

Questions for Myth and Theology seminar, 11/6/75

1. In view of Russell Barta's "Demythologizing Theology" (America, Feb. 5 1972): Assuming that Christinity presents a true world-view, why press for a theoretical/theological formulation when the symbolic expression is already available? Is the theological expression better than the mythical?

2. What can be said regarding the supposed case of the "sincere person" who is not "converted," the sincere agnostic, the sincere atheist? If conversion is necessary for authentic subjectivity and authentic subjectivity is the pre-requisite for objectivity in knowing, who is to judge and by what criteria, whether one is converted or not?

3. Please comment on the accuracy and adequacy of the following:

a. According to J. A. Stewart, Plato uses myth to express God, Soul and Cosmos because these realities prove illusive if approached by science; yet they respond to an undeniable human experience and need and are that which alone lets life and thought go on. And Kant insists that these three (God, Soul, Cosmos) are not knowable by Speculative Reason; only Practical Reason can affirm their reality. But Lonergan goes a step further. What Plato expressed by myth and Kant affirmed only by Practical Reason Lonergan claims can be known. And this, because his understanding of knowledge is different. First, he does not assume that knowing is taking a look. It is this assumption which leads Kant to denying the knowability not only of God, Soul and World but also of all noumenal reality. Second, Lonergan maintains that internal experience (the experience of consciousness itself) is now sufficiently articulatable to allow it to be dealt with as an experiential data that can be understood and reasonably affirmed. That is to say, consciousness itself can be known in the same way that all other "things" are known when we speak of human (not mere sense) knowledge. The fact that the human world is a world mediated by meaning (and not a world of the already-out-there-now) makes the object of knowledge based on internal experience as real as any other thing known on the basis of sense experience.

b. As for Plato's approach, then, we note a progress beyond it: what was formerly expressible only in myth can now be articulated theoretically, i.e., according to a systematic philosophy: myth is the primordial articulation with which theory begins and from which it moves toward systematic articulation.

c. As for Kant and Plato (as interpreted by Stewart): these two say that we must act "as if" God, Self and World are real because of the social significance of these ideas. Lonergan would say that they are real and that there is no need to act "as if" they are real any more than we act "as if" in regard to the rest of our world mediated by meaning.

Plato → Arist  
ception  
empirical explanation  
↓  
more so  
less so  
transcendent  
Cognition  
Scales → feel

98% of  
Kant's is being  
trapped  
authenticity  
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P.S. I passed my exam This morning (val.).

D.G.H.

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1. Myth (1): dramatic symbolic narrative sacred  
Myth (2): the theological myth, to be eliminated by demythologizing theology.

(1) presented by Eliade, formulated by Dupré, and the like  
(2) Jonas, exemplified by Augustine, the Greek councils; eliminated by Bultmann, along with the Xtian community; more radically and fundamentally by Kant

Cf "The Dehellenization of Dogma" TS 28 1967 336-351  
Second Collection 11-32

Patristic "myth": Harnack out of Kant

PP used Greek words, were educated members of Gk culture, but did not find in Gk philosophy concepts they needed, such as uncreated and created, born not made, consubstantial, O'Donovan

Theologians: Butterfield add Geisteswissenschaften to Naturwissenschaften; transition from logic to method (Ar se as truth; modern se as ongoing process) Aquinas Today: Journal Religion April

Theologians: "movements" ie bandwagons; they are not an elite; former pupils from Pennsylvania coalfields

Next semester: Symbol and Analogy: is it "hot air"; John, Life Light, well what precisely if anything is he talking about; vs illusion that there is some nugget called revelation that we do not have to assimilate according to our capacities and needs

Gospel to be preached to all: the simple gospel to the simple in their endless varieties; gospel plus as much theology as they can grasp and need, to the endless gradations away from the nugget named simplicity for the simple

Hence: The Ascend of Mind and Heart to God

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2. People in rain forest of Philippines

We differ by millions of years of historical development plus belief

98% of what a genius knows, he knows not by personal experience, personally originated insight, personally developed judgement but in and through symbiosis <sup>with</sup> ~~in~~ the beliefs of his community, and the rest of the community are believers too.

Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of reality

Twofold authenticity: Collection 246 f.

Personal authenticity: religious moral intellectual conversion

Authenticity of one's tradition: not wipe out beliefs

Newman's hypothetical choice; but attend to mistaken beliefs, work out their associates if any, warn the mistaken believer

Phil 2 12: "You must work out your own salvation in fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you, inspiring both the will and the deed, for his own chosen purpose."

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3.a "... consciousness itself can be known in the same way that all other things are known when we speak of human (not mere sense) knowledge"

As sensitive data are given to the subject qua intentional by his senses, so too the data of consciousness are given to the subject qua conscious by each of his conscious activities

There is however a basic difference between the two cases of "givenness"

what is given by sense is given as object

what is given by consciousness is given on the side of the subject, given as attending, not given as attended to

Hence inquiry about and insight into data of sense is relatively immediate: usually simplified by imagination, schematized, so that only many simplifications and insights amount to an understanding of the not merely imaged but sensible

But inquiry about and insight into the data of consciousness necessitates the use of imagined dummies that stand for, represent, what is given in consciousness

Ambiguity of "knowing"

- a) any cognitional activity: seeing, hearing, etc; partial objects
- b) patterned combination of interlocking cognitional activities: not experience alone, understanding alone, judging alone, but all three about the compound object at once experienced understood affirmed

3b. From Plato to Aristotle

From Aristotle (truth as achievement of science) to modern science as ongoing process in natural and human science (Aquinas Today)

3c. Stewart's Kantian Plato is less general than the real Plato

Plato's concern with symbolic utterance remains necessary in the whole process of education (even today: lack of it seems disastrous); most men will not get beyond it (intellectual conversion last and rarest)