



**John Henry Newman and Ludwig Wittgenstein:  
On Certainty and Faith**

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## **Abstract**

The roles of certainty and faith have been very much divided in modern times by the positions allocated them under an all-consuming positivistic account of human processes. It is ironic that this view, which stems from the Enlightenment period, a time of appreciation of the wonderful capacities and potential of the human being, has come to neglect so much of the reality of life as it is daily lived out by the person. John Henry Newman and Ludwig Wittgenstein, working from a humanist core, give a view of certainty and faith which goes a long way toward restoring the harmony of these processes by drawing our attention back to the unified starting point of all our enquiries, to what is always already there and functioning in our lived lives.

What emerges from this side by side reading of Newman's *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* and Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* is firstly an organic and holistic account of how what we come to reflect on as our beliefs are formed. Secondly, similarities in their ways of seeing support Newman as a philosopher with a significant contribution to make to contemporary philosophy. Lastly, the parallel reading foregrounds the wide and often humanist scope of the religious mind-set which has the capacity to bring philosophical analysis back to a grounding in the ontological, ethical and existential concerns which give it dimension and purpose.

## Declaration of Originality

**College:** Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick

**Department:** Philosophy

**Degree:** Master of Philosophy

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**Title of Thesis:** Newman and Wittgenstein on Certainty and Faith

**Declaration:** I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that it does not contain the work of any other individual. All sources that have been consulted have been identified and acknowledged in the appropriate way.

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## Introduction

This thesis is the fruit of a seed sown some years ago during a module on the philosophy of God where I first encountered Newman's philosophy in an article on *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. By that time I was already a committed fan of Wittgenstein's work and when I borrowed a copy of *GA* from the college library in order to gain a better understanding of Newman's thought, similarities between his and Wittgenstein's understanding of key issues in the conception of the human being and human life seemed to jump out at me with such frequency and force that it was impossible to ignore them. From this experience there arose a lack of understanding as to why Newman did not occupy a more significant place in philosophy generally, as well as a resolve to pursue a more detailed observation of links between his thought and Wittgenstein's in order to raise awareness of his potential to contribute greatly to both historical and contemporary debates in the fields of epistemology, ethics and religion.

The issues which I found to be in common, ranging from the conception of an existential quest, through our ways of acquiring and using information, and the nature of our reflection into these ways, particularly regarding the role of theory, to the manner of our beliefs in God, as they come to light in *GA* and *OC*, are explored in the following five chapters. Chapter one provides a biographical sketch of each philosopher which highlights personal concerns that impacted on their work as well as contextualising the *GA* and *OC* within the wider frame of the life and work of each man. Chapter two is taken up with an in depth reading of *OC* and supplies the immediate context and motivations behind this work as well as structuring Wittgenstein's overall thought there into topics of key concern to this research.

Chapter three engages in a similar exegesis of *GA*. As will be seen this is a purposeful reading insofar as it approaches the text with key areas of concern in mind. Compared to the concise form of *OC*, one could conceivably spend a large portion of one's life covering all the issues touched on by Newman in this work, and a clear focus on the areas of relevance to the question of certainty was necessary to progressing this particular enquiry. Ironically this tactic of leaving to one side issues which are not immediately relevant to our purpose reflects one of the several key methodological points of connection between the two philosophers which are formally identified and explored in Chapter Four.

Chapter five focuses on the issue of certainty and religious belief and applies what by that stage has taken the form of a Newman-Wittgensteinian methodology to its enquiry into what each philosopher has to say on this topic. If raising awareness of Newman as a philosopher of note is the major purpose of this research, this section highlights its minor purpose insofar as it works to emphasise Wittgenstein's religious mind-set and so to widen the conception of religious understanding and experience beyond the hegemony of both systematic religious and atheistic definition.

By way of methodology, what is applied from the very beginning here is Wittgenstein's own method of 'perspicuous representation', that is the laying out side by side of two things in order that connections might present themselves to the one looking.<sup>1</sup> What is from the beginning resisted, is the establishing of any causal links between the thought of both men, an approach which should, by the end of this work, be seen to be one which would have had the approval of both philosophers. In addition wherever appropriate, biographical information is included in support of interpretative points made, giving this research a bio-critical slant.

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<sup>1</sup> *P.I.*, 122

In terms of literature the focus has been largely on the primary texts upon which this thesis is based and most time and energy has been expended on reading and re-reading and interpreting these texts in order to maintain a faithfulness to the original thought. Also noteworthy here is the contribution made by the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* on the part of Wittgenstein and the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* and the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* on that of Newman. The most significant secondary texts drawn on are those by Angelo Bottone, Wolfgang Kienzler, Ian Ker, Paul Engelmann, Maurice O'Connor Drury and Bob Plant, all of which are regularly cited in the footnotes of the following chapters to which they greatly contributed.

Having set out the intentions of this research, discussed the layout and methodology and briefly reviewed the literature there remains only to acknowledge a personal hope that the words and ideas that follow do some small justice to the works of John Henry Newman and Ludwig Wittgenstein, my constant companions over the last two years, and with whom it has been a privilege to engage.

'Affections, Instincts, Principles and Powers,  
Impulse and Reason, Freedom and Control –  
So men, unravelling God's harmonious whole,  
Rend in a thousand shreds this life of ours.

M. Arnold, 'Written in Butler's Sermons'

"In the days ahead, you will either be a mystic  
(one who has experienced God for real)  
or nothing at all."

Karl Rahner

# 1. Towards Certainty: Biography and Background

## 1.1 Introduction

The importance of context to understanding is something that will be referred to many times in this thesis. It seems proper then to begin a setting out of Newman and Wittgenstein's thought on certainty with at least a brief overview of the life context within which that thought accumulated, particularly when the key works on that topic, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* for Newman and *On Certainty* for Wittgenstein, were produced toward the end of their lives in each case. With this aim in mind this chapter will proceed to give a short biography for each philosopher before suggesting ways in which, despite great cultural differences, aspects of their personalities and self-understanding impact in similar ways on their work.

## 1.2 John Henry Newman 1801 - 1890

The personal tone to Newman's writing, the sense of an existential quest, makes the inclusion of biographical detail all the more necessary in any consideration of his work. *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, in particular, exudes a sense of the painstaking personal consideration given to its themes towards the end of a life consistently concerned with truth and the nature of religious truth. Although an introvert in Jungian terms, Newman was courageous in taking up controversial positions publicly, often risking humiliation and the loss of cherished friendship by sharing his less than orthodox view of things political, scientific or religious. He pursued truth not regardless of the consequences, but in the certain belief that these consequences must be meaningful by their very relation to that truth. His position was in the first instance that of a foremost public intellectual of his time, with all the responsibilities and potential for disesteem that this entailed. In the words of Laurence Barmann, Newman was:

...a humanistically educated intellectual who knew philosophy, theology, and history, and who used these in strikingly personal literary productions of an apologetic nature. He was a highly idiosyncratic thinker whose personal history affected every page he wrote.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Laurence Barmann, 'Theological Inquiry in an Authoritarian Church: Newman and Modernism' in Gerard Magill (Ed), *Discourse and Context: An Interdisciplinary Study of John Henry Newman*. (Illinois, 1993) p 189.

The strong personal interest and employment of rhetorical mode can be used, especially anachronistically, as a stick with which to beat Newman<sup>2</sup> but as this thesis will highlight, after we acknowledge the historical and cultural positions from which each of us views the world, the truth *becomes* a question of what we are prepared to fight for, with rhetoric being a suitable vehicle for this passion.

Portraits of Newman combine to give an account of a sensitive and studious young boy who from an early age seemed cut out for intellectual life.<sup>3</sup> Accounts of earliest letters home from boarding school reflect an attention to style and a flair for words that seems almost unnatural in one so young. His progression through the British school and college system is marked by the same seriousness, rarely lightened by any of the usual extra-curricular activities of student life. He is different, and is from early on, aware of this discrepancy between himself and his peers.<sup>4</sup> Whether or not his religious beliefs are the sole cause of this difference is a matter for discussion. Certainly the influence of his evangelical tutor and mentor, Rev. Walter Mayers, is marked in Newman's own religious fervour, which gave him a sufficient sense of right to be able to stand and speak against certain behaviours of his college friends, not an easy thing for any young adult to do. This ability of Newman's to maintain a position of disharmony with the world at large is exhibited again and again in the series of controversies which followed his personal assumption of the role of defender of the 'true' (Anglican) faith against the heresy of the age. This heresy took the prevailing form of a pervasive liberalism, whose reception in the hearts and minds of Anglican believers was, as Newman realised, made all the more facile by the insubstantial ground of a religion born out of opposition rather than position. With the commencement of the Tracts<sup>5</sup> in 1833 he began a journey, as he thought to fill in the blanks in the Anglican system so that it might withstand the challenges of the age;

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<sup>2</sup> For an example of such criticism see David Nicholls and Fergus Kerr OP, *John Henry Newman: Reason, Rhetoric and Romanticism*. (Bristol, 1991) pps 1-12

<sup>3</sup> Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman*. (Oxford, 2009) pps 1-54 ; Brian Martin, *John Henry Newman, his Life and Work*. (London, 2000), pps 9-16; J. H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, (London, 1994); John Cornwell, *Newman's Unquiet Grave: The Reluctant Saint*. (London, 2010), pps 21-32

<sup>4</sup> Newman tells how, upon his arrival at Oxford, he was so fearful that he refused to enter his dorm room unless the Headmaster accompanied him.

<sup>5</sup> 'Tracts for the Times', the series of ninety publications by the Oxford Movement that issued over a period of eight years from 1833 to 1841.

what followed was in fact a personal journey of conversion from one set of certain beliefs to another, a breakdown of seeming oppositions in the face of a relentless historical and intellectual inquiry into the truths of Christianity.

And yet, perhaps, those first vehement feelings which carried me on, were necessary for the beginning of the movement; and afterwards, when it was once begun, the special need of me was over.<sup>6</sup>

In his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, Newman tells of 'a new object' of occupation that was *given* him following a period of travelling away from England, initially with his good friend Hurrell Froude but culminating in a period alone journeying through Italy and Sicily.<sup>7</sup> He became, during this time of exposure to Mediterranean 'scenes of beauty' and to the treasures of European history, increasingly averse to the liberal cause and was filled with a strong sense that he had a mission to fulfil at home in counteracting this cause.<sup>8</sup> His sense of a task was only strengthened by a near brush with death when he fell ill with a bad fever in Sicily. During his recovery, he felt even more certainly that his life had been spared because there was a mission intended for him and it was possessed by this exhilarated spirit that he returned home, filled with a sense of purpose and ready to begin the fight. That he understood his mission to be divinely inspired and guided is perhaps best supported by the verses, now famous as a hymn, that he wrote on the ship home from Palermo to Marseille, entitled 'the Pillar of Cloud':

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

I was not ever thus,  
Nor prayed that Thou shouldst lead me on;  
I loved to choose and see my path;  
But now lead Thou me on!  
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,

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<sup>6</sup> *Apologia*, p 51

<sup>7</sup> Hurrell Froude was one of Newman's closest friends, an Anglican Priest and early leader of the Oxford Movement who died of T.B. in 1836, aged only 32.

<sup>8</sup> Newman, *Apologia*, 1994, p 48.

Pride ruled my will. Remember not past years!

So long Thy power hath blest me,  
Sure it still will lead me on.  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent,  
Till the night is gone.  
And with the morn those angel faces smile, which I  
Have loved long since, and lost awhile.<sup>9</sup>

Newman personally dates the beginning of the Oxford Movement to a sermon given by John Keble on the first Sunday after his return to England. The sermon, entitled 'National Apostasy', is a call to recover the 'authoritative confirmation of the plain dictates of conscience in matters of civil wisdom and duty' that are central to the Old Testament.<sup>10</sup> Keble sees a nation in the process of alienating itself from God and, like the prophets of old, reminds his listeners of the social and moral consequences of the present course of action which 'separates religious resignation altogether from men's notions of civil duty.' Keble also issues a call for 'perfect public m[e]n' like the biblical Samuel to remonstrate with the people, a call which resonated with Newman's freshly appointed task. The twin notions of recovery and remonstrance can be seen to be central to the *Tracts for the Times*, the series of publications of the Oxford Movement, edited or written in large part by Newman, whose purpose was to strengthen the authority of the Anglican Church by recovering strong and reasoned historical links with the primitive church.<sup>11</sup> Paradoxically, these are among the most confident and certain writings of Newman, despite the existence of a discrepancy in what he thought they were achieving, a *Via Media*, and what they actually were communicating. They addressed much of the content of the thirty-nine articles, such as those on Justification, Apostolic Succession and the Sacraments, all key issues of the Reformation.<sup>12</sup> The most controversial was Tract 90, the last tract, entitled *Remarks on Certain Passages of the Thirty Nine Articles*, published in 1841, which openly challenged Anglican authority

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/verses/verse90.html> accessed December, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> John Keble, 'National Apostasy', <http://anglicanhistory.org/keble/keble1.html>, accessed December, 2010

<sup>11</sup> Newman, *Apologia*, 1994, pps 51 – 95. At least one third of the Tracts, published between 1833 and 1841 were edited or written by Newman. Many of these were works by Anglican Divines which he re-introduced into circulation during this time.

<sup>12</sup> Statements of Anglican doctrine put together in 1563 under the direction of Matthew Parker, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, to mark out the Anglican position relative to Roman Catholic and continental Protestant theology. For a full list of the Tracts see <http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/> (accessed December 2010).

by questioning the consistency of the thirty-nine articles with patristic literature. The strength of Newman's belief in what he was doing can be seen by his assumption of full personal responsibility for the consequences of his treatises; he accepts the rebukes and reprimands from both church authorities and his college, conscious that:

No great work was done by a system; whereas systems rise out of individual exertions. Luther was an individual. The very faults of an individual excite attention; he loses, but his cause (if good and he powerful-minded) gains. This is the way of things; we promote truth by a self-sacrifice.<sup>13</sup>

This period from the beginning of the Tracts to his conversion to Catholicism in 1845 is one of great deliberation and intellectual challenge for Newman. His extensive reading of the Fathers and of the events of the earliest church councils, as well as the works of the reformers and Anglican doctors all led him deeper into the maze of Reformation thought and principles. What emerged was an increasing devotion to those earliest fathers and defenders, from Origen and Justinian to Augustine, Gregory, Clement and Leo, and a progressive commitment to a single religious position that made it increasingly clear that the *Via Media* which Newman sought was not a truth position at all. Rather it was one of those tools acting upon the truth whereby it was hewn from all sides in a process of sculpting and moulding that ever moved its substance toward its final form.<sup>14</sup> In this way the Anglican Church was like the various heresies which interacted with the primitive church; their positions were definable only by their relation to the greater church and were, in the final account, susceptible to judgement by that church.<sup>15</sup> This realisation acted as a death blow to the principle of the *Via Media* upon which Newman had been focused, throwing all his key ideas into doubt. It was, as he makes clear in the *Apologia*, a crisis point, a plateau in the journey from

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<sup>13</sup> Newman, *Apologia*, 1994, p 55.

<sup>14</sup> See I. Ker, *John Henry Newman*, (Oxford, 2009) pps 257-315 for an excellent summary of Newman's thought in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.

<sup>15</sup> In the *Apologia* (pps 113-117) Newman comes to this realisation during a period of study of the Monophysite controversy of the fifth century in which he saw undeniable links to the Reformation problems and to the various break away positions that emerged in the following centuries. He was also influenced here by an article by Wiseman that appeared in the Dublin Review of August, 1839, which compared the Anglican position to that of the Donatists in Africa. While Newman dismisses this particular comparison on the basis that the Donatist crisis was restricted to the church in Africa as opposed to the whole church, he was gripped by Wiseman's quotation of the words of St. Augustine: *Securus judicat orbis terrarum* – which Newman interprets relative to the church as meaning that the universal church is, in its judgements, secure of truth. To quote him directly here: '...the deliberate judgment, in which the whole Church at length rests and acquiesces, is an infallible prescription and a final sentence against such portions of it as protest and secede.' (*Apologia*, 1994, p116).

where he could first glimpse his destination, although it was still far in the distance. According to what can in hindsight be identified as his philosophical method, Newman determined to negotiate this distance 'not by my imagination, but by reason'.<sup>16</sup> He is ever wary of the influence of personal opinion and feeling on matters that have so much more than the individual at stake, and strives in the midst of his own confusion and anxiety for a holistic view by incorporating in his deliberations as many perspectives as possible. This method is reflected too in his style of rhetoric which always details a clear understanding of his opponents' arguments before proceeding to his own. It is fair to say of Newman that in the application of this method he possessed the quality he most admired in others, that of consistency. Ironically, this made his task of following the truth of his intellectual inquiry all the more personally difficult.

Nicholas Lash accurately reflects that Newman 'never leapt anywhere in his life' and he certainly did not jump into conversion to Catholicism without a lengthy and anxious period of inquiry and reflection.<sup>17</sup> This was a most significant period in terms of his later discussion of certainty, knowledge and truth. His research into the Anglican position led him to reflect upon the continuity of truth more generally in a dynamic world and the emerging evolutionary understanding of truth as something constantly both in motion and being acted upon from all sides which developed at this time is central to his later account of certainty as part of a process of convergence<sup>18</sup>. During this 'middle' period (described above) he becomes more and more inwardly concerned about the opinions he is voicing, wondering if silence would not be preferable to a reactionary position where he speaks largely to oppose the 'enemy'. He is anxious about the overall status of opinions relative to creeds, remarking that: 'Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion. A conclusion is but an opinion...to say that a thing *must* be, is to admit that it *may not* be.'<sup>19</sup> All conclusions occur in a context of doubt, something which has become increasingly

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p 117

<sup>17</sup> Introduction to *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, (Indiana, 1979), p 17

<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the best account of Newman's dynamic perspective on truth can be found in his 1878 work *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*; see <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/development/> (accessed December, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Newman, Letter to the Times, 1841, quoted in Ker, 2009, p 211.

clear to him. Creeds, however, born out of faith, are chiefly ethical in their concern. They codify the experiences of faith so that they might provide the principles of action in life lived in community and Newman remains throughout the course of his life committed to this understanding of a faith congruent with a certain kind of life, as will be seen in the exploration of *GA* undertaken here. His concern to accurately depict the fluidity of the belief-action relationship is one of the aspects of his thought which makes him so relevant to present day discussion. It forces us to rethink our whole notion of grounds and supports an orbital image of truth based on a series of relations rather than any kind of hierarchy or its inverse. Religious justification in this account is inseparable from the ethically fruitful life and from a faith that speaks in deeds. This is not to dismiss the existence of *a* truth but to realise the limits of our judgement so that we resist hiding behind a wholly notional grasp of faith. This seemingly purely theological question is very significant because of its impact in so many areas of Newman's life. He believed in *a* truth by which all things had a truth position; he strove for objectivity based on this belief. He believed that through the object of his faith, he had a mission and with few exceptions his life was consumed in activities for and towards this cause. His is a position that incorporates distinctions such as private/public, immutable/corruptible, reason/experience, intellectual/ethical in a way which impinges on his key ideas; on the development of doctrine, for example, or on education. What is true and right is *evidentially* fruitful and, under the influence of the faith that leads to this acknowledgment, we can examine this evidence and make truth judgements about the things to which it pertains. The possibility and reasonability of providing evidence for faith is one of the main issues that occupied Newman, both in the years at St. Mary's and with increasing force in his later life. *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* is in part the fruit of his thought on this topic, incorporating much that was first raised in his University sermons.

Before evidence, Newman is clear that 'Life is for action'. Action, he notes, requires an assumption and 'that assumption is faith'.<sup>20</sup> Certainty pertains to action in an immediate, ontological way; to act is to behave with certainty. Therefore, following

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<sup>20</sup> Newman, *Discussions and Arguments in Various Subjects*, quoted in I. Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 2009, p. 211

the link made by Newman, certainty pertains to faith and by faith to creed. Anything that is a conclusion is deduced or inferred from circumstances that are themselves subject to change. Faith, on the other hand, has 'never been a deduction from what we know'; rather it is always 'an assertion of what we are to believe' based on revelation, 'no one aspect' of which 'must be allowed to obscure[s] or exclude[s] another.'<sup>21</sup> If the fight against liberalism is anything, it is against the rule of opinion, which is at base subjective and relative. What Newman is striving for is consistency, which he sees as the measure of reality. This is achieved against the backdrop of a constant framework of core assumptions (faith) which can be objectively consulted in the formulation of both thought and action but which must be supplemented with the variety of perspectives that give any object depth and dimension. To get to the reality of something we must, believing in the existence of that one reality, proceed to build it up by gathering in 'the variety of aspects under which it presents itself to various minds'.<sup>22</sup> In this view any idea or object can, in its unity, encompass all manner of aspects, even those that appear initially as dissimilar or even opposing. It is the Anglican refusal of this potential unity, or catholicity that makes its truth position untenable for Newman. It takes one aspect as the whole truth, forgetting the source of the aspect, the object to which it belongs and which gives it life. It is to this object that, after much 'dismay and disgust' and exhaustive attempts to reconcile himself to the Anglican position, Newman finally turned, upon his conversion to the Roman Catholic church in 1845.<sup>23</sup>

While Newman's early years in the Roman Catholic Church were, though busy, somewhat less controversial, his talents and public persona increasingly led him into positions where his opinions were required but where, in voicing them, he always risked offending one or another party in the growing disputes within Catholicism itself.<sup>24</sup> In part, the nature of the separation Newman allows between certitude and

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 212; p 303.

<sup>22</sup> J. H Newman, 1878, 'Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine', 1:2, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/development/chapter1.html> accessed December, 2010

<sup>23</sup> Newman, *Apologia*, 1994, p 117

<sup>24</sup> I refer here to the issues that prompted the Ultramontane controversy, some examples being conflicting opinions on proper methods and extent of Catholic education; on the role of lay persons in both the provision of Catholic education and in matters of church policy; on the question of the

certainty in *GA* reflects the difficulties he experienced with acts of submission required by Roman Catholic authorities and the actual thoughts and beliefs he privately held on matters of the day. He is initially clear that upon his reception into the Roman Catholic Church he sacrificed private judgment but the very idea is problematic in actuality, something he later acknowledges. The most challenging area of dispute in the Roman Catholic Church in the second half of the nineteenth century was the rise of Ultramontanism and the notion of Papal Infallibility. Newman sees that the ideal of an authority which is objective by virtue of its relationship to objective Divine truth is unavoidably represented in real terms by flawed and even corrupt human beings. 'Nor does it follow, because there is a gift of infallibility in the Catholic Church, that therefore the parties who are in possession of it are in all their proceedings infallible.'<sup>25</sup> However the dynamic between external authority and private judgment is necessary to the emergence of truth as Newman noetically sees it, with church authority having as its principal function the preservation of unity which is the movement of the many toward the divine One. This dialectic engagement of private judgment and external authority is important to understanding Newman's view of reason and its part in the attainment of certainty. Newman sees conscience, which is subjective and private, as the primary experience of God by which the person intuits a judge and a sense of personal duty to a divine authority.<sup>26</sup> The church is the bodily presence of divine authority in the world and requires the submission of private judgment for the sake of the progress of unified truth, but submission to church authority does not disconnect the private relationship to God or the responsibilities arising from this which involve the personal use of reason to decipher truth and to act in accordance with that truth. Though Newman from as far back as his time at St. Mary's was occupied with the philosophical subjects that developed into *GA*, there is no doubt that the extent of the

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treatment of converts from Anglicanism in relation to main body Catholics and on the extent of the final authority of the Pope to rule infallibly for the whole church.

<sup>25</sup> Newman, *Apologia*, 1994, p 230. Also stated here is the awareness that 'Such high authorities act by means of instruments; we know how such instruments claim for themselves the name of their principals, who thus get the credit of faults which really are not theirs.' It is fair to say that the question of the institution of Papal Infallibility as a doctrine caused the greatest clash, internally, for Newman between private opinion and church authority. Ironically, he was in the end a liberal in this regard, resisting the extremes of the Ultramontanist protagonists. Newman's capacity to take a broad view of things and to be ever conscious of the real and historical rather than the ideal situation makes some of his views appear quite liberal yet it is a liberalism that is founded in a religious conservatism which completely trusts in a Truth that will overwhelm all obstacles in progressing to its realisation.

<sup>26</sup> *GA*, p 97.

impingement of authority in the Roman Catholic church in the late eighteenth century and the kind of inner debates that it prompted for him, acted to increase his motivation to write his best known work.

‘I consider that Time is the great remedy and Avenger of all wrongs, as far as this world goes. If only we are patient, God works for us – He works for those who do not work for themselves. Of course an inward brooding over injustices is *not* patience, but a recollecting with a view to the future is prudence.’<sup>27</sup>

Newman shows a remarkable capacity at times to sit with confusion, inconsistency and even self-doubt. As this passage from his diaries shows he rests secure in one sure truth at all times; that of the presence of God and of divine order in all things. Reflection is proper to human reason but needs to take the form of discernment of the Divine will rather than the narrow view gained when contemplation is focused by the promotion of personal aims or gains. This neo-platonic view is consistent with his love for the early church and for the theology of the Fathers who incorporated such Greek thought into their attempts to understand the mysteries of Christianity. It involves an underlying trust in a unifying good will rather than a detached demand for evidence in support of one point of view or another. The victory of Truth is unquestionable for Newman; Truth will out and the Divine order will be realised but things will be fruitful in their proper time. Many a heresy has developed from the ‘unseasonable’ insistence of a privately perceived truth.<sup>28</sup> Equally the church, when it acts to restrict reason completely as in the late nineteenth century, in fact contributes to the suppression of Truth. However as noted, heresy has been indispensable to the progress and shaping of the Truth and the on-going conflict between private judgment and Authority circumscribes the arena of truth, from which dynamic it is urged indefectibly forward. The sequence in Newman’s thought then is that the goal of reason is truth, truth is divine order and the power of infallibility in the discernment of this order on earth is with the Catholic Church (Authority). While he advocates patience in acting on the dictates of personal reason there is no doubt that on occasion he found this difficult, particularly throughout the Ultramontanist controversy and in his attempts to improve the status of Catholic education, both in Dublin and at Oxford. His own view of human

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<sup>27</sup> Newman, *Letters and Diaries*, xxiii, pps 3-4 quoted in Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 2009, p 598.

<sup>28</sup> Newman, *Apologia*, 1994, p 231.

reason and his capacity for entertaining seeming polarities based on their contribution to Truth was the very opposite of the increasingly fearful and temporally concerned position of the church hierarchy during the nineteenth century. As an example of his broadmindedness, on the topic of education Edward Said said of his thought that it could 'undercut any partial or narrow view of education whose aim might seem only to reaffirm one particularly attractive and dominant identity...'<sup>29</sup> In fact perhaps the greatest vindication of Newman's position is witnessed in the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council whose pronouncements on the role of the Laity and on Catholic education show that his difficulties with Church policy in his own time were the result of his 'seeing further than they' and the truths that he intuited then were borne out, if posthumously.<sup>30</sup>

On the negative side, Newman's is a difficult position to maintain in controversy when either one party or another wishes to 'use' you for their ends. He is on occasion accused of being deliberately 'unclear' and of misleading his readers.<sup>31</sup> His *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, prompted by the Kingsley affair, was written to counteract serious misunderstandings commonly held about his opinions as well as to clarify the actual circumstances of his 'turn' to Roman Catholicism for those Anglican friends and followers whose opinion and friendship were important to him. Newman's stoic patience in controversy and firm belief in the timely victory of truth was (and is) not a common quality. It is possible for a critic to apprehend in this view the inherent danger of any set of circumstances being indifferently held as ultimately acceptable. However, Newman is clear on the authority of individual conscience which continually prompts reason to seek out truth and he never fails to use opportunities, even in an atmosphere of constraint, to put across his heartfelt beliefs. It is also necessary to take into account here the apologetic style of much of Newman's writing, in which being misrepresented and used is both expected and considered acceptable under certain

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<sup>29</sup> E. Said quoted in J. Cornwell, 'A Place to Map Out the Universe' in *The Tablet*, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2010, p 9.

<sup>30</sup> Newman, *Apologia*, 1994, p 129.

<sup>31</sup> For example Ker, 2009, cites from Newman's Letters and Diaries an occasion in 1862 when W. G. Ward, ultramontanist author of *the Dublin Review*, accused him of ambiguity and invited him to 'draw out unambiguously for the Bishop's benefit the distinction between "external submission" and "internal assent"'. Also in the Kingsley controversy (1863-64) which motivated Newman to write his *Apologia*, Kingsley misrepresents Newman's non-dogmatic approach to truth within the Catholic framework and history. See Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 2009, pps 533 – 537 and *Apologia*, Preface, pps 3 – 17.

*gentlemanly* conditions. One is not just making a point but making it in defence and part of the aim is to take down one's opponent in a clash of verbal swords. Newman does wonder at times whether the type of public correspondence in which he engages pushes him into saying things that go against his nature and it cannot be denied that this Ciceronian style of rhetoric in general goes beyond purposes of mere enlightenment.<sup>32</sup> That said, there can be no doubt that the historical bitterness between Anglican and Roman Catholic communities is behind the unnecessarily offensive nature of some of the attacks on Newman, whose position as a convert left him vulnerable to both sides.

Newman never regretted or doubted his decision to convert to Roman Catholicism. With regard to Papal Infallibility he advocated patience in the sure belief that the initially strong move from authority would, in time, bring about a counter measure from among individuals and that a reasonable doctrine would be the ultimate result. He never underestimated the power of individuals to prompt change although their role was often only acknowledged in hindsight, with the overview that history allowed rather than in the middle of change. Though loyal to the Church and the Pope, he famously upheld the prime position of conscience when he allowed that: '...if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts, ...I shall drink – to Conscience first, and to the Pope afterward.'<sup>33</sup> Ker denotes his 'general theological position' as 'a cautious openness, combined with a deference to authority'.<sup>34</sup> His philosophical position is marked by the same openness to unpredictable contributions to truth with deference to a unity which would in time make sense of all positions. He joined the ranks of 'ecclesiastical hierarchy', whom he notes in the *Apologia* were historically 'mainly in the right', when he was appointed Cardinal on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1879 by Pope Leo XIII, having agreed to accept the honour on condition that he be allowed to remain in Birmingham and not be consecrated as a Bishop.<sup>35</sup> In his acceptance speech on that

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<sup>32</sup> Newman, *Letters and Diaries xxiv*, pps 242-242 quoted in Ker, 2009, p 630, cites Cicero as 'the only master of style I have ever had'.

