

*In your first book on De Deo Trino, you talked about differentiated consciousness and undifferentiated consciousness. It seems to me that in our development of the meaning of what man is, we've gone back to an undifferentiated consciousness. I wonder if you would explain that a little more.*

The difference between differentiated and undifferentiated consciousness is a difference that occurs in individuals. Undifferentiated consciousness is to be found in all children of every time and place. The mass mind seems to be an instance of undifferentiated consciousness as it is supposed to exist today. The problem of the differentiation of consciousness, and particularly the problem of knowing exactly what is meant by the differentiation of consciousness, and particularly a grasp of that differentiation in a manner that gives it a real meaning, is involved in considerably grave technical problems, philosophical and psychological and so on. At the present time, the classical culture has broken down. New types of philosophical questions have arisen that are much more complicated. To think one's way through them is quite a chore. In other words, the breakdown of classical culture, the emergence of modern culture without as yet having reached its maturity, creates a danger of reversal to primitivism in those that can't stand the pace. Does that meet your question?

*I find I can accept your analysis entirely if I can substitute one word of mine for one of yours. My substitution for your breakdown would be less indicative of a failure in classical thought than of a failure on our part to appreciate classical thought. It reminds me somewhat of the challenge to religion, that religion has failed, when the answer is that it hasn't really been tried. I would say the same of philosophy, and I wonder what you would have to say. The word I would substitute would be abandonment. Classical thought has been abandoned. It hasn't broken down.*

I used the word 'breakdown' in a strictly empirical sense, as referring to a state of affairs. With regard to the further question, Should there have been that abandonment or breakdown or should there not have been that abandonment or breakdown, we're moving onto the normative level. I think it was inevitable. There was a narrowness to the classical culture – I remember reading Christopher Dawson's *Age of the Gods* about thirty-five or forty years ago. He was describing all these primitive cultures and civilizations, and he remarked that up till the development of modern studies that had been going on for over a hundred years, and his particular type of cultural sociology was rather new, Greece and Rome and Israel had been islands of light in a great obscure sea. And modern study has eliminated that. The weakness of the modern culture is its failure to develop the normative side. I might be inclined to say that a classical period is an essential part in mankind's development and in the development of particular nations. In other words, you can't leap from a primitive state to modern historical consciousness. But I think that on any view of history, one is going to move to the much broader viewpoint of historical consciousness beyond classical culture. That's just my opinion.

*You ended your lecture rather abruptly. You indicate we've lost the ability to judge what meanings are true and what are not. Would you say that with a great deal of patience we can judge what's true and thereby again build up another system with some strengths? Would you say what we're doing now in trying to open up to all the particularities of life is doing something that would lead to another culture that could do more, so that if we do the job now of organizing*

*all the knowledge we're trying to get, this will somehow be a perfection of our human knowledge?*

I think the question is as follows, namely, in concluding the general discussion of meaning and the modern mediation of meaning, I stressed its multiplicity, its potentiality, its wealth, its variety. Hermann Diem, a Protestant professor of theology in Germany, his second volume in a dogmatics was subtitled 'Between Existentialism and Historicism.' Our objective world apprehended concretely is historically apprehended. Our subjective world is existential. We know a great deal about ourselves, but there's a great deal of problem solving epistemological problems. There are not universally acceptable solutions to epistemological problems, and historians have the greatest difficulty explaining just what they're knowing and how they get to know, arrive at real knowledge. The epistemological problems repeat themselves both in the subjective and in the objective sides. There do not exist techniques of judgment. The empirical sciences do not stop to ask just how much of what we're saying is certain and will not be changed. The periodic table in chemistry covers enormous masses of data. Can it be changed? Is it possible? To what extent? That type of question is not raised in science. Similarly, the problems of when an interpretation is certain. There is a whole series of commentaries on St John. How much of it is certain? The reviews tell you that so-and-so is stimulating, and this is a new insight, and so on. How much of it is certain? How much of it is not going to change in all subsequent works of exegesis studying St John? Those are questions that lie outside the methods employed currently in hermeneutics: the questions of judgment do not impose themselves. And that isn't too surprising, because Greek philosophy never got around to separating judgment clearly and distinctly from understanding. German philosophy, German idealism, hasn't got that distinction either. In existentialism, it's the leap from *Verstehen* to *Entscheiden*, from understanding to deciding. There's no intermediate position called judging. There's a distinct act. And a great deal of Scholasticism speaks of *compositio vel divisio*, and very little stress on what we would call the unconditional character of assent. Of its nature, that act of judging is something personal. Now, there is something to the classical culture that was expressed in its classical manner, that we have to reformulate in terms of a contemporary existential and historical mode of thought. My book *Insight* was concerned with that on the general level, and the thing I'm working on, *Method in Theology*, is concerned with it in the field of theology. There's no doubt that there has to be a transposition of the values of classicism, but the transposition won't end up with something that the classically orientated and formed mind will expect. It will be something out of his world. I believe we're confronted with a fundamental crisis. Just as fourth-century Athens or the prophets in Israel created an entirely new situation, so in the present world the important, manifest change is natural science, but the critical change lies in the field of human studies, and more on the side of interpretative human studies than on the side of the behavioral studies. In other words, the interpretative studies implicitly raise all the philosophical and theological issues, and raise them all at once. You get all your problems repeated in your problems of interpretation, of hermeneutics. And you have them all repeated again in problems of history and problems of the philosophy of history, namely, its epistemology and the nature of the object with which it deals. Who tells his secrets to other people? If no one tells his secrets, then what does history talk about? That's one of the aspects. Am I answering your question?

*At least the beginning!*

Well, that's all we can hope to do perhaps tonight.

*In the Dark Ages, the primordial classical culture broke down, and afterwards in the period known as the Renaissance, there was the resurgence or resurrection of that culture amalgamated with new theological dimensions and constants. Now that culture seems to be breaking down. I want to ask you if you would foresee in the future a synthesis in the Hegelian sense perhaps where the present existential philosophy refurbishes classical culture, so that we would have perhaps a new type of Renaissance of classical culture.*

I think if the word 'classical' is used in a definite sense, with the objectivist justification it gave for norms and standards, that has been superseded. I think a future effort towards certainty will not be something that is formulated logically but something that is formulated methodically. But to explain just what that means would be rather lengthy. But a methodical approach envisages the transition from one logically coherent position to another. It's in that movement – to be able to grasp the invariants in such movement rather than the coherence of an ideal position – that fundamental issues arise.

*In the introduction to Insight, you say it's an invitation to a personal decision. What is the connection between the personal decision you're talking about and – and I'd also like to ask what is the personal appropriation of one's own rational self-consciousness which you speak of – what is the connection between this and the existential decision that is talked about so much today?*

In general, existentialism does not involve the category, the level of judgment. It proceeds from understanding, *Verstehen*, especially understanding that in *Insight* is called commonsense understanding of human life and of oneself, to decision. Decision is looked upon as a free act. In other words, is *Weltanschauung*, is a concrete practical attitude toward living, something that is true? That question is a question that modern philosophy has not been able to answer affirmatively. Existentialism is one way out. You're on the side of the subject, discovering all about the subject. Or idealism is not a way out, and similarly, if you go into the concrete of history, you run into a relativism such as that of Ernst Troeltsch. The question was put to Husserl. Husserl's aim was to work out foundations such that Western man, European culture, would not represent simply another anthropological species but would represent something absolute, something definitive, in the way of values. Husserl didn't finish. Now, the answer to that question provided by *Insight* is in terms of the subject becoming aware of his own operations and of their necessary implications. When you consider operations and not objects, your thought is moving on a level that deals with all objects implicitly. Moreover, your operations are given immediately. They are immediate data of consciousness. When you speak of understanding or insight, people know what you mean, even if they are not able to use the word in a technical philosophic manner. They know what is meant. They'd be insulted if you said, 'Are you stupid?' The experience is there. They know what it is to understand and not to understand. Using those experiences of inquiry and understanding, formulation and reflection, weighing the evidence and judgment, as one's fundamental terms, one can advance in further knowledge of those terms and yet retain the relations between them, because they are also given in experience. The difficulty with an objectivist type of philosophy that sets down first principles and deduces from them is that – to take a thing like the principle of contradiction – can you define it? Well, I can define it

with sufficient accuracy to be able to answer all objections that are raised today. My accuracy may be sufficient to meet all the objections that are raised for the next ten years or the next hundred years. But in general the history of human thought is such that any solution simply gives rise to further questions and leads to the point where you have to get a new solution to be able to answer all the further questions that emerge. To get around that problem is the reason for this going to self-appropriation. The approach in *Insight* is existential in the sense of existential philosophy but it has dimensions that are not acknowledged ordinarily in existential philosophy, namely, this level of judgment and the possibility of judgments of value being true. The general attitude is that once *Weltanschauung*, a world view, a view that involves commitment arises, well, we're just in the sphere of personal opinion. To get around that is the hump. Does that meet your question?

*I believe the answer to this question is implied in what you said, but I'll try to state the question, because I think it will force the issue with classicism. You speak of the mediation of meaning, and I was wondering why you don't speak of the mediation by or toward meaning. In other words, is meaning something that is non-temporal, static, and transcendent, or is it immanent and organically dynamic? Does man discover meaning, find himself involved in the motion of meaning, or create meaning?*

