# The Relevance of Newman in a "Post-Christian" World

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Edited by

Keith Beaumont and Robert C. Christie

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## DEDICATION

The editors wish to dedicate this book to our respective families:
wife Karen, and children Ian, Erin, and late son, Eric,
on the one hand,
and Sr Barbara, O.P., on the other.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# CONTRIBUTORS
# IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

**Christine ANDERSON** is Chair of the Department of Voice and Opera and Associate Professor of Vocal Studies at the Boyer College of Music and Dance of Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. She holds a B.M. in Voice from Illinois Wesleyan University and earned both M.M. and D.M.A. degrees in Voice at the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati. She has sung numerous performances as soprano soloist with several prestigious contemporary music ensembles and has worked with such composers as Lukas Foss and Kristof Penderecki. Dr. Anderson also taught in the Musical Theater Department at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and has presented master-classes and papers at national and international conferences such as the Australia Voice Symposium, the Music Teachers National Association, and the Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities.

**Keith BEAUMONT** was born in Australia in 1944, obtained a Ph.D. from Warwick University in the U.K., and taught French Literature at the University of Leicester, U.K., from 1970 to 1991. Following a long path of conversion, he was received into the Catholic Church in 1986 and decided to radically re-orientate his life. He was ordained a priest of the French Oratory in 1996. He has taught courses on the history of spirituality and on John Henry Newman in several Catholic universities in France and preached numerous retreats in monasteries and religious communities. He has published a dozen books on Newman, including anthologies and a major study of Newman's spiritual teaching (*Dieu intérieur. La Théologie spirituelle de John Henry Newman*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2014). His most recent publications are an anthology of 25 sermons arranged thematically (*Être chrétien*, Éditions du Cerf, 2017) and an edition of the first French translation of Newman's two volumes of Catholic sermons. He is Hon. President of the Association francophone des Amis de Newman.

**Robert C. CHRISTIE** is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and Religion at DeVry University, North Brunswick, NJ. He is on the Board of Directors and President of the Saint John Henry Newman Association, at Seton Hall

University, South Orange, NJ. He is editor of the Newman Association's newsletter and is formerly Executive Director of the National Institute for Newman Studies, Pittsburgh, PA. He has both written and spoken about Newman at many conferences and in numerous books and periodicals. Most recently, he has edited, and contributed to, *Saint John Henry Newman: Preserving and Promulgating His Legacy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020). He is married with three children, Ian, Erin, and the late Eric.

**Mary Jo DORSEY** is a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who has lived and worked in Las Vegas, NV, and New York. She earned a B.S. in Biology from Carlow University (1988), a Master's degree (1990) and a Ph.D. (2008) in Library and Information Sciences from the University of Pittsburgh. Currently at the University of Pittsburgh, she is a board member of the Saint John Henry Newman Association as well as its Communication Coordinator. She has studied the information-seeking behaviours of library and Internet users, noting the many different paths users take toward information. She has lectured and presented papers on the inevitable shift from the physical library to the digital library. She has taught graduate courses in library and information sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. She was the project manager for the digitization of the archives of John Henry Newman in Birmingham, England.

**Romuald EBO** is a priest of the Diocese of Abomey in Benin, West Africa. Ordained in 2008, he was sent by his Bishop in 2009 to study spiritual theology in Paris where he also exercised a ministry at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. In 2016 he was awarded a Doctorate by the Centre Sèvres (Jesuit Faculties of Philosophy and Theology) for a thesis on Newman's conception of conscience and the place of the conscience within Christian spiritual experience as a whole, published as *Expérience spirituelle et conscience chez John Henry Newman: éléments d'une théologie spirituelle de la conscience* (Saint-Léger Éditions, 2017).

**Pierre GAUTHIER** is a priest of the Diocese of Rodez in south-western France and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy in the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Strasburg (one of only two State universities in France permitted to have a theology faculty!). He is the author, amongst other works, of *La Pensée religieuse de Richard Hurrell Froude, 1803-1836* (Paris, 1977) and of a major work on the twin themes of tradition and development in Newman and the French philosopher, Maurice Blondel, *Newman et Blondel. Tradition et développement du dogme*, which was published by the Éditions du Cerf (Paris, 1988) in their prestigious

"Cogitatio Fidei" collection. He also organized and coordinated the publication in French of the eight volumes of *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. He has been a pillar of the French Association and a member of its Board for over 35 years. He lives now in semi-retirement in the Catholic parish of Millau in the Diocese of Rodez.

