

Some Aspects of Human Nature As Viewed by Cardinal John Henry Newman

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The three views of human nature presented in this essay, all John Henry Newman's, are from the vantage point of natural religion, from that of the liberally educated person, and from that of one imbued with Christian faith and love. These three views are related not progressively, but analogously, for each viewpoint in itself shows some kind of profound, intrinsic development of what is usually taken to be "mere" human nature.

Being human, according to John Henry Newman, is quite distinct from fully flourishing as a human being, and the full flourishing of a human being is itself quite distinct from the fulfillment of being human in Christ. Generally and abstractly viewed, as in this essay, a human being can be externally described in all three of these ways—as human, as fully flourishing, as Christian. In like manner, viewed generally and in the abstract, human beings can be viewed through the lens of each of the disciplines called “humanities.” Only taken all together, however, can the disciplines of the humanities, and all other views of human nature, approximate in as complete a way as possible (and even then not exhaustively) a portrayal of human being as it is. The lack of complete satisfaction and finality in defining human being may be because, in the concrete, the human person is individual and unique, like no other except as image of God, ultimately an ineffable mystery. It may also be because, as some would have it, there is no such thing as human nature, in which case, there could be no legitimacy to such undertakings as the humanities. But these rich and abundant studies, like this essay, presume the intelligibility of a definite subject matter viewed under one or another or many of its myriad aspects.

As an apologist for religion, Newman favored analogical argument

as his main instrument of persuasion. Analogy is the manner by which the mind reasons from things that are known to be alike in significant respects to previously unknown similarities in other respects. Analogical thinking is employed, for example, in the translation of meaning from one language to another, or in the transposition from one tonal scale to a similarly structured scale in a different key, or to an understanding of the lessons of history as they might be applied to our own time. This mode of reasoning requires a flexible mind that can situate itself within the frameworks of various views (say, that of the French language and of the German language), while at the same time keeping those views anchored in the “focal reality” to which they refer (the single meaning conveyed in both languages).

Each aspect by means of which a focal reality is considered Newman calls a “view” of that reality. Human nature can be viewed in a great variety of its dimensions, under a multitude of aspects or features, as the mind shifts into different registers or keys for the viewing. The humanities organize and order related aspects according to which each of these disciplines of the mind, by means of its own method, may view human nature. Here is how Newman says it.

Let us take, for instance, man himself as our object of contemplation; then at once we shall find we can view him in a variety of relations; and according to those relations are the sciences of which he is the subject-matter, and according to our acquaintance with them is our possession of a true knowledge of him. We may view him in relation to the material elements of his body, or to his mental constitution, or to his household and family, or to the community in which he lives, or to the Being who made him; and in consequence we treat of him respectively as physiologists, or as moral philosophers, or as writers of economics, or of politics, or as theologians. (IU 54–55)¹

Such is the purpose of studying the humanities—not to excel in a single view or method of approach, but for the truth writ large about human nature itself. Concludes Newman:

When we think of [human nature] in all these relations together, or as the subject at once of all the sciences I have named, then we may be said to reach unto and rest in the idea of man as an object or external fact, similar to that which the eye takes of his outward form. (IU 55)

In this essay, Newman's understanding of human nature writ large is the focal reality, ordering and ordered by the three views of it taken here. The first part of the essay describes Newman's philosophical view of human nature in itself, that is, essentially. The second part shifts into Newman's understanding of human nature in its possibilities for development into the most complete way of being human, naturally speaking, that is, human nature in its flourishing or full integrity. The last part of the essay takes the view which Newman privileges, namely, that of human nature transformed in Christ. It is not three different realities being considered but one only, in ever-incomplete variations of its aspects. As Newman writes:

We know, not by a direct and simple vision, not at a glance, but as it were, by piecemeal and accumulation, by a mental process, by going round an object, by the comparison, the combination, the mutual correction, the continual adaptation of many partial notions, by the employment, concentration, and joint action of many faculties and exercises of mind. (IU 134)

Newman repeatedly states his desire to take human nature "as it is" in the concrete actions of daily life. "Let us take things as we find them; let us not attempt to distort them into what they are not. True philosophy deals with facts. We cannot make facts" (US 231). John Locke, whom Newman admires for other reasons, is the one whom he is directly opposing here. Locke "takes a view of the human mind," Newman writes,

which to me seems theoretical and unreal. Reasonings and convictions which I deem natural and legitimate, he apparently would call irrational, enthusiastic, perverse, and immoral; and that, as I think, because he consults his own ideal of how the mind ought to act, instead of interrogating human nature, as an existing thing, as it is found in the world. Instead of going by the testimony of psychological facts, and thereby determining our constitutive faculties and our proper condition, and being content with the mind as God has made it, he would form men as he thinks they ought to be formed, into something better and higher, and calls them irrational and indefensible, if (so to speak) they take to the water, instead of remaining under the narrow wings of his own arbitrary theory. (GA 109)

Newman's empiricism in this regard does not preclude, but is rather the basis for his positing the universality of human nature. Because of what one discovers within oneself and witnesses in others, directly through lived experience and indirectly through learning, one can conclude that the same fundamental attributes found in oneself are possessed by other beings like oneself. Newman reasons analogically: "Human nature is in all ages one and the same: as it showed itself in the Israelites, so it shows itself in the world at large now" (VM 39).

