

Chapter Ten

Dialectic and Foundations

While dialectic and foundations differ in phase, they have enough in common to be treated in the same chapter. They differ in phase: dialectic is the culmination of a first phase in which theology is an encounter with the religious past; foundations is the basis of a second phase in which theology, in response to the past, takes a stand in the present with respect to the future. On the other hand, both are specialties on the proper end of the fourth level of intentional consciousness, the level of deliberation, evaluation, decision. Again, both regard ~~conflicts~~ conflicts: ~~dia~~ dialectic clarifies them; foundations resolves them. Finally, while the clarification and the resolution are ^{separated} separated by a set of basic decisions, still these decisions pertain, not to the professional activity of the theologian, but to the ~~ref~~ religious life on which he reflects.

1. Dialectic

Dialectic deals with conflicts. The conflicts may be overt or latent. They may lie in religious sources, ~~in~~ in the religious tradition, or in the writings of theologians. They may regard contrary orientations of research, contrary interpretations, contrary histories, contrary value-systems, contrary horizons, contrary doctrines, contrary systems, or contrary policies.

Dialectic makes such conflicts explicit, assembles and orders them, reveals their roots and interconnections. In doing so, however, it is moving them and their original context into a new higher context. For earlier thinkers and writers do not know anything about subsequent ones. Later ones may have vague or even incorrect notions of their predecessors. Contemporaries may know one another only occasionally or incidentally. But dialectic assembles them all, compares them, notes where they agree and where they differ, and ~~and~~ reduces differences to their roots.

The possibility of this procedure is transcendental method. There exists a normative pattern that relates and directs the recurrent operations of human intentional consciousness. As it exists and functions in the methodical theologian, so it has existed and functioned well or ill ^{in all men} down the ages. Its proper functioning generates positions: ~~its malfunctioning generates counter-positions now is the time for all good men to come to~~ functioning generates positions: they result from observing the transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible. Its malfunctioning generates ^{counter-positions:} ~~counter-positions:~~ they result from failing to observe one or more of the transcendental precepts.

The first condition the dialectical theologian must fulfil is self-appropriation. He must attend to his own intentional ~~intelligent~~ consciousness on all its levels. He must grasp the interconnections of the several levels and of the operations proper to each. He must understand why and in what measure his understanding of the dynamic structure of his conscious being is not subject to revision. He must accept the values

implicit in the transcendental notions and explicit in the transcendental precepts.

It is to be noted that positions and counter-positions are to be understood concretely as opposed moments in on-going process. They are not to be taken as just contradictory abstractions. They are to be apprehended in their proper dialectical character. Human authenticity is not some pure quality, some serene freedom from all oversights, all misunderstanding, all mistakes, all sins. Rather it consists in a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and the withdrawal is never a permanent achievement. It is ever precarious, ever to be achieved afresh, ever in great part a matter of uncovering still more oversights, acknowledging still further failures to understand, correcting still more mistakes, repenting of more ^{deeper} and ~~deeper~~ sins. In brief, human development is largely through the ever fuller resolution of conflicts and, within the realm of intentional consciousness, the basic conflicts are defined by the opposition of positions and counter-positions.

~~Because dialectic is based~~

Because dialectical theology is based on the theologian's self-appropriation, it cannot be philosophically ~~na~~ or morally ~~or religiously~~ neutral. Self-appropriation is not only familiarity with one's own conscious and intentional operations but also familiarity with all the oversights and over-emphases that result in mistaken cognitional theories, inadequate epistemologies, faulty or non-existent ontologies. Self-appropriation cannot stop short with cognitional self-transcendence; it has to go on to the real self-transcendence that pursues values and thereby ~~eliminates~~ moves towards the elimination of the biases that spring from unconscious

motivation, individual or group egoism, and the rashly assumed omniscience of common sense.

Only through the movement towards cognitional and real self-transcendence, by which he ^{the theologian} ~~that~~ overcomes ^{his} ~~the theologian's~~ own conflicts, can he hope to discern the ambivalence at work in others and the measure in which they have resolved their problems. Only through such discernment can he hope to appreciate all that has been intelligent, true, and good in the past even in the lives and thought of opponents. Only through such discernment can he come to acknowledge all that was misinformed, misunderstood, mistaken, evil even in those with whom he is allied.

This action is reciprocal. Just as it is one's own self-transcendence that enables one to know others accurately and to appreciate them fairly, so inversely it is through knowledge and appreciation of others that we come to know ourselves and to fill out and refine our apprehension of values. So Friedrich Meinecke could claim that history, as concerned with values, "... gives us the content, ~~the~~ wisdom, and signposts of our lives." So Carl Becker could write: "The value of history is... not scientific but moral: by liberating the mind, by deepening the sympathies, by fortifying the will, it enables us to control, not society, but ourselves -- a much more important thing; it prepares us to live more humanely in the present and to meet rather than to foretell the future."

