

Ch. XIII SYSTEMATICS

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1. The function of systematics

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Two distinct operations of intellect:

- Understanding answers questions of the type: Quid sit? Cur ita sit?
- Judgment answers questions of the type: An sit? Utrum ita sit?

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By judgment ~~it~~ is known the existence of what has been defined.

This distinction is essential to an understanding of the Augustinian-Anselmian precept:

Crede ut intelligas.

Vatican I retrieved the notion of understanding: reason illumined by faith can attain a fruitful understanding of the mysteries of faith.

The promotion of such an understanding is the principal function of systematics: to take over the facts, established in doctrines, and work them into an assimilable whole.

not of reason itself. CG ↑

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Opodl. IV, c 9, a 3 Aquinas points out that a disputation can be directed to either of two ends:

- to remove doubt about what was so: then appeal to authorities *recognized by tradition*
- to instruct: then one must take one's stand on the reasons that bring to light the ground of the truth.

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On the contrary, Catholics in recent centuries have not merely distinguished, but even separated philosophy and theology. An infortunate separation:

- (a) Misleading. Students took it for granted that systematis theology was just ~~the~~ mere philosophy and so of no religious significance. *Not taken for an ideal intruder*
- (b) Weakened both natural theology and systematic theology.

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(c) The separation seems founded on a mistaken: it assumed an objectivity totally independent of the human mind that thinks; *proof only if systematically formal horizon correct horizon may if conversion*

Basically the issue is a transposition from the abstract logic of classicism (basic is proof) to the concreteness of method (basic is conversion).

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Objection: This transition from proof to conversion does not square with the claim of Vatican I that through creatures God can be known by the natural light of human reason.

Answer:

(1) The definition prescind from the actual order in which we live. "Ab homine lapso" of Kleutgen's scheme was dropped.

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(2) In the actual order normally religious conversion ~~precedes~~^{precedes} rigorous proofs.

But I do not think it is impossible, by way of exception, certain knowledge of God precedes the acceptance of God's love.

(3) An ~~interpretation~~ integration of natural with systematic theology is not to mean any blurring of distinctions; (Separation ≠ distinction)

(Systematics)

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2. Closed options

From a faculty psychology we have moved into an intentional analysis that distinguishes 4 levels of conscious and intentional operations. Hence:

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(1) The priority of intellect is just the priority of the first three levels over the fourth

(2) Pure reason is an abstraction

(3) An exception to the old adage, nihil amatum nisi praecognitum, is possible.

God's gift of his love may precede our knowledge of God, and cause our seeking knowledge of God. The gift is an orientation towards an unknown, a transcendent mystery, that nevertheless reveals ^{its} the goal by its absoluteness.

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This orientation provides the primary and fundamental meaning of the name, God.

This orientation illuminates negative theology, which is concerned to speak about a transcendent mystery.

However, if there is to be an affirmative theology, there must be confronted the question whether God is an object.

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Not an object in the naive realist, empiricist, positivist, idealist ^{pseudo-scientific} sense.

It is an object: what is intended in questions and known through ~~right~~ correct answers.

On the primary and fundamental meaning of the name God, God is not an object (the term of an orientation to transcendent mystery is not a matter of raising and answering questions).

But withdrawal is for return: from mystic prayer to thinking back on one's prayer.

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More commonly: from intelligence to an intelligent ground

from facticity to a necessary ground

from man's morality to a moral ground of the universe.

Moreover, religion is shared by many. Hence questions about God.

(4) A fourth consequence of the shift from a faculty psychology to intentionality analysis: The basic terms and relations of systematic theology will not be metaphysical, but psychological.

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Hence a metaphysics which can be critically controlled.

Nevertheless, since knowledge of intentional consciousness can develop, it follows that the whole structure admits development and thereby escapes rigidity.

cf. categories chap II

Basic Kantian structure
→ criteria for actual vs metaphoric distinctions
it follows
the same
elim. authoritarian theology

(The function of Systematics , page 2)

479 Especially: proportionate, transcendent, analogous intelligibility are three distinct, but there is no occasion to separate them.

This distinction is a return to Aquinas' systematic theology: systematics must present a single unified whole (Cfr. Contra Gentiles, Summa Theologiae)

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3. Mystery and Problem.

