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BC70-1A Method¹

It is of course a pleasure for me to be here with you.

Method in theology: The question is, What is one doing when one is doing theology? If you can't answer the question, you don't know what you are doing when you're doing theology. But the answer to the question is not simple. In general, what I'll be saying falls into two parts, the first part background and the second foreground. The background consists of four chapters: on method, the human good, meaning, and religion. They're of unequal length, but on each of them I'll be giving general ideas, general models. The second part is foreground. The fifth chapter is functional specialties. That has already been published in *Gregorianum*, last fall – a periodical, quarterly, from the Gregorian University in Rome. They were celebrating their fiftieth anniversary, and they had certain people contribute. This chapter on functional specialties gives us eight titles, and they will be the titles of eight more chapters, some of which will be very brief and others long: Research (I don't think there will be a chapter on Research, but it is one of the specialties), Interpretation, History, From History to Dialectic, Dialectic, Foundations (not for the whole show but for what comes afterwards), Doctrines, Systematics, Communications.

On the logical status of what I'll be saying, in general think of it as a model, an ideal type. This is the minimal acceptance. By a model I mean something that stands to human sciences and theology in somewhat analogous fashion as mathematics stands to physics or chemistry. It's a set of related terms and relations, interlocking terms and relations. Such a set in general has three uses. It has a heuristic use: it directs your attention in a determinate direction, helping you to look at the objects, attend to the data. It has a use in forming hypotheses. Instead of thinking out the whole of the hypothesis for

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yourself, you tailor the model to fit the case. With regard to this heuristic use, an example. Henri-Irenée Marrou, in a book published in French under the title *De la connaissance historique*, translated into English with the non-equivalent title which isn't followed out in the book *Meaning in History*, published by Helicon in Baltimore and by someone in Dublin, speaks of the use of the ideal type by the historian, and he takes as his ideal type Foustel de Coulanges, a nineteenth-century historian who wrote a book on the ancient city, *La cité antique*. It had all the advantages of a model. It prescribed just how the ancient city was formed, out of the patriarchal families, and so on and so forth, all sorts of details on the ways the families grouped the religious cult, the way it was practiced, and so on. Now he says an ideal type is not the highest common factor of all the ancient cities. It is not the most representative account of the ancient cities. It is the most explanatory idea you can have. Foustel de Coulange's idea of the ancient city does not apply to Sparta, hardly at all. But it is extremely useful in studying the constitution and the history of Sparta, because you saw how different Sparta was, you noticed all sorts of things you otherwise would not notice. In other words, the model need not square with what you're going to find, but it can be awfully useful in finding it out. So the heuristic function, a help in forming hypotheses. Thirdly, a help in drawing descriptions. Reality can be frightfully complicated, and to have an interlocking set of terms and relations that are some sort of an approximation can be a big help in doing the descriptions, in making your description full and accurate.

Those are the general uses to models. In other words, they are not descriptions of reality. They are not hypotheses about reality. They are at a further remove. But they are very useful all the same, just as mathematics is not a hypothesis about reality nor a description of reality but still is frightfully useful in physics. In fact, all the heavy thinking is done by the mathematicians.

Now all I'm saying – I'm not saying that this minimum is all that is going to be true in what I'm saying. I think there will be more than that. But it is up to yourselves to find for yourselves what is this more and be convinced of it.

Now to go to our first chapter, Method. In general, there are three notions on method. There are people who say that method is not a science but an art. It is learnt not in lectures or in books but in the laboratory, the seminar. They say that what people need is the concrete example, the critique of one's performance by an expert. One learns it by watching someone do it and having someone watch you when you are doing it. And I think that is true, first of all for all initial thought on method, and secondly, for the finer points in every specialized area. The seminar, the laboratory, etc. are indispensable.

However, one learns in the course of time. And the second approach to the idea of method is to select and study and analyze the conspicuously successful science. In the Aristotelian corpus the successful science was geometry, mathematics. And Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* by and large are based on the syllogism but also on mathematics; mathematics was the one field in which the *Posterior Analytics* applies properly. On that see Ross's introduction to his edition of *Prior and Posterior Analytics*. Today, science, without any qualification, usually means natural science. It is the conspicuously successful science. So one picks this conspicuously successful science and analyzes it and understands the way it works and one sets it up as the ideal science; and everything else is science insofar as it approximates to this.

Now, that procedure is fine for the conspicuously successful science, but it isn't too helpful for the others; all they are assigned is a lower place in the pecking order; they are not given much help in doing their own work. And so there is a third alternative, namely, to derive a preliminary notion of method from the successful science and to proceed from that preliminary notion to cognitional theory: What happens when you are knowing in any case? The point is to find in cognitional theory the properties that define

method, and consequently to have a method that is transcendental, that holds for any case of method. It is the condition of the possibility of there being any method at all.

There are two senses of the word the word ‘transcendental’: the Scholastic sense, the most general terms possible: *ens, unum, verum, bonum*; the Kantian sense, conditions of the possibility of ...; and both apply to transcendental method. It is the most general notion of method; and at the same time it is the condition of the possibility of there being any method. And, finally, determine the relation, the function of transcendental method to particular methods.

So much for a general account of what is meant by method – three different approaches. And ours is the third.

1 A Preliminary Notion

First, then, we take a preliminary notion from the successful sciences; and we define method as a normative pattern of related and recurrent operations yielding cumulative and progressive results. We will say something on each one of those words.

There are distinct operations. Each of the operations is related to the others; the relations form a pattern; the pattern is the right way of doing the job; it is normative, a normative pattern of related operations; the operations in the pattern can be repeated: a normative pattern of related and recurrent operations. The results are cumulative. In other words, you apply this set of operations to the results of the previous applications, which applies the set to the results of yet previous applications; the wheel of method not only turns; it rolls along; the results are cumulative. It is not like ‘The New Method Laundry.’ which washes the clothes the same way every time, the same clothes. You have the earlier results changing still earlier results, so the thing is cumulative. And it is progressive: you are getting to know more and more about the object.

Now, what are the operations? In the conspicuously successful science, they praise the spirit of inquiry, and inquiries recur. They urge observation and description, and observations and descriptions recur. The descriptions can conflict, or not be seen as fitting together; and that gives rise to problems, and the problems recur. And problems sooner or later lead to discoveries, and discoveries recur. And discoveries are expressed in hypotheses, and hypotheses recur. The hypothesis has to be presented in the context of its suppositions and its implications, and this logical work of working out the suppositions and implications recurs. And when you have this set of implications, you begin to devise experiments that will test the hypothesis. And devising experiments and the process of experimentation recur. And the experimental results can confirm the hypothesis, but they can also lead to some qualification of it, some correction. And when it does one has to discover what the necessary correction is, great or small, and so we are on the second turn around.

Such, then, is our general notion of a method: a normative pattern of related and recurrent operations with cumulative and progressive results.

Note, then, we are conceiving method, not as a set of rules, and much less as a set of rules to be followed blindly by anyone. Rules to be followed blindly by anyone are all right for 'The New Method Laundry,' or for any process like the assembly line, any process that gives the same result over and over again. We have this normative pattern of operations, and from the pattern of operations you can devise rules, but you get the rules much more synthetically and much more briefly in the pattern itself. The operations are not limited to logical operations, to defining terms, selecting basic propositions, deducing consequences. There are included observation, discovery, experimentation, verification. And none of these is a matter simply of defining terms, selecting basic propositions; the logical operations are also included; they are not excluded. You need the logical operations to form your hypothesis, to work out its suppositions and implications, to make your corrections, etc. But there are not only logical operations but also other

operations such as inquiry, observation, discovery, experiment, synthesis, verification. You need synthesis to put together your new discovery with what is correct and what was held in the past.

Logical operations alone lead to a view of the eternal, the immutable. It is not because the Greeks are metaphysical that they were interested in the eternal and the immutable, it was because they were sold on logic. Our position will not be just movement within a finished, closed, logical whole as in the Hegelian synthesis: a motion within a closed system. But the logical and non-logical are in a dynamic synthesis. The non-logical add what is new, keep changing the science; and the logical keep holding together all that has been acquired.

So much for a preliminary notion of method. It is a notion that is far too general to be useful in natural science, and, on the other hand, it does provide a starting point for what we want, namely, a transcendental method.

2 The Basic Pattern of Operations

Next, there is a basic pattern of operations that occurs in us not as scientists but as human beings. It occurs whether or not we are scientists, doing science. And the operations in the pattern are seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, kinesthesia, imagining; inquiring, understanding, conceiving, formulating; reflecting, marshaling and weighing the evidence, judging; deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking, doing. We will assume some familiarity with at least some of these terms. What we are concerned with is the pattern in which they fit; these terms refer to operations, and the operations recur. The question before us is, What is the pattern in which they occur? If we discover that pattern we will discover the relations between these operations, how these operations coalesce into a process. Finally, you can see that we are going to have terms and relations, an

interlocking set of terms and relations, terms referring to operations and relations linking the operations to one another. We are going to have a model, at least, out of this.

Operations: now, with regard to these operations, first of all they are transitive. They have objects. They have objects in the grammatical sense. I see a microphone; and the microphone is the object of the verb 'see,' in the grammatical sense. But there are also objects of operations that are transitive in a psychological sense. Seeing makes the microphone present to me, and by 'present' I mean something psychological; not like the presence of the microphone in the room but your presence to me or my presence to you, a psychological meaning of the word 'presence.'

Now, this psychological sense of the transitive operations is what is meant by the words 'intend,' 'intentional,' 'intentionality.' It is my awareness of the object and the object's presence to me. Again, another aspect of each and all of the operations listed is that the operations listed are operations of an operator, and the operator is named the subject. And he is subject not only in the grammatical sense: I see the microphone; but also in the psychological sense that the subject is present to himself, and his seeing is present to him when he sees the microphone. This psychological sense of the subject is what is meant by consciousness.

By consciousness, then, we don't mean some sort of inward look. You have to be conscious before any sort of reflexive activity is going to find anything inside. You don't become conscious after you have operated; the operation itself is conscious, it is present: you are aware of a difference when you open and close your eyes. That difference is not the same as the presence of the object; it is the difference between being present and not present to somebody.

Every one of the operations, then, in the list is both intentional and conscious: it is of an object and in a subject. And in both cases, there is a psychological event involved. The operations have a twofold dimension: as intentional they regard objects, make

objects present to the subject; as conscious they make the operating subject present to himself.

There is an ambiguity to the word 'presence.' The presence of the object is not the same as the presence of the subject to himself. The object is present as what is attended to, what is intended, what is seen or heard, or felt or tasted, or understood, and so on. But the subject is present as attending, intending, seeing, hearing, understanding, and so on. And so you can give all your attention to the object and yet be present to yourself. To be conscious you don't have to run around and put yourself in the objective field, you are conscious by the very fact that you are looking at the field.

The word 'introspection' has a valid meaning. But that valid meaning is not looking inside. To think of introspection as taking a look inside is merely the myth that all knowing is like looking; consciousness or introspection is some sort of knowing, and therefore it is like looking.

Introspection is the same sort of process as occurs in the commonsense development of human knowledge, or in the scientific development of knowledge, except that instead of starting out from the data of sense it starts from the data of consciousness. You can start from the fact that you see and feel, but you can also start from your seeing and hearing and understanding and imagining; that's just what we are doing in this section. We started out with a list of those operations, and we said that we will assume that most of them are familiar to you. So just as we move from the data of sense through inquiry and discovery and formulation to reflecting, weighing the evidence, judging, so we can start from the data of consciousness: from seeing, hearing, inquiring and understanding, and weighing the evidence and judging to an understanding of those operations, and to a judgment that the operations do occur in the pattern that one arrives at by understanding.

Now, with regard to the pattern in which the operations occur, I have been describing what the operations are, their general characteristics: they are both intentional

and conscious, and intentional and conscious at the same time. We now have to distinguish different levels in consciousness, different types of consciousness, different qualities in consciousness.

In the dream state, consciousness is fragmentary and obscure. Waking: there is the empirical level, the sensible level. There is the intellectual level: inquiry, insight, formulation. The rational level: reflection, marshaling and weighing the evidence, judging. And the responsible level: deliberation, evaluation, decision. There is a qualitative difference as one moves from one level to the next. Our sensing is not conspicuously different from that of the higher animals. But the intellectual is something quite different from the sensible. The sensible is intelligible, it can be understood. But intellectual consciousness is intelligent: it inquires, not blindly, but intelligently; and inquiry is seeking understanding. And when one understands one acts, one thinks in the light of what one has understood; one thinks intelligently and speaks intelligently; it is not merely something that can be understood, it is the correlative to the intelligible: the intelligent.

The third level is the rational level. Insights are a dime a dozen. I once gave a lecture to a group of psychiatrists at a hospital, talking mainly about insight, a topic they were interested in, and at the end of the lecture one of the doctors said, 'Well, our patients have a lot of insights, but they are wrong.' There you are moving from the level, the exercise of intelligence, to the level of judgment, the rational level. Consciousness is critical; it demands the evidence; it bows to the evidence, but it also notes any weakness in the evidence; it won't judge beyond the evidence. And the fact that the positive component in any science is merely probable shows that our judgments, despite all the great achievements of the sciences. They say the positive component is only probable. Why? Because they are with respect to an absolute. You can be certain that this is a table. But about some scientific theory you say, 'Well, it probably will be revised sooner or later.'

Finally, there is the responsible level, the level on which consciousness becomes conscience, the level on which you are concerned with what is truly good, with what is really worth while. And it is in terms of that truly good that one evaluates and decides and acts with a good conscience or a bad conscience, according to what one's decision is.

Just as there is a qualitative difference in the consciousness on the successive levels, so there is a qualitative difference of the objects intended. The intending of sense is receptive or formative in the *Gestalt*. But to say that sense is creative is to talk about hallucinations. Imagination can be representative or creative. Understanding: what is understood, what is grasped by understanding, is not something that is given; it is something that is possibly relevant to the data; it isn't what must be so, but what can be so, and it is not something given. It enriches what is given because that is contrary to the great principle: anything you know you know by taking a look; it is an epistemological problem.

Judgment is based upon the grasp of the unconditioned, of an absolute. Consequently, it is in something independent of the subject. What makes knowledge public is truth; the fact that you have reached an unconditioned and consequently reached something that is independent of oneself. One achieves a cognitional self-transcendence in judgment.

And in deliberation, evaluation, decision, if they are right, you achieve a still fuller self-transcendence. One becomes a principle of benevolence and beneficence, capable of genuine love.

Now, with regard to the several levels, we want to draw a distinction between the categorial and the transcendental. Categories are determinations. They have a limited denotation. They vary with cultural variations. They may be illustrated by Lévi-Strauss's totemic operators or the equivalent in our sport writers who talk about the Lions and the Bears and the Cubs, and so on; by the explicitly named categories of Aristotle: substance, quantity, quality, relation, time, place, action, passion, posture, and habit. Categories that

are not so named: Aristotle's four causes, the logical categories of genus, difference, species, property, accident. The products of scientific achievement: mass, temperature, the electromagnetic field, the periodic table, the evolutionary tree. Heidegger's existentials: they are all categories.

Transcendentals are comprehensive in connotation, unrestricted in denotation, and invariant through cultural change. They are comprehensive in connotation: they intend everything about everything, and consequently they are concerned with the concrete. Being is not an abstraction, nor true nor good; an abstraction is not good, it is no good. So they are comprehensive in connotation and unrestricted in denotation; they are concerned with everything and everything about it. And they are invariant through cultural change. They cause the cultural change; they are not a product of cultural change.

The transcendentals are contained in questions as of a kind. We have four levels, and we have three kinds of questions that move us from the first to the second, the second to the third, the third to the fourth. From the level of sense we are moved to the level of intelligence by questions for intelligence: what, how, what for, why, how often? And those questions for intelligence cannot be answered by a yes or no. Is there a logarithm of the square root of minus one? Yes. No., O.K. But what is it? You can't answer yes or no.

The second level of questioning, promoting us from the second to the third level: Is it true? Is that right? Is it certainly so or only probably so? These move us to the third level.

Is it worthwhile? Is it only apparently good or truly good? And so we are moved to the fourth level.

In our capacity to ask those questions there are contained the transcendentals: the intelligible, the true, the real, the good. And because questions carry on indefinitely, these transcendentals are unrestricted in denotation; because they are not satisfied until all questions about everything are answered, they are comprehensive in connotation. And because there is the possibility of moving from one level to the next, becoming human

beings, being awake in the full sense of the word, they are invariant through cultural change. They are what bring about cultural change; they are not a product of it.

You have to distinguish the transcendental notions and the transcendental concepts. It is one thing to have the ability to ask what and why and how – that's the transcendental notions. When you find words to express those questions: what and why and how, and so on, you have moved to a transcendental concept. The transcendental concept is the objectification of the transcendental question; the transcendental notion is what initiates the process that produces the transcendental concepts. Obscurantism is blocking the question. (Something missing here)

We have spoken of different levels and qualities of conscious intentionality, of the difference between the categorial and the transcendental; and now we have to say something about objects.

Operations: there are simple operations, and then there are compounds of different operations. Similarly, there are elementary objects and compounded objects. There is a consequent ambiguity in the word 'know.' You can use the word 'know' in the elementary sense, and then seeing is knowing, hearing is knowing, understanding is knowing, feeling is knowing, and so on; any operation is knowing. But to use knowing in the human sense – and that knowing is always a compound – it is not merely sensing, nor merely understanding, nor merely judging, but a compound of the three. As you can consider simple operations or the compound of different operations, so you can have simple objects – the visible, the intelligible, the affirmed – or you can have a compound of all three: what is experienced, understood, and affirmed. What makes the compound is the linking of the transcendental notions. What is experienced is what can be understood, and what is understood is what can be conceived, and what can be conceived is what can be reflected on, the evidence for it weighed, and what is weighed and found to have sufficient evidence is what can be affirmed. And if it is a possibility that is affirmed, you can go on to ask whether it is good, whether it will be worthwhile realizing it. There is a

single thrust of the human spirit; it heads for the good but to reach the good, you have to know the real, what actually exists and what could exist. To reach the real you have to know what's true. And to reach what's true you have to understand. And to understand you have to attend to the data. And so spontaneously you move up through questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, questions for deliberation.

And so we have arrived at our basic pattern, our four levels of consciousness, the connections between them, through the transcendental notions. We observe that the basic pattern is dynamic in a twofold way. It is dynamic materially because it consists in, its matter is, operations. Just as a melody, a dance, consists in operations, it is dynamic materially; it is not like a statue. But it also is dynamic formally. It assembles itself. Spontaneously we sense, we don't have to make an effort. Intelligently, we inquire because we are intelligent. Rationally, we reflect. Responsibly, we deliberate. This dynamic pattern is materially dynamic because it consists in operations; and it is formally dynamic because it is self-assembling, it assembles itself. And that self-assembly is open-eyed: attentive, intelligent, rational, responsible. And in those four words we have the transcendental precepts: Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible.