ideas are important here: 1) The acts of the mind intend their proper objects, some aspect of objective reality, which, on being attained, cause specific feelings often strong enough to be called emotions or affections. 2) A reflective process of comparing and contrasting these feelings, one with another, serves in turn to distinguish specific acts of the mind and, further, reveals to the introspective thinker a reverse intentionality in which the proper object of each mental act can be reflectively discerned and grasped.¹⁸ The reflective analysis, in thus moving from effect to cause, reverses the original process implicit in the lived experience of pre-reflective thought.

II. NEWMAN'S DEFINITION OF CONSCIENCE

Identifying it with Aristotle's *phronesis*,¹⁹ Newman defines conscience in the Grammar of Assent as the mental power which judges in particular instances of personal or social conduct.

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. It comes of an acquired habit, though it has its first origin in nature itself, and it is formed and matured by practice and experience; and it manifests itself, not in any breadth of view, any philosophical comprehension of the mutual relations of duty towards duty, or any consistency in its teachings, but it is a capacity sufficient for the occasion, deciding what ought to be done here and now, by this given person, under these given circumstances. It decides nothing hypothetical, it does not determine what a man should do ten years hence, or what another should do at this time. It may indeed happen to decide ten years hence as it does now, and to decide a second case now as it now decides a first; still its present act is for the present, not for the distant or the future.²⁰

This cognitive act of the mind, while indivisibly one, has the twofold function of perceiving both moral value and obligation here and now in the particular instance;²¹ it reveals itself in human consciousness as a moral sense or perception and as a sense or perception of obligation which apprehends imaginatively, dimly, and in a non-generalized manner, a sanction external to the mind. In other words, in the act of conscience moral good is presented to man as of absolute obligation; hence morality and religion remain for Newman inseparably united. It is in the light of this inseparability that Newman can view conscience as the source of two areas of knowledge. Conscience as moral perception is the creative principle of ethics;²² from his consciousness of particular acts as right or wrong, one gradually infers the notional propositions that there is a right and wrong and that certain acts are universally good or bad. Thus it is that one constructs a personal code or system of ethics. Conscience as perception of obligation, on the other hand, becomes the creative principle of religion;²³ from a number of its individual acts one notionally infers the existence and nature of an external, invisible, and superior personal being who commands and judges, of God, and forms in time a personal religious world which in fact can find its fulfillment only in divine revelation. Only in the light of these two worlds, especially of his religious world, does man have the necessary framework to interpret and investigate the physical world external to his mind.

Newman distinguishes between this twofold aspect of the single act of conscience, not only because the act in its multiplicity serves as the source of two different yet related kinds of knowledge, but also because one can lose his recognition of either one of the other of the functions in particular areas of conduct²⁴ and because one sometimes discovers his moral perception to have been mistaken in certain acts without thereby losing the recognition of his duty always to obey the individual dictates of conscience.²⁵

It is important to understand here that man's awareness of conscience develops in harmony with Newman's analysis of the process of thought. The first stage consists in instinctive perception of moral value and obligation in the concrete; the second in generalization into ethical and religious notions and propositions; the third in the realization of the ethically and religiously general in experience. In each stage, one's apprehension of conscience, what it is and what it implies, differs. The first stage of instinctive perception, furthermore, belongs totally to imaginative knowledge; in being aware of absolute obligation, one knows imaginatively that such obligation comes from a being external to him. But this knowledge, although direct, is non-generalized. Only in the stage involving generalization does one's direct imaginative knowledge of God become intellectual knowledge in the commonly understood sense; and only in the final stage of intellectual realization does one become aware of God as a personal being present to him in and through conscience.

In terms of such developing awareness, moreover, man becomes conscious of the act of conscience only in his initial awareness of the peculiar feelings which follow actions which in consequence and after generalization he calls right or wrong.²⁶ Here, of course, Newman refers to the genesis of one's awareness rather than to a supposed genesis of conscience itself, which is a mental power rooted in human nature. Newman's point is

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that a child learns right and wrong from experience, and not from innate truths prior to experience and reasoning. Only as the child grows in experience and the powers of memory, reasoning, and verbalization, can he begin to consult conscience prior to decision and action. Finally, any generalized or intellectual awareness which a child might have of conscience as a mental power, like the generalized consciousness of a unified self, results from some verbal knowledge received from others and from inductive abstraction and inductive inference from particular acts.

