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John Henry Newman's Unitary Theory Of Knowledge – Epistemology, Educational Philosophy And Implications

Richard Casey

Mary Immaculate College, Ireland

Abstract

This paper endeavours to investigate how John Henry Newman's 'The Idea of a University' can inform the educational philosophy prevalent in primary education. Newman's theory of knowledge will firstly be investigated, for Newman's epistemology must be thoroughly understood in order to authentically interpret his philosophy of education. The Grammar of Assent will be the central text in this first area of study, and some of Newman's first principles, as well as their further implications, will be explored. In the *Idea,* Newman posits that for a university to teach a universal curriculum, all subjects must be included. If theology is a subject (as Newman assumes in the *Idea* and attempts to prove in the *Grammar*), it must also be included as part of this curricular provision. Newman believes that theology is a science containing objective truths; thus, a university must teach theology if it is to be in fact what it claims to be in theory. Newman proceeds to claim that because all knowledge forms one whole, which is intrinsically and inextricably interconnected, theology has a bearing on other subjects. Theology informs other subjects, completing and correcting them, just as other subjects likewise do to theology. This is due to the fact that all subjects are partial views of reality and, as such, they need each other in order to provide, as completely as is humanly possible, a correct and complete view of reality. This idea of curriculum wholeness being essential to a university education, will then be applied to the idea of holistic educational provision in the primary school setting.

Keywords: Newman, education, unitary theory of knowledge