

## “H Newman” and Ludwig Wittgenstein: Re-evaluating the History of John Henry Newman’s Philosophical Reception\*

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### Abstract

It is commonly held that the dominance of logical positivism, in the early part of the twentieth-century, hindered Newman’s philosophical recognition. However, commentators also argue that Newman’s writing began to gain wider recognition following Wittgenstein’s reference to “H Newman” (1969) in the posthumous publication of *On Certainty*. This essay explores whether or not this version of the history of Newman’s philosophical reception rings true – exploring whether or not the reference to “H Newman” really marks a watershed for Newman’s philosophical legacy.

### Keywords

John Henry Newman, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Linguistic Philosophy, Logical Positivism, Philosophical Reception

### Introduction

It is frequently argued that the prevalence of a variant of evidentialism within linguistic philosophy, logical empiricism,<sup>1</sup> delayed

\*I would like to dedicate this article to my mentor the late Mervyn Davies – a “St. Andrew” in Newman scholarship: John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 8 Vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1907–1909), II, 3.

<sup>1</sup> The prevalence of logical positivism during this period in Anglophone philosophy as argued by Garcia: ‘From the 1920s to the 1960s, large tracts of English-speaking philosophy labored under the shadow of logical positivism and its verification criterion of meaning. Positivism is evidentialism for the twentieth-century; empirical certitude extends only to what is immediately presented to sense experience (sense-data), and statements that cannot be verified falsified by such evidence are... meaningless.’ Laura L Garcia, ‘Catholic Philosophical Theology,’ in *Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. C Meister & P Copan (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 525-534, at p. 530.

Newman’s recognition as a philosopher up until the late 1960s.<sup>2</sup> A recent example (2015) of this perspective is visible in the writing of Duncan Pritchard who argues that ‘Newman went from being one of the most important intellectual figures of his day to being hardly discussed at all by philosophers by the middle of the twentieth century.’<sup>3</sup> In order to support this narrative, Pritchard cites Fergus Kerr’s essay ‘In an Isolated and, Philosophically, Uninfluential Way’ (2000) in which Kerr suggests that interest in Newman’s work was eclipsed when A J Ayer (1910) began his tenure at Oxford (1959-1978).<sup>4</sup>

Kerr is correct to note the disinterest in Newman by logical positivists like Ayer who maintained that the only genuine propositions are those which ‘picture’ or ‘represent’ a possible state of affairs.<sup>5</sup> Ayer’s position well illustrates what Kerr identifies as the ‘pervasively secular environment of analytic philosophy’ during this period,<sup>6</sup> and Kerr is not alone in connecting Newman’s neglect to the dominance of logical positivism in the early part of the twentieth-century.<sup>7</sup> In an essay entitled ‘Newman as a Philosopher’ (1990), the late Basil

<sup>2</sup> For examples of this view see: Basil Mitchell, ‘Newman as a Philosopher,’ in *Newman after a Hundred Years*, ed. I Ker & A G Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 223-246 at p. 241; Cyril Barrett, ‘Newman and Wittgenstein on the Rationality of Belief,’ in *Newman and Conversion*, ed. I Ker (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), pp. 89-99; Fergus Kerr, ‘“In an Isolated and, Philosophically, Uninfluential Way” Newman and Oxford Philosophy,’ in *Newman and the Word*, eds. T Merrigan & I T Ker (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2000), pp. 155-179. For an alternative perspective on Newman’s philosophical reception see: D J Pratt Morris-Chapman ‘The Philosophical legacy of John Henry Newman: A Neglected Chapter in Newman Research,’ in *New Blackfriars* (2017), 722-750.

<sup>3</sup> Duncan Pritchard, ‘Wittgenstein on Faith and Reason: The Influence of Newman,’ *God, Truth and Other Enigmas*, ed. M. Szatkowski (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), pp. 141-164 at p. 163 fn11. Pritchard’s analysis is not quite accurate for, while it is clear that Newman was recognized as an *important* dialogue partner in many philosophical writings his philosophical reception during the nineteenth century was shaped by a form of evidentialism typified in Clifford who stated that ‘it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.’ For further discussion see: Pratt Morris-Chapman, ‘The Philosophical Legacy of John Henry Newman,’ 722-750; W K Clifford, ‘The Ethics of Belief,’ in *Lectures and Essays*, 2 Vols (London: Macmillan, 1879), II, p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> Kerr, ‘Newman and Oxford Philosophy,’ p. 156.