III. THE ARGUMENT TO GOD FROM CONSCIENCE

Perhaps the most important point in Newman's theory of conscience is his conviction that the perception of obligation is the primary natural source of religion and religious knowledge. Newman writes, "Our great internal teacher of religion is . . . our Conscience . . . Conscience, too, teaches us, not only that God is, but what He is; it provides for the mind a real image of Him, as a medium of worship."²⁷ Thus conscience is for Newman the source from which one infers God's existence and attributes and realizes God's being as a personal presence. In revealing a God who is transcendent and yet imminent, conscience forces on man the fact that he is a subject and hence acts as a powerful antidote to rationalism. Further, conscience as the source of religion leads man to a notion of providence,²⁸ to a sense of sin,²⁹ to sacrifice and atonement,³⁰ and finally to the expectation of special divine help and of a further revelation from God.³¹ Finally, conscience by its nature leads man to the Church, which manifests God's further revelation of himself in Christ; thus the image of himself which Christ impresses on the minds of his members completes and fulfills the mental image of God which originates in conscience.³²

In the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman attempts to reveal the pre-reflective inferential process which begins from individual acts of conscience as perception of obligation and ultimately leads to a faith-realization of the doctrinal proposition that there is one God.

As from a multitude of instinctive perceptions, acting in particular instances, of something beyond the senses, we generalize the notion of an external world, and then picture that world in and according to those particular phenomena from which we started, so from the perceptive power which identifies the intimations of conscience with the reverberations or echoes (so to say) of any external admonition, we proceed on to the notion of a Supreme Ruler and Judge, and then again we image Him and His attributes in those recurring intimations, out of which, as mental phenomena, our recognition of His existence was originally gained.³³

For Newman the reflective uncovering of this natural inferential process which one, both man and child, and with the help of outside influences, commonly and validly makes is at the same time the argument and proof for God's existence,³⁴ although in the

Grammar proof is not his primary purpose.

I have already said I am not proposing here to prove the Being of a God; yet I have found it impossible to avoid saying where I look for the proof of it. For I am looking for that proof in the same quarter . . . — by the same means as those by which I show how we apprehend Him, not merely as a notion, but as a reality.³⁵

Argument and proof in this case mean for Newman the analysis of the facts of conscious existence rather than the presentation of syllogistic argument. He does not deny the place of strict syllogistic demonstration, but writes later, regarding his proof of Christianity, that he prefers informal inference.³⁶

The facts or evidences from lived experience which Newman presents for his reader's understanding are singly or by themselves only probable at best in relation to the conclusion that there is a God, but discerned together in relationship can be seen to point or converge towards this conclusion which the properly disposed mind can informally conclude to and then, on a reflective level of thought, realize in its own experience. Newman finds this kind of analytic-synthetic argument for the existence of God more natural and more convincing to the multitude of people who are not metaphysicians yet still desire some understanding of and justification for their already valid realization of the personal presence of the God who remains unseen.

The structure of Newman's argument can be summarized in the following principles and steps. Newman intends to uncover the proper object of conscience viewed as the mind's perception of absolute obligation. His basic principle is the assumption that the mind attains specifically different objects in its various acts and that the appropriation and apprehension of these objects cause specifically different feelings. Therefore, an analysis of a particular intentional feeling in its relationship to other intentional feelings will reveal its proper object. In view of these correlative principles, Newman sets forth his argument more or less in the following three stages: 1) A reduction to pre-reflective consciousness, to one's implicit awareness of the dictate of conscience as manifested in his perception of obligation. 2) An analysis of this perception and its consequent feelings in relation to the perception of the beautiful and its consequent feelings, that is, conscience in contrast to taste. 3) An analysis of the feelings of conscience in relationship to the feelings caused by obedience or disobedience to a parent. It must be admitted here that Newman presents rather the conclusions of his analysis and that his comparison of the feelings of conscience to the feelings excited by parents needs completion.