Newman's insistence on the objectivity and universality of human nature is important to stress because for him, "What is not universal has no claim to be considered natural, right, or of divine origin. . ." (GA 260).

I. Human being *qua* human

To be human, for Newman, is to be an integral person of body and soul with a rich interiority that is naturally oriented outward toward the external world, visible and invisible. The heart of this interiority is conscience, the soul's inner chamber of connection with its Maker. For Newman, this is the primary fact of human nature: its always already-there relation to God, be that relation less or more fully realized, be it but sporadically perceived or vaguely inchoate, or altogether rejected.

Human beings then are naturally religious, for by "religion," Newman means "the knowledge of God, of His Will, and of our duties towards Him" (GA 251). Inquiring into the chief doctrines and the grounds of natural religion, both in primitive times and now, Newman finds "there are three main channels which Nature furnishes for our acquiring this knowledge, viz. [a] our own minds, [b] the voice of mankind, and [c] the course of the world, that is, of human life and human affairs" (GA 251).

a. By "our own minds" as a channel for knowing God, Newman means conscience, "our great internal teacher of religion" (GA 251). Through conscience, each human being possesses a connatural awareness of self-in-relation-to-God ("myself and my Creator"²)—an interiorly experienced knowledge possessed in no other way.

Conscience is a personal guide, and I use it because I must use myself;

I am as little able to think by any mind but my own as to breathe with another's lungs. Conscience is nearer to me than any other means of knowledge. (GA 251)

God as Judge is the specific content of the knowledge disclosed through the ordinary experience of conscience. The concomitant self-knowledge attained through conscience is of oneself as naturally possessed of a moral sense, an inner rule of right and wrong, and thus of oneself as obligated by a code of moral duties.

I take our natural perception of right and wrong as the standard for determining the characteristics of Natural Religion, and I use the religious rites and traditions which are actually found in the world, only so far as they agree with our moral sense. (GA 251)

The moral sense that naturally accompanies conscience dictates "no religion is from God which contradicts our sense of right and wrong" (GA 270). A person's conscience makes application of this general sense of right and wrong to the particular circumstances of everyday life.

The rule of morals is the same for all; and yet, notwithstanding, what is right in one is not necessarily right in another. What would be a crime in a private man to do, is a crime in a magistrate not to have done . . . (GA 270)

b. The second natural conduit of religious knowledge, the "voice of mankind," is located especially in the humanities, which assist in filling out the doctrines of natural religion, as they find expression in the various belief systems and mythologies of human history, in recorded dreams, and in literal and fictional narratives of voyages and travels. The ubiquitous utterances of this voice, heard across all ages and cultures, reinforce and develop the knowledge that comes through conscience. They tell of an inherent and unshakable human sense of sin and guilt, of pollution and retribution, of obligations due an angry God, of deserved punishment for unobserved duties, of exacted penalties in this life and in a projected future life, of a corrupt condition that requires expiation, of priesthood and rites, of prayers, offerings and sacrifices, and of the possibility of atonement. These natural acknowledgements of the divine seem harsh and negative, as Newman observes: "Wherever Religion exists in a popular shape, it has almost invariably worn

its dark side outwards” (GA 252–3). Newman insists on the severity of natural religion because,

from the circumstances of human nature, though not by the fault of Religion, such is the shape in which we first encounter it. Its large and deep foundation is the sense of sin and guilt, and without this sense there is for man, as he is, no genuine religion. (GA 258, emphasis added)

c. The third natural informant about religion, which is “the system and the course of the world,” points to an experienced order in the universe together with a strong sense of its Maker’s obscurity, withdrawal and even complete absence from human affairs.

Starting then with the being of a God, (which, as I have said, is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence . . .) I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress If I looked into a mirror, and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling, which actually comes upon me, when I look into this living busy world, and see no reflexion of its Creator. . . . The sight of the world is nothing else than the prophet’s scroll, full of “lamentations, and mourning, and woe.” (Ap 216–17)

With reverberations of Hobbes’ dismal portrayal of human life in its natural state as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short,” and in a manner that recalls the dread and despair in that condition as represented by thoughtful believers from Job to Pascal and Kierkegaard, Newman describes the forlorn state of the human race in its sad restlessness throughout the ages.

To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; . . . the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race. . . —all this is a vision to dizzy and appall; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution. What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact?

I can only answer, that either there is no Creator, or this living society

of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence. (Ap 217)

Accordingly, it does not seem unreasonable to Newman for people earnestly to inquire in the face of this silence: “Why does He not write His Moral Nature in large letters upon the face of history, and bring the blind, tumultuous rush of its events into a celestial, hierarchical order?” (GA 256).

