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7 The Dialectic of Methods: Part One

The exercise of this functional specialty, dialectic, is done by theologians and not by methodologists; consequently, it pertains to theology, not to method in theology. Still, an account of the method has to at least consider opposing methods that would tend to exclude the method we are proposing. We will consider two different oppositions to what we have been saying: the first from linguistic analysis and then the second from such a position as the existentialism of Karl Jaspers, who has an awful lot to say about *Existenzerhellung*, the clarification of *Existenz*, but claims that this clarification is purely subjective, it is not a part of knowledge.

With regard to the analysts, we are very fortunate: a couple of years ago Fr MacKinnon read a paper at the Catholic Theological Society and it was published in the *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 23 (1968) 30. And I quote a couple of paragraphs:

Since the publication of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* there has been a growing consensus that the meaningfulness of language is essentially public and only derivatively private. Unless this were so language could not serve as a vehicle for intersubjective communication. The meaning of a term, accordingly, is explained chiefly by clarifying its use, or the family of usages associated with it. This requires an analysis both of the way terms function within language, or a study of syntax, and also of the extra-linguistic contexts in which its use is appropriate, or questions of semantics and pragmatics.

A consequence of this position ... is that the meaning of a word is not explicable by reference or reduction to private mental acts. The usual scholastic doctrine is that

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words have meaning because they express concepts. Meanings are primarily in concepts, private mental acts or states, and then derivatively in language which expresses such a concept. Within this view of language, transcendence does not present too formidable a linguistic problem. A word such as 'God' can mean a transcendent being, if this is what one intends in using the word. Comforting as such a simple solution might be, it, unfortunately, will not work.

I, of course, hold that mental acts do not occur without a sustaining flow of expression. Cassirer in the third volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* devotes about fifty pages to expounding the correlation between aphasia, agnosia, and apraxia: in other words, difficulties in speech, in thought or knowledge, and in action. If you have one of them not working, the other two don't work very well either.

Further, the ordinary meaningfulness of ordinary language is essentially public and only derivatively private. Children and foreigners learn a language by learning how it is ordinarily used. But what is true of the ordinary meaningfulness of ordinary language is not true of the original meaningfulness of any language, ordinary, literary, or technical. Unqualified meaningfulness originates in expressed mental acts. What the meaning is, one may say, becomes clearer to the meaner when he finds what the other person's reaction is to his speech. It then, however, is not yet the public language. Gibson Winter, in developing a social philosophy to handle the divergences in sociologies, draws on George Herbert Mead and has meaning as something that develops socially; one makes the gesture or utters the sound, and he knows what the other takes his meaning to be by the other's response. Now, we had more to say about that in our chapter on meaning. But there is a constant origination of new meanings of words, and this is not done by the public; it is done by individuals and propagated in the public. Recently, someone used the phrase, 'I don't want to be in that pushcart,' and he got it back within twenty-four hours in another milieu; this sort of thing spreads. Slang is all the time developing.

Therefore original meaningfulness, not public or ordinary meaningfulness but original meaningfulness, new meaning, is communicated and perfected through expressed mental acts and it attains ordinariness when perfected communication is extended to a large number of people, when it becomes current. If one conceives language as the expression of mental acts, further, one will conclude that philosophic problems have their source not only in linguistic expression but also in mental acts, and it could happen that one would devote much more attention to the mental acts than to the linguistic expression.

On the other hand, one may feel that mental acts are just occult entities or, if they really exist, that philosophers are going to keep on floundering indefinitely if they pay any attention to them or, at least, if they make them basic to their method. So there are two possible attitudes, and between them it is a methodical decision which game you are going to play; any question of method is a question of a decision: how I'm going to do it.

With regard to the possibility of proceeding from mental acts to fundamental meanings – which is what we are doing in this method in theology; that is what we expounded on method in chapter 1; a method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations with cumulative and progressive results, and the operations in question are such operations as inquiring, observing, describing, understanding, problem forming, and so on. These are all mental acts. Now, what is the possibility of making mental acts your first? Well, you don't make them the first when you are an infant, or when you are a boy. There is required a terrific development. We have distinguished four realms of meaning: the commonsense everyday meaning, ordinary language; theory, a language that is technical with fundamental terms as constructs: they do not refer to objects given in experience; mass does not name momentum or weight or anything else you may experience; temperature does not mean feeling hotter or colder; it can mean that but it needn't. This metal thing is at the same temperature as this wooden table, but one feels cold and the other feels warm. The fundamental constructs are constructs that are derived from equations, and so on. There is the mode of interiority, and it rests upon the self-

appropriation of the subject. There is transcendence, the language of prayer, of prayerful silence, of worship.

