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Religious Studies and/or Theology

III The Ongoing Genesis of Methods

There is no need for me to tell you that today the word, theology, denotes not some well-defined form of thought but rather an aggregate of quite different and often quite nebulous forms. In contrast, religious studies seems to present a more determinate and uniform front, though even there, one may feel, there exist stirrings and strivings that may be all the more significant because they are mainly potential.

If this estimate of the present situation is correct, then manifestly there can be no simple answer to the question before us. One might compare or contrast some particular type of theology with some particular direction in religious studies. But when both terms are left in their full generality, then the issue has to shift from statics to dynamics.

Such a shift is not just a vague dodge. For a quite static view of the nature of the sciences and of their relations to one another can be had from Aristotelian analysis in terms of material and formal objects. In contrast, a quite dynamic view of the same matter is had when sciences are conceived in terms of method and field, and methods are not fixed once for all but keep developing, differentiating, regrouping as the exigences of advance may demand.

It is into the ongoing genesis of methods that we must plunge, for it is precisely this process that explains both the disarray of contemporary theologies and the less apparent though perhaps not less significant stirrings in religious studies.

Accordingly we begin from the origin of this dynamic of methods in the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Next, we shall take issue with the danger or suspicion of relativism by indicating the foundations on which the succession of methods may be based. Thirdly, we shall argue that increasing specialization entails increasing limitation and that increasing limitation serves to define the possibility and encourage the actuality of additional, distinct, even disparate methods. Fourthly, it will appear that the more human studies turn away from abstract universals and attend to concrete human beings, the more evident it becomes that the scientific age of innocence has come to an end: human authenticity can no longer be taken for granted. Fifthly, we ask whether there is any method that can deal with the unauthentic as well as the authentic, with the irrational as well as the rational; and some such approach we designate by the Greek name, praxis. Finally, in the light of praxis, we attempt to relate religion, theology, and religious studies, where these three are considered not as static abstractions but as the dynamic entities they partly are and partly can be.

Religious Studies and/or Theology

On Tuesday evening we attempted a description of the more ordinary variety of religious experience. On Wednesday we explored the possibility of there being some connection between religious commitment and objective truth. Tonight there remains the practical aspect of the matter. On what grounds may religious studies be considered an academic discipline? Can a claim in any way similar be made for theology? Such are the questions before us, and if an answer is to be ~~xnxanx~~ at all plausible, it has to proceed not from any outdated view of man and his world but from contemporary reality and contemporary concerns.

Learning: Modern Style

In the introduction to his account of The Origins of Modern Science Herbert Butterfield noted that the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries overturned the authority in science not only of the middle ages but also of the ancient world. He concluded that that revolution "outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements, within the system of medieval Christendom."

Now I have already had occasion to point out certain elements in that revolution. It aimed at utility, and so it was concerned with everyday materials, their manipulation, their mastery, through a process of trial and error. It

demanded autonomy: its basic terms and relations were to be mathematical in their origins and experimental in their justification. It was concerned not with words but with reality and so it excluded questions that could not be resolved by an appeal to observation or experiment. On all three counts it ran counter to the ideal set forth in Aristotle's Posterior Analytics. Despite an initial concern with understanding things, that work devoted its efforts to the construction of a theory of science out of the terms, relations, inferences constitutive of the demonstrative syllogism. Instead of developing science by combining mathematical notions with their experimental verification, the Posterior Analytics conceived philosophy and science as a single, logically interlocking unity, in which philosophy was to provide the sciences with their basic terms and principles. Instead of directing men's minds to practical results, Aristotle held that science was concerned with necessary truth, that what can be changed is not the necessary but the contingent, and so the fruits of science lay simply in the contemplation of the eternal truths it brought to light.[2]

Such was modern science at its origins. But it continued to develop and thereby to reveal further differences. Notable among those was its departure from an earlier individualistic view of science. Aristotle's sets of syllogisms were highly compact affairs, and so he had no difficulty in thinking of science as an acquired habit

tucked away in the minds of individuals. Cartesian thought took its stand on an initial universal doubt and proceeded as a search for ideas so clear and distinct as to beget certitude. The program of the eighteenth century Enlightenment was to appeal to reason, proclaim science, and purge people's minds of the prejudices inflicted upon them by tradition.