As a result of this informal argument, Newman is convinced that the proper object of conscience as perception of obligation is God whom one imaginatively and inadequately, but directly and truly, apprehends in the individual dictates of conscience, just as the proper object of conscience as moral sense is moral value perceived imaginatively, *intensive* and *pro hac vice*, in the individual judgments of conscience. In consequence, one proceeds validly to transform these imaginative perceptions into notions and propositions which one finally realizes in experience and give real assent to. But, according to Newman, neither the child's implicit inference, nor his own more explicit argument, to

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the existence of God makes use of syllogistic reasoning or the notional premise that every law implies a lawgiver.³⁷

Newman begins his argument in the *Grammar* with the proposition, a common first principle³⁸ as he calls it, that men by nature have a conscience.³⁹ This proposition enunciates verbally an act of assent grounded in one's consciousness of particular judgments and commands of conscience. The consciousness one has of the commanding function of conscience, as Newman elsewhere writes, belongs among those other phenomena of consciousness, acts of reasoning, sensing, and so on, which are bound up with and convey to one the idea and fact of his existence.

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 be a fallacy. I do not advance from one proposition to another, when I know 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.

If this be so, it follows that, whereas all such acts, as of memory, sensation, reasoning, etc. are bound up in the original object of consciousness, and are the mode in which my existence is known to me and inseparable from it . . .⁴⁰

To deny these various acts and their power to attain their proper objects is also to deny one's own existence. Hence a child's pre-reflective inference from a multiplicity of acts of conscience to the notion of an external, invisible, superior, and personal being obliging him, a notion which he can identify with the God of faith, has the same validity as his pre-reflective inference to the notion of a vast external world from acts of perceptual real apprehension. While inferences both transcend experience in the strict sense for Newman, both consist of the generalization of the data implicit in initial image-objects.

Newman then proceeds to the feelings of self-approval and hope or of compunction and fear which follow certain actions which one consequently calls right and wrong. Feeling usually indicates for Newman a composite reaction of the total personality, means feeling which is often strong enough to be called an emotion or affection and which manifests and is caused by intellectual recognition. The feelings experienced here, which go by the name of good or bad conscience, manifest primarily one's perception of obligation in the dictate of conscience. "Conscience is ever forcing on us by threats and by promises that we must follow the right and avoid the wrong."⁴¹

Newman next analyzes the perception of obligation in relationship to the perception or "sense of the beautiful and graceful in nature and art,"⁴² that is, conscience in relation to taste. There are two significant differences between the two senses, a difference in subject matter or area of operation and a difference in ultimate intentionality. First, the perception of beauty functions in the area of things and has the beautiful in things rather than in persons as its proper object; the perception of obligation, on the other hand, operates in the area of human action, especially of one's own actions in relation to himself.

[F] or the sense of beautifulness, as indeed the Moral Sense, has no special relations to persons, but contemplates objects in themselves; conscience, on the other hand, is concerned with persons primarily, and with actions mainly as viewed in their doers, or rather with self alone and one's own actions, and with others only indirectly and as if in association with self.⁴³

Secondly, the perception of beauty reveals only the human person, for the ultimate test of beauty or deformity is for each person his own taste; there is no higher criterion. The perception of obligation, however, always carries "*the mind out of itself and beyond itself.*"⁴⁴ It always discerns a higher criterion outside the human mind; it always involves an obscure, non-generalized and pre-reflective awareness of its dependence on something beyond self.

And further, taste is its own evidence, appealing to nothing beyond its own sense of the beautiful or the ugly . . . but conscience does not repose on itself, but vaguely reaches forward to something beyond self, and dimly discerns a sanction higher than self for its decisions, as is evidenced in that keen sense of obligation and responsibility which informs them.⁴⁵

This natural revelation implicit in one's perception of obligation can be further specified if one considers the quality of the feelings following it. The perception of beauty, except when persons are accidentally concerned, causes intellectual feelings untinged by real emotion or affection and partakes more of tranquil admiration than of passion. But the perception of obligation in the dictates of conscience always causes emotions of awe, reverence, hope, and especially fear.