Now, the norms of common sense and of transcendence interpenetrate in primitive, undifferentiated consciousness, which lacks realms of theory and interiority. The differentiation of the four realms: in other words, to be able to operate in any one of the four requires a three-fold differentiation of consciousness. The world of theory is the world of science; it satisfies man's practical bent; it effects the transition from magic to science. Separating the world of theory – in Aristotle, philosophy is in the world of theory in much the same way as science. The movement of modern philosophy has been setting up basic science and common sense on the world of interiority, from myth to philosophy. Finally, the world of transcendence is based on religious concern and religious experience.

The shift from the world of common sense into the world of theory is a terrific development. It was begun in an inadequate fashion by the Greeks, and it has been the whole labor of the modern world for a number of centuries, and the theory has been becoming more and more theoretical as time goes on. This construction of the world of theory is out of the world of common sense; you start from commonsense meanings but you move over to defined meanings that form a system: your mass, temperature, electromagnetic field in physics; your periodic table in chemistry; your evolutionary tree in biology. You are dealing with things that are not given. You can say they are inferred but you are setting up a fundamental set of constructs in terms of which all your thinking is done. Appeals to the world of common sense are recurrent but you don't use commonsense language in making corrections in this world of theory; it is a distinct world. If you are at home in these two, then it is possible to move into the world of interiority. What we are doing in *Insight* is precisely that process. We are using mathematics in chapter 1 to discuss insights that can be closely defined, pinned down. We are dealing with physics mainly in chapters 2 to 5 to deal with the ongoing process of development in the sciences. In chapters 6 and 7 we are dealing with common sense and

its aberrations, because common sense mixes with common nonsense, usually. We are using all these different types of developing intelligence to set up an account of cognitional activity in which the basic terms will name the operations and the dynamic of events will give you the relations between the basic terms. It is a whole process; one does not start from there but one arrives there and when one arrives there one can make that one's basis and move out from it, just as in the world of theory you set down your system and proceed from it.

This differentiation of common sense and theory is adumbrated in Plato's phenomena and noumena, Aristotle's first for us and first absolutely, Aquinas's hymns and systematic theology, Galileo's secondary and primary qualities; the secondary qualities are irrelevant to the realities studied in the mechanics: color and everything else was just like tickling; it's a movement on our sensory organs, it is just movement, matter in motion. Eddington's two tables: the table that is brown, hard, solid, heavy, and the table that is mostly empty space, with here and there a wavicle. There are two different worlds, two languages, two communities, two modes of knowing, right along the line. You can add on a third. You have the world of interiority which *Insight* is an attempt to set up, and there has been that attempt all along, and finally there is the world of transcendence; religious experience can come to be an entirely different world.

So while language that refers to mental acts is initially going to be a public, ordinarily used language, still, you can use that language and add on to it theoretical language to set up a third use, to determine what you mean by mental acts that arise out of the common sense and the theory but which set up a new first from which you can proceed. In that case, mental acts can be your fundamental meant and other things what you derive from your fundamentals.

With regard to the type of objection one gets from Karl Jaspers: He devotes enormous pains to a qualification of *Existenz*. But he states quite simply that it is not knowledge. On my view, self-appropriation is a heightening of consciousness; you are aware not only of the object of your act but of the act itself. It is not by eliminating the

object that you become aware of the act, it is by enlarging your field of attention so that the act as well as the object becomes apparent. By changing from one object to another you get still further clarification of the act.

Further, this heightening of consciousness is simply experience. But just as from sensible experience you proceed through understanding and judgment to human knowing, similarly, from this heightening of consciousness through understanding and judgment you proceed from experience to knowing. Just as there is a valid transition in the one case so too there is in another.

However, unless one admits that human knowing is this matter of experiencing, understanding, and judging, one will have a totally different meaning of the word 'object' from the word I use. There is the object in the world mediated by meaning; it is what is intended by the questions and what becomes understood, affirmed, decided by the answer. But you can have the object in the world of immediacy, the 'already out there now real,' that meaning of the word 'object.' You have, for example, in the first sentence in Kant's *Transcendental Aesthetic* in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: whatever may be the mediate ways in which we know objects there is only one way in which objects are known immediately, and that is by *Anschauung*. The only human *Anschauung* is sensing. In other words, the only objects immediately known are sensible objects. We'll be told that the categories of the understanding are referred to objects only by being applied to what is given in *Anschauung*, and that the ideals of reason are relevant to objects insofar as they are applied to the use of the categories of the understanding. And the categories of the understanding are applied to the objects of *Anschauung*. You get the whole system coming out of that use of the word 'object.' In that setup you can understand Jaspers. You have to get out of the Kantian world to make Jaspers's *Existenzerhellung* satisfy an account of knowledge.