**Michele MARCHETTO** is Professor of Philosophy of Education and Philosophical Anthropology at the IUSVE, Venice, which is linked to the Università Pontificia Salesiana in Rome. In 2005 he edited Newman's *Scritti filosofici* (which include the *Oxford University Sermons*, the *Grammar of Assent,* and the *Philosophical Notebook*), and in 2008 his *Scritti sull'Università* which include *The Idea of a University,* and *Rise and Progress of Universities*). Both volumes are introduced by long monographs. He contributed a study of *La filosofia di John Henry Newman e le sfide del relativismo* to the volume *Una ragionevole fede. Logos e dialogo in John Henry Newman* (2009) and has also published *Un presentimento della verità. Il relativismo e John Henry Newman* (2010), as well as several papers on Newman's idea of the person. He edited (with P. Manganaro) the proceedings of the international conference held in Venice, *Maestri perché testimoni. Pensare il futuro con John Henry Newman e Edith Stein* (2017). His latest works are *John Henry Newman. Identità, alterità, persona* (2016), and *Newman. Il primato di Dio e la formazione dell'uomo* (2019).

**Alexander B. MILLER** earned a doctorate in Historical Theology from Fordham University in the Bronx, New York. His primary field of research is patristics, particularly the study of the Christian East and Near East, and his doctoral research focused on the theological anthropology of Cyril of Alexandria. However, since his undergraduate studies, Dr. Miller has been captivated by the interaction of conscience and epistemology in Newman's thought, resulting in an article on "The Reasonableness of Faith and Assent in Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons* and *Grammar of Assent."* His interest in Jerzy Popiełuszko and the Solidarity movement is born of a felicitous discovery resulting from marriage.

**R. Michael OLSON** is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Philosophy Department at Saint Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont. He earned his doctoral degree in Philosophy from Emory University in 1998 and works in the history of philosophy, with special interests in classical political philosophy, philosophical psychology, philosophy, and religion, focusing on such figures as Plato, Newman, and Kierkegaard. He has

published and presented papers on St. John Henry Newman's *Grammar of Assent* and *The Idea of a University*.

**Didier RANCE** is a Permanent Deacon (of both the Latin and Oriental rites) and former national Director of Aid to the Church in Need, France. A historian by training, he is the author of some thirty books and of a vast number of lectures and articles on a wide range of subjects. Among his latest books are a biography of the English poet and mystic John Bradburne who was killed in Zimbabwe in 1979, now available in English translation, *The Vagabond of God*, and *Nietzsche et le Crucifié*. He is currently working, at the request of the Zimbabwean and Italian Bishops, on the *Positio* for the beatification of John Bradburne and that of the Italian Franciscan Friar, Agostino Vicini. He is a Franciscan tertiary and Vice-President of the Association francophone des Amis de Newman.

**Paul ROBIN** is an agronomist by training who worked at the prestigious INRA (National Institute for Agronomic Research). He has also been for forty years at the service of the Church of the Diocese of Montpellier. The conflict between faith and reason which he describes as potentially "schizophrenic" has its roots in his own experience. It took him thirty years to become reconciled to himself and to his Church, without however ever leaving the latter. It is to John of the Cross and to Newman that he owes this reconciliation. He is married with four children and seven grand-children (three of them English, one Canadian and one American).

**Grégory SOLARI** is a philosopher (author of a thesis on "Newman's Cogito" in the *Philosophical Notebook*). He teaches at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Geneva and is Director of the Éditions Ad Solem, the principal publisher of Newman in France. He has published, amongst other books, in 2014 *Le Temps découvert. Développement et durée chez Newman et Bergson*, and in 2019 *John Henry Newman. L'Argument de la sainteté.* He is married with three children. He is a member of the Board of the French Association.

**Jack SULLIVAN** is a Permanent Deacon of the Archdiocese of Boston, USA. After studying law at Suffolk University Law School in Boston he worked for 14 years as a lawyer and was then for 30 years a Chief Magistrate in the Court system in Plymouth, Massachusetts. In 2000-2001, Jack was inexplicably (in medical terms) cured of an excruciatingly painful back disorder after appealing to John Henry Newman for his intercession, his cure being subsequently recognized as the miracle which opened the way

for Newman's beatification. He was ordained a permanent deacon for the Archdiocese of Boston in September 2002 and serves as Catholic chaplain to a large prison in Plymouth, Massachusetts. He was asked by Pope Benedict XVI to serve as deacon at Newman's beatification in September, 2010, and his wife Carol, to whom he has been married for 45 years, was asked to bring Newman's relic to His Holiness as part of that same Mass. Since his miraculous cure, he has given talks all over the U.S. as well as conducting healing services with the only relic, so he believes, of St John Henry Newman outside of the Birmingham Oratory.

**Bernadette WATERMAN WARD,** educated at Harvard and Stanford, is Associate Professor of English and Director of Graduate Study at the University of Dallas. She is the author of *Eliot's Angels: Mimetic Desire in George Eliot's Narratives* (forthcoming, University of Notre Dame Press) and *World as Word: Philosophical Theology in Gerard Manley Hopkins* (CUA Press, 2002). Secretary of the St John Henry Newman Association, and a board member for more than two decades, she has written numerous articles on Newman. She writes frequently on Hopkins and is on the board of scholars for the *Hopkins Quarterly*. She is also on the board of University Faculty for Life, and in that capacity publishes on more recent literature. She has published one drama and performs poetry as part of the Bonehouse Collective. As a volunteer, she teaches English to immigrants.

# INTRODUCTION

KEITH BEAUMONT AND ROBERT CHRISTIE

On 7-9 November 2014 a major international conference was held in Paris, organized jointly by the Association *française* (now francophone) des Amis de Newman and the Newman Association of America, now The Saint John Henry Newman Association. The conference was attended by some twenty Newman specialists from North America and a roughly equal number from France and other European countries. Its theme was "The Relevance of Newman in a 'Post-Christian World'" ("La Pertinence de la pensée de Newman dans un monde 'postchrétien'"). Papers were given in English or French, all having been translated in advance into the other language. The chapters of the present volume are all based on papers given at that conference.

What was meant by "post-Christian"? In choosing this theme, there was no intention of suggesting that Christianity has completely disappeared from contemporary European or North-American society, nor indeed from any other part of the world. There are moreover considerable differences in this respect between different countries of Europe, and between Europe and North America.[1] The term was merely intended to signify that Christianity was no longer a major reference for the great majority of those who, in Western countries, shape public opinion in our modern world – in the media, in higher education, and in political life. All, or almost all, think and speak as if the question of God were no longer of any relevance to public life, "religion" being confined to the purely domestic sphere and being purely a matter of personal and private "opinion". Christianity, it is widely believed amongst the opinion-makers, belongs to the past, its "dogmas" and its

[1] In France, for example, the principle of "*laïcité*" (which can be very roughly translated as "secularism" though there is no real equivalent in English) is all too often understood not in the sense of neutrality but in that of exclusion. Since the Act of Separation of Church and State in 1905, for example, there is absolutely no place for the teaching of religion in all State educational establishments, from primary schools to universities (with the sole exception of the two Universities of Metz and Strasburg, which in 1905 were situated in Departments then under German administration and where the Concordat of 1801 has never been abrogated).

values being simply outdated. The question therefore arises: what can a thinker like Newman have to *say* to sophisticated and educated Western men and women who adopt, or are influenced by, such a view of things?

It should be added, to avoid possible misunderstandings, that the choice of the conference theme was in no way intended to suggest that Newman has nothing to say to *Christians* today! We are indeed convinced that he has. We simply wished to focus on the "post-Christian" aspect of the question, given the nature of contemporary culture and society.

Within the broad theme of the conference, the choice of particular subjects was left to the initiative of contributors (subject, obviously, to the agreement of the organizers). By remarkable good fortune – or, more probably, on account of the *unity* which characterizes Newman's thought, despite the great variety of his writings – most of the papers can be grouped around a number of thematic poles.

The first four take a broad view of Newman and of the conference theme and constitute, in one way or another, an introduction to the conference.

Thus Didier Rance poses with panache the question of the "relevance of relevance". How are we to define such a term? He proposes a comparison between Newman and three 20th century thinkers who have all dealt in different ways with the concept of relevance: the anthropologist Dan Sperber and the linguist Deidre Wilson, and above all Alfred Schütz, banker by day and philosopher by night who had strong links with the phenomenological school of Edmund Husserl. Newman thus appears as a precursor of 20th century phenomenology. The author stresses the parallels in particular between Schütz's conception of relevance and Newman's concept of "real assent", touching along the way (but how could it be otherwise with Newman, given its centrality?) on the theme of faith. Finally, he suggests that, amongst other features of Newman's thought, his phenomenology of conscience and of the nature of assent, together with his distinction between the "notional" and the "real", are as relevant today as in his own time, and perhaps even more so.

Next, Michele Marchetto, Professor of Philosophy of Education and Philosophical Anthropology at two Italian universities, deals with the question of "The Understanding of 'Selfhood' in Newman's Thought and in Contemporary Western Philosophical Culture". He first analyses the immense confusion which characterizes contemporary reflection concerning the concepts of the "person" and of the "self", emphasizes the ambivalence of contemporary anthropocentrism, and argues the need for a "return to the person", seeing Newman as a precursor in this domain. He judiciously compares the latter's thought with that of a number of 20th century phenomenologists and philosophers, notably Paul Ricœur. He

focuses in particular on the "illative sense", establishing a parallel between Newman's analysis of this phenomenon in the *Grammar of Assent* and the concrete example he provides of its functioning in the narrative of the *Apologia*. Finally, he sees in Newman's experience of conscience – expressed in his discovery of "myself and my Creator" – the expression of a personalism which can provide a way out of the current confusion of ideas.

Keith Beaumont, in "The Mind of Newman: the Theme of 'Connectedness' as Key to his Thought", then attempts to characterize that mind. His starting point is a formula found in *The Idea of a University* where Newman gives as the aim of university education the acquisition of "a connected view or grasp" of things. Where many, in both past and present, have tended and tend to think in terms of oppositions or contradictions between ideas, or phenomena, or areas of knowledge, Newman seeks on the contrary to discover, and advocates the search for, the "connections" or links or relationships between these – for example, the "connectedness" or interrelatedness of all academic disciplines, or the relationship between "dogma" and spirituality, or that between the "notional" and the "real", between theology, ethics and spirituality, between the individual conscience and the authority of the Pope, between change and continuity within the process of "development". In place of the all too current reduction of our conception of Christianity to just two "dimensions" – an intellectual dimension ("believing") and an ethical one (the defence of certain "values") – Newman proposes an "integrated" vision of the Christian life in which these two, admittedly necessary, dimensions are placed in the service of a third dimension, that of the interior or spiritual life. Newman thus offers the example of a particular *way of thinking* or *approach to reality* which both Christians and "post-Christians" have every interest today in developing in themselves.

Robert Christie's chapter, on "Newman's Principle of Development: the Gateway to Contemporary Insight", belongs to this first introductory group through its detailed analysis of the characteristics of what constitutes a "post-Christian" and of the role of higher education in promoting this world view. The author then examines what he calls the "aesthetic" vision of Newman, that is to say his constant quest for a form of plenitude or totality in place of the fragmented and narrow categories of thought which characterize our current age, seeing in Newman's vision a valuable antidote to this limited range of thought. He shows how this vision is expressed in *The Idea of a University*, in the last of the *University Sermons*, and in the *Essay on Development*. His analysis thus links up partly with that of the preceding chapter whilst adopting a quite different approach, at the same

time looking forward to the chapters in the following group dealing with the theme of education.

This second group, then, focuses on Newman's contribution to thinking on education, with several authors touching also on the theme of the nature of faith.

Michael Olson, in "The Center of the Circle of Knowledge: Self-Knowledge in Newman's *The Idea of a University*", starts from the observation that our age suffers from an excess of "theories" and that the fascination exercised by these theoretical (or, in Newman's terms, "notional") constructions has led to a fragmentation of knowledge and to a loss of any sense of the individual as an integrated whole (his analysis joining here that of Michele Marchetto). In Newman's thought, what constitutes the center of the "circle of knowledge" is not any one discipline or field of knowledge, not even what he calls "philosophy", but the individual self, that is to say the human person in its concrete reality, the "real" apprehension of which imposes an order on the diverse and separated sciences. It is through the rediscovery of this self that the true "enlargement of the mind" of which Newman speaks in *The Idea* can actually occur.

Paul Robin, in "Newman and his *Idea of a University* as Viewed by a Scientist: a Practice, an Encounter, a Translation for today", provides a personal testimony to the important role played by his discovery of Newman in "converting" him from scientific positivism to a more open and humanistic world view, and in overcoming the threat of "schizophrenia" between his scientific mind-set and the requirements of religious faith. Newman's Dublin lectures in particular led him to question and to rethink certain of his own mental categories, and indeed even the nature and functioning of the human mind. Newman also led him to understand in a quite different way the concepts of "truth", "power" and "the Truth", and to the realization that there can not be two contradictory "truths" but only partial truths which must seek reconciliation in the mystery of the one unique "Truth". He concludes with a challenge addressed to all of us today to seek and to integrate into our lives this reconciliation.

Christine Anderson also provides an account of a personal journey inspired by Newman in "'To Sweeten and to Sanctify': Developing a 21st-century Teaching Philosophy based on the Writings of John Henry Newman". As a professor of music and singing she has been confronted by the challenges thrown up by the evolution of higher education with its huge increase in administrative and technical staff to the detriment of teaching staff, and the reduction of the latter's role to that of the purely impersonal transmission of "knowledge". She has thus been led to redefine her own "teaching philosophy" thanks to her progressive discovery of the ideas of

Newman, not just in *The Idea of a University* but also in his sermons and other works, and above all of his conception in his *Meditations and Devotions* of a "mission" given to him – and to us – by God.

In his paradoxically entitled chapter "Faith, Reason and the University: From Benedict XVI to Newman", Pierre Gauthier occupies a position half-way between the theme of the university and that of faith. Rather than attempting to show a spurious influence of one man on the other, he examines the common ground shared by the two. Both draw upon their experience as university professors, both are steeped in a knowledge and love of Classical Antiquity and of history. This common experience and shared knowledge led them both to emphasize the universality of knowledge and its implications for the relationship between different university disciplines. Both also see an intimate link between faith and culture, as exemplified by the monastic tradition in which the quest for God led naturally, through the study of the Scriptures and reflection on these, to the development of a whole literary and scientific culture. The common plea of Newman and Pope Benedict for unity and integration may today seem utopian. But cannot a utopia serve as a warning, as well as a goal to be aimed at, even if that goal should seem forever merely a distant horizon?

Grégory Solari, in a chapter entitled "Incarnation: a Corporal Paradigm of Certitude in Newman", takes as his starting point a statement by Newman in the *Apologia* that he was "more certain **(**of the reality of God as revealed by his conscience**)** than of having feet and hands", a statement noticed by the philosopher Wittgenstein (who found it "curious"). The author reflects on the nature of certitude, on the nature of the self and on its relationship to the body, and proposes a comparison of the experience of Newman with that suggested by the Cartesian *cogito*, arguing for a much broader interpretation of Descartes' thought than the purely intellectualist one usually given to it. He puts forward the hypothesis that Newman may have intuitively grasped what phenomenology today calls the "living body".

In "Conscience and the Big Lie: Newman's Theological Epistemology and the Solidarity Movement", Alexander Miller first examines Newman's conception of conscience as a means of both self-knowledge and the knowledge of God, then studies in the light of these ideas the brief career of the Polish priest Jerzy Popieluzsko, chaplain to the Solidarity movement in the 1980s, brutally murdered in 1984 by the State Security police and beatified as a martyr in 2010 (his canonisation is under consideration following a miraculous cure attributed to his intercession). In his sermons, preached during a monthly "mass for the fatherland" attended by thousands of people, Popieluzsko denounced the "Big Lie" of Polish Communist propaganda and the State's manipulation of people's consciences in the

interests of an atheistic ideology. The author believes that the pedagogy employed by the two men in their teaching on conscience can play a significant role today in our pluralistic and individualistic societies.

Bernadette Waterman Ward analyzes, in "Evangelism and Living Assent in John Henry Newman", the conflict between Christian values and the demands of "politically correct" attitudes as well as the fear in our post-Christian culture of creating embarrassment through the expression of disapproval. In this context, Christians find themselves more and more marginalized and criticized for not joining the mainstream of "advanced" opinion. Newman's teaching, particularly his preaching which combines great moral rigour and lucidity of psychological analysis, can help us to reach a "real assent" capable of leading to an authentic conversion.

Romuald Ebo, a priest from Benin in West Africa, reflects in "Newman and Inter-Religious Dialogue" on the relevance of Newman's conception of conscience to contemporary inter-religious dialogue. Conscience is, for Newman, the source of what he calls "natural religion", a term which does not designate any specific historical reality but rather the state of every man possessed of some form of natural religiosity, a natural religiosity which the proclamation of the Gospel does not destroy but builds upon and brings to fulfilment. The author argues that if the Church is a depositary of the truth, salvation is through Christ alone, whether operating through or outside of the institutional Church.

Our last two chapters possess a different character. In "Digitizing Newman's Archive" Mary Jo Dorsey, formerly *Knowledge Manager* of the National Institute for Newman Studies situated at Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), gives a fascinating account of the vast programme of digitization of Newman's archives housed at the Birmingham Oratory, a project which will be of tremendous service to Newman scholars the world over. And Jack Sullivan, a Permanent Deacon of the Archdiocese of Boston in the United States, gives in "I Believe in the Communion of Saints: The Story of a Miracle" a moving account of the circumstances of his miraculous cure through the intercession of John Henry Newman, which opened the door to Newman's beatification by Benedict XVI in September 2010.