<sup>33</sup> J. H. Newman, *Certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching Volume II*, (London, 1900) p 261 via <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/anglicans/volume2/gladstone/section5.html> accessed December, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 2009, p 744.

<sup>35</sup> Newman, *Apologia*, 1994, p 230.

day he claimed: 'an honest intention...an absence of private ends... a dread of error...[and] a desire to serve...' throughout all he had written. He continued to write and publish well into his eighties although increasingly only publicly in response to a critic or when the situation pressed him. He died of pneumonia after a brief illness on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1890, at the remarkable age of ninety.

This biographical sketch is intended to form a background to the concerns of *An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent* which will be discussed in detail in chapter two hereunder. It brings to light reasons for Newman's interest in the process of assent to truth. In addition it shows how, in his case, what is believed with certainty is still open to change and that the Truth persists in its cause subjectively through the voice of conscience and objectively through the voice of Authority. It gives an important overview of Newman's idea of Truth as something progressive and dynamic, requiring both the action of reason and the voice of authority for its development. It illustrates his noetic ability to entertain the coexistence of opposites and to rest with paradox, thus giving a picture of reason that goes beyond traditional syllogistic logic. Finally, it is clear that Newman's task, as he ever perceived it, was the pursuit of Truth which for him was inseparable from the Divine. Insofar as truth applies to all areas of human endeavour, so does God, whose intellect can be intuited in the whole order of creation. Following the Christian kerygma, Newman believes in the potential of *all* human beings to be instruments of truth and because of this he embraces the difference which our ideals, founded in a notional grasp of human life, often rule out. The compatibility of faith and reason which Newman advocates depends ultimately on his view of Truth which calls for a consistent trust in a divine good will for the world and a certain belief in the graced capacity of human beings to rationally discern it. In an era where truth is increasingly divided and the divisions pitted against each other, *GA* recalls us to the unity and flow we experience in lived life where all is connected to all with a certainty that defies scientific explanation. This concern with unity through variety brings his reach into our present post-post-modern world which, following a reign of relativity now grapples with the same problem.

### 1.3 Ludwig Wittgenstein 1889 – 1951

Ludwig Wittgenstein dreaded misinterpretations of his work and there is a definite line of demarcation between what he understood he was doing and what the various schools of thought that claim him either as their founder or as one of their greatest proponents, understand him to have been doing.<sup>36</sup> For this reason (i.e. the likelihood of misinterpretation) and because his work and his life were inseparable, a biographical prelude seems important to any consideration of his thought. The combination of his spirituality and his genius resulted in a rather unique way of viewing the world. G. H. Von Wright notes that he was 'a most uncommon man' and believed that 'in his later work he had no ancestors in the history of thought'.<sup>37</sup> While the second part must remain open to argument, it is hoped that at the very least, his distinctiveness will be made evident here.

Wittgenstein was born in Vienna in 1889, the youngest of nine children of one of Austria's wealthiest families. The Wittgenstein home was a centre of culture with famous musicians such as Brahms and Mahler, and artists counted among family friends. Wittgenstein's own interest in the arts, particularly music, is well documented in biographical accounts as well as surfacing in his own work. His intimate experience of the high culture of Vienna in his youth no doubt increased his dismay at the scientific-industrialised culture in which he later found himself immersed. As Von Wright notes, his view of culture as in decay was inextricable from his understanding of language and philosophy; problems in language which caused the seeming puzzles of philosophy stemmed from problematic forms of life, something that will be discussed in more detail later on.<sup>38</sup> He was baptised a Roman Catholic although

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<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the key distinctions to be noted in interpretations of Wittgenstein's work are those between epistemological and ethical concerns and from an epistemological viewpoint between claims to an inviolable form of realism and a kind of linguistic monism. In religious terms interpretations vary between understandings of mysticism, classical theism, natural theology and fideism. See for example here Nigel Pleasant, 'Wittgenstein, Ethics and Basic Moral Certainty', *Inquiry*, 2008, 51:3, pps 241-267. Also Thomas D. Knepper, 'Ineffability Investigations: what the later Wittgenstein has to offer to the study of ineffability' in *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 2009, 65, pps 65-76.

<sup>37</sup> G. H. Von Wright in Malcolm, N., *Wittgenstein A Memoir*, (Oxford, 2001) p 14.

<sup>38</sup> G. H. Von Wright, 'Wittgenstein in Relation to his Times' in B. F. McGuinness (Ed), *Wittgenstein and his Times*, (Bristol, 1982), pps 108-120.

religion in the home was from a mixed background of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism with Jewish lineage. Despite (or perhaps because of) high intelligence he did not perform exceptionally in school. His initial choice of career was in Physics and Engineering and on leaving school he went to study Engineering, first in Berlin and then in Manchester. Despite his change of career, throughout his life he remained interested and capable in this field. For example during the Second World War while working for a Doctor in Guy's Hospital he designed an innovative device to record changes in blood pressure.<sup>39</sup> It was through engineering that he was introduced to the philosophy of maths, in particular the work of Frege and Russell, and he eventually abandoned his original studies to pursue philosophy in Cambridge, although over the course of his life he often struggled with the notion of philosophy as a worthwhile career.<sup>40</sup> On arrival there he made himself known to Bertrand Russell who immediately took Wittgenstein under his wing in a relationship that was not without its difficulties. Russell notes in his biography how Wittgenstein would call to him for intense discussions at late hours and, on occasion, in a suicidal frame of mind.<sup>41</sup> He describes his student at that time as 'perhaps the most perfect example I have ever known of genius as traditionally conceived, passionate, proud, intense, and dominating.'

Wittgenstein's first published work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, was a work in progress when he left to serve his country with the Germans in the First World War. He worked on it, despite the adverse conditions, throughout the war years and went to great lengths to get the manuscript sent to Russell from a prisoner of war camp in Italy. Judging mostly by his correspondence at this time it seems he went through a kind of conversion experience during the war. He had on him at all times a copy of

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<sup>39</sup> M. O'Connor Drury, *The Danger of Words and Writings on Wittgenstein*, (Bristol, 1996) pps. 146-147. Also see R. Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Duty of Genius*, (London, 1990), p 267, for an account of Wittgenstein's repairing a broken steam train in Trattenbach.

<sup>40</sup> G. H. Von Wright notes how the early years 'were a time of painful seeking and of final awakening to clarity about his vocation'(in McGuiness, 1982, p 5) He goes on to comment that 'doubt' was the 'moving force' throughout Wittgenstein's life. In letters to his friend Paul Engelmann Wittgenstein mentions his concern that he had a task to perform in which he was failing: P. Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, (Oxford, 1967) p 41, p 21, pps 33-34. From biographical material as a whole a sense emerges of an individual who showed frequent concern about the worthiness of his work in relation to the talents he possessed.

<sup>41</sup> B. Russell, *Bertrand Russell Autobiography*, (London, 1998), pps 329-330

Tolstoy's *Gospels in Brief* which greatly impressed him and he regularly indicated in his letters that he had submitted himself to the will of God and was consequently not fearful of anything that might befall him.<sup>42</sup> This fervour did not remain with him long, although he had a chequered relationship with Christianity throughout his life. In later correspondence he deplors his lack of faith and decency but tempers this with an implicit longing for a natural or naïve faith or perhaps more accurately, for a non-corrupt state.<sup>43</sup>

The *TLP* was received as a work of genius and is still impressive, both as a work of logic and of ethics, though it became for Wittgenstein by his own definition a ladder which was thrown away and moved on from in his later work. Using what came to be known as the picture theory of language it explores the ontological and epistemological nature of the proposition; how it is a thought in perceptible form and the complex way in which it is related to the world, whose system of relations is itself reflected in the grammatical rules by which the proposition makes sense. As well as appealing to the visual, spatial and mathematical capacities of the reader it has an ethical appeal insofar as it invokes an awareness of constraint, set by the bounds or functions of language, in what can be properly spoken about. In its analysis of pictorial representation it makes a distinction between meaning and truth value, that is, it separates *that* a proposition *means* from whether what it means is *true* or *false* in relation to what it represents.<sup>44</sup> Propositions are pictures of logically possible states of affairs whose truth/falsity is decided by their correspondence to actual states of affairs. The quality of representation – that connection with events in the world by which a picture can be deemed a picture at all and no more or less than a picture – and its accuracy in the particular case, depend of course on a perceiving subject. While from the point of view of logic there is much in the *TLP* that was later overturned by Wittgenstein's more culturally integrated outlook, for example the belief in the existence of a set of atomic propositions into whose 'facts' all complex propositions can be analysed, it importantly

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<sup>42</sup> G. H. Von Wright, (Ed), *Letters to Russell, Keynes, and Moore*, (New York, 1974) p 82. Wittgenstein remained a fan of Tolstoy all his life. See also here R. Monk, *Wittgenstein...*, 1990, pps 115-117; P. Engelmann, *Letters from Wittgenstein*, 1967, pps 79-80.

<sup>43</sup> P. Engelmann, *Letters from Wittgenstein*, 1987, pps 21; 53-55.

<sup>44</sup> See Anthony Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, (Harmondsworth, 1993), pps 54-71 for a full account of picture-theory in the *Tractatus*.

establishes the indivisibility of language and the world, and eliminates the perceived distance between subject and world, as well as initiating a new ground of Philosophy. A conclusion of the *TLP* is that the totality of propositions is the totality of possible states of affairs and therefore that the limits of language are the limits of the world. The answers to the problems of philosophy must lie within these limits. At this point Wittgenstein believed that if a question derives in the world then the answer will be found there or else the question is being wrongly put. This is not to dismiss the metaphysical or spiritual; on the contrary, he is merely drawing a line between what lies within the limits of language and what is effected by those limits. His position is summed up nicely in the famous last line of the *TLP*: 'Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent'; the fact that this is not how we behave requires us to leave the rigidly logical picture and take a whole new look at language which is what Wittgenstein's later work proceeds to do.

It is clear from the author's preface to the *TLP* that Wittgenstein believed that he had in fact solved the problems of philosophy. He claims, with the kind of certainty that evaded him in later years, the kind that forgets the ever present possibility of the proposition 'I thought I knew', that 'the truth of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems'.<sup>45</sup> With characteristic restlessness and a determination to immerse himself in real life he gave up his considerable inheritance and commenced training as a school-teacher in Austria, eventually being positioned in a tiny rural village called Trattenbach. This new way of life was part of a greater transition for Wittgenstein that is part of the path to his later work, and much has been written and surmised about the turn in his thought that is evident in that work. His friend Paul Engelmann gives perhaps the best insights into his character to enable us attempt to enter into this conversation. He is clear that Wittgenstein saw life as a task and furthermore as a task which would be the basis of an end of life judgment.<sup>46</sup> This begs the question of belief in a task-giver and judge, a source of ethical and spiritual authority, yet Wittgenstein consistently resists any

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<sup>45</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (London, 1974), p 4.

<sup>46</sup> P. Engelmann, *Letters from Wittgenstein*, 1967, pps 79-80.

lessening of his personal responsibility for his life and work. Engelmann wrote a poem which greatly impressed Wittgenstein and which Engelmann believed would give a right understanding of the kind of religiosity that was involved in his discussions with his friend, which is worth quoting in full here:

Bidden by death's sombre Angel  
Flies the Soul through depths nocturnal.  
And he leads her to the Judge.

Through dread night, through sick corruption  
Eye to radiant eye they struggle:  
'Art Thou guilty? Wilt confess?'

Guiltless was I, guiltless am I,  
Am as my Creator made me,  
My Creator bears the guilt.

Flung into the deepest chasm,  
Ringed by tongues of angry fire  
Burns the Soul and burns her pride.

And the Soul amidst Hell's fires  
Says 'Yet He, up there, has pleasure  
With his Angels and he mocks me.

Could I see Him I would spare Him  
Not a spark of flames tormenting  
Which I suffer free from guilt.'

Lo, a storm on wings descending  
Flies into Hell's fiery furnace  
And it bids the soul to come.

Leads her into highest Heaven,  
Where the Angels, veiled and mourning,  
Gather round the empty throne.

'Speak, where is He, veiled Angels,  
Does He shun me, is He hiding?'  
'No, He burns in searing Hell.'

Then the Soul woke from her vision,  
And it was a deep awakening  
From the dream she dreamed in Hell.

And amid hell's raging fire  
Sang the Soul: 'What sears and burns me

Is God's love, for I have sinned.'

Sound bursts forth from all the Heavens,  
And my hands are grasped by Angels,  
And they cry, 'God is Almighty'.<sup>47</sup>

The absconding of agency through the idea of the Creator, using Divine agency as the source of the limits of our responsibility for each other and for the world, is in fact the worst kind of pride. To live with this belief is to comfortably live in an illusion, hence the metaphor of the dream.<sup>48</sup> The hardest thing, then, to accept is the position of agent because this implies a responsibility that is unthwarting. For one who cannot simply eliminate the Divine, one who retains the capacity for awe and wonder, and the insight that what leaves us silent speaks volumes, the challenge is great indeed. He is agent insofar as he *acts* but not insofar as he *is*. Therefore his greatest achievements are at most the very minimum he has to do to justify his existence, his capacities. To fall into the plan of systematised religion is to fail insofar as it is an escape from self-leadership and self-belief for one who sees further or with greater clarity than the majority.<sup>49</sup> In truth, Wittgenstein's kind of 'seeing' necessitates a discrepancy in the relationship with self and an increasingly scientific world, a disharmony which he clearly felt. But according to Engelmann the properly religious person also realises that the world or 'life as it is' cannot be blamed for this discrepancy.<sup>50</sup> 'Life as it is' provides the 'conditions for the task', while the responsibility for modification resides with the person. Engelmann feels that 'the one who has achieved this insight and holds on to it, and who will at least try again and again throughout his life to live up to it, is religious.' However, here he also points out a complication: what if for a certain type of person, part of the task is to modify the conditions of the task? For a person as conscientious as Wittgenstein, this leaves him with an inconsistency; the 'blame' for his difficulties must lie with him as agent but it just may be that, *because of the capacity for seeing he has been given*, his vision is right and the impairment is in the world. The task then

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<sup>47</sup> Engelmann, 1967, pps 75-76. See also here p 9, Letter number 8 from Wittgenstein to Engelmann requesting a copy of the poem.

<sup>48</sup> R. Monk, *Wittgenstein*, 1990, p 382 notes Wittgenstein supporting this view. See also Wittgenstein's letter to Engelmann in Engelmann, 1967, p 7.

<sup>49</sup> Note for example Wittgenstein's comments on systematic religion in *Culture & Value*, (Oxford, 1998), p 97e: 'A theology which insists on the use of certain *particular* words and phrases and outlaws others does not make anything clearer.' Also *Ibid*, p32e, where he compares one's submission to Catholic Dogma to the application of 'a weight to your foot to restrict your freedom of movement.'

<sup>50</sup> Engelmann, 1967, p 77.

becomes the overwhelming one of changing the world; but how can one man possibly do this? By, to quote Lichtenberg, 'work[ing] faithfully and actively on that part of the plan which lies before him.'<sup>51</sup> That part, for Wittgenstein, was Philosophy.

As already mentioned, Wittgenstein suffered from doubts about what exactly his 'vocation' was.<sup>52</sup> His search for work that would be best suited to his task and his capacities led him from Aeronautics to Engineering, to pure Maths, to Philosophy of Maths and Philosophy proper, to school-teaching and gardening, with further ventures into the fields of music and medicine. Von Wright felt that 'doubt' was the 'moving force' in Wittgenstein's journey and I believe that it is to this doubt of Wittgenstein's that what he was doing sufficiently justified his talents that he refers.<sup>53</sup> Clearly school-teaching was not the vocation he was looking for either. In 1921, during his time teaching primary school children in Trattenbach, he wrote in a letter to Engelmann: 'I had a task, did not do it, and now the failure is wrecking my life...'<sup>54</sup> His recurring sense that he was failing in his task was the source of self-destructive thoughts and agonising self-criticism. Even when he was working well he was dogged by a fear of pride which never let him become complacent.<sup>55</sup>

There is, as McGuinness explains, a view of philosophy expressed by Wittgenstein that sees it as an indulgence of intellectual vanity, a striving after 'an angel's knowledge'.<sup>56</sup> Wittgenstein subjects the vain philosopher in himself to frequent attacks and by doing so learns to resist the temptations to such hierarchical knowledge claims that are generally incurred in doing philosophy. There is a tendency to justify doing philosophy by making it essential, foundational to all knowledge:

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<sup>51</sup> Cited in O'Connor Drury, *The Danger of Words*, 1996, p 115.

<sup>52</sup> See note 39.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*; Also see Monk, 1990, p 569, where he notes that what was ethical/good in Wittgenstein's understanding could be seen as potentially 'flowing from the love of God'. Wittgenstein found it hard to put his philosophy in this category because of the constant temptations it presented to be motivated by pride in one's own insights and intelligence and by the pleasure experienced in the admiration of others.

<sup>54</sup> P. Engelmann, *Letters from Wittgenstein*, 1967, p 41.

<sup>55</sup> R. Monk, *Wittgenstein*, 1990, pps 91 – 104 tells how Wittgenstein spent months living in total isolation in his hut in Norway. O'Connor Drury, *The Danger of Words*, 1996, pps 154-156 notes how he also lived ascetically for a period in Connemara in Ireland. Both moves were made in an effort to attain a kind of purity of focus on his work. Monk, pps 412-414, notes Wittgenstein's continual attempts at 'dismantling his pride' in the course of his work.

<sup>56</sup> B McGuinness, *Approaches to Wittgenstein - Collected Papers*, (London, 2002) p 235.

For there seemed to pertain to logic a peculiar depth – a universal significance. Logic lay, it seemed, at the bottom of all the sciences...it is, rather, of the essence of our investigation that we do not seek to learn anything *new* by it. We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view. For *this* is what we seem in some sense not to understand.<sup>57</sup>

In fact it is only because we have applied ourselves to knowing how to live already or because we stand on the backs of those who have done so that we can entertain philosophical thoughts at all. If we were hungry, cold, under threat of attack, uneducated, would we be trying to solve the problems of philosophy? There is nothing essential or foundational about it and Wittgenstein dismisses this rationalisation. This leaves him still caught between the strong sense of his task and the search for the ethical justification for where it is leading him. For philosophy to be ethical it must temper reason with ethical will and self-interest must be subjected to some kind of good or authority outside itself. The renunciation of wealth, the attempt at giving something to the world by educating poor young children, the brush with monastic life, these are all part of a battle with the will for Wittgenstein and while he returns from this period to the philosophical life, it is with a changed perspective on things, a change which is evident in his work from this point on, particularly in its focus on seeing and perspicuity. Anthony Kenny compares the person's susceptibility to enmeshment in philosophical problems to 'the Christian doctrine of original sin.'<sup>58</sup> We unavoidably take in the 'problems' as we take in language and thus we are all unavoidably in a state of 'sin'. What is needed is for us to see the light; for someone who has seen the light to shine it outwards into the darkness and bring the errors to light by showing us the bewitchments of language by which they occurred so that we know how to see properly from now on. Wittgenstein uses this language of enlightenment in the preface to his second great work, the posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations*, where he says: 'It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another...'<sup>59</sup> He has worked to correct his own vision. Now he wants philosophers to undergo a conversion experience; to admit that the seeming significance of philosophical problems has been used to promote the great project of

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<sup>57</sup> *PI*, 89

<sup>58</sup> A. Kenny, 'Wittgenstein on the Nature of Philosophy' in *Wittgenstein and his Times*, B McGuinness (Ed), (Bristol, 1982) pps 1 - 26

<sup>59</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford, 1967), p viii.

domination by reason and to acknowledge the part that individual vanity has played in keeping this going. The *PI* will attempt to ‘modify the conditions of the task’, to change the grounds of philosophy, not by syllogism or proof but by example and through participation in a dialogue about the world for those who are willing to engage with it.

Rather than coming across as an authority, from the beginning Wittgenstein takes an instrumental position in the *PI*. He notes in the preface how, despite his desire to pull his thoughts together in book form, ‘in an order and without breaks’, he found this impossible to do, being ‘unable to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination’.<sup>60</sup> Here he is in the position of a facilitator: ‘I ought to be no more than a mirror, in which my reader can see his own thinking with all its deformities so that, helped in this way, he can put it right’.<sup>61</sup> It is a turn from logical to dialogical, from saying to showing, employing a method which Wittgenstein later terms ‘perspicuous representation’. Here experiences are laid out side by side in order to allow links to present themselves to the one looking.<sup>62</sup> His interest in St. Augustine, perhaps as a mentor who combined spirituality and mysticism with philosophical reflection, is reflected in the early reference to Augustine’s representative view of language which, when followed through, shows meaning to be a process of matching up inner concepts and external objects in a historically dependent way.<sup>63</sup> This view is then overturned, as is Wittgenstein’s own previous notion of atomic propositions, by a closer look at the actual practices of language. Language acquisition is not a process of learning names or building sentences from combinations of stored name-facts. It has far more to do with willing and intending. For example he speaks of how a broom has its meaning, not by our mentally adding together the concepts of brush and stick or by our mentally skipping over this step.<sup>64</sup> It is a broom because we require and use it as a broom. A ‘broom’ is what I need, it is what works in this context of housework, which is the context in which I have encountered it and in which I recognise it. Meaning is

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>61</sup> *C&V*, 1998, p 18e.

<sup>62</sup> *PI*, 122. For more detail of Wittgenstein’s *method* of ‘Perspicuous Representation’ see Clack, 1999, pps 53-73.

<sup>63</sup> *PI*, 1.

<sup>64</sup> *PI*, 60.

whole, not a sum of parts. Equally, numbers are not kept in some kind of mental table to which we refer, or which is there but becomes dispensable after a time. We learn to count in the activities of life, in the engagement of intention and object. Numbers don't *mean* in themselves. Meaning is a form of engagement, a dynamic experience inextricable from forms of life. We don't learn language but we learn to *use* it through immersion in a wide variety of forms of life. Meaning and understanding occur, not in some private realm of the mind, but where articulation occurs; in the public sphere, in what Wittgenstein terms the language games. This is not to completely deny private *experience*, only private meaning and the *PI* puts forward a distinctive argument against the possibility of a private language as well as examining the use (and misuse) of the terms of private experience, our psychological language, which will be looked at in more detail later.

It would be difficult to summarise the *PI* but it is important to briefly note how the game analogy works and how it leads to a different view of the proposition than that of the *TLP*. Taking the example of chess that Wittgenstein himself uses, even the person who has never played chess encounters the carved pieces of wood as part of something meaningful and not as a cluster of carved pieces of wood. He anticipates a purpose in their shape and layout. He has not played this game but he has played games and while the rules for chess are different to the rules of football, for example, there is something that is common to all games that as players we recognise or anticipate. This 'something' Wittgenstein calls 'family resemblance' indicating that it is not something concrete or fixed but rather the occurrence of similarities in certain features. Just as we do not encounter chess pieces as individual objects so we do not encounter words or even sentences in isolation but as purposeful and participatory in some wider context in which we are resident. Even naming has no meaning outside of the language game. It is the equivalent of placing the piece on the board in chess; it has this particular identity only in the context of the game: 'We may say: *nothing* has so far been done, when a thing has been named. It has not even *got* a name except in the language-game.'<sup>65</sup> In this case the proposition describes nothing. It is merely waiting for the game to start. On the other hand, single words may be propositions

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<sup>65</sup> *PI*, 49

insofar as they are understood as descriptions of relations within a game as, for example, one builder shouting 'Slab' to another and the other going off, fetching the slab and bringing it to him.<sup>66</sup> There is no one exact structure of a proposition by virtue of which it makes sense. Instead it is by its connections, and by this we mean connections to the game and to the form of life, that it gains its sense. It is a living thing. The proposition in use is like first person over third person experience. It is intimate with its surroundings and its meaning rests in this intimacy, which passes over to the realm of knowledge only in hindsight, in being reported upon, in reversion to third party mode. It is the ontological word over the epistemological word, contributing not to knowledge but to being, living. The possibilities of propositions are the possibilities of forms of life; the totality of forms of life makes up a whole culture but in both game and culture the boundaries are not indelible, either in time or space. There is, therefore, no universal grammar, but universal familiarity with game playing and sufficient 'family resemblances' to enable the transition from one language and one set of games to another. Wherever we go and whatever we do we are players and language is in play.

Interesting to note here is that within particular contexts or games, propositions that oppose each other can each make a valid contribution to the game, in the same way that a black king and white king contribute to the game of chess. Lars Hertzberg notes that there are some games where equivocality is part of the rules.<sup>67</sup> We don't exclude people in a discussion about the nature of love, for example, because their opinion is different to ours. This nature of love 'game' is one of gathering truth where truth itself, we allow, is open-ended. Correspondence-truth in the later Wittgenstein's thought relates to correspondence to the rules of the game, rather than to objects in the world. This requires a significant change in perspective on truth and certainty. Without further complicating things we can note as Lars Herzburg does that we enter some games in a different spirit to others, just as we enter some games in a spirit of fun or learning as opposed to a spirit of winning or losing. Misunderstanding the spirit of a game is another cause of philosophical problems of which we should be aware.

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<sup>66</sup> *PI*, 2

<sup>67</sup> Lars Hertzberg, 'The Kind of Certainty is the Kind of Language Game', in Phillips and Winch, Eds., *Wittgenstein – Attention to Particulars*, (London, 1989), pps 92 – 111.

The *Investigations* moves away from theoretical knowledge, advocating instead a return to seeing and doing that ‘heads straight for what is concrete’.<sup>68</sup> Commenting on the *TLP*, Engelmann compared his friend’s position to that of Kraus and Loos in the aesthetic world, terming them all ‘creative separators’ who consequently ‘arouse fierce resistance, since their endeavour runs counter to the deepest instinct of their age, which seeks to overcome division in all fields.’ In the *PI*, it seems that the boundaries that logic sets in stone are seen from a real life perspective as more akin to a series of integrated circles. The game analogy preserves difference and highlights how unviable it is to interpret one game in the terms or rules of another; we couldn’t possibly play gin-rummy using the rules of chess, for example. Yet by it we are sufficiently aware of resemblance so as to be able to intuit a paradigmatic link or the possibility of one. Wittgenstein manages an intricate balance here of reason and ethics which acknowledges what is systematic while making a clear place for difference. He openly resisted the very notion of great systems, believing philosophy’s focus on the rule as a reality in the world to be one of the chief sources of its misunderstandings: ‘we are...entangled in our own rules’.<sup>69</sup> It is more the case that Wittgenstein allows room for the possibilities of cultural engagement and evolution, as well as for the interaction of forms of life, that actually occur in the world. Of course we could make this kind of mistake with his game analogy where we dogmatically search for the ‘hidden’ language games. Wittgenstein anticipates this, reminding us that ‘The language games are rather set up as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the parts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities.’ Later he refers again to analogies as rulers or ‘measuring rods’, not reality.<sup>70</sup> The analogy between games and forms of life stands to acknowledge resemblance and preserve difference in a way that will rule out all inappropriate analogies under it.<sup>71</sup> We can say, then, that it is possible to observe an *inclusive*

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<sup>68</sup> *C&V*, 5e. Wittgenstein is commenting on Renan’s *Peuple l’Israel* and compares his own way of seeing things to that of the Jewish mind-set which he conceives of as focusing on the concrete rather than the abstract and theoretical.

<sup>69</sup> *PI*, 125

<sup>70</sup> *PI*, 130-131

<sup>71</sup> In his efforts to preserve difference, Wittgenstein follows Goethe, whose influence on his thought is noted by Engelmann (1967) and Monk (1990). His acknowledgement of resemblance persisting through difference is similar to that of the later Phenomenological tradition, in particular to Emmanuel Levinas in

position which is wholly ethical in the picture of language and culture that is given in the *PI*. A place in our language is merited by a use in the world. There are no unmerited places. Neither are there any reserved ones.

Having drawn the reader's attention sufficiently to the nature of philosophical problems, Wittgenstein goes on to look at some of the most bewitching instances of language use, such as those which seem to involve accompaniment by unseen mental processes or those which refer to 'private' experience. The hidden and the private occur in our language with such frequency as to make the misunderstandings springing from them some of the most deeply rooted original sins of linguistic human nature. Yet the fact is that everything that is articulated exists on a single plane. Things cannot be explained outside the terms predicated of them. Knowing equals grasping or recognising in use. It is not an on-going carrying around with us in a private mind. Regarding private sensations, such as pain, Wittgenstein points out that these cannot possibly be privately identified as there is nothing to distinguish them. The possibility of identification is the possibility of distinction; that is of standing out from others. We may experience pain and choose not to articulate it but even in acknowledging the possibility of articulation we have acknowledged its public content. Long ago we were taught that what emerged from us as a moan or a groan, a pointing, a grimace or clenching of muscles, had a place in our language as 'pain'. As soon as we recognise our sensation as pain, we have re-entered that public sphere that is language. But, one might think, what of private thought in pictures? Wittgenstein might reply that pictures are always *pictures of* something. Do we recognise the pictures as something? If we answer 'no' here we are left with merely a stream of colours and shapes, and even then, we would think of them as *certain* colours and shapes. Knowing, understanding, believing are all cases of recognition; that is of grasping the right word in the right context which is simultaneous with grasping the rule. The language of epistemology is part of the language game that involves showing that we can play language games.

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his discussion of the face to face encounter; see E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, (Pittsburg, 1969) especially Part B:7, 'Face to Face – An Irreducible Relation' pps 79 – 82.

It would be possible to spend a lifetime engaging with the remarks that make up the *PI* and this thesis will make further references to it. Questions raised there of private experience and the language of knowing and believing as well as that of other states such as wishing and expecting, were carried on as a natural component of his work on the topic of certainty with which Wittgenstein engaged right up to his death in April, 1951. The last remark of what was subsequently published as *On Certainty* was written only a few days before he died. Wittgenstein's 'sustained treatment of the subject' (of certainty) was prompted to a large extent by the desire to respond to G.E. Moore's 1925 essay 'A Defence of Common Sense' which attempts to justify the certainty applying to truisms such as 'There exists at present a living human body which is *my* body'.<sup>72</sup> Here Moore distinguishes between 'understanding' a proposition as being able to sensibly use it and rely fully on its truth, and 'knowing what it means', that is being able to rationally analyse it. The case of 'knowing what it means' involves the abstraction of the proposition from use by a particular individual at a particular time and looking at it for every case of its use, as if 'every case' is an object in itself. This case Moore finds 'profoundly difficult' while connecting this difficulty to a certain type of use of the English language. The essay deals with matters of verification, correspondence and coherence in the attempt to consider and grant truth value to propositions in separation from the world. It points out the endless regression which is the outcome of the analytic position and reminds philosophers at large that to query certain things such as bodily existence and the reality of space, time, the world, is to try to hold a position that is contradicted by the very fact of one's undeniably *being* presently, bodily, spatially and temporally here doing philosophy in the first place. Equally the existence of other human beings, the world and so on cannot be queried without claiming some *knowledge* of these things. The terms grant the existence, so to speak. Moore goes on to distinguish between mental and physical facts and to raise the question of interdependence, either logically or causally, of physical facts on mental facts. The whole idea of correspondence between mental and physical facts implies a distance between subject and world that Wittgenstein cannot condone. However, there remains the fact that we sometimes speak as if this distance exists.