These various perturbations of mind which are characteristic of a bad conscience, and may be very considerable, — self-reproach, poignant shame, haunting remorse, chill dismay at the prospect of the future, — and their contraries, when the conscience is good, as real though less forcible, self-approval, inward peace, lightness of heart, and the like, — these emotions constitute a specific difference between conscience and our other intellectual senses, — common sense, good sense, sense of expedience, taste, sense of honour, and the like, — as indeed they would also constitute between conscience and the moral sense, supposing these two were not aspects of one and the same feeling, exercised upon one and the same subject-matter.⁴⁶

Since only persons, and not inanimate things or animals, can cause these strong feelings or emotions, Newman concludes that the perception of obligation has as its proper object a person, "that it always implies . . . that it always involves the recognition of a living object, towards which it is directed."⁴⁷ But these feelings, while personal, are experienced even when one does good or evil with no human person present and, in view of their quality and intensity, imply a person vastly superior and much holier than man. Moreover, these emotions, even while not the same as those one also experiences in

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committing evil in the presence of a human person, are somewhat like those excited in one when he obeys or disobeys, receives praise from or hurt, a loved parent.⁴⁸ Thus Newman finally concludes that the apprehended external, superior, and loved person who excites these feelings remains invisible to man, is God implicitly recognized by us as “a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive”⁴⁹ and also a loving Father,⁵⁰ and therefore the proper object of the perception of obligation is God.⁵¹

Newman saw this argument as buttressed by history and by his observation of other persons, especially of children, but its primary source remains his own personal experience. As a child Newman had strong impressions of the unreality of the material world and the reality of two and only two persons, himself and God.⁵² The latter impression, matured and formed into a reasonable conviction embracing others, never left him⁵³ and as a remembered and present fact became part of the evidence which his probings of conscience attempted to clarify. The former impression, that of the unreality of the physical world, became transformed in his recognition of the material world as a veil of God. But, although human history and the material world constituted evidences of God, only the religious mind formed by conscience could read them correctly.⁵⁴ Like many moderns, Newman was impressed by God’s absence in the world, an absence which only the voice of conscience could interpret for him;⁵⁵ and the physical world, even considered apart from the sinfulness of mankind, to his mind could lead to atheism as easily as it could to theism.⁵⁶ He wrote of himself that conscience alone, by forcing on him the reality of the existence of the Living God, kept him from atheism or pantheism or polytheism.⁵⁷

Newman’s teaching on conscience has of course never lacked its critics; yet today the tide of opinion, it seems, has changed in his favor. However this may be, one must judge Newman on his own ground. His method of approach, far from being based on a priori theories or “empty words,” is grounded in experience and reflection on experience. Ultimately, then, a main contention in argument must be the experience of Newman himself, to whom conscience was such an important factor in life. As this paper began with the *Apologia*, there let it end. “If I am asked,” Newman wrote there, “why I believe in a God, I answer that it is because I believe in myself, for I feel it impossible to believe in my own existence (and of that fact I am quite sure) without believing also in the existence of Him, who lives as a Personal, All-seeing, All-judging Being in my conscience.”⁵⁸

¹ John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of his Religious Opinions* (new ed.; London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1873), p. 241. The *Apologia* first appeared in 1864.

² John Henry Newman, “Letter to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk,” *Newman and Gladstone: The Vatican Decrees*, with an introduction by Alvan Ryan (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), p. 129. The “Letter” was published in 1875.

³ John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (new ed.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), pp. 348-349: "What is the peculiarity of our nature, in contrast with the inferior animals around us? It is that, though man cannot change what he is born with, he is a being of progress with relation to his perfection and characteristic good. Other beings are complete from their first existence, in that line of excellence which is allotted to them; but man begins with nothing realized (to use the word), and he has to make capital for himself by the exercise of those faculties which are his natural inheritance. Thus he gradually advances to the fullness of his original destiny. Nor is this progress mechanical, nor is it of necessity; it is committed to the personal efforts of each individual of the species; each of us has the prerogative of completing his inchoate and rudimental nature, and of developing his own perfection out of the living elements with which his mind began to be. It is his gift to be the creator of his own sufficiency; and to be emphatically self-made. This is the law of his being, which he cannot escape; and whatever is involved in that law he is bound, or rather he is carried on, to fulfil." The *Grammar* was first published in 1870.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 232-233, 348-349.