Besides, what is new in existentialism is the trend; it is a phase in this trend that has been moving away from knowledge in terms of experiencing, understanding, and judging, on to this fourth level where we deliberate, evaluate, judge. Kierkegaard

emphasizes faith, Nietzsche power, Dilthey concrete human living, Husserl constitution of our intending, Bergson *elan vital*, Blondel action, the pragmatists results, and the existentialists authentic subjectivity.

To conclude, to have a setup which is methodical, you are in a philosophy of action; you need an objectivity not only in terms of experiential, normative for knowing, and absolute objectivity, the objectivities of those first three types of operations, but also an objectivity on the fourth level. The fundamental idea of human development as self-transcendence makes objectivity the fruit of authentic subjectivity, so that authenticity is a fundamental notion in which all positions can be put together, I believe. That is my position, anyway. Are there any questions?

Question 71: Are each of these conversions really a series of conversions? Can you say something about the difference between development within a horizon and the more radical shift into a different horizon?

Loneragan: The more radical shift is when you reject characteristic features of what you previously held. It involves a rejection of earlier positions. Simple development: you keep on going. The difference between the two: you can have a process of development without abrupt change, insofar as the development is of the type Newman describes: by one's devotion to truth one gradually rids oneself of one's errors; the errors more or less drop away. There is that type of development. And you have the equivalent of conversion without something abrupt. But you can have the abrupt element, someone conspicuous for a certain position and then changing. They said of Bertrand Russell – not that this is necessarily a type of conversion, but it is a type of change – that he wasn't a good leader. He would set forth a view, gather a following, and then leave people behind; he would change his mind about it. That was a change of a conspicuous position but I wouldn't say it was a conversion, since he always remained pretty well within the same type of philosophy. But to move from one philosophy to another, to be convinced of one thing

and then change to something else, that is very rare; and it is the proper meaning of conversion. You can have it simply as development, dropping away.

Question 72: As I understood the relationship between yesterday's lecture and today's, yesterday the historian had come to something of an impasse because he couldn't really get out of his horizon completely, and each historian, then, would have a different horizon. And today in dialectic we were going to criticize these various horizons and link them up, or relate them, or something. Well, the theologian acting in this fourth stage of dialectic, from what horizon, what viewpoint, or what perspective does he work? Is he able to escape his viewpoint or perspective?

Lonergan: No. He just exhibits himself. But they are all doing it. It makes possible for the people who are more open, more ready, to get what is true and good and holy and to discern what isn't. It is the human experiment: let people reveal what they are, let them set it out; and this revelation will separate the sheep and the goats, and make it possible for the goats to join the sheep; provide them with an invitation or a challenge, as you like to call it, or an encounter. Any person can be convinced that he's got the normative horizon, the one that's right. But it is by letting these different opinions on what normative positions are emerge, and state clearly what they are and what they imply in terms of developing positions and reversing counterpositions. By developing positions and reversing counterpositions, one exaggerates one's position or brings it out very clearly.

Question 73: Does this conflict with what you said about an absolute viewpoint in *Insight* from which the interpreter could relate all the genetic developments?

Lonergan: Potential universal viewpoint is what I say. Well, this is implementing it; there it was potential, something that could be. This is inviting an organized setting, presenting a method which would move towards that, the way that science moves towards a complete explanation of all phenomena; it is an ideal goal. It is the survey course; the same course being surveyed by different people, from different viewpoints.

Question 74: (Edward MacKinnon): Since I was more or less cited with the counterposition, perhaps I could clarify it. On the points that he brought up, there was less disagreement between our positions than would be indicated; the disagreements, I think, were on a somewhat different level. The point I was trying to make in the article you cited was the question of the meaningfulness of language. And the meaningfulness of language occurring in mental acts doesn't come by reference or reduction to the mental acts themselves. Meaning functions within language. But meaning is a multi-dimensional term. If we take the basic idea of the meaning of words, they are clarified by the roles they play within language and language games, different usages of language. This question of what is meaning is something different from how do particular meanings originate – they can originate, certainly, in a bright idea, an insight, a decision that somebody makes that brings about the introduction of new terms, but the terms become part of a language by the way they are used, and people have a chance to assimilate the insight through the way in which they are used.

