Newman Versus Objectivism: The Context of Modern Rationalism, Legalism and “Paper Logic”

Summary

Many authors have dedicated their articles to the theology of John Henry Newman. He is known very well for his idea of the development of doctrine, ecclesiology, or argument from conscience to the existence of God. How strange should in this situation appear that not many contemporary philosophers are familiar with his metaphysics, theory of science, epistemology, anthropology, or ethics? I think this is the reason why we won’t find many “pure philosophical” articles and papers dedicated to his fascinating philosophy.

In this paper I would like to present the other side of the coin. Walter E. Conn accurately described the Newman’s opposition to “subjectivist ethics”: Liberalism, Evangelicalism, and Rationalism. But at the same time, our British philosopher argued with representatives of the “objective ethics,” which finds its expression in the three attitudes that Newman called “Rationalism,” “Legalism,” and “Paper Logic”.

Keywords: Newman J.H., Conn W.E., Rationalism, Legalism, „Paper Logic”, ethics, objectivism.

Many authors have dedicated their articles to the theology of John Henry Newman. He is known very well for his idea of the development of doctrine, ecclesiology, Mariology, or argument from conscience to the existence of God. How strange should in this situation appear that not many contemporary philosophers are familiar with his metaphysics, theory of science, epistemology, anthropology or ethics. I think this is the reason why we won’t find many “pure philosophical” articles and papers dedicated to his fascinating philosophy.

Walter E. Conn tries to show how Newman was opposing radically autonomous ethics and epistemology (Conn 2007). He mentions three philosophical schools – “Liberalism”, “Evangelicalism”, and “Rationalism” – that Newman used to describe trends that were contemporary to him. In Newman’s opinion,
liberalism “represents, on the level of moral antecedents, the *anti-conscience principle*: it denies the reality of sin and evil, and reduces the experience of conscience to mere aesthetic sense, expediency or utility. Contrary to the moral principles of Christianity – which emphasize the sense of sin, and the utter incapacity of humankind to achieve its own salvation and, hence, the need for grace – liberalism proclaims the post-Enlightenment view of the intrinsic goodness of human nature and its inherent capacity for self-salvation” (Clamor 2007, 68). On the other side, says Newman, is “Evangelicalism”, which “says take care of the state of heart, and the Objects and works will almost take care of themselves. But I have been stating this modern view as judicious, pious, and moderate men put it forward abstractedly. But the mass of men develop it, and then what is in itself (as I conceive) a mistake, becomes a mischief” (Newman 1984, 130). Last, “Rationalism” “is a certain abuse of Reason; that is, a use of it for purposes for which it never was intended, and is unfitted” (Newman 1890, 31).

After conducting my research on Newman’s vision of moral conscience, I must agree with Walter Conn: Newman was one of the most excellent critics of modern radical moral subjectivism and autonomism (Greek: *autos*+*nomos*). But this is only a half-truth, because Newman was also an excellent critic of radical objectivism and heteronomism (Greek: *heteros*+*nomos*). Fidelity to his theological method – *via media* – is noticeable also in his ethics. “A *Via Media* was but a receding from extremes” (see: Newman 1993, 137; Galecki 2012, 307–311). If radical subjectivism is one extreme, than radical objectivism is the second. Truth is equally distant from dogmatic subjectivism as from dogmatic objectivism.

It is very difficult to give one, ultimate definition of objectivism. But in this article I will understand objectivism in this same way as Jonathan Harrison does it in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: “We shall, however, call an ethical theory objective if it holds that the truth of what is asserted by some ethical sentence is independent of the person who uses this sentence, the time at which he uses it, and the place where he uses it” (Harrison 1967, 71). As we can see, it is very general definition and formulated negatively: moral objectivism is a theory which draws truth and false, good and evil from the acting subject (person). In this same way we may describe heteronomism – I will use those two terms interchangeably.