But if such ~~a program~~ individualism still lives in the assumptions of a science of many in the twentieth century, the carrier/~~xxxxxxxxx~~ today is a social group. No individual knows the whole of modern mathematics, or the whole of ~~theoretical~~ physics, or the whole of chemistry, ~~or~~ or the whole of biology. Such knowledge is possessed not by an individual but by the members of a group. They have passed successfully through the initiation ritual of a Ph. D. They are familiar with a technical language which they alone speak and understand. They know the correct procedures to be followed in their investigations and the ideals that should govern their thinking. They are master of the novel/conceptual systems introduced by the pioneers and the renovators of their field. They belong to the appropriate associations, attend the congresses, read the journals, consult the libraries, contribute to the publications, and design the tools and equipment they may need. A modern science is a specialization.[3] The scientists are specialists. ~~Their function is to see to it that their speciality~~ Their function is to ~~see~~ keep their tradition alive and flourishing. Hans-Georg Gadamer startled many when in his great book, Wahrheit und Methode, first published in 1960, ~~he contended that the minds of the/exegetes of a literature~~ interpreters he contended that to interpret a literature one had to inherit ~~are formed by the classics of that literature. But what~~ or find one's way into a literary tradition. But what

holds for the humanities, also holds for the sciences. If Butterfield is right in thinking modern science the most striking event since the beginning of Christianity, the eighteenth century was right in rejecting an earlier tradition only because it launched a new tradition.

Initially, of course, the new tradition was not yet a tradition. Nor was it easy for it later on to advert to its traditional character. For there lurked in men's minds the Aristotelian assumption that science was clear and certain knowledge of causal necessity. What could be more clear and certain than the verified deduction of the orbits of the moon and of Mars? What could be more necessary than conclusions that were demonstrated? Only when Euclid and Newton and Maxwell bowed to Riemann and Einstein and Heisenberg, did it become obvious that earlier mistakes could not be knowledge of necessity and that, like earlier views, the new systems were not deductions from necessary truths but verified conclusions from hypothetical theories.

Aristotle, then, was quite right in holding that a science that consisted in the grasp of necessary truth had to be purely theoretical and could not be practical. But from the start modern science intended to be practical. Today there are many steps along the way from basic research to pure science, from pure science to applied, from applied to technology, from technology to engineering. But the multiplicity does not obscure the underlying unity. For us good theory is practical, and good practise is grounded in sound theory. Where the Aristotelian placed his reliance on first principles he considered necessary, the modern scientist places his reliance ultimately

not on his basic laws and principles but on his method. It was the method that brought forth the laws and principles in the first place, and it will be the method that revises them if and when the time for revision comes.

Foundations

So we are brought up against a problem of foundations. If method can revise the principles and laws on which a successful science has been constructed, so too, it would seem, methods themselves are open to correction and revision. If methods too can be revised, then is not the whole of science just a vast structure resting upon sand?

Here, I believe, there is room for a valid distinction. There are the particular methods adapted to the needs and opportunities of particular fields. As such needs and opportunities come to light, methods themselves undergo further adaptation. They become more specialized. They develop new techniques and refine old ones. They incorporate fresh stratagems, models, mappings, seriations. But all such changes and modifications come under a higher law. As the revisions of existing theories, so too the developments of existing methods are just fresh instances of attending to the data, grasping their intelligibility, ~~formulating and checking the validity of the new insights~~ formulating the content of the new insights, and checking as thoroughly as possible their validity. In brief, underpinning special methods there is what I have named generalized empirical method. Its operations are the operations we can verify each in his own consciousness. And the normative

~~pattern~~

pattern that relates these operations to one another is the conscious dynamism of sensitive spontaneity, of intelligence raising questions and demanding satisfactory answers, of reasonableness insisting on sufficient evidence before it can assent yet compelled to assent when sufficient evidence is forthcoming, of conscience presiding over all and revealing to the subject his authenticity or his unauthenticity as he observes or violates the immanent norms of his own sensitivity, his own intelligence, his own reasonableness, his own freedom and responsibility.

Now it will be felt that this appeal to generalized empirical method really is an appeal to individual subjectivity and that individual subjectivity, so far from offering a secure foundation, gives rise to serious doubts and grave uneasiness.

But once more a distinction must be drawn. There is the subject correlative to the world of immediacy, and the subject correlative to the world mediated by meaning and motivated by value. The world of immediacy is very much like Hume's world in which there is discerned neither permanence nor causality nor necessity. The subject correlative to the world of immediacy is the subject locked up in his immediate experience of the data of sense and of the data of consciousness. His knowledge is just infra-structure, and his actions flow directly from appetites. His capacity to communicate is uninformed by intelligence, unguided by reason, uncontrolled by responsibility.

Now if individual subjectivity is understood to mean the subject as correlative to the world of immediacy, then

I heartily agree that individual subjectivity, so far from offering a secure foundation, gives rise to serious doubts and well-founded uneasiness.