These deep-seated acknowledgements and perplexing questions, which stem from the predominantly harsh side of natural religion, already suggest and imply, Newman notices, a lighter, if not immediately consoling, side as well: visions of salvation, superstitions about the easy amelioration of wrongs, prophecies of better times to come and hope in a future state of just recompense. Without ignoring its dark underside, Newman writes, it can also be said that “all Religion, so far as it is genuine, is a blessing, Natural as well as Revealed” (GA 258). Some alleviation of the burdens of natural religion are constituent elements of it, as instanced in the realization that “religious beliefs and institutions, of some kind or other, are of such general acceptance in all times and places” (GA 258). Some comfort is also found in religion’s benefits that are naturally expected, and in the hope for a happier state after death for those who do good and avoid evil.

They have an earnest of that future in the real and recurring blessings of life, the enjoyment of the gifts of the earth, and of domestic affection and social intercourse, which is sufficient to touch and to subdue even the most guilty of men in his better moments, reminding him that he is not utterly cast off by Him whom nevertheless he is not given to know. (GA 258)

Despite the chaos of physical nature and human affairs in every age, human beings are able to recognize naturally a good God who is related to humankind providentially.

. . . the spontaneous piety of the human mind discerns Divine Supervision. Nay, there is a general feeling, originating directly in the workings of conscience, that similar governance is extended over the persons of individuals, who thereby both fulfill the purposes and receive the just recompenses of Omnipotent Providence. (GA 259)

As universal as belief in providence, Newman notes, is the pervasive

practice of prayer, experienced as a comfort in times of trouble, for individuals and for whole societies and cultures as well.

Here again, if, in order to determine what the Religion of Nature is, we may justly have recourse to the spontaneous acts and proceedings of our race, as viewed on a large field, we may safely say that prayer, as well as hope, is a constituent of man's religion. (GA 260)

Together with prayer, which is "the voice of man to God," an express revelation of some kind, as "the voice of God to man," is a naturally hoped for, desired and expected solace in natural religion. God's revelation to the naturally devout can be seen in their religious interpretations of the ordinary and extraordinary events of life, which are taken as coming directly from the hand of God, often in reward or punishment for deeds done or omitted.

In treating of Revealed Religion in the long section of the *Grammar of Assent* bearing that name, Newman articulates his more ample view of the preparedness for a divine revelation for those who hunger for it that is provided by natural or popular religion. It is a "pre-sentiment" of a revelation from God.

One of the most important effects of Natural Religion on the mind, in preparation for Revealed, is the anticipation, which it creates, that a Revelation will be given. That earnest desire of it, which religious minds cherish, leads the way to the expectation of it. (GA 272)

For Newman, this inborn, natural desire, based on the twofold sense of God's infinite goodness and human unworthiness, produces the "strong presumption" and the "antecedent probability" of Divine Revelation.

Like his favored Alexandrian Fathers of the Church, Newman finds not only hints and traces of the divine, but a genuine "dispensation" and revelation manifest in pre- and non-Christian sources. Clement of Alexandria and Origen were the first Christian humanists and educators of the Christian intellect to take Greek thought on its own terms, thus "recovering and purifying it," rather than reversing, condemning or discarding it because it was heathen. In marked contrast with earlier western Fathers and apologists whom Newman had read, the Alexandrians, like Newman, embraced the philosophy, literature and

mythology of the Greek sages and poets, striving to see the interconnectedness of all truth in God. Properly understood, this “dispensation of paganism” was the divinely ordained preparation of the Hellenic mind, indeed of any educated mind, for the Good News of the Gospel. “There had been in some sense a dispensation carried on in favor of the Gentiles. He who had taken the seed of Jacob for His elect people had not therefore cast the rest of mankind out of his sight” (Ap 36). In fact, Newman wonders if there ever was a time when reason was unaided by such revelatory divine gifts.

It must be recollected that Christianity is only the continuation and conclusion of what professes to be an earlier revelation, which may be traced back into prehistoric times, till it is lost in the darkness that hangs over them. As far as we know, there never was a time when that revelation was not. (GA 278)

In the poem “Heathenism,” Newman exquisitely exhibits the voice of God’s Spirit within this special dispensation of paganism, be it of yesteryear or of today.