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<sup>72</sup> See G.E.M. Anscombe & G. H. Von Wright's preface to Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, (London, 1969). The full text of G. E. Moore's essay *A Defence of Common Sense* is available at <http://www.ditext.com/moore/common-sense.html>, accessed February, 2011.

The grounds of facts become a key issue in Wittgenstein's account of certainty. Because of his entirely linguistic approach these matters must be considered on a single plane which dismisses the 'depth' implied in preferential or hierarchical accounts of truth. Certainty too must merit its place because of its use. There can be no question of dependence in a vertical sense, only horizontally across a field or game. Equally there can be no regression backwards or forwards in a temporal sense so no proposition can be grounded in historical/causal understanding. Yet, again, we persist in speaking as if knowledge had depth in a hierarchy leading to certainty. The illusion of depth is one of the 'bewitchments' raised by *OC* and looked at in more detail in the next chapter.

The biographical sketch must end with Wittgenstein's death at the residence of his doctor and friend in Cambridge in April, 1951. That his religious attitude was not typical of any systematic religion was evident upon the dilemma faced by his closest friends on whether or not to give him last rites or hold a Christian service and burial for him.<sup>73</sup> Even those who knew him best were unsure of where he fitted in from the point of view of faith in God, but the very fact that it was an issue shows their understanding that he had a significant faith of sorts and apart from the wealth of academic work on Wittgenstein and religion, there are many instances in biographical writings which support this.<sup>74</sup> His unorthodox religious position when set beside Newman's more classical views makes for an interesting discussion on the topic of certainty and faith which is taken up in the last chapter here.

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

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<sup>73</sup> M. O'Connor Drury, 'Conversations with Wittgenstein' in *The Danger of Words and Writings on Wittgenstein*, (Bristol, 1996), pps 170-171. Drury tells of how, having received a telegram that his friend was near death, he arrived at the home of Dr. Bevan, Wittgenstein's doctor with whom he had been staying, to be greeted with the news that Wittgenstein was now unconscious and that no-one could decide whether the usual rites for the dying should be performed. He records a similar discussion regarding the funeral service. In the end it was decided to adopt the Catholic practices but Drury notes '...I have been troubled ever since as to whether what we did then was right.'

<sup>74</sup> Drury (1996), Monks (1990), Von Wright (2001), all cite religious discussions with Wittgenstein. On the topic of Religion this thesis will refer to works by D. Z. Phillips (1976), Brian Clack (1999), and Fergus Kerr (1997), to mention a few. Also very relevant here are Wittgenstein's collected remarks that make up the volume *Culture and Value* (1998).

A life devoted to work, an ethical and existential motivation and focus, a real sense of conscience and a view of life as a task which would be in some whole sense judged are some of the characteristics shared by Newman and Wittgenstein according to autobiographical and biographical material. These features are not at all insignificant to the discussion of certainty that follows, which is permeated in the case of each philosopher by a desire for congruency between thought and action, notion and reality. Also notable here is the emerging sense of thinkers who were ahead of their time and consequently often out of alignment with their contemporary culture, something which led in both cases to habits of introversion and self-evaluation so that the question of motive for enquiry was constantly being reviewed. Again, this is something that shows itself to have a bearing on their philosophical enquiries. It is worthwhile keeping this sense of the personal in mind as we move in the following chapters to a more in depth exploration of the two key works under discussion here.

## 2. On Certainty: Mad Doctors and the Reasonable Man

### 2.1 Introduction

The comments of which *OC* is comprised are in large part a response to two papers by G. E. Moore: *A Defence of Common Sense* (1925) and *Proof of an External World* (1939).<sup>1</sup> In these papers Moore defends common sense knowledge as genuine knowledge and notes, among other things, how those philosophers who take up a contrary position are in fact contradicting their own existence and for that reason cannot be taken seriously. Moore makes a number of points which become key to Wittgenstein's enquiry into certainty. These are as follows:

1. He makes a distinction between 'understanding the meaning' of a proposition such as 'the earth has existed for many years past', and '*know[ing] what it means*, in the sense that we are able to give *a correct analysis of its meaning*...The question what is the correct analysis of the proposition meant *on any occasion*...is, it seems to me, a profoundly difficult question, and one to which, ...no one knows the answer.' As well as drawing attention to the problem of obtaining unconditional knowledge, Moore also highlights an unnatural division that the focus on logic and science has brought about and against which Wittgenstein will argue.
2. He claims that certain propositions are true *because he knows* them to be true, inviting a discussion on the topic of subjective knowledge/authority and the Cartesian problem arising from it.
3. He asserts, at the end of the *Proof*, that 'I can know things which I cannot prove.' This statement, for Wittgenstein, brings to the fore exactly what is problematic about Moore's approach. It poses the two key questions that are the subject of *OC*: firstly, what involved in knowing and can we include those things that we take for granted in our lived lives as knowledge?; secondly, does knowledge necessarily carry with it the requirement for proof?

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<sup>1</sup> G. E. Moore, in Baldwin, T., (Ed), *G. E. Moore – Selected Writings*, (London, 2003), pps 106-133; 147-170. From this point on references will be to the *Defence* and the *Proof*. L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, Anscombe, G.E.M. and Von Wright, G. H. (Eds), (New York, 1972). Future refs will be to *OC*.

Wittgenstein takes up the enquiry from his understanding of a world which is in the way that we say it is. By focusing on how we *use* terms such as 'I know', 'I am sure' and so forth, he makes us aware of the vast, inter-dependent network that is reality, of the immediacy of the subject-world connection, and of the failure of the positivistic framework to encapsulate truth. The scientific requirement for evidence and proof is not nearly sufficient, in the face of the variety of understanding that takes place in life as it is fruitfully lived, to serve as the singular means by which we come to knowledge of this world.

## 2.2 Knowledge and Doubt

That Wittgenstein is responding to Moore is clear from the first comment of *OC*: 'If you do know that *here is one hand*, we'll grant you all the rest.'<sup>2</sup> Such a statement is a gateway to reality and to know one such fact would be to potentially know them all because nothing exists in isolation. To know is to be able to distinguish and this is done in the context of a practice or purposeful form of life. I only know this is a hand insofar as I know it is not a foot or a head, or furthermore that it is not a dog or a house. It can be known as a hand only as part of a paradigm, that of the human body, which in turn can only be known in the presence of other existing things all of which belong to other paradigms or worlds of use. To know that *here is one hand* is equally a statement about space and time. In distinguishing a hand here I presently mark it out from all that surrounds it; I grant it a place and time of existence at the same time as I grant myself, as speaker, a spatiotemporal location. The only way that *here is one hand* can be known is by a human being, a human body, in a world of beings that is as we say it is. In addition, to utter this thing as a hand is to know what it is to be a hand, that is to say to know how it is used. Therefore if I know that here is one hand, I have experienced it as such and in this way I am granted a past and all that that includes. To speak at all is to be immersed in reality. Whether I say 'there is one hand' or 'I know there is one hand' I reveal the undeniable position from which I utter my

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<sup>2</sup> *OC*, 1.

proposition, that is to say I reveal a world where everything ‘hangs together’ as a package and in which my ‘I’ is firmly anchored.<sup>3</sup>

In this world that is as we say it is, truth and falsity must be attributed by us, the language users.<sup>4</sup> The determinants of any proposition are delimited by the meaningful use of the words in context. Where there is meaning and understanding there is a world of use which sets limits on the range of experiences that are attributable to the terms involved. These limits are the outermost bounds of the language games and emerge in use. For example take the proposition ‘It is raining’. The word ‘raining’ here includes certain experiences; hearing certain sounds, feeling wet drops on the skin, seeing drops on the window pane or earth, the darkened sky and so on. By choosing this word to utter my experience I avail of the word’s limits. I extricate my experience from the limitlessness of all possibilities. I choose the enclosure for my experience, so to speak. But Wittgenstein is constantly aware that all our enclosures are ‘enclosures with holes’.<sup>5</sup> The limits that fix the truth of what we say are set within the possibility of things being otherwise and so the certainty attached to my choice of word to express the truth of my sensible and intellectual encounter – my recognition *as* – is not undone by the subsequent expression ‘It is not raining’. This marks a whole other experience as does the further expression ‘I thought it was raining’. Each time I choose words appropriate to my encounter with the world and in choosing these words in the particular circumstances I set the bounds within which the truth of what I say can be determined. The bounds of our language games are enclosures with holes, providing both the stability and fluidity required for declarations of truth and falsity in a dynamic and dialogical world. By virtue of the hole in the enclosure, the determinants of my proposition can be called into doubt, that is to say challenged by the entrance of a possibility that I delimited out in my original encounter but which was always in play as a possibility. It is only in the presence of this possibility of doubt that we can claim

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<sup>3</sup> *OC*, 279;313.

<sup>4</sup> *OC*, 5: ‘Whether a proposition can turn out false after all depends on what I make count as determinants for that proposition’.

<sup>5</sup> *PI*, 99: ‘Here one thinks perhaps: if I say “I have locked the man up fast in the room – there is only one door left open” – then I simply haven’t locked him in at all; his being locked in is a sham. One would be inclined to say here: “you haven’t done anything at all”. An enclosure with a hole in it is as good as *none*. – But is that true?’

knowledge, that we can relate what has been with what could have been within the confines of the particular game or world of use.

That knowledge can only be said to occur in a context of doubt is confirmed in the way we generally use expressions of knowledge. I say 'I know' in order to clarify or persuade, for example in the face of another possibility or opinion. I know that is a Laburnum tree, for instance, only because I am aware that there are very many varieties of tree, and even of yellow flowering tree, from within which I make a distinction. Or perhaps my knowing is expressed in the face of contradiction. You think it is a Lime tree and I need to show you that it is something else. Or again, it might be a misty day and the tree is a familiar landmark which I identify from among several objects shrouded in the mist. In all of these examples there is room for the possibility of the tree being something else. But in everyday life there are countless cases where we never feel the need to raise the question of knowledge; this is a hand, I am a human being, that is a tree, the world has existed for many years past, to use a few of Moore's examples. The problem with applying philosophical or scientific analysis in cases like this is that the desire for knowledge requires us to try and bring in doubt where there isn't any. Wittgenstein says 'My having two hands is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything that I could produce in evidence for it. That is why I am not in a position to take the sight of my hand as evidence for it.'<sup>6</sup> This certainty that is greater than evidence merits a closer look for sure, because on it rests the totality of what is. We cannot, contrary to Descartes, 'be in doubt at *will*' and we cannot have knowledge without a context of doubt.<sup>7</sup> To doubt in certain cases is inconceivable; for me to doubt a proposition such as 'this is my hand' would be to doubt everything and doubting everything is not possible. 'Would that not be like the hypothesis of our having miscalculated in all our calculations?'<sup>8</sup> This doubting 'I' which the knowledge game brings into play is always already a body, occupying a spatiotemporal location, a human being, in a world of human beings. This is the position from which I speak and I cannot take up a position prior to it. To deny any of this is to be self-denying which is not possible for a self that continues to sustain itself,

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<sup>6</sup> *OC*, 250.

<sup>7</sup> *OC*, 221.

<sup>8</sup> *OC*, 55.

look after its bodily needs, and engage with the world, even in the form of trying to doubt it. Even as I doubt, I engage in non-doubting behaviour. Reality is there before I *know* it and I am at no distance from it. I can say this because I live it.

### **2.3 The Private 'I'**

As well as interposing a division between the real world and the world that is subject to doubt, the imposition of a need for verification causes another rift, that between the philosophical subject and the 'I' that is the player in the language game, the utterer, the language using human being. For Wittgenstein, the subject is the linguistic 'I', the player of the language-games. The 'I' is the point of entry to the games and to avail of the linguistic 'I' is to utter forth from the framework on which it hinges. To enter the game at all is to be part of a consensus which does not doubt certain things. That we avail of our 'I' shows that we are anchored to the network that grants us the (linguistic) commonality we need to be able to distinguish the objects we encounter in the world, and to delimit our experiences from within the realms of possibility we find there. The subject is the seeker and the utterer, the one with the intention to act and the desire to speak (think) the world according to its needs. To avail of the 'I' is to be in play. The difference between the 'I' as player and the 'I' as traditionally conceived subject is that in the latter case it would seem that the truth of any proposition is arbitrarily subjective, as if we each, in isolation, set the meaning of names each time we use them, while in the former it is by availing of particular words in particular circumstances that 'I' set in place the determinants of the truth uttered by them. The subject for Wittgenstein is the subject in play and inseparable from the world with which he engages. 'I' have an immediate access to the world that eliminates the need for evidential, correspondence and coherence accounts of truth, all of which involve a 'tallying' that Wittgenstein dismisses. Consequently, when Moore holds up his hand in front of him and claims to know that here is one hand we must ask where is the room for doubt here? In the absence of doubt we must query the possibility of knowledge. I have had no experience of doubting that this is my hand therefore the experience of *knowing* it cannot enter here either. Ordinary life bears this out. We don't, except in philosophical analysis, say 'I know this is my hand' because the distance required for doubt or knowledge is unavoidably absent. In a similar way, I don't *have* a body; I am

this body: 'If someone says "I have a body", he can be asked "Who is speaking here with this mouth?"'<sup>9</sup> There is no correspondence here, no verification can or need take place, not because I or Moore *know* it but because in the case of my hand, my body, it simply is. My 'I' is the site of linguistic incarnation.<sup>10</sup> But the priority we grant to scientific analysis continues to do violence to this unity by thinking and seeking in terms of correspondence where none exists.

Our thinking in terms of correspondence that is of judgement and proof, leads to another problem with Moore's claims. When we speak in terms of knowledge about certain fundamental 'framework propositions' we are led to seek out the *authority* behind this knowledge. If I say with Moore that 'I am a human being', 'there exists at present a living human body, which is my body' and so on and then claim that these are objective facts precisely because I know them, I am claiming along with Moore that *my knowing* acts as the authority for my knowing, implying some kind of split in the 'I' that is not evident externally. It points to the existence of a private 'I', an inner person secreted within the body presented to the world, by whom we run our experiences for the purpose of verification.<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein encapsulates the problem as follows:

Now, can one enumerate what one knows (like Moore)? Straight off like that, I believe not. – For otherwise the expression "I know" gets misused. And through this misuse a queer and extremely important mental state seems to be revealed. (OC, 6)

*I know because I know I know* cannot be authoritative here unless we accept this bifurcation and the resulting *inner* person for whom we have not a shred of evidence.

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<sup>9</sup> OC, 244

<sup>10</sup> Chris Lawn reflects on the reality of the ontological immediacy of the 'living word' in his chapter 'A Competition of Interpretations: Wittgenstein and Gadamer Read Augustine', in *Wittgenstein and Gadamer: Towards a Post-Analytic Philosophy of Language*, (London, 2004) pps 106 – 124. He considers the subject-word-world connection in terms of incarnation and I find this a very apt term for use here. Also significant here, I believe, is Wittgenstein's comment: 'There are remarks that sow and remarks that reap' (*Culture and Value*, 1998, 89e) insofar as he marks out here a difference between the words *of* an experience and the words *cultivated* by that experience, where the latter refers to epistemological analysis.

<sup>11</sup> For a thorough analysis of what is essentially the Cartesian problem, see F. Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, (London, 1997) in particular Chapter 1, 'The Modern Philosophy of the Self', pps 3 – 27. Also see S. Thornton, 'Wittgenstein *sans* the Private Language Argument' in *Cogito* 10:1, 1996 for a clear interpretation of Wittgenstein's thought on the bodiliness of the subjective 'I' and the dangers of trying to look past this.

Much more acceptable is the understanding that what there is here is not knowledge in the positivistic sense. What there is is bodily experience, part of which is the capacity to assert this experience.

## 2.4 There like our Lives: The Question of Authority

If there is a speaking, thinking, writing 'I' there is a whole frame of reference on which it hinges. Wittgenstein notes that 'The truth of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference.'<sup>12</sup> They reflect the continuity of existence that is our human experience. This frame of reference is the inherited background against which we can speak of truth and falsity at all, the structure in which our chain of questions and answers, and our speaking 'I', is secured. The framework propositions have the form of the rules of engagement that have arisen out of the dialogue of life. They are the points at which 'we pass from explanation to mere description' and recognise that 'giving grounds,...justifying the evidence, comes to an end...'.<sup>13</sup> In actuality, the way we speak shows that some things are just 'there, like our lives', not doubted and not the subject of knowledge in any evidential sense.<sup>14</sup> We inherit the earth but, it seems, have difficulty with the meekness. When we try to subject everyday experience to scientific or logical enquiry it appears to fail, although in practice there is nothing wrong. This is because this type of knowledge requires doubt and this requirement conflicts with our lived reality. Our insistence on scientific knowledge creates all kinds of pseudo-problems precisely because such knowledge has its own terms and not everything can or ought to be subjected to those terms. Immersed within the scientific paradigm we want to point to the grounds that support our propositions. When we think of certainty as certain *knowledge* in this way we cannot avoid the question of authority or proof that follows. Consider the statement 'I am in Ireland' for example. I can say this with certainty but why and how? It is beyond sense for me to doubt the truth of such a statement for a variety of reasons. Firstly because it is 'I' who knows it; this seems to leave less room for doubt than if someone else said it of me; secondly, because I have never had any reason to doubt it and have had

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<sup>12</sup> OC, 83.

<sup>13</sup> OC, 189; 205.

<sup>14</sup> OC, 559.

innumerable experiences that successfully depended upon it, and thirdly, I know it because I have it on very good authority, my parents, teachers, the global media etc. But none of these grounds rules out the possibility, however distant, of 'I thought I knew'. Perhaps some historical discovery will show that the name was mis-translated way back in the tenth century or maybe the sea will recede so that Ireland is no longer an island but clearly joined with Britain. What would this mean for my certainty?

The fact is that we have our being in a world where anything can happen but our ways of speaking are formed around what normally happens or at least what has shown itself to be consistently possible. Wittgenstein has long been clear that our language grows up around our practices and is inseparable from our forms of life.<sup>15</sup> The expression of certainty is part of this language use and therefore similarly conditioned. Those experiences (including the experience of something never happening) that act as delimiters of possibility, form the bedrock that supports our knowledge game and the possibility of a meaningful expression of certainty. For Wittgenstein 'meaningful' relates to meaning which occurs in use. A meaningful expression of certainty is one which is useful and such an expression as 'I am in Ireland' has proved to be endlessly useful for me. Our certainty, like our language and our behaviour must be both useful and adaptable if it is to remain meaningful. This adaptability is incorporated in the meaningful expression of certainty. The possibility of exception is always part of the rule. It is not possible to doubt or know everything as this would mean the end of experience, of life. The expression of certainty from the point of view of knowledge, then, does not rule out the possibility of the expression 'I thought I knew' but rather can only be meaningful in a life which includes not-knowing. Wittgenstein tries several expressions, most notably the fact that man could never be on the moon, to locate an absolute certainty, an enclosure without a hole, but does not succeed. The fact that the example he chooses is one that has subsequently been overthrown only strengthens his ultimate position. As will be seen this position is not one which dismisses the logic of science but which asks us to keep in mind its place and limits.

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<sup>15</sup> See *PI*, language games 1 & 2 here.

The relation of certainty to use explains why the language game supports both a conflict of certainty and a mistake. In the case of a conflict, two people can say with equal certainty that it is and is not raining precisely because they know how to avail of the word and its limits in use. This is the basis of their having a conversation about it at all. That one is subsequently mistaken, that what she felt as rain on her face was in fact water from next doors sprinkler system, is made possible by these limits too. However, when someone repeatedly says that it is raining when the sun is blazing down on a dry day, or if the person in the example given here believes that water on the skin from *any* source is rain, then the limits of the game, the rules, have been exceeded and what we have is not a mistake but non-sense due to differing frames of reference (different cultures perhaps). 'In certain circumstances a man cannot make a mistake...if Moore were to pronounce the opposite of those propositions which he declares certain, we should not just not share his opinion: we should regard him as demented.'<sup>16</sup> The authority on which our certainty is based is the authority of being able to properly apply the rules of the game as they have been formed in a particular culture and context. There is no hierarchy and no transcendent authority granting one culture or context of play superiority over another.

We can, as Moore does, talk about the framework propositions, but our talk doesn't *fit* the knowledge game because it forms the outer limits of this game. Can I subject my existence to any real question of knowledge when it must be taken for granted in the very asking of the question? It seems, if we follow through the question of how we know any of these frame of reference 'facts', that we arrive at ungrounded *knowledge* but Wittgenstein notes what is more properly the case: '... the end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting.'<sup>17</sup> Beyond knowledge is *acting as if*. Not knowing, not being able to prove, does not in any way preclude our acting. In fact, this thesis will show that in Wittgenstein's view the search for grounds can hinder action.<sup>18</sup> There is a negative correlation here which is ethically significant.

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<sup>16</sup> OC, 155.

<sup>17</sup> OC, 110.

<sup>18</sup> See Engelmann, P., *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, p 135: 'Wittgenstein's language is the language of wordless faith. Such an attitude adopted by other individuals of the right stature will be the source from which new forms of society will spring, forms that will need no verbal

Think of the child; for a long time what lies unquestioned governs how he acts. By the time he gets to question things, experience has filled in many of the gaps, that is to say action and result has been a sufficient support for further action. A totally rigid frame of reference (complete knowledge) would negate action by virtue of the fact that all outcomes would be predictable and progress impossible. A totally fluid frame of reference (complete doubt) would equally make action impossible through complete unpredictability and indeterminacy. The actual frame of reference facts, those things that we don't call into question and which grant us co-ordinates on the linguistic map, become the authority against which the individual experience can be distinct and meaningful. We need rules in order for our lives to have meaning in the same way that we need grammar in order for our expressions to have meaning.

It is important to note that the rules are not themselves objects of knowledge. Wittgenstein realises that much of the implied depth of philosophical problems comes from our mistaken efforts to make the rule part of the subject of the enquiry. Rules emerge in practice and we learn to *use* them. That something is called something in particular circumstances is part of the rule, the basis of our language game. If I can be mistaken or deceived about certain things then the very meaning of being mistaken is under threat: 'If this deceives me, what does 'deceive' mean?'<sup>19</sup> That some things are the way we say they are is exempt from enquiry. That we are venturing into the endless loop of the rule is evident in our increasing need to imagine seemingly impossible situations, such as houses turning into steam or cattle standing on their heads and laughing!<sup>20</sup> When we try to *know* a rule, we try to make the denoter of truth and falsity itself subject to truth or falsity. For example that there are no earthquakes in Ireland could be said to be a rule. We don't act as if there are earthquakes likely to happen, we don't take precautions in building our houses or roads, we don't have special shelters, we don't teach our children what to do in an earthquake emergency and so on. Can we say that we *know* there are no earthquakes

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communication, because they will be lived and thus made manifest. In the future, ideals will not be communicated by attempts to describe them, which inevitably distort, but by the models of an appropriate conduct in life.'

<sup>19</sup> *OC*, 507.

<sup>20</sup> *OC*, 513. See also 549 where we find the bracketed statement: 'Pretensions are a mortgage which burdens a philosopher's capacity to think'.

in Ireland? Can we say the statement is true or false? What we can and will do is treat the statement as a rule and act accordingly. Our rules are the unacknowledged methodologies of our forms of life. A rule does not withstand an investigation because it can't be checked; think of the offside rule in football for example, or of the times tables in maths. We can never prove that  $12 \times 12 = 144$  but we can use it to calculate and this is what we learn to do. Similarly we can't *prove* in any case that the world is the way we say it is but we can and do use it, every minute of every day.<sup>21</sup>

Contemplating the rule in isolation is a fruitless task, at least from an epistemological point of view. Wittgenstein tells us to '...Forget this transcendent certainty, which is connected with your concept of spirit.'<sup>22</sup> Our certainty is connected to the rule and the rule to our forms of life. This is the immediacy that links common sense and truth. In truth, it seems that in my acting as if  $12 \times 12 = 144$ , all the 'mental' components, believing, knowing and being certain, drop out of the picture altogether. Like Moore, Wittgenstein resists the idealist dependency of truth on consciousness. In a reality that is, by the consensus that is language, as we say it is, existence, degrees of existence or the truth of existence cannot depend on different subjective mental states. Whether it is raining, for example, cannot be said to depend on whether I believe, know or am sure that it is raining. The only enquiry possible here is whether or not I am able to use the term appropriately, that is to apply the rule. In use, however, these expressions function in an authoritative way. My ability to use the term 'raining' is based on my experience of rain and of life in general. What I say here is useful in the sphere of action, perhaps to prompt me to take an umbrella or persuade someone else to, upon leaving the house. 'There is no doubt behind practical doubt' and the appearance of depth in a psychological or mental sense is an illusion to trap those of us longing for a puzzle to solve.<sup>23</sup> What Wittgenstein is letting

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<sup>21</sup> A comment from Wittgenstein, *C&V*, 72e: 'God grant the philosopher insight into what lies in front of everyone's eyes' seems particularly relevant here!

<sup>22</sup> *OC*, 47. W/S is not dismissing the concept of spirit at all here but just pointing out that our rules are not to be confused with it. They come from our practices there is nothing ethereal about them. He has a definite place for 'spirit' elsewhere. In a way part of Wittgenstein's project in *OC* is to make room for the awesomeness of the ordinary. We don't need to analyse it into transcendence to experience this.

<sup>23</sup> *OC*, 19.

us see here is that an important kind of knowing is knowing what is and is not subject to enquiry.

What counts as knowledge according to the rule is also determined by the spirit of the game and games are played in many different spirits, scientific, mathematical, philosophical, theological, general etc. Knowledge in one sphere does not necessarily rule out knowledge in another. The judgement of events in one sphere by the rules of another is a further root cause of philosophical 'problems', something Wittgenstein often remarks upon.<sup>24</sup> When we conceive of knowledge without conscious thought of the spirit of our enquiry, that is in an unconditional sense, we pit the different disciplines against each other in competition for what appears to us as the single ground of truth; the promised land. We presume that knowing equals having or in some way enclosing the thing that is known and act as if the truth is something that can be colonised. In all cases, the constant possibility of 'I thought I knew' shows the failure of our projects to actually enclose anything. What constitutes our reality is not founded in this way. Our engagement with life, our dialogue, takes place *only in the presence of this possibility*. Our enclosures are all, as already noted, 'enclosures with holes'. These holes make room for the unexpected which we also come to expect as part of life. Any picture of life that does not allow for this experience of the 'expected unexpected' is not a picture of reality.<sup>25</sup> All that we are and do, is and is done, in the space of possible confrontation with 'I thought I knew'. It is our source of hope and our possibility of redemption. Through the holes in our enclosures a spirit of humility and hope is manifest in all our forms of life:

You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there – like our life.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> OC, 236 for example. Also, see L. Wittgenstein, 'Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough' in *Philosophical Occasions: 1912 -1951*, Klagge, J. C., and A. Nordmann, (Eds), (Indiana, 1993), pps 115-119 which covers Wittgenstein's notes on *Frazer's Golden Bough*, where he challenges the interpretation of ritual in terms of scientific understanding.

<sup>25</sup> I encountered this term in an essay by D. Attridge writing on J. M. Coetzee's novel *The Master of Petersburg*, in the context of an account of J. Derrida's thought on hospitality. See D. Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading- Literature in the Event*, (London, 2004), pps 113-137.

<sup>26</sup> OC, 559.

The fact that we continue to use 'I know...' even in the face of 'I thought I knew' shows that our expressions have an immediate, present value. Knowing has the value of confirming our recognition of something as a tool within the game. Knowing how to say is knowing how to use for the purposes of whatever game we are immersed in, and that is the immediate concern, at least in non-philosophical circumstances:

If I say 'Of course I know that that's a towel' I am making an *utterance*. I have no thought of a verification. For me it is an immediate utterance. I don't think of past or future. (And of course it's the same for Moore, too.) It is just like directly taking hold of something, as I take hold of my towel without having doubts.<sup>27</sup>

The sureness that is implied in my claim to know here relates to the function of the towel and my capacity to use it in the present situation. The mistake we make is in thinking of knowledge as an object to be had so that 'I know' equals 'I have the knowledge that...' for once and for all, as if this knowledge is something that is stored in some invisible secret part of the human being. Our knowing can and does let us down but we choose action over paralysing doubt. I may when lost in the mist say 'I know that is the old oak tree. If we turn right here we will come to the house', and it may later turn out that I wrongly recognised the tree, but action was necessary and preferable to non-action and from that perspective my use of 'I know' was fruitful. We don't rest in possible states of affairs. In the end there is only knowing how to say and knowing how to do, in accordance with what it is that we want to presently achieve. Saying 'I know' can never *prove* anything. The kind of knowledge that is functional recognition is the basis of the language game. Such knowledge has its particular value within our whole system of saying and doing. Its authority lies within the remit of the authority of the living word. Wittgenstein asks by way of clarification 'Does a child believe that milk exists? Or does it know that milk exists? Does a cat know that a mouse exists?'<sup>28</sup> We can similarly ask do we teach a child that a chair exists and then get her to sit on it? That something is a chair is the rule in the same way that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ . What a child learns is not the existence of things but what we do with them. It is in

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<sup>27</sup> OC, 510.