But where the differences come in, in the way he described his position and the position I have held: the ordinary meaning begins as ordinary language; extensions of ordinary language can lead to extended uses of the terms, and these acquire new referential functions. Within this explanatory framework one can extend the meaning of terms in terms of a theory of mental acts. One can take this extended meaning as explanatory. But the point I was trying to make is that in doing this one should be conscious that what one is using is analogous, theory-dependent extension of language. Is that still a counter-position?

Lonergan: No. It is not necessarily, except ... For example, I was talking with Miss Anscombe down in Florida; I was talking about insight and Euclid and at one point she said, 'I do not understand.' And if I had been on my toes I'd have asked: What's missing? You know what you mean by understanding in an experience that you can identify.

Question 75: I have no difficulty with that.

Lonergan: Well, that's all that I am saying.

Question 76: Would you say that a shift from empiricism to idealism or from empiricism or a material idealism such as that of Berkeley to a realism of the classical Thomist-Aristotelian type is an intellectual conversion?

Lonergan: To prescind from the examples – they are half-way houses – there was a lot of talk about *Insight* being 'a way' down in Florida, not a doctrine but a way; it is a way, but there is the whole way as well as half the way.

Question 77: It seems at times that there is an ambiguity in the things that you've said between conversion in its psychological sense and its normative sense which you are employing when you talk about this conversion as a half-way house.

Lonergan: Yes. That's right.

Question 78: With regard to moral conversion and your mentioning of a fundamental option. Fr Giles Milhaven has pointed out that in the formation of a fundamental option a person could think his position was different from what it really is. Could you comment on that?

Lonergan: Well, he doesn't know himself very well.

Question 79: Because he is just using common sense or he is lacking a method, or what?

Lonergan: Well, he lacks the language to express what he is. If I am brought up in a Catholic milieu, I can talk about myself only in Catholic language. If I am brought up in an Aristotelian or a Thomist or a Kantian context, my apprehension of myself and the way I talk about myself will be in that language. And if that is not what I am, then my use of that language on some points will agree with what the authentic language is and on other points it will devalue the language, give it a meaning that it has not got; in that way, you move into the unauthentic tradition. People can proclaim themselves as agnostics or atheists because they cannot accept the other fellow's notion of God, or the notion of God they acquired from their parents, or their teachers, and so on. And yet they

can be quite holy. Their being holy isn't something they ever associated with people's talk about God. Is that meeting your point?

Question 80: How could they possibly think they are in God's friendship and not have faith?

Lonergan: I'm not saying they think they are in God's friendship.

Question 81: Well, morally?

Lonergan: No. I'm talking about religiously. The fundamental option really is religious. If Milhaven is talking contemporary moral theology, that fundamental option is religious.

Question 82: So is it based on his ill use of the meaning of language?

Lonergan: It may be that. But it is not simply language. It can be a distorted notion of religion that leads to a rejection of religion, a distorted practice of religion that leads to a rejection of religion. People are not totally in error. What they cling to has something of truth in it. The point to dialogue is to uncover these elements of truth.

Question 83: But more in the area of morals. What would cause a person to think he is a Christian and think he is a good one when really he isn't?

Lonergan: Oh! that's a different question. Why does he think he is a Christian when he isn't? Because sociologically he is a Christian, for example, by education, by association. But his apprehension of what it is to be a Christian is deficient.

Question 84: In other words, he doesn't realize how subtle evil can be?

Lonergan: This is shifting the question, again, from Christian to evil. But self-knowledge is something to be earned; it doesn't come easily. It is like any other type of knowledge, it is difficult, and it makes a bloody entrance.

Question 85: In the *Idea of a University*, Newman mentions pigeon-holes and says that when a pigeon-hole is missing we fit it into another. Could you explain this?

Lonergan: Well, it is the person who doesn't understand or who has stopped developing who has these pigeon-holes. If he is dealing with something he doesn't understand he will stick it anywhere; he isn't really thinking. But the pigeon-holes are metaphors. The real

issue is, has he insights or is it oversight? It's a question of the development of understanding and the continuous development of understanding.

Question 86: To make a new pigeon-hole, would this require a conversion?

Lonergan: No. Just a new concept.

Question 87: Conversion follows in a practical order. Would we have to push from the level of understanding and judging back to a new level of experiencing, I mean in a spiral type of sense, in order to reach a new understanding and a new judging. So that really conversions are hard to effect practically mere on a dialectic of understanding and judging, but that will push you back to a higher level of experiencing, to let more come in. Or do we have to stay at the level of understanding and judging?

Lonergan: No. Conversion always involves decision as well.

Question 88: And this decision is to bring you to an openness to new experience, at a higher level?

