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# The Influence of Aristotelian Rhetoric on J.H. Newman's Epistemology

**Abstract:** The article examines the influence of Aristotelian rhetorical theory on the epistemology of Newman. This influence is established on historical grounds and by similarity of content. Specifically, the article sheds light on how the rhetorical notions of ethos, logos, and pathos are all implicitly incorporated into Newman's theory of knowledge concerning the concrete. The section on rhetorical ethos focuses on Newman's appeal to the "prudent man." Concerning logos, particular attention is paid to the rhetorical enthymeme and in what sense Newman's method of argument (Informal and Natural Inference) can justifiably be described as enthymematic. Pathos, in turn, is shown to be significant for the way in which Newman views the subjective dimension of the individual's coming to knowledge. The rhetorical rationality that emerges sets the stage for clarifying, in another context, other more theological themes in Newman's writings, such as his religious apologetic, his understanding of tradition, and even his Christology.

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## 1 Introduction

In his *An Essay in the Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870), Newman tried to justify the claim that believers without knowledge of arguments for their faith are nevertheless reasonable in assenting to that faith. Engaging the rationalists and the agnostics, Newman attempted to illustrate that even the educated person's faith does not ultimately rely on textbook syllogisms, but rather "on personal reasonings and implicit workings of the mind, which cannot be adequately put into words."<sup>1</sup> Newman's Oratorian confrère in Birmingham, Edward Caswall (1814–1878), sums up Newman's intentions with his notes scribbled in his copy of the *Grammar* after a conversation with Newman: "Object of the book twofold. In the first part shows that you can believe what you cannot understand. In the second part that you can

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<sup>1</sup> Father Zeno, *John Henry Newman: Our Way to Certitude. An Introduction to Newman's Psychological Discovery: The Illative Sense, and his Grammar of Assent* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), 11.

believe what you cannot absolutely prove."<sup>2</sup> To this end, Newman's *Grammar* elucidates three different kinds of reasoning or 'Inference': Formal, Informal, and Natural. Formal Inference is synonymous with deductive logic and can be reducible to syllogisms.<sup>3</sup> The more subtle and complex kind of reasoning is Informal Inference, which involves a cumulation of probabilities, and whose *terminus* does not actually entail the conclusion (like a syllogism does), but rather points to it, just like a polygon that is inscribed in a circle tends ever closer to the 'limit' of the circle as the quantity of its sides increases.<sup>4</sup> Natural Inference, finally, is that kind of instinctual reasoning that relies most on first-hand experience, like the 'weather-wise peasant' who can predict the weather without necessarily giving scientific reasons.<sup>5</sup> There exists, according to Newman, a perfection of mind which enables the individual to judge the verity of the propositions that express the conclusions of these various forms of Inference, many of which concern contingents or concrete realities. This virtue is the Illative Sense.

In order to more thoroughly understand Newman's Illative Sense and how Newman conceives of the mind's capacity to judge and therefore acquire knowledge about concrete matters, it would be helpful to situate Newman's thought not only in its historical, but also its philosophical context. Bearing in mind the multiple strands of philosophical influences running throughout Newman's writings,<sup>6</sup> we shall focus on the Aristotelian strand. In the end, exploring the Aristotelian influence of the *Rhetoric* on Newman's theory of judgment will serve to highlight a real, explicit, and central influence on Newman's thought.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Caswall quoted in Charles Dessain, *John Henry Newman* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980), 148.

<sup>3</sup> *G. A.*, 264. All references to Newman's works refer to the Longmans uniform edition unless otherwise noted and are abbreviated according to the convention established by Joseph Rickaby's *Index to the Works of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914).

<sup>4</sup> *G. A.*, 320–321.

<sup>5</sup> *G. A.*, 332.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Sillem, *The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman, Volume 1*, ed. Edward Sillem, 2 vols. (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1969–70). Hereafter, *P. N.*, I and *P. N.*, II. The first volume is an introduction to Newman's philosophical thought written by Sillem; the second volume is Newman's notebook, edited by Sillem.

<sup>7</sup> I am not examining Newman's skills as a rhetorician, nor trying to point out the rhetorical elements of the works themselves. (W. Jost and E. Corbett have done this.) What is of relevance here is the rhetorical (and in the broader picture, dialectical) dimension of Newman's conception of reason.

## 2 Newman's appreciation of Aristotle and the *Rhetoric*

Newman's first in-depth encounter with Aristotle was as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Oxford. The Classics degree for which Newman studied, at the time, included Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Poetics*. Oxford itself was then under the influence of Richard Whately,<sup>8</sup> whose academic career there was characterized by, among other things, an attempt to restore the prominence of Aristotle in the Oxford curriculum.<sup>9</sup> Newman came under Whately's influence when the former became a fellow at Oriel College in 1822 and, later, vice-principal of St. Alban Hall (under Whately) in 1825. Newman was very conscious of how very indebted to Whately he was.<sup>10</sup> The extent and nature of Whately's influence on Newman's thought is increasingly being uncovered and clarified.<sup>11</sup>

This influence, however, was not unidirectional. There exists evidence to suggest that Newman might have had a hand in some of the passages of Whately's own *Elements of Rhetoric*, just as he did in Whately's *Elements of Logic*.<sup>12</sup> Whether this is incontrovertible or not, it is indisputable that not only Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*, but Aristotle's own *Rhetoric* was formative for Newman. Newman was not only familiar with, but, I argue, deeply imbued with

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**8** Richard Whately (1787–1863) was a fellow at Oriel College, Oxford from 1811 to 1821. He was principal of St. Alban Hall in 1825 (at which time Newman was a fellow at Oriel), and made bishop of Dublin in 1831. He was a leading figure among the "Oriel Noetics." For more information on Whately, see Richard Brent, "Whately, Richard (1787–1863)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edition, May 2006. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29176>]. Accessed 4 Dec 2013.

**9** See A. Dwight Culler, *The Imperial Intellect: A Study of Cardinal Newman's Educational Ideal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 39.

**10** *Apo.* 111–119. Cf. Newman's letter to Whately of 14 November 1826 (*L. D.*, I, 307). Newman and Whately's friendship cooled during the 1830's due to theological and political differences.

**11** See, for example, Geertjan Zuidwegt, "Richard Whately's Influence on John Henry Newman's Oxford University Sermons on Faith and Reason (1839–1840)," *Newman Studies Journal* 10/1 (2013): 82–95. Zuidwegt brings to bear the relationship between antecedent probability and evidences on an understanding of faith as a kind of inference (or reason).

**12** Ray E. McKerrow, "'Method of Composition': Whately's Earliest 'Rhetoric,'" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 11 (1978): 43–58; Edward P.J. Corbett, "Some Rhetorical Lessons from John Henry Newman," *College Composition and Communication* 31 (1980), 402–411, p. 402. There is no doubt that Newman was instrumental in the composition of Whately's *Elements of Logic* (London: J. Mawman, 1827). See p. vi of the preface.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Edward Sillem writes that Newman "retained throughout his life a special affection for the *Rhetoric*."<sup>14</sup>

The first signs of Newman's reading Aristotle's *Rhetoric* come in 1819. In December of that year, Newman writes to his sister, Jemima, that he has been studying "the beauties of the *Rhetoric*" and mentions a self-professed "proficiency in the lessons" of the "great man" (Aristotle).<sup>15</sup>

Later, in 1823, as a fellow at Oriel, in a verse that Newman pens, again to Jemima, the *Rhetoric* features among those works which his best pupils read.<sup>16</sup> One of Newman's pupils, Thomas Mozley (1806–1893), in 1825, mentions how Whately's 'Rhetoric' is preparatory to his study of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which his tutor, Newman, "strongly recommends."<sup>17</sup> Still later, in 1839, there is evidence of Newman having recommended Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to W. H. Anderdon (1816–1890), who, apparently, was rather disappointed in it. Newman responded:

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13 As a point of departure and a substantiation of my claims, I am indebted to the very helpful study by Walter Jost, *Rhetorical Thought in John Henry Newman* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989). Jost has argued that rhetorical reasoning mirrors informal reasoning (as dialectic follows formal reasoning). Further points of departure for Newman's indebtedness to the *Rhetoric* include the second chapter in Angelo Bottone, *The Philosophical Habit of Mind: Rhetoric and Person in John Henry Newman's Dublin Writings* (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2010), esp. 59–89. *L. D.*, II, 264, where Newman mentions *ethos* as the determinant of practical matters; *L. D.*, IV, 356, in a letter by Whately to Newman acknowledging that they "consulted together about so many practical measures and about almost all the principal points in my [his] publications"; *John Henry Newman: Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Henry Tristram (London: Sheed & Ward, 1956), 67: "It was a peculiarity of Whately to compose his books by the medium of other brains"; Franz Michel William, *Die Erkenntnislehre Kardinal Newmans* (Bergen-Enkheim bei Frankfurt: Verlag Gerhard Kaffke, 1969), 66–7.

14 *P. N.*, I, 151. From now on, 'rhetoric', unless italicized, is always referring (not to the text, but) to the art of rhetoric as conceived by Aristotle, using, as the text for all subsequent quotations, the W. Rhys Roberts translation found in *The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle*, with introduction by Edward P. J. Corbett (New York: Random House, 1984).

15 From Newman to Jemima, 10 December 1819, *L. D.*, I, 70. Cf. *L. D.*, I, 64. Newman's enthusiasm will wane, as he will put aside Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, thereby relinquishing any chance that he had for a 'first class' mark, in order to focus on other subjects that demand his attention. He will ultimately receive only a 'third class' for his degree.

16 *L. D.*, I, 164 (19 May 1823).

17 *L. D.*, I, 306n. Originally in *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman During His Life in the English Church*, ed. Anne Mozley (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1903), I, 116. Mozley is most likely referring to some manuscript of, or the actual copy of, Whately's article, 'Rhetoric' in the *Encyclopedia Metropolitana*. This article, in turn, was further developed and published as *Elements of Rhetoric* (Oxford: J. Parker, 1828).

I recollect being very much disappointed when I first read it – having heard a great deal of it – and I could not bear it as an Undergraduate. I saw nothing in it (except the part about the passions) – But what I meant when I praised it, and what has grown on me about it is this, that it is a sort of analysis of one's ordinary thoughts, doings, plans etc. I mean there are more sayings, principles, τόποι and the like in one's common talk out of the *Rhetoric* than any other book.<sup>18</sup>

Here, Newman is articulating the *practical* dimension of the *Rhetoric* that appeals to him.