However, I must point out that generalized empirical method appeals not to the individual subjectivity that is correlative to the world of immediacy but to the individual subjectivity that is correlative to the world mediated by meaning and motivated by value.

I must add that the subject in this sense, so far from being locked up in immediate experience of the data of sense and the data of consciousness, moves in a universe with which he is acquainted according to the measure of his personal development by common sense, by science, by human studies, by philosophy, perhaps even by theology.

Further I would urge that while the experience of the subject correlative to the world of immediacy is a purely private affair, privacy in the world mediated by meaning has to be contrived and defended and even then it is limited. In that world one is taught by others and, for the most part, what they know they have learnt from others, in an ongoing process that stretches back over millennia. In that world one not merely experiences but understands and manifests one's understanding in one's words and deeds, to thereby invite the approval or correction of one's betters, the admiration or the ridicule of one's peers. Common sense is not an individual idiosyncrasy. Scientific discoveries that are not published, scrutinized, accepted, remain unknown and without issue. Exegetes and historians may secure the privacy of their findings by consigning

them to the flames,-but only if their findings are published, only if they are read, only if they attain the recognition of the community of specialists in their field, only then do they begin to exert some influence on subsequent exegetical or historical investigation or teaching.

Finally, however, I must concede that subjectivity is not a foundation that automatically is secure. To think There can be something wrong with subjectivity, of course, but the problem is not its individuality, isolation, privacy.

However, while I believe that attention, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility take individuals out of the isolation and privacy of the experiential infra-structure, I must not be thought to suggest that this liberation towards truth, reality, objectivity is fool-proof. towards truth, reality, objectivity, excellence is automatic or fool-proof. It is not. Man is called to authenticity. But man attains authenticity only by unfailing fidelity to the exigences of his intelligence, his reasonableness, his conscience. What is far more grave, is that the short-comings of individuals can become the accepted practise of the group; the accepted practise of the group can become the tradition accepted in good faith by succeeding generations; the evil can spread to debase and corrupt what is most vulnerable while it prostitutes to unworthy ends what otherwise is sound and sane. Then the authentic, if any have survived, are alienated from their society and their culture. The more courageous look about for remedies but find none that even appear equal to the task. The average man, who knows he

was not born to be a hero, decides he has no choice but to go along with things as they are. And the more numerous the people who concur with that decision, the less is the hope of recovery from unauthenticity, the greater is the risk of the disintegration and the decay of a civilization.

Since disintegration and decay are not a private events, even generalized empirical method is experimental. But the experiment is conducted not by any individual, not by any generation, but by the historical process itself.

From Method to Methods

A modern science is characterized more by its method than by its field, for the field tends to expand to include every area in which the method can be applied successfully.

At the same time, the more a method is developed, the more it becomes specialized. In certain areas its success is conspicuous, in others success is modest and even rare. In such cases probably a different development of method is needed, and so where there had been one more general method, now there are two more specialized methods. In this fashion the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth conturies was a general methodical breakthrough that since has divided and subdivided into all the specialized branches of natural science.

It remains however that not all empirical methods emerge as differentiations within the basic procedures the natural sciences. The clear-cut instance

of this leap to another genre is provided by historical studies as they developed in Germany in the nineteenth century. The background that gave this movement its sweep and profundity is to be traced to the French Enlightenment and to the post-Kantian idealists. But if it took over the Enlightenment's dedication to human progress, it abhorred its abstract thinking. If it agreed with Hegel's insistence on concreteness and his concern with world history, it repudiated his a priori methods.

It was this movement that launched the study of the history of religions, and it will not be out of place to indicate its basic ideas as they were unfolded by Friedrich Wolf, Friedrich Schleiermacher, August Boeckh, Johann Gustav Droysen, and Wilhelm Dilthey.[4]

Friedrich Wolf, when still a student, demanded the creation of a new faculty, philology. He conceived it as a philosophico-historical study of human nature as that nature was exhibited in antiquity. To this end later on in his own teaching at Halle he brought together in his courses a whole series of distinct disciplines: literature, antiquities, geography, art, numismatics; and he informed them with the critical spirit that produced his Prolegomena to Homer.

Friedrich Schleiermacher found the hermeneutics of his day to be little more than two sets of rules-of-thumb: those followed by biblical exegetes and those employed by classical scholars. He reconceived it as a general art of avoiding misunderstanding and misapprehension. By that negative formulation he none the less gave to understanding, Verstehen, its basic

role in the theoretical development of historical studies.