Lonergan: This sort of thing can happen in all sorts of ways. There is no use setting up a scheme and saying it is always going to be this. All I'm doing is simply setting up a contrast: Is it values or is it satisfactions? Usually, it is a mixture of both. People becoming better and better, or worse and worse, or staying where they are. Similarly with regard to what you mean by: What are you doing when you are knowing? Why is doing that knowing?, and, What do you know when you do it? Getting clarity on those issues. Religious conversion – God's grace, which you accept.

Question 89: What is the function of decision in intellectual conversion?

Lonergan: It is consenting to the change in yourself.

Question 90: The change itself is not the conversion.

Lonergan: Intellectual conversion is a change in one's judgments, in one's account of: What are you doing when you are knowing? Why is doing that knowing? What do you know when you do it? There is a change in that. And objectivity is a matter of experiencing, understanding, judging. But one devotes the time to this sort of thing by an

act of will, by thinking it worthwhile. There are all sorts of people who will say, 'Don't bother me with that.' And that is *their* decision. In other words, with regard to decision, if the scientist was not deciding to be a scientist and renewing his dedication to his science, he would be a psychopath, a person without deliberation, evaluation, and responsibility.

Question 91: It is clear that in moral and religious conversion decision is central. Is that true in the case of intellectual conversion?

Lonergan: Well, it isn't the same sort of centrality. But it is truth as a value; it is not only an achievement; it is a value. Devotion to truth as a value is maybe something that you are presupposing. A person can have that dedication without yet being converted. But he hasn't implemented it yet fully. But you have to have that decision there or the person is just subhuman.

Question 92: Would you say that the decision to do science and the decision to get involved in intellectual activity and to pursue something is a practical decision. So the scientist as doing is practical but what he is doing is theoretical activity?

Lonergan: Sure. Okay.

Question 93: It seems phenomenologically that the affirmation of judgment by which we appropriate the intellectual structure is almost like a necessary once for all, whereas the experience of moral conversion and religious conversion occurs everyday. So there are many conversions as it were.

Lonergan: Yes. I agree with that.

Question 94: We have been using Western terms to think about mental processes and to articulate what we understand of our inner operations. It is said that Eastern man thinks in thought patterns that are quite different from Western man. I am wondering if you have any personal experience of meeting with an Eastern mind and having an Eastern mind examine the categories that you have used to set forth the mental processes and to reflect about these as being valid for the Eastern mindset or not.

Lonergan: With regard to that, I, personally, have not had much to do with Eastern minds; there were people from India with me in theology. People who are greatly influenced by *Insight* are in Japan. Fr. Perez Valera had two papers in Florida on such topics, on transcultural movements and Zen Buddhism, in terms of *Insight*. With regard to what is called the Eastern Mind, the Eastern religious mind is the differentiation of consciousness: common sense and transcendence, fundamentally. They have people in the East who learn Western science and are brilliant at it. My friend, Fr. Eric O'Connor, he is secretary of the Canadian Mathematical Society, and every second year they bring the best mathematicians of Europe to lecture to Canadian university professors. One year they had a man from India. In general, while Easterners [can and do move into the differentiations of consciousness of theory] and interiority still, insofar as they remain in their own culture and do what they think would be acceptable in India, there is a conflict going on. At the Gregorian it was recognized that you are taking on a real job if you are going to direct a Western doctoral dissertation with a person from India. Insofar as they wanted to conceive the doctoral dissertation as something that would appeal, be good, Indian style, it would be stringing the pearls on the thread, that's one way of describing their way of thinking, their mentality. But you get exactly the same thing in the West, of course. We have a man at the Toronto School of Theology, and one of our young men was following a course at Wycliffe College, he noticed one fellow writing down beside an item in the bibliography from Kittel, 'No want.' If people want 'wants' in their doctoral dissertation, they'll have a hard time getting them done. But the question, fundamentally, is the differentiation of consciousness – I don't think the difference between East and West is a great impenetrable unknown. As a matter of fact, we have two Chinamen at Regis and one referred to the other as 'the inscrutable Oriental.' These differences exist, but they can be understood. And people in the East can do anything anyone in the West can do, and so on. But they are moving out on their own. The Indians with me in theology, in Rome, asked about a new theology for India, said, They don't learn a different physics and mathematics from what you have in the West. There is the

problem of communications to people who do not move in a differentiated consciousness. That's the problem of communication – that's the eighth functional specialty.

Question 95: Can you have a dialectic between a Protestant and a Catholic who have made the three conversions? ..

Lonergan: Not in the present sense of dialectic. The issue there would be simply theological. Within theology there may be differences on the question of authority. Fundamentally, something like that