’MID Balak’s magic fires
 The Spirit spake, clear as in Israel;
 With prayers untrue and covetous desires
 Did God vouchsafe to dwell;
 Who summon’d dreams, His earlier word to bring
 To patient Job’s vex’d friends, and Gerar’s guileless king.
 If such o’erflowing grace
 From Aaron’s vest e’en on the Sibyl ran,
 Why should we fear, the Son now lacks His place
 Where roams unchristen’d man?
 As though, where faith is keen, He cannot make
 Bread of the very stones, or thirst with ashes slake.³

All of this then—from the natural informant of conscience to the histories and stories of our kind that tell of the sophisticated and universal practices of natural religion, even the desire for God’s continuing self-revelation—all of this, Newman is asserting, is available *by nature* to every human being. “Such, then, in outline is that system of natural beliefs and sentiments, which, though true and divine, is still possible to us *independently of Revelation.*” (GA 263, emphasis added)

II. Human well-being

The first part of this essay has taken up Newman's view of human nature in its very essence. This essential nature, pre-eminently religious, is not fully developed in most individuals, in many cases through no fault of their own. The essay's second view of human nature now takes its stand beside Newman's view of the "mere" humanity or essence of a person.⁴ It investigates what is required for that person's continuing development and full actuality—not as a carpenter, not as a nurse, not as a university student or a professor, but just insofar as that person is a human being. What then, for Newman, constitutes the fullness of human flourishing and well-being, its integrity, and how is one to go about developing it?⁵ All of the natural predispositions and potentialities of human nature must be brought out and developed as completely as possible, if an individual's nature is to be fully actualized.

The full flourishing of the individual is not something natural to human beings "as we find them"; rather, their well-being and completeness needs to be achieved by each person, importantly, through training, through education and through habit. "The bodily eye, the organ for apprehending material objects, is provided by nature; the eye of the mind, of which the object is truth, is the work of discipline and habit" (IU 135).

Because human nature must be taken "as we find it," and because human beings are by nature religious, it is insufficient, according to Newman, to define them as exclusively rational animals. "After all, man is *not* a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal" (DA 294),⁶ and is also a believing, worshiping and praying animal, according to the dictates of natural religion. The development of reasoning, judgment and will are moral and religious obligations, "sacred duties" (GA 225–26), rooted by nature in conscience for the gradual perfecting of human being.

Liberal education can begin this personal development, although the fully developed human being does not follow with necessity from that education. Any study at all can be taken up in a liberal manner, that is, by pursuing it exclusively for its own sake and for no purpose or ulterior motive outside itself. Newman favors, however, the study of

the classics of Greece and Rome as best able to provide a rigorous education of the intellect.

The question is not what department of study contains the more wonderful facts, or promises the more brilliant discoveries, and which is in the higher and which in an inferior rank; but simply which out of all provides the most robust and invigorating discipline for the unformed mind. (IU 222)

He notes the centuries-old preference for classics, and their “lineal descent,” as possessing “the best instruments of mental cultivation, and the best guarantees for intellectual progress” (IU 221). In an address to the School of Philosophy and the Arts at the Catholic university in Dublin, he states that western civilization

has its common principles, and views, and teaching, and especially its books, which have more or less been given from the earliest times, and are, in fact, in equal esteem and respect, in equal use now, as they were when they were received in the beginning. In a word, the Classics, and the subjects of thought and the studies to which they give rise, or, to use the term most to our present purpose, the Arts, have ever, on the whole, been the instruments of education which the civilized *orbis terrarum* has adopted. . . . (IU 216)

In western tradition, liberal education in the classics was found to involve four principal disciplines:

Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, and Mathematics; and the science of Mathematics, again, was divided into four, Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy, and Music; making in all seven, which are known by the name of the Seven Liberal Arts. (IU 218–19)

According to Newman’s idea, the goal or end of university education is the cultivation of a lively and disciplined intellect, just for the sake of its own health and well-being. The very attainment of knowledge is its own fulfilling and pleasurable end. In holding this, Newman pays extraordinary tribute to Aristotle:

All that I have been now saying is summed up in a few characteristic words of the great Philosopher. “Of possessions,” he says, “those rather are useful, which bear fruit; those liberal, which tend to enjoyment. By fruitful, I mean, which yield revenue; by enjoyable, where nothing

accrues of consequence beyond the using.” (IU 102, quoting Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.5)

The goal of liberal education is achieved, first, by learning and by practicing the all-important “habit of method” in its many disciplined applications to the verbal arts of the trivium and the mathematical arts of the quadrivium.

Let [the student] once gain this habit of method, of starting from fixed points, of making his ground good as he goes, of distinguishing what he knows from what he does not know, and I conceive he will be gradually initiated into the largest and truest philosophical views, and will feel nothing but impatience and disgust at the random theories and imposing sophistries and dashing paradoxes, which carry away half-formed and superficial intellects. (IU 13)

A healthy intellect is one that is “energized” for the seeking and detection of truth, its sole and proper object. The mind actively digests, assimilates, compares, corrects, refines and relates, and gradually becomes habituated to these complex processes. The unfortunate alternative is “lingering in the vestibule of knowledge” (IU 134), the mind passive, inert and barely receiving of the facts and information presented to it—its purpose to pass tests, to graduate, to get a good job, and so forth. Study for any useful or extrinsic purpose, even in the admirable service of religion, is not liberal, but is study for utility’s sake, for what it can do. Newman is not belittling the practical knowledge that is power in the world. He is simply arguing that the perfecting of the intellect for its own sake, the special work of the university, has a living beauty and a fulfillment entirely its own:

[Its] enlargement consists, not merely in the passive reception into the mind of a number of ideas unknown to it, but in the mind’s energetic and simultaneous action upon and towards and among those new ideas, which are rushing in upon it. . . . We feel our minds to be growing and expanding then, when we not only learn, but refer what we learn to what we know already. It is not the mere addition to our knowledge that is the illumination; but the locomotion, the movement onwards, of that mental centre, to which both what we know, and what we are learning, the accumulating mass of our acquirements, gravitates. (IU 120–21)

The objective is gradually to illuminate one's knowledge beyond the mere acquisition of information, "to invest it with an idea," so that knowledge will be "impregnated by Reason," and one's mind becomes habituated to this larger, philosophical way of viewing things (IU 103). Philosophy in this sense is for Newman "the architectonic science," not unlike Aristotle's "science of sciences" or Bacon's "*philosophia prima*," enabling one to see the bearing of one discipline, method and subject matter upon another, and their relation to the whole: "to have mapped out the universe is the boast, or at least the ambition, of Philosophy" (IU 105).

In Newman's idea of the university, the individual disciplines are seen as particular views which approximate, under a variety of aspects, knowledge of the whole of God's created universe. Each discipline is a manageable abstraction from the whole, its subject matter accessed by a method unique to that subject. "These various partial views or abstractions, by means of which the mind looks out upon its object, are called sciences" (IU 53). *Pace* Descartes' *mathesis universalis*, no one can view or comprehend all aspects of the created universe at once. Newman writes:

With all its capabilities, the human mind cannot take in this whole vast fact at a single glance, or gain possession of it at once. Like a short-sighted reader, its eye pores closely, and travels slowly, over the awful volume that lies open for its inspection. Or again, as we deal with some huge structure of many parts and sides, the mind goes round about it, noting down, first one thing, then another, as it best may, and viewing it under different aspects, by way of making progress towards mastering the whole. So by degrees and by circuitous advances does it rise aloft and subject to itself a knowledge of that universe into which it has been born. (IU 53)

Every science or discipline is limited to the excellence of its own method and view of reality, and every discipline needs the others to help limit, balance and make the best sense of itself.

I have said that all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and work of the Creator. Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multi-

plied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance each other . . . To give undue prominence to one is to be unjust to another; to neglect or supersede these is to divert those from their proper object. It is to unsettle the boundary lines between science and science, to disturb their action, to destroy the harmony which binds them together. . . There is no science but tells a different tale, when viewed as a portion of a whole, from what it is likely to suggest when taken by itself, without the safeguard, as I may call it, of others. (IU 94)

What is required is the availability for inquiry into all branches of knowledge, “at least implicitly” (IU 182), and the study of a fair number of the disciplines, where that study is neither superficial nor shallow, thus avoiding the educational disaster Newman calls “viewiness”(IU 12).⁷

Newman argues that just as the other subjects in the encyclopedia of knowledge, the intellectual discipline of theology is a necessary part of any university curriculum. To start with, theology can help to purify and develop the intellectual aspects of natural religion, preserving devotion and worship, but dismissing any remnants of ignorance and superstition. In developing his reasons for the required study of theology, Newman argues that theology is a way of knowing just like other forms of knowledge, so it has its place in a university, which claims as such to teach all knowledge.⁸ Theology’s absence from the circle of learning would mean that the disciplines upon which it has some bearing would be distorted, unbalanced and incomplete without its signature contribution. How could Dante’s *Divine Comedy* or the history of music or of philosophy be taught without any theological references? “To blot [theology] out is nothing short, if I may so speak, of unraveling the web of University Teaching. It is, according to the Greek proverb, to take the Spring from out of the year” (IU 71). As would the omission of any other essential discipline, theology’s absence would “put our whole encyclopedia of knowledge out of joint” (IU 63), because each subject influences and is influenced by other subjects.

Are we to limit our idea of University Knowledge by the evidence of our senses? then we exclude ethics; by intuition? we exclude history;

by testimony? we exclude metaphysics; by abstract reasoning? we exclude physics. Is not the being of a God reported to us by testimony, handed down by history, inferred by an inductive process, brought home to us by metaphysical necessity, urged on us by the suggestions of our conscience? It is a truth in the natural order, as well as in the supernatural. (IU 38)

Here Newman is advocating the inclusion in the curriculum of the intellectual subjects of theology and ethics as proper subjects of any university at all. Their practical counterparts, the actual practice of religion and morality, Newman reserves for his discussion of the residential life of the Catholic University.⁹

The philosophical habit of mind gradually formed by liberal education is a lasting “master view,” one that is neither complete nor unalterable in its details, but one that contributes to a full human life. This enlarged way of seeing has rightly surveyed the vast field of knowledge and its objects, thereby understanding *in general* how things stand in relation to one another and to the whole. The liberally educated individual, whom Newman refers to as “the gentleman,” possesses a wealth comparable to any material advantage, one less tangible, but one more permanent and satisfying.

He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called “Liberal.” A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what in a former Discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. (IU 96)

As a kind of by-product of liberal education, the “gentleman” possesses “the connatural qualities of a large knowledge” (IU 110) and is thereby equipped with “fitness for the world,” that is, with the ability to learn, and to excel, in any field of work or profession. “That training of the intellect, which is best for the individual himself, best enables him to discharge his duties to society” (IU 154). Nonetheless, whether or not an individual ever works at or professes anything, that individual has achieved the intellectual excellence that exquisitely suits human

nature and has risen to the full stature of humanity at its best and most integral. Writes Newman:

That further advantages accrue to us and redound to others by its possession, over and above what it is in itself, I am very far indeed from denying; but, independent of these, we are satisfying a direct need of our nature in its very acquisition; and, whereas our nature, unlike that of the inferior creation, does not at once reach its perfection, but depends, in order to it, on a number of external aids and appliances, Knowledge, as one of the principal of these, is valuable for what its very presence in us does for us after the manner of a habit, even though it be turned to no further account, nor subserve any direct end. (IU 97–98)

Just so, Newman would seem to conclude his *Idea's* discourses with this highest ideal of university education:

It is the education, which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It teaches him to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant. It prepares him to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility. (IU 154)

Toward the end of the discourses, however, Newman begins to shift into a different register, taking on a view that implies and foreshadows his idea of a specifically *Catholic* university, up to this point not readily obvious. He shows how the well-educated “gentleman” can nonetheless be led astray by the very liberal learning that has brought about his well-being. Just as there is the natural religion of heathenism, humble and devout before God, so in a civilized age there is the “religion of philosophy,” but this religion is proud and arrogant (IU 157–58). The religion of reason or of philosophy is a counterfeit religion that can readily attach itself to the university-educated individual who possesses that hard won philosophical habit of mind, for it thrives not on submission before God, but on pride of intellect, on faith in only itself and its creations. “It considers itself from first to last independent and supreme; it requires no external authority; it makes a religion for itself” (IU 157). For Newman, alongside the liberal habit of mind into which

one has been inducted intellectually, there needs to take place a simultaneous development of conscience, not only intellectually through theology and education of “the moral sense,” but more totally in the personally lived experience of religion and morality. He elucidates:

Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another; good sense is not conscience, refinement is not humility, nor is largeness and justness of view faith. Philosophy, however enlightened, however profound, gives no command over the passions, no influential motives, no vivifying principles. . . . Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and the pride of man. (IU 110–11)

The life of the liberally educated individual, then, is continually challenged further, for “Liberal Education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman” (IU 110).

Newman has roundly advocated the liberal education of the “gentleman.” Nonetheless, like St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and Dante before him, he also warns of the dangers that accompany such mental excellence. Just reading books and cultivating one’s garden would be fine, Newman says, if one did not have an immortal soul.

III. Abundant life

The true, final end of human nature, namely, abundant and eternal life, is offered by Christ and His Church. It is a life that neither destroys nor deifies human nature, but raises it up and far exceeds it. Newman writes:

“Ye must be born again,” is the simple, direct form of words which [the Church] uses after her Divine Master; “*your whole nature must be re-born*, your passions, and your affections, and your aims, and your conscience, and your will, must all be bathed in a new element, and reconsecrated to your Maker,—*and, the last not the least, your intellect.*” (Ap 222, emphasis added)

Because faith is, for Newman as for St. Thomas Aquinas, “the reasoning of the religious mind, or of what Scripture calls a right or renewed heart” (US 203, emphasis added), it is important to Newman to clarify

exactly what is involved in rightly disposing the mind and heart for faith. From natural conscience comes the desire for more than it itself can fully supply, that is, for authoritative guidance and a divine law, possessed in their fullness, not just in a vague, incomplete and fragmentary way.

It creates in them a thirst, an impatience, for the knowledge of that Unseen Lord, and Governor, and Judge, who as yet speaks to them only secretly, who whispers in their hearts, who tells them something, but not nearly so much as they wish and as they need. (OS 66)

A right state of heart, readied by the heart's longing, hope and love, is necessary not only as a predisposition for faith, but also for maintaining, preserving and keeping that gift. For "what is to be their protection against the aberrations of the intellect, but the deep convictions and eager aspirations of the heart?" (OS 74–75). In this sense, "we believe, because we love" (US 236), and we come to understand because we believe.