Newman wrote many pages fighting against ethics based on code, law, and “scientific reason” independent of the subject of morality. In his opinion, every time that ethics tries to include the wholeness of morality, it encroaches into foreign territory: “A still bolder encroachment was contemplated by the Reason, when it attempted to deprive the Moral Law of its intrinsic authority, and to rest it upon a theory of present expediency. Thus, it constituted itself the court of ultimate appeal in religious disputes, under pretence of affording a clearer and more scientifically-arranged code than is to be collected from the obscure precedents and mutilated enactments of the Conscience” (Newman 1909b, 71). The
British Cardinal knows that this temptation – to have one, objective and ultimate code of morality – is strong. Both sides – ordinary people asking moral questions and philosophers trying to give the answers to these questions – would like to have such easy tool which could resolve all moral dilemmas. Newman takes the position that an objective moral code or law is utopian. First of all, because it depraves persons; secondly: it is inconsistent with reality. Let us try to consider both of those accusations.

**Person in the trap of code and law**

Newman said that when a person is not living on one’s own, when he is not searching for the truth by himself, when he leaves the weight of decisions to others – to others’ reasons, consciences, experiences, opinions – than he/she in some way is losing his/her personality, and ability to be different being than the others, to be individual, to be a self (see: Newman 1909b, 291–293). Those people became only part of the society, religion, or the school of thinking. One’s situation would be very similar to the vision given by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or to people living in totalitarian countries, such as Kampuchea under the reigns of Khmer Rouge or Nazi camps during II World War, when people couldn’t use their names and were only numbers without will or reason.

Newman writes more about those exterior and codified ethics in a sermon titled *Evangelical Sanctity the Perfection of Natural Virtue*: “Morals may be cultivated as a science; it furnishes a subject-matter on which reason may exercise itself to any extent whatever, with little more than the mere external assistance of conscience and Scripture. And, when drawn out into system, such a moral teaching will attract general admiration from its beauty and refinement; and from its evident expediency will be adopted as a directory (so to say) of conduct, whenever it does not occasion any great inconvenience, or interfere with any strong passion or urgent interest. National love of virtue is no test of a sensitive and well-instructed conscience, – of nothing beyond intellectual culture. History establishes this: the Roman moralists write as admirably, as if they were moral men” (Newman 1909b, 40–41). This thought is connected with Newman’s opinion: knowledge is not the same as virtue – if you know what is good in particular situation doesn’t mean that you will choose it; whether you are excellent philosopher doesn’t mean that you’re good person of a paragon of virtue (Newman 1907, 120). His metaethics is therefore not Socrates’ “ethical intellectualism”: knowing what is good and right means acting in accordance with this knowledge; wrong acting proves that someone does not have knowledge about right and wrong (see: Copleston 1985, 108–113). Newman would say: you can act wrong even though you know that you are choosing evil instead of good.
As we know, Newman was not only a theoretical philosopher. His works are full of examples of joining our thinking with our experiences and life. For example, in case of codified morality, the convert Cardinal gives many examples of this kind of ethics which are external to the moral subject, but I will quote only one text devoted to Greek virtue ethics. It will confirm what was written above: „Virtue, on the other hand, rewards young men with the praise of their elders, and it rewards the aged with the reverence of youth; it supplies them pleasant memories and present peace; it secures the favor of heaven, the love of friends, a country’s thanks, and, when death comes, an everlasting renown. In all such descriptions, virtue is something external; it is not concerned with motives or intentions; it is occupied in deeds which bear upon society, and which gain the praise of men; it has little to do with conscience and the Lord of conscience; and knows nothing of shame, humiliation, and penance” (Newman 1904, 23–24). Therefore, if external acting can’t be identified with internal morality, people who are trying to live according to some “objective” and “external” code or law (ἕτερος νόμος) or, on the other hand, attempt to write such a code or law, are making a big mistake. They both take away the personal responsibility of the concrete human being and blind or deaden the moral sense which recognizes what is right and wrong. And those two elements (sense of duty and moral sense) constitute conscience (see: Newman 1903, 105–106; Newman 2000, 35–36; Newman 1868, vol. 3: 87). We must therefore say that Newman’s vision of morality was broader: it included cognitive element (moral sense) as well as element of responsibility (sense of duty).