⁵ John Henry Newman, MS A.46.3 (1859), *Philosophical Readings in Cardinal Newman*, ed. James P. Collins (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1961), p. 190: "I grant or I assume, that the soul would not think without some external stimulus; that if it were cut off from all external communication from the external world, it would pass this life in a sort of torpor. . . . Again, it is scarcely possible to believe that we could think without the experience of the senses, which as it were awaken thought."

⁶ *Grammar*, 116-118, 389, 396-398. See also *Apologia*, 241-243.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 19-35 *passim*. Newman's imaginative sense or imagination is the mental power which in union with the senses unifies the various sensations into an image-object in and through which the mind grasps the existential world. Existents beyond the senses are the proper object of the act of real apprehension. However, imagination and real apprehension appear to be two aspects of the same act. On direct knowledge through the senses, see the conclusion of Newman's letter to Dr. Charles Meynell, dated August 20, 1869, in *Philosophical Readings*, 201: "Therefore I hold that we do not *prove* external individual objects, but *perceive* them — I cannot say that we *immediately* perceive them, because it is through the *experience* as an instrument that we are led to them — and though we do not prove the particular, we *do* prove the *general*, i.e. by induction from the particular. I am sanguine in thinking this is in substance what you say yourself."

⁸ *Ibid.*, Newman holds that assent can be given *only* to propositions, expressed either mentally or orally. Thus one must have some grasp of language before he can assent.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 301: "I said just now that an object of sense presents itself to our view as one whole, and not in its separate details: we take it in, recognize it, and discriminate it from other objects, all at once." Newman here describes the act in one who has reached some use of his mental powers.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34: "To apprehend notionally is to have breadth of mind, but to be shallow; to apprehend really is to be deep, but to be narrow-minded. The latter is the conservative principle of knowledge, and the former the principle of its advancement. Without the apprehension of notions, we should for ever pace round one small circle of knowledge; without a firm hold upon things, we shall waste ourselves in vague speculations. However, real apprehension has the precedence, as being the scope and end and the test of the notional."

¹¹ Newman does not use the terms "pre-reflective" and "reflective," but they correspond to the realities he describes.

¹² *Ibid.*, 330-331.

- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 259-260.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 331: "When it is characterized by precision, subtlety, promptitude, and truth, it is of course a gift and a rarity: in ordinary minds it is biased and degraded by prejudice, passion, and self-interest; but still, after all, this divination comes by nature, and belongs to all of us in a measure, to women more than to men, hitting or missing, as the case may be, but with a success on the whole sufficient to show that there is a method in it, though it be implicit."
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 288: "It is plain that formal logical sequence is not in fact the method by which we are enabled to become certain of what is concrete; and it is equally plain, from what has been already suggested, what the real and necessary method is. It is the cumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review; probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be convertible into syllogisms, too numerous and various for such conversion, even were they convertible." See also pp. 316-329 *passim*. The mental power which in its perfected state reasons naturally *or* informally in the concrete to opinion or truth is called the illative sense.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 358-359.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 105, 205-209. Newman explains these feelings or felt recognitions, especially those accompanying the act of certitude, on these pages. See also his *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (2d ed. rev.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914), p. 48. The *Essay on Development* was first published in 1845 and appeared in a second, revised edition in 1878.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 353-354.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 354-355. Elsewhere, for example in the *Letter to Norfolk*, 134, Newman refers to conscience as the *practical judgment* which the mind makes in a particular instance of conduct: "Secondly I observe that conscience is not a judgment upon any speculative truth, any abstract doctrine, but bears immediately on conduct, on something to be done or not done." To confuse matters even more, Newman sometimes speaks of conscience as a *feeling* which follows judgment and action; see, for example, *Grammar*, 105-106.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 105-106, 108, 361. See also *Development*, 361, and *Philosophical Readings*, 209. Concerning the perception of moral value, Newman writes in the *Grammar*, 65: "I am not of course dreaming of denying the objective existence of the Moral Law, nor our instinctive recognition of the immutable difference in the moral quality of acts, as elicited in us by one instance of them. Even one act of cruelty, ingratitude, generosity, or justice, reveals to us at once *intensive* the immutable distinction between those qualities and their contraries; that is, in that particular instance and *pro hac vice*. From such experience — an experience which is ever recurring — we proceed to abstract and generalize; and thus the abstract proposition 'There is a right and a wrong,' as representing an act of inference, is received by the mind with a notional, not a real assent."
- ²² *Ibid.*, 105-106, 110.
- ²³ *Ibid.* See also pp. 389-390.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.* See also *Philosophical Readings*, 209-210.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 64-65, 105.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 389-390.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 401-402.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 392-395, 487.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 422-424, 486-487.