The safeguard of Faith is a right state of heart. This it is that gives it birth; it also disciplines it. This is what protects it from bigotry, credulity, and fanaticism. It is holiness, or dutifulness, or the new creation, or the spiritual mind, however we word it, which is the quickening and illuminating principle of true faith, giving it eyes, hands and feet. It is Love which forms it out of the rude chaos into an image of Christ; or, in scholastic language, justifying Faith, whether in Pagan, Jew, or Christian, is *fides formata charitate*. (US 234)

Supernatural faith and love build upon natural religion, whether one is university-educated or not. While liberal education is in no way a necessary cause of or a prerequisite for the reception of revealed religion, a believer who possesses that broad, far-reaching enlargement of mind, which includes the study of theology, can profess an intelligent faith with deeper understanding and consequence. St. Paul, Newman points out, was learned before and after he "learned Christ," leaving behind only his sins. "We would not be unclothed," Newman quotes Paul as saying, but "clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (OS 95). A man of profound self-knowledge, St. Paul was conscious of possessing a nature capable of all the emotions, high

purposes and sins that human beings could confront.

Human nature, the common nature of the whole race of Adam, spoke in [Paul], acted in him, with an energetical presence, with a sort of bodily fullness, always under the sovereign command of divine grace, but losing none of its real freedom and power because of its subordination. And the consequence is, that, having the nature of man so strong within him, he is able to enter into human nature, and to sympathize with it, with a gift peculiarly his own. (OS 95–96)

Just as Moses, St. Paul's counterpart in the Old Covenant, was familiar with the wisdom of the Egyptians, so St. Paul, fittingly called "the Apostle of the Gentiles," revealed his close acquaintance with pagan Greek writings. Newman observes that Paul quotes from the Greek classics three times: once each to the Athenians, to the Corinthian converts and to his disciple Titus (OS 97). Newman says of Paul: "He was a true lover of souls. He loved poor human nature with a passionate love, and the literature of the Greeks was only its expression; and he hung over it tenderly and mournfully, wishing for its regeneration and salvation" (OS 98).

Newman celebrates the tenderness, compassion and amiability of "that glorious Apostle." Yet St. Paul's strong words and epistolary admonishments to those who neglected their discipleship of Christ demonstrate his real distinction from Newman's celebrated "gentleman" of merely philosophic religion. St. Paul cries out about those who, having "rejected a good conscience," have "made shipwreck of their faith" (OS 73). A glance at some of "the lineaments of the ethical character, which the cultivated intellect will form, *apart from religious principle*" brings out St. Paul's distance and difference from the dignified, philosophic and civilized "gentleman," who, for Newman,

is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles that hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him; and he concurs with their movements rather than takes the initiative himself. His benefits may be considered as parallel to what are called comforts or conveniences in arrangements of a personal nature: like an easy chair or a good fire. . . . He carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast. . . ; his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home. . . . He submits to pain,

because it is inevitable, to bereavement, because it is irreparable, and to death, because it is his destiny. . . . If he be an unbeliever, he will be too profound and large-minded to ridicule religion or to act against it; he is too wise to be a dogmatist or fanatic in his infidelity. . . , [for] he is a friend of religious toleration. (IU 159)

Because of these cultivated attributes, St. Paul though learned was no “gentleman” in Newman’s full and secular sense of the term. Paul had little time for the “comforts or conveniences” of a sedentary, leisurely life as he traveled the rough ground of the Mediterranean preaching Christ. In Paul there was no “avoidance of whatever may cause a jar or a jolt,” for he was not concerned “to make every one at their ease and at home,” this world being no lasting abode.

Newman’s Christian “gentleman” is obviously meant to be an ideal type to which no single individual likely conforms completely. The notion is perhaps best realized amidst the rich variety of Doctors of the Church—among those who were educated institutionally, those self taught, those graced by God with philosophic vision. Those who have become “gentlemen,” Newman says,

are seen within the pale of the Church and without it, in holy men, and in profligate; they form the *beau-ideal* of the world; they partly assist and partly distort the development of the Catholic. . . . Basil and Julian were fellow-students at the schools of Athens; and one became the Saint and Doctor of the Church, the other her scoffing and relentless foe. (IU 181)

In the lives and writings of the celebrated Christians who are learned saints and doctors, especially St. Athanasius and St. Augustine for Newman, living examples embody “how sacred learning and profane are dependent on each other, correlative and mutually complementary, how faith operates by means of reason, and reason is directed and corrected by faith” (IU 223).

Such lofty notions as the full flourishing of human nature in the “gentleman,” and the abundant life of grace co-existing with intellectual excellence in a Doctor of the Church, might leave one wondering about the fate of the ordinary, even the uneducated, masses of people who dominate by sheer numbers the populations of every place

and time. These people have a special and always acknowledged place in Newman's heart and writings, perhaps because of his closeness to his mother and sisters, perhaps because of his pastoral experience as a priest, perhaps because of his studies of the role of the laity, especially in the early centuries of the Church. In the first place, he writes: conscience is "adapted for the use of all classes and conditions of men, for high and low, young and old, men and women, independently of books, of educated reasoning, of physical knowledge or of philosophy" (GA 305). Furthermore, if conscience is assiduously and devoutly attended to, if the heart is on the lookout for a revelation, one may be assured

that the best argument, better than all the books in the world, better than all that astronomy, and geology, and physiology, and all other sciences can supply,—an argument intelligible to those who cannot read as well as to those who can,—an argument which is "within us,"—an argument intellectually conclusive, and practically persuasive, whether for proving the Being of a God, or for laying the ground for Christianity,—is that which arises out of a careful attention to the teachings of our heart, and a comparison between the claims of conscience and the announcements of the Gospel. (OS 74)

The *reasoning* of the religious mind, then, is the deep and earnest thought of a rightly disposed individual; it is the *grounds* for his or her faith. Such grounds, or reasons for faith, can be most personal, simple and implicit, for given one's pre-disposition to believe, those grounds are sufficient even for certitude.