The first consequence of objective and external ethics, which I called above the “depraving” of individual persons and whole societies, may be easily noticed when we study societies based on “divine” authority (whether the Roman Emporium and the Third Reich, as well as medieval Christian theocracies or some contemporary sects). Citizens or members of these societies are very often involuntary, thoughtless, mechanical-acting parts of authoritative managed system. Those persons were not thinking, because they had instructions; they were not searching for the truth, because all the truths were known; they were not making decisions, because the decisions were made for them.

Sometimes philosophers are radical moral objectivists too. They forget that the purpose of philosophy is first and foremost to ask a question and to formulate a problem; giving answers and solutions must be done very carefully. Let us hear Newman’s opinion: “This is the true office of a writer, to excite and direct trains of thought; and this, on the other hand, is the too common practice of readers, to expect everything to be done for them, – to refuse to think, – to criticize the letter, instead of reaching forwards towards the sense, – and to account every argument as unsound which is illogically worded” (Newman 1909b, 276). Indeed, those who aspire to know all the answers must be prepared to bear the responsibility for all acts which will be made according to code created by him.
The inconsistencies of radical ethical objectivism

The second problem which appears, when studying radical moral objectivism and heteronomism, is the deep discrepancy between objectivism as a metaethical theory and human experience. Philosophers taking the position of objectivity are pretending to be “outside” of this world. They suppose that they can in an “objective way” study and judge morality; objectivists assume that somehow they objectively exist. Their existence is thought to be independent of subjective thinking. Even passing over the problem of language (every language is creation of particular society, based on a concrete, particular outlook), we will to come across to inevitable difficulties. Now we will study Newman’s discussion with those different philosophical, logical and ethical complications of radical heteronomy.

Objective ethics believes that is possible to discover the nature of man. But not the nature of “John Smith’s”, but the Nature of Man: the pure, ontological essence of human being. Our experience shows us that there is something common to every person, but also that there are differences between them. One of the leading terms used in classical philosophy is “essence”: the objective element of being, constitutive of a concrete class of beings. For humans it would be “humanity”, for good – “goodness”, for women – “femininity”. But what exactly does it mean? Does morality based on those essences give any practical answers for the fundamental question: how should I live? Using Newman’s distinction between “real” and “notional” we would have to say, that ontological essence is notional, while morality is real: “Each thing has its own nature and its own history. When the nature and the history of many things are similar, we say that they have the same nature; but there is no such thing as one and the same nature; they are each of them itself, not identical, but like. A law is not a fact, but a notion” (Newman 1903, 280). Thus, if we want to build ethics on objective (notional) law, we will lose the reality of morality at the same time.

To be understood correctly, we must say that Newman never thought that law was unnecessary or that it was something bad. Many times he emphasized that there existed objective truth and that universal law exists (see: Newman 1909a, 89, 357; Newman 1903, 65, 299–300, 310, 375; Newman 1868, vol. 8: 185; Newman 1980, 272–273). He has even written these words: „Better is it that the Law remain to us externally, and in the way of an upbraiding conscience, than that it should be utterly removed” (Newman 1868, vol. 5: 147) – it is better to live according to external law (heteronomy), than to live without any law, without any rules. But this does not mean that forced morality is a good morality or that legalism (ethics based on external law) is his favorite kind of morality. Cardinal Newman in his writings was admitting the existence of law, especially Christian law, because he was always taking under consideration the educational and developing nature of the person. Yet at the same time he was struggling with theories that identify natural (or moral) law with absolute, objec-
tive and divine Law: “We must distinguish between the aboriginal transcendent moral Perfection of God, which is one, and not directly stamped in image upon our minds, (& which is the true Law of Nature) and the diversified shapes into which it is refracted in a given creation, and in our created minds. The Decalogue is but the refracted rays of the indivisible Divine Law. Hence stealing could not be a sin from eternity, except hypothetically, as implying property which has only existed in time” (Newman 1970, 131). In my opinion it is one of the most original and amazing conclusions that Newman has ever written. It shows how naïve is the thinking of those who identify moral perfections with preserving the Decalogue – they mix up means with end.