<sup>5</sup> He writes: ‘A genuine proposition pictures a possible state of affairs. These pictures themselves are facts and share a pictorial and a logical form with what they represent. Failure of representation occurs when a sentence, laying claim to a truth or falsehood, depicts no possible state of affairs, whether simple or complex. Inasmuch as they are themselves neither elementary propositions nor truth-functions of elementary propositions, metaphysical pronouncements fail to represent anything. They are nonsensical. . . This applies to ethics an aesthetics.’ A J Ayer, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1982), p. 112

<sup>6</sup> Kerr, ‘Newman and Oxford Philosophy,’ p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> In this regard Ayer’s *Dictionary of Philosophical Quotations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) is revealing, for this posthumous work not only fails to mention Newman but its obsession with recent developments in analytic philosophy leads Ayer to virtually ignore the British Idealists and the Cambridge Platonists.

Mitchell argued that the rise of logical empiricism made Newman irrelevant to the dominant concerns of both British and continental philosophy:<sup>8</sup>

For much of the period that has elapsed since his death it must have seemed that his predominant concerns were simply irrelevant to the development of philosophy. Philosophy of religion was itself increasingly peripheral to the interests of professional philosophers and, within the philosophy of religion, the central question was taken to be that of the meaning of theological utterances. The outstanding challenge to the whole theological enterprise was taken to consist in the problematic character of theological claims as judged by the standards of scientific thought [evidentialism]. Whether these were articulated crudely in terms of verifiability or in more sophisticated ways, it was generally taken for granted that theology could not satisfy them.<sup>9</sup>

In this essay Mitchell indicates that the logical positivist tradition within British empiricist philosophy, which had 'been predominantly hostile' to religious belief,<sup>10</sup> rendered Newman's writing uninteresting to professional philosophers until the late 1960s.

One real weakness in these analyses is that they focus upon Newman's philosophical reception within Europe. Antony Kenny's assessment of 'Newman as a Philosopher of Religion' (1990) is broader in that he appears to take the analytic tradition within the United States more into account. Nevertheless he likewise believes that 'in the analytic tradition, which is dominant here [in the UK] and in much of the United States'<sup>11</sup> Newman's work has had almost no 'progeny' in the century after the publication of the *Grammar* (1870-1969). Though Mitchell's study is wider than that of Kerr (which discusses Newman in relation to Oxford Philosophy), and while Kenny's is broader still the belief common to these writers is that the emergence of Logical Positivism hindered Newman's philosophical recognition.

### Newman and Wittgenstein

For many Newman commentators, the posthumous publication of Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1889-1951) *On Certainty* (1969)<sup>12</sup> was

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell, 'Newman as a Philosopher,' p. 241.

<sup>9</sup> Mitchell, 'Newman as a Philosopher,' pp. 236-237.

<sup>10</sup> Another reason given by Mitchell is that the tendency toward idealism in continental philosophy detached Newman, who he describes as being 'firmly rooted in the Empiricist tradition,' from the affairs of European philosophers. Mitchell, 'Newman as a Philosopher,' p. 223.

<sup>11</sup> Kenny, 'Newman as a Philosopher of Religion,' pp. 98-100.

<sup>12</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. D Paul & G E M Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), p. 3.

a watershed moment for Newman’s philosophical recognition.<sup>13</sup> Wittgenstein’s earlier work, such as the *Tractatus* (1921) which argued that meaningful propositions offer a picture of reality,<sup>14</sup> was often employed by Logical Positivists.<sup>15</sup> However, in his later writings, Wittgenstein argued that the sense of a proposition is not determined by it mirroring reality.<sup>16</sup> Instead he argued that the meaning of an expression is found in its use within a linguistic community.<sup>17</sup> It is to these later publications that many Newman commentators show considerable interest.

Wittgenstein’s reference, in *On Certainty*, to a certain ‘H Newman’ has been interpreted as highly significant:

1. If you do know that here is one hand, we’ll grant you all the rest. When one says that such and such a proposition can’t be proved, of course that does not mean that it can’t be derived from other propositions; any propositions can be derived from other ones. But they may be no more certain than it is itself. (on this a curious remark by H. Newman)<sup>18</sup>

Kenny views this reference to ‘H Newman’ as a turning point and considers that ‘in recent decades professional philosophers in the analytic tradition have become interested’ in the issues that preoccupied Newman.<sup>19</sup> In a similar vein Cyril Barrett, a Roman Catholic philosopher who wrote extensively on Wittgenstein,<sup>20</sup> considers that: ‘Since the appearance of that book in 1969 quite a number of papers on Newman as a philosopher, many of them comparing him with Wittgenstein, have appeared.’<sup>21</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Though not all commentators mention Wittgenstein’s reference to ‘H Newman’ it is implied by the fact that the date of this publication is often mentioned as a turning point.