It goes without saying that all the participants in our November 2014 conference and all the authors of chapters in this book are firmly convinced of "the relevance of Newman in a Post-Christian world". We fervently hope that our readers will come to share that view.

# PART I:

# A BROAD OVERVIEW OF THE SUBJECT

# CHAPTER ONE

# THE RELEVANCE OF RELEVANCE: SCHÜTZ, SPERBER-WILSON, NEWMAN[1]

DIDIER RANCE

***Abstract**: When we speak of relevance, of what are we speaking? The concept may prove itself both tougher and more successful than seems at first to be the case. Several thinkers of the twentieth century gave it an important place in their work, especially cognitive scientists Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, who today are regarded as leaders in this area. More interesting still is the theory of relevance of the sociologist Alfred Schütz, who concurs on more than one point with Newman's concerns. To confront them may enrich our knowledge both of Newman and of relevance.*

*The Relevance of Newman in a "post-Christian" World?* Perhaps, being a little provocative, I could say, "Why bother?" The answer to this question is right in front of us: it is the relevance score of the words "John Henry Newman" in this field. When we talk about "relevance" today, it is that which is calculated by the algorithms performance of a search engine that is gaining more and more relevance. This may seem a bit of a joke (but for how much longer?), but if I add that *relevance* and *relevant* appear in some 360 million web pages, you will agree that it is worth the trouble to take a brief look at them, to take the time to ponder on the *relevance* of *relevance* itself, since this term has been for at least fifty years now a buzzword in politics, the humanities, advertising, to name but a few fields.

A thesaurus actually defines the terms "relevance", "relevant" (and "pertinence") as "properly applying to the case in hand".[2] These terms appear during the Middle Ages in the legal vocabulary (that is relevant which a magistrate judges to relate directly and strongly to the subject of the

[1] [English translation by Keith Beaumont.]
[2] Webster's 1913 Dictionary.

dispute or the trial), even if the concept is much older (for example, it is implied in a possible translation of Mark 12:34: "when Jesus saw that he [the scribe] answered wisely" (NKJV). However, it was not until the twentieth century that the term was launched upon its brilliant career – even if, as Keith Beaumont has stressed, its true meaning had not escaped the sagacity of John Henry Newman.

What is, or who is, relevant? Why, when, how? Is it a quality, a function, a judgment, a behaviour? Is its driving force a need, a desire, a blind mechanism? The study of the relevance of relevance has led to much work by linguists, social and cognitive scientists, and philosophers. I will try first to summarize two of the most influential theories on the subject[3], before testing them against "Newman's relevance".

## Alfred Schütz and the structures of relevance

Alfred Schütz (1899-1959), an important figure of Husserlian phenomenology, was a banker by day and a philosopher, recognized by his peers, by night. This characteristic may explain his concern for individual and societal day-to-day life, and the fact that the concept of "relevance" is at the core of his thinking.[4] For him, relevance is a key element of our daily lives: in our choices, it is midway between "because" and "in order to". Starting from Husserl, William James and Henri Bergson's *attention à la vie* ("attention to life", Schütz uses the French words), Schütz develops a typology of relevances.[5] He purposely goes from the practical to the conceptual and not the reverse. He intends above all to explain "how it happens" when we make a "relevant" choice. For him the key role is not played by predicative judgment or rational inquiry, but by what he calls, borrowing the term from Husserl, "prepredicative": things as they are in our

[3] To mention but a few other ones: Eric Voegelin equates relevance and motivation, on the Aristotelian and Christian normative basis of good and the virtues; cf. *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: UCO, 2012), 1-26. For Barbara Gorayska and Roger Lindsay, who find their sources in Weber, relevance is essentially practical and goal-dependant (cf. "The Roots of Relevance", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 19/4, 1993), 301-323).

[4] See A. Schütz *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 16-52; *The Structures of the Life-World,* vol.1 (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973), 182-215.

[5] To mention some: topical, interpretative or motivational, voluntary or imposed (Schütz put in the latter "disease, bereavement" and religion) (cf. A. Schütz, "The Well-Informed Citizen. Essay on the Social Distribution of Knowledge", in *Collected Papers*, vol. 2 (The Hague, Nijhoff), 127).

consciousness before conceptualization, based on our previous experiences, our feelings, our prejudices, our habits, and on social circumstances such as language, culture and so on. Our life experiences and thoughts are deposited as sediments into our consciousness at this prepredicative level to constitute what Schütz called a "stock of knowledge to hand", a "horizon of relevance" (and even plural horizons, as the sedimentations are many, and varied, and structure themselves into organic blocks that he called "provinces").

When an event, external or internal, a stimulus or a problem occurs in this horizon of relevance, what is happening? For Schütz, Carneades, a Greek philosopher, laid the foundations of the right answer to this question.[6] Carneades exposed the following problem: I walk into a room and, in a dark corner, there is something coiled up. Is it a rope or a snake? What are the relevant response and the relevant conduct that result from it? Carneades established that the mental category we implement to give these is the "*πιθανον"*. This Greek term can be translated as *plausible*, *probable*, or *possible*, or may encompass the three (and also *believable*, *credible*, *convincing* – the exact meaning of this term is a subject of controversy since Antiquity).[7] Schütz chooses to translate it as "problematic possibilities", a term taken from Husserl : these depend on the structuring of our horizons of reference, on the manner an event or a problem enters them, on our capabilities of typifying situations (e.g., familiar or strange, routine or surprise, obvious or not, and so on – in which imagination plays a role), and on the context (what is plausible/possible/probable in a sailor's cabin differs from what is plausible/possible/probable in an unfamiliar room, especially if it is in a country where snakes proliferate). All of these elements are "problematic possibilities" converging or diverging, and determine how we react appropriately to a stimulus (snake or rope? forget it, or look for a stick?). Schütz concludes with Carneades: better choose scepticism for conceptual knowledge, and probabilism for relevant actions in real life.[8]

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[6] Schütz wrote that Carneades had made "the most careful analysis of the phenomenon in question" (*Reflections*, o.c, 17), "an extremely careful investigation of questions which concern the problem of relevance" (*The Structures*, 183).

[7] Carneades' successor in the Academy, Clitomachus, admitted he did not know what Carneades had really wanted to mean by the term. For Cicero, Sextus Empiricus or Philo, it leads to firm belief, but for others, ancients or moderns, it means only plausible, and is therefore not a sure criterion for belief.

[8] According to Schütz, "The relevance problem is perhaps both the most important and at the same time the most difficult problem that the description of the life-world has to solve" (*The Structures*, 183).

## Dan Sperber, Deirdre Wilson and relevance as automatism

The second currently prevailing theory of relevance concerned initially a limited scope: pragmatism or, more specifically, communication.[9] For the anthropologist Dan Sperber and the linguist Deirdre Wilson (whose work I will summarize here in broad outline), relevance in communication obeys specific principles: any communicator suggests to his interlocutor that his stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance and, for the latter, all other things being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved by processing an input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time and, other things being equal, the greater the processing effort expended, the lower the relevance of the input to the individual at that time. From this, the authors conclude that human beings are designed to automatically maximize the effectiveness of their information processing, whether they realize it or not, which is by definition relevant. That does not seem to go very far beyond setting out in technical terms the trivial definition of relevance (distinguished from "automatic"): that is relevant to me which has to do with what I know and with adding something to it (Sperber and Wilson acknowledge this limit).

## Newman and relevance

What of the word and the concept in Newman? The words *relevance* and *pertinence* are not frequent in Newman's writings: some twenty occurrences for relevance and its lexical field, and less than half that number for pertinence. By contrast, their antinomies appear more often: *irrelevant* occurs about 70 times and *impertinent*, when meaning irrelevant, almost ten times; is it an idiosyncratic stylistic feature or a cultural curiosity?

However, the combination of relevance and of Newman seems a good match as, since his own time, his name has been steadily attached to this concept.[10] One can perhaps see in this constant feature a kind of reward for

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[9] See D. Sperber & D. Wilson, *La Pertinence, Communication et Connaissance* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1989) (I quote from the French translation); D. Sperber & D. Wilson, *Relevance, Communication and Cognition* (Harvard: Harvard U.P., 1986); *Ibid.,* "Relevance Theory", in L. Horn and G. Ward (eds.), *Handbook of Pragmatics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 607-632.