Finally, in 1874, Newman recalls that his reflections on the *Logic* and *Rhetoric* in his examination papers (as an examiner in Oxford) anticipated what he was arguing in the *Grammar*.<sup>19</sup> More will be said of the relationship between Aristotle and Newman's epistemology below. Now, however, it is enough to note Newman's familiarity and high regard for Aristotle and this particular text.

Not only does Newman explicitly cite texts from the *Rhetoric*, as he does, for example, when he summarizes and defends liberal education and knowledge,<sup>20</sup> but he is also at home in the technical language of Aristotelian rhetoric, as when Newman asserts that “an enthymeme fulfils the requirements of what I have called Inference.”<sup>21</sup> Our point-of-departure in this current article is a passage from one of Newman's *University Sermons*:

Faith, then, as being a principle for the multitude and for conduct, is influenced more by what (in language familiar to us of this place) are called *εἰκότα* [*eikota*] than by *σημεῖα* [*sēmeia*], – less by evidence, more by previously-entertained principles, views, and wishes.<sup>22</sup>

*Eikota*, commonly translated as Probabilities, and *Sēmeia*, translated as Signs or evidences, are staple concepts of Aristotelian rhetoric. These two dimensions roughly mirror two out of Aristotle's three main points of persuasion in the *Rhetoric*: *ethos* (the moral and intellectual character of the speaker), *pathos* (the emotional state of the hearers, but here expanded to the general subjectivity of the individual), and *logos* (the *argument* itself, including reasons and evidences supplied in the persuasion). *Eikota* and *Sēmeia* correspond, roughly, to the latter

<sup>18</sup> *L. D.*, VII, 139 (9 September 1839).

<sup>19</sup> *L. D.*, XXVII, 80.

<sup>20</sup> *Idea*, 109.

<sup>21</sup> *G. A.*, 263.

<sup>22</sup> *U. S.*, 188. That Newman attaches these categories to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is beyond doubt, for in 1847, in his attempt to emphasize the 'Oxfordian' (and, hence, pre-Catholic) character of the sermons, Newman, in his set of amendments to what would become the French translation of some of his *University Sermons*, points to this very passage, writing, “p. 180 [188] *εἰκότα* vid. Aristotle's *Rhetoric*” (*L. D.*, XII, 31).

two, respectively. Ethos also has an important role to play in Newman's thought, and corresponds to the epistemological weight Newman gives to the opinions of the 'prudent man'. Hence, the following discussion will be divided into three sections: (1) a section on *ethos* which will briefly explore the Illative Sense's relationship to the prudent man, especially regarding the issue of an inquiry; (2) a section on *logos*, or argumentation, which will explain the rhetorical element of the Illative Sense during the course of an inquiry; and finally (3) a section on *pathos* which will discuss the Illative Sense's acquisition of certain presuppositions or starting-points at the beginning of an inquiry. But before we delve into these three sections, a few general observations should be made about Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and why Newman found its employment to be advantageous for what he was trying to achieve.

## 2.1 Rhetoric and the contingent, concrete, and circumstantial

At the outset, the most obvious, and perhaps most important, aspect of rhetoric that appeals to Newman is its concern with the concrete, or, in Aristotle's words, its "observing *in any given case* the available means of persuasion."<sup>23</sup>

Key to understanding how one reasons about concrete matters according to Aristotle is the distinction between the demonstrative and the dialectic.<sup>24</sup> In the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle treats the syllogism under its formal aspect (the necessary connection between the conclusion and the premises) and the material aspect (the content and verity of the premises), respectively.<sup>25</sup> Scientific demonstration occurs when the matter of the syllogism, or the premises, are certain, true, and primary (essential).<sup>26</sup> Such a demonstrative syllogism gives one *episteme*, or scientific knowledge, or knowledge of a thing's causes; the method is merely expository and deals with the necessary and invariable; the typical example for this kind of Aristotelian science is geometrical proof. When, however,

<sup>23</sup> My emphasis. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355b 25.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Sister Miriam Joseph, *The Trivium: The Liberal Arts of Logic, Grammar, and Rhetoric: Understanding the Nature and Function of Language*, ed. Marguerite McGlinn (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2002), 226.

<sup>25</sup> Sr. Joseph, *The Trivium*, 130–2. All quotations from the *Organon* are from *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, vol. 1, ed. W. D. Ross et al., 12 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>26</sup> Robin Smith, "Aristotle's Logic," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, [encyclopedia online]; <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/aristotle-logic/> [accessed 22 September 2011]; Sister Joseph, *The Trivium*, 226.

the matter treated is not certain knowledge, but opinion – or when the matter (which is expressed in premises) is probable and contingent rather than certain and necessary, then dialectic is the method used.

In dialectic, there are multiple views on a given question which are reasonable and probable, but not incontrovertible.<sup>27</sup> According to Aristotle, “Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic.”<sup>28</sup> Both dialectic and rhetoric are similar in that they treat of concrete, contingent questions to which the answers are not logically demonstrable. Historical judgments – considered, here, as an ‘answer’ to a historical question – for example, involve just such contingent subject matter (e. g., events shaped by decisions made by human person’s who, presumably, *could have* acted otherwise). Considering Newman as a historian helps explain, then, his predilection for intellectual instruments that deal with questions to which there is no *necessary* and *demonstrable* answer.<sup>29</sup>

Rhetoric, however, can be said to be, in a sense, ‘more concrete’ than dialectic simply due to its practical application. Rather than considering a philosophical question for its own sake in the form of a typical *disputatio*, the rhetor aims for some action: either to accuse or defend, to praise or blame, or to exhort or dehort. This, of course, follows Aristotle’s scheme in the *Rhetoric*, according to which he classifies the various kinds of oratory: forensic (judicial) whose time province is the past, epideictic (demonstrative) whose time province is the present, and deliberative (political), whose time province is the future.<sup>30</sup> Newman, in his illustrative examples of Informal Inference, mimics this structure of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*: “Let us take three instances belonging respectively to the present, the past, and the future.”<sup>31</sup> Just as the art of rhetoric is employed for various purposes in conjunction with various time provinces, so the human mind thinks and employs its own methods according to the particular work it sets out to do.

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<sup>27</sup> Aristotle treats dialectic chiefly in his *Topics*. See the brief summary of it in Sister Joseph, *The Trivium*, 226.

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1354a, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Placing the *Grammar*’s main thrust thoroughly in the dialectical (as opposed to the scientific) realm is Newman’s quotation: “[...] so an intellectual question may strike two minds very differently, may awaken in them distinct associations, may be invested by them in contrary characteristics, and lead them to opposite conclusions; – and so, again, a body of proof, or a line of argument, may produce a distinct, nay, a dissimilar effect, as addressed to one or to the other” (G. A., 302).

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle presents the three kinds of oratory in Book I, Chapter 3 and treats of them individually in Chapters 8, 9, and 10.

<sup>31</sup> G. A., 294. Newman then continues to show how Informal Inference is exercised in order to establish (1) that Great Britain is indeed an island (present), (2) that Virgil did indeed compose the *Aeneid* (past), and (3) that we indeed shall die (future).

The influence of the *Rhetoric* is also manifest in Newman's constant use of forensic allusions in his writings, especially in the *Grammar*.<sup>32</sup> Even in his notebook, he writes, "On the scientific method compared with what may be called the personal. It is analogous to the legal."<sup>33</sup> Investigation into a question is like a trial, and the individual's mind is like a jury that has no choice but to judge.<sup>34</sup>

It ought not to be surprising that the scholar interested in historical questions and developments would also have an inclination toward oratory whose time province concerns the past. Newman's discussion of the *range* of the Illative Sense is full of *historical* examples and applications, such as when he describes the differing conclusions of historians,<sup>35</sup> or his criticism of Gibbon,<sup>36</sup> or the need to be able to rule out certain absurd propositions in historiography, lest we prevent ourselves from moving the investigation forward.<sup>37</sup>

Some of Newman's examples have a striking resemblance to Aristotle's, both in terms of their content, and in terms of what the examples try to convey. Newman's example of the consideration of the proposition, "We shall have a European war, for Greece is audaciously defying Turkey," is one such example.<sup>38</sup> In considering the approach to such a statement, Newman is teasing out how concrete circumstances eschew the imposition of the syllogism. Newman highlights the irreducibly particular details of the case which are requisite to making a judgment about war, and shows that,

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32 *G. A.*, 323: "But there may be a consistency in a theory so variously tried and exemplified as to lead to belief in it, as reasonably as a witness in a court of law may, after a severe cross-examination, satisfy and assure judge, jury, and the whole court, of his simple veracity." On 153–4 (184): "I may find it my duty, for instance, after the opportunity of careful inquiry and inference, to assent to another's inference, whom I have for years considered guilty." On 256–258 (324–326), Newman uses the example of a murder trial. On 262 (332), Newman refers to the lawyer "who 'would know, almost by instinct [...]' that the heroine was guilty" and the "experts and detectives [...] in cases whether of the civil or criminal law" exercising a "sagacity incomprehensible to ordinary men." On 291 (372), Newman refers to "some great lawyer, judge or advocate, who is able in perplexed cases [...] to detect the principle which rightly interprets the riddle."

33 *P. N.*, II, 126.

34 See Walter Jost's treatment of the relationship between logic and jurisprudence in Jost, *Rhetorical Thought in John Henry Newman*, 94–95.

35 *G. A.*, 363–371.

36 *G. A.*, 373.

37 *G. A.*, 376. Commenting on propositions such as "Noah has been considered the patriarch of the Chinese people," Newman writes, "These propositions, and many others of various kinds, we should think ourselves justified in passing over, if we were engaged in work on sacred history."

38 *G. A.*, 303–304.