Every author of systematic ethics must recognize the inevitable limits of one’s system. “Canonizing” one – as was done by Thomists with Aquinas’ moral and metaphysical system (See, for example Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter on the Restoration of Christian Philosophy “Aeterni Patris”) – will cause only one thing: a gradual discrediting of the whole system. As Newman emphasizes many times: every thinking is based on some first principles, which are reasonable but not provable; we choose them based on our real assent and our subjective history, experiences, etc. „Now that there must be such things as First Principles – that is, opinions which are held without proof as if self-evident, – and, moreover, that every one must have some or other, who thinks at all, is evident from the nature of the case. If you trace back your reasons for holding an opinion, you must stop somewhere; the process cannot go on for ever; you must come at last to something you cannot prove; else, life would be spent in inquiring and reasoning, our minds would be ever tossing to and fro, and there would be nothing to guide us. No man alive, but has some First Principles or other. Even if he declares that nothing can be known for certain, then that is his First Principle. I am not saying whether your reasoning, or your First Principle, was true or false; that is quite another matter; I am but illustrating what is meant by a First Principle, and how it is that all reasoning ultimately rests upon such. It would be your First Principle, in the case supposed, a principle for which no reason could be given [...] This, I repeat, is what is called a First Principle, and you see what a bearing it has both upon thought and upon action” (Newman 1892, 279–280).

This is the reason that we cannot give evidences for any system of thought (sapientia – in contrast to different physical sciences), we can only give arguments, that do not have the objective, absolute or universal power of convincing. I think this is the reason why Newman did not want to give “a moral proof to the existence of God”, preferring the word “argument” (see: Newman 1970, 74; Boekraad, Tristram 1961; Morgan 1996, 320; Kłos 1999; Salomon 2000) – in my opinion, Aquinas had the same reason for writing not about “proofs” or “evidences”, but “five ways”, quinque viae (Thomas Aquinas 1947, pars I, q.2, a.3.). We could in this place quote Newman’s words used in Grammar of Assent: “egotism is true modesty” (Newman 1903, 384). This popular aphorism should
be remembered by all philosophers and theologians: there is some mystery to which we do not have access. In other words: “Doubtless it is our wisdom, both as to the world and as to Scripture, to take things as we find them; not to be wise above what is written, whether in nature or in grace; not to attempt a theory where we must reason without data; much less, even could we frame one, to mistake it for a fact instead of what it is, an arbitrary arrangement of our knowledge, whatever that may be, and nothing more” (Newman 1909b, 110).

Does this mean that the real and objective knowledge and truth is unrecognizable (as it was shown above, Newman didn’t call into question existence objective reality)? Should we resign against searching for objective truth? Did we should only on subjective, emotional, or sensual? No, Newman wasn’t writing about unrecognizability but about some appropriate skepticism. If we won’t realize the limits of our knowledge, this “objective” (which means also: “common”) knowledge will divide instead of uniting us. So where will be those objectivism? Again, “egotism is true modesty”. In cases when we are searching for ontological, theological or moral truths “there is much need of wariness, jealousy of self, and habitual dread of presumption, paradox, and unreality, to preserve our deductions within the bounds of sobriety, and our guesses from assuming the character of discoveries. System, which is the very soul, or, to speak more precisely, the formal cause of Philosophy, when exercised upon adequate knowledge, does but make, or tend to make, theorists, dogmatists, philosophists, and sectarians, when or so far as Knowledge is limited or incomplete” (Newman 1909b, 295).

We won’t find anything which could be objective proof for our opinions, beliefs, assents, rules of live. But those epistemological skepticism includes only “objective certitude”, not real, “personal certitude”: “Instead of devising, what cannot be, some sufficient science of reasoning which may compel certitude in concrete conclusions, to confess that there is no ultimate test of truth besides the testimony born to truth by the mind itself, and that this phenomenon, perplexing as we may find it, is a normal and inevitable characteristic of the mental constitution of a being like man on a stage such as the world. His progress is a living growth, not a mechanism; and its instruments are mental acts, not the formulas and contrivances of language” (Newman 1903, 350). And so we arrive at Newman’s philosophical anthropology.