<sup>14</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears & B. F. McGuiness (London: Routledge, 1974), p. 74 (6.54).

<sup>15</sup> According to Puchner: ‘the reception of the *Tractatus*, which was taken by many members of the Circle as a kind of foundational document, comparable to a foundational manifesto, of logical positivism.’ Martin Puchner, ‘Doing Logic with a Hammer: Wittgenstein’s “Tractatus” and the Polemics of Logical Positivism,’ in *Journal of the History of Ideas* (2005), 285-300, at 291. For an example of this kind of philosophical reception see: A. J. Ayer, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1982), pp. 111-112.

<sup>16</sup> Ludwig J J Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 31-32 (65-66); Brian R Clack, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy of Religion* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1999), p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. D Paul & G E M Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Kenny, ‘Newman as a Philosopher of Religion,’ pp. 98-100.

<sup>20</sup> For further discussion see: Cyril Barrett, *Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religious Belief* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>21</sup> Barrett, ‘Newman and Wittgenstein on the Rationality of Belief,’ pp. 88-90, 93.

It is true that following this publication works on both Wittgenstein and Newman have recognised several parallels between these writers, including: Yearley (1978),<sup>22</sup> Ferreira (1980),<sup>23</sup> McCarthy (1982),<sup>24</sup> McGuinness (1988),<sup>25</sup> and Barrett (2005).<sup>26</sup> Writing on the *Tractatus*, Roy Lemoine argues that Wittgenstein's 'understanding of certainty owes much to Newman's discussion of certitude' (1975).<sup>27</sup> Mitchell suggests that Newman's rejection of any neutral standard of rationality anticipates Wittgenstein (1990).<sup>28</sup> Ker considers that Newman's treatment of doubt foreshadows Wittgenstein's fundamental insight into the absurdity of universal scepticism.<sup>29</sup>

Though commentators are correct that Wittgenstein's reference has led to numerous comparisons between J H Newman and Wittgenstein - and has had a positive effect on Newman's philosophical reception- it is imprudent to view this reference as a basis for evaluating J H Newman's philosophical legacy. A decade before the publication of *On Certainty*, the philosopher Ernest Gellner (1925-1995) observed parallels between Newman's *Apologia* and Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the claim that Wittgenstein's reference to 'H Newman' in *On Certainty* (1969) acts as a turning point at which Newman began to be taken seriously by philosophers is problematic for another reason - there is some uncertainty as to whether Wittgenstein is even referring to John Henry Newman.

<sup>22</sup> Lee Yearley, *The Ideas of Newman: Christianity and Human Religiosity* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), pp. 85 & 161n45.

<sup>23</sup> J M Ferreira, *Doubt and Religious Commitment: The Role of the Will in Newman's Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 69. Ferreira (a philosopher and Newman commentator) compares Wittgenstein's understanding of religious language with that of Newman.

<sup>24</sup> G McCarthy, 'Newman and Wittgenstein: The Problem of Certainty' in *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1982), 98-120.

<sup>25</sup> Brian McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: a Life: young Ludwig 1889-1921* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1988), p. 153.

<sup>26</sup> Barrett argues that the 'type of religious reasoning that Wittgenstein favours is very similar to that of John Henry Cardinal Newman in the Grammar of Assent.' Cyril Barrett, 'The Wittgensteinian Revolution,' in *Faith and Philosophical Analysis: The Impact of Analytical Philosophy on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. H Harris, C Insole (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 61-71, at 67.

<sup>27</sup> Roy Emanuel Lemoine, *The Anagogic Theory of Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 13-14.

<sup>28</sup> Basil Mitchell 'Newman as Philosopher,' in *Newman After a Hundred Years*, ed. I Ker & A G Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 223-246, at p. 239.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Ker, *The Achievement of John Henry Newman* (London: Collins, 1991), pp. 71-73.

<sup>30</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Words And Things: An Examination Of, And An Attack On, Linguistic Philosophy* (London: Routledge, [1959] 2005), pp. 36-37.