To draw a scientific conclusion, the argument must run somewhat in this way: – ‘All audacious defiances of Turkey on the part of Greece must end in a European war; these present acts of Greece are such: ergo;’ – where the major premises [sic] is more difficult to accept than the conclusion, and the proof becomes an ‘obscurum per obscurius.’<sup>39</sup>

The example of war itself, in addition to the details one ought to consider and weigh, mirrors Aristotle’s treatment of war and peace in Book I, Ch. 4 of the *Rhetoric*. Aristotle’s elucidation of all the details, facts, histories, and proclivities with which it behooves the political orator to familiarize himself<sup>40</sup> echoes Newman’s own method which entails determining “the particular case by its particular circumstances.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Aristotle himself, a few paragraphs prior to his discussion of war and peace, admits the same shortcoming of scientific demonstration with regard to human affairs, such as war:

But the more we try to make either dialectic or rhetoric not, what they really are, practical faculties, but sciences, the more we shall inadvertently be destroying their true nature; for we shall be re-fashioning them and shall be passing into the region of sciences [...].<sup>42</sup>

## 2.2 The rhetorical *Organon* that transcends the scientific

Having illustrated the non-contentious claim that rhetoric (being a counterpart to dialectic) is utilized in concrete circumstances, what is left to show is Newman’s pressing interest in the concrete and particular, which would thereby exhibit one dimension of his Aristotelian frame of mind. Newman, in fact, invokes the “heathen moralist”, Aristotle, when the former describes the unavoidable confrontation with concrete circumstances:

In truth, nothing is more easy to the imagination than duty in the abstract, that is, duty in name and not in reality. It is when it assumes a definite and actual shape, when it comes upon us under circumstances (and it is obvious it can come in no other way), then it is difficult and troublesome. Circumstances are the very trial of obedience.<sup>43</sup>

Concrete circumstances, for Newman, are the great determinants in one’s path to knowledge. The hearer’s or thinker’s situated-ness when making a concrete

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<sup>39</sup> *G. A.*, 304.

<sup>40</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1359b, 34–1360a, 11.

<sup>41</sup> *G. A.*, 303.

<sup>42</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1359b, 12.

<sup>43</sup> *U. S.*, 8.

judgment, the speaker's situated-ness when proposing something or some thesis for another's assent, and ultimately, the situational character of history, its events, occurrences, tendencies, and fluxes and the impact of these on other individuals, on other Christians, on Ecumenical Councils, and on the Church's tradition, are what concern Newman. The *Rhetoric* of Aristotle is the work which deals, more than others, with this situational or circumstantial form of argumentation.

Many of Newman's writings, such as "The Tamworth Reading Room", seek out that which persuades, or that which convinces.<sup>44</sup> And this, in turn, belongs more precisely to the province of rhetoric. A look at Whately's teaching in *Elements of Rhetoric* might be helpful here. There, Whately writes that reasoning's objectives are twofold: "Inferring," and "Proving." The former is "the *ascertainment* of the truth by investigation"; the latter "the *establishment* of it to the satisfaction of *another*," and the latter, Whately asserts, belongs to the province of rhetoric.<sup>45</sup>

So when Newman points out the inadequacies of logic, by pleading for an "*organon* more delicate, versatile and elastic than verbal argumentation,"<sup>46</sup> he is, in fact, echoing that which Whately contends when he sets rhetoric (or proof or establishing the truth of something *to the satisfaction of another*) apart from inference. Whately writes, "In explaining therefore, and establishing the truth, he [the philosopher *qua* rhetor] may often have occasion *for rules of a different kind* from those employed in its discovery."<sup>47</sup> It is this distinction between inference and proof (assent) of Whately's that sheds light on Newman's remarks about logic: "Logic then does not really prove."<sup>48</sup> Logic provides a host

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44 See for example, "The Tamworth Reading Room" in *Discussion and Arguments*, 292–297.

45 Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Baxter for John Murray, 1830), 6–7. He continues, "and it was added, that to *infer* is to be regarded as the proper office of the Philosopher, or the Judge; – to *prove*, of the Advocate. It is not however to be understood that Philosophical works are to be excluded from the class to which Rhetorical rules are applicable; for the Philosopher who undertakes, by writing or speaking, to convey his notions to others, assumes, for the time being, the character of Advocate of the doctrines he maintains [...] And in doing this, he will not always find it expedient to adhere to the same course of reasoning by which his own discoveries were originally made; other arguments may occur to him afterwards, more clear, or more concise, or better adapted to the understanding of those he addresses. In explaining therefore, and establishing the truth, he may often have occasion for rules of a different kind from those employed in its discovery."

46 G. A., 271.

47 My emphasis. Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric*, 7.

48 G. A., 271.

of other services,<sup>49</sup> “but for *genuine proof* in concrete matter we require an *organon* more delicate, versatile, and elastic than verbal argumentation.”<sup>50</sup>

The lines of distinction are drawn by both Newman and Whately between ascertainment, discovery, and – properly so-called by Whately – ‘Inference’, on the one hand, and establishing and proof, on the other. Newman simply takes this distinction made by Whately in the *Elements* and applies it, or rather, extends the meaning of it, to serve his own purposes, all the while keeping the substantial meaning of the distinction intact. Where Whately contrasts Inference with Proving, Newman invests a substantial portion of the *Grammar* in contrasting Inference with Assent. For Whately, the crucial point of the distinction lies in whether or not we are concerned with establishing something to the *satisfaction* of another *person*.<sup>51</sup> In similar fashion, Newman’s Illative Sense is meant to determine at what point the Inferential evidences *satisfy* the mind, enabling the individual person to assent to a given proposition. Both Newman and Whately use the same word ‘Inference’ to denote the same meaning: argumentation in either its scientific (logically demonstrative) or contingent (dialectical) forms; they use different words, Proof and Assent, to denote, again, the same meaning: the point at which a person is satisfied with the evidence to the extent that he or she assents (or in rhetorical terms, is persuaded).<sup>52</sup>

It is my contention that Newman is using ‘organon’ here both in its general sense as an instrument for acquiring knowledge *and* in its more specific sense denoting Aristotle’s works on logic. Newman is contrasting the more ‘flexible’ organon with that of ‘verbal argumentation’ – synonymous with Inference – whose scientific form is Logic.<sup>53</sup> In concrete matters, Newman is exhorting us to

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49 Newman continues to describe the tasks of logic on 217 (271): “It enables us to join issue with others; it suggests ideas; it opens views; it maps out for us the lines of thought; it verifies negatively; it determines when differences of opinion are hopeless; and when and how far conclusions are probable.”

50 My emphasis. *G. A.*, 271.

51 Cf. *Idea*, 415: “Aristotle, then, in his celebrated treatise on Rhetoric, makes the very essence of the Art lie in the precise recognition of a hearer. It is a relative art, and in that respect differs from Logic, which simply teaches the right use of reason, whereas Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, which implies a person who is to be persuaded.”

52 The similarity is only a material one and, hence, the two terms are not completely synonymous. Newman would, for example, predicate ‘unconditional’ of Assent, but not of Proof.

53 The full quotation from *G. A.*, 263–264: “Verbal reasoning, of whatever kind as opposed to mental, is what I mean by inference, which differs from logic only inasmuch as logic is its scientific form. And it will be more convenient here to use the two words indiscriminately, for I shall say nothing about logic which does not in its substance also apply to inference.”

move beyond the Aristotelian *Organon* to a more flexible one.<sup>54</sup> Newman's call for a new 'organon' can be understood, not as a departure from, but as a result of, his acceptance of, and familiarity with, certain key elements of Aristotle and the classical tradition.<sup>55</sup> That is to say, as will become clearer below, a substantial portion of Newman's answer to scientific minds such as William Froude<sup>56</sup> and the liberals of the evidentialist school is to recover the classical Aristotelian distinctions between various forms of argument and apply them to the issues at hand. The scientific versus the dialectical is just such a distinction. Both kinds of argument have the potential to elicit in us the same, phenomenologically equivalent, certitude.<sup>57</sup> The primary difference or even "imperfection" of the arguments dealing with the contingent "arise out of its subject-matter and the nature of the case."<sup>58</sup> Much epistemological stagnancy can be avoided if we sufficiently differentiate between these two spheres. To do so requires that we refrain from approaching concrete questions with expectations of demonstrative resolution, when the best possible outcome is "moral certainty" that is achieved by way of dialectic or, more practically, rhetoric. Furthermore, we ought to appreciate, and appreciate by understanding better, the nature and capacity of that faculty of the human mind which is activated when confronted with concrete questions, i. e. the Illative Sense.

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54 The *Rhetoric* is not included in the *Organon*, or the collection of Aristotle's works on logic. (Though the distinction between the dialectical and demonstrative (i. e., scientific) is indeed present there, for example, in the *Topics*).

55 Newman's love for Cicero, as it manifested itself in the article written for the *Encyclopedia Metropolitana*, is one example of this. Cf. "Personal and Literary Character of Cicero," in *Historical Sketches I* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 239–300.

56 William Froude (1810–1879), brother of historian, James Anthony, and leader of the Oxford Movement, Richard Hurrell. William was an engineer and naval architect. He earned a first class in mathematics at Oxford (Oriel College) in 1831. Newman's composition of his *Grammar* was in large part the result of his ongoing correspondence with W. Froude on the reasonableness of faith and certainty based on limited evidence. See *Cardinal Newman and William Froude F. R. S.: A Correspondence*, edited with commentary by Gordon Huntington Harper (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1933).

57 Newman hints at this equivalence multiple times, this time, quoting from Vince, the Astronomer: "When these reasons, all upon different principles, are considered, they amount to a proof [...] which is as satisfactory to the mind as the most direct demonstration could be." Again, "the mind rests equally satisfied, as if the matter was strictly proved." Quotation in G. A., 319.

58 G. A., 323.

### 3 Ethos and the judgment of the prudent man

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle discusses the idea of the persuasive import of the rhetor's character in Book I, Chapter 2 and more specifically in Book II, Chapter 1. In the latter, he specifies what it takes for a man to possess *ethos*: it takes prudence (*phronesis*, or good sense), good moral character (*arête* or virtue), and goodwill (*eunoia*). The good man – the man of *ethos* – is well-intentioned, upright, and prudent. Aristotle writes something that Newman himself could have written (with the help of Corbett's English rendering of it):

We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided.<sup>59</sup>

Where opinions are divided and certainty impossible is the realm of dialectic, which, as has been stated, treats of contingent and particular things. Now it is precisely these contingencies, such as historical questions or even the verity of particular doctrines, that concern Newman. To tackle them, Newman has implicit recourse to *ethos* by explicitly invoking the prudent man.<sup>60</sup> Interestingly, for Cicero, who was also a key figure in Newman's intellectual development, the prudent man and the orator are "ideally the same."<sup>61</sup>

Because the Illative Sense's capacity to judge concerning particulars has already been discussed above, what is left for us is merely to unpack the importance Newman attaches to what he calls the *judicium prudentis viri*.<sup>62</sup> The prudent man's mind is characterized by a "practical expertness" which equips

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<sup>59</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1356a, 6–9. Cf. *Idea*, 408: "Hence it is that the great philosopher of antiquity, in speaking, in his Treatise on Rhetoric, of the various kinds of persuasives, which are available in the Art, considers the most authoritative of these to be that which is drawn from personal traits of an ethical nature evident in the orator; for such matters are cognizable by all men, and the common sense of the world decides that it is safer, where it is possible, to commit oneself to the judgment of men of character than to any considerations addressed merely to the feelings or to the reason." See also *Idea*, 329: "Orators and preachers are by their very profession known persons, and the personal is laid down by the Philosopher of antiquity as the source of their greatest persuasiveness."