<sup>28</sup> OC, 478.

this doing, in our practices, that the language game, and our knowledge claims, begin and end.<sup>29</sup>

## 2.5 Justification by Works

We are asking ourselves: what do we do with a statement “I know...?” For it is not a question of mental processes or mental states. And *that* is how one must decide whether something is knowledge or not.<sup>30</sup>

Neither ‘mental states’ nor what we, as a consequence of the unnatural division we have created, speak of as ‘objects in themselves’, provide grounds for certain knowledge. To know is to intuit and to be able to apply the rules that spring from our experience of lived life. In some cases, the rule is very much in the foreground; in mathematics, for example, we have almost pure rule with verification playing little or no part. In other cases the rules merge into the background. Psychology, for example, operates according to a rule that presumes a formless entity called ‘mind’ which is in some way separated from the body and capable of being investigated, but most often this rule fades into the background where it lies as the forgotten ground of all our subsequent psychological ‘discoveries’ and knowledge claims. So much in life that was ‘once disputed’ is long since ‘fixed...removed from the traffic...shunted onto an unused siding.’ These things that ‘give[s] our way of looking at things, and our researches, their form...for unthinkable ages...ha[ve] belonged to the scaffolding of our thoughts...’<sup>31</sup> Wittgenstein wants us to see in a new way, that is to see how the rules are kept in their pivotal place by the consistency of our behaviours. In this way we can observe that ‘*agreement with reality* does not have any clear application.’<sup>32</sup> With this in mind, he turns his attention to the part played by expectation and intention in our knowledge claims. He observes how our finding is conditioned by our seeking. We look for something where experience has taught us it is likely to be found and we learn from experience not to look for or expect something in a place where we have not

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<sup>29</sup> This is not to dismiss our sense of wonder at existence. Wittgenstein, ‘Lecture on Ethics’, in Kenny, A. (Ed), *The Wittgenstein Reader*, (Oxford, 1994) pps 289-296, cites this as a case of ‘running up against the boundaries of language’ which for him counts as an experience of the Divine. His point is more about preserving the dignity and worthiness of our human ways of going on in the world. That we have knowledge in this way is not something to be striven past but is amazing and sufficient in itself.

<sup>30</sup> OC, 92

<sup>31</sup> OC, 94.

<sup>32</sup> OC, 215.

encountered it before.<sup>33</sup> We don't, for example, open a drawer to check for a book and when it is not there, open the drawer again every five minutes to check if it is there now.<sup>34</sup> That we look and the way we look is evidence of our expectation that something will be where and how we expect it to be. Our enquiring is like the focusing of a telescope; we adjust it to look at the moon and when we look, we find the moon. Quelle surprise! Wittgenstein highlights here the paradigmatic nature of our knowledge. The way we live sets the paradigms within which our enquiries take place and according to which we claim to find things out. 'Strange coincidence that every man whose skull has been opened had a brain!'<sup>35</sup> Or that water boils at one hundred degrees Celsius. Our certainty comes from a reality where how we speak is how things are and this immediacy is beyond epistemological justification. What changes a paradigm is living, that is to say experience, not any kind of 'mental' act of induction or deduction. What we know is there to be known within the systems we build around what we do. What we do comes first and does not rely on these systems: 'The squirrel does not infer by induction that it is going to need stores next winter as well. And no more do we need a law of induction to justify our actions or our predictions.'<sup>36</sup>

Wittgenstein is adamant that the connection between logic and the world '...is not of the form "I know"'.<sup>37</sup> All logical propositions depend on empirical ones. This impossibility of separation is not new. Logicians from Aristotle to Lotze have put forward various theories all of which attempt to account for a divide between first thought (awareness of/as) and judgement (knowing) that in practice we don't experience.<sup>38</sup> In large part it is only when we come to the Phenomenological tradition, in particular Heidegger, and separately from this to Wittgenstein, that we find the focus on intentionality, on how our seeking impacts on what it is that we find. In *OC* this is combined with an account of reality that insists on the immediacy and unity of subject and world (in forms of life) which makes any idea of correspondence

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<sup>33</sup> See *OC*, 98;99.

<sup>34</sup> *OC*, 315.

<sup>35</sup> *OC*, 98.

<sup>36</sup> *OC*, 101.

<sup>37</sup> *OC*, 401.

<sup>38</sup> See Heidegger, M., *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, (Indiana, 1982), Chapter 4, pps 177-201 for an excellent historical overview on this topic.

inconceivable. For Wittgenstein, the mind is not a blank slate, it is not a slate or table or filing cabinet at all. It is the bodily subject, which is part of the world. The connection between awareness, conscious thought, knowledge and this body is purpose. Purpose is focused and this focus is like the analogy of the telescope used earlier. It puts a frame around what it is that we are seeking out; it foregrounds the world according to our intentions and our expectations. A man's certainty therefore is not connected to his knowing in the sense of what he can prove but to the way in which he seeks, to his 'attitude'.<sup>39</sup> This is the difference between the philosopher and the ordinary man when each is saying 'I know that that's a ...' The goal of the philosopher is to determine something, that of the ordinary man, to *avail* of it and this amounts to literally a world of difference.

As soon as our philosophical enquiry turns to 'mad doctors' or maleficent demons for its justification we should hear warning bells. These are signs of philosophical doubting behaviour. In truth, that certain things are *in deed* not doubted is essential to our enquiries and Wittgenstein wants us to be aware when our talking is contradicted by our doing; for example the person who argues that water boiling at one hundred degrees is merely a probability, even as he makes himself a cup of tea. The fact that we can question things is the surest sign that we are secure in our life. I look, therefore there is a world to look in and something to be found. What we know emerges in our ways of intending and expecting. Far from being a judgement or decision, our knowledge is a reflection of our readiness to *act as if* things are a certain way. When we say 'I know', that is when we use it, there is not the depth present that our analysis of the statement implies. The analysis moves the statement outside the language game. In the loss of context there is a loss of recognition and our words become veiled and unfamiliar to us. 'Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgement.'<sup>40</sup> That is to say it is a response to or recognition of something done. If we take it beyond this we are merely constructing layers around it, so that we might have something to penetrate. Life in no way depends on everything that can be

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<sup>39</sup> OC, 404

<sup>40</sup> OC, 378

doubted being doubted or on everything that can be known being known.<sup>41</sup> What lies unsaid, for example that there is not a trapdoor opening unto a lake under where I am sitting right now, does not equal what is unknown but what is not useful. Everything is connected to everything else but these relations do not sit about in the waiting room of conscious mind. To bring one thing to the table is to bring everything and this is what happens in every act, in every utterance. This is the daily task of incarnation where the desiring human being participates through the word in bringing forth the endless stream of life.

It is clear then that our expressions of certainty do not come into existence only in the arena of knowledge as traditionally understood. Neither is there any correspondence involved; being certain does not involve claiming certainty. Rather, 'certainty is *as it were* a tone of voice in which one declares how things are, but one does not infer from the tone of voice that one is justified.'<sup>42</sup> The only justification for our certainty is a fruitful life. This is all the justification we need. We can curse those trees that don't bear fruit, not pin all our hopes on them. When we think in positivistic terms of knowledge we are forced to accept with Wittgenstein that: 'The difficulty is to realise the groundlessness of our believing...'<sup>43</sup> The judgement that such knowledge demands requires an overarching judge or authority that shows itself to be absent when we search for it. The form of our lives, however, is one of engagement with each other, with the world, based in action and result. Here, our experience is sufficient ground for further experience and for all that we can say about it. 'Language I would like to say – is a refinement, "in the beginning was the deed"'<sup>44</sup> Wittgenstein is on Moore's side here; he wants to defend common sense and resist Kant's reduction of all things to subjective mind. He goes a step further than Moore by leaving the question of proof aside altogether and appealing to a greater authority, that of use. In the end fruitfulness, a holistic human flourishing, is the proper measure of knowledge; the case of certainty is a case of justification by works.

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<sup>41</sup> See *OC*, 392 here: 'What I need to show is that a doubt is not necessary even when it is possible. That the possibility of the language-game doesn't depend on everything being doubted that can be doubted.'

<sup>42</sup> *OC*, 30.

<sup>43</sup> *OC*, 166.

<sup>44</sup> Wittgenstein, *Culture & Value*, (Oxford, 1998), 36e. Wittgenstein quotes Goethe here, *Faust*, Part I (In the Study).

## 2.6 Conclusion

Moore makes a distinction between understanding the meaning of a proposition and knowing what it means. This distinction is intended to separate the ordinary usage of a proposition from its philosophical analysis, where the latter attempts to know in an unconditional and therefore 'profoundly difficult' sense what the words mean. Throughout *OC*, Wittgenstein returns to this distinction between understanding and knowing, where the former refers to words in context and therefore in use, and the latter to philosophical and logical analysis. He shows that the attempt to make unconditional knowledge claims is intricately related to ordinary usage or meaning, but confuses the rules that set the limits of that use with objects of enquiry themselves. These rules have arisen in our practices and are inseparable from lived experience. Central to our misconceptions about what we can know with certainty is a confusion in the attitudes shaping our enquiries. We don't always look in the same way and our tendency to put scientific methods ahead of other forms of enquiry has intensified the philosophical confusion around this subject. Wittgenstein shows how verification does not happen in the way that this paradigm sets out and that the games of language brought about in accordance with human activities involve no correspondence, but rather an incarnate immediacy of word and world that belies all our philosophical divisions. Finally he consistently makes clear the egalitarian nature of a reality that is, as he understands it, a level playing field, in opposition to the hierarchical structure encouraged by the ideals of pure logic. In Wittgenstein's world all walks of life contribute to the meaning of life in a holistic way. This perspective makes way for an apophatic philosophy that utilises the wonder of the new and the inexplicable as a tool by which to constantly re-interpret tradition, so keeping our enquiries as close as possible to the source of their inspiration.

By making certain knowledge an object that can be abstracted from life we conspire in making it a weapon of submission and continue a project that draws our attention away from all that can be really fruitful in human life. Wittgenstein's ethical-epistemological emphasis is on *using* up rather than storing up what we know. As the

next chapter will show this is precisely the focus Newman urges in *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, and with Wittgenstein's arguments freshly in mind we now turn to this work to explore its motivations and themes in the treatment of the topic of certainty.

### **3. Newman and the Question of Assent: The Law and the Law that is Written on our Hearts.**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will examine Newman's account of the manner by which we arrive at certain belief as it is given in *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*.<sup>1</sup> The *GA* is in one part Newman's response to Hume's charge of anti-rationalism against religious belief, and to the increasingly positivistic culture which was developing throughout nineteenth century Britain and progressively undermining the place of faith in lived life. In another part it is the more personal fruit of Newman's thought on the topic over the course of his life and is inseparable from his personal experience of adapting through difficult changes in that life, both in an interior and exterior sense. Like Wittgenstein, Newman wants neither to enthrone logic nor to scientifically legitimise common sense. His concern is with finding a rational space which accommodates the emotional and ethical activity witnessed in human life. His heart is in *GA* as much as his head and it is both of and to the real, rational, emotional and devotional human being that he speaks. The *GA* is much less concise than *OC* so while this section covers the same concerns to the topic of certainty that were marked out in the previous chapter, it does not use the same section headings as to do so would have been to force one reading on the other. Taking for granted Newman's strongly Christian faith which is part of the framework of his understanding, no less than Wittgenstein he emerges here as a thinker who is ahead of his time. As well as highlighting links to Wittgenstein this chapter endorses Newman's appeal for the post-modern world in terms of his treatment of difference and his understanding of the hermeneutic essentiality of our prejudices.

#### **3.2 Knowledge and Doubt**

'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 forever pace

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<sup>1</sup> J. H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, (Indiana, 1979). From here on references will be to *GA*.

round one small circle of knowledge; without a firm hold upon things, we shall waste ourselves in vague speculations. However, real apprehension has the precedence, as being the scope and end and the test of notional; and the fuller is the mind's hold upon things or what it considers such, the more fertile is it in its aspects of them, and the more practical in its definitions.<sup>2</sup>

This early passage on the nature of knowledge foregrounds many of the divides with which the *GA* deals in its attempts to enquire into the structures of human belief: the real and the notional, the universal and the particular, the theoretical and the practical, the mind and the body. These are assumptions from within the tradition of propositional discourse from Aristotle to Locke, a tradition founded in a representative understanding of language which necessarily results in a split process of understanding where words stand for things, either ideas or objects, and meaning is a process of matching up that takes place in the mind of every subject. Once the logical sense of the proposition has been grasped then it is judged in that same mind to be true or false against the background of subjective experience.<sup>3</sup> We can loosely say that for Newman the first process is one of apprehension, the second one of understanding. He distinguishes between apprehension and understanding on the basis that apprehension is 'simply an intelligent acceptance of the idea, or of the fact which a proposition enunciates' while understanding involves the ability based on experience to be able to conceive of the proposition in use and therefore in a more connected way.<sup>4</sup> Newman tells us that apprehension can occur without understanding, although it is clear that in both cases, any apprehension either logical or contextual, must depend at some point on experience. He says little more about understanding by way of definition but during the course of *GA*, understanding as it is explained here is taken over by 'real apprehension' which is discussed in great detail. While Newman starts with the divides of the tradition it is precisely his prioritisation of the contribution of real experience to knowledge that results in the much more unified and contextual account of meaning that is gained from a reading of the *GA* as a whole.

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<sup>2</sup> *GA*, p 47.

<sup>3</sup> Here the proposition logically apprehended plays the role of a possible state of affairs that gains its truth value via the measure of its correspondence to what must be a non-linguistic reality. This picture is very similar to Wittgenstein's view of the proposition in the *TLP*, a view which, like Newman's, becomes altered by an increased focus on lived experience.

<sup>4</sup> *GA*, p 36.

If by knowledge is meant obtaining the truth of an experience, *GA* stresses two ways in which the subject acquires knowledge: Notional Apprehension and Real Apprehension. Insofar as it is possible Newman deals with these separately. Notional apprehension is part of the intellectual processes by which we work with our experiences in order to categorise and conceptualise them:

‘In processes of this kind we regard things, not as they are in themselves, but mainly as they stand in relation to each other. We look at nothing simply for its own sake...without keeping our eyes on a multitude of other things besides.’<sup>5</sup>

Newman notes how notional assent is characterised by a move away from ontological experience and toward a rational generalisation that loses sight of the real and particular. Consequently what we claim as knowledge from within this sphere is often ‘gratuitous idealism’ or the result of a tendency to ‘draw the individual after the peculiarities of his type’.<sup>6</sup> However, Newman’s experience is that notional assent no less than real assent is immediate and unconditional, not part of a process of inference or deduction, and he has to struggle to make the fluidity of the real life process clear against the traditional account which isolates the ‘notional’ proposition from its connection to particular events.<sup>7</sup> By his separation of assent and inference he is trying to establish that our assent does not depend solely on logical evaluation but arises out of ontological commitments from which we are never detached. These commitments are the equivalent of the natural prejudices and passions which Husserl through the emerging project of phenomenology would later devote himself to removing. Newman does succeed in positing a negative correlation between inference and assent which is significant to the overall discussion of certainty, noting that ‘...when inference is clearest, assent may be least forcible, and when assent is most intense, inference may be least distinct...’<sup>8</sup> This ties in with the personal and passionate nature of assent as Newman understands it and as life exhibits it. We are rarely certain because we

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<sup>5</sup> *GA*, p 44

<sup>6</sup> *GA*, p 45-46

<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein experienced similar difficulties in the *TLP*, which told of atomic facts or stand-alone basic propositions into which all complex propositions could be broken down. He revised this view of language in his later work (*Philosophical Investigations*) which relates meaning to context and admits the impossibility of any proposition having independent meaning.

<sup>8</sup> *GA*, p 52

have worked something out by syllogism and are most often certain of the things we set out to prove.<sup>9</sup>

Our notional propositions are formulaic in character, providing us with the rules for our descriptions of the particular. Because by their nature they are a generalisation of the particular, when it comes to their application in an individual instance they will always be found to be to some degree inexact. This is the 'economy' of truth necessary for unpredictable human life at the real and individual level.<sup>10</sup> We must acknowledge the 'catachrestic margins' of our systematic reductions while acknowledging that this 'is, and ever must be, the popular and ordinary mode of apprehending language.'<sup>11</sup> It is also, according to Newman in a pre-figuring of Husserl's 'naïve attitude', the scientific mode. As already noted, he refers to how it is that we see only aspects of things. Our notions or rules are built on these aspects and consequently, not embodying the fullness of things, they allow for the coming together of seeming incompatibilities on this plane of abstraction. They also make room for mistakes. Newman uses the example of our saying that straight lines cannot enclose a space, commenting that: 'I have defined a straight line in my own way at my own pleasure; the question is not one of facts at all, but of the consistency with each other of definitions and their logical consequences.'<sup>12</sup> While we should have to query the 'in my own way at my own pleasure', what is being acknowledged here is that in our seeming agreement with rules set at a general level, there is always room for difference at the level of the particular. Our assent to the rule is our acknowledgement of consistent *behaviour*. From it we derive the logical tendency to look where we expect to find, within notional bounds set by our experience, but this does not rule out the unexpected and unique altogether. The rule carries within it the

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<sup>9</sup> Tallmon, J., 'Newman's Contribution to Conceptualizing Rhetorical Reason' in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 25 (1995): 197-213) notes that this is Newman's own starting point for his enquiry into certitude – i.e. he is confident that human beings do hold with certainty many things in spite of a lack of scientific proof.

<sup>10</sup> *GA*, p 56. Newman borrows this term from Theology, where it means a less than whole but sufficient for use picture of something; an approximation at something that cannot be fully pinned down. However, in relation to the study of probability it is meaningful also. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century mathematician, Thomas Bayes, set out a law dealing with this distance between notional or statistical accounts and real, particular situations which developed into Bayes theorem. Bayesian mathematics influenced Hume but also Ramsey who in turn was a noted influence on Wittgenstein.

<sup>11</sup> *GA*, p 45

<sup>12</sup> *GA*, p 59.

possibility of exception; thus our logical mode of reason exhibits its attachment to our emotional and practical modes and our notional assent is kept subservient to real life experience. Again, in terms of sight, Newman is noting how any account of the world or the object given from the calculations of any one single mode of reason will necessarily have a blind spot. This leaves room for imagination, faith and (as in Wittgenstein's account) trust, to play a role in real and less than predictable human life.

That we do have faith in many circumstances seems to be the case. Under the heading of 'credence' Newman speaks about 'spontaneous assent' in the case of all those things we don't question or doubt in our daily lives; what he calls 'the furniture of the mind' and the 'rich and living clothing' upon which we build the rest of our discussions.<sup>13</sup> The phrase 'spontaneous assent' in such a context seems paradoxical, another anomaly forced upon him by the divisions of propositional logic. In a similar way under the title 'presumption' he includes all those things that we don't question about our reasoning processes such as their aim at truth, their reliability and so forth. He makes an important point here when he says 'It seems to me un-philosophical to speak of trusting ourselves. 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.' As Wittgenstein put it some things are just there like our lives. There are many things into which we don't enquire but as acceptance of them seems necessary to the propositional chain it becomes necessary in Newman's account to include a category of assent to cater for them.<sup>14</sup> He is clear that he is speaking about things commonly understood to be the case; he makes the point that such assents '... are, in each of us, not indeed personal, but national characteristics'. However, the means by which we move from private and personal judgment to 'mutual understandings' and the 'means of co-operation' between men and women at this cultural level is not explained. How is it that we all agree in our private judgement? In the end he categorises such

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<sup>13</sup> All references in this paragraph are from *GA*, pps 60 – 75.

<sup>14</sup> Because he maintains, to a degree, the divisions associated with the tradition, Newman's understanding here resists complete relativism and the all-encompassing view of the subjective hermeneutic that comes into being with Heidegger. See C. Larmore, 'Tradition, Objectivity, and Hermeneutics' in B. R. Wachterhauser, *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*, (New York, 1986) pps 147-165, for a detailed discussion on the hermeneutic/historical watershed.

information as knowledge-in-use in a way that implies it is knowledge in hindsight rather than knowledge held in our mental store, for want of a better expression, while still claiming it under notional assent. It is an example of the kind of struggle involved in the unnatural separations warranted by the methods of traditional logic. There is firstly the separation of object and subject from their unifying context. Secondly, reason is split into abstract and functioning reason which then in a third division gives the appearance of two kinds of knowledge; knowledge why (theoretical/causal) and knowledge that/how (practical). That knowing how to proceed in lived life does not evidence the kind of jarring implied by the mental steps in the logical account secures the problem with this account that Newman will seek to overcome with his proposal of the illative sense.

If notional assent pertains to the categories and limits of knowledge then real assent is concerned with what we *do*. In the processes of real assent as Newman treats of them separately, we are dealing with the *becoming* of the rule. Use makes things real. Having a consistent place in life concretises notional objects and gives them dimension according to Newman.<sup>15</sup> Life and action promote acceptance of our beliefs in a circular way. Life converts us to the object; for example a piece of poetry or scripture or political ideology that we could perhaps have quoted by heart, can become deeply and poignantly meaningful in certain life contexts: 'But let his heart at length be ploughed by some keen grief or deep anxiety, and scripture is a new book to him.' (p 80) I may grasp the sense of the proverb 'a stitch in time saves nine' but an experience may bring it home to me in a very real and meaningful way. Real assent is wholly subjective, involving will, passion and most importantly, imagination. Reality is the engagement of subject with world in a process of refraction that is no guarantee of truth. No matter how vividly we apprehend something it still may or may not be the case: 'A proposition, be it ever so keenly apprehended, may be true or may be false.'<sup>16</sup> There is still something untouchable about the world here that is in keeping with the empirical tradition and which we can recognise in the early Wittgenstein. Hence Newman's correlation of real assent and imagination, where imagination is the ability to conceive

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<sup>15</sup> Newman is of course talking about meaning deriving from context here, although he is still viewing it from out of the traditional Cartesian position.

<sup>16</sup> GA, p 80

of the possibility of something being true without it necessarily being so. This is creative imagination, which can stimulate the passions and prompt actions. It is knowledge not held passively in the mind but directed to action on the strength of consistency and probability, but without recourse to law.<sup>17</sup> In Newman's understanding logical or causal predictions based on an appeal to experience are in the end only equivalent to hypotheses accounting for the lack of experience. 'The confusion is a fact, the reasoning processes are not facts.'<sup>18</sup> We must beware, in our desire to systematise, not to double up on the confusion by treating the rules as objects in themselves. In what is essentially a Humean view, Newman stresses the power of imagination to *describe* or image the object on the basis of experience rather than to *ascribe* to it reasons and so subject it to laws and criteria of causation.<sup>19</sup> Through imaginative reason we do encounter the particular, albeit still within bounds set by subjective experience. But as already noted these bounds are soft margins which can and do make way for the new and different. What better to make way for the new than the unique subject? Real assent may be given in an individual situation and conflation that may never be accounted for statistically. This is the advantage of Newman's essentially *private* and historical subject over the still to come nameless and faceless *Dasein* of the hermeneutic turn.<sup>20</sup>

While he tries to maintain the line between real and notional propositions, real and notional objects, real and notional apprehension and assent, Newman encounters continual difficulty with finding the boundaries on each side. Part of this problem rests

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<sup>17</sup> St. Paul's distinction between 'the law' and 'the law that is written in our hearts' (Romans, 2:14) springs to mind here. Wittgenstein also read St. Paul with interest (e.g. Culture and Value, 1998, p 35) and there is in both accounts of certain belief this tendency towards the laws that are inscribed on us by life as it is lived by the whole person, in community, over those that are systematically imposed on us and to which we pay lip service only. For an interesting discussion pertinent to this weighting of reason see Denis McManus' soon to be published article, 'Heidegger, Wittgenstein and St. Paul on the Last Judgment: On the Roots and Significance of the "Theoretical Attitude"', forthcoming in the British Journal for the History of Philosophy.

<sup>18</sup> GA, p 73

<sup>19</sup> Newman reminds us that our understanding of causation and the laws of nature are in the end founded in 'assumed analogy' – that this intuition of likeness is the extent of their (seemingly scientific) reliability (GA, p 74).

<sup>20</sup> Actually Heidegger is closer to Newman than this sentence implies, positing as he does a strong link between *Dasein*'s creative freedom and the acceptance of what he calls his 'heritage'. Both have a sense of the essential-constitutional element of the historical-temporal location of the human being. See M. Wheeler, 'Historicality and Historizing' in 'Martin Heidegger' (SEP, 2011), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/#HisHis> accessed Oct, 2012.

in the high dependency on personal experience; he admits that what is grasped as notional for one man may be 'really' understood by another and that an individual may quite often apprehend the same proposition in both ways at the same time. It is impossible, then, for Newman to say what portion of our certitude actually resides in what is represented by the words of the proposition; what is verifiable, objective fact in any particular case. Consequently he is keen to stress the greater strength of real apprehension, a strength which is measurable by results. Real apprehension and assent leads to real action and consequences. Life is the test of knowledge and the denouncer of 'vague speculations'.<sup>21</sup> Consistency of experience becomes the chief measure of reality for Newman. Those objects that most regularly and repeatedly impress themselves upon us literally leave an impression upon us that is true to their nature and being; in this way we can come to know them in themselves, or really. So experience gives depth or concreteness to our apprehensions by affirming them as dependable representations of the way things are.<sup>22</sup> Assent, defined as our unconditional acceptance of a proposition as true, is in this way grown into rather than logically arrived at, and really only comes to our awareness in hindsight, in a notional process of enquiry.

In Newman's way of conceiving the process, knowledge is the subjective apprehension of objective truths; hence the distinction made by him between certitude and certainty, where certitude is an (epistemic) state of subjective mind in relation to a particular proposition while certainty is a property of the 'external' or objective event.<sup>23</sup> However, Newman recognises that the subject is always partially sighted, limited by the operation of his senses and the accidents of his experience to apprehending only aspects of things. Consequently, subjective knowledge always has

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<sup>21</sup> GA, p 47

<sup>22</sup> Again, as in Wittgenstein's account, we encounter the problem of depth which is characteristic of the failure of ontological difference to, to quote Heidegger, 'protrude ... in the linguistic form' (Heidegger in McManus, 1995, p 19).

<sup>23</sup> GA, p 162. Here Newman makes the following distinctions: '...let the proposition to which the assent is given be as absolutely true as the reflex act pronounces is to be, that is, objectively true as well as subjectively;- then the assent may be called a *perception*, the conviction a *certitude*, the proposition or truth a *certainty*, or thing known, or a matter of *knowledge*, and to assent to it is to *know*.' Tallmon is clear that for Newman '...certitude is a subjective perception about the truth of a proposition and certainty is an objective statement about the truth value of a proposition.' See Tallmon, J., 'Newman's Contribution to Conceptualising Rhetorical Reason' in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 1995, 25:197-213, p 204.

margins for error. This is part of a proto-phenomenological discourse on sight that runs through *GA*, referring to the fact that our seeing is always limited to aspects in time and place and conditional upon personal experience. Complete knowledge/truth in this view is always beyond us and greater than us, fulfilled only by an omniscient and transcendent God, whose presence is naturally made known to us through the workings of conscience.<sup>24</sup> By acknowledging the limitations of our possibility of knowledge Newman makes it conceivable that our assent to the truth of propositions, our certitude, can be wholehearted and complete even though we have previous experience of what we believe whole-heartedly being later overturned.

Newman's inheritance from Locke is clear throughout *GA*.<sup>25</sup> However he does dispute with him on one specific point on the nature of certain assent. Locke ties inference and assent together suggesting that certainty is built up by logical degrees, that is by a series of little proofs adding up to big proofs, while Newman insists on the unconditional and often spontaneous nature of assent as given by rational human beings in everyday life.<sup>26</sup> The question being left out here is of course whether in many cases we have a process of assent at all. Newman tries to move away from Locke and from logic to rhetoric but in the end he still allows the bounds of propositional logic to restrict the discourse. Unconditional and spontaneous acceptance of a proposition leaves no room for the two-step process of apprehension and judgement which logic seems to require. We are left with an ontological versus epistemological time delay, when what happens 'forward' is examined backwards. What is needed is a framework within which to speak of ontological knowledge or knowledge in play. Newman is closer to Wittgenstein than to Locke here by

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<sup>24</sup> The role of conscience is discussed in more detail on pages 97-113 of this thesis.

<sup>25</sup> Newman says of Locke's view of assent that '...he affirms and sanctions the very paradox to which I am committed myself.' (*GA*, p 137) For a detailed comparison of the views of Locke and Newman on the topic of certain assent see Edward P. J. Corbett, 'A Comparison of John Locke and John Henry Newman on the Rhetoric of Assent', in *Rhetoric Review*, 1:1, September, 1982, pps 40-49..

<sup>26</sup> Newman's disagreement is based in the fact that what Locke says here about degrees of assent (Book IV, xv of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*) contradicts Locke's overall thesis that we human beings act as if we are certain in cases where we can never obtain conclusive proof. Newman agrees with the overall thesis but is clear that neither assent nor truth admit of degrees. We can hold with certitude that x is the case. We can hold with equal certitude that x is *likely* to be the case. In both situations our certitude is indefectible and the truth to which we assent is complete. Tallmon quotes Newman's own words to explain this key difference as being: '...not variations of assent to an inference, but assents to a variation in inferences'. *GA*, p 147 in Tallmon, J. M., 1995, p 204-205.

acknowledging that the grounds we assume upon reflection don't appear to operate in life. There is an immediacy that pure logic cannot adequately explain. Even the word 'assumption' signifies a thought process or step that is not evidently taken in the everyday situation. This ontological knowledge is essentially what Husserl is looking for also and what Phenomenology tries to describe but which can never be a prejudice free, ahistorical perception. The position Newman adopts in the *GA* uses the terms of recognition, namely consistency, probability and spontaneous assent, to loosen up the bonds of logic coming from Locke in order to let us see past the mode of reason that insists on the steps of pure logic. He brings us toward an ontology of reason itself, we might say, where practice evolves the bounds of theory from the inside. Newman says as much against Locke's theory which declares the strength of an assent to be positively related to the strength of the inferences leading to it. Locke rejects as irrational assents that go beyond inferential evidence but Newman introduces a perceptible shift in grounds by insisting that 'The practice of mankind is too strong for the antecedent theorem, to which he is desirous to subject it.'<sup>27</sup>

Newman wants to clear spontaneous assent of rationally negative connotations of mere mimicry or repetition while keeping to the fore its unconditionality. This unconditionality is not just cognitive but contextual. He tells us that 'the circumstances of an act, however necessary to it, do not enter into the act itself.'<sup>28</sup> There is an analogy to be observed between the way that an act rules out every other possibility of being/doing and the way an act of assent rules out every other possibility of believing. What is present in our belief is not 'a positive resolution in the party believing never to abandon that belief' – assent explicitly rules out a resolution of this kind. What is present in the state of believing is 'the utter absence of all thought, or expectation, or fear of changing.'<sup>29</sup> These are the subjective conditions of its unconditionality. Belief in the *truth* of something is characterised by this fearlessness. We can go so far as to say that for Newman, fear is the ontological opposite of truth,

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<sup>27</sup> *GA*, p 137

<sup>28</sup> *GA*, p 135. I interpret Newman here to be saying that the circumstances of an act, while necessarily the context, do not enter causally into it. He is differentiating between grounds and cause to foreground the cumulative wisdom of practical reason which is no more calculated (Wittgenstein would say tallied) than what is seen or felt or remembered.