## The identity of ‘H Newman’

The reference to ‘H Newman’ is perceived by many writers to be a direct reference to John Henry Newman. For example, Wolfgang Kienzler’s article ‘Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman’ (2006), Bottone’s article ‘Newman and Wittgenstein’ (2004) and others, suggest that this reference indicates that Wittgenstein was influenced by John Henry Newman.<sup>31</sup> It is equally possible, however, that this reference refers not to John Henry Newman but to the Cambridge Mathematician, with whom Wittgenstein worked and argued, Maxwell Herman Newman (1897-1984). Kienzler confidently asserts that any suggestion that the remark in *On Certainty* alludes to Max Newman is ‘excluded’ by the use of the initial H.<sup>32</sup> This is most inaccurate. It is just as possible for Wittgenstein to be referring to Maxwell ‘H Newman’ as to John ‘H Newman.’ It is therefore erroneous to suggest that the initial ‘H’ rules out the idea that Wittgenstein cites Maxwell H Newman.

Wittgenstein and M H Newman were colleagues at Cambridge during the nineteen thirties. They both taught Alan Turing (1912-1954), and for a time were both on Alice Ambrose’s (1906-2001)<sup>33</sup> Ph.D examination committee until Wittgenstein withdrew.<sup>34</sup> While M H Newman preferred to be referred to as ‘Max,’<sup>35</sup> it is possible that Wittgenstein, an Austrian, called Max ‘Herman.’<sup>36</sup> In his correspondence with German speaking writers, such as Albert Einstein (1879-1955), M H Newman is often addressed as H Newman<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Wolfgang Kienzler, ‘Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman on Certainty,’ in *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 71 (2006), 117-138, at 134-136; Angelo Bottone, ‘Newman and Wittgenstein after Foundationalism,’ *New Blackfriars* 86 (2005), 62-75; Cyril Barrett, ‘Newman and Wittgenstein on the Rationality of Belief,’ in *Newman and Conversion*, ed. I Ker (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), pp. 89-99; Lemoine, *The Anagogic Theory of Wittgenstein’s “Tractatus”*, p. 14; J M Ferreira, *Scepticism and Reasonable Doubt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 161n25; G McCarthy, ‘Newman and Wittgenstein: The Problem of Certainty’ in *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1982), 98-120.

<sup>32</sup> Wolfgang Kienzler, ‘Wittgenstein and John Henry Newman on Certainty,’ in *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 71 (2006), 117-138, at 118n6.

<sup>33</sup> Ambrose was an American Philosopher who studied at Cambridge.

<sup>34</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Public and Private Occasions* ed. J C Klage, A Nordmann (Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), p. 375.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Hilton, ‘Obituary M H A Newman,’ in *Bulletin: London Mathematical Society* 18 (1986), 67-72, at 67.

<sup>36</sup> While he preferred to be known as Max by his friends, it is not clear that they were such. Some of their discussions were so heated that Wittgenstein once wished M H Newman had been ‘drowned at birth.’ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Public and Private Occasions* ed. J C Klage, A Nordmann (Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), pp. 374-375.

<sup>37</sup> Albert Einstein, cited in ‘The Max Newman Digital Archive’ [item 2 13 2] Box 2 Folder13 item2 <http://www.cdpa.co.uk/Newman/MHAN/view-item.php?Box=2&SubBox=&Folder=13&SubFolder=&Item=2&SubItem=&Page=1> (Accessed 14.12.09).

and 'Herm.'<sup>38</sup> His father, Herman Alexander Neumann, was born in Germany and was 'interned' as an enemy alien (by the English) during the First World War. Soon after his incarceration M H Newman changed his surname from 'Neumann' to 'Newman' (1916). Thus it seems that while circumstances required that M H Newman evaded his German heritage with English colleagues, he sustained it wherever possible.<sup>39</sup> On this basis, it would seem that Wittgenstein's reference in *On Certainty* could just as easily be referring to M 'H Newman' as it could to J 'H Newman.'