[10] It may also be mentioned, conversely, that the actual or perceived relevance of Newman is such that some who deny it talk about the need to "demythologize" Newman. See for example V. Pitt, "Demythologizing Newman", in D. Nichols & F.

his own efforts to demonstrate the relevance of the Fathers of the Church for his own and for all times. By doing so, and also by reaching out to people themselves rather than limiting himself to their ideas, he is himself a model of relevance. Several Popes have affirmed this relevance, and studies, articles, books and conferences have supported it (as this conference will endeavor to do also), even competing sometimes in the superlative (up to a Newman belonging "to all times, places and peoples".[11] We could also mention the many comparative studies of Newman and several relevant thinkers of our times, from Bergson to postmodernists through Blondel, Husserl, Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Michael Polanyi or Taylor. Moreover, we could add another note on Newman and relevance: the prospect of his canonization, which would open the door to his being declared Doctor of the Church. The new criteria for the saints who are to be proposed as Doctors of the Church, as published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, stipulate as their sixth criterion "*the special effect and relevance of the eminent doctrine*" of the candidate, "in as much as it possesses a *sure and durable message*".[12]

## Newman and Wilson-Sperber

A dialogue can now be opened between Newman and the theories of relevance just presented. I will start with Sperber's and Wilson's theory, with which the gap seems unbridgeable. The shared use of some themes, as, for example the emphasis on the role of imagination, or the kind of inference that Newman called "informal" and Sperber and Wilson "non-demonstrative", is not enough. It could be qualified only, in Newman's terms, as notional or even verbal convergence of relevance.[13] Pascal Engel

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Kerr eds., *John Henry Newman. Reason, Rhetoric and Romanticism* (Bedminster : Bristol Press, 1991), 13-27.

[11] D. Rance, "Les sermons de Newman, quelle pertinence pour les chrétiens aujourd'hui ?", *Études Newmaniennes*, 25 (2009), 141-144.

[12] The list of these criteria can be found in Drew Morgan, "John Henry Newman, Doctor of Conscience: Doctor of the Church", *Newman Studies*, 1/4, 2007, 22-23. The concept of "lasting" can be compared to the "continuing relevance of Newman" developed by Louis Bouyer (in *Newman Today*, ed. Stanley L. Jaki (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 165-174).

[13] For these authors, "the non-demonstrative inference is a logical process within a realistic form of imagination subject to appropriate conditions"; see D. Sperber & D. Wilson, *La Pertinence*, 109. Contexts lead to differences (*ibid*., 103-179). Compare J. H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903), 288-329 and D. Sperber & D. Wilson, *La Pertinence*, 103-180)

draws a parallel between the *Grammar of Assent* and the article in which Dan Sperber presented his theory of beliefs in general: for both, there are substantive beliefs, intuitive premises of our inferences – and thus of our assents (Newman) or our saliency (Sperber-Wilson).[14] But Newman's "first principles" involve all faculties of consciousness/conscience, including moral and religious, as well as cognitive. They are radically different from Sperber's neural basis.[15] And if Newman did respect agnostic seekers of God in his time and held a dialogue with men such as William Froude[16], he fought against naturalist scientism[17], the kind of which Dan Sperber offers a rejuvenated version – a world where the question of God is irrelevant, where the only relevant enquiry is to ask why men ask such questions, and its answer is put in purely naturalistic terms involving physics, neurology and evolution.

## Newman and Schütz

The dialogue with Schütz is much more fruitful. The comparison between these two theories which were developed in different centuries and against different backgrounds, and expressed moreover in different words, is surely a delicate and a somewhat audacious exercise. But an effective link between our two thinkers does exist: Carneades! We have seen the decisive importance of the latter for Alfred Schütz. But the Greek philosopher is no stranger to Newman, who studied him in his youth while writing in 1824 his

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[14] See P. Engel, "Newman and the Grammar of Assent", http://jeannicod.ccsd.cnrs.fr/ijn_00000221; see also D. Sperber, "Intuitive and reflective beliefs", *Mind and Language*, 12/1, 1997. 67-83.

[15] See G. Casey, *Natural Reason, A Study of Concepts of Inference, Assent, Intuition and First Principles in the Philosophy of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (New York: P. Lang, 1984), 205-303.

[16] See for example his letter of 29 April 1879 to William Froude in J. H. Newman, *Letters & Diaries*, vol. XXIX, January 1879-September 1881, C.S. Dessain & Thomas Gornall eds, (Oxford U.P., 1976), 112-120, and P. Vincette, *La Théorie de la connaissance et de la certitude chez John Henry Newman* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: ANRT, 2002), 98-99.

[17] Even with Prime Minister Robert Peel (cf. R. Pattison, *The Great Dissent. John Henry Newman and the Liberal Heresy* (Oxford: 1991, 178). In his *Idea of a University,* Newman writes that a young man educated in the complexity of the natural sciences will struggle with the simplicity of God (J. H. Newman*, The Idea of a University, Defined and Illustrated*, vol 2 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903), 402; this attitude is noticed in T. Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts, The Theological and Religious Ideal of John Henry Newman* (Leuven: Peeters, 1991), 57-58).