³² *Ibid.*, 464-465, 488-489.

³³ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 63, 104.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 410-412.

³⁷ *Philosophical Readings*, 210.

³⁸ Newman defines first principles in the *Grammar*, 60, as the notional and often implicit “propositions with which we start in reasoning on any given subject-matter.” On p. 270, he distinguishes two kinds of first principles, those “which resolve themselves into the conditions of human nature,” that is, which proceed either from nature or according to the natural use of one’s mental powers, and those which have their origins in “the sentiments of the age, country, religion, social habits and ideas.” That there is a right and wrong is an example of the former, that Jesuits are sly and crafty of the latter.

³⁹ *Grammar*, 105.

⁴⁰ *Philosophical Readings*, 193-194. Newman here engages in a colloquium with Descartes as he does later, in the same manuscript notes (p. 211), with Kant. See also *Grammar*, 287.

⁴¹ *Grammar*, 106.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Philosophical Readings*, 210.

⁴⁵ *Grammar*, 107.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* See also *Philosophical Readings*, 192-193: “E.g. the feeling of conscience is one of a specific kind, but which we could not describe except from the example and analogy of sensible experience. We could but say, ‘It is peculiar, special; it is not like a taste, not like a feeling of propriety, of honor, of mathematical truth, etc. etc. It is one which he who feels knows and bears witness about to others who feel it, but it is indescribable.’ But *when* he has the experience of this world, he finds a key to his perplexity of *grasping* and defining. He says, ‘It is *like* the feelings I

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have in obeying or disobeying a dear *superior* or *father*.' And then from this analogy a Personal Being is suggested as its object."

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁰ *Philosophical Readings*, 209, 211.

⁵¹ Newman's argument may be summarized propositionally as follows: 1) The perception of absolute obligation leads to intense feelings of reverence, awe, hope, and fear. 2) We experience such feelings only in the presence of a person and never when merely confronting an animal or thing. 3) Conscience, therefore, implies a person; and, moreover, implies one who is not our equal but superior to us, one who is our lawgiver to whom we are responsible. 4) Therefore, conscience intends God as its proper object.

⁵² *Apologia*, 4. See also p. 195.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 198-199, 241.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 241-243. See also *Grammar*, 116-118, 389, 396-398, and John Henry Newman, "Faith and Reason, Contrasted as Habits of Mind," *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford, Between A.D. 1826 and 1843* (3d.; London: Rivington's, 1872), p. 194-195. The *Oxford University Sermons* first appeared in 1843.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 241. Earlier Newman wrote in his *Oxford University Sermons*, 194-195, that: "It is indeed a great question whether Atheism is not as philosophically consistent with the phenomena of the physical world, taken by themselves, as the doctrine of a creative and governing Power. But, however this be, the practical safeguard against Atheism in the case of scientific inquirers is the inward need and desire, the inward experience of the Power, existing in the mind before and independently of their examination of His material world." In 1872, in the third edition of the *Oxford University Sermons*, Newman appended the following explanatory footnote: "'Physical phenomena, taken by themselves;' that is, apart from psychological phenomena, apart from moral considerations, apart from the moral principles by which they must be interpreted, and apart from that idea of God which wakes up in the mind under the stimulus of intellectual training. The question is, whether physical phenomena logically *teach* us, or on the other hand logically *remind* us of the Being of a God. In either case, if they do not bring to us this cardinal truth, we are, in St. Paul's words, 'without excuse.'"

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

