

*I'd like to place the preliminary question in the terms of a man who has a tremendous respect for your work, Fr. Robert Richard. In his article in New Catholic Encyclopedia, he places the possible objection that the exegesis that you do in your theological work, especially the work on the Trinity, is more a doctrinal than a disinterested exegesis.*

In *De Deo Trino* I didn't attempt to do any exegesis. I had done my exegesis in Christology in *De Verbo Incarnato*, where I have about 100 pages on the New Testament. Doctrinal exegesis, I think, is a fair enough statement even with regard to *De Verbo Incarnato*. The functional specialty 'exegesis' aims at grasping as author in his individuality, getting every nuance of an author's thought, in every detail, as far as he can push it. I think I have in my *De Deo Trino* a distinction between that approach, in which one is concerned to reenact, reconstitute, another's thinking in the past – and that's the functional specialty 'interpretation,' the second of my eight functional specialties – and on the other hand, there is the ongoing life of the Church, in which the Church is not attempting to be Paul and John, and so on, in their individuality. It's not its business to be constantly repeating everything that is in the Old and New Testament, in the sense that was then meant. Gadamer in *Wahrheit und Methode* says your interpretation is complete only when you apply it to the present situation, and that *Applikation* is moving something out of its original context and putting it in the contemporary context, talking to people today. Now, talking to people today is my eighth functional specialty, Communications. In between Communications and Exegesis there are Doctrines, which are neither the one nor the other. Doctrines are the Church making up its own mind about something. It's on the basis of scripture, but it's putting a question in its contemporary terms.

*My question would be more in terms of Doctrine than of Communications. I would wonder if you would even consider it possible that in the formulation of dogma – let's take the Council of Nicea, especially as this was later understood by the powerful mind of Athanasius – would you think it would be conceivable that there would be not really an essential but nonetheless serious misunderstanding of the meaning of scripture in the way this doctrine was formulated?*

The way it was formulated is simply a question of language, and language is never more than adequate. I think that what you have at Nicea represents a legitimate development, and secondly, I think that that development is not something that's specifically Hellenistic; I think it's something that pertains to the human mind.

*Even more specifically, the way that Athanasius seeks to justify his formulation that the same things are predicated of the Son as of the Father except the title 'Father' – the way he seeks to justify that is to return to the New Testament and find such predication there. Now if, in the context of contemporary and ongoing exegesis it could be shown that really it's not the same thing that is meant by these titles when it is applied to the Lord Jesus and when it is applied to the Father, what would you say in that context?*

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<sup>1</sup> A discussion period that seems to have been held on the second day of the second week of the Institute on Method at Regis College, Toronto, in 1969. The recording can be found at 533R0A0E060.

I'd say that Athanasius's argument was poor. There was in the NT a whole series of Christologies, and they are not saying the same thing, they are developing what was said before.

*Right, and if you said that Athanasius's reasoning was poor there, what would that mean?*

Well, Athanasius belongs to classicist culture, the same static kind of mentality that either is anachronistic or archaist.

*What would this mean for the doctrine of Nicea?*

Well, the doctrine of Nicea is one thing and Athanasius's arguments are another. What a contemporary theologian – When I say I think it was a legitimate development, I'm saying something that Athanasius didn't think of. Development is a recent notion. It was unknown to Petavius. He thought Justin Martyr was a heretic. The fundamental flaw in the whole medieval enterprise of theology was – the *quaestio, Sed contra est*, lining up the authorities on either side – they sought a logical reconciliation a system that would reconcile logically the whole business. They didn't have the idea of historical development. And the reason why method in theology is a contemporary problem is history, the fact of development, acknowledging that, and recognizing that you have to have specialization to handle all these different things.

*Just one more question. Do you think it is conceivable that the dialectical movement in the development of dogma should be viewed in a complex way something like this: Whereas there is, under the guidance of the Spirit, a preservation of the essential truth of Christianity, for example, the faith belief that Christ is God, and that this is preserved, nonetheless, because of cultural difficulties there could be peripheral and important errors in the understanding of the scriptural message, and that the complex dialectic in the development would have to consist in a willingness in faith to go back and correct, insofar as we would be able at any moment in history, an error in an earlier dogmatic formulation in light of our growing understanding in faith and under the teaching authority of the Church, of what scripture is saying?*

Well, I would read anyone's thesis who said he thought that was necessary, and I'd base my judgment on the evidence he brought forward.

*You wouldn't have any necessary objection?*

I'd like to see – for example, people talk about the inspiration of scripture. And why they don't study the scripture to find out what inspiration is instead of setting up some theory about what inspiration must be, I don't know.

*(Another questioner): If modern research turns up something that Athanasius is interpreting wrongly, precisely what is going to be the basis to say that the modern interpretation is correct as compared to Athanasius's?*

Exegesis is a thing that has developed enormously. The patristic exegesis was not good exegesis. Medieval exegesis was not good exegesis. It was a matter of quoting texts. But they quoted them well, and magnificently, and they knew their stuff inside out. Read Augustine on grace, and you

have the whole scripture just coming right at you. But it was not going in to the individuality of these different authors. That sort of thing occurs within recent centuries. We'll talk more about it tomorrow – What is an interpretation? Interpretation became a scientific department with Schleiermacher. How do you avoid misunderstanding? It became a general subject. Prior to that, there was a hermeneutics for classical scholars, reading the Latin and Greek authors; there was another hermeneutics for scriptural scholars, interpreting scripture, and it consisted in a set of rules. From Schleiermacher we haven't got any one treatise but about five different things that have been collected. But Schleiermacher's pupils, especially August Boeckh, used Friedrich Wolf, who started Philologie, and Schleiermacher, to set up a methodology of the philological sciences, and that was transposed into history by Droysen – that's the sort of thing we're going to be talking about this week.

*What would be your reaction to the tendency in Christology today to emphasize the life of Jesus as man? I have difficulty in trying placing the emphasis on his death and resurrection and in reference to that, the early kerygma.*

Well, as far as I know, the scripture scholars all agree that you can't write a life of Jesus such as was aimed at by Strauss and so many people in the nineteenth century. The data just aren't there, and that was not the interest of the New Testament writers – to provide materials for a biography. The NT is an expression of faith, and faith doesn't mean being dopey.

*The contemporary emphasis would put the attention on the life that he lived and the death that he died in faithfulness to the end.*

Well, it's a very pleasant piece of humanism, isn't it? It's been thought of before – that view was attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia, though he has been defended since. It's disputed whether Theodore really held that sort of thing or not. But at least you would consider Jesus as a prophet, that much more than Socrates, who was faithful to the end, after all.

*The Law of the Cross inevitably raises questions about pacifism and the possibility of a Christian using violence. And there is way that the scriptural evidence leads to the minimal judgment that anyone who wants to defend Jesus on his way --*

Christians have not been an awfully peaceful outfit down the centuries. Now, a distinction has to be made between the individual good and the social good. The traditional doctrine of a just war was a matter of the social good, preserving the social good that existed at any given place. It is one thing to say that the individual Christian has to love his enemies; it is another thing to say that the war office has to. The war office is not an individual. The NT meaning given to the death of Christ, the Law of the Cross, is something set before us. It's a way of doing things that does not just release a chain of further evils. What any individual is going to do is his exercise of freedom. I don't think it's a law, in the sense of the ten commandments. It's a law in the sense of a line of spiritual development. I think you said the burden of proof remains on the other side, and that's a good enough answer.

*Can you comment on how you see the rules of the faith and the rules of theological inquiry in the face of the present magisterium and the question of speculation on marriage and divorce.*

I mustn't urge people to be disloyal to their bishops. We have a different regime here in Canada. I don't see how anything can be against the natural law when there are no reasons for it. And the reasons against birth control, well, you can find perfect reasons in Aristotle's biology, which happens to be wrong. And that's about as much as I know about that side of that question. In regard to the right to dissent, no one has answered Rahner's article on the topic in *Stimmen der Zeit*. In regard to divorce, that is a quite different matter. The New Testament and Christian tradition on divorce is fairly strong. Now, divorce is one thing, and what you define as a valid marriage is another. If there are physical diriment impediments to marriage, it would seem there could also be psychological ones. It's the sort of development that very probably will come in time.

*The question is raised about different expressions of the Church's regulations regarding marriage for different cultures, and then perhaps of other matters that are more strictly doctrinal.*

I don't think I can take the matter any further. I taught marriage once about 1944. I haven't looked at it since.

*When a Council decides something, what meaning does that refer to? Does it refer to the meaning of any given man at the Council? Does it refer to a common meaning existing in the minds of the conciliar Fathers? Does it refer to something the theologians will have to work out in their work? What exactly is the meaning?*

In general it's a minimal meaning and an obvious meaning. What isn't obvious isn't defined. And in general definitions are obvious. There is no hermeneutical literature on conciliar definitions. You have to read up on the history and that sort of thing, but what they're saying is just crystal clear. 'If anyone says there was a time when he wasn't, or that he was created out of nothing, and so on.' It lists the different things in one part, and in the other part it presents the positive doctrine.

*Would you say, then, because of the more exact mode of expression in conciliar doctrines there is limited sense compared to scripture, where it is very difficult to pick out the meanings even of a particular man?*

Well, first of all, no expression is abstract. One is always talking about reality, and reality is always concrete. The abstraction comes in insofar as one's designation of the reality is incomplete. One doesn't say everything about it. But one means something concrete selected by these general determinations. Again, to say the Son is God is not to say something abstract about the Son. God isn't an abstraction. It's talking a different language. It's moving into the world of theory. It's what sets up the movement that eventually becomes theology. It's what I described in the first or second lecture in terms of the shift. And that occurs in every movement that doesn't want to be captured by other movements or turned to new ends, no matter what kind of movement it is. We had a theological congress here in Toronto a couple of years ago, and on the panels there were four people, and one person, of course, on each of these panels was a gentleman who contributed a considerable sum of money towards having the congress. He would

ask the fourth question of the learned speaker, and with Langdon Gilkey's paper he suggested that if used a few more four-letter words it would be better understood! Gilkey handled it beautifully. He spoke very much agreeing with him for three or four minutes, and then went on to say, 'Of course, if anyone is interested in any subject whatever, he takes it for granted that he has to get down and learn the technical language. And it's the same thing with the 'turn to the Idea' in religion. When you haven't got it, what have you? Well, you can have the gods of the moment, you can have the gods of the place, you can have the living polytheism of Shintoism, and so on. You can have the Greek pantheon, and the Hindu pantheon, with subsequent movements toward monotheism in them. Religious experience is something that you have to tie down if you want to know what it is. If the whole problem resolves to what you can make clear and distinct to four-year-olds, there's an oversimplification.

*The question is about the analysis of faith and the light of faith in Lonergan's earlier text 'Analysis fidei.' How does this relate to what he is now saying about faith and beliefs?*

Well, that earlier treatment is within the traditional context, which is theology in the domain of theory. What I'm setting up now is theology with its roots in interiority. It's the same as the distinction between being in love with God and sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is not something you can relate to historic religions all over the world. I'm providing something of a hypothesis for tackling that problem, and as well the problem of the salvation of the infidel.

*Relating interiority to theory gives priority, then, to the light of faith.*

Yes, certainly. Don't go back into faculty psychology, though, in the original sense.

*You would come back to the metaphysics, though?*

The experience would be fundamental just as the insight is fundamental to the metaphysics in *Insight*.

*And you would arrive at something similar?*

Well, I wouldn't be changing what I said yesterday, or Friday.

*Yesterday you made some remark about God's self-transcendence in creating the world for our sake. Could you comment on that?*

Deus caritas est. 1 John 4, a couple of times.

*With relation to the theorem of self-transcendence ...*

You don't understand love if you think in terms of means and end. Love is always the overflowing from the principal to the secondary object. So the secondary object is also end. You love your neighbor in himself and for himself. Otherwise it isn't charity. If you love your neighbor as a way for you to get to heaven, well ... There was a tertian director in France some

years ago, and one of the tertians remarked, 'One could see that his love of us was all supernatural.'

*In christology, with regard to the formula 'One person, two natures,' is it possible that the understanding of person and nature have changed so much that the formula is no longer adequate or even safeguards the actual meaning?*

It wasn't at one time safeguarded by it. Those terms are very incidental in the decree of Chalcedon. The guts of Chalcedon is 'one and the same,' and 'one and the same' is God and man, true God and true man; one and the same is the Son of the Father from all eternity and the son of the virgin in time. Chalcedon repeats that, time and again, and finally it throws in a phrase toward the end something about two natures in one person. But the emphasis isn't there. What you mean by two natures in one person you get out of the 'one and the same.' What do they mean by 'person?' One and the same, not somebody else -- which was the point at Ephesus. Nestorius said, 'The immortal is not mortal.' So man can't be God, and so on -- he listed all the contradictions in it. Cyril's position was 'One and the same.' The orientals brought in the two natures after 'one and the same' was acknowledged. The two natures mean you have different series of predicates, in time and eternal, mortal and immortal, and so on. That's what is meant by the two natures in those decrees. It's not a matter of someone finding a definition of a person. That's a matter of speculative theology, working the thing out coherently.

*You said there is no hermeneutical literature on a conciliar document. I don't see how that's true.*

Well, let's go back to a more fundamental instance. Take Euclid. You have to study to find out what Euclid means. And usually you have to both study and have a good teacher. But there are no learned disputes about what Euclid means. Similarly, with regard to the councils, you need to study to understand them and the situation in which they arose and the questions they were meeting, and all the rest of it. But the point at issue in a council is not something that people will say, 'It isn't clear; I don't know what they're talking about.'

*There's your article on what exactly was being decided at Vatican I on natural knowledge of God. I'm involved with questions about what exactly Trent was deciding about Adam and the Vulgate and other things.*

Yes. That is not the same sort of hermeneutical problem that you have -- insofar as these people move into the world of theory -- the councils do that to a lesser extent than what you have in mathematics -- my fundamental theorem is that once you get into the world of theory, thinking systematically, hermeneutical problems tend to vanish. As long as you're merely within the world of common sense and trying to state something that is transcendent, your speech is so shot through with figure and symbol that the interpretation is extremely difficult.

*And the councils don't always achieve that theory.*

No. Now, you'll get in a council a short statement, and people will take it and interpret it in their context, and you have to pull it out of their context put it back in the context of the council, and

that's why you have to consider the series of developments in the council, the questions that are raised, and so on.

*And that's one of the things that I am happy about what you say, that one of the jobs of the systematic theologian is to grasp those conciliar statements in a way that is reconcilable with a universal viewpoint.*

That's true.

*Have you changed anything with regard to your theory of Christ's knowledge?*

Someone came to me in Rome during the Council, and he wanted to do a thesis on Rahner's theory of Christ's knowledge, and I said that the question was whether Christ made an act of faith or whether he knew the mysteries. I said, 'Father Rahner's in town, go and see him.' The man had studied at Innsbruck. So he went and saw Rahner, and Rahner said, 'Did Christ have faith? Be careful here in Rome!' So I sent him to Fr Alfaro, who now is prefect of studies, who is a great devotee of Rahner's and knew him quite well. Alfaro was quite upset: 'That's a subject on which Rahner's thought is incomplete, and I don't want young people marching in on that!' There is this question. My position is that it's certainly not in the Catholic tradition that Christ believed just as much as we do – Christ as man. If you want to say Christ as God didn't believe but Christ as man believed, well, it's a *nova sententia*, and you go ahead and establish it. I think the difficulties made against the beatific vision of Christ are silly. They just don't understand the issue. I've had no evidence to the contrary on that. I haven't changed, but I haven't studied it for a while.

*Can you say something about the role of the magisterium in theologizing, especially for the systematic theologian?*

The systematic theologian – the thing I've been setting up are the set of operations that are performed by specialist theologians. I haven't discussed the materials on which they operate, on which they do their research and their interpreting, and so on. Those materials de facto will be the total history of religions, the history of Christian religions, and then specialized areas of particular authority at particular moments, such as scripture, the councils, the Roman pontiff. You'll get difference on those things from people in different religions. This set of operations will be the same no matter what religion you belong to and are doing the theology of. Now a fundamental task in doctrinal theology is relating the pronouncements of the magisterium to the sources. Is this a legitimate development? I don't think you can deduce it, but you can see what happened in between and understand why they came to the conclusion that they did. If the Church in the fourth century had accepted the doctrine of Arius, it would obviously have been something mythical. No one at the present time believes in some intermediary being that's superior to men and angels but inferior to God.