<sup>60</sup> For Aristotle, the *ethos* of the orator comes through *during* the oration. Here, we interpret *ethos* more generally so as to include, for example, the reputation of one enjoyed *prior* to another's encounter with him or her.

<sup>61</sup> Victoria Ann Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 35. For Newman's indebtedness to Cicero, see Bottone, *The Philosophical Habit of Mind*, 89–102.

<sup>62</sup> *G. A.*, 317; 383.

him or her to be more likely to attain the correct conclusion than another who is a novice to the subject matter.<sup>63</sup> This becomes increasingly true the more abstruse the subject matter. The Latin axiom *Cuique in arte sua credendum est* [Each person in his or her own art or skill must be believed] is one of Newman's favorites.<sup>64</sup>

The pedagogically minded Newman is also aware of the highly personal element in transmitting ideas. Newman's insistence on the virtues of the tutorial system is based on the conviction that personal contact is indispensable to the pupil's holistic learning and development. Newman's exposition of his educational ideal reveals his concurrence with the "Philosopher of antiquity" according to whom the "personal" is the source of "greatest persuasiveness."<sup>65</sup>

Although an individual's probity is not emphasized by Newman in the *Grammar*, it is nevertheless present in other writings.<sup>66</sup> Holiness, Newman vows, is "irresistible" in persuasion. So important is a person's character that Aristotle goes so far as to describe it as that which can induce us to believe something without having heard any argument.<sup>67</sup> The concern here is the validity of arguments from authority. Of course, it is preferable to consult one's own self, provided one has the necessary acumen to judge of some matter; but excepting this, we turn to one who has what we lack: namely, experience in the subject matter. The two options are ultimately the same, the second simply being a more indirect variation on the first.

We judge for ourselves, by our own lights, and on our own principles; and our criterion of truth is not so much the manipulation of propositions, as the intellectual and moral character of the person maintaining them, and the ultimate silent effect of his arguments or conclusions upon our minds.<sup>68</sup>

## 4 Logos and the course of an inquiry

In the section describing the Illative Sense in action during the course of an inquiry, one is struck by the brevity of this section relative to the others which treat of the start and issue of the inquiry. Moreover, Newman says little about

<sup>63</sup> *The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Faith and Certainty*, ed. Hugo M. de Achaval, J. Derek Holmes (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 22. Hereafter, *T. P.*

<sup>64</sup> He quotes this (or some variation of it) in *T. P.*, 22; *G. A.*, 341; *Idea*, 6; *Ess. I*, 230; 11, 40.

<sup>65</sup> *Idea*, 329.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *U. S.*, 92–95, on the "beauty and majesty of virtue."

<sup>67</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1378a, 7–8.

<sup>68</sup> *G. A.*, 302.

the course of an inquiry as such; rather, he chooses to *illustrate* its constituent elements through the example of a dispute among various scholars regarding their historical assessments of pre-historic Greece. Newman chooses to illustrate these elements by example rather than by systematically pin-pointing specific ones and analyzing them because Newman's entire theory of implicit reasoning would be undermined if he were to scientifically account for elements or factors affecting the arrangement, analysis, and assessment of premises in concrete situations. All that we find explicitly articulated by Newman are elements described variously as "assumptions spontaneously issuing out of the state of thought,"<sup>69</sup> "tacit understandings," "vague and impalpable notions of 'reasonableness',"<sup>70</sup> "critical feeling," "antecedent reasoning," "absolute persuasion,"<sup>71</sup> and "starting-points" and "collateral aids, not formally proved, but more or less assumed."<sup>72</sup> At the root of these psycho-ratiocinative factors is the highly personal dimension of reasoning which Newman seeks to uncover. Emphatically, Newman insists on the human mind – not an external rule, or logical modes and figures – that directs the course of an argument. Throughout an inquiry, there are too many factors and considerations; too many aspects under which things can, should, or maybe should *not* even be considered; different memories which serve to either confirm or call into question other bits of evidence; numerous principles, many of which are held unconsciously, some of which determine, for example, what does and does not count as evidence. No logic exists which is able to wade through the complexities concomitant with inquiries into certain concrete subjects. Rather, it is only the living mind that can handle, collate, and process everything with which the human person is confronted, and this is done with the help of an "intellectual instrument far too subtle and spiritual to be scientific."<sup>73</sup> Newman's Implicit Reasoning or Informal Inference can be regarded as rhetorical,<sup>74</sup> then, in the sense that Newman takes seriously Aristotle's insight, that most men "cannot take in at a glance a complicated argument, or follow a long chain of reasoning."<sup>75</sup> What can be interpreted as an expression of elitism in the case of Aristotle is, for Newman, an observation about the nature of the thinking process which actually shows the versatility and agility of the human mind: namely, that

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69 G. A., 364.

70 G. A., 367.

71 G. A., 368.

72 G. A., 371.

73 G. A., 364.

74 Cf. Walter Jost, *Rhetorical Thought*, Chapter 3.

75 *Rhetoric*, 1357a 3–4.

despite these limitations, the mind is capable of coming to knowledge about concrete things through subtle and variegated processes of thought.

#### 4.1 Is Newman's Informal reasoning enthymematic?

Dwight Lindley has recently suggested, in taking forward the thesis that Newman's Informal and Natural Inferences mirror rhetorical reasoning, that the kind of reasoning methods Newman imparts is rhetorical in the sense that it is enthymematic. Lindley writes:

All speakers, according to Aristotle, communicate via enthymeme, leaving some or many of the premises out of each logical segment of their arguments. This means that rhetoric is de facto presumptive, taking many details of every situation for granted as tacit premises as it moves forward to draw subsequent conclusions. In Newman's epistemology, these unspoken premises come to stand for all the countless data of implicit reason, the antecedent probabilities for the persons, places, and ideas involved in the present situation. *The complex network of implicit reason is, for Newman, the great tacit premise of all the enthymemes of our lives, undergirding every attempt we make at communication. Our explicit reason is in every case enthymematic, seeking to carry in 'the body of rhetoric' all the fullness of our experience of reality.*<sup>76</sup>

This insightful assertion, no doubt, provides much food for thought. But we ought to reexamine whether or not Newman's Informal and Natural Inferences merit the title enthymematic.<sup>77</sup>

#### 4.2 Enthymematic reasoning: similarities with Newman's Informal Inference

Though much is still disputed about the exact nature of the enthymeme, what is clear is that the enthymeme is the rhetorical counterpart to the scientific and dialectical syllogism. Classically, the enthymeme has often been described as a syllogism in which one premise is lacking or taken for granted, thereby allowing a

<sup>76</sup> My emphasis. Dwight Lindley III, "Probability and Economy in Newman's Theory of Knowledge," *Newman Studies Journal* 7/1 (2010): 20–28, 23.

<sup>77</sup> Lindley is correct to emphasize the existence of implicit premises that are active despite their not always being on the conscious level. The question posed, here, however, is whether or not 'enthymematic' is the best descriptor of Newman's Informal (and Natural) Inference.



more swift traversai from premise to conclusion.<sup>78</sup> Although this characterization of the distinguishing mark of the enthymeme is still disputed,<sup>79</sup> one can assert that this way of syllogizing, nonetheless, is oftentimes more effective in speech because it does not impose the burden for the listeners to follow, and risk getting lost in, unnecessary premises; furthermore, the more that is left unsaid, and hence, given an aura of acceptability, the more fluid and natural the reasoning process appears from the hearer's point-of-view. In short, some things are better left unsaid.<sup>80</sup> Of course, the critic may rightfully object to the manipulative character of such selective omissions. But such an interpretation of rhetorical theory as manipulative, perhaps rightfully attributed to Aristotle,<sup>81</sup> need not and ought not to be applied to Newman. For the ultimate reason why some things, aspects, premises, and considerations should be left unsaid when arguing is because many of them simply *cannot* be articulated to anyone's satisfaction by virtue of their being "too multiform, subtle, omnigenous" and "too implicit." Few minds, if any, can keep a multitude of verbalized premises before them. This is, undoubtedly, what Newman attempts to overcome when he says that verbal argumentation must be subordinate to a "higher logic."<sup>82</sup> Such is the implication when one observes, as shrewdly as

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**78** Such an interpretation takes the *Rhetoric* 1357a 17–19 as its starting point: "The enthymeme must consist of few propositions, fewer often than those which make up the normal syllogism. For if any of these propositions is a familiar fact, there is no need even to mention it; the hearer adds it himself." Even Sister Miriam Joseph has accepted this definition. Cf. Sister Joseph, *The Trivium*, 138–139.

**79** The safer and, in my opinion, more correct interpretation is to accept Aristotle's definition of the enthymeme in the *Analytica Priora*, II, 27, which says nothing about missing premises but simply defines it as a syllogism starting from probabilities or signs (70a 9–10). Following this line, the definition would then be presupposed in the *Rhetoric*. For a more detailed analysis of the current debates surrounding the precise nature of the enthymeme, see Antoine C. Braet, "The Enthymeme in Aristotle's Rhetoric: From Argumentation Theory to Logic," *Informal Logic* 19, No. 2 & 3 (1999): 101–117. Cf. William T. Parry and Edward A. Hacker, *Aristotelian Logic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 359 n1.

**80** Newman echoes this idea when he continues, "It is this which was meant by the Judge who, when asked for his advice by a friend, on his being called to important duties which were new to him, bade him always lay down the law boldly, but never give his reasons, for his decision was likely to be right, but his reasons sure to be unsatisfactory." *G. A.*, 303.

**81** "It is this simplicity that makes the uneducated more effective than the educated when addressing popular audiences [...] Educated men lay down broad general principles; uneducated men argue from common knowledge and draw obvious conclusions" (*Rhetoric* 1395b 28–29); "We assume an audience of untrained thinkers" (1357a 12–13).