Man's response to transcendent mystery is adoration but not an adoration that excludes words, lest of all when men worship together. But the words have meaning within some cultural context and contexts can be ongoing, derived from one another, interacting. Thus, while mystery is very different from the problems of common sense, of science, of scholarship, of much philosophy, still the worship of God is within a social, cultural, etc. context and that involvement generates problems with which theologians attempt to deal.

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Our reflections on the differentiation of human consciousness have brought to light some of the general types of context within which religious and theological discourse occur. Man's expression of his apprehension of God can be largely symbolic; inadequacies of expression are corrected by reinterpretation and modification of symbols in such a way that undesired meanings are excluded. The same occurs in the Presocratic world of a Xenophanes or the post-systematic world of Clement of Alexandria, e.g..... The biblical God that stands or sits is not taken literally. God is conceived in terms of the notions of truth, goodness. Such rethinking of God the Father entails a rethinking of his Son, etc... There follows the crises provoked by Arius, Nestorius etc. and the post-systematic statements of the councils. The minimal use of technical expressions in Greek councils etc. prepared the way for the medieval rethinking of Christian doctrine in scholastic terms. In the wake of this legacy are the further shifts manifested in modern science, modern scholarship and modern philosophy.

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Now while mystery is not to be identified with problem the contexts in which mystery is adored are anything but free of problems and the problems today are so many that many today do not know what to believe. They are not unwilling to believe but they want to know what church doctrines mean. This is a problem for systematics.

The answer to the questions is a gradual increase of understanding. Clues, answers and new questions succeed one another. The vein of questions in one area may seem to die out but successive thinkers tackle the whole matter over again. Eventually perhaps a master arrives on the scene capable of envisaging all the issues and treating them in their proper order.

That order is not the order in which the solutions were discovered. For the course of discovery is roundabout. Distinct from the order of discovery is the order of teaching. A teacher postpones solutions that presuppose other solutions and begins with issues whose solution does not presuppose the

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(482) the solution of other issues.

Such was the ordo ~~doctrinalis~~ disciplinae that Quinas wanted in theology books for beginners. An illustration: In 1st book of the Scriptum super Sententias there is no separation of the treatment of God as one and of God as Trinity; but, in the Summa contra Gentiles a systematic separation is effected. Further, what in the Contra Gentiles was treated in very separate fashion- books is in the Summa theologiae united in a continuous stream

(483) Not only does the order of teaching or exposition differ from the order of discovery but also the terms and relations of systematic thought express a development of understanding over and above the understanding had either from a simple inspection or from an erudite exegesis of the original doctrinal sources. So in Thomist trinitarian theory such terms as person, etc. have a highly technical meaning. They stand to these terms as they occur in scripture or patristic writings much as in modern physics the terms mass and temperature stand to the adjectives, heavy and cold.

The existence of this divergence between religious sources and theological systems is a necessary consequence of the view expressed in the 1st Vatican Council that, while it is the same dogma, meaning that is being understood still that understanding grows and advances down the ages (DS 3020). In Doctrines a true permanence of dogma was stressed. In Systematics the stress is principally on systematic developments.

Such developments occur in widely different contexts, e.g. the Greco-Roman and Byzantine, the medieval and the modern.

(484) Unfortunately, though very humanly, all such developments are under the sign of contradiction. Systematic misunderstandings occur. The misunderstandings are manifold. An array of conflicting systems exists as well as conflicting interpretations, histories, etc.

To deal with such multiplicity once more one must appeal to dialectic. Differences must be apprehended and reduced to their grounds, e.g. social, cultural, historical; presence or absence of conversions. On the basis of such analysis and in the light of one's own foundations and method one will judge which systems express positions and which counter-positions.

4. Understanding ^{and} the Truth.

Data, as noted earlier, are given to sense or to consciousness. They are, of course, hardly noticed unless they fit in with one's understanding and have a name in one's language.

Now while data are just a single component in human knowledge, facts result from the conjunction of three distinct levels.

(485) Now one can understand data and one can understand facts. Understanding

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of data is expressed in hypotheses, and the verification of hypotheses leads to probable assertions. The understanding of facts is more complicated for it supposes the existence of two orders or types of knowledge, where the facts of the first type supply the data for the second type, e.g. in critical history two inquiries are distinguished: a first aimed at how the witnesses got their information, etc; a second that ~~evaluated~~ employed the evaluated information to construct an account of what was going forward at a given time, etc. There is a similarity in this procedure in natural science.