August Boeckh was a pupil of both Wolf and Schleiermacher. He developed their ideas in composing an Encyclopedia and Methodology of the Philological Sciences. In it philology was conceived in the grand manner, a manner at once ~~xxxxxx~~ precise, penetrating , and comprehensive. In a definition to which presently we shall recur, philology was to be the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of ~~xxx~~ the human spirit.

Johann Gustav Droysen generalized the notion of expression. Not only individuals express themselves in their speech and writings. There is a sense in which families, peoples, states, religions may be said to express themselves. Accordingly, history may be conceived as the interpretation of such group expression, and Boeckh's ideas on philology may be applied to the writing of history.

Wilhelm Dilthey brought the matter to its fine point. He contended that ~~Dx~~ Das Leben selbst legt sich aus. Human living is itself its ~~xx~~ own interpretation. In other words, the expression, which the exegete or the historian interprets, is itself the product of understanding, namely, the understanding people have of themselves, their situation, their role, the human condition.

At once it follows that there is a profound difference between natural science and historical study. Both the scientist and the historian would understand: the scientist would understand nature; the historian would understand man. But when ~~x~~ the scientist understands nature, he is not

grasping nature's understanding of itself; for though nature is intelligible, it is not intelligent. But when the historian understands man, his understanding is a recapturing of man's understanding of himself. This recapturing is ~~interpretation. It corresponds to the understanding that it recaptures yet differs in mode from it, now is the~~ interpretation. It differs from the understanding that it recaptures, for it makes thematic, puts in words, an understanding that was not thematized but lived. Yet in another fashion it corresponds to what it recaptures; for it envisages an earlier situation and recounts how an individual or group understood that situation and revealed themselves by their understanding of it.

In Dilthey we have an echo of Vico's claim that it is human affairs that men best understand, for human affairs are the product of human understanding. Again, in Dilthey we have an anticipation of R. G. Collingwood's view that historical knowledge is a reenactment of the past. Finally, we have only to shift our gaze from the interpreter to the persons under scrutiny, to arrive at a phenomenological ontology. The endless variety exhibited in human living has its root in the endless variety of the ways in which people understand themselves, their situation, and the human condition. Such understanding commonly is of the type that spontaneously is generated and spontaneously communicated, the type that may be named commonsense. It is ~~constitutive~~ constitutive of the basic department of human knowledge, the department expressed in ordinary language. Like ordinary language it varies from place to place and from

time to time. It enters into the intelligible form man communicates to the products of his ingenuity and his skill. It is part and parcel of human conduct. It is constitutive of the cognitional and the moral reality that makes man the 'symbolic animal' of the historians and the 'self-completing animal' of the sociologists.

Let us now revert to August ~~Boeckh~~ Boeckh's definition of philology as the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of the human spirit. The constructions of ~~th~~ the human spirit are man and his world: for his world is a world mediated by meaning and motivated by value; and it is the human spirit that constructs the meanings and ~~respo~~ responds to the motivating values. But what man has constructed man can reconstruct. What man has responded to in thought and ~~wo~~ word and deed, he can respond to once ~~m~~ more if only in thought and word and feeling. Such reconstructing and such responding-to-once-more ~~and the communicating~~ are the narratives of the interpretations of the scholar and the ~~narratives of the~~ historian.

We may conclude this section by noting that historical studies, so conceived, have all the marks of a distinct specialization. Like natural science history is empirical, but where the sciences seek universal principles, laws, structures, seriations, history would understand particular words, deeds, situations, movements. Where the several sciences each construct their own technical languages, historians as an ongoing group are confronted with the task of deciphering and learning all the languages of mankind whether still living or though long since dead. Where the sciences come

to know parts or aspects of the universe that common sense never would discover, historians enlarge their own common sense to the point where it encapsulates something of the common sense of other places and times. Lastly, as other specializations, so the study of history leads to the formation of a professional group that develops its own proper procedures and traditions, enforces an initiation ritual of doctoral studies, meets in its own annual congresses, and stocks special libraries with its reference works, surveys, journals, and monographs.

Dialectic

~~There is to human studies a fundamental problem. If they wish to copy the methods of the natural sciences, now the methods of the natural sciences are copied, results comparable to those obtained in natural science~~ will be

As long as human studies copy the methods of the natural sciences, they obtain assured results, but they minimize or omit the human world mediated by meaning and motivated by value. On the other hand, when human studies attempt to deal bravely and boldly with the world mediated by meaning and motivated by value, they find themselves involved in philosophic, ethical, and religious issues. Philosophies oscillate between a world of immediacy and a world mediated by meaning. Individuals and groups esteem values, but they tend to maximize satisfactions, and they are ever tempted to the endless rationalizations that make their satisfactions into necessary incidents in the pursuit of values. Religions are many. They may differ very slightly, and they may diverge to the point

of disparateness. And contradicting their multiplicity is the secularist rejection of all religion.