In his opinion, objective truth reaches to human being though his subjective personality. The British philosopher uses here a beautiful symbol: as light, which is naturally white, reaches to our eyes refracted by the atmosphere into seven colors, so objective truth disclosing itself in many particular truths which we discover using our individual reasons, emotions, senses, intuitions, memories, etc. (Newman 1970, 143). Thus we can compare objective – in which I mean: divine truth – with natural, white light; individual person with all her powers, history, experiences, with atmosphere; and subjective truths with visible to our eyes light in one of seven colors. I recall this symbol because it perfectly shows
the unity of objective, divine and subjective, personal truth, revealing simultaneously their diversity and richness. Of course, we can’t forget, that not everything that people consider as truth really is truth; not every subjective idea is truth only because it is subjective or recognized by those person as truth. But fact that not every “subjective truth” is real truth doesn’t mean that every subjective truth is false.

Newman absolutely realize that exist high risk to err: “Undoubtedly, it is possible, it is common, in the particular case, to err in the exercise of Doubt, of Inference, and of Assent; that is, we may be withholding a judgment about propositions on which we have the means of coming to some definite conclusion; or we may be assenting to propositions which we ought to receive only on the credit of their premises, or again to keep ourselves in suspense about; but such errors of the individual belong to the individual, not to his nature, and cannot avail to forfeit for him his natural right, under proper circumstances, to doubt, or to infer, or to assent. We do but fulfill our nature in doubting, inferring, and assenting; and our duty is, not to abstain from the exercise of any function of our nature, but to do what is in itself right rightly” (Newman 1903, 7). We could quote other words – one of my favorite – written by the great nineteenth-century cardinal: “We are so constituted, that if we insist upon being as sure as is conceivable, in every step of our course, we must be content to creep along the ground, and can never soar. If we are intended for great ends, we are called to great hazards” (Newman 1909b, 215). The anthropology given by Newman is realistic and optimistic simultaneously. Realistic, because he exactly sees the situation and the condition of the human person: we are intended for great things, for moral perfection, for complete happiness; but in the same moment we have a lot of dilemmas, different concepts of what is right and wrong, there is deep incommunicability between persons; in a way we move in a mist of ignorance. At the same time Newman’s anthropology is very optimistic: in this world, severed from the objective truth and divine reality, we have been given all we need. We have senses to experience the material world and reason, will, intuition, emotions and conscience to recognize moral and religious truths.

In my opinion so far we cannot say that Newman was a radical subjectivist or even relativist. As I have shown – and what Walter E. Conn portrayed – Newman repeatedly was writing about objective reality and our duties to search for it. Sentences like this one: “Every one who reasons, is his own centre; and no expedient for attaining a common measure of minds can reverse this truth” (Newman 1903, 345) only confirm the fact that Newman supported that we have no certain (unlike certitude) and notional (unlike real) access to divine, common and unchanging truth. Recalling the symbol with light: Newman’s epistemological, anthropological and moral subjectivism has nothing common with relativists like Peter Singer and Richard Rorty (or Pontius Pilate), who denied the existence of objective truth and for this reason granted every person the status of god, and what I call “radical subjectivism”. Newman never would agree with such standpoint, he spent his life fighting with it (which is greatly shown in Conn’s paper).
But we cannot forget that he was also fighting with the philosophical attitude which he called “paper logic”: „I had a great dislike of paper logic. For myself, it was not logic that carried me on; […] It is the concrete being that reasons; pass a number of years, and I find my mind in a new place; how? the whole man moves; paper logic is but the record of it. All the logic in the world would not have made me move faster towards Rome than I did; […] and therefore to come to me with methods of logic had in it the nature of a provocation, and, though I do not think I ever showed it, made me somewhat indifferent how I met them, and perhaps led me, as a means of relieving my impatience, to be mysterious or irrelevant, or to give in because I could not meet them to my satisfaction. And a greater trouble still than these logical mazes, was the introduction of logic into every subject whatever, so far, that is, as this was done” (Newman 1993, 218).