Thetwo orders of knowledge call for two applications of the notion of truth. There is the truth of the facts in the first order and also the truth of the account or explanation reached in the second order. The two are interdependent, for the second can lead to a correction of the first, e.g. the critical historian's discovery of what was going forward can lead him to revise his evaluation of his witnesses.

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Far more complicated is the case of our eight, directly or indirectly interdependent, functional specialties. Each is the work of all four levels of ^{intentional} consciousness, yet each is a specialty inasmuch as each is concerned to perform one of eight tasks.

Here our concern is with doctrines and systematics. Both aim at understanding the truth, but in different manners. Doctrine aims at a clear and distinct affirmation of religious realities; its principle concern is the truth of such an affirmation; its concern to understand is limited to the clarity and distinctness of its affirmation. But systematics aims at understanding of what doctrines affirm. It wants true understanding, but is fully aware that its understanding is bound to be imperfect, merely analogous, commonly no more than probable.

collective

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There are, then, in doctrines and systematics two instances of truth and two instances of understanding. Doctrines is to state clearly and distinctly the religious community's confession of the mysteries so hidden in God that men could not know them if they had not been revealed. Assent to such doctrines is the assent of faith, which religious people regard as firmer than any other. But the measure of understanding accompanying the assent of faith is highly variable. Ireneus, for example, denied that the more articulate man is more a believer than a less articulate man.

In contrast, the views sets forth in systematics are no more than probable, but the understanding to be reached is on the level of one's time. In the medieval period it was static system; in the contemporary world it has to be at home with modern science, scholarship and philosophy.

(488) Here we may insert brief answers to accusations often made against systematic theology.

--That it is speculative. German idealism makes it clear that it can be, but our systematic theology is quite a homely affair. It aims at an understanding of the truths of faith, a Glaubensverständnis. ^{The} truths of faith are church confessions.

--That systematic theology can become irreligious. It can, particularly when its emphasis is not on conversion but on proof, or when it is motivated by individual or corporate pride. But when conversion bases the whole theology, gives the name, God, its primary and fundamental meaning, which systematic theology does not believe it can exhaust or even do justice to, then systematic theology will remain in harmony with its religious origins and aims.

--That systematic theology is fruitless. Systematic theology has its fruitless aspect, for it can at times systematise misunderstanding, which will be attractive to those (usually the larger number) who do not understand. Dialectic cannot be simply excoriated. But at least one is no longer totally at its mercy, when one methodically acknowledges the existence of such dialectic and describes its structure and method.

--That systematic theology is elitist. It is difficult, as are math, etc. but the difficulty is worth meeting ^{of}. For if one does not attain, on the level of one's own age, an understanding the religious realities one believes, one will be at the mercy of the psychologist, etc. who will not hesitate to tell believers what it really is in which they believe.

--That systematic theology is irrelevant, if it does not provide the basis for the eighth functional specialty, communications. But to communicate one has to understand. Repeating formulas cannot take the place of understanding. It is understanding alone that can say what it grasps in any of the manners demanded by the almost endless series of different audiences.

(489) 5. Continuity, Development, Revision:

1. Continuity:

a. 4 factors:

1. Normative struct. of consciousness & int acts; but struct. can be violated; Possible to direct acts, not to truly good, truth, increasing underst.

- (490) a. Result of viol: dialectic of positions & counter-positions. Manifests need for intell & mor conversions.
2. Gd's gift of love: given in various measures.
3. Permanence of dogma: mysteries can be better understood; what is understood is just what Gd revealed. Hum under thus: in eodem dogmate, eodem sensu eademque sententia (DS 3020).

4. Occurrence in past of genuine achievement:

- (491) a. I have 2 studies: Gr. & Freed & Verbum. My method today wd lead to significant differences from Aq's presentation; but also affinities. Aq's thought on gr. & freed, & on cogn theory & trinity are gen. achievements.

2. Development: less conspicuous when gospel is preached effectively to a diff cult; more conspic: type of developmt in diff of consc. Finally, results of dialectic: fruits & evils.

- (492) 3. Revisions: theol revisions have origin in cultrual developa, therefore now theol. developmt. is long delayed response to devel of mod sc, scholarshp, phil.
- a. Read final paragraph on p. 492 as summary