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So it is on the fourth level of dialectic that we really encounter the past. Research yields data, interpretation meanings, history movements. But in dialectic we meet persons that originate values and disvalues and, through ^{that} meeting,

2. Dialectic as Methodical Strategy

The strategy of dialectic is to bring out into the open all relevant philosophic presuppositions and value-judgements. It is to use their oppositions both to clarify the past and to challenge contemporary theologians to self-understanding and self-criticism. It invites the critical exegete and historian to advance from the critique of others to the critique of himself. It is, however, just one strategy among many, and a review of the others will add clarity to our account.

Before considering methodical strategies, a word must be said on the pre-methodical, ^{on everyday} ~~of~~ traditionalism. Its assumption is that there is nothing new under the ~~sun~~ sun. If one has anything intelligent or ~~true~~ true or wise to say, then one had best say it by quoting the intelligent, ~~or~~ truthful, and wise men of the past. If one cannot find one's contribution in the works of the ancients, then one has^x to choose between the following alternatives. The first is to increase the world's store of pseudepigrapha: one imitates as best one can the style of an earlier period and attributes one's composition to some person known to have lived at that time. The second is to take some recognized authority, say Aristotle ^{or Augustine} or Aquinas, and to interpret him in one's own sense.

An escape from traditionalism is offered by rationalism. The rationalist demonstrates necessary conclusions from self-evident premisses. He does so, not as a creature of flesh and blood, but as an abstraction named right reason. What cannot be demonstrated, he considers mere belief; and ~~believers~~ he accounts believers very evidently to be creatures of flesh and ~~his~~ blood. The difficulty with the ¹ rationalist position is that by and large

it is empty. While there may exist necessary conclusions that follow from ~~the~~ self-evident premisses, they are not to be found either in mathematics or in natural science. ^{Nor do philosophy,} ~~Philosophy,~~ theology, and the human sciences ~~do not~~ seem to be as simple as rationalist assumptions suppose.

A third strategy consists in the rejection of presuppositions. Usually it is just the other fellow's presuppositions that are rejected and then, of course, one is confronted not with a strategy but with mere foul play. But the rejection of presuppositions can be understood in two further senses, and one of these is mistaken, and the other correct.

If absolutely all presuppositions are rejected, then every act of understanding except the first is rejected. For every subsequent act of understanding presupposes previous acts, complements, qualifies, ~~x~~ or corrects them, and is functionally related to them. In brief, it presupposes them and, without them, it would be different from what, in fact, it is. Hence, to reject absolutely all presuppositions is to limit each human being to a single act of understanding, his first. It is an act that occurs before children learn to speak.

But the rejection of presuppositions may be not absolute but only relative. In that case one claims that the sciences have no presuppositions within their own order. Each has its own proper method and each takes its stand on that method alone. ~~¶~~ In a sense each presupposes common sense, for there are many operations in ^{a science that} ~~the science that~~ cannot be performed by persons lacking common ~~sense~~ sense. It remains that mere common sense is not a premiss on which the science ~~take~~ takes its stand, and it follows that the science limits the competence of common sense and corrects it when it steps beyond those limits.

Again, the natural sciences presuppose logic and mathematics. But logic and mathematics pertain to a different order. They are not natural sciences, for they are not subject to an on-going process of verification and revision. They are pure constructs, neither hypotheses nor descriptions, yet extremely useful ~~in~~ when it comes to writing descriptions or framing hypotheses.

Again, the natural sciences presuppose gnoseology, ~~epistemology~~ epistemology, metaphysics. But once more there is a difference of order. The natural sciences regard a world of theory. Gnoseology and its consequents regard a world of interiority. The physicist, for example, presupposes gnoseology, not when he speaks about specific objects of physics, but when he speaks about his own interiority, his knowledge of physics.

The relation of the human sciences to gnoseology is more complex. The human scientist presupposes gnoseology when he speaks of his knowledge of human science. But he may do so as well in quite another fashion. For gnoseology, epistemology, metaphysics are part of man's knowledge of man. They provide a set of constructs that may regularly be employed both in describing human activities and in framing hypotheses about man's nature. In brief, they can stand to human science in a fashion analogous to the relation between mathematics and natural science.

Finally, the nearest approach to presuppositionless knowledge is ~~transcendent~~ transcendental method. In enuntiating that method, the mind is simply objectifying itself as given in consciousness. The method, then, ^spresupposes the mind. But it presupposes it, not as some hypothetical or postulated entity, but as a present, conscious, active reality.