<sup>29</sup> *GA*, p 160-161

falsity being its logical opposite.<sup>30</sup> Squaring this un-conditionality with truth on an objective level brings new difficulties. Our certitude is no guarantee of certainty, and here we begin to weave through the difficult distinction between truth and knowledge in Newman's account. Certitude is '...the perception of a truth with the perception that it is a truth, or the consciousness of knowing as expressed in the phrase "I know that I know..."'.<sup>31</sup> Certainty refers to what is objectively there and unassailably true in its holistic existence but which we perceive only in aspects. According to Newman '...what is once true is always true, and cannot fail, whereas what is once known need not always be known, and is capable of failing.'<sup>32</sup> Newman's picture ultimately rests on subjective belief in a transcendent consciousness that guarantees the objective and infallible truth position. Consequently he draws throughout *GA* on natural theology, making an analogy between the methods of Natural Theology which reveal aspects of God through our sense of conscience and of awe and wonder, and those of Empiricism where aspects of the truth of how things are in the world are revealed through the encounter of the senses with objects in the world.<sup>33</sup> It is humanity's essential blindness to the thing in itself, where the empirical tradition meets the Gospel tradition, that makes it possible for each of us to be personally convinced of differing truths. Knowledge, therefore, is truth curtailed by the limits of subjective perception. Certitude is belief in a particular truth to such a degree that we will act as if it is true and that we are prepared to defend it as knowledge.

It is appropriate before finishing this sub-section to see what Newman has to say about doubt. Very early in *GA*, he makes a place for doubt as one of three mental acts or attitudes toward a proposition.<sup>34</sup> Doubt is the mental attitude related to inference and

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<sup>30</sup> D. McManus, (2011) discussing Heidegger's discussion on the Parousia in his lectures on St. Paul, notes two types of fear which Heidegger picks out in St. Paul's writings: 'servile fear' and 'chaste fear'. Servile fear occurs when a man works for the good out of a fear of punishment. Chaste fear is, according to Heidegger, the fear of the man who has begun to strive for the good for its own sake.' I think this second type is an example of the kind of unconditionality Newman is trying to get across here. McManus finds in Heidegger and Wittgenstein a call for appropriation over justification which involves, getting out of the 'grip' of 'the theoretical attitude', and I find this to be the case in Newman also. D. McManus, 'Heidegger, Wittgenstein and St. Paul on the Last Judgment: On the Roots and Significance of the "Theoretical Attitude"', forthcoming in the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, pps 9-11.

<sup>31</sup> *GA*, p 163

<sup>32</sup> *GA*, p 163-164

<sup>33</sup> There is an ongoing analogy between the senses as pointing to or revealing objects in the world and

<sup>34</sup> *GA*, pps 25-29

conclusion and thus part of the process of logical reasoning, and Newman summarily dismisses it as surplus to his requirements in this work which will focus on 'concrete matters'. For Newman, the closer we get to the concrete, the further away we are from doubt. Philosophical doubt can happen at the level of abstraction but not in midst of experience.<sup>35</sup> Later on in speaking of self-doubt he dismisses this too with the practically wise statement that '...we use, not trust our faculties...'<sup>36</sup> In lived reality such scepticism has no place – our being and doing has an immediate, functioning truth that cannot be proved, denied or doubted. Newman is aware that in order to doubt something we must have already acknowledged its presence; our doubt stands on top of something that is already there. Equally, to be certain implies that we have acknowledged the room for doubt: 'To say that a thing must be is to admit that it may not be.'<sup>37</sup> In going beyond doubt in this way, certain belief shows itself to be more than a calculation from evidence; it combines reason and passion. It is this latter dimension of certitude that makes it difficult for us to categorise doubt as it's opposite. The relationship is asymmetrical and while Newman does speak of not-doubting as an inverse form of assent he also makes a distinction between being 'merely without doubt' and being certain, the nature of which is captured by the addition of the word 'merely' here.<sup>38</sup> Being without doubt is poorer for a lack of devotion or impassioned commitment, despite the equality that might exist at the level of logic. Newman the empiricist relies on warm-blooded experience to dispel abstractions from common sense. In the majority of cases doubt is not an issue for the engaged subject and although he doesn't go so far as to say it, there is no other kind. Philosophical scepticism is evidence of a certain kind of life which in the end overturns it. Newman makes the noteworthy point, in a later distinction between investigation and inquiry, that doubt is no more than part of the methodology of logical investigation, where we argue *from belief* for the purposes of persuasion or in the face of contradiction. We

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<sup>35</sup> R. Whately, an Oxford logician and good friend of Newman's made the point that Newman is making here when he noted that there are 'cases in which doubt itself may amount to the most extravagant credulity'. Whately, *Elements of Logic*, 1848, Book II, #3, as cited in Kienzler, W., 'Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman On Certainty' in Kober, M. (Ed), *Deepening Our Understanding of Wittgenstein*, (Amsterdam, 2006) p 125.

<sup>36</sup> GA, p 66. See also here pps 272-273: 'Our being, with its faculties, mind and body, is a fact not admitting of question, all things being of necessity referred to it...'; 'Such as I am, it is my all; this is my essential stand-point, and must be taken for granted...'; 'I am what I am or I am nothing. I cannot think, reflect or judge about my being, without starting from the very point which I aim at concluding.'

<sup>37</sup> GA, p 89

<sup>38</sup> GA, p 15; p 51

tend to understand doubt as calling the object into question when in fact it represents a challenge to our belief which, for Newman, leaves the truth of the object untouched. Genuine doubt, if we can allow such a term, belongs to the province of inquiry which stems from the not-knowing or wondering subject as opposed to the sceptical one.

### **3.3 Justification by Faith in Action**

The difficulty with the mix of heart and reason that Newman wishes to cater for is perhaps most evident in his discussion of justification. To assert that certitude is justified belief while also maintaining the claim to the unconditionality of assent is a task that would frighten anyone less than an accomplished theologian, comfortable with paradox! He has already made it clear that certitude is assent that has been *reflected upon* so we may take this self-consciousness of knowing as the first condition of justified belief. The reflection occurs after the initial acceptance of the truth of the proposition and is concerned with investigating that truth. Most of our assents are simple and are our responses to our environment as ‘emotional and moral’ creatures.<sup>39</sup> They are immediately concerned with our acting and doing – Newman calls them operative – and this requires of them that they be immediate and unquestioned. He stipulates that certitude requires a further conscious judgement upon these simple assents in order to satisfy the intellectual component of our nature. Reflection necessitates a time delay between doing and judging that is evident in Newman’s two step account which puts the doing (the real) first. Therefore the judgement never quite touches reality but relates to the propositional picture of it that comes from our reflection. As a combination of both operative assent to a state of affairs, and reflective assent to the truth of that first assent, certitude draws real and notional, instinctual and logical, together in a mutual and dialogic process of justification which reflects the unity of actual human life. To use one of Newman’s examples, the proposition ‘the cholera is in the midst of us’ understood and acted upon serves very well as a principle of action.<sup>40</sup> The proposition ‘that the cholera is in the midst of us is beyond all doubt’ is strategically different, compounding the state of things and rational confirmation of the state of things in a way that implies checking

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<sup>39</sup> GA, p 176

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*

has taken place. It is an interesting example in light of what Newman, in a way that may be interpreted as pre-empting Wittgenstein's warnings against bewitchment by language, subsequently says about the negative correlation between action and notional assent. The logical demand for justification may have us changing what were 'realities for our imagination' into 'little more than notions' and we may find ourselves 'hampered by involuntary questionings, as if we were not certain, when we are.'<sup>41</sup> The more attention we give to the notional and justificatory process, the less we actually do and the more rigid we become in a world that requires us to be flexible. Here the first proposition may have us running around effecting what we can to protect ourselves and our community. In the time spent coming to the conclusion reached in the second proposition the cholera may have already claimed us! Of course one could say that without the second we may act rashly and under false understanding and so waste our time, energy and resources; either way there is a serious ethical question at the heart of this seemingly semantic discussion. Ultimately we need both the imaginative capacity to grant that events are a certain way and the logical capacity to reflect upon and investigate the truth of those events. When one or other takes over we hinder effective ethical action, either by a premature demand for justification or by rash and wasteful action.

This section of *GA* highlights what will be discussed in the following chapter as a key concern of both Newman and Wittgenstein, which is the development of an ethics of enquiry.<sup>42</sup> Newman observes our tendency, in light of the promotion of reason, to 'throw ourselves out of our habits of belief into a simply dispassionate frame of mind' thereby throwing the door open to 'vague antecedent improbabilities...merely what is strange or marvellous in certain truths, merely the fact that things happen in one way

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<sup>41</sup> *GA*, p 177-178

<sup>42</sup> There are two ways in which this can be observed in Newman's account. The first is described here. The second way in which Newman contributes to the ethics of enquiry is by encouraging another kind of reasoning, i.e. other than that favoured by a rationalist epistemology which always desires universalizability and results in difference being reduced to abnormality. Tallmon (1995) suggests that Newman's epistemology offers 'a way to combat this rationalistic bias...' p 206. Newman's awareness here by its emphasis on the radical uniqueness of the individual and its respect for the particular context in the face of the theoretically ordained majority of the rule, anticipates to a degree the work of Emmanuel Levinas.

and not in another, when they must happen in some way'.<sup>43</sup> The resulting seeming strangeness disturbs us and we endeavour to interpret it through the framework we naturally have by forming comparisons and analogies where none are actually appropriate. If we focus on what actually happens rather than spending ourselves on over-analytic reflection upon all those things which we can conceive of as potentially having been the case, we could avoid the deep and enticing labyrinths of false systematisation and return ourselves to the sphere of ethical action.<sup>44</sup> It is in this sphere of the present event that our certitude gains what upon logical reflection seems impossible: its infallibility. Newman tells us that 'A certitude is directed to ... [a] particular proposition, it is not a faculty or gift but a disposition of mind relatively to a definite case which is before me.'<sup>45</sup> It carries us along in the flux of life where we cannot rest in possible states of affairs, promising 'nothing as to the truth of any proposition beside its own.'<sup>46</sup> Our certitude inextricably relates to existing circumstances which require of us a commitment, rather than to any and all circumstances. Existing circumstances place us 'upon the shoulders' of 'our forefathers', Newman notes, meaning in the midst of things taken for granted.<sup>47</sup> In an example very similar to Wittgenstein's one of walking in the mist, Newman asks if on a moonlit walk, our realising that what we were certain was a man is in fact a shadow, ought to make us question our certainty that what we are presently perceiving is a shadow. He goes on to refer to this type of mistake as 'functional disarrangements of the intellect' but this seems unfair. There is an undeniable truth in our perceiving and responding in each case on the basis of the wealth of our experience, which is beyond justification. This is how we live. The question remaining is: is this act-basis commitment to a truth position to be called knowledge? Newman notes that this type of certitude marks out the bounds within which we can have such a discussion at all, providing us with 'the landmarks of thought'.<sup>48</sup> We have to have a position in order to reflect upon and investigate our position! It is won for us 'indefectibly' by our grasp of things based on our situation and experience to date which lead us in a certain

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<sup>43</sup> GA, p 179-180

<sup>44</sup> Further reference to the negative influence of counter-factuals will be included as part of the discussion on the shared ethic of Newman and Wittgenstein in the following chapter.

<sup>45</sup> GA, p 183

<sup>46</sup> GA, p 185

<sup>47</sup> GA, p 187

<sup>48</sup> GA, p 190

direction and eliminate other paths without our really reflecting at all. While our certain commitment happens proposition by proposition (or event by event) in forward time it is only when looking back that we are aware of the dots being joined. Experience does not equal cause but rather relationship which is what I believe both Newman and later, Wittgenstein, (following Hume here) are trying to establish. If knowing we know is the basis of justified belief and therefore knowledge, then in this account, in our continuous present we know nothing but stand related to countless things, which is to say nothing more than that our position is one of constant engagement with the world, and that knowledge and belief are established on a kind of trust which comes through praxis.

In making the distinction he does between assent and inference Newman re-emphasises this engaged position as the real and meaningful one. Inference and inferential argument is the expression of logic, its form so to speak. It is less than real insofar as it excludes, by a process of generalisation through comparison, the living context in which meaning takes place. The art of logic can be said to have 'stripped them [words] of all these connatural senses, to have drained them of that depth and breadth of associations which constitute their poetry, their rhetoric, and their historical life...'<sup>49</sup> Inference is concerned with finding the scientific formula for the event; it chooses the scientific over the historical and consequently floats above real life in the process. The world of logic is one, Newman notes, which leaves us 'unanswerable'. Its detachment from historical concreteness is also a detachment from personal, ethical responsibility which can never be realised in the world of logical probabilities. The further we rise in our reasoning above historical conditions the further we are from ever proving anything, despite the impression that things are otherwise, that this is where proof lies. The best we can do is to arrive at first principles, which are the logical boundaries delimiting possibilities to a generalised range of interpretation that shows us where we might begin to look for answers to our particular questions. For Newman, we must 'let units come first, and so called universals second...'<sup>50</sup> In a discussion which would not be out of place in twentieth

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<sup>49</sup> GA, p 214

<sup>50</sup> GA, p 223

century phenomenology he stresses the absolute indivisibility of the real and particular thing which can never, 'by any calculus of logic, [admit] of being dissected into all the possible general notions which it admits, nor, in consequence, of being recomposed out of them;...' <sup>51</sup> All created beings are, like their God, ultimately incommunicable, and while logic can try and resist the communication of nonsense it cannot claim to '...be the measure of fact.' <sup>52</sup> Logic and scientific reason have their place in our inquiries. In our less than systematic lives the epistemology of how we live depends on imaginative reason to move us from experience to experience. Perhaps logic was never meant to be the subject of inquiry that it has become. Newman says 'we think in logic as we talk in prose, without aiming at doing so.' Wittgenstein had a similar understanding about our tendency to confuse the rules with the subject matter of our inquiries. Logic is not the aim of life but a kind of mapping device that helps us to picture it. The relationship incorporates an apophantic/hermeneutic difference that is essential to human functioning rather than something to be overcome. <sup>53</sup> Later thinkers, Wittgenstein included, find that this relationship is properly mirrored in the way language works and point us there to find the proper way of seeing our problems. Newman's sense of the real, historical and unique human being is far too strong to relinquish it to this philosophical middle ground.

### 3.4 The Subject and The Illative sense

In Newman's account, to extend the map analogy, logic provides the 'as the crow flies' route which, on the ground, is of little or no assistance. Logical connections are nothing in the face of 'those pre-existent beliefs and views, in which men either already agree with each other or hopelessly differ, before they begin to dispute and which are hidden deep in our nature, or, it may be, in our personal peculiarities.' <sup>54</sup> These peculiarities of time, place and personal experience are the ineluctable roads we travel in our groundedness and it is on this question of grounds that twentieth and

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<sup>51</sup> GA, p 225-226

<sup>52</sup> GA, p 227

<sup>53</sup> Walter Jost finds in Newman a pre-figuring of many of Heidegger's themes and it is from his work that I have appropriated the apophantic/hermeneutic division I am using here. See W. Jost, 'Philosophic Rhetoric: Newman and Heidegger' in Magill, G. (Ed), *Discourse and Context: An Interdisciplinary Study of John Henry Newman*, (Illinois, 1993) pps 54-80.

<sup>54</sup> GA, p 222

indeed twenty-first century philosophy turns. What is degraded in the turn to language, the unique reality and authority of each historical human subject, becomes the problem that hermeneutic-linguistic philosophy ends up striving to overcome. In Newman's rhetorical approach each and every subject is persuaded to truths, moved in the direction of truths to which she herself will commit and try to convert others, by the effects of living and engaging with the world. From the wide breadth of this experience reason in its various modes gathers-in perspectives on truth to gain an organic view of the way things are in a functioning process Newman terms 'informal inference'.<sup>55</sup> This process which he builds into what he will call the 'illative sense' not only considers the paradigmatic breadth of the particular fact or event but also the experiential, historical and emotional depth attaching to it. Its informality refers to its instinctual and non-directed operation perfected in and through use. As Wittgenstein also noted, we do not sum up all that has gone before and use it to weigh up what is likely to happen; rather our reason converges upon what is *logically* only ever going to be a probability. According to Newman here, the mind is 'unequal to a complete analysis of the motives which carry it on to a particular conclusion, and is swayed and determined by a body of proof, which it recognizes only as a body, and not in its constituent parts.'<sup>56</sup> In a discussion that bears considerable similarities to Wittgenstein's understanding of family resemblance Newman highlights the importance, in this gathering and converging process of reason, of its capacity to recognise likeness. We are inexplicably aware of similarity in difference; of familial belonging in an understanding of meaning that rests wholly in relationships rather than theoretical paradigms. The premises of informal inference are at their widest the cumulative probabilities of words in context; in Wittgensteinian terms they are the limits of the language game, whose 'laws' in Newmanian terms are never more than 'generalised facts.'<sup>57</sup> The only real law, he posits, is this correlation between certitude and *implicit* proofs, both of which depend on refraction through a historical subject. This is supported by 'the language in common use, [which] when concrete conclusions are in question, implies the presence of this personal element in the proof of them.'<sup>58</sup> Language stimulates and persuades in accordance with the conditions of the particular

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<sup>55</sup> GA, p 230

<sup>56</sup> GA, p 233

<sup>57</sup> GA, p 238

<sup>58</sup> GA, p 251

subject such as, level of intelligence, education, culture and so on. In terms of meaning, the subject cannot be equalised out of the equation.

The framework within which certain acceptance comes about is, from a positive viewpoint, the convergence of what experience shows to be likely and possible, or from a negative viewpoint, the outermost limits of what experience rules out, what lies beyond even the expected unexpected. These boundaries which for Wittgenstein are indicated within language in play, stemming from practice, are for Newman intuited in the experiencing subject in an on-going way. The process of proof as the 'limit of converging probabilities' goes on, he tells us 'as much without words as with them', by which he makes the point that certainty has its being in effect and action as much as in any discursive display.<sup>59</sup> He is keen to stress the implicit and instinctual nature of this process which shows 'as a simple act, not as a process, as if there were no medium interposed between antecedent and consequent...' and which is carried on with a seeming 'intrinsic and personal power' that makes it akin to a kind of 'divination'.<sup>60</sup> He is still, caught in the bounds of the tradition, positing an invisible step which must take place although it has the appearance of not doing so, but the discussion unwittingly says as much against this step as it does in favour of it. In the end Newman aligns the reasoning process leading to certitude with that of moral and aesthetic judgement, making it depend to a large degree on subjective 'sight' and the individual capacity for 'read[ing] what comes before them...'<sup>61</sup> The authority at work in and through this process of interpretation is a kind of trust rather than rule; that is a trust in ourselves and our experiences and in those others who possess the right to judge by virtue of 'long acquaintance with their subject'.<sup>62</sup>

'In all of these separate actions of the intellect, the individual is supreme, and responsible to himself, nay, under circumstances, may be justified in opposing himself to the judgment of the whole world; though he uses rules to his great advantage, as far as they go, and is in consequence bound to use them.'<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> GA, p 254

<sup>60</sup> GA, p 260-261

<sup>61</sup> GA, p 266

<sup>62</sup> GA, p 269

<sup>63</sup> GA, p 277

Newman is clear that no criteria for objective judgment can overthrow the authority of individual judgment, an authority which is exercised through the ratiocinative faculty which he names the illative sense. The illative sense concerns itself with what is immediate to life, to the present and particular circumstances of this or that individual in making this or that choice on how to proceed. It is the reasoning faculty that displays the elasticity necessary to the natural order, working where theories fail us, in the particular case, where the authority of the individual is ineluctably supreme and the hypothetical is of no consequence. As a faculty of judgement, Newman tells us, the illative sense works in various distinct subject areas, but always according to the same method. Ultimately, its sanction is that of complete trust in our being and way of life as founded in experience. It is by virtue of this continual link with experience that Newman on occasion speaks of it as a faculty of mind that somehow surpasses language: 'It is the mind that reasons...not any technical apparatus of words and propositions.'<sup>64</sup> There is a sense in which, in deciphering the limits of converging probabilities, one is involved in the limits of language itself in a non-verbal way. The illative sense is at work in the informal process of limit setting and the creation/intuition of what in later philosophy will be referred to as the hermeneutic horizons or world-hoods of inquiry. For Newman however these horizons are subject to the complete personal authority of the illative sense: 'It is a rule to itself and appeals to no judgment beyond its own...'<sup>65</sup> Furthermore as a 'personal gift', it cannot supply any 'common measure between mind and mind', appearing to leave us with a locked-in, self-sufficient and solipsistic subject. But this criticism is based on a view of judgement as *discourse* and it is possible to see in *GA* a different understanding of judgment; an existentialist and somatic account that is comprised of seeing and acting, where choosing involves the unified person, physically and mentally together turning away from a variety of possible responses and toward a particular one, in a lived bodily version of Derridean *différance*. The fact is, and Newman is determined to begin with what we take for granted, we each have distinct points of view from which and for which we are prepared to argue. We each see the world in a slightly different way as a result of our experience, environment and intellectual make up. This seeing is our personal ground of truth and from this position we may hold fast to a judgment that

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<sup>64</sup> *GA*, p 276

<sup>65</sup> *GA*, p 283

pits us against the whole world. It is our first and last resort; the position from which we set out on our enquiries and, as we saw with G. E. Moore, where we return when logic fails: 'I can know things which I cannot prove'.

Newman frequently parallels illative functioning with sight. The illative sense is bound to act in the way that the eye is bound to see. It is ever intending and engaging with the world. Its judgments are founded in 'aspect' and 'view', in 'seeing as', incorporating the personal context that this brings.<sup>66</sup> He puzzles over the variety of ways in which people see such things as lines as convex or concave, or figures as looking to the right or left, putting one in mind of Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit here.<sup>67</sup> He speaks of 'family likenesses' and how they are so variously interpreted, and equally of our capacity to make mistakes in identity.<sup>68</sup> The fact that we defend our way of seeing indicates our belief that an objective truth is validated by one position or the other, but this objective reality depends for its unified existence on 'a Power, greater than human teaching and human argument...' by comparison with which, as individuals, we are but partially sighted.<sup>69</sup> We see things, and rule things out, in the light of what has come before, and our arguments and discussions are made possible by the delimiting function of the illative sense. We begin neither from a place where everything is considered nor from a place of universal doubt, but from natural assumptions reflecting experience and culture. Because of the nature of philosophical inquiry this seems as if we are beginning on level two, which stands on top of level one which contains all those things we don't bring into our enquiries, such as whether or not we who are asking the questions exist. However, it is this kind of thinking that both Newman, and to a greater degree Wittgenstein, are challenging. Level one *is* this three dimensional point from which we enquire. Again, in keeping with the imagery of sight and seeing, the question of depth arises here. Newman speaks of 'antecedent reasons' and 'antecedent probabilities' but is aware that our being is uninterrupted by either, in the same way that our vision is a flow of ceaseless seeing. When we think in terms of knowledge or judgement we are necessarily looking back at the events under

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<sup>66</sup> GA, p 290

<sup>67</sup> PI, Part II, xi

<sup>68</sup> GA, p 292

<sup>69</sup> GA, p 293

question. In the present, the event catches us up and it is on this un-investigated level that life happens: ‘...the great discoverers of principles do not reason. They have no arguments, no grounds, they *see* the truth but they do not *know* how they see it; ... it is the second-rate men, though most useful in their place, who prove, reconcile, finish and explain.’<sup>70</sup> There is a clear priority given to seeing here and a clear link between seeing and truth *before* knowing and truth, a link which will be a mainstay of the Phenomenological tradition. Newman is making a distinction (which Wittgenstein also makes) between our believing, and our subsequent believing the grounds of our believing. Do we see the event in itself as it happens to *us* in our personal history, or do we see it notionally as part of a linked sequence of events by which it obtains a kind of universal inevitability that gives us power to justify it and thus make it a measure by which to judge? In the distancing from ourselves that happens in the second case our concern moves from judging ourselves to judging others. In the first case we are justified by our response, by praxis; our lives are wholly an ethical dialogue with the world. In the second we are justified by theory and ethical engagement becomes optional and may be set aside. For Newman, following Aristotle’s ethics of personal engagement, the first position is the one that is in accordance with our nature and being. The second is an instance of being ambitious beyond our nature. We find in Wittgenstein a very similar ethical understanding.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.5 On Probability: Newman, Ramsey and Hume

From a more positivistic aspect, the illative sense works on the basis of the strength of truth-probability occurring in the event of the convergence of various streams of

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<sup>70</sup> GA, p 296

<sup>71</sup> What is chiefly being referred to here is the temptation to be led by either universals or by counter-factuals, away from what is to hand and needing attention. See Newman, GA, p 273: ‘My first elementary lesson of duty is that of resignation to the laws of my nature, whatever they are; my first disobedience is to be impatient at what I am, and to indulge an ambitious aspiration after what I cannot be, to cherish a distrust of my powers, and to desire to change laws which are identical with myself.’ Wittgenstein too is concerned that we match our enquiries to our actual needs, something which is discussed more fully in the next chapter. Also, as already pointed out, he is ever wary of being ambitious for a way of being that goes beyond our actual ways, seeing it as a kind of vanity which is to be avoided. What Newman anticipates here is the twentieth century focus on ‘a renewed poetics of philosophy’ which essentially questioned our questioning from an ethical point of view. This quote is taken from R. Shusterman, ‘A Renewed Poetics of Philosophy’ in *Practicing Philosophy, Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*, (London, 1997). Shusterman gives an overview of our purposes in doing philosophy (pps 1-16) and points to the Western world’s ‘depersonalization of knowledge’ and its relegation of the practice of self-examination and redemption to the sphere of religion, as causes for the direction it has taken in Europe.

probabilities, none of which alone has the strength to bring us to certain assent, each arrived at by a mode of reason working with experience in a process of historically and culturally conditioned interpretation, yet together carrying the possibility of a unique conflation which makes room for the truly new. It provides, for Newman, the bridge he needs between notional and real, universal and individual, statistical and particular and potentially, scientific and religious. He gives priority to the role of experience over rational calculation in the delimiting functioning of probability in day to day life and his account is not a million miles from that of the Cambridge mathematician and well documented influence on Wittgenstein, Frank Ramsey. What Ramsey does is to switch our emphasis on probability from a purely rational conception to one focused on use, thus grounding it in human life rather than in anything transcendent. He notes that our belief that a particular relationship ( $aRb$ ) exists, rests in the fact that certain actions of ours are useful only if  $aRb$ . From this we can say that  $aRb$  is *true* if these actions are in fact useful.<sup>72</sup> In other words, Ramsey linked belief to activity in such a way as to show that what we believe is made true by the usefulness of the actions by which these beliefs are interpreted. That I return to the house to grab my umbrella, for example, is evidence that I believe it is raining or is going to rain. This particular action is useful only if that is the case. My regular use of this course of action evidences the success of my belief. True belief evolves from that which is seen to be reliable in our experience. Reliability is key to Newman's account of knowledge and of our illative functioning, as reflected by his frequent stress on consistency. For Newman knowledge *is* a dependable historical relationship.<sup>73</sup> Ramsey's essentially pragmatic theory is founded in the belief that what we conceive of as universals and particulars are different linguistic constructions from the same set of practical constituents, so that whether we say that Socrates is wise, or that wisdom is a

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<sup>72</sup> See <http://www.nilsericsahlin.se/ramsey/index.asp> accessed October, 2012. Ramsey was influenced by Bayesian mathematics, as was Bishop Joseph Butler whose influence is keenly felt in Newman's work. Newman was very open to evolutionary understanding, commenting in a letter on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1868 that: 'As to the Divine Design, is it not an instance of incomprehensibly and infinitely marvellous Wisdom and Design to have given certain laws to matter millions of ages ago, which have surely and precisely worked out, in the long course of those ages, those effects which He from the first proposed. Mr. Darwin's theory need not then to be atheistical, be it true or not; it may simply be suggesting a larger idea of Divine Prescience and Skill. Perhaps your friend has got a surer clue to guide him than I have, who have never studied the question, and I do not [see] that "the accidental evolution of organic beings" is inconsistent with divine design — It is accidental to us, not to God.' J. H. Newman, Letter to J. Walker of Scarborough, 1868, in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, (Oxford, 1973).

<sup>73</sup> A. Bottone, *The Philosophical Habit of Mind*, (Bucharest, 2010), p 140: 'Knowledge, in its broader and deeper sense, means to put in relation' i.e. to recognise relations within the whole system.

characteristic of Socrates, the difference is in the linguistic form, not in reality.<sup>74</sup> Variations in this form are not divisive of reality. While Newman doesn't eliminate the notional/real divide, his understanding of probability as a bridge between universal and particular pre-figures Ramsey's and Wittgenstein's stress on the symmetrical link between probability and use, expectation and fulfilment.

It is through the link between probability and use rather than probability and explanation that Newman diverges from Hume. While Newman is in agreement with Hume on the formation of natural laws via consistent historical experience and testimony, he resists Hume's basis for challenging the occurrence of miracles. In Hume's account, that something is a miracle is the least plausible explanation for its occurrence based on reasoning by antecedent probabilities.<sup>75</sup> However, this is based on the understanding that a miracle is an occurrence which violates a natural law. Newman is aware of the flexibility granted by the Humean account of natural law and is clear that the term includes, alongside historical experience, the possibility of the occurrence of something that has not been experienced before. Because of our illative functioning the accounts of various modes of reason may converge on an explanation for an event which will contradict the historical experience under any particular mode. The edges of our interpretive enclosures blend into each other and there are openings for different possibilities. Where these openings lie rests in each case in the unique, interpreting subject, where hermeneutic limits (including existentialist interests) and historical forces (including ethical call) interplay.<sup>76</sup> Newman finds Hume to have underestimated the strength of current belief to override what in scientific measure seems implausible; he makes the point that current belief can pitch considerable

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<sup>74</sup> See D. H. Mellor, (1998). Ramsey, Frank Plumpton. In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge. Retrieved November 03, 2012, from <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/DD056SECT6F.P>.