Christianity is addressed, both as regards its evidences and its contents, to minds which are in the normal condition of human nature, as believing in God and in a future judgment. Such minds it addresses both through the intellect and through the imagination; creating a certitude of its truth by arguments too various for direct enumeration, too personal and deep for words, too powerful and concurrent for refutation. (GA 379)

Newman goes out of his way to allow always for the miracle of grace imparted directly from above:

The act of mind, for instance, by which an unlearned person savingly

believes. . . may be analogous to the exercise of sagacity in a great statesman or general, supernatural grace doing for the uncultivated reason what genius does for them. (US 218)

In sum, unlettered or educated, factory worker or Doctor of the Church, “we attain to heaven by using this world well, though it is to pass away; we perfect our nature, not by undoing it, but by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims higher than its own” (IU 93).

With regard to the three views of human nature related analogously in this essay—that of human being qua human, that of fully flourishing human being, and that of the graced person of faith—the Catholic Church can do no less and no more than take human nature exactly “as it is,” and “as it is found,” in her learned saints, in her faithful people and, indeed, in all people, for “she does not teach that human nature is irreclaimable, else wherefore should she be sent? not, that it is to be shattered and reversed, but to be extricated, purified, and restored; not that it is a mere mass of hopeless evil, but that it has the promise upon it of great things, and even now, in its present state of disorder and excess, has a virtue and a praise proper to itself” (Ap 221–22). His vocation as apologist, philosophical theologian, and teacher for this Church requires that Newman know this human nature as it is, in its length, breadth and depth, viewed under many aspects, but ultimately as one living focal reality.

Endnotes

1. Abbreviations of the titles of Newman’s works are identified in square brackets in the Works Cited. Newman’s main writings may be found in full at <http://www.newmanreader.org>.
2. Newman describes his experience of conversion at age 15: “. . . making me rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator. . .” (Ap 18).
3. *Verses on Various Occasions*, No. LXXIV, written at Messina, April 21, 1833. See VVO 129.
4. Newman employs Aristotle’s categories to distinguish the *essence* and the *integrity* of a thing in order to differentiate the idea of a university in itself (its

essence) from its entire well-being (its *integrity*), which is added by colleges, libraries, laboratories, museums and so forth, and, especially, by the Church. Newman illustrates the distinction by means of an analogy. A human being's essence is its human form and matter, soul and body. The air the human being breathes is not part of its essence, but is, Newman says, "a *sine qua non*" for the individual's well-being or integrity as a living human being. So too, analogically, the Church breathes integrity or full life into the university as such, making it a Catholic University. For Newman's use of these terms, and for his acknowledged indebtedness to Aristotle for them, see the first paragraph of the Preface of IU, and also DCD 49.

5. Assumed here, as in Newman's educational writings as a whole, are the ordinary, early ways of developing human nature in children, namely, through the family and by schooling. For the early education of young boys, Newman emphasizes, above all, "a discipline in accuracy of mind" (IU 273). See also IU 10–13.
6. This statement may seem to be a rejection of Aristotle's classic definition, that "man is a rational animal"; to the contrary, however. It embraces Aristotle's meaning and points to a broadened and more inclusive sense of rationality than that of Newman's own day. Newman's understanding of human nature is much closer to that of Aristotle, because of the latter's rich meaning of the fullness of rationality, than it is to the impoverished and truncated rationality of much of modern thought. For example, Descartes defines the self as a doubting or thinking thing, for in his hypothetical experiment, he has left behind all moral and religious holdings as if they did not pertain, essentially, to human self-identity.
7. Cf. IU 13: "An intellectual man, as the world now conceives of him, is one who is full of 'views' on all subjects of philosophy, on all matters of the day. It is almost thought a disgrace not to have a view at a moment's notice on any question . . ."
8. Newman's many arguments for the necessary inclusion of theology in any university curriculum are found in the first three Discourses of the *Idea*.
9. This discussion is found in the chapters of *Rise and Progress of Universities* (RPU). Not well known is the fact that Newman considered his writings on university education to be a "three-volume work." Besides the discourses of the *Idea*, there is the volume of various University Subjects presented in essays and lectures which Newman eventually published as the second half of the *Idea*, where it is found today. Thirdly there is the important volume he ultimately entitled *Rise and Progress of Universities*, a collection of lead articles first published by Newman in the *Catholic University Gazette*. See "Introduction" to *Rise and Progress* by M. Katherine Tillman.

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