Another methodical strategy is to claim that an empirical science must be value-free. This claim is correct ~~in three~~ ~~manner~~ in three manners.

^ First, inasmuch as the science is empirical, it sets forth factual interconnections; value-judgements do not settle matters of fact; and so value-judgements are not internal to empirical science. Secondly, scientific investigation is one thing, and practical policy is another; as soon as specialization begins, the two must be kept apart. It follows that an empirical science will be value-free in the sense that it remains aloof from practical issues in which values and individual or group interests are apt to be mixed in a rather ~~in~~ inextricable fashion. Thirdly, an empirical scientist is not a specialist on questions of values; his speciality is to arrive at the intelligibilities that can ~~be~~ empirically; be verified; consequently, he has no specific mandate to express his sentiments or judgements on values or disvalues; and the more technical and rigorous ~~rigorous and theoretical~~ his science is, the easier it will be for him to abstain from such expression.

It remains that every non-methodical investigation, if successful, will have ~~followed~~ obeyed the norms contained in the transcendental notions, and that every methodical investigation not only will have followed these norms but also their detailed application in the relevant area. The pursuit of science is the pursuit of a value.

Nor is this all.

^ Just as every human action is in part constituted by meaning, so too is it constituted in part as the realization or as the failure to realize value. Further, a scientist is not an abstraction; he is a man operating on the four levels of conscious intentionality. So it is that, the less his work approximates to technical and rigorous character of theoretical economics, the more it approaches 'description' or

of conscious intentionality. The better a man he is, the more refined his sensibility, the more delicate his feelings, the more fully will he respond to the values and disvalues exhibited by the persons ^{or groups} he is investigating. This response need not appear if his subject has all the technical rigor of theoretical economics. But the more it approaches concrete description or narration, the less will it be possible for him not to communicate his own attitudes. Even though no overt value-judgements are expressed, they are read between the lines and, as Friedrich Meinecke has observed, ~~to leave one's preferences in now is the time for all good men to~~ to show but not to state one's preferences can be the most effective way to win a reader's agreement. Hence, rather than trick their readers, there are scientists that believe the proper procedure to be an explicit statement of one's value-judgements. In that fashion the reader is forewarned and, if he disagrees, he will be in a position to discount estimates that otherwise he might inadvertently come to ~~accept~~ accept.

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Hans-Georg Gadamer carries the issue one step further. The exegete or historian can discover in the writings and deeds of the past a challenge to his own viewpoint, his own upbringing, his own cultural tradition. That challenge can bring about a radical reorientation in his thought, his values, his way of life. That process of self-understanding, self-criticism, self-discovery will set up a new basis from which he will ~~rewrite his earlier work in exegesis or history.~~

While there is, then, not a little truth in the view that a science is ~~value-free~~ presuppositionless and value-free, still that truth is far from the whole truth. Instead of being blandly assured that science is presuppositionless, the scientist needs to be warned of the existence of ^{his} extra-scientific presuppositions and of the ~~the~~ danger that any errors they contain will interfere with scientific work. Instead of being blandly assured that science is value-free, he should be urged to review his values critically and to be ever on his guard lest he inculcate values and even propagate biases while disclaiming the possibility of doing either.

Nor ~~is~~ ^{are} warning enough and urging enough. Fully critical science is not content with good intentions. It sees to their systematic implementation through method. At least in some field or fields of inquiry there is needed the strategy we have named dialectic, the ~~etc~~ strategy that makes contrary positions explicit, clarifies their opposition, seeks out their roots, and thereby makes the errors and biases of the past a present remedy against their perpetuation.

Finally, I need not argue that, if dialectic is ~~not~~ needed in any field of inquiry, it is needed in theology.

3. A Note on the Will

There will be, perhaps, among my readers those that find our notion of dialectic rather disconcerting. They may find quite plausible that has been ~~the~~ ^{the} case, ~~I have~~ made for it, ~~quite plausible~~, yet withhold assent because it seems to allot the human will far too large a role in what should be a purely intellectual pursuit.

Now this contrast between intellect and will presupposes a faculty psychology. A faculty psychology is a psychology that presupposes a metaphysics and so distinguishes the soul and its several powers or potencies. The distinction of the potencies gives rise to questions of priority and preeminence. Finally, differing answers give rise to different schools of a sensist, intellectualist, or voluntarist persuasion.