Such differences are radical. Philosophic differences affect the very meaning of meaning. Ethical differences affect all evaluations. Religious differences modify the meaning and value of one's world.

Such differences become traditional. None of us is an Adam living at the origin of human affairs, becoming all that he is by his own decisions, and learning all that he knows by personal experience, personal insight, personal discernment. We are products of a process that in its several aspects is named socialization, acculturation, education. By that process there is formed our initial mind-set, world view, blik, horizon. On that basis and within its limitations we slowly begin to become our own masters, think for ourselves, make our own decisions, exercise our own freedom and responsibility.

Such radical and traditional differences put their stamp not only of the writings to be interpreted and the events to be narrated but also upon the mind-set, world view, horizon of exegetes and historians. In utopia, no doubt, everyone in all his words and deeds would be operating with the authenticity generated by meeting the exigences of intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility. But our world is not utopia. Even if anyone manages to be perfectly authentic in all his own personal performance, still he cannot but carry within himself the ballast of his tradition. And down the millennia in which that tradition developed, one can hardly exclude the possibility that unauthenticity

entered in and remained to ferment the mass through ages to come.

So we come to the end of the age of innocence, the age that assumed that human authenticity could be taken for granted. I do not mean that human wickedness was denied. But it was felt it could be evaded. Truth was supposed to consist in the necessary conclusions deduced from self-evident principles. Or it was thought that reality was already out there now, and that objectivity was the simple matter of taking a good look, seeing all that was there, and not seeing what was not there. Or there was admitted the real existence of a critical problem, but it was felt that a sound critical philosophy -- such as Kant's or Comte's or some other -- would solve it once for all.

The end of the age of innocence means that authenticity is never to be taken for granted. Mathematicians had to generalize their notion of number to include irrationals and imaginary numbers. Physicists had to develop quantum theory because instruments of observation modified the data they were to observe. In similar fashion human studies have to cope with the complexity that recognizes both (1) that their data may be a mixed product of authenticity and of unauthenticity and (2) that the very investigation of the data may be affected by the personal or inherited unauthenticity of the investigators.

The objective aspect of the problem has come to light in Paul Ricoeur's distinction between a hermeneutic of recovery, that brings to light what is true and good, and a hermeneutic of suspicion, that joins Marx in impugning the rich, or

or Neitzsche in reviling the humble, or Freud in finding consciousness itself an unreliable witness to our motives. Again, it may be illustrated in my own account of "The Origins of Christian Realism," that distinguished the christological and trinitarian doctrines of Tertullian, Origen, and Athanasius on the basis of a philosophic dialectic. Tertullian under Stoic influence was oriented toward a world of immediacy. Origen under Middle Platonist influence was in a world mediated by meaning, where however meaning was the meaning of ideas. Athanasius finally was in the world mediated by meaning, where the meaning was the truth of the Christian kerygma.[5]

As dialectical analysis can be applied to problems of interpretation, so too it can be applied to historical issues; and the issues may be either such general issues as progress, decline, recovery, or the very specific issues that arise when historians are in radical disagreement.

On the general issue progress is analysed as a cyclic and cumulative process. A situation gives rise to an insight. The insight generates policies, projects, plans, courses of action. The courses of action produce a new and improved situation. The new and improved situation gives rise to further insights, and so the cycle recommences.

Similarly, decline is cyclic and cumulative, but now unauthenticity distorts what authenticity would have improved. The policies, projects, plans, courses of action that come from creative insight into the existing situation have the misfortune of running counter not merely to vested interests. Doubts are raised, objections formulated, suspicions insinuated, compromises imposed. Policies, projects, plans, courses of action are but to any and every form of human unauthenticity.

modified to make the new situation not a progressive product of human authenticity but a mixed product partly of human authenticity and partly of human obtuseness, unreasonableness, irresponsibility. As this process continues, the objective situation will become to an ever greater extent an intractable problem. The only way to understand it correctly will be to acknowledge its source in human waywardness. The only way to deal with it will be to admonish the wayward. But such sophistication may be lacking, and then one can expect not repentance but rationalization. So decline continues unabashed. The intractable problem keeps growing. Rationalizations multiply, accumulate, are linked together into a stately system of thought that is praised by all who forget the adage: Whom the gods would destroy, they first make blind.