Meaning is multidimensional. Practically all the things you said are true of some aspects of meaning. There is a potential meaning on the level of the psyche, of the symbol, of the datum, of the words, or the image, of the affect, of the archetype, and so on. There is the intention of being, the question, the wonder which intends meaning, but it is as yet unspecified. There is meaning when you understand, you are illuminated but that illumination is not yet something in which subject and object are divided. You get the division when you formulate what you understand. And that objectification is not yet affirmed. Reflection puts the question, Is it so? There is the potential meaning on the level of experience, formal meaning on the level of understanding, actual meaning on the level of judgment – you're saying something is so if you judge – and finally, realizing meaning when you're deciding, deciding to do something, perform an external act. But that deciding will influence not only things, man's transformation of nature. It will influence the social setup, the human world. And it will determine the kind of person you're making of yourself. It's realized meaning, constitutive meaning. Those meanings can be static insofar as you're involved in definitions and look upon definitions as something to be explained but not disputed – let's not dispute about words, let us take some definitions as self-evident. On the other hand, you can approach questions historically. One familiar instance is the word 'person' in theology. In Augustine, what is meant by person? Augustine said, 'Father, Son, Holy Ghost, they're three. Three what? There aren't three Gods or three Fathers or three Sons or three Holy Spirits. What are there three of? He said to answer the question, What are there three of? we say persons. That is a heuristic concept of person. He wasn't defining it in any particular way. You have definitions of person in Boethius, in Richard of St. Victor, and in St Thomas. These are three different definitions, and all three involve metaphysical terms? Which one of the three are you going to take? Well, you have to go into metaphysics to decide. And so you get a third level, in which metaphysical theories are the basis of your account of person. You have the theory of Scotus and of Capreolus and Cajetan and Tiphanius and Suarez. And the metaphysicians don't solve the business. Descartes raised the 'Cogito, ergo sum,' the ego – that's the person. You go to consciousness and the subject of consciousness. Christ had one person and

two natures. One person, therefore one consciousness – it doesn't seem to work. In God there's one nature and three persons. Are there three consciousnesses? It doesn't seem to work. And you get theological speculation running along those lines until you get to Günther, who got condemned in the nineteenth century. So the psychological approach leads to difficulties, and you turn to phenomenology. What is a person? Well, a person isn't *it*, it's *you*, Thou, I and Thou, the phenomenology of intersubjectivity – that's where you apprehend the person. You must think of the three divine persons in terms of intersubjectivity. There has been a historical sequence of approaches to the notion of person. And has it come to an end? Well, it has as far as we know. But we don't know about the future. That illustrates the sequence of definitions. Each one of the definitions as proposed is proposed as an ultimate answer. It tries to do everything to be ultimate. But you can move on. Similarly, there's the history of doctrines, and the methodological problem is, How do you find your feet in this? Now tonight I'm just setting the problem. I'm not answering the questions. The discussion of method in theology is not a lecture but a course, and an unfinished course at the present time.

*Towards the beginning of your talk, you talked of two worlds. The first was the world of immediate experience or the preverbal world of the infant, and then after that a mediated or constituted world, mediated through meaning, or (I take equivalently) a constituted world, using a Husserlian or idealistic term. Is this prior world, this preverbal world of immediate experience, sensible, and is it constituted?*

I didn't attempt to do any infant psychology. I was using the infant by way of an illustration. Is there in the infant the intention of being, or is there not? I don't know. You have Jean Piaget's study of child development in terms of differentiating spontaneous operations that are very clumsy and uneconomical and inefficient. By differentiation you get different operations out of one spontaneous effort, and the differentiations adapt the operation to the object or the matter on which it operates. His thought is fundamentally derived from biological categories of adaptation, which he puts in two parts: assimilation and adjustment. Piaget is very weak on the affective side of child psychology. Just what happens in the infant's mind, just when something like the notion of being emerges, and so on – I don't know whether it has been investigated empirically, and I wouldn't be tempted to say. What is relevant from that is the way the habits formed by the child when he is learning to talk – he throws his meanings back upon his earlier experience, so he thinks that what he means by the moon is what he sees and just what he sees. It's the basis of all empiricism, positivism, phenomenism, materialism, and so on – that habit of mind acquired in childhood and never overcome. That world of immediacy is a position adopted. That's with regard to the child. I spoke of a world mediated by meaning. A world that is merely mediated by meaning is a world that is known by experiencing, understanding, and judging, and if the judgments are true, that world really exists, it's the objective world. The world known by natural science, insofar as natural science is not just probable but true, is a world that exists. It's mediated by acts of meaning, but it's not constituted by them. You don't change that world by getting a new theory, but you change your theory to get better knowledge of that world. There's an intermediate beyond a world simply mediated by meaning. There's a world that comes into existence that is brought about through acts of meaning: the transformation of nature, of the environment. But there is also a world that has its potentialities in human nature, its exigencies in human nature, but it has its acts and form through meaning. It is constituted through meaning. What is meant by democracy? That meaning as it world itself out concretely in all the ways of

democracy, is one thing in the United States and another in England. They're both democracies, but they're not identical in all respects, and the differences are differences in meaning, and the meaning is first in the sense, as Fr Johann said in one of his notebooks in *America*, that when man emerges from nature in history, the world becomes unstuck. That constitution of the world of human institutions and human cultures through meaning – end of recording.