Now if the reader will revert to the first chapter, he will note that this book on method does not presuppose a faculty psychology. It takes its stand on an analysis of intentional consciousness. It does not distinguish intellect and will, speculative and practical intellect, or any similar faculties or potencies. It does distinguish four levels of activity: a level of experiencing; a [↓] level of inquiring, direct and inverse understanding, and conceiving, defining, formulating; a level of reflection, ~~weighing~~ reflective understanding, ~~facta~~ and judging; a level of deliberating, evaluating, deciding. The relations between the levels may be described as sublating. Each higher ^{level} ~~level~~ sublates its ~~predecessors~~ predecessors, not indeed in the sense that they are involved in contradiction, but in the sense that the higher goes beyond the lower, sets up a new basis of operations, adds new operations, superposes itself on the previous levels, whose operations it preserves in their proper distinctiveness and extends enormously in their significance and efficacy.

Hence, as intelligence sublates sense, as critical reflection sublates intelligence and sense, so deliberation sublates critical reflection, intelligence, and sense. Each in turn opens up a new realm within which it operates with respect to the results and the operations on the previous levels, preserving

them, completing them, extending them. Sense without intelligence lives not in a universe but in a habitat. Intelligence without critical reflection is powerless against myth and magic. Critical reflection without deliberation is solemn about trivialities and light-headed on serious issues.

Each level has its own immanent norms that guide its own operations and the direction and enrichment they bring to previous levels. ~~It follows that the norms of the highest level are the norms of the whole. Those norms are values to be pursued and disvalues to be excluded now is the time for all good men to~~ levels. As each higher level comes into operation, a fuller self-transcendence is achieved. By sense we are responding to our environment. By intelligence we serialize and extrapolate and generalize to a universe. By ~~judem~~ judgement we attain cognitional ~~self~~ self-transcendence, for there we come to know not just our feelings or imaginings or thoughts or opinions but what is so and what is not so. By deliberation, evaluation, ^{action,} decision, we can achieve a real self-transcendence by becoming principles of genuine benevolence and beneficence, by realizing values. In the measure each of us succeeds in doing so, he exists authentically. In the measure he fails, he exists unauthentically.

On this analysis, then, the function of dialectic is manifest. It is concerned to clarify concrete instances in which authentic and unauthentic existence have given rise to oppositions within religion or within theology. Anyone opposed to such clarification seems to be in favor of radical confusion.

Let us now revert to the objection that dialectic allots to the human will far too large a role in what w should be a purely intellectual pursuit.

First, what is meant by a purely intellectual pursuit. It is a specialized pattern of experience in which deliberation and evaluation lead to the decision to pursue for their own sakes the experiences that lead to ever fuller understanding and the ever fuller understanding that leads to a better grasp of or approximation to truth. To suppose that there are purely intellectual pursuits that occur without deliberation, evaluation, decision, is to suppose that ^{scientists} ~~intellectuals~~ are abstractions. They are not.

Secondly, what is meant ^{by urging that dialectic allots} ~~by~~ ^{by alloting} to the human will far too large a role? It means that one may cover with the single word, will, both good will and bad will. It means that one does not wish to admit a distinction between values, which good will pursues, and disvalues, which bad will pursues. It means that human apprehension of values does not have to be developed and refined, that human value-judgements are not open to ~~prof prog~~ progress, that human good will does not have to be encouraged and strengthened and that human bad will does not have to be discouraged and weakened. Dialectic does all of these, but a superficial appeal to faculty psychology blurs the issue.

Finally, if it is said that values are subjective, again one must distinguish between authentic and unauthentic subjectivity. Authentic subjectivity is the possibility of truth, both the truth of fact and truth about values. Unauthentic subjectivity is the source of inattention, misunderstanding, mistakes, and sins.

objectivity
of values

4. Dialectic and Religion

Above it was argued that dialectic was not philosophically neutral, for it rested on the theologian's self-appropriation self-appropriation, and that implies a determinate gnoseology, epistemology, and metaphysics. Similarly, it was argued that dialectic was not morally neutral: it has to break with bias of every kind, and that break results only from the earnest pursuit of values and the complete rejection of disvalues. But we did not say ^{whether} ~~whether~~ or ~~no~~ not dialectic was religiously neutral, for the excellent reason that the question is rather complex and demands separate treatment.

First, then, dialectic does not exclude religious people. Not only are most theologians religiously committed, but also very many theologians must pursue the attainment of holiness if theology is to discern, appreciate, judge religious values and communicate such discernment, appreciation, judgement to others. Accordingly, just as holiness is not a bar to doing research, to interpreting, to writing his history, so it is not a bar to doing dialectic.

Secondly, religions are many, and they differ from one another. Dialectic occurs principally, not within some one religion, but between many religions. It is the seat, not of authority, but of dialogue. It is not institutional but ecumenist. It is where the many meet, ^{to} clarify their differences, eliminate misapprehensions, remove incoherences. It is where they endeavor to understand why the other fellow disagrees, to find behind what ~~one's~~ one thinks his error the truth to which he is ~~so~~ so devoted.