<sup>75</sup> D. Hume, 'Of Miracles' in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, extracted from *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, (London, 1902 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) via internet, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/9662/9662-h/9662-h.htm#section10>, accessed October, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Newman is ahead of his time here in terms of the development of hermeneutic principles. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Hermeneutics and Universal History* in Watcherhauser, B., *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*, (New York, 1986) pps 111-146, discusses the way in which historical concerns became subordinate to hermeneutics for a time, being understood to be 'behind the text' and capable of being identified from the text. However the Post-Modern approach – Pannenberg in particular discusses Gadamer – has been to recognise that the historical is embodied in the interpreting subject too and so is an inseparable part of any process of interpretation. Newman is already clear on this point.

weight against evidence which speaks in favour of a position that contradicts it, as can personal reputation in the case of a witness. Hume tends toward a scientific account of probability while Newman is anxious that it should retain its own particular place among the modes of human reasoning. Both Newman and Wittgenstein agree that this place is a meeting point of theoretical and practical, universal and particular that shows life to be a dialogue of both types of understanding rather than a competition between them.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This review of Newman's account of how we hold things to be certainly true has required the weaving of an often winding path through *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. It has proceeded on this path by putting aside some of the obstacles which would be insurmountable in a positivistic review; this is not Newman's method. When we take *GA* on its own terms as a personal enquiry and apologetic, a number of things come to light which locate Newman in a much more philosophically significant position than is generally acknowledged for him. Consider his complete acceptance of the historical subject, for example; his acknowledgement of the role played by difference in maintaining flexible horizons of understanding; his multi-modal view of reason and its connection to the emotional and devotional aspects of the human person; his appreciation of the groundlessness, in scientific terms, of our knowledge and finally and perhaps most importantly, his ethical concern to maintain a link between enquiry and real need or use in our philosophical endeavours.

This reading provides many points of convergence with Wittgenstein's understanding of certainty as set out in the previous chapter and an exploration of these links, against the background of existential concerns set out at the beginning, forms the basis of the following chapter.

## 4. Newman and Wittgenstein: Seeing Connections

### 4.1 Introduction

Having set out side by side and in some depth the thought of Newman and Wittgenstein on the topic of certainty it is now feasible to explore connections emerging from these readings. Comparisons in this section are made by way of descriptive rather than causal links with an overall focus on how both philosophers contribute to an ethically centred view of knowledge and meaning. The threat to this core of human meaning posed by the less than practically real methods and demands of science is felt in a similar way by Newman and Wittgenstein and the resulting concern shows itself in the suggestion of an ethics of enquiry which takes the form of looking and looking and seeing with fresh eyes how we think, speak and act on a daily basis; by using real life to hold theoretical life up to the light. The comparison with Wittgenstein brings out in particular how much Newman's thought has to contribute to current debates in epistemology, ethics and hermeneutics, recognising him as a prophetic philosopher who 'anticipated modern and postmodern concerns and themes and who explored these in an original fashion.'<sup>1</sup>

### 4.2 Style

I had a task, did not do it, and now the failure is wrecking my life...

God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of two thinkers for whom the question of depth or dimension – of life investment – is so significant, it is fitting that there has been a wealth of biographical material written which makes a positive contribution to the interpretation of their

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<sup>1</sup> I. Ker and T. Merrigan in *Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, Ker, I., and Merrigan, T., (Eds) (Cambridge, 2009) Introduction. See also W. Jost, 'Philosophical Rhetoric: Newman & Heidegger', in Magill, G., Ed., *Discourse and Context*, (Illinois, 1993) p 72. Jost notes that 'Even in Newman, who from a distance can appear so classically conservative and reactionary, modernist and even postmodernist consciousness has emerged, though it remains in and of itself unexplored.'

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein in P. Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, (Oxford, 1967) p 41. Newman, *Meditations*, Part III, Meditations on Christian Doctrine, p 301, (internet, 2012), accessed 21.06.2012.

philosophical work. It is precisely on this question of life investment that similarities in their background are most apparent. As has been discussed, biographical accounts of each philosopher document a strong sense of a task, a life's work for which they are destined and upon which they will ultimately be judged. This sense of a final judgement adds a dimension of conscientious self-awareness which is evident in the rhetorical style of both writers.<sup>3</sup> The *GA* and *OC* evidence a personal caring for what is being said which draws the reader in; a kind of leading by example that will separate those committed to the enquiry from those for whom it is an exercise in argument which will ultimately make no difference to their lives. For Newman and Wittgenstein, this sense of a last judgement and of a personal mission acts to foreground the ethical and to consistently prioritise the real over the theoretical in their work with the resulting awareness that a purely theoretical approach acts to draw us away from the responsibilities arising with our being. Newman's chosen motto from St. Ambrose, 'non in dialectica complacuit Deo salvum facere populum', 'It did not please God to save his people through dialectic', fits this point well. In the case of Wittgenstein it is evident in his determined refusal to be led away from the way things are said and used. Newman, too, keeps his focus on our very real and ordinary experiences of life. Certainly the use of very ordinary and practical examples along with a non-systematic approach is a trait of both works.<sup>4</sup> The attempt to keep the discussion of language tied to the ways it is used places both Newman and at least the later Wittgenstein in the 'expressive' camp of philosophical thought about language according to Taylor's

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<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to remember here that both men had brushes with death early in life. Regarding rhetorical style, A. Bottone, *The Philosophical Habit of Mind*, (Bucharest, 2010), p 77, notes that: 'Rhetoric, in fact, as study and practice is not less concerned with the human person than ethics. If, for Newman, logic totally ignored the personal dimension of knowledge, rhetoric represented to him a model of reasoning not rigorously exact, but nonetheless with its own rationality and its own matter of coping with the problem of practical life in a non-arbitrary way.' On this topic of rhetoric, note the following quote from Newman: 'It will be our wisdom to avail ourselves of language, as far as it will go, but to aim mainly by means of it to stimulate, in those to whom we address ourselves, a mode of thinking and trains of thought, similar to our own, leading them on by their own independent action, not by any syllogistic compulsion' (*GA*, p 245), alongside this one from Wittgenstein's preface to *PI*: 'I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.' See also here B. Plant, 'Seeing the world aright: Wittgenstein's Rhetoric' in *Wittgenstein and Levinas Ethical and Religious Thought*, (Oxon, 2005)

<sup>4</sup> W. Kienzler, 'Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman On Certainty', in *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 71, 2006, p 127 and A. Bottone, 'Newman and Wittgenstein After Foundationalism' in *New Blackfriars*, 86:1001, Jan 2005, p 68 both suggest that Newman's habit of giving very detailed and practical examples is one element of *GA* which appealed strongly to Wittgenstein.

classification.<sup>5</sup> The fact that they arrive at this place from strongly analytic beginnings is another point of common ground between them, a point which highlights their contribution to a holistic account of language and of the human being which philosophical meddling has caused us to forget.<sup>6</sup> It is also fair to say that both operate within a ‘hermeneutics of belief’ rather than of suspicion, that is to say they equally recognise that ‘doubt comes after belief’ and that we use our faculties and all that is given before we ever think about trusting or believing in them.<sup>7</sup> This position is reflected in the move from logic to rhetoric, from a notional place where everything is subject to enquiry to the real life place where only certain things are.

### 4.3 Sight, Seeing and the Problem of Depth

“I know” has a primitive meaning similar to and related to “I see”...I know is supposed to express a relation, not between me and the sense of a proposition (like “I believe”) but between me and a fact. So that the *fact* is taken into my consciousness. This would give us a picture of knowing as the perception of an outer event through visual rays which project it as it is into the eye and the consciousness...And this picture does indeed show how our imagination presents knowledge...<sup>8</sup>

In processes of this kind we regard things, not as they are in themselves, but mainly as they stand in relation to each other. We look at nothing simply for its own sake...without keeping our eyes on a multitude of other things besides.<sup>9</sup>

*An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* and *On Certainty* explore the links between seeing, knowing and believing. Newman, anticipating Heidegger’s horizontal approach to contingency, is sensitive to knowledge as a kind of ‘seeing as’, viewed out of a particular framework. This applies to both the general area of enquiry and first

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, (Cambridge, 1985), pps 248-292 brought to my attention via a discussion by Chris Lawn, in his book *Wittgenstein and Gadamer: Towards a Post-Analytic Philosophy of Language*, (London, 2004) pps 1-18.

<sup>6</sup> Bottone, 2010, notes: ‘...[Newman] links the proper organization of the sciences to the way in which the human mind conceives reality. This has its basis not in a transcendental subject but, on the one hand, in the structure of reality and, on the other hand, in the intellectual dimension of the person.’ (p 63)

<sup>7</sup> This is a distinction made by Ricoeur and cited by A. J. Crowley, ‘Theory of Discourse: Newman and Ricoeur’ in G. Magill, (Ed), (Illinois, 1993) pps 81 – 91

<sup>8</sup> *OC*, 90

<sup>9</sup> *GA*, p 44

principles adopted, for example science, theology, mathematics etc., what Newman terms 'primary conditions', and to the more subtle individual 'assumptions' coming through our culture, background, education, class, age, religion and so on.<sup>10</sup> Like Wittgenstein, (I am specifically thinking of the duck-rabbit here), he discusses our way of seeing in aspects, our view driven by the focus of our enquiry and our particular and present life need. This proto phenomenological approach allows for certain beliefs while at the same time allowing for the possibility of change and even reversal of belief that happens in the dynamic contexts of real life. The never ending variety of aspects which our lives present mean we are constantly challenged to review, extend and incorporate elements of our experience into our existing conceptual and linguistic framework, our way of seeing. The account of reason that is appropriate to this view of things, and which Newman puts before us, is necessarily multi-modal and flexible, and both *GA* and *OC* draw on life as it is to challenge the confining notion of universal reason presented by the positivistic view, whose failures in application give us pseudo problems to solve. In the case of Newman the focus is on the seeing/knowing *individual*. He is a man of his time in his assumption of the Cartesian split and the existence of private mind. Therefore, a strict analysis of his view would highlight the consequent problem of solipsism and the incompatibility of this with the linguistic subject of Wittgenstein's account. However, Newman's reluctance to let go of the historical and individual subject is invaluable to the hermeneutic quest. An account of meaning that reflects its foundation in experience must allow for the prejudices attaching to the unique ontological location of that experience; the seeing place. The formation of the subjective view/prejudices then becomes another issue under the hermeneutic umbrella. Although Wittgenstein's focus in the *PI* is on the communitarian nature of language and on the misunderstandings that lead us to the idea of private thought/language, it is less so in *OC*. Here he is very interested in the expression 'I know' or 'I believe' and its special epistemological (though for want of a better word), status: 'I would like to reserve the expression "I know" for the cases in

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<sup>10</sup>*GA*, p 217. W. Jost, 'Philosophic Rhetoric: Newman and Heidegger' in Magill, G., (Ed), *Discourse and Context*, (Illinois, 1993), p 59, groups Newman, Heidegger and Wittgenstein together in his discussion of 'seeing as'. Crowley, 1993, p 82, discusses Ricoeur and Newman's understanding of the importance of this element of personal paradigms within the hermeneutic circle, citing Ricoeur as follows: 'This means that the conditions of an authentic appropriation, as they are displayed in relation to texts, are themselves paradigmatic. Therefore we are not allowed to exclude the final act of personal commitment from the whole of objective and explanatory procedures which mediate it.'

which it is used in normal linguistic exchange.<sup>11</sup> He stresses the role played by subjective expectation, itself an ontological interpretation of probability, in the way we look and see. Our finding is conditioned by our seeking so that how we see/look for any event has a prevenient element that comes from our experience and delimits the possible results of our enquiry. This speculative sphere applies both in a communitarian way, within the workings of the language game, and individually as part of the impact of our personal experience on our framework. Wittgenstein's allowance that the parameters set around our interpretation are not rigid; even the 'bedrock' sometimes erodes, makes way for the possibility of something new or different showing itself.<sup>12</sup> In this way nothing is ruled out, while our knowledge claims are based in what usually happens in practice, what is, to use a favourite phrase of Newman's, consistent. It is this consistency that leads to recognition as and as Newman notes it is not usual or necessary most of the time to analyse the truth of this first seeing.

The problem of depth perception is a by-product of this discourse on knowledge as sight. It is possible that Newman's struggle with the divides of a still representational understanding of language highlighted for Wittgenstein the dimensional gap apparent when we try to square ontological dimension with propositional flatness. It could be said that this was Wittgenstein's problem with the *TLP* too. There is no conversation paradigmatically possible between framework and body because there is no gap; there is only relationship. The relation of rule to language is rooted in an ontology that makes them impossible conversation partners at least without incorrectly (and bewitchingly) expressing one in the terms of the other. Wittgenstein points out that there is no failure of language, no possibility of language not being adequate. What we have are two incomparable, because inseparable, things, being and language, and the mistaken idea, rooted in a lingering representational understanding of language, that we can make them match. As noted earlier, Newman said that 'we think in logic as we talk in prose, without aiming at doing so.'<sup>13</sup> Wittgenstein would agree that our 'aiming' at logic was precisely the problem with most of contemporary philosophy. We

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<sup>11</sup> *OC*, 260

<sup>12</sup> *OC*, 97, 498

<sup>13</sup> *GA*, p 228

need to see and treat of the rule in a different way to the general objects of our enquiries if we are to rescue philosophy from the depths of its own making.

When answers to life questions are pursued in a positivistic way we are consistently faced with, to paraphrase Heidegger, the failure of being to protrude into language.<sup>14</sup> Wittgenstein notes how propositional logic forces us to locate, or substantiate, the missing dimension that comes with living experience via the interposition of some third step that must be taking place below the surface of our language. This we do either by the admission of a private 'I', the inner person who checks all of our experiences for us, or by the imagination of further propositional layers behind what we say, so that we can evidence some form of judgement behind or under our final assertions. In both these cases our imagined step gives the illusion of depth and with it the illusion of consciousness, supplying a *doing/being* that is lacking from our propositions. Newman too criticises the perplexity caused by this pursuit of grounds where none are ultimately to be found. Scepticism is the result: 'in the lowest depth a lower deep' as he puts it rather sarcastically; as he points out elsewhere, in the end scepticism is the position most unlike our lives and therefore most unbelievable.<sup>15</sup> It is the attempt to remove all value and all power structures from our interpretations but all our doubts and investigations spring from a place of belief and a life both valued and variously committed. It is towards this 'what is there', not what is underneath that both Wittgenstein and Newman wish us to turn our attention. Like the later phenomenologists they favour description over explanation in terms of capacity for enlightenment.<sup>16</sup> What is amazing is already present, not hidden under any layers or

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<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, (Indiana, 1982), p 212, cited in D. McManus, 'Heidegger, Wittgenstein and St. Paul on the Last Judgment: On the Roots and Significance of the "Theoretical Attitude"', forthcoming in the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, (obtained by courtesy of the author) 2012, pps 18-19.

<sup>15</sup> Newman, *GA*, pps 90-91: 'Resolve to believe nothing, and you must prove your proofs and analyse your elements, sinking farther and farther, and finding "in the lowest depth a lower deep", till you come to the broad bosom of scepticism.'

<sup>16</sup> W. Kienzler, 'Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman On Certainty', in *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 71 (2006), pps 117-138, refers to two mentions of Newman by Wittgenstein, the second being the following comment: 'A description, not an explanation (Newman) leads to clarity here.' (MS, 117, 208) Kienzler goes on to explain why he believes this comment does not refer to J. H. Newman but I disagree with him that this possibility is ruled out. Newman clearly favours description. He talks about the importance of not treating the rule – 'the order of nature' as a 'physical necessity' (*GA*, 298). Elsewhere he asks that we 'instead of devising, what cannot be, some sufficient science of reasoning which may compel certitude in concrete conclusions' should 'take things as they are, and resign ourselves to what we find.' (*GA*, p 275) One of his criticisms of Locke is that 'The practice of mankind is too strong for the antecedent theorem, to which he is desirous to subject it.' (*GA*, p 137) Finally he points out that

hovering above us in another realm. Its life context gives it the only justification it needs.

#### 4.4 On Doubt

‘ “We could doubt every single one of these facts, but we could not doubt them *all*.” Wouldn’t it be more correct to say: “we do not doubt them *all*.” Our not doubting them all is simply our manner of judging, and therefore of acting.’<sup>17</sup>

‘...there are writers who...have gone far beyond this reasonable scepticism, laying down...that we ought to begin with a universal doubt. This, however, is of all assumptions the greatest, and to forbid assumptions universally is to forbid this one in particular. Doubt itself is a positive state...and thereby necessarily involves a system of principles and doctrines all its own.’<sup>18</sup>

Wittgenstein and Newman are equally clear that the Cartesian exercise of universal doubt is in fact an impossibility, firstly because our calling anything into question is based on our having prior experience/knowledge of that thing, and secondly because we are always enquiring from some ontological location which necessitates the existence of the very things we are trying to doubt. Newman is clear that this type of doubt belongs to our methodology and pertains to the form of our logical enquiries rather than to any real questions of our existence. Later on, in speaking of self-doubt he makes the point that ‘We are what we are, and we use not trust our faculties. To debate about trusting in a case like this is parallel to the confusion implied in wishing I had had a choice if I would be created or no...’<sup>19</sup> In a similar way, Wittgenstein makes clear that ‘...doubt comes after belief.’<sup>20</sup> Neither life nor philosophy begins with the suspension of belief and scepticism is a luxury resting in a life that has its basic human needs already in hand.

With regard to our *expressions* of certainty, again both men agree that our certainty is most often expressed in a situation where other possibilities are intuited or suggested by events, where a mistake and therefore a doubt is made possible by the

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repetition ought not be mistaken for cause and used to rule out possibilities of experience (GA, pps 73-75). We need to keep in mind the ontological distinctness of what is there before us.

<sup>17</sup> OC, 232

<sup>18</sup> GA, p 294

<sup>19</sup> GA, p 66

<sup>20</sup> OC, 160

paradigmatic enclosures delimiting the language game. However, because a doubt is theoretically possible does not mean it has to be considered in life. 'What I need to shew is that a doubt is not necessary even when it is possible. That the possibility of the language-game doesn't depend on everything being doubted that can be doubted.'<sup>21</sup> If Newman and Wittgenstein have anything in common it is a desire to move us away from the counterfactual 'what ifs' of the sceptic and the scientist and back to what is actually happening in the life of the ordinary human being. As Newman notes real life situations involve more than this cold rationality. Our certainty in acting a particular way is a development of heart as much as reason and depends on our devotion, commitment and trust in the particular case. It is fair to say that both philosophers are aware of the asymmetrical nature of certainty and not doubting. Certainty belongs to lived life; doubt to a philosophical analysis of life. They cannot be suitably squared off in any way.

#### **4.5 The Ethics of Enquiry**

'The sentence "I can't be making a mistake" is certainly used in practice. But we may question whether it is then to be taken in a perfectly rigorous sense, or is rather a kind of exaggeration which perhaps is used only with a view to persuasion. We might speak of fundamental principles of human enquiry.'<sup>22</sup>

When the enquiry into certainty is formulated against the foreground of our life practices as it is in the case of both Newman and Wittgenstein what begins to emerge from a comparative reading is a methodology for ethical enquiry more generally. Key points in this regard are discussed hereunder.

##### **4.51 First Principles: From Practice You Came and into Practice You Shall Return**

Wittgenstein and Newman have several points in common to make about the formation and role of our ideals. Our First Principles are not, Newman reminds us, 'elementary truths prior to reasoning' as the scientific view makes us inclined to think. They are, rather, abstractions from particular events, which act to mark out the limits

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<sup>21</sup> *OC*, 392

<sup>22</sup> *OC*, 669, 670

of our experiences to date in the arena of a particular practice. They act as honing devices which taper our enquiries according to particular areas. They direct us to a relationship, to elements in a set. Where Newman talks of First Principles and personal prejudices, Wittgenstein speaks of rules and framework propositions. The rule is the wider culturally accepted limit which interacts with the outermost edge of the operations of the individual or particular view. If I am looking for a book, to use an example from Wittgenstein, at a personal level there are certain places where I will look; in the drawer in my bedroom, on the bookshelf in my office, in a particular bag. I won't look in my washing machine but there is conceivably an individual who might choose to keep his book there (so his cat can't get at it perhaps!) What is not conceivable (or considered) in any account is that the book might have vanished into thin air. That this cannot be is at the level of natural law or first principle but Wittgenstein is doubtful about the analytic understanding of this concept:

'But do we not simply follow the principle that what has always happened will happen again (or something like it)? What does it mean to follow this principle? Do we really introduce it into our reasoning? Or is it merely the natural law which our inferring apparently follows?...'<sup>23</sup>

Newman uses the image of an octagon within a circle, whose edges blend with the circumference of the circle surrounding it, to try and capture the wholly engaged way in which these principles are formed and function in real life.<sup>24</sup> Both men are keen to expose the organic as opposed to the scientific nature of the rules which bound the paradigmatic enclosures of our beliefs about the world. Both are keenly aware of the measure of flexibility afforded by these enclosures due to their on-going formation in our practices. They are as Wittgenstein notes 'enclosures with holes' accommodated by our holistic and imaginative capacity to think, say, believe, and act in context. It is to this holistic awareness that Newman refers when he talks of the illative sense which reflects the elasticity of multi-modal reason, the various strands of which gather in the possibilities of experience to form a definite conclusion of the particular thing or event as *that* thing. Experience most often confirms our paradigms, sometimes alters them and occasionally shifts the very bedrock granting them their place, for example man

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<sup>23</sup> *OC*, 19-20

<sup>24</sup> *GA*, p 253

landing on the moon. Whatever the rule says, in practice anything can change.<sup>25</sup> Newman and Wittgenstein show that our first principles properly interpreted accommodate experience rather than dictate how it must be.

Newman acknowledges the influence of tradition in determining the bounds of our enclosures. He notes that there are historical and other forces such as popular opinion all the time influencing our paradigms and the ideals we construct from them. A purely logical account fails to incorporate these influences. Wittgenstein's account of meaning in use realises this too. These historical cultural forces are embedded in our language games and incorporated in their evolution in a non-systematic way. In the scientific view our first principles and framework propositions appear to function as laws directing the way things are. Newman and Wittgenstein encourage us to see that the way things are incorporates a past way things were and conditions a future way things will be without strategy. The strategy comes always a fraction behind, as part of our reflective practice and suggests the possibility of biases, of inferior and superior positions, of an overarching system at work. An important part of our contextual functioning stressed by both Newman and Wittgenstein is our capacity to intuit likeness while still maintaining awareness of the unique event. In life we gain meaning in a way which preserves difference, a fact we tend to lose when we analyse this practice.

On the role of our ideals Wittgenstein asks us to remember that:

'The only way namely for us to avoid prejudice – or vacuity in our claims, is to posit the ideal as what it is, namely as an object of comparison – a measuring rod as it were – within our way of looking at things, and not as a preconception to which everything must conform.'<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Newman (anticipating Popper) notes how even in 'mathematical physics a margin is left for possible imperfection.' (GA, 222) This is the space for the new and the different – for the exception. Also here note: '...but this mental rule is not only minute and particular, but has an elasticity, which, in its application to individual cases, is, as I have said, not studious to maintain the appearance of consistency.' (GA, p 278)

<sup>26</sup> CV, 30e

while Newman warns against 'gratuitous idealism' and the tendency to 'draw the individual after the peculiarities of his type'.<sup>27</sup> There is always room for difference at the level of the particular and each and every act contributes to the rule. Newman notes that: 'the confusion is a fact, the reasoning processes are not facts'.<sup>28</sup> When we treat the rules as facts we create a new and bewitching problem to solve, something Wittgenstein regrets about the nature of philosophy. It is in this confusion of rule (bottom up) and law (top down) that we move from description and image to causal understanding which narrows our account of human reason and propagates the kind of tyranny of the majority that philosophers like Levinas worked to redress.<sup>29</sup> A proper understanding of the formation of the rule via experience will keep us humble in the face of marginal positions that may, feasibly, become majorities someday. There is, however, another form of ideal which is also a kind of transcendence to an unreal realm and which the Newman-Wittgenstein view asks us to re-consider; that is our tendency to counter-factual thinking. Wittgenstein notes that 'Pretensions are a mortgage which burdens a philosopher's capacity to think'; Newman expresses exasperation at our 'intellectual waywardness' by which we set out to consider all the strange and unlikely possibilities of an event rather than going directly to where our instinct and reason immediately lead us.<sup>30</sup> This belief that things could have been otherwise creates another seeming form of depth that impacts hugely on our understanding and judging. By insisting on the level of the embodied given they remind us that not everything is relative. Relativism is another ideal ill used by us insofar as we give it the strength of reality when we factor 'could have beens' into our judgments. In Wittgenstein and Newman's picture there are immanent absolutes. That is to say that our language games include an element of meaning-determinism insofar as they allow for a determinable position that takes account of the ontological situation.<sup>31</sup> For Newman these absolutes are ultimately subjective insofar as they are

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<sup>27</sup> *GA*, pps 45-46.

<sup>28</sup> *GA*, p 73

<sup>29</sup> Newman asks on behalf of the individual 'What right have we to subject the person ... to the scientific notion of an abstract humanity ... Why must the tyrant majority create a rule for his individual history?' (*GA*, p 224)

<sup>30</sup> *OC*, 549; *GA*, p 179

<sup>31</sup> A very helpful article here is M. Kusch, 'Kripke's Wittgenstein, On Certainty, and Epistemic Relativism' in D. Whiting, (Ed.), *The Later Wittgenstein on Language*, (Hampshire, 2010) pps 213-229. Kusch entertains the idea that Wittgenstein's naturalism can be used to counteract accusations of epistemic relativism against him. While Kusch is arguing for the existence of epistemic relativism in *On Certainty*, he keeps the reservation that Wittgenstein would have had good awareness of how this position 'jars

held with certitude by those believing them; for Wittgenstein it is harder to say but they rest in what can perhaps be called an evolutionary essentialism. So there are, working with our ontological position as beings constantly engaged in a dynamic process of interpretation, certain points which must be exempt from a kind of questioning which would push them through to transcendence in one or the other direction. That we can imagine that things could have been otherwise is not to say that they actually could and Wittgenstein and Newman both constantly ground us in what is there in order to show us what we are doing, in other words as a kind of cure for this tendency to notional relativity which we exhibit. To manipulate Bishop Butler, things are what they are and not other things, and both philosophers employ a form of naturalism in the way they agree that certain things are just 'there like our lives', beyond the bounds of enquiry. They show that anti-foundationalism does not necessarily imply relativism.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.52 An Ethics of Need

'...it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game.'<sup>33</sup>

'Life is for action. If we insist on proofs for everything, we shall never come to action...'<sup>34</sup>

Wittgenstein tells us that our enquiries must be 'rotated around the fixed axis of our need.' Similarly Newman is clear that our quest for knowledge is properly based in use. We want to use facts and are ultimately concerned with effects. Our enquiries are into our way of life and not merely into 'the apparatus of words and propositions.'<sup>35</sup>

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with our natural, naïve attitude to epistemic disagreements.' This links with Newman's understanding of certitude as a position we are prepared to defend on the basis of consistent, lived experience. Ultimately while from an epistemological viewpoint we can hold in our understanding two different views of what is true, (Kusch uses the Wittgensteinian example of two tribes, one of whom believes man can travel to the moon and one who believes this to be impossible), we tend to move beyond epistemology at this point into heart felt persuasion.

<sup>32</sup> In other words, what is exempt from doubt and proof is exempt from counterfactuals too.

<sup>33</sup> *OC*, 204

<sup>34</sup> *GA*, p 91

<sup>35</sup> *GA*, p 276

Equally Newman stresses the need to enquire 'sui generis' or after the form of the object of enquiry in each case, resisting the encroachment of the scientific or any one method where it does not apply. Our rational modes and methods are as numerous and varied as are the circumstances and motivations behind our enquiries. This is a pragmatic and an ethical move closer to the world of difference that we encounter and does justice to the perspectival account of seeing and knowledge at the centre of post-modern thought. Proof and doubt have a specific function in a particular method of enquiry that is applied in certain areas – mathematics and physics for example. This method does not naturally extend into the human and social sciences.<sup>36</sup> Here, doubt becomes wonder, proof, a working relationship. Newman picks up on the negative correlation between the application of logical methods and fruitful living when he warns us against 'being hampered by involuntary questionings, as if we were not certain, when we are.'<sup>37</sup> Life is for action, and we are rational for use.

As part of the focus on need, both *GA* and *OC* seek to establish what is and is not contingent in the world as we find it. As Newman puts it: 'Unless we had the right, when we pleased, of ruling that propositions were irrelevant or absurd, I do not see how we would conduct an argument at all...'<sup>38</sup> In this regard Wittgenstein asks what is rightly to be shunted onto an unused siding, Newman, what is to be used in trust and what is 'beyond reason'.<sup>39</sup> Our areas of enquiry set within consistent experience exclude certain lines of questioning in an evolutionary way which affects not only what and how we enquire but also what and how we expect to find. What we expect then becomes an inextricable part of how we look and conditions what we find in a circular way. Awareness of the effective bounds of enquiry will keep us concerned with what can be effectively changed. All of our enquiries come from an established place. We are not bound by laws from above or beyond but by expectative rules arising from this ontological place, where the ongoing experience of human beings like and including ourselves dictates what we find most likely and most impossible. There is no

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<sup>36</sup> Wittgenstein tells us in *PI* that 'certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language' is one of the main causes of philosophical misunderstandings. (*PI*, 90)

<sup>37</sup> *GA*, pps 177-178. As a related aside in Newman's letter to Bishop Ullathorne on the First Vatican Council and the topic of Papal Infallibility he speaks of how the council were introducing doubt where there was no 'practical doubt' an instance of the power play involved in the attempt at achieving rational universality. Newman, 1870, in W. P. Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, Vol II, (London, 1912) pps 287-289

<sup>38</sup> *GA*, p 293

<sup>39</sup> *OC*, 210; *GA*, pps 66, 179

'dispassionate state of mind' or of being and this understanding is the basis of rhetorical method. Walter Jost defines rhetoric as 'the power to interpret indeterminacies persuasively.'<sup>40</sup> Newman and Wittgenstein by helping to define what is and is not indeterminate in the practical sense, also define the scope of our rhetorical functioning and show it to be far wider than the scientific approach to reason would allow. Broadly speaking the rhetorical refers to the natural function of the subject within the hermeneutic project and it is fair to say that both Newman and Wittgenstein are primarily concerned with natural human functioning insofar as their work continually holds up contextualised human practice as a light against theory, rather than the other way around.