*What role do you give the magisterium? Does the magisterium follow the developments of theology or does it have a leadership role?*

Well, it doesn't seem to follow the directions of theology! But de facto it does. It chooses between theologies. In the patristic period, the people who did the theological thinking that was done were mainly bishops, with a few exceptions – Ephrem, Jerome, Justin, Origen. After Chalcedon, when they discover that you have one person and two natures, then you must have one nature without a person, that's impersonal: *physis anhypostatos*. Then you get Byzantine Scholasticism; it moves out of the hands of the bishops to theorists. In the medieval period, bishops aren't theologians at all, and they haven't been since, except by exception. Now, the magisterium is not tied down by the theologians, just as God isn't tied down by the laws of the Church. But de facto the ideas come out of theologians. Whether you're going to be following the theologians of fifty years ago, though, or the theologians of today makes a big difference.

*How do you handle the problem of the magisterium when it goes against what you consider to be a true theological development?*

There's Rahner's article in *Stimmen der Zeit*. It's fairly complete. There are other studies that have been made on that same point that have come to the same conclusion. What Rahner is stating is traditional doctrine, even though there are bishops that don't know about it.

*Is that the one that is reported on in National Catholic Reporter?*

Yes.

*I'd like to know your opinion on functional Christology, with no manifestation of the nature that is communicated in these titles.*

What you have emphasized enormously in the NT is the Logos, serving the Logos, the message. There is a tradition of teaching and accepting. Those activities are not metaphysical explicitly, but they are metaphysical implicitly. You can get a whole metaphysics out of cognitional structure. If you want to say that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were never attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, you can say there are no grounds for any metaphysical conclusions from the NT. But not otherwise. That's what I mean when I said that I do not think the documents are something peculiarly Hellenistic. When our Lord say, 'Let your speech be "Yes, Yes," and "No, No," "Est, Est," "Non, Non," it isn't explicitly metaphysics; it's not in a metaphysical context. But if you're saying that's what's so, you're explicitly metaphysical, in any sense of the word 'metaphysics' that I accept. Of course, people take metaphysics to mean all the nonsense that's ever been written on the subject. And of course you can't get that in the Gospels. The basis is purely cognitional theory, and elements in cognitional theory that aren't going to be revised in any contemporary sense of the word 'revise.' In the metaphysics, there's potency insofar as there is experience, form insofar as there is understanding, act insofar as there is judgment; that's what I mean by potency, form, and act. And so on.

*It seems to me you're perfectly correct in saying the NT authors are metaphysical, ontological, implicitly in what they are stating, and that they are talking about the person of Christ, not just the function of Christ, and that they are or at least the author of the fourth Gospel is making the faint claim that Jesus in his person is God. But it seems to me that the question that we are faced with is, What is the understanding that such a NT author would have of this predication 'God.'*



*In light of that, I'd like to ask you this question. In your first thesis in the first volume of De Deo Trino, on the consubstantiality of the Son to the Father, you deal with the notion of God and with such notions as the immutability, the eternity of God, and you seem to show that such predications are made concerning Jesus Christ within the NT. The first question I would like to ask you is this – and there's a little prolegomenon too. In an issue of Commonweal last year, Father Crowe made what for me was a rather surprising statement, in which he said that it would seem that theologians are going to have to take seriously the implications of a becoming in God, not of course in the Aristotelian sense of a transition from potency to act, but that in some true way there is a becoming and a mutability in that sense in God. And of course there are other authors, like Fr Schillebeeckx and Fr Rahner, who are also arguing for a non-Aristotelian but true mutability in God. I wonder what you would say about this?*

People can take as their ultimate categories 'necessary' and 'contingent.' They are two concepts, defined as what must be and what may or may not be. And if you make that the foundation of your thinking about God, then you will have to exclude mutability from God. However, that isn't the only approach. My presentation of God in *De Deo Trino* is that of an unrestricted act of understanding grounding a true judgment of value grounding an act of love, where one is because of the other – God understands this act of understanding but his understanding of himself is also an understanding of all creatures possible and actual. And the Word is an affirmation of all creatures possible and actual. And the Spirit is love not only of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, but of all creatures. I describe that infinite act as existential, the way we are existential through the understanding of values and their judgments and their decisions, acts of love. There I can see the possibility that we could say that God might have been other than he is, in the sense that he might not have created, or he might have created a different universe. And there is to God as he has been eternally a relation to this universe in his knowledge and choice. But when I say that, I am making my ultimate categories questions of existence, intelligence, reasonableness, love, and so on. I'm not accepting these conceptual abstractions as ultimate.