### Newman's 'Influence' on Wittgenstein?

While uncertainty pervades the identity of Wittgenstein's reference to 'H Newman,' a number of writers have attempted to bolster the suggestion that J H Newman influenced him through an appeal to the testimony of students, or professors, with whom Wittgenstein worked. For example, compare the following quotations:

[Barret] Yorick Smythies, a former student of Wittgenstein's, told me that Wittgenstein had said of J. H. Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, that Newman thought the grammar was supporting the Christian faith whereas, in fact, the faith was supporting the grammar, as if it were suspended from a balloon.<sup>40</sup>

[FitzPatrick] In 1977 I read a Paper to a Wittgenstein Conference [and] was informed by Professor Anscombe that Wittgenstein did not read the *Grammar of Assent*; but that, on hearing [its] theme... he acknowledged the likeness to his own views...<sup>41</sup>

The above suggests that Wittgenstein's witnesses are unclear as to whether or not he had read Newman's *Grammar of Assent*. Wittgenstein's other associates present more conflicting claims. While some suggest 'that he admired Newman's obvious sincerity'<sup>42</sup> others

<sup>38</sup> H K H Weil, cited in 'The Max Newman Digital Archive' [item [box]2 [folder]8 [item]2]http://www.cdpa.co.uk/Newman/MHAN/view-item.php?Box=2&SubBox=&Folder=8&SubFolder=&Item=2&SubItem=&Page=1 (Accessed 14.12.09).

<sup>39</sup> Peter Hilton, 'Obituary M H A Newman,' in *Bulletin: London Mathematical Society* 18 (1986), 67-72, at 67.

<sup>40</sup> Cyril Barret, *Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religious Belief* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 181.

<sup>41</sup> P J FitzPatrick, 'Newman's Grammar and the Church Today,' in *John Henry Newman Reason, Rhetoric and Romanticism*, ed. D Nicholls & F Kerr (Bristol: Classical Press, 1991), pp. 109-134, at 128n1.

<sup>42</sup> R Rhees, ed. *Recollections of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 130.



contend that 'He disliked the theological writings of Cardinal Newman, which he read with care during his last year at Cambridge.'<sup>43</sup>

Regardless of the conflicting testimonies above, it is clear that Wittgenstein was aware of Newman and it is of course possible that this may have had an influence upon him. Dewi Phillips, in his essay on 'Antecedent Presumption' (2004), argues that Wittgenstein's work has a number of similarities with Newman and, moreover, considers it fruitful to compare these writers.<sup>44</sup> He considers they are 'as one' in that they reject the idea that 'we possess a [basic] concept of reason which justifies all knowledge' (1988)<sup>45</sup> and illustrates the similarities between these writers using the following citations:

[Newman] to write theology is like dancing on the tight rope some hundred feet above the ground. It is hard to keep from falling, and the fall is great.<sup>46</sup>

[Wittgenstein] an honest religious thinker is like a tightrope walker. He almost looks as if he were walking on nothing but air.<sup>47</sup>

Phillips citation is taken from a volume of Newman's *Letters and Diaries* that was posthumously published a decade after Wittgenstein's death (1961). While it is true that extracts of this letter were published in Ward's biography (1912), and thus Wittgenstein could have read the contents, it would be difficult to determine whether the similarities between the quotations above are the result of a direct influence of Newman upon Wittgenstein.

More recently, Duncan Pritchard has suggested that aspects of Newman's *Grammar of Assent* could have had 'a major influence' on Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*.<sup>48</sup> In an essay entitled 'Wittgenstein on Faith and Reason: The Influence of Newman,' (2015) Pritchard offers a powerful re-reading of *On Certainty* 'through the lens of Newman.' Here he proposes the hypothesis that Wittgenstein developed these ideas 'with a specific view to applying them to religious belief in the way that Newman does.'<sup>49</sup> Following this exercise Pritchard concludes that re-reading the text in this way casts Wittgenstein's discussion of scepticism and relativism in quite a different light. He writes:

<sup>43</sup> Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein, A Memoir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 59.

<sup>44</sup> Dewi Z Phillips, 'Antecedent Presumption, Faith and Logic' in *Newman and Faith*, ed. I Ker & T Merrigan (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 2004), pp1-24, at pp. 16-17.

<sup>45</sup> D Z Phillips, *Faith after Foundationalism* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 84-86.

<sup>46</sup> LD XXII, p. 215.

<sup>47</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 73.

<sup>48</sup> Duncan Pritchard, 'Is "God Exists" a "Hinge Proposition" of Religious Belief?' in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 47 (2000), pp. 129-140, at 132.

<sup>49</sup> Duncan H. Pritchard, 'Wittgenstein on Faith and Reason: The Influence of Newman,' in *God, Truth, and Other Enigmas*, ed. M Szatkowski (2015), pp. 197-216 at.