**82** *G. A.*, 303.

Newman does, the ultimate limitations of language with regard to thought, however useful language is.<sup>83</sup>

Now, according to the classical Aristotelian enthymeme, the unsaid premise can be filled in, at least theoretically.<sup>84</sup> Does this disqualify Informal and Natural Inferences from being enthymematic? No, simply because omissions of premises due to the overwhelmed, over-stretched, and fatigued mind *does not* mean that one categorically cannot articulate the implicit premises *when the individual is pressed or prompted to do so*. Like Aristotle's enthymemes, then, Newman's Informal and Natural Inferences contain premises that are *proponibile*, even if, on a practical level, they burden the argument, are deemed unnecessary, or are simply unconsidered.<sup>85</sup>

### 4.3 Enthymematic reasoning: a major difference from Newman's informal Inference

On the level of an argument's essential structure, however, describing Newman's Informal and Natural modes of argument as enthymematic can be misleading. It is misleading because such an assertion ignores the syllogistic form of an enthymeme and instead focuses on the omission of premises. Newman's Informal and Natural Inferences, however, are qualitatively different modes of argument from the enthymematic syllogism.<sup>86</sup> Newman himself

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**83** G. A., 284: "Thought is too keen and manifold, its sources are too remote and hidden, its path too personal, delicate, and circuitous, its subject-matter too various and intricate, to admit of the trammels of any language, of whatever subtlety and of whatever compass."

**84** An example from *Rhetoric* 1394 4–6. "There is no man among us all is free, For all are slaves of money or of chance." The missing premise is "Slaves are not free."

**85** T. P., 22: "Another condition of a science is that its premises should be few, whereas in the *evidentia creditatis*, there are so many as not to admit of convenient exhibition; Think how many propositions it has taken to arrive even at number 12. immediately above! for this reason again the *evidentia creditatis* does not admit of scientific treatment." The "number 12" to which Newman refers is the twelfth in a series of propositions aiming to show how evidence of contingent truths is logical, but not scientific.

**86** "Enthymematic syllogism" is actually redundant. I use it for rhetorical emphasis!

associated enthymemes with the deductive syllogism, albeit in its rhetorical form.<sup>87</sup> This is true to Aristotle.<sup>88</sup>

By mentioning the enthymeme in the chapter discussing Formal Inference, Newman sets it apart from Informal reasoning. Informal Inference includes inductive arguments such as cumulative and analogical arguments. Inductive, here, simply means arguing *from particulars*. The rhetorical version of inductive reasoning is, according to Aristotle, the *example*, which he *sets in contrast to* the enthymeme because the latter is *deductive*.<sup>89</sup> Hence, when Lindley writes, “All speakers, according to Aristotle, communicate via enthymeme,” he simply omits Aristotle’s crucial addition, “*or examples*.”<sup>90</sup>

There’s no question that, for Aristotle, as for his followers, such as Whately, and even for Newman, the deductive syllogism (and by implication, the rhetorical enthymeme) had a certain pride of place over the inductive example.<sup>91</sup> But given a certain concrete case, Newman tries to show that imposing a syllogism, even an enthymematic one, becomes nugatory.<sup>92</sup> Newman’s example of applying a syllo-

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**87** G. A., 263: “An enthymeme fulfils the requirements of what I have called Inference. So does any other form of words with the mere grammatical expressions, ‘for,’ ‘therefore,’ ‘supposing,’ ‘so that,’ ‘similarly,’ and the like. Verbal reasoning, of whatever kind, as opposed to mental, is what I mean by inference, which differs from logic only inasmuch as logic is its scientific form. And it will be more convenient here to sue the two words indiscriminately, for I shall say nothing about logic which does not in its substance also apply to inference.”

**88** *Rhetoric* 1356b 2–10; 1394a 25–27. The *Rhetoric* schematizes argument such that what the syllogism is in dialectic, the enthymeme is in rhetoric. What induction is to dialectic, example is in rhetoric.

**89** *Rhetoric* 1356b 3–8: “The example is an induction, the enthymeme is a syllogism [...] I call the enthymeme a rhetorical syllogism, and the example a rhetorical induction. Everyone who effects persuasion through proof does in fact use either enthymemes or examples: there is no other way.”

**90** The passage that Lindley refers to, but cites only partially, is *Rhetoric*, 1356b 5–7. The full text is: “Every one who effects persuasion through proof does in fact use either enthymemes or examples: there is no other way.”

**91** Although Aristotle admits the effectiveness of both, he writes: “Speeches that rely on examples are as persuasive as the other kind [enthymematic] but those which rely on enthymemes excite the louder applause” (*Rhetoric*, 1356b 24). He also writes that we should have recourse to example only if we *cannot* argue by enthymeme, implying that examples work best when they supply evidence after the enthymeme (1394a 9–17).

**92** G. A., 284.

gism to the argument, “We shall have a European war, *for* Greece is audaciously defying Turkey,” is a case-in-point.<sup>93</sup>

As Newman continually sets aside the Formal argumentations he finds inadequate, and describes the subtleties of a “higher” logic, the picture becomes clearer. Newman has in mind a mode of argument, a method of reasoning, which transcends the deductive approach that entails generalizations (or universals) being applied to particulars. Simultaneously, however, Newman asserts that Informal (and by entailment, Natural) Inference has a logical form, despite the fact that it eludes the syllogism. Newman's proof by converging probabilities is the paradigmatic example of Informal Inference. Jost summarizes it well and helpfully points out that such a reasoning process is neither deductive, nor inductive:

When Newman speaks of proof by converging probabilities, he seems to have in mind the sort of argument that helps us conclude that our house has been burglarized on the basis of an open door, a chair out of place [...]. On analysis these signs do not provide the minor premises for five independent syllogisms; Mill denied that we reasoned that way, and so did Newman. But it is also clear that these facts do not lead to an inductive generalization about a class; we have rather converging proofs leading to a singular [...]. Newman compared it [the convergence] to a cable or rod.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> This is a *fortiori* the case when we consider those concrete cases in which personal agents endowed with free wills are involved. One of the main arguments justifying the liberal arts in *The Idea of a University* is the requisite recognition that human agency plays a role in both history and temporal affairs, generally. Cf. *Idea*, 53–57. It is useful to keep this in mind when confronted with what can seem to be a puzzling move on Newman's part, such as when he lumps abstractions together with generalizations, putting on the same level, ‘All men are rational,’ and ‘All men have their price.’ The probable and contingent character of the latter is put on equal footing with the former proposition that has been traditionally interpreted as categorical. Newman's practical bent is evident here. Interestingly, two of Newman's examples suggesting his reluctance toward accepting categorical propositions – ‘All men die; (but what of Elias?)’ and ‘All men have their price; (but what of Fabricius?)’ – are both noted exceptions to the “uniformity of causation” principle on which all categorical propositions are based: it is not applicable to a being with free will; hence, no one can categorically state, ‘All men have their price’. Furthermore, the principle “requires the normal concurrence of the First Cause. Thus miracles represent a deviation from the uniformity of nature, attributable to the free will of the First Cause.” Hence, Elias need not die like all other men. For these exceptions, see Sister Miriam Joseph, *The Trivium*, 216.

<sup>94</sup> Jost, *Rhetorical Thought*, 96.

#### 4.4 Newman's Informal Inference and Ordinary Sign enthymemes

It is my contention that it is Aristotle's Ordinary (fallible) Sign enthymeme – an enthymeme which is not a syllogism, properly speaking – which provides a model for Newman's *cumulative* argument, or an argument by the accumulation of evidences.<sup>95</sup> Newman wishes to vindicate those modes of argument which elude the grasp of the deductive syllogism. Enthymemes, too, are, strictly speaking, deductive – moving from wholes to parts – even if their premises are only contingent. The Ordinary Sign enthymeme, however, is exceptional in the sense that it is formally *not* syllogistic, but is nonetheless discussed under the heading of enthymeme by Aristotle. Let us take a closer look.

According to Aristotle there are two main kinds of oratorical argument: argument by example (inductive) and argument by enthymeme (deductive).<sup>96</sup> The enthymeme, further, is divided between those that are based on Probabilities (*eikos*) and those on Signs (*semēia*).<sup>97</sup> The Signs, in turn, can be either fallible or infallible.<sup>98</sup> Aristotle's examples of an Infallible Sign enthymeme are, "The fact that he has a fever is a sign that he is ill," or "The fact that she is giving milk is a sign that she has lately born a child."<sup>99</sup> This kind of enthymeme, or "complete proof" (*tekmerion*), where the conclusion *necessarily* follows if the premises are true, is irrefutable and hence, according to Aristotle, forms a valid deductive syllogism. Both Probable and Infallible Sign enthymemes have this in common: the conclu-

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<sup>95</sup> Jost is not explicit about this thesis. He does, however, associate cumulative arguments with Signs, generally, as he does in the passage cited (96).

<sup>96</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1393a 20–24. In Book II, Chapter 25, Aristotle extends this classification: Enthymemes based upon (1) Probabilities are those which argue from what is, or is supposed to be, usually true. Enthymemes based upon (2) Examples are those which proceed by induction from one or more similar cases, arrive at a general proposition, and then argue deductively to a particular inference. Enthymemes based upon (3) Infallible Signs are those which argue from the inevitable and invariable. Enthymemes based upon (4) ordinary Signs are those which argue from some universal or particular proposition, true or false (1402b 14–21).

<sup>97</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1357a 33–34. On Signs, see *Analytica Priora*, II, 27. "A sign means a demonstrative proposition necessary or generally approved: for anything such that when it is another thing is, or when it has come into being the other has come into being before or after, is a sign of the other's being or having come into being [...]" (70a 5–9).

<sup>98</sup> Whately, in his *Elements of Rhetoric*, describes the distinction between these two kinds of Signs as those which are *causes* of the evident signs, and those which are mere *conditions* of the evident signs. The former yield demonstrations; the latter probabilities. Cf. *Elements of Rhetoric*, 50.