#### 4.6 The Being of Probability

'...probability does in some sense presuppose and require the existence of truths which are certain.'<sup>41</sup>

'If you are not certain of any fact, you cannot be certain about the meaning of your words either.'<sup>42</sup>

Both Newman and Wittgenstein approach Probability from the ground up. In other words it is not understood as a kind of abstract rational prediction or calculation but as a pattern of consistent behaviour which conditions other expectative behaviour. Probability is not a deliberation of mind but an expectation based on what usually happens. 'If someone is looking for something and perhaps roots around in a certain place, he shows that he believes that what he is looking for is there.'<sup>43</sup> Our practices give rise to the paradigmatic expectations by which they are interpreted and re-enacted or adapted. The epistemological enquiry into certain belief will always struggle with the ontological priorness of this effective reality, which leaves it to deal only with what will have already become test cases. It is this ontological understanding of probability that I believe is most central to the Newman-Wittgenstein account of certainty. Newman's Illative sense is a kind of phronetic drawing on life events to form a cumulative probability focused by the present need to

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<sup>40</sup> W. Jost, 'Philosophic Rhetoric: Newman and Heidegger', in Magill, G. (Ed), (Illinois, 1993) p 59

<sup>41</sup> GA, p 192

<sup>42</sup> OC, 114

<sup>43</sup> OC, 285

actively respond to the particular event requiring attention. It is not a thought before an action but an action incorporating previous experience through habit, body memory, spatial awareness, desire and all holistic features of rational human living. For Newman it is the subjective force which generates belief and effects action. He struggles to make this ontological picture understood within the terms of propositional logic. It forces him to speak of 'latent and antecedent grounds' where there is no real need to evoke a purely mental step at all.<sup>44</sup> Living with Irish weather has taught me to take a coat when I am leaving the house, even in the middle of summer. When I reach out and take my coat I don't reflect or calculate. There is whole-body fluidity about my action, a sense of everything coming together in its focus. This is the illative sense in action.

Wittgenstein, influenced by Ramsey, has a very similar evolutionary interpretation of how probability works. The language games are the linguistic arenas around our practices; our words in use display our experiences and our expectations arising from a particular practice. That we act in a certain way reflects the sequences and successful effects of our actions as they have up to now shown themselves within this sphere of experience. Equally our not acting in a particular way highlights the uselessness of some possible ways of doing things. Either way the seemingly prior fact or truth, positive or negative, which our actions display does not lay there as a rational object to be appropriated in isolation from those actions. As the practice evolves so do the rules which count as the measure of the truth of what we say about it. As noted both accounts of probability depend on our ability to recognise familial links. Our incorporation of previous experience into present experience depends on our ability to see where the present experience belongs. The probability of something being a certain way is wholly related to our finding it familiar, of intuiting its belonging to a particular group of experiences while maintaining awareness of its ontological distinctiveness. And this is how we do operate; in the end cumulative probability is another expression of consistency and consistent relationships. Both the language game and the illative sense explain our certainty by way of consistent practice and

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<sup>44</sup> J. H. Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford Between AD 1826 and 1843*, (Indiana, 1997), p 213. Further references will be to the abbreviated title, *US*.

experience, that is to say by way of our established ways of life. These are our most certain truths and our facts.

#### 4.7 Justification and Grounds

This reading of Newman and Wittgenstein together contextualises the comment in *OC* which mentions 'H Newman' as referring to John Henry Newman. Wittgenstein says:

If you do know that *here is one hand*, we'll grant you all the rest. When one says that such and such a proposition can't be proved, of course that does not mean that it can't be derived from other propositions; any proposition can be derived from other ones. But they may be no more certain than it is itself. (On this a curious remark by H. Newman)<sup>45</sup>

Newman is certainly clear that the proofs in which our certainty rest are not the propositional proofs of logic which fail to touch the world.<sup>46</sup> The search for this type of grounds only leads to endless regression or nominalist tautologies. The fact that we do attain certainty is evidenced by our acting and founded in our consistent experience of the way things are. Both Newman and Wittgenstein converge on this understanding and both agree that it is not scientific proof but a kind of trust in our 'thrownness' to borrow from Heidegger that grounds our certain beliefs. The lack of scientific grounds does not indicate that our beliefs are irrational. Newman and Wittgenstein focus on our practices and re-present us with a holistic account of reason where what is rational is what is reasonable to think, say and do in our experience of life.

Our certain beliefs in this account are fruitful.<sup>47</sup> Our certainty springs from our practices and returns there to contribute to their continuing success. While we can and do reflect on it, it does not belong in the sterile observation tower of logical thought but has life and the power to move us to action. Therefore, as Angelo Bottone

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<sup>45</sup> *OC*, 1

<sup>46</sup> Regarding our reasons for assent to propositions, Newman remarks: '...whatever those reasons were, even if we ever realized them, we have long forgotten them. Whether it was the authority of others, or our own observation, or our reading, or our reflections, which became the warrant of our assent, any how we received the matters in question into our minds as true, and gave them a place there. We assented to them, and we still assent, though we have forgotten what the warrant was. At present 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.' *GA*, pps 141-142

<sup>47</sup> See Wittgenstein (*OC*, 92): 'We are asking ourselves: what do we do with a statement "I know...?" For it is not a question of mental processes or mental states. And that is how one must decide whether something is knowledge or not.'

notes, both Newman and Wittgenstein are anti-foundationalist in the rationalist sense insofar as they show that our certain beliefs are not calculated by scientific methods or supported by evidence in a way that meets scientific standards.<sup>48</sup> They rest, rather, in an ontological commitment to our forms of life, a commitment which is sustained even as we enquire into it. As a commitment it is on the one hand undeniably individual. As a process of interpretation which is to be 'carried out into the realities of life' it is bound by the traditional and cultural horizons which are the backdrop to the individual framework or seeing place.<sup>49</sup> As Newman notes it is possible to believe what one cannot understand and what one cannot prove.<sup>50</sup> This kind of belief is witnessed in our readiness to act as if, to participate in a form of life without being bound to explain it. While at first glance it seems that this type of belief only refers to an area such as religious faith this is not the case. Just think of the number of people who drive cars without fear of them falling apart on the road, despite no understanding of how they operate and no logical working out or gathering of data relating to instances of such things happening. This separation of certainty from its epistemological conception as certain investigated/evidenced *knowledge* is something both Newman and Wittgenstein conclude on; the enquiry into certainty necessarily draws our understanding of knowledge and reason into question.

The search for certain knowledge, Bottone notes, is related by Wittgenstein to our desire for a 'safe condition'.<sup>51</sup> The realisation that no proposition can be ultimately proved ranks our scientific conception of knowledge on the same level as faith, which Newman points out is the basis of all our assumptions, or as the 'trust' that Wittgenstein concedes is at the bottom of the language game.<sup>52</sup> Bottone tells us that:

'The main thesis of *On Certainty* is that what man finds impossible to doubt is not what he knows for certain, but what he takes as certain or what he treats

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<sup>48</sup> See A. Bottone, 'Newman and Wittgenstein After Foundationalism', in *New Blackfriars*, Jan 2005, 86:1001 pps 62-75. 'If we define "foundationalism" as the idea that only what is sufficiently grounded has to be accepted, then Newman and Wittgenstein can both be considered anti-foundationalists.' (p 67)

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p 64.

<sup>50</sup> GA, 'The Apprehension of Propositions', pps 36-48

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p 68

<sup>52</sup> GA, p 90; OC, 150, 509. An interesting quote from Wittgenstein here on the redemptive possibilities of realising this groundlessness: 'So this [redemption] can come about only if you no longer rest your weight on the earth but suspend yourself from heaven...(A man who is suspended looks the same as one who is standing, but the interplay of forces within him is nevertheless quite different, so that he can act quite differently than can a standing man.)' in A. Kenny, *The Wittgenstein Reader*, (Oxford, 1996), p 300-301

as certain, or what plays that particular role for him. Consequently there is no reference to the question of knowing.<sup>53</sup>

Without the reference to knowledge it becomes a case of justification by works which is what we find in both *GA* and *OC*. Newman stresses the fruitfulness of our certainty in a way which can be compared to the Aristotelian concept of flourishing. In Wittgenstein's work this concept takes on an evolutionary bent; that what we are most certain of is what works best for us in our life practices. This view of certainty as justified by works makes sense in its universal application to the hermeneutic worlds which make up our world; it supports truth functioning within the various hermeneutic circles, ethnic, national, cultural and personal, in which human beings have their lives.

#### 4.8 On the Believing Subject

Dmitri Shalin traces in post-modern philosophy's move from the disembodied to the embodied subject, a parallel move from a purely discursive (or propositional) hermeneutic, through a pragmatic hermeneutic, and toward a bio-critical understanding that highlights differences between discursive and affective life as the source of humanity's ethical call.<sup>54</sup> Any *theory* that purports to close this gap, and this has been the focus of philosophy for centuries, therefore attempts to delete the ethical and along with it the source of enquiry itself. Bridging this gap is a life's work, or as Shalin notes 'an ontological condition' which happens person by person.<sup>55</sup> Shalin is speaking from the cutting edge of post-modern philosophical and sociological culture, yet it is a discussion in which Newman could comfortably be a participant. For him, the reasoning that reaches out beyond what is purely logical is moral precisely because of the personal element involved. While *GA* and *OC* both display a faithfulness to human nature and to the part played by the whole person in what is

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<sup>53</sup> Bottone, 'Newman & Wittgenstein After Foundationalism', 2005, p 69

<sup>54</sup> D. N. Shalin, 'Signing in the Flesh: Notes on Pragmatist Hermeneutics', *Sociological Theory* 25:3, September 2007, pps 193 – 224. See also Bob Plant, *Wittgenstein and Levinas Ethical and Religious Thought*, (Oxon, 2005), p 105: 'What requires descriptive analysis is not only what is said but also the way what is said integrates with one's practical integration towards life.'

<sup>55</sup> Shalin, p 193. D. Z. Phillips acknowledges similarly that: 'Yet, however much can be shown of the way in which the treatment of certain questions has developed over the years, it remains true that the individual, in one important sense, must start from scratch. He must do so in the sense that if he is to be a genuine enquirer he must begin with his own puzzles. Philosophical puzzles cannot be answered on one's behalf by another...' D. Z. Phillips, *Religion Without Explanation*, (Oxford, 1976) p 9.

knowledge/belief understood primarily as a commitment to a way of life, there are distinct differences in approaches to the role of the subject; Newman upholds the unique position of the choosing, historically located subject and respects the existential power of that subject, who can passionately commit to a position which pits him against his whole culture. For him 'Moral evidence and moral certitude are all we can attain' because life calls us to *apply* ourselves to constant decision making which we do on the ontological basis of a history, a point of view and importantly a conscience.<sup>56</sup> While on one hand Wittgenstein's view seems to subordinate the subject to the consensually governed terms he chooses, on the other his (Wittgenstein's) own lived example aligns him with Newman's position. Evolution itself depends on individuals who are committed to living and thinking in a different way. He rightly acknowledges that language evolves in community and that it cannot fail in its task; everything that can be said can be said. But this saying is not the world. There is an essential existential gap which is not a lack in our language but the space for our doing. Here, in the pass-over into silence, the answers to our enquiries into what we can know are manifested in what we subjectively and individually do. What we do is the source of all change and Wittgenstein's 'holes' in our paradigmatic 'enclosures' evidence his allowance of space for the determining subject.

Wittgenstein does allow for the contextual immediacy of our certainty and for the fact that it derives from our frameworks. Much of *OC* is an investigation into his own frame of reference: 'I know that I have never been on the moon...', yet he also acknowledges the wider cultural framework which acts as an authority for the individual: '...water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.'<sup>57</sup> Challenges to the cultural framework can only come from the individual; insofar as the choice to act one way or another is made by him/her, the individual holds the possibility of the new. This is something with which Newman is in agreement. He speaks of the arena of truth as being that area where individual belief rises up against orthodoxy in a challenge which, like the heresies in the early church, can culminate in a positive contribution to the

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<sup>56</sup> *GA*, p 252

<sup>57</sup> *OC*, 111, 293

truth position.<sup>58</sup> Although the stress is communitarian in Wittgenstein's account both men acknowledge the role of the individual and his/her unique experience via an acknowledgement of the relationship of knowledge to the ontological frameworks attaching to the 'seeing as' position:

'Or they may be compared to a landscape as drawn by the pencil...in which by the skill of the artist, amid the bold outlines of trees and rocks, when the eye has learned to take in their reverse aspects, the forms or faces of historical personages are discernible, which we catch and lose again, and then recover, and which some who look on with us are never able to catch at all.' (G p 249)

In this passage which mirrors Wittgenstein's understanding, we are made aware of the difference in seeing between individuals and of the continuous possibility of another point of view, a vision that is surely at the heart of post-modernist understanding.

What strengthens Newman's case for the distinct role of the individual in certain knowledge is his overt and absolute acceptance of conscience as a source of personal authority. For Newman this inner dialogue goes beyond language to become 'word' with all the religious connotations this word carries. As he sees it, this inner word relates so directly to will as to give it a force of authority which can all but compel us to believe and act in a particular way; this may be in a way that contradicts appearances, outward authority or the general view. It is by conscience that we are aware of the misalignments between discourse and practice, between things as we know them to be and as we intuit they should be. It is the ethical source of our knowing that we know. That Wittgenstein had an understanding of conscience is evident from biographical evidence. Engelmann, Drury, Monk, Malcolm all give us a picture of this man who was at times 'wretched' with feelings of inadequacy, in dread of not being a 'decent' enough human being and about being ultimately judged on this.<sup>59</sup> He worried about his capacity for 'seeing farther than others' and about the personal responsibility that this capacity brought to him. He was constantly aware of discrepancies between what he believed was important in life and what his culture

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<sup>58</sup> Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, (London, 1994) p 225-226

<sup>59</sup> These are Wittgenstein's words taken from various letters to his friend Paul Engelmann between 1916 and 1937. See P. Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, (Oxford, 1967), pps 11, 21, 25, 33, 41, 55, for some examples. I refer also to the biographical sketch of Wittgenstein in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

emphasised as important.<sup>60</sup> He tells us that ‘...”consciousness of sin” is a real event... and so are despair and salvation through faith’.<sup>61</sup> The question of Wittgenstein and religion will be taken up in detail in the following chapter. Suffice it to say here that what he says on this topic shows him to be a naturally religious person who wanted to stay apart from anything that would endanger or corrupt this tendency by the dominating desire to explain and own.<sup>62</sup> Newman, following Butler, posits the experience of conscience as well as that of a sense of awe and wonder at the natural world, both also characterised as experiences of God by Wittgenstein, as the chief sources of natural religiosity. While Newman sees our capacity for natural religious experience as a preparation for revealed religion, to the end he champions this original and personal interaction with God.<sup>63</sup> Conscience is more than mere reflection but functions to prompt change.<sup>64</sup> It is where the religious and the ethical come together. Bob Plant, who writes on Wittgenstein and Levinas, believes this ‘bringing [of] the ethical and religious spheres together’ to be a definite orientation within Wittgenstein’s striving.<sup>65</sup> It is undoubtedly part of Newman’s; the religious believer in the *GA* is a devotee who lives a certain kind of life and whose beliefs are evidenced by what he does. There is something undeniably personal about the disquietings of conscience. Newman’s attention to it within the hermeneutic framework prefigures Heidegger and Gadamer as well as Wittgenstein. The difference is that he doesn’t need to struggle with the religious understanding of the concept; he takes it for granted. This is interesting in view of the way in which philosophy over the last century has been taken up with the pseudo problem of talking about what is essentially religious experience, without naming God, something which will be discussed in the last chapter.

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<sup>60</sup> Engelmann pps 70-110;

<sup>61</sup> Wittgenstein in A. Kenny, *The Wittgenstein Reader*, (Oxford, 1994) p 296

<sup>62</sup> M. O’Connor Drury, in ‘Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein’ in *The Danger of Words and Writings on Wittgenstein*, (Bristol, 1996) pps 76-96, gives one of the best pictures of the type of religiosity we are talking about in discussion about Wittgenstein.

<sup>63</sup> Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*, Vol II, (London, 1896), p 261, famously comments as follows: ‘I add one remark. Certainly, if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts, (which indeed does not seem quite the thing) I shall drink – to the Pope, if you please – still, to conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards.’

<sup>64</sup> Newman, *Certain Difficulties*, pps 256-258, tells us that ‘conscience is not a judgment upon any speculative truth, any abstract doctrine, but bears immediately ...on something to be done or not done.’

<sup>65</sup> Bob Plant, *Wittgenstein and Levinas, Ethical and Religious Thought*, (Oxon, 2005), p 110.

In the consistent relation of knowledge to ways of seeing and ways of seeing to ways of doing there is necessarily a move towards an embodied view of both reason and the person which is anticipatory of how philosophy would develop over the next century and a half. However, although he pre-figures Wittgenstein's rational anti-foundationalism, Newman does not dismiss tradition. Shalin accuses Heidegger of 'taking a linguistic turn' on the road to disembodiment. On the path from disembodiment to embodiment perhaps Wittgenstein can be said to have taken a linguistic turn on the road to embodiment; neither linguistic position is sufficient to human experience and ultimately not a satisfactory alternative to the Cartesian picture. Although so much of *GA* is an analysis of propositions Newman somehow manages to resist this turn. He maintains *what he sees to be there* in life; the ontological difference which Heidegger notes fails to 'protrude ... in the linguistic form'.<sup>66</sup> Again, we are not talking here about any inadequacy of language. Rather we are pointing out that language is not meant to equal being; thinking that it is creates all kinds of 'depth' problems as we try to locate the missing dimensions of experience in what we say. Newman sees that the experiencing subject cannot be equalised into the terms he uses. In the post-modern over-determination to embodiment, itself in part a resistance or sublimation of the name of God, philosophy has again forgotten the way things are. We talk about our minds, our thoughts, our hopes and our potential and we do not hesitate to use the grammar of possession.<sup>67</sup> This awareness of self is intimately entwined with the natural experience of conscience, part of what is for Newman (and I argue Wittgenstein and Derrida) the naturally religious person, already there as part of the given, beyond the bounds of enquiry. Newman holds on to this self for dear life, not because he unwittingly falls into a Cartesian trap, but because it is an unquestionable part of what is experienced as 'there like our lives'.

#### 4.9 Conclusion

This chapter brings together those connections that present themselves in Newman and Wittgenstein's discussion of certain belief in this reading of *An Essay in Aid of a*

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<sup>66</sup> D. McManus, 'Heidegger, Wittgenstein and St. Paul on the Last Judgment...', forthcoming in the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 2012, p 19

<sup>67</sup> See Wittgenstein (The Blue Book, p 69-70 cited in A. Kenny, *The Wittgenstein Reader*, (Oxford, 1994), p 196: 'The word 'mind' has meaning, i.e., it has a use in our language; but saying this doesn't yet say what kind of use we make of it.'

*Grammar of Assent* and *On Certainty*. There are some places where similarities in thought are quite remarkable, for example our way of seeing in aspects and from within cultural and personal frameworks, or the use of 'family resemblance' as an analogy to explain our non-systematic intuition of belonging. There is a strong affinity too in both men's understanding of the place of doubt in our enquiries and the need for a clear separation between what can and cannot be subject to doubt. They both warn us to pay attention to the nature of our universal concepts and to our use of counter-factuals in order to keep our energies and intellect focused on what is ethically essential for our life. This section has also commented on stylistic parallels with particular reference to the use of rhetorical method. From a wider perspective the connections between *GA* and *OC* point to a methodology for ethical enquiry that focuses on real need and away from the pseudo-problems created by the misapplication of logical-scientific method. This is in keeping both with Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophy as therapy and with Newman's stress on belief which is justified by deeds. It is a method which has potential to draw the ethical and the religious together and opens up interesting links with thinkers such as Levinas, Derrida and Gadamer, links which highlight the significance of Newman to contemporary philosophical discussion.

Finally the connections explored here merit a discussion on the topic of religious belief which is made all the more interesting by the different religious backgrounds of Newman and Wittgenstein. To view them side by side is to place the belief system and ethics of revealed religion alongside those of an unsystematic and interior spirituality, in a way which makes it very much a debate for the present time. This discussion forms the basis of the final chapter which will look at the ways in which Newman and Wittgenstein's views on certainty impact on religious belief.

## 5. On Certainty and Faith: Living with the Reality of God.

### 5.1 Introduction:

This chapter considers the authors' objectives in their treatment of the topic of certainty and explores the contribution made by *GA* and *OC* to understanding religious belief, particularly in the context of a response to the challenges of Hume and the resulting temptation for believers to enter the proof game. It notes how the religious and the ethical are unquestionably linked in the thought of both Newman and Wittgenstein and discusses how the bounds of ethical enquiry, which emerged in the enquiry into certainty generally, apply in the case of religious belief. Finally it will discuss how their approaches to God divide into revelation for Newman and what can be referred to as 'manifestation' for Wittgenstein, and briefly consider the implications of these two ways in the context of conceptions of a secular world.

### 5.2 Religious-Ethical Objectives

'If you and I are to live religious lives, it mustn't be that we talk a lot about religion, but that our manner of life is different. It is my belief that only if you try to be helpful to other people will you in the end find your way to God.'<sup>1</sup>

It is not the belief of this writer that *An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent* or *On Certainty* are primarily focused on epistemological concerns.<sup>2</sup> At least, insofar as these concerns are present, they are subsumed by the greater ethical interests at the heart of a personal quest for meaning. These are end of life works for both Newman and Wittgenstein and as enquiries are pursued firstly as part of an existential-ethical-

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<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein in O'Connor Drury, *The Danger of Words and Writings on Wittgenstein*, (Bristol, 1996) p 114

<sup>2</sup> This is in agreement with, for example, Mark Wynn, 'The Relationship of Religion and Ethics: A Comparison of Newman and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion', *Heythrop Journal*, 2005, XLVI, pps 435-449 and Duncan Pritchard, 'Wittgenstein's On Certainty and Contemporary Anti-Scepticism', in Moyal-Sharrock & Brenner (Eds.) *Investigating On Certainty: Essays on Wittgenstein's Last Work*, (London, 2005) pps 189-224. According to Nigel Pleasants, 'Wittgenstein, Ethics and Basic Moral Certainty' in *Inquiry*, 2008, 51:3, pps 241-267, who believes in the priority of epistemological concerns in *On Certainty*, my opinion here puts me in the 'New Wittgenstein' school of exegesis, in the good company of among others Cora Diamond and Stephen Mulhall.

religious quest for personal understanding, and secondly as a possible means to enlighten others which is a responsibility felt to arise out of this quest.<sup>3</sup> To talk of either or both works purely in terms of reformed epistemology is not accurate either, although there are those who read Wittgenstein in this way. Christopher Hoyt explains the difference in terms of the way a hinge proposition is understood.<sup>4</sup> A reformed epistemologist like Plantinga, for example, sees belief in God as a hinge or basic proposition which acts as a *foundation* for all other beliefs in the system. Wittgenstein's relational understanding is that the 'force' of the hinge proposition is achieved only through its place within an already working system of which it is part rather than basis. Life brings us to believe in God. Newman perhaps walks a finer line than Wittgenstein here but as we have seen he has a similar anti-foundational approach to belief in general and therefore a more Wittgensteinian understanding of how basic propositions become basic in lived life. It is this focus on lived life as the given place from which all our doubts and enquiries spring that gives the ethical centre to the work of both men. Newman asks: 'Why am I to begin with taking up a position not my own, and unclothing my mind of that large outfit of existing thoughts, principles, likings, desires, and hopes, which make me what I am?'<sup>5</sup> We cannot get before this position and an epistemology which asks us to suppose that we can is unethical by virtue of its unreality. Hence both works inherently reject the Enlightenment position and strive for one which does justice to the real thinking, feeling, human being. It is with the recognition of this ethical base that the rest of this chapter proceeds to discuss the contribution made by *GA* and *OC* to understanding religious belief.

As a believer and prominent member of the Catholic Church, Newman's investigations take place from within a believing framework which finds God at the centre and at the

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<sup>3</sup> Daniele Moyal-Sharrock, 2004, *Understanding On Certainty*, p 1, gives a very good picture of the personal journey that is *On Certainty*, noting that: 'Upon opening *On Certainty*, the reader is abruptly drawn behind the scenes to witness the struggle of a philosopher alone with his subject.' She comments further about how the reader is called 'to live the text' in a fully engaged way. Newman gladly acknowledges the personal nature of his quest: 'Is it not wonderful then, that, while I can prove Christianity divine to my own satisfaction, I shall not be able to force it upon anyone else.' (*GA*, p 321)

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Hoyt, 'Wittgenstein and Religious Dogma', in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2007, 61:1, pps 39-49.

<sup>5</sup> *GA*, p 330

outermost 'enclosure' of meaning. Neither the notion of meaning or of ethical obligation is problematic for him as God provides the absolute upon which both ultimately depend. This is not to affirm Newman as a purely classical theist; there is much in his focus on individual conscience as the primary experience of God that is expressivist and non-traditional.<sup>6</sup> Religion is still for Newman very much about a passion and a kind of life which makes sense. In large part his objective in writing *GA* was to 'show that there is a true philosophy of religion' in the hopes of moving people to 'a better sort of religious sentiment'.<sup>7</sup> To this end he is fighting against the view, coming from Hume, that religious belief is akin to superstition and unsupportable in a modern, progressive and scientific world. The approach taken by Newman is one which shows up the non-(scientifically) foundational nature of all that we believe and act upon on a daily basis. Alongside the other activities of our lives, he secures a place for religious belief as a rational and life supporting process which supports the human being as we find him, historically located and endlessly and whole-heartedly committed to people and objects and ways of being in the world. Newman shows that our certainty is built on assumptions which we justifiably make based on our experiences in all areas of life. These consistent experiences in the contexts of lived life make further experiences fully rationally acceptable to us; this includes experiences of God and our response of commitment to religious belief and practice. Our illative sense regularly converges on the point of God. Our subjective experiences of God in the wonder we feel at the natural world and in the dialogue of conscience naturally prepare us for acceptance of the Christian kerygma and the tenets of revealed religion, in Newman's account.<sup>8</sup> The Gospels are in large part the fulfilment of the expectation of God which these experiences create. On receiving the Christian message as believers we respond by seeing all things in a new light and living in a new

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<sup>6</sup> See here Ian Logan, 'Newman and Rahner on the Way to Faith – and Wittgenstein Came Too!', *New Blackfriars*, 2001, 82:970, pps 579-590. Logan notes that the 'effectiveness' of Newman's proof of God from conscience 'is dependent on its not being regarded as a proof of God in the sense of the traditional proofs.'

<sup>7</sup> Newman, *Letters & Diaries* xxv, pps 3-4 and p 250 cited in Ker, I, *John Henry Newman*, (Oxford, 2009), p 629.

<sup>8</sup> 'Next, as to its relation to nature, as I have said, Christianity is simply an addition to it; it depends on it, and that of necessity, for how possibly can it prove its claims except by an appeal to what men have already?...And in agreement with this obvious conclusion we find in Scripture our Lord and His Apostles always treating Christianity as the completion and supplement of Natural Religion, and of previous revelations...' *GA*, p 302; 'One of the most important effects of Natural Religion on the mind, in preparation for Revealed, is the anticipation which it creates, that a revelation will be given.' *GA*, p 328.

way. This real (as opposed to purely notional or intellectual) response is what it is to believe for a Christian and it is sourced in real life experience of the reality of God. Newman is clear that the development of religious practice through to modern Christianity does not involve distancing ourselves from the practices of our more primitive ancestors: ‘the progress of which man’s nature is capable is a development, not a destruction of its original state; it must subserve the elements from which it proceeds, in order to be a true development and not a perversion.’<sup>9</sup> Religious practice, ancient and modern, reflects something of our fundamental nature. The seeming contradiction between ‘the religion of barbarism’ and current religious understanding is founded in a human nature which has been subject to ‘a one-sided progress of mind’ to the detriment of conscience and the experiences of passion and fear which conduct us from it to religious belief lived out in a life of ethical concern.<sup>10</sup> *GA* seeks, in a way which can be understood by the prevailing rationalist mind-set, to correct this imbalance.

In the case of Wittgenstein nothing is overt or traditional. *OC* cannot be said to be a book specifically about religious belief or morality. But it is consistent with a concept of the human being as an enquirer concerned with truth and meaning, and as one whose beliefs are shaped in community that we find in Wittgenstein’s other works. And, like the *Lecture on Ethics*, it does link the religious and the ethical. As Bob Plant notes, *OC* 608-612 which uses as an example the contrast between consulting the propositions of physics or the guidance of an oracle in deciding something, discusses how, when it boils down to the links between truth and the framework principles of our different ways of seeing, all ways are equally deserving of our respect, though we may *persuaded* in favour of one or another.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, *OC* supports the view that even our most seemingly meta-physical pronouncements are grounded in some practice or other, thus manifesting an ethic that refuses to posit the human being as somehow less than he could be – a ‘hobbled angel’ to borrow from Fergus Kerr.<sup>12</sup> By grounding the religious in this way Wittgenstein keeps it tied to the ethical and helps

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<sup>9</sup> *GA*, p 308

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>11</sup> Bob Plant, *Wittgenstein and Levinas: Ethical and Religious Thought*, (Oxon, 2005) pps 63-69.

<sup>12</sup> Fergus Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, (Oxford, 1986) p 80.

us to see it as answering a genuine human need.<sup>13</sup> For countless people belief in God facilitates the living of a meaningful life, even while our talk of God or of right and wrong may constantly have us running up against the logical boundaries of language. Wittgenstein, too, has a sense of the *reality* of God. He tells us that ‘Life can educate us to a belief in God’ and that the Christian kerygma is ‘not a theory about what has happened and will happen to the human soul, but a description of something that actually takes place in human life’ where “‘consciousness of sin” is a real event and so are despair and salvation through faith.’<sup>14</sup> Like Newman he makes a strong and anti-Humean place for our primitive experience of God. He is clear that historical attempts to *explain* religious practice have merely exhibited an anachronistic and false understanding of progress which leads us to apply in a universal way the one explanatory framework where it does not belong and cannot do justice to the human being.<sup>15</sup> Science has always flourished alongside religious belief. Hence the capacity of so-called primitive man to make the equipment needed to build houses, hunt animals, navigate the oceans and work the land. Our rituals and our talk of God belong to a certain way of life and express in all times the effects of particular experiences of being in the world. In fact, Wittgenstein sees much of religious practice as stemming from our expectative-fulfilment capacity. Our rites most often exhibit gratitude for those things that are predictable in life; we dance because the rain is coming. It is not about the attempt to control or explain but about our powerlessness and about our being safe despite it. Our religious rites are centred on the most predictable, most ordinary (or awesome, depending on your framework) events of our lives; for example meals/eating, changing seasons, birth and new life, death and illness, transition from child to adult. In the face of these things we can mostly just stand back and watch and

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<sup>13</sup> There is only one directly religious reference in *On Certainty*; no 47 tells us that: ‘This is how one calculates. Calculating is this. What we learn at school, for example. Forget this transcendent certainty, which is connected with your concept of spirit’. The implication here is that our concept of spirit should be of something attached to and manifest in what we say and do. Our talk of transcendence is an evasion of real and ethical concerns as well as stemming from a mistaken attempt to make the rule an object in the world.

<sup>14</sup> C&V, 96; 32. Bob Plant (2004) strongly makes the point that in Wittgenstein’s account ‘both believer and nonbeliever remain united by certain primitive natural human activities’ and that there are possible connections between religious acts and acts of ‘piety’ such as adoring a religious image and kissing a picture of a loved one, or the sense of absolute trust in the religious experience and in the relationship of parent and child which Newman also comments on in *GA*, (pps 34, 35). See B. Plant, ‘The Wretchedness of Belief: Wittgenstein on Guilt, Religion, and Recompense’ in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 2004, 32:3, p 455

<sup>15</sup> D. Z. Phillips, *Religion Without Explanation*, (Oxford, 1976), pps 26-42. Also, B. Clack, *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion*, (Hampshire, 1999), pps 3-12; 79-86.

this is what makes it so awesome, that we expect certain things to happen in a certain way and that they do. Our certitude is fulfilled in the certainties of life every day to put Newmanian language on it and we learn that we *can* be certain, that we *can* trust something. The feelings of safety and the awe that come about in and through this experience point us to God, and are a source of both celebration and gravity as witnessed in the response that is our religious rituals.<sup>16</sup>

One further point connecting *OC* to Wittgenstein's views on religion: the insistence, which *OC* warns against on seeing the world through 'the lens of our ideals' has a parallel in religious dogmatism.<sup>17</sup> Wittgenstein sees this failure to see past our pre-conceived and self-interested notions of how things should be as a kind of self-imposed blindness where we insist on trying to move past the 'veil of the sensible world' to some transcendent, universally applicable position. Although he admires the wholehearted commitment of the religious believer, this way of seeing is irreconcilable with his own personal position and contradicts the therapeutic view of philosophy which he advocates. I think it is fair to say that Newman struggled often with this dogmatic element of the Catholic Church and at times wished for the flexibility that naturally accommodates the particular and the different. One cannot help but think here of the Gospel story of the blind man, or of parables such as that of the Good Samaritan which ask us to 'look and look' and see past those ideals which position and judge marginalised groups with a distinct loss of sight of our shared humanity and of the instability of any one position past this common level. Also to be rejected as an object of comparison within religious belief in Wittgenstein's terms, is the ideal of the purely rational/spiritual human being; the 'I in the sight of God which 'remains the paradigm for the self even where the theology has been abandoned.'<sup>18</sup> This is an ideal by which we devalue ourselves and the good we can do. Fergus Kerr's comments on Wittgenstein's approach could be applied to Newman also:

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<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein, in the 'Lecture on Ethics' (in A. Kenny, *The Wittgenstein Reader*, (Oxford, 1994) pps 289-296) notes three experiences of God, namely our feeling guilty, our sense of awe and wonder at the world and our experience of 'feeling safe no matter what'.

<sup>17</sup> C. Hoyt, 'Wittgenstein and Religious Dogma' in *The International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 2007, 61:39, p 42.

<sup>18</sup> F. Kerr, 1986, *Theology After Wittgenstein*, (London, 1997), p 42

We are agents in practical intercourse with one another – not solitary observers gazing upwards to the celestial realm of the eternal forms, or inwards at the show in the mental theatre. What constitutes us as human beings is the regular and patterned reactions that we have to one another...community is built into human action from the beginning.<sup>19</sup>

Theological ideals which draw us away from our ethical responsibilities here and now must give way to the persistent voice of conscience which ever reminds us ‘that we are personally responsible for what we do; that we have no means of shifting our responsibility, and that dereliction of duty involves punishment;...’<sup>20</sup>

### 5.3 Adopting a Framework

The dependence of certain knowledge or truth on our frameworks, as explored in both *GA* and *OC*, is true of religious belief also, at least on a general level of understanding: Reflect for example on the following quotes:

He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth us not; by this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (John, 4:6 quoted in *GA*, p 323)

I read: “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” And it is true: I cannot call him *Lord*; because that says nothing to me...And it could say something to me, only if I lived *completely* differently. (*C&V*, 33)

Religious belief needs to be understood from the perspective of the one living the life of the believer. A logical analysis will fail to do justice to its ontological effects – again a failure of being to protrude into language. The spirit of truth and the spirit of error belong to the spirit of the game. It is not enough to barge into the game and demand to play. One must first enter the spirit of the game and that is not achieved by deduction or inference but by a certain kind of desire. The believer feels differently because, in Newmanian terms, God for him is an image rather than a notion. Life has impressed him with a sense of the reality of God. Mark Wynn makes a strong case for Newman’s project not being that of trying to provide evidence in support of religious

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p65

<sup>20</sup> *GA*, p 307. See also here Bob Plant, 2004, *The Wretchedness of Belief....*, p 472 which refers to Emmanuel Levinas’ question as to whether it is time ‘for the good to be loved without promises’. This notion of doing the good with no beyond and therefore no ‘because’ in sight is the ethical understanding which comes to the fore here in both Newman and Wittgenstein’s views of the properly religious person.

belief as is commonly taken to be the case; rather in his view Newman is trying to give us a picture of what it is to *perceive* God.<sup>21</sup> Wynn gives the example of someone who has slipped on the ice and suffered an injury. While we all are aware at some level of the potential for slipping on ice, for this person it is more than a notion. The real dimension brought by her experience of falling is carried through into her lived life; she acts differently because of it. Wynn talks in terms of emotions, of feeling, rather than seeing but the point is the same. In a similar way the experience of God is an affective reality. It makes a difference to how one lives. Wynn's point reminds us that Newman's discussion of Notional and Real apprehension should not be understood as one about two purely intellectual activities. In Real apprehension we grasp something at an ontological, subjective level where it becomes part of the framework from out of which we see and do everything.<sup>22</sup> At this level the individual has something unique to offer which goes beyond words into feeling and action. One cannot help but think of Levinas here and of his resistance of the universalising rationale which ingests the 'other' in its own terms and misses what this other can offer that is irreplaceable – his unique experience and view point.<sup>23</sup> In religious belief, as elsewhere, Newman recognises the existential significance of the individual faith position and respects the contributions to wider understanding made possible by differences experienced at this personal level. As he comments on Christianity: 'It is not dreary matter of antiquarianism; we do not contemplate it in conclusions drawn from dumb documents and dead events, but by faith exercised in ever-living objects, and by the appropriation and use of ever-recurring gifts.'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Mark Wynn, 'The Relationship of Religion and Ethics: A Comparison of Newman and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion', in *Heythrop Journal*, 2005, XLVI, pps 435-449. See here also I. Kerr, *John Henry Newman*, (1997), who reminds us that '...our understanding of meanings is normally a *perception* of meanings, and thus not a matter of inferences...' (p 138)

<sup>22</sup> Examples used by Newman here are the proposition 'Sugar is sweet.' (GA, p 30-31) I can be brought up to believe that sugar is sweet, is bad for your teeth and we should not eat it. I apply this proposition by not eating sugar, so show that I apprehend it on a certain level. However, there is a difference to the level (or perhaps depth) of my apprehension when I have tasted sugar. In fact, it will most likely completely change my attitude and behaviour around sugar! A second example is his reflection on a man's apprehension of the words of scripture: 'But let his heart at length be ploughed by some keen grief or deep anxiety, and Scripture is a new book to him.' (GA, p 80)

<sup>23</sup> E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, (Pittsburg, 1969), in particular 'The Face to Face: An Irreducible Relation', pps 79-82.

<sup>24</sup> GA, p 376

Wittgenstein understands this difference only too well and is respectful of the gap in experience between the believer and the non-believer, often meriting accusations of fideism.<sup>25</sup> As a form of religious solipsism it is difficult to accept that Wittgenstein advocated this in any form. We can and do talk about God, atheist, agnostic and believer, so there is some framework crossover.<sup>26</sup> This is founded in a religious naturalism which Wittgenstein exhibits; we have a natural capacity to 'get' God; the concept of the Divine or Absolute is not alien to us, believer or atheist. But subjective experience brings a different level of understanding that cannot be explained but only witnessed in the lived response it elicits. It is this lived response that enters us into the community of believers where the spirit of the game is defined and perpetuated. Here, God is a source, an end and a meaning which secures our way of life and affects everything we do. For the believer, who makes 'a passionate commitment to a system of reference', God is the hinge proposition around which everything else turns.<sup>27</sup> For both Newman and Wittgenstein the religious believer is one for whom the reality of God has been 'seized upon... believingly (i.e. lovingly)'.<sup>28</sup> To the non-believer one wants to say 'put that in your pipe and smoke it'!

#### **5.4 After Naturalism: The Way the Truth and the Life**

D.Z. Phillips notes how our explanations of religious belief, from those of the early anthropologists such as Fraser and Pritchard to Freud and his followers, to social theorists like Durkheim and those in the tradition of Feuerbach, all follow on from or sit on top of religious belief itself.<sup>29</sup> These are 'ways of seeing' as opposed to causes and although we can, as Phillips does, examine and engage with these ways, in the end they leave religious belief and practice untouched. Phillips includes a supporting quote from Simone Weil in this regard which I think is worth repeating here:

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<sup>25</sup> Bob Plant, 2004, 'The Wretchedness of Belief...', p 453 notes that Wittgenstein talks about this gap in terms of 'thinking entirely differently', having 'different pictures', or employing a 'different kind of reasoning' and 'being on an entirely different plane'. It is an existential difference that he is talking about here.

<sup>26</sup> On the crossover between epistemic systems in Wittgenstein's thought see Martin Kusch, 'Kripke's Wittgenstein, On Certainty and Epistemic Relativism' in Daniel Whiting (ed.), *The Later Wittgenstein on Language*, (Hampshire, 2010), pps 213-230.

<sup>27</sup> Wittgenstein, *C&V*, 1998, 73e

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 38e

<sup>29</sup> D. Z. Phillips, *Religion Without Explanation*, (Oxford, 1976), pps. 100-121.

The French school of sociology is very nearly right in its social explanation of religion. It only fails to explain one infinitely small thing; but this infinitely small thing is the grain of mustard seed, the buried pearl, the leaven, the salt. This infinitely small thing is God; it is infinitely more than everything.<sup>30</sup>

That small thing is experienced by believers as a *reality* not a theory and this is what the atheist most often fails to grasp. The fact that we employ ways of explaining religious belief stems from the need for persuasion in a case of clashing reasons or world views. Newman would agree: 'Men become personal when logic fails; it is their mode of appealing to their own primary elements of thought, and their own illative sense, against the principles and the judgment of another.'<sup>31</sup> Hume's consignment to the flames is, in the end, merely his employment of a particular method of assessment of what is there. The fact that such debate occurs highlights the presence of God in our world. Phillips understanding here is a reflection of Wittgenstein's. The truth is in description; after that comes persuasion and conversion. Our explanations operate on a mistaken conception of truth as holding across frameworks; either that or their proponents have a meta-physical conception of truth as transcendent and absolute, which is out of keeping with their fundamental objections to God! Religious belief is not itself a world view or way of seeing but part of an experience of human life in all times and places, sitting alongside building homes, or having children or any number of other human activities. As in *OC*, Wittgenstein's approach to religion is to be primarily concerned with the description of what is there in religious practice and life. He resists the desire to interject a 'because' that can amount to no more than the imposition of one framework on another. What was happening in the Catholic Church in Newman's time, Ultramontanism and the declaration of Papal Infallibility, show the dangers associated with the explanatory account. We forget about the primacy of experience and the response to it and formalise the theoretical so that it becomes a law which is ultimately used to dominate and control. Wittgenstein uses the simile of a weight being attached to the foot in order to restrict freedom of movement.<sup>32</sup> The individual experience becomes something to be feared, a threat to the established way. In the church as well as out of it Newman struggled to show the worth of the individual

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<sup>30</sup> Simone Weil, 'A War of Religions' in *Selected Essays*, p 215, quoted in Phillips, 1976, p 97.

<sup>31</sup> *GA*, p 288

<sup>32</sup> *C&V*, 1998, 33e

account. It must be allowed to come forward and to pit itself against authority in what he called 'the arena of truth'.<sup>33</sup>

G. E. Anscombe pointed out how a conception of Divine law continues to underlie our ethical judgements even in a supposedly godless society, and much of modern ethical debate has concerned itself with the struggle to conceive of ethical values without the framework of some kind of absolute judgement or religious teleology.<sup>34</sup> What Newman and Wittgenstein add to this debate, through the concept of conscience as primary awareness of the Divine, overtly in *GA* and through the experience of guilt and the conception of judgement for Wittgenstein, is that the joining of religious and ethical spheres does not happen at a cultural level, within the frameworks of particular religions and their conceptions of divine law. Rather, it is something that begins in each naturally Divine-conceiving human subject, through intuitions of judgement and responsibility, of awe and wonder and of grace.<sup>35</sup> It is in this coming together of religious and ethical that life and meaning become conjoined, that life is seen to be value-laden. From this point we gradually diverge in our various ways of assessing good/bad, right/wrong. Our ways of seeing evolve and we adopt certain primary frameworks such as that of revealed religion, or science, or humanism, no one of which can be ultimately proved to be a better system of judgment than the other except by passionate persuasion.<sup>36</sup> Newman confirms this when he says: '...I say plainly I do not want to be converted by a smart syllogism; if I am asked to convert

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<sup>33</sup> Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, (London, 1994), pps 225-226

<sup>34</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', in *Philosophy*, 33:124, pps 1-16. This religion of morality without God is something Newman specifically speaks against, condemning it as part of post-enlightenment over rationalisation which falls far short of doing justice to the full expanse of human nature. (*GA*, p 308)

<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, T. Klein, *Wittgenstein and the Metaphysics of Grace*, (Oxford, 2007), Preface xii, suggests that Wittgenstein is the one who can 'save us from bewitchment by the word 'grace''. Klein understands 'grace' to mean an encounter between the human and the Divine and finds in Wittgenstein's thought reference to such an encounter at the point where we run up against the boundaries of language. On our side of this encounter, where the Divine touches the world through the word, is an act of perception of God. It carries with it an awareness of the gift of the other that reverberates with Levinas also.

<sup>36</sup> See B. Plant, *Wittgenstein and Levinas Ethical and Religious Thought*, (Oxon, 2005), pps 63-69 for a full discussion of the 'process of persuasion' which comes to the fore when giving reasons comes to an end.

others by it I say plainly I do not care to overcome their reason without touching their hearts'<sup>37</sup> while Wittgenstein admits that:

...if I am to be REALLY saved, what I need is *certainty* – not wisdom, dreams or speculation – and this certainty is faith. And faith is faith in what is needed by my *heart*, my *soul*, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul with its passions, as it were with its flesh and blood, that has to be saved, not my abstract mind.'<sup>38</sup>

Hence passion, or 'heart' rather than logic is central to our deepest sense of value, and rhetoric, as 'heart speaking to heart' to quote Newman, is the natural vehicle of ethical and religious dialogue. This kind of passion drives people to martyrdom or to an ascetic life and is witnessed in science for example by Galileo, or philosophy, by Socrates, as much as it is in the life of the religious believer who with his whole heart believes Jesus the Nazarene to be the way, truth and life. The point here is that there is a point where all ways move beyond epistemologies. *After* epistemologies, ways of seeing, there begins the passionate quest for truth.

### 5.5 Ways of Seeing God

Newman's way was to make religion the 'integrative existential factor' of his 'own reality as [a] continuously thinking and morally growing person'<sup>39</sup> Newman sees the revelation of Christianity to be the natural progression from this first position granted us by nature and this is where his passion leads him. Through his interest in the early church he follows the recorded experiences of the earliest witnesses and lovers of the Christian life and in general embraces the theology that comes from this, although always with a wariness which appreciates the catachrestic margins of such talk and reserves a special place for individual experience. As was discussed in *An Essay on The Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman has a fluid and evolutionary understanding of Christian truth. All theological positions have a part to play in bringing this truth to light, and this may involve the death of certain beliefs which were once so convincing. Changing belief, which as *GA* shows has no bearing on our certitude in particular time and context, is as much a component of theology as the

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<sup>37</sup> *GA*, p 330

<sup>38</sup> *C&V*, 38e

<sup>39</sup> Lawrence Barmann, 'Theological Inquiry in an Authoritarian Church', in Magill, G., *Discourse and Context*, (Illinois, 1993) p 189.

fixedness offered by dogma. That Newman felt like this is brought to light particularly in his approach to the question of Papal Infallibility where he resisted the attempts to petrify an authority that heretofore was accepted and responded to in a devotional way.<sup>40</sup> But it is fair to say that Newman accepts Catholic theology and explanatory talk about the being of God, while retaining his indelible sense of the primacy of the individual's experience over all dogma. His investigation into his beliefs, carried out against the firm backdrop of belief in God, convince him that the Catholic Church is the bearer and protector of the true message of Christ and for the sake of this he accepts all that comes with adopting its framework. As part of his commitment to the truth he 'submits to an authority', something Wittgenstein also recognised as integral to a heartfelt belief.<sup>41</sup> Newman notes:

When once the mind is broken in, as it must be, to the belief of a Power above it, when once it understands that it is not itself the measure of all things in heaven and earth, it will have little difficulty in going forward...I say that, when once it believes in God, the great obstacle to faith has been taken away, a proud, self-sufficient spirit...<sup>42</sup>

Wittgenstein is recorded as both admiring and criticising Newman.<sup>43</sup> It is clear that what he did admire about *GA* was its sincere style and its attempts to see further than traditional logic would permit in understanding belief. What he criticised was in the main to do with Newman's theology; for example, Bouwsma gives us an account of Wittgenstein's critical assessment of Newman's attempt to literally explain a recorded miracle involving Christian men who spoke after their tongues had been cut out. It is precisely this type of explanation that goes against the devotional understanding of religious belief which is being discussed and while Newman gives us, in *GA*, a broader account of what is rational he is not always consistent himself in his separation of scientific and religious modes! Drury recounts Wittgenstein's expression of both his respect for Newman's 'sincerity' and his dislike for the manner in which Newman

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<sup>40</sup> Ian Kerr, 2009, *John Henry Newman*, pps 651-693. Also Barmann, 1993, in Magill, G., pps 181-206.

<sup>41</sup> *C&V*, 1998, p 45e.

<sup>42</sup> *GA*, p 385. It is worthwhile referring back to Paul Engelmann's poem quoted in full on pps 15-16 herein to get an idea of just how similar Newman and Wittgenstein are on certain points of understanding of the human relationship to God.

<sup>43</sup> W. Kienzler, 'Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman On Certainty' in *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 2006:71, pps 117-138 gives a thorough account of various conversations and comments to Drury, Smythies, Malcolm, and finally O. K. Bouwsma from whose notes the account of Wittgenstein's criticism of Newman's explanation of miracles is taken.

'preached to his friends at Littlemore'.<sup>44</sup> Kienzler concludes his article in part with the comment that 'Wittgenstein fundamentally disagreed with Newman's views on religion...' and it would be hard to argue with this, however, it could perhaps be softened by the consideration that Wittgenstein would have understood and admired Newman's *commitment* as a practicing Catholic. Wittgenstein conceives of God in a way that permits him to enter a discussion on religious belief.<sup>45</sup> However his approach, as Plant notes, is to protect the name of God in the Hebrew sense, rather than explain it away or make ineffability claims.<sup>46</sup> Everything that can be said, can be said. God can be said so there is no question of the failure of words here but God cannot be *explained* as another object in the world. He can be related to and at best, the relationship described or witnessed through the responses of the believer. As is supported by his writings elsewhere Wittgenstein's remarks on the topic of certainty contribute to making his ethical and religious position *manifest*. Taken in conjunction with other works they show his profound respect for the religious and devotional human being and for the commitments which guide him to live a meaningful life. Just as he prefers the simple 'huts' of the Gospels to the 'church' to be found in the writings of St. Paul, Wittgenstein respectfully resists dogmatic religion and the accompanying over-explanation he sees in Christian theology.<sup>47</sup> As he notes: 'A theology which insists on the use of certain particular words and phrases, and outlaws others, does not make anything clearer.'<sup>48</sup> Life, which brings us to the Divine in the first place, has the potential to lead us further into God and the (synonymous) good, without the necessity for transcendent descriptions or intellectual proofs. As in *OC*, in the case of religious belief his focus remains on the life and the very real and relevant experiences of God that happen there.

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<sup>44</sup> In *'The Danger of Words...'* (Bristol, 1996), p 130.

<sup>45</sup> Bob Plant, 2004, 'The Wretchedness of Belief...', p 451, compares Wittgenstein's religious position to that of Tolstoy who notes in dismay his lack of 'relationship' with God despite his 'recognition of the existence of God'.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p 462, reminds us that while both 'Wittgenstein's early work' and its 'appropriation by the Logical Positivists' ...'might be said to have placed God under erasure, for Wittgenstein such a "boundary line" ...was not a mark of disavowal, but rather a way of protecting the term "God".'

<sup>47</sup> *C&V*, 1998, 35e

<sup>48</sup> *C&V*, 97e.

What Wittgenstein is aware of is what Plant terms 'the full existential weight' of Christian belief.<sup>49</sup> This is not to follow Feuerbach by positing God made in the image of man, but rather to refuse to evade the ethical demands following the experience of God by pursuing a process of intellectualisation which must remain on the level of the theoretical. This is in keeping with his view of Philosophy as therapy. Philosophy of religion in Wittgenstein's picture, we might say, is a type of clarity-therapy, which asks us to recognise when our words don't make anything clearer but our actions just might. All that said, it is important to make clear here that theology is part of religious life and practice, contributing to the first principles or hinges around which religious life rotates. It would be inaccurate to put religious belief and theology in opposition and Wittgenstein does not do this. Once again, he reminds us to pay attention to our ideals, and to the formation of our rules. They must be open to change from the ground up. His objection, therefore, can be seen as similar to Newman's regarding the Doctrine of Infallibility; it is an objection to petrification at the level of the rule. There are timely warnings here for a church with a tendency to fear which shows itself in precisely this way. Newman and Wittgenstein share a fluid and progressive understanding of truth which let us see that this kind of fear is the ontological opposite of truth.

While they may share this view of truth, there is ultimately an unbridgeable divide in their approaches to God. While Newman goes the way of revealed religion Wittgenstein's path to God is still being beaten out. Maurice O'Connor Drury makes an interesting comment to the effect that Wittgenstein and Simone Weil have been the two most profound influences on his life.<sup>50</sup> What is shared by both of these philosophers is a profoundly ethical spirituality which refuses to be moved from its utter commitment to the intrinsic value of human life while yet being aware of this life as wholly gifted. It is a spirituality that struggles internally against pride and externally against the effects of pride, the conquering ego. There are those who see both

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<sup>49</sup> Plant, 2004, p. 452. I think this phrase is to the area of religious understanding what Heidegger's phrase 'the failure of being to protrude into language' is to understanding in general.

<sup>50</sup> O'Connor Drury, M, 1996, *The Danger of Words* ...p. 98. For further evidence of the Weil-Wittgenstein connection see also R. Rhees, *Discussions of Simone Weil*, (New York, 2000) and P. Winch, *Simone Weil, The Just Balance*, (Cambridge, 1989).

philosophers as mystics.<sup>51</sup> For sure, Wittgenstein's approach to God veers on the side of the Pseudo-Dionysian and apophatic. He does not want us to try and say who God is, even if God is something we acknowledge as the outcome of an experience: 'In short, one's application of "the word" 'God' does not show *whom* you mean – but rather *what* you mean.'<sup>52</sup> But while he talked about experiences of the Divine he was not interested in investigating this experience to arrive at knowledge of God, or to move somehow deeper into God. He notes the fact that he did not have a personal relationship with God as a point of difference between himself and the religious believer.<sup>53</sup> It seems that, apart from the ethical focus shared with Weil and maybe Kierkegaard, without considerations of knowledge of God or communion with God, in terms of fitting into the tradition Wittgenstein stands ancestor-less in the realm of religion also. If this is the case, he certainly has not stood useless, inspiring a wealth of discussion in both the philosophy of religion and in theology. Perhaps in the end his very non-place within the tradition makes him a perfect instrument of the *via negativa* insofar as his words cast an illuminating darkness on all our ways of conceiving God.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Following Hume's attack on religious belief and the enlightenment understanding of progress generally the idea was formed that we human beings could and should move beyond such superstition; that to look for explanation and proof was the only position suited to the rational human being. The fact that the capacity for religious belief is within the sphere of what is *reasonable* for every human being is restored by the views of natural religious experience put forward by both Newman and Wittgenstein. As both understand it, in the natural dialogue of conscience there arises simultaneously the awareness of God and the intuition of justice. Through this awareness a sense of the potential value of all we do comes into play and ethics, religion and meaning are irrevocably bound together. That each understands religious belief to be something that has a real impact on how the believer lives his life, rather than submission to a set

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<sup>51</sup> See for example S. D. Moringiello, 'Kataphasis, Apophasis and Mysticism in Pseudo Denys and Wittgenstein', in *New Blackfriars*, 2003, 84:987, pps 220– 229. Also E. Stanley B. Fronda, *Wittgenstein's (Misunderstood) Religious Thought*, (Leiden, 2010), reviewed by B. Clack in *Religious Studies*, 48:2, June 2012, pps 269-273 ; J. R. Atkinson, *The Mystical in Wittgenstein's Early Writings*, (Oxon, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> C&V, 58e

<sup>53</sup> B. Plant, *Levinas and Wittgenstein Ethical and Religious Thought*, (Oxon, 2005), pps 101-121

of rules, supports the point about concern for the role of the ideal discussed in the previous chapter. In the area of religious belief as in other areas of enquiry, an awareness of the dynamic and dialogic formation of our first principles is shown to be vital to ensuring that individual experience continues to impact on the progress toward truth. Clearly then, the ethics of enquiry emerging from this thesis' reading of *GA* and *OC* has elements of application to the enquiry into religious belief. In terms of the tradition of talk about God in philosophy and theology, there remains a deep divide between the approach of Newman and that of Wittgenstein. It is a divide which suggests that the encroaching of the secular and the divide between religion and spirituality has more to do with a resistance to naming God than to anything more fundamental. This resistance may be a kind of caving in under positivistic peer pressure which results in the kind of sublimation of the religious which we experience in some twentieth century phenomenology.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand it may be a genuine, cultural apophysis; an evolutionary clearing of obstacles as part of a striving toward a purer encounter with the radically Unknown; neither seems to fully capture Wittgenstein's approach which leaves knowing out of the question altogether, instead trusting in the ethical life to make God manifest. God is in the spirit in which we do; in us in the doing and in the world in what is done. Certainly, the Newman-Wittgenstein divide on this point merits further discussion beyond the scope of this thesis and it seems clear that Wittgenstein's unique perspective will continue to shed new light on the thought of Newman and other key figures within the tradition, both scholastic and contemporary, for some time to come.

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<sup>54</sup> This sublimation or apophysis begins in Heidegger and is especially felt in the work of Derrida. See John D Caputo, 1997, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*, (Indiana,1997) also Denis McManus, 'Heidegger, Wittgenstein and St. Paul on the Last Judgment: On the Roots and Significance of the "Theoretical Attitude"' forthcoming in the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 2012.

## Conclusion

From its conception this thesis was ambitious in its scope and founded almost as much on instinct and a sense of adventure as on research evidence. At this point therefore it is satisfying to be able to say that it has succeeded in its three main aims; firstly, by providing a pragmatic and organic account of the manner in which our beliefs are founded it has shifted the understanding of certainty from an epistemological to an ontological basis that more accurately reflects human life and practice. Secondly by shining light on similarities in the thought of Newman and Wittgenstein it has evidenced Newman's significance as a philosopher with a considerable amount to contribute to contemporary issues in epistemology and ethics, whose thought encompasses many areas of philosophical tradition from scholasticism to pragmatism and through to phenomenology and hermeneutics. The work done here has also acknowledged important links between the two philosophers and key figures in the continental tradition, more specifically Heidegger, Derrida and Levinas. Worthwhile further research on this topic would most certainly include in the case of Newman at least, an expansion of these connections which could only be touched on here. Thirdly, in its treatment of certainty and religious belief this thesis has explored the input of a religious mind-set to philosophical understanding and challenged a more rigid view of what comprises such a mind-set in a way that can only be beneficial in a post-modern world which strives to embrace natural variety and difference. In addition this study has raised the question of the role and function of conscience both as a natural source of personal authority and as a pointer to something transcendent which can contribute significantly to the living out of a meaningful life.

If these are the major conclusions there are several minor outcomes which also deserve to be mentioned here. This work has successfully employed a bio-critical approach which has allowed for a more holistic interpretation of the key works. The inclusion of biographical details has made a worthwhile contribution to the account of similarities between the two philosophers and has helped to promote the notion of congruence between life and thought which is an important focus of *GA* and *OC*.

Newman and Wittgenstein's explorations of certainty taken together propose a broad and multifaceted account of reason which more aptly depicts the rational human being in all his many 'forms of life'. This view can stand against more universalising accounts which promote colonisation and inequality. As discussed in the penultimate chapter the parallel reading of *GA* and *OC* undertaken here also witnesses the emergence of a methodology for ethical enquiry which is open to being used as a philosophical tool going forward. It has the therapeutic value of retrieving us philosophers from the winding mazes of our own making and from the more fruitless sceptical anxieties into which they lead.

Finally, this reading of Newman and Wittgenstein promotes a renewed sense of awe and wonder at us human beings, at our capacities and our ways of life. Both philosophers remind us that our rational, emotional and devotional parts do not work in isolation and that our philosophical reflections need to be mindful of this unity. They appreciate our historical nature while reminding us to look and look and see life events in a way that neither diminishes nor tries to transcend their possibilities. Leading by example both philosophers stress the importance of continued questioning into our ways of life, our methods and assumptions, but in a way that supports rather than impedes what comes most naturally to us. Our manner of trusting which has been brought to the fore in this research indicates that we are by nature made to use ourselves up rather than think ourselves up, an idea which calls Simone Weil's notion of de-creation to mind. This is not to dispute the value of philosophical contemplation but to stress that there are points, which we can become aware of, where it becomes useless.

A final word on the topic of certainty: what Newman and Wittgenstein together communicate through this study is that our certainty happens in the unified human life, where all the parts of the person which we separate upon reflection come together, where what we expect mostly happens and what we recognise mostly turns out to be what we require it to be. Well before any question of justification our certainty is founded in the consistency and trust that comprises the biggest part of our daily lives.

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