This reading of OC . . . suggests that Wittgenstein had a conception of the epistemology of religious belief which is very different to that usually attributed to him. According to the standard reading of Wittgenstein in this regard . . . he is endorsing a straightforward fideism . . . If Wittgenstein’s aim in OC is to unpack Newman’s ideas concerning the rationality of religious belief, however, then this would suggest that Wittgenstein’s account of the epistemology of religious belief should be thought of very differently. Although it would share with fideism the idea that the most fundamental religious beliefs of the faithful are to be regarded as essentially groundless, this would not be in contrast to ordinary non-religious belief. Indeed, the point would be that a subject’s most fundamental beliefs, whether religious or non-religious, are to be regarded as essentially groundless. Moreover, this point about the ultimately groundlessness of fundamental religious belief is not meant to imply that religious beliefs are in general groundless. Instead, the idea would be that non-fundamental religious beliefs are locally grounded in much the same way as non-fundamental non-religious beliefs are.<sup>50</sup>

There are problems with Pritchard’s fideistic interpretation of Newman. Newman was more of a ‘soft rationalist’ than a fideist in that he did not consider our basic beliefs to be groundless.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, Pritchard’s re-reading of *On Certainty* offers a powerful example of Newman’s contemporary relevance. More specifically it demonstrates the way in which Newman’s work can shed philosophical light upon this text. Nevertheless, even Pritchard acknowledges that his claim that Newman influenced Wittgenstein is tenuous. He states that he ‘won’t be offering a full defence of this alternative reading of OC’ since ‘I’m not convinced that such a full defence can be even in principle offered.’ Moreover, he states that his ‘exegetical claim,’ that Wittgenstein is seeking to develop Newman’s ideas, is ‘at best quite modest’ and ‘even if an overarching reading of OC could be defended, it would require far more than the evidence I marshal here.’ Pritchard makes clear that he is not so much interested here in the ‘historical details’ but rather in the ‘philosophical light such a non-standard reading could cast on the text.’<sup>52</sup> Thus, while Pritchard is uncertain as to whether or not Newman influenced Wittgenstein he does think Newman’s work is highly relevant to the philosophical issues raised in *On Certainty*.

<sup>50</sup> Pritchard, ‘Wittgenstein on Faith and Reason: The Influence of Newman,’ 208-209.

<sup>51</sup> For Newman faith has grounds, even if the grounds are found retrospectively to be inadequate. For further discussion on this point see: Frederick Aquino, ‘Newman on the Grounds of Faith,’ *Quaestiones Disputatae* (2018):5-18, at 13-14.

<sup>52</sup> Pritchard, ‘Wittgenstein on Faith and Reason: The Influence of Newman,’ 197-198.

## Conclusion

From the above it seems that, even if it were the case that Wittgenstein ‘did not read’ a word of Newman, many philosophers have discussed Newman in relation to him as a result of his reference to ‘H Newman.’<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, while it is clear that parallels exist between these writers, and that Newman’s thought has the potential to illumine the relevance of Wittgenstein’s work to contemporary thought, it is unclear as to what extent Wittgenstein really engaged with Newman. Whatever the case may be, it is quite untrue to suggest that prior to Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty* Newman was ignored by philosophers. While the influence of logical positivism and its significance for the philosophy of religion have been considerable<sup>54</sup> it is demonstrable that Newman was discussed by a range of twentieth-century philosophers before the demise of this form of evidentialism within linguistic philosophy. Hence, though it is right that Wittgenstein remains one of the most important figures in the history of twentieth-century philosophy, he is not the only philosopher. Important as they are, the history of twentieth-century philosophy cannot be confined to the history of logical positivism or the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein. In conclusion, any assessment of the extent to which philosophers engaged with Newman’s work must give due attention to the great diversity within twentieth-century thought. Though it may be too early to process the vast complexities of the last century of philosophical debate, it is important to attend to as wide a variety of philosophers as is possible so as to explore the extent to which philosophers engaged with Newman’s work.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Both proponents and critics of linguistic philosophy cite Newman. For example: C W K Mundle, *A Critique of Linguistic Philosophy* (London: Glover & Blair, [1970] 1979), p. 107. Alan R White, *Misleading Cases* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 129.

<sup>54</sup> Dermot Moran, ‘Towards an Assessment of Twentieth-Century Philosophy,’ in *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth-Century Philosophy*, ed. D Moran (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1-40, at p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Pratt Morris-Chapman ‘The Philosophical legacy of John Henry Newman’, 722-750.