<sup>99</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1357b 14–16.

sion (whether probable or not) *necessarily* follows the premises, so long as the premises are true or accepted.<sup>100</sup>

This is not the case, however, with fallible or what Aristotle calls Ordinary Sign enthymemes. Again, Aristotle's example is: "The fact that he breathes fast is a sign that he has a fever."<sup>101</sup> The argument is not a syllogism, nor can it be fashioned into one without a great deal of verbal dexterity which would, in any case, result in a formally invalid argument.<sup>102</sup> And yet, such a proposition, though formally invalid, is not *bad* reasoning. In fact, one may even say that it is very *good* reasoning. Moreover, the fact that Aristotle includes this form of enthymeme when treating of it seems to indicate that, although Aristotle recognized that Ordinary (non-necessary, fallible) Sign enthymemes cannot be put into valid logical form, they can, nonetheless, be persuasive and hence, need not carry with themselves a negative and deceptive connotation. In fact, it can be said that non-necessary Signs are not only popular, but commonly accepted ways of arguing and reasoning. Jurisprudence and medical diagnoses are two such instances of Sign reasoning and Newman uses both examples in the *Grammar*.<sup>103</sup>

Such a method of reasoning in terms of Ordinary Signs, when multiplied, is what Newman calls a proof by converging probability.<sup>104</sup> If one understands what Aristotle means by the Ordinary Sign enthymeme, then the meaning of Newman's descriptions of Informal Inference become contextualized and clarified. They, like Ordinary Signs, are "cases, in which evidence, not sufficient for a scientific proof, is nevertheless sufficient for assent."<sup>105</sup> Here, Newman implies that the kind of

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**100** The necessity here refers to the nature of the relationship between conclusion and premise; the contingent (probable) nature of the conclusion itself still stands. In other words, its form is syllogistic (necessary); its matter probable (contingent).

**101** *Rhetoric*, 1357b 17–20. In the *Analytica Priora*, he gives the example, "A woman is with child because she is pale" (70a 20–21).

**102** Aristotle takes this kind of Sign and says of it, "But the syllogism which proceeds through the middle figure is always refutable in any case: for a syllogism can never be formed when the terms are related in this way: for though a woman with child is pale, and this woman also is pale, it is not necessary that she should be with child" (*Analytica Priora*, 70a 33–40). The middle figure, in this context, is Figure II, in which the middle term is the predicate of both premises. One *could* put it into the following form: "Those who have fever breathe fast. Peter breathes fast. Ergo [...]." But such an argument is formally *invalid* by the undistributed middle.

**103** *G. A.*, 324–328; 332.

**104** *G. A.*, 320–321.

**105** *G. A.*, 316.

argument sought is one whose premises are unscientific,<sup>106</sup> that is, contingent. The Ordinary Sign enthymeme's are of this sort. Newman again: "Converging probabilities [...] constitute a real, [...] reasonable, not an argumentative, proof."<sup>107</sup> The probabilities' convergence is deemed by Newman to be non-argumentative because they are not syllogistic. Neither are the Ordinary Sign enthymeme's. Again Newman: "We have arrived at these conclusions [Informal Inferences] not *ex opere operato*, by a scientific necessity independent of ourselves."<sup>108</sup> The conclusion inferred from the Ordinary Sign enthymeme too is *not* necessary. That is to say, nothing in the relationship between its premises – or the form the two take together – compels any movement to a conclusion. Instead, the derivation of the conclusion relies on the interpretation of, or the 'reading' of, the two (or more) premises (or evidences) by the human mind. The human mind, not the structure of the argument, is indexical. The individual is "guided by the implicit processes of the reasoning faculty,"<sup>109</sup> not by an assemblage of arguments and syllogisms. As a result, an individual's experience and the shrewd mind have the upper hand over against the Formal syllogism. Formal Inference (including the enthymeme!) cannot stomach such a mode of reasoning, and hence exhorts: "Let every prompting of the intellect be ignored, every *momentum* of argument be disowned [...]. Let the authority of nature, common-sense, experience, genius, go for nothing."<sup>110</sup> Conversely, it is the prompting of the intellect, common sense, and experience which effectively contribute to the success of Ordinary Sign enthymemes.

We can say, then, that Newman's Informal Inference guided by the Illative Sense shares characteristics of the enthymeme generally understood, in the first place, because both are invoked to address primarily questions of a contingent and, hence, probable nature. Moreover, both enthymemes and Newman's Informal Inference allow for unarticulated, but nevertheless proponible, premises. More specifically, however, Newman's proof by converging probabilities is in substance identical – not to the Aristotle's more general understanding of the enthymeme, but to a particular version of the exceptional Ordinary Sign enthymeme.

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**106** Evidence sufficient for scientific proof means premises which are, according to Sister Miriam Joseph, "true, essential and certain," (*Trivium*, 226) or, according to Aristotle, "true, primary, immediate, better known than and prior to the conclusion, which is further related to them as effect to cause" (*Analytica Posteriora*, 71b 20–24).

**107** *G. A.*, 327.

**108** *G. A.*, 318.

**109** *G. A.*, 310.

**110** *G. A.*, 263.

## 4.5 Summary

The non-necessary Ordinary (fallible) Sign enthymeme, when the signs are multiplied, is the prime model for Newman's proof by converging probabilities. In this light, Informal Inference takes on a concrete Aristotelian rhetorical character. Closer to home, converging probabilities, seen as a proof, is also expressed in Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*, in much the same way as Newman himself articulates it.<sup>111</sup> In fact, it is in Whately's book that we find the discussion of cumulative probability discussed in the same section as the Signs.<sup>112</sup> The importance of the Informal kind of reasoning being enthymematic is the fact that, on the one hand, it exhibits a genus of argumentation that eludes the syllogism, while, on the other hand, it garners for itself an air of reasonableness, since it, among other reasons, is propounded by Aristotle as a real method of persuasion. The inclusion of such a method in the *Rhetoric*, though not justifying the method as such, at least makes the more general claim that it is persuasive precisely because a great number of people do *in fact* reason in this way and this is so, presumably, because such a method of reasoning accords successfully with

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<sup>111</sup> Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric*, 59–60: There are other arguments “in which a similar calculation of chances will enable us to draw a Conclusion, sometime even amounting to moral certainty, from a combination of data which singly would have had little or no weight; e. g., if any one out of a hundred men throw a stone which strikes a certain object, there is but a slight probability, from that fact alone, that he aimed at that object; but if all the hundred threw stones which struck the *same* object, no one would doubt that they aimed at it. It is from such a combination of Argument that we infer the existence of an intelligent Creator from the marks of contrivance visible in the Universe, though many of these are such as, taken singly, might well be conceived undersigned and accidental; but that they should *all* be such, is morally impossible.” John Davison (1777–1834), another fellow at Oriel about whom Newman writes one of his essays in the *British Critic* in 1842, also mentions proof through accumulation in his *Lectures on Prophecy* in language similar to Newman's own, in terms of its style and substance: “These topics, prominent as they are when separately taken, compose only one subject of connected and harmonizing proof. However different the ground and principle of reason in each of them may be, the effect of them is to be united, and it bears upon one and the same point in combining to make up that moral evidence by which it has pleased the Almighty to ascertain His last revelation to us” (19). “For though some kind of proof be incapable of accession by an extended cumulative reason, the proof of religion is not of that nature, but one which gathers light and strength by the concentrated force of all its moral evidence. The whole of it, therefore, must be laid together, and the aggregate of the concurrent proofs will close the investigation [...] that the vindication of our Faith rests upon an accumulated and concurrent evidence” (23). See John Davison, *Discourses on Prophecy: Its Structure, Use, and Inspiration*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1845).

<sup>112</sup> Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric*, Chapter II, Sects. 3–4. Also to be noted is Whately's inclusion of Testimony as a kind of Sign. This discussion begins in Section 4.



human experience. Though not syllogistic, one can use the word ‘logical’ to describe it.<sup>113</sup>

## 5 Pathos and the start of an inquiry

The practical, persuasive, and hence rhetorical character of Newman’s conception of Inference cannot be limited to converging probabilities in terms of evidences (or Signs). This is why we now turn to the more subjective element of Inference, which, in rhetorical terms, we refer to as *pathos*. For Aristotle, *pathos* refers specifically to the persuasive appeal to the audience’s emotions.<sup>114</sup> The orator is meant to stir up these emotions which “so change men as to affect their judgments.”<sup>115</sup> This element of *pathos*, however, when applied to epistemology, is not so much about stirring or provoking emotions in the hearer; for Newman what is significant is the recognition that there are certain factors that *precede* any argument and which affect one’s judgment. These are called antecedent considerations. Both Aristotle and Newman agree about the importance of, for example, the ‘right frame of mind’. For Aristotle, the orator may have a hand in influencing this ‘frame of mind’ by stirring emotions, but might also simply have to recognize and appeal to the ‘frame of mind’ whatever it happens to be at a given time among a certain people. Hence, for example, the Aristotelian orator must take into account the listeners’ age and social status.<sup>116</sup> In what follows, I take the liberty of expanding these factors to include the entire subjective dimension of the person or inquirer because part of Newman’s attention to the subject includes,

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**113** The relationship between logic and Newman’s Informal Inference is no doubt complex. Walter Jost has directed attention to the seemingly contradictory tendencies in Newman’s *Grammar in Rhetorical Thought*, 92–93 and, on page 93, has interpreted it thusly: “Were logic equivalent to notions, in short, Newman’s fears would be well founded. But logic is not equivalent to notions, and once we change the meaning of logic from notional propositions in valid deductive relations to valid deductive relations exclusively, it is quite correct to say (as Newman seems to on occasion) that concrete reasoning can be consummately logical: ‘We think in logic, as we talk in prose, without aiming at doing so.’ In the modern sense of logic, this is to say nothing more than that our reasoning is often consistent or valid and that validity as such has nothing to do with the notions of which Newman speaks. Where he equates ‘logic’ with ‘notions,’ the former appears simply irrelevant to informal inference.

**114** *Rhetoric*, 1356a 13–17; 1377b 25–1378a 5.

**115** *Rhetoric*, 1378a 20.

**116** This discussion is in *Rhetoric*, 1388b 31–1391b 8. ‘Social status’ is this author’s term for Aristotle’s “fortune” or “birth, wealth, power” etc. (See *Rhetoric*, 1388b 35–1389a).

but is not limited to, the emotions and prejudices based solely on age and status.<sup>117</sup> This will become more clear below.

## 5.1 Signs and Probabilities

One upshot of a consideration of the subject is that an accumulation of evidence cannot be reduced to objective phenomena. For there is a subjective dimension that contributes to what sign or phenomenon is interpreted to be a piece of evidence in the first place. In this sense, Newman's use of *Eikota* (translated, Probabilities) moves well beyond Aristotle's more objective use of the word.<sup>118</sup> Accepting the empiricist critique of probability, Newman focused on the subjective dimension of probability as a notion in the mind, not a property within the object itself. Whether or not something is deemed probable depends not simply on the nature of the object itself, but on the 'principles, views, and wishes' (*U. S.*, 188) or expectations of the individual subject. A proof of "converging probabilities", then, is constituted by both Signs and Probabilities (here understood as what one thinks to be likely).