*Although in your first volume on the Trinity, you seem –*

I don't say that there, but I can see, from what I say there, the possibility of going on to something more. The position that I take here is that any objection against God's immutability is an argument that doesn't prove. I still think that's true.

*The question I would ask is not in terms of some abstract philosophical consideration, but what is presented to us in the NT view of the divinity of Christ.*

Well, they don't say of Christ that he's immutable, as far as I know. They do say it of God. 1 Timothy.

*That would be in terms of an Aristotelian transition from potency to act.*

I don't know that there's anything Aristotelian about 1 Timothy.

*No, but the Aristotelian formula would describe what is being talked about. But that's peripheral. It seems to me that in your first volume when you are dealing with the question of the eternity of the Son, so that this can be predicated of him as God –*

Well, I don't think I'm treating that very closely in any way.

*You wouldn't put that much importance on it.*

No. My treatment of the NT is in my *De Verbo Incarnato*. The NT doesn't regard Christ as God very much. The main concern is with the man. It's in the asides that you get the divinity cropping up, as in the first or second chapter of Mark, 'Who can forgive sins unless he's God?'

*Do you really feel that that's the meaning?*

That's what he's talking about, that's the obvious meaning.

*It isn't obvious to me.*

They say to him, 'Who can forgive sins apart from God?' and he says, 'That you may know the Son of Man can forgive sins, which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or pick up your bed and walk. That's his answer.

*That doesn't mean the Son of Man is here conceived as God.*

No, and I'm not saying that. But there's a suggestion there.

*Yes, but it could be interpreted in various ways.*

Yes, but what does it mean there, in the context of Mark? Mark has a high Christology.

*Oh, a very high Christology, but I don't know that it's a Christology of the divinity of Christ.*

No, but no one says that. The word, *theos*, means God the Father in the NT, with rare exceptions. It's not possible for them to talk about the divinity of Christ using the word *theos*, because that means the Father.

*If conceivably it could be shown that the various passages in the NT which we have from the period of the Fathers as referring to a personal preexistence of Christ, for example, the Philippians 2 passage, could be shown in the minds of the authors of the NT not to be referring to such a personal preexistence, which actually you use as one of the ways of showing the eternity of the Son – if this could be shown, don't you think this would lead us to a reconsideration of what we mean when we predicate in our faith divinity of Christ.*

Yes, if it could be shown, fine. But you have to remember that when the primitive talks of light, he doesn't mean merely material light. There's all the symbolic significance of light there, too. Primitive thought is not something you can water down like that. And similarly, where you have

people in the commonsense pattern of experience, realm of meaning, and so on, you have a 'plus' to add to everything they say if you want to understand what they're talking about. A minimal interpretation of religious documents is in general a mistaken interpretation, because people are talking about something more than they can adequately express. So there's that to be taken into account with regard to this idea that maybe we've gone too far. You'll find arguments on the other side, generally.

*With regard to your cognitional thing, there is an invariant substratum. If you're going to talk about God in this new way of talking, how are you going to get out of something invariant in God?*

The invariant in God is the Trinity. What do you mean by invariant? Immutability? No, invariant means a structure that is constant, but it's the structure of a process of change.

*But something is not changing.*

The structure.

*But unchanging if involved in the structure.*

Yes, but to talk about an invariant in God would imply that God is in a process of change, with the structure remaining unchanged. And that's not my view – perhaps Schubert Ogden and Hartshorne, and so on.

*But then you have to have something like the substance and accidents categories of the old metaphysics.*

Well, get the meaning of what I said about Trinitarian processions. Think concretely of an unrestricted act of understanding whence proceeds another infinite act which consequently is identical with it, a judgment of value, from which proceeds another infinite act which consequently is identical, which is an act of love. If that's what God is, as far as we can conceive him, then necessity and contingency aren't ultimate statements about him. They are very derivative concepts.

*Well, I would agree with that, but on the older view.*

Well, then, you have no difficulty then, as far as I can see.

*His acts are characterized as contingent ad extra, and so can't be called necessary.*

I don't think we're going to get any further on that.