Cardinal Newman has had a three reasons to “dislike paper logic”; first of all his own experience has shown him the weakness and insufficiency of searching for the truth based on rationalism, formalism and logic—he was one of the greatest minds in his times, and pure logic couldn’t bring him to truth, faith and conscience did it. Secondly, he has found many arguments against ethics that build on logical and rational cohesion. And thirdly, Newman in all his philosophical vision grants the first and primary role to the person (divine and human). “Logic, he held, is servant, not a master; it is the individual person who thinks and controls his thinking, not logic. The function of logic is to point out the routes the mind can follow” (Sillem 1969, 74). Logic is a tool, created and used by men. Treating logic as the absolute and ultimate criterion of morality: good and bad, right and wrong, saintly and sinful, is a huge mistake! Logic can’t “objectify” naturally subjective and personal morality; it can only give us some rational advices, trains of thoughts, outlooks in ethics. But that is all. Logic which exceeds its nature of useful tool becomes “paper logic”.

Paper logic is main foundation of rationalistic ethics. As it was written above: „rationalism is a certain abuse of Reason; that is, a use of it for purposes for which it never was intended, and is unfitted.” Newman often calls people who believe their “pure” or “procedural” reason more than their conscience or other authorities, witness, experiences as “rationalists” (see: Newman 1868, vol. 1: 213, 219). Newman used to call them “people with narrow minds” and in a few places describes them in such words: “They have already parcelled out to their own satisfaction the whole world of knowledge; they have drawn their lines, and formed their classes, and given to each opinion, argument, principle, and party, its own locality; they profess to know where to find everything; and they cannot learn any other disposition. They are vexed at new principles of arrangement, and grow giddy amid cross divisions; and, even if they make the effort, cannot master them. They think that any one truth excludes another which is distinct from it, and that every opinion is contrary to their own opinions which are not included in them. They cannot separate words from their own ideas, and
ideas from their own associations” (Newman 1909b, 307–308). We could say
“narrow minds” but broad expectations and claims. Taking position that effect of
work my individual reason according to particular method derived from individ-
ually accepted first principles is universally and objectively valid must be recog-
nized as really daring. Newman would call those expectations merely as “imper-
ial”.

Newman has brought our attention to another problem. This is how he de-
scribed it: “Those who are certain of a fact are indolent disputants; it is enough
for them that they have the truth; and they have little disposition, except at the
call of duty, to criticize the hallucinations of others, and much less are they an-
gry at their positiveness or ingenuity in argument; but to call names, to impute
motives, to accuse of sophistry, to be impetuous and overbearing, is the part of
men who are alarmed for their own position, and fear to have it approached too
nearly” (Newman 1903, 201–202). We can say that this is only a psychological
argument, without any cognitive value. But Newman’s method was – in some
part – based on a very interesting psychology. From the philosopher’s point of
view it is only premise to argument against radical objectivism, but for the needs
of this paper I will just say, that my experience confirms Newman’s opinion.
Many of those who say, they are sure of what they believe (but they say they
“know” it) do not want to openly discuss their standpoint
on any critique or bring their conclusions into question; they guard their opin-
ions as objective, ultimate and in some way divine. In psychological and politi-
cal context this attitude is called fundamentalism.

Conclusions

It is extremely difficult to unambiguously define Newman’s concept of
metaethics. Personally I used to use his own term: via media, middle way. The
British philosopher always tries to choose the good elements of particular doc-
trines and reject the worst. This is the reason why Walter E. Conn has written his
article which correctly describes Newman as opponent of subjectivism, but sim-
ultaneously correct is my thesis about him as adversary of objectivism. Paradox?
Or maybe just a subtlety of definitions? Newman never denied the existence of
objective truth and reality. But he couldn’t agree with those ethicists who be-
lieved that any heteronomical system, code or law can give every person in any
particular situation answers what to do to make right choice. He has given us Ar-
istotle as teacher: “What it is to be virtuous, how we are to gain the just idea
and standard of virtue, how we are to approximate in practice to our own standard,
what is right and wrong in a particular case, for the answers in fullness and accu-
racy to these and similar questions, the philosopher refers us to no code of laws,
to no moral treatise, because no science of life, applicable to the case of an indi-
vidual, has been or can be written. Such is Aristotle’s doctrine, and it is undoubt-
edly true. An ethical system may supply laws, general rules, guiding principles, a number of examples, suggestions, landmarks, limitations, cautions, distinctions, solutions of critical or anxious difficulties; but who is to apply them to a particular case? whither can we go, except to the living intellect, our own, or another’s?” (Newman 1903, 354). Expressing on this place his criticism toward heteronomy, Newman thereby reconciles internal authorities – reason and conscience – with external authorities. We aren’t devoid of any external help on the path of searching the truth, but we always have to remember that no other person can give me final and obligating answer for my existential questions, and no one else can make a choice on behalf of me. And those, unfortunately, are assumptions of law or code ethics.