We might recall that, in the tenth of his *University Sermons*, Newman juxtaposes evidence (*Sēmeia*) with "principles, views, and wishes" (*Eikota*). The section in the *Grammar* expositing the action of the Illative Sense at the start of an inquiry is dominated by a discussion of *Eikota* (though he does not use this term in the *Grammar*) or first principles *in the most general sense of the word*: namely, all those things, ideas, expectations, prejudices, dispositions, and principles, which one carries within oneself before an inquiry begins.<sup>119</sup> In short, the *Eikota* refer, for Newman, to those dimensions within the subject that have the potential to increasingly (or decreasingly) dispose someone to accept, believe, or assent to

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**117** For Newman, it is the general 'state of mind' of the listener that the rhetor has to take into consideration. For example, while reviewing a draft of an article seeking to defend the verity of the shrine at Loreto – the veritableness of which Newman would become less convinced – Newman says that in order to make it more "rhetorically convincing," the author has to make sure that the argument is "adapted to the state of men's minds." See *L. D.*, XIV, 260 (to J. M. Capes, 19 April 1851). In this context of discussing what is 'rhetorically convincing', Newman also mentions the necessity of highlighting the antecedent probability for something (or at least that something is *not improbable*).

**118** McKerrow shows that for Whately a concept such as "probability" referred to an individual's knowledge of the event, not to events themselves (as it did for Aristotle). Cf. Ray E. McKerrow, "Richard Whately on the Nature of Human Knowledge in Relation to Ideas of His Contemporaries," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42 (1981), 453–454.

**119** According to Newman, for example, the rhetorical strength of Kingsley's allegations against him lies in playing on the *prejudice* that Newman was a papist while an Anglican. See *L. D.*, XXI, 90–91.

certain truths.<sup>120</sup> The more disposed someone is to accepting some such truth, the less evidence will be necessary before the individual is persuaded. Naturally, the converse is also true. For Newman, then, *Eikota* and *Sêmeia*, Probabilities and Signs, or expectation and evidence, should not be understood as two objective categories under which the world's phenomena fall. Rather, they should be understood as two impulses in the same argument – or two dimensions in the process by which one comes to knowledge.<sup>121</sup> “Mere probability proves nothing, mere facts persuade no one.”<sup>122</sup> The role of the Illative Sense at the start of an inquiry is to acquire the right starting-points or suppositions that will allow for further and fruitful inquiry; similarly, the Illative Sense also dismisses other suppositions that would hinder the inquiry and lead us towards the “irrelevant and absurd.”<sup>123</sup> As the traditional Aristotelian rhetor appeals to the audience's emotions (or more generally, the listeners' presuppositions) so as to deploy the *argument* more effectively, so the Illative Sense equips the thinking subject with a capacity to accept certain first principles and starting points by which subsequent evidence can be interpreted with greater import.

## 5.2 Antecedent considerations at the start of an inquiry

Discussing the role of the Illative Sense at the *start* of an inquiry (Ch. 9, Sect. 3, No. 2), Newman naturally opts to discuss antecedent reasoning. Antecedent probabilities are used with frequency and versatility: to argue that a criminal's reputation increases the likelihood of the accusation leveled against him; to argue for or against miracles; to convert people to Christianity; or to draw theological conclusions. In short, antecedent probabilities are salient in the outcome of a dispute, even though they, by themselves, do not prove any given case.<sup>124</sup> Newman, in his understanding of antecedent probability, is indebted to Whately.

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**120** Another way of expressing this is *antecedent considerations*, or “everything that is consciously or subconsciously in the mind when the enquiry begins.” See Philip Flanagan, *Newman, Faith and the Believer* (London: Sands & Co. Ltd., 1946), 78.

**121** Newman sees the two sides as playing a complementary role with regard to each other: “Reason, weighing *evidence only*, or arguing from *external experience*, is counter to Faith; but, admitting the *legitimate influence and logical import of the moral feelings*, it concurs with it.” My emphasis. (*U. S.*, 195).

**122** *U. S.*, 200.

**123** *G. A.*, 376.

**124** *G. A.*, 381–383. Esp. p. 383: “Facts cannot be proved by presumptions, yet it is remarkable that in cases where nothing stronger than presumption was even professed, scientific men have sometimes acted as if they thought this kind of argument, taken by itself, decisive of a fact which was in debate.”

Whately, in his *Elements of Rhetoric*, takes Aristotle's division between arguments by Signs (*Semeia*) and Probabilities (*Eikos*) and, in his own terms, describes the former as arguments from effects to conditions and the latter as arguments from causes to effect, or, respectively, *a posteriori* and *a priori* arguments.<sup>125</sup> The former refers to an accumulation of evidences or effects which tend toward a condition which accounts for them; this coincides with the paradigmatic method of Newman's Informal Inference. Arguments from cause to effect (or *a priori* arguments), according to Whately, entail arguments from antecedent probability, and serve as a counterpart to arguments from Signs. According to these *a priori* arguments or antecedent probabilities, a given set of circumstances serves to account for (or be the cause of) a certain effect; the circumstances, as a result, elicit an expectation of that effect.

The difference between the two can be illustrated by Whately's own examples of a murderer.<sup>126</sup> It should not, then, come as a surprise that Newman himself, in the material prepared for his introduction to the French edition of his *University Sermons*, uses the *same example* of a murder.<sup>127</sup> The *a posteriori* argument that accumulates evidences goes something like this: 'He had blood on his clothing; he was not with us when the crime happened, etc [...] Here, the facts (effects) will be explained, if the accused man committed the crime.'<sup>128</sup> The *a priori* argument according to antecedent probability, however, runs something like this: 'he hated the deceased; he had an interest in the latter's death; he was a robber.' Here, the facts (causes) such as that the man was a robber, explain (or account for) the crime (the effect). As Flanagan explains, *a posteriori* arguments that accumulate evidence prove more or less perfectly, according to their strength; the *a priori* arguments cannot prove anything, but they do "confirm a proof when evidence is produced, or make a doubtful or probable proof more probable."<sup>129</sup> The two kinds of argument together build up a case in such a way that the stronger the antecedent probability, the less evidence is needed to convict an individual of

125 Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric* (1830 ed.), 48–51.

126 Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric* (1830 ed.), 44–51.

127 *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford between A. D. 1826 and 1843*, ed. James D. Earnest and Gerard Tracey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 241. Henry Tristram, "Cardinal Newman's Theses de Fide and his Proposed Introduction to the French Translation of the University Sermons," *Gregorianum* 18 (1937): 252–255; Newman mentions the motif briefly in *U. S.*, 264. Cf. Flanagan, *Newman*, 68–69; Cf. Geertjan Zuidwegt, "Between Rome and Infidelity: Newman's *Essay on Development* and its Early Critics, 1845–1847" (unpublished Masters dissertation, Faculty of Theology, K. U. Leuven, 2010), 59–62; Cf. *Two Essays on Biblical and Ecclesiastical Miracles*. (London: Longmans, Green. Co., 1907), 14.

128 Flanagan, *Newman*, 68–9.

129 Flanagan, *Newman*, 69.

belief, despite the fact that there can exist a certain amount of evidence which is fixed and sufficient to convince everybody.<sup>130</sup> Both Whately *and* Newman apply this correlative method of argument to the question of Christianity, where the preparatory nature of *a priori* (antecedent probability) arguments serve as a foundation for their *a posteriori* counterparts. Here is Whately at length:

The antecedent probability that a revelation should be given to man, and that it should be established by miracles, all would allow to be, considered by itself, in the absence of strong direct testimony, utterly insufficient to establish the conclusion. On the other hand, miracles considered abstractedly, as represented to have occurred without any occasion or reason for them being assigned, carry with them such a strong intrinsic improbability as could not be wholly surmounted even by such evidence as would fully establish any other matters of fact. But the evidences of the former class, however inefficient alone towards the establishment of the conclusion, have very great weight in preparing the mind for receiving the other arguments; which, again, though they would be listened to with prejudice if not so supported, will then be allowed their just weight.<sup>131</sup>

Though it is not our place here to make a comparative analysis, it should be noted that Newman's argument in the *Grammar* justifying certitude in relation to Christianity follows, generally, the justificatory pattern of Whately in its synthesis of both *a priori* and *a posteriori* arguments.<sup>132</sup> To put it briefly, Newman's proof by evidences is presented to those "whose minds are properly prepared for it."<sup>133</sup> Such a preparation begins, for Newman, with an experience of the acts of conscience which *ultimately* leads one to expect a revelation.<sup>134</sup> This expectation entails a whole host of presuppositions or first principles – such as that man is not sufficient for his own happiness – upon which the subsequent evidences for Christianity can

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130 Flanagan, *Newman*, 69.

131 Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric* (1830 ed.), 113–114.

132 For a comparison of Whately's and Newman's respective theories of belief and the rhetorical argumentation behind it, see Zuidwegt, "Richard Whately's Influence on John Henry Newman," 91–93. Zuidwegt further points out the inconsistency between Whately's apologetical *theory* (manifested in the above-quoted passage) and his actual apologetical *praxis* (manifested in, for example, his "Easy Lessons on Christian Evidences") which relied almost exclusively on evidences (See p. 93).

133 *G. A.*, 415.

134 *G. A.*, 404–405; 423. Emphasis is put on *ultimately* because Newman only begins with conscience but methodically paints the portrait of a character who, sensitive to conscience, exhibits a plethora of notions and beliefs that all hang together: responsibility, burden, and punishment; providence; that one is not sufficient for one's own happiness; that prayer is part of Natural Religion.

be stacked.<sup>135</sup> Insisting on these presuppositions (for why “attempt to prove a second proposition to those who do not admit the first?”),<sup>136</sup> Newman attempts to prove the truth of a Christian revelation as demonstrable, albeit not irresistible.<sup>137</sup> The same model of argument imbues Newman's *Essay on Development* wherein antecedent probabilities are established *first* in order that they may be “fulfilled” by historical evidence.<sup>138</sup> Antecedent argument plays a role even in Newman's analysis of emotions and sentiments; passions and affections, for example, imply their objects.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, to understand Newman's thoughts on the communication of, and acceptance of, any idea, Probabilities (*Eikota*) must be placed alongside any and all Evidence (*Sēmeia*).<sup>140</sup> “If I have brought out one truth in anything I have written, I consider it to be the *importance of antecedent probability* in conviction. It is how you convert factory girls as well as philosophers.”<sup>141</sup> While the coincidence of probabilities and facts constitutes the form of the *argument* itself, whether or not one actually apprehends something as ‘probable’ to begin with is, in large part, dependent on the subject's disposition. What we learn from Newman, then, is that *logos* or argumentation never stands alone; its very structure presupposes *pathos* (as the concept is expanded here so as to include all antecedent convictions and moral dispositions).

