

Questionnaire

1. In English-speaking Canada there are courses offered in philosophy in all universities. The dominant tendency, not due entirely to argument, is linguistic analysis. In many places there will be found quite competent professors presenting ancient and modern philosophies and in Toronto there is a celebrated Institute of Mediaeval Studies. The impact of philosophy seems small: there is a respectable but slight minority that philosophically is literate; but the fields most esteemed and frequented offer the hardware of mathematics, physics, and the other natural sciences or the software of literary or historical studies.

2.1 In 1931 the Jesuits of Upper Canada opened a house of philosophy in Toronto. The professors were good men, undistinguished, devoted to ministry in the local parishes, content to teach a text-book and reported in some cases to resent further questions being raised. After about twenty-five years it was decided to discontinue the philosophate in Toronto and to send our scholastics to the philosophate of the Oregon Province in Spokane.

2.2 Philosophical studies (1) have declined in the virtue of the influence and power of activists and beatniks, (2) gained from the breakdown of the old narrowness and regimentation, (3) will regain their proper status only when the organization of the curriculum of studies is totally liberated from the deductivist hierarchy of sciences and reconceived as a methodically unified set of interdisciplinary fields.

In other words, objectively and logically 'being' is the most comprehensive notion and 'metaphysics' the fundamental science. But this view envisages the 'golden age' when the sciences are definitively formulated, deductively organized and related, &c., &c. In fact the sciences are ongoing, each is organized and undergoing change under the hegemony of its specialized method, and the key position is not metaphysics but the generalized method that grasps both the core of the specialized methods and the manner in which their products form an interdisciplinary unity.

3.1 My difficulty with this question is the meaning of the word, Jesuit. I have been a Jesuit for fifty-four years and for the greater part of that time the name, Jesuit, had enjoyed a highly precise but differentiated meaning. The differentiations in that meaning, its analogous character, have been assailed in recent years, and so I feel I have to offer multiple answers in view of the objective ambiguity of the present situation.

In so far as Jesuits are to operate intelligently and effectively in education and in missionary work (which is far more complex) whether at home or abroad, key decisions on priorities, on the nature of problems, on strategy and tactics, will risk having all the futility and wrong-headedness of fighting tanks with bows and arrows unless they are informed by solid philosophic and theological development within the contemporary world-wide spectrum of cultures. See below # 4.12.

Such philosophic and theological development is not within the reach of the average man or of the average priest. It is not going to become a practical possibility for many Jesuits either easily or rapidly. Not only would a new generation of professors have to be trained but even the project of training them has yet to be ventilated, discussed, accepted, implemented. Indeed, even the consideration of such a project could be rejected by the opposition of the egalitarian mass-mind to specialization.

The root difficulty is that the Society was founded when the uomo universale was the human ideal, but it now exists in a world in which intelligent and effective operation presupposes intense specialization. The old distinction between professed and formed coadjutors broke down not merely because of populist egalitarian sentiment but more fundamentally because the old professed were not a little ridiculous in the eyes of the genuine specialists whether professed or not professed.

A final word on this complex and basic issue is that specialization is not necessary for everyone just as it is not possible for everyone. What is needed, where comprehension cannot be attained, is respect. The old short course (*cursus seminaristicus*) did attain this goal, but other devices would be more attractive and no less useful.

3.2

I once addressed the American Catholic Philosophical Association on the various ways in which different aspects or parts of philosophical studies were relevant to the study of theology. Referring the reader to my A Second Collection (London and Philadelphia, 1974, pp. 193-208) for a fuller statement, I think that if the student of theology is not merely to repeat dogmatic formulae but also be able to state clearly and convincingly what they mean and how they evolved, then he has to be acquainted (1) with what he is doing when he is knowing, (2) why is doing that knowing, and (3) what does he know when he does it. There is a further need of acquaintance with the history of philosophy if one is to understand Christian thinkers and/or their adversaries.

However, I do not believe that this implies a complete identity between the study of philosophy in liberal arts colleges and in ecclesiastical studies. In my Philosophy of God and Theology (London and Philadelphia, 1973) I argued that for future priests 'natural theology' had best be combined with the treatises that went by the names, *De Deo Uno*, *De Deo Trino*.

More generally, modern studies commonly are concerned not with abstract universals but with concrete realities. This concern extends not only to objects but also to subjects. Philosophy can be omniscient only with respect to man in the state of pure nature. As soon as issues regard concrete human beings and processes, it is essential for non-Pelagians to operate out of a synthesis of theology and philosophy. The supreme problem is the problem of evil and, if one is to make any headway against it, one cannot prescind from the grace of Christ. Hence I should say that all Christians but especially future priests need an explicit integration of theology with their human studies.

4.11

We are back at the ambiguity mentioned in #3.1. Personally I would like to think that the ideal Jesuit is to be a person capable of operating intelligently and effectively on the level of his time. Today that means that consciousness has been highly differentiated: the same man must be a man of sound common sense; he must be sufficiently initiated in the mathematical sciences as not to be mystified by their procedures and techniques; he must have mastered the arts of hermeneutics and critical

history sufficiently to understand long-term human development, cultural diversity, the basic problems of transcultural communication; he must from his personal experience and development be familiar with the existential, the interpersonal, the historical as constitutive determinants of what it is to be a modern man; he must have struggled to advance in holiness and the life of prayer.

The minimum course in philosophy will aim at opening the door for as many future Jesuit priests as possible to begin to become capable of operating intelligently and effectively on the level of our time.

The core element is such an opening would be cognitional theory as an experiential answer to the question, What am I doing when I am knowing? Epistemology as an answer to the further question, In what sense is doing that constitutive of knowledge? Metaphysics as the corollary that answers, What does one know when one does it?

The core can be simplified by concentrating on schematic but striking illustrations. It can be enriched by precise accounts of and exercises in mathematical, scientific, hermeneutic and historical knowledge. In both cases the key element is a inasmuch as//radical change in the student//he begins to thematize what already he is conscious of but has not objectified.

As the minimum merely aims at opening the door, it will not guarantee results; at the same time there is no limit to the extent to which the door can be opened. The whole issue is the teacher: he will have the graces of erudition, fluency, clarity, precision, &c.; but the essential point will be whether he really understands what he is talking about.

For in the measure that he understands he will be able to lead, to inspire, to help, to cajole others to advance to a share in what he has to offer. In the measure that he does not really understand, then it will be the dismal business of the blind offering to lead those that as yet do not see.

4.12

Marx is one of the classics in economic theory and in theory of history. But a concentration on Marxian thought without a broader context that reveals its significance would be in my opinion a disaster.

Modern thought and action derive their dynamic from theories of history: there is the liberal view of history as progress;