I think that Drew Morgan recalls the very valuable distinction between ethics and morality. “There are many Christian ethical systems («ethics»), and the content is distinctive as well, not on the notional «ethical» level, but on the more personal and particular, real level of «morals». This includes individual moral decisions and acts commanded by conscience in accord with the phronesis, the personal judgment which each person must make in every moral instance” (Morgan 1996, 531). Identifying them is big mistake. Even if philosophers and theologians are trying to build some ethical systems from which follows some orders, prohibitions, laws, codes, values, etc., these systems can’t be directly applied to particular, concrete situation. Solution of every possible moral problem is not the aim of ethics. On the other hand ethics which tries to resolve all the moral problems of every individual person necessarily must turn out to be incoherent, as I have shown it in second part of this paper. Morals are particular, personal, practical, and subjective; ethics is general, theoretical and objective. Confusing them each other will lead to nowhere or – what would be worst – to totalitarianism or fundamentalism.

At the end of this article we must once again emphasize that the only way to reconcile this divine, objective reality – which he defends in many places of his works – and surrounding us personal, subjective reality – which defense accomplished by Newman dedicated is this paper – is the reality of conscience: the place where the subjective “self” meets the objective, independent reality of moral and religious truths and duties. John Henry Newman as “Doctor of Co-

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1 For instance, Terlinden (Terlinden 2007, 212) supposes that Newman’s concept of conscience is a great remedy for very popular contemporary relativism: „Newman’s observation on the permanence of the sense of duty in conscience, despite the errors of the moral sense, takes on, in my view, a particular importance in an age increasingly marked by individualism and subjectivism. For today, even more than in the nineteenth century, the perception of good and evil varies greatly from one individual to the next. With the priority given to individual freedom in western culture, the desires and will of the subject had assumed such importance that they are often the only realities that matter no longer. It is therefore becoming more and more difficult to reach agreement on an objective order of the moral good and moral values. To guide his choices between good and evil, the individual falls back to his moral conscience understood above all in its subjectivity, that is to say as a freedom for the subject to choose his values him-
science” showed us that real morality and ethics appears as relation: relation between persons. That is why neither radical subjectivism nor objectivism nor radical autonomy nor heteronomy can lead to Truth. In human moral lives exists tension between myself and the Other; between me and my wife, friends, neighbors, accidentally coming across passer-by's, and finally between me and God. This tension can be overcome only within conscience. „Newman’s philosophical visions mount from the self, known in the innermost sanctum of conscience, to God, the Creator and Sovereign Master of each and every man, as of the entire universe. In the experience of the inner life of conscience a man stands on his own, apart from everything in the world, to all appearances alone, – but in reality face to face with two luminously evident beings, his true self and the living God” (Sillem 1969, 123). Conscience is a place where these two self-evident beings – myself and God, subjective truth and objective Truth – meet together.

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self. This reference to conscience therefore involves the risk of turning conscience into a power creating moral values, thus opening the door to unbridled subjectivism, each individual following but their own desires, to the detriment of the calling from others, and the Other”.


**Newman versus obiektywizm. Kontekst współczesnego racjonalizmu, legalizmu oraz „papierowej logiki”**

**Streszczenie**


W swoim tekście chciałbym przedstawić inną stronę medalu. Walter E. Conn dokładnie opisał Newmanowską polemikę z etyką subiektywistyczną, którą Brytyjczyk określał mianem liberalizmu, ewangelikalizmu i racjonalizmu. Conn pominał jednakże milczeniem fakt, iż równocześnie nasz filozof precyzyjnie krytykował przejawy etyki obiektywistycznej, które nazywał racjonalizmem, legalizmem oraz „papierową logiką”.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Newman J.H., Conn W.E., racjonalizm, legalizm, „papierowa logika”, etyka, obiektywizm, etyka kodeksowa.