Can a people, a civilization, recover from such decline. To my mind the only solution is religious. What will sweep away the rationalizations? More reasoning will hardly do it effectively, for it will be suspected of being just so much more rationalizing. And when reasoning is ineffective, what is left but faith? What will smash the determinisms -- economic, social, cultural, psychological -- that egoism has constructed and exploited? What can be offered but the hoping beyond hope that religion inspires? When finally the human situation seethes with alienation, bitterness, resentment, recrimination, hatred, mounting violence, what can retributive justice bring about but a duplication of the evils that already exist? Then what is needed is not retributive justice but self-sacrificing love.[6]

Such is the general, schematic application of dialectic to historical issues. But there also is the specific application that deals with intractable problems in exegesis and in historiography. There problems are tractable when further research, new discoveries, increasing discernment bring solutions. But there are other problems that do not yield to such treatment. Rather they keep recurring in one guise or another no matter how much the context is changed by ongoing research, discovery, discernment. Their source does not lie in the data but in the investigators. The discovery to be made is not a better understanding of the data but a better understanding of the investigators.

Finally, besides the dialectic that is concerned with human subjects as objects, there is the dialectic in which human subjects are concerned with themselves and with one another. In that case dialectic becomes dialogue. It is particularly relevant when persons are authentic and know one another to be authentic yet belong to differing traditions and so find themselves in basic disagreement. It may be illustrated by the ecumenical movement among Christians and by the universalist movement set forth by R. E. Whitson in his The Coming Convergence of World Religions, by Raymond Panikkar's diacritical theology, and William Johnson's Christian monks frequenting Zen monasteries in Japan.

Praxis

Experimental method reveals nature. Historical method reveals man, the self-completing animal, in the manifold variety of his concrete existing. Dialectic confronts us with the problem of the irrational in human life and, as well, provides a technique for ~~objects~~ ~~trying~~ distinguishing between authentic and unauthentic evaluations, decisions, actions. Praxis, finally, raises the final issue, What are you to do about it? What use are you to make of your knowledge of nature, of your knowledge of man, of your awareness of the radical conflict between man's aspiration to self-transcendence and, on the other hand, the waywardness that may distort his traditional heritage and even his own personal life.

It is only after the age of innocence that praxis ~~becomes an academic subject. A faculty psychology that defines will as rational appetite and that concludes will is rational only if it follows intellect now is the time~~ becomes an academic subject. A faculty psychology will give intellect precedence over will and thereby it will liberate the academic world from concern with the irrational in human life. The speculative intellect of the Aristotelians, ~~and~~ the pure reason of the rationalists, the automatic progress anticipated by the liberals, all provided shelter for academic serenity. But since the failure of the absolute idealists to encompass human history within the embrace of speculative reason, the issue of praxis has repeatedly come to the fore. Schopenhauer conceived the world in terms of will and representation. Kierkegaard insisted on faith. Newman toasted conscience. Marx was concerned

not merely to know but principally to make history. Nietzsche proclaimed the will to power. Blondel strove for a philosophy of action. Paul Ricoeur has not yet completed his ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ many-volumed philosophy of will, and Jürgen Habermas has set forth the involvement of human knowledge in human interests. Along with them have marched in varying ways ~~xxx~~ pragmatists, personalists, existentialists, while phenomenologists have supplanted faculty psychology with an intentionality analysis in which cognitional process is sublated by deliberation, evaluation, decision, action.[8]

If I have referred to so many and so different thinkers, it has not been to agree with all of them but rather to discern despite their differences a common concern with what I have named praxis. On an older view contemplative intellect, or ~~speculative reason, or rigorous science had the hegemony~~ speculative reason, or rigorous science were supreme, and practical issues were secondary. But the older view grounded its hegemony on necessity. That claim no longer is made. If we are not ~~xxxx~~ simply to flounder, we have to take our stand on authenticity: on the authenticity with which intelligence takes us beyond the experiential infra-structure to enrich it, extend it, organize it, but never to slight it and much less to violate its primordial role; on the authenticity with which rational reflection goes beyond the constructions of intelligence and draw[9] sharply the lines between astrology and astronomy, alchemy and chemistry, legend and history, magic and science, myth and philosophy; on the authenticity with which moral deliberation takes us

beyond cognitional process into the realm of freedom and responsibility, evaluation and decision, not in any way to annul or slight experience or understanding or factual judgment, but to add the further and distinct truth of value judgments and the consequent decisions demanded by a situation in which authenticity cannot be taken for granted.

It follows ~~that praxis~~ that, while empirical method moves, so to speak, from below upwards, praxis moves from above downward. Empirical method moves from below upwards, from experience to understanding, and from understanding to factual judgment. It can do so because it can presuppose that the data of experience are intelligible and so objects that straightforward understanding can master. But praxis acknowledges the end of the age of innocence. It starts from the assumption that authenticity cannot be taken for granted. Its understanding, accordingly, will follow a hermeneutic of suspicion as well as a hermeneutic of recovery. Its judgment will discern between products of human authenticity and products of human unauthenticity. But the basic assumption, the twofold hermeneutic, the discernment between the authentic and the unauthentic set up a distinct method. This method is a compound of theoretical and practical judgments of value. The use of this method follows from a decision, a decision that is comparable to the claim of Blaise Pascal that the heart has reasons which reason does not know.

Religion, Theology, Religious Studies

While praxis is relevant to the whole of human studies, its relevance is particularly manifest in the sphere of religion. For that sphere is the world as mediated by ultimate meaning and motivated by ultimate value. But commonly the religions apprehend ultimate meaning and ultimate value symbolically. The theologies endeavor to discern whether there is any real fire behind the smoke of symbols employed in this or that religion. Religious studies finally envisage the totality of religions down the ages and over the expanse of the globe.

The matter needs to be illustrated, illustration has to be particular, and so I shall speak in terms of Christian experience. There occurs, then, a response to ultimate value in conversion from waywardness or in a call to holiness. The Christian message will give that response a focus and an interpretation: the response will be taken as God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us; the focus will be found in the objective expression of the same love by the Father sending the Son to us and revealing his love in the Son's crucifixion, death, and resurrection. From preaching the message and the gift of the Spirit, the Christian community is born, spreads, is passed on from generation to generation. It lives by its discernment between the authenticity of a good conscience and the unauthenticity of an unhappy conscience. It devotes its efforts to overcoming unauthenticity and promoting authenticity. It is praxis alive and active. But as yet it is not praxis

questioned, scrutinized, made explicit and thematic.

Theology comes out of such questioning, and three distinct emergences must be distinguished. In the ancient Christian church questions centered on such specific issues as christology and Pelagianism. In the medieval period there was a sustained effort to move from the symbolic expression of Christian thought to its literal meaning. But this effort's involvement in Aristotelian thought with its concern for proof, necessity, and eternal truth, not only fostered litigiousness and controversy but later led to its all but disruptive renewal under the impact of modern science, modern exegetical and historical methods, and modern philosophies.

Sound renewal is not yet, in my opinion, a common achievement. But the contemporary situation does seem favorable to an eirenic and constructive use of dialectic and dialogue. The former tendency to controversy has greatly diminished, partly because modern science and human studies lay claim not to absolute truth but to no more than fuller understanding, partly because speculative intellect or pure reason have given way to the claims of praxis. There remain differing Christian communions and each may be represented by more than one theology. But acceptance of dialectic, especially in the form of dialogue, is powerfully fostered by the ecumenical movement, and the promotion of union between differing communions cannot but favor the promotion of union among the theologians of the same communion.

When I say that the contemporary situation favors an eirenic and constructive use of dialectic, I must not be taken

~~that are the goals of communism~~

to imply that we can expect great and rapid results. For religious communions are historical realities. Their authenticity is the resultant not only of the authenticity of their contemporary members but also of the heritage transmitted down the centuries. Whatever the defects of any such heritage, it comes to be accepted in good faith. Good faith is good not evil. It needs to be purified, but the purification will be the slow product of historical research into the screening memories and defense mechanisms and legitimations that betray an original waywardness and a sinister turn.

Besides the Christian communions there are the manifold preliterate religions and the great world religions. Religious studies takes as its field all religions. Its main thrust ~~is the history of religions in the sense of the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of mankind. now is the time~~ is the history of religions, that is, the research that assembles and catalogues the relevant data, the interpretation that grasps their morphology, the history that locates them in place and time, studies their genesis, development, distribution, interaction.

But history itself is practised in varying manners. Its ideal can approximate the ideal of natural science, to minimize attention to meaning and values. In contrast, it can embrace the ideal of the German Historical School defined as the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of the human spirit. Then meaning and values ~~receive explicit attention, but inevitably the risk is run of an extra-scientific influence from diverging phil-~~

receive explicit attention. The need is felt and the desire expressed that one write of the religions of mankind in a manner that is recognizable by the respective groups that practise the religion. One can go further, as did Friedrich Heiler, and see the mission of the history of religions to lie in a preparation of the cooperation of religions;[9]

and certainly such a purpose satisfies the cardinal point of method as praxis; for it discerns a radically distorted situation; it retreats from spontaneous to critical intelligence; it begins from above on the level of evaluations and decisions; and it moves from concord and cooperation towards the development of mutual understanding and more effective communication.