### 5.3 The relationship between moral disposition and antecedent probability

Antecedent considerations, coupled with one's moral disposition, affect the personal *preparation* necessary for the encounter with any argument. When it comes to presenting the Gospel, Newman writes, “If we are to convert souls savingly they

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<sup>135</sup> The summary opposite of these is found in Newman's description of the beliefs of a “civilized age.” See *G. A.*, 416.

<sup>136</sup> *G. A.*, 416.

<sup>137</sup> *G. A.*, 410.

<sup>138</sup> Antecedent arguments are everywhere found in the *Essay on Development*. They are invoked for the sake of expecting developments in general, and for the sake of particular doctrines. See, in particular, *Dev.*, Ch. II. Sect. III., 2. See also Robin Selby, *The Principle of Reserve in the Writings of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 75–88, esp. pp. 83–86.

<sup>139</sup> *Dev.*, Ch. I. Sect. II., 7. Thomas Vargish, *Newman: The Contemplation of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 59: “Newman's position is again the antithesis of Freud's. For Newman, guilt and fear, desire and love, are not chiefly sources of illusion but chiefly sources of knowledge.”

<sup>140</sup> *U. S.*, 224: “a reaching forward of the mind” toward evidence or facts.

<sup>141</sup> *L. D.*, XV, 381.

must have the due preparation of heart.”<sup>142</sup> Using the wrong kind of argument (e. g., an abstract argument in order to establish God’s attributes) “*against men who are unprepared personally for the question*” will simply lead to a “land of shadows, ‘where the light is as darkness’.”<sup>143</sup> Persons must be prepared for any inquiry into the truth of any matter. For Newman, such preparation is increasingly necessary as one moves away from mathematical and abstract matters to concrete and religious questions. Such preparation requires both a certain kind of moral disposition – or what Newman in the twelfth of his *University Sermons* called the “right state of heart” – and the acquisition of certain first principles.<sup>144</sup>

A proper moral disposition, for Newman, is attained by the adherence to one’s conscience. It is only with a sense of being responsible for something or to someone that the gravitas of religious matters comes to the surface. Conscience does this *prima facie* by its sense of duty, but also by furnishing the mind with a sense of urgency and a sense of expectation, especially in religious matters. Newman, here, is heavily indebted to Joseph Butler (1692–1752) and his *Analogy of Religion*.<sup>145</sup> As to the sense of urgency, Newman quotes Butler who writes that the inquiring parties must be

as much in earnest about religion, as about their temporal affairs, capable of being convinced, on real evidence, that there is a God who governs the world, and feel themselves to be of a moral nature and accountable creatures.<sup>146</sup>

Dovetailing this sense of earnestness in ascertaining the truth is conscience’s, and generally the moral disposition’s, effect on one’s expectations. “And what he thinks likely, depends surely on nothing else than the general state of mind,

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142 *L. D.*, XXV, 3.

143 My emphasis. *G. A.*, 314.

144 *U. S.*, 234. One should be aware of the development of Newman’s thought on this idea. It can be said that the early Newman placed more emphasis on the moral disposition than the late Newman. The later Newman, writing the Introduction to his *University Sermons*, is, according to Flanagan, for example, more aware of the insufficiency of antecedent probabilities than the Newman at the time of the *Sermons* themselves. Cf. Flanagan, *Newman*, 71. Although conscience is a constant starting point for Newman, even (and especially!) in the *Grammar*, Newman is less likely, as his thought matures, to attribute culpability to the person with whom he disagrees. Such a shift can be attributed to his experience with his good friend and empiricist William Froude. Nevertheless, in 1871 still, Newman wrote, in a letter, that his *Grammar* is meant “to show that a right moral state of mind germinates or even generates good intellectual principles” (*L. D.*, XXV, 280). Cf. Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts*, 39n45.

145 *Apo.*, 10–11; 19.

146 Quoted in *G. A.*, 320. Newman’s quotation is taken from Butler’s *Analogy of Religion* (1836 ed.) 278. Conscience’s apprehension of God is discussed in Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts*, 37–40.

the state of his convictions, feelings, tastes, and wishes."<sup>147</sup> What is a probability for one person,

depends on his moral temperament. A good and a bad man will think very different things probable. In the judgment of a rightly disposed mind, objects are desirable and attainable which irreligious men will consider to be but fancies.<sup>148</sup>

The key link between moral character and antecedent probability lies in the relationship between the apprehension of fundamental truths delivered to us by conscience, on the one hand, and the *interpretation* that these truths effect in one's encounter with something(s) or event(s), on the other. In the previous quotation, this relationship is expressed in terms of the relationship between the *desirable* and the *attainable*. An object is seen to be more attainable – more probable – when there is a desire or affection for it. This psychological pattern ought not be mistaken for the erroneous notion that the verity of something is justified by some wishful thinking. There are two reasons for this cautionary note. First, neither a desire for something, nor an antecedent probability that something is true, makes that thing true and Newman – especially the more mature Newman – recognizes this. Secondly, this relationship between conscience and the probable – or the moral disposition and one's expectations – is not limited to what is desirable, but also extends to any psychological phenomena, including responsibility and accountability. For one is also more likely to hold the verity of the more severe doctrine of Judgment to be more probable, as the case may be, if one is more in touch with one's conscience.<sup>149</sup> Hence we cannot accuse Newman of reducing the efficacy of an argument to the audience's moral state because Newman affirms that *the process* by which one arrives at a conclusion, despite all other personal, moral, and emotional factors that may contribute to that process, still has within itself a rational trajectory.<sup>150</sup>

According to Newman, then, the individual's moral disposition is one fundamental aspect of his or her preparation for any inquiry, but more prominently so in contingent and concrete, moral and religious matters. The one who is not self-reflective, who is aloof from moral self-awareness, may consider a religious subject "carelessly, captiously, or with indifference." On the other hand, one who is conscientious may press "upon the conscience [...] that we are playing with

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<sup>147</sup> *U. S.*, 226.

<sup>148</sup> *U. S.*, 191.

<sup>149</sup> *Dev.*, Ch. I. Sect. II., 7.

<sup>150</sup> Newman does not reduce the criteria necessary for knowledge to one's moral disposition. He affirms that one can account for the ratiocinative method involved. See *G. A.*, 320.



edged tools” so as to truly “ascertain what the truth is.”<sup>151</sup> Meekness, humility, and “teachableness are qualities of mind necessary for arriving at the truth in any subject, and in religious matters as well as others.”<sup>152</sup> “Obedience to our conscience [...] is the way to know the Truth.”<sup>153</sup>

In sum, then, one’s moral disposition affects one’s expectations, hopes, and ‘view’ of the world, and hence, plays a distinct role in antecedent probabilities. Antecedent probabilities, in turn, can be so rooted in an individual consciousness that it becomes an active principle which guides inquiries. The presuppositions with which one approaches any inquiry effect what is deemed to be a “reasonable” conclusion, and what is not. Whether or not one accepts the legitimacy of “doctrinal development,” for example, for Newman, depends, in large part, on the presuppositions, the antecedent probabilities, and the moral character of the individual inquiring into it. Sillem summarizes Newman’s thoughts well here:

Newman agreed that we must follow the *a priori* laws of logic when we are thinking in the abstract. When, however, a man is seeking the truth about matters of fact, especially in the realms of metaphysics and religion, the outcome of his searches depends in a large measure on his moral character and disposition, and on his being wholly and dispassionately dedicated to the truth as to a good *higher than* himself.<sup>154</sup>

Interestingly, in a letter written in 1847, Newman explains that when he wrote, in his *University Sermons*, the phrases, “mere unstable Reason” and “mere Reason”, he was referring to “reason *not under the guidance of conscience*.”<sup>155</sup> We can infer that reason *under the guidance of conscience* belongs to the one who is *prepared*. This, of course, impacts the way in which theologians conceive of apologetics and the credibility of the Christian faith.

## 6 Conclusion

A tradition of Aristotelian rhetorical theory – stemming from Aristotle’s own *Rhetoric* and developed in Whately’s *Elements of Rhetoric* – has been shown to have had a clear influence on Newman’s epistemology. More precisely, I have shown that the classical notions of Aristotelian *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* corres-

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151 *L. D.*, XX, 170.

152 *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, VIII, 113. Hereafter, *P. S.*

153 *P. S. I*, 146.

154 *P. N.*, I, 66. Cf. *U. S.*, 84.

155 *L. D.*, XII, 30. Newman writes this in the context of expressing thoughts on a new edition of his sermons about to be translated into French.

pond respectively to Newman's appeal to the prudent man, his theory of Informal and Natural Inference, and the significance Newman attaches to personal moral disposition and its effect on antecedent probability.

This rhetorical dimension of Newman's epistemic principles helps shed light on the highly concrete and personal nature with which Newman envisions any approach to, and communication of, the truth, religious or otherwise. This way of argument becomes significant for Newman not only in his defence of the Christian religion, but also of the particular doctrinal developments within the Roman Catholic tradition. Applied to theological Tradition, or the transmission of the mystery of Christ, the *Rhetoric* – and Newman's appeal to it – substantiate the quite obvious, but oftentimes overlooked truth, that the content of the faith is transmitted, not by books and arguments, but by people, their actions and habits; and that faith is transmitted, not to an impersonal and unembodied Reason, but to concrete human persons. By reflecting on the Aristotelian rhetorical rationality developed by Newman, one can begin to see Newman's apologetical and pastoral application of it. Reflecting on this rhetorical rationality sets the stage for further development of a 'rhetorical Christology'. Newman explains, for example, that discipleship begins when one is persuaded by the "rhetoric of His [Christ's] divine Life."<sup>156</sup> Christ, here, is the great rhetor, whose perfect virtue renders the authority of his character (i. e., his *ethos*) insurpassable; whose words and actions constitute the best argument (i. e., *logos*); and whose message is tailored to his hearers (i. e., *pathos*) such that it bears fruit among the seekers and those who are prepared for it.

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156 *L. D.*, XXVI, 232.



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