Finally, the more that religious studies moves from the style of natural science to that of profounder historical study, the more it endeavors to understand the element of total commitment that characterizes religion, the more it is concerned to promote the cooperation of religions, then the more it finds itself involved in the radical oppositions of cognitional theory, of ethical practise, of religious and secularist man. At that point it too can undertake dialectic, a dialectic that will assemble all the dialectics that relate religions to organized secularism, religions to one another, and the differing theologies that interpret the same religious communion. At that point, again, it can invite to dialogue the representatives of related and ultimately of disparate religions.

Conclusion

I began by pointing out, this evening, that the issue, Religious Studies and/or Theology, if it is not to deal with static abstractions, has to plunge into the ongoing genesis of methods and has to view its terms as dynamic entities, as compounds of the actual and the potential, even as mixed products of human authenticity and unauthenticity.

I have distinguished different methods: experimental, foundational, historical, dialectical, critically practical.

My first conclusion is that the more religious studies and theology put to good use the whole battery of methods, the more they will move asymptotically towards an ideal situation in which they overlap and become easily interchangeable.

As a second conclusion I would say that such overlaping and interchangeability are ideal in the sense that they are desirable. Theology and religious studies need each other. Without theology religious studies may indeed discern when and where different religious symbols are equivalent;[10] but they are borrowing the techniques of theologians if they attempt to say what the equivalent symbols literally mean and what they literally imply. Conversely, without religious studies theologians are unacquainted with the religions of mankind; they may as theologians have a good grasp of the history of their own religion; but they are borrowing the techniques of the historian of religions,

when they attempt to compare and xk relate other religions with their own.

Thirdly, if any agree that such an ultimate overlapping and interchangeability are desirable, their praxis will include a recognition of the obstacles that stand in its way and an xfx effort to remove them. Now a discovery of the obstacles is not difficult. For the end is in sight as soon as both theologians and students of religions are in principle ready to xmxinx accept and to employ, xhx as they become relevant, the methods I have been now is the time for all good men is not difficult. For this end became apparent to nox is not difficult. For we concluded to this end from the assumption that both theologians and students of religions would put to good use the whole battery of methods that have been devised. It follows that there are as many possible obstacles as there are plausible grounds for rejecting or hesitating about any of these methods. It follows, finally, if the methods really are sound, that the obstacles may be removed, at least for authentic subjects, by applying both the hermeneutic of suspicion and the k hermeneutic of recovery. The hermeneutic of suspicion that pierces through mere plausibility to its real ground. The hermeneutic of recovery that discovers what is intelligent, true, xhx and good in the obstruction, and goes on to employ this discovery to qualify, complement, correct earlier formulations of the method.

Notes

1) Herbert Butterfield, The Origins of Modern Science: 1300-1800, Revised Edition, New York: The Free Press, 1965. P. 7.

2) For a fuller statement, B. Lonergan, "Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation," Journal of Religion 55 (1975) 169-172.

3) Ibid., 166-169.

4) For references see my Method in Theology (London and New York 1972) pp. 208 ff.

5) This dialectic I developed in "Origins of Christian Realism;" Theology Digest 20 (1972) 292-305; reprinted in A Second Collection, London and Philadelphia: Darton, Longman & Todd and Westminster Press, 1974. The fuller version in my De Deo trino is being published in English under the title, The Way to Nicea, and is due from the same firms during this year.

6) This dialectic is developed at length in Insight, chapters seven, eighteen, and twenty.

7) R. E. Whitson, The Coming Convergence of World Religions, New York: Newman Press, 1971. Raymond Panikkar, "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology," Concilium 46 (1969) 43-53. William Johnston, The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing, Second edition, St. Meinrad, Indiana: Abbey Press, 1975; The Still Point, New York: Fordham University Press, 1970; Christian Zen, New York: Harper & Row, 1971; New York: Silent Music, New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

8) On sublation, see Method in Theology, pp. 241, 316, 340.

9) Friedrich Heiler, "The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Cooperation of Religions," in The History of ~~Religion~~ Religions, Essays in Methodology, edited by M. Eliade and J. Kitagawa, Chicago University Press 1959 and 1962, pp. 142-153.

10) Eric Voegelin, "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," in ~~Eternità e Storia, Firenze: Vallecchi, 1970, pp. 215-234. now is the time for all good men to come~~ Eternità e Storia, a cura dell' Istituto Accademico di Roma, Firenze: Vallecchi, 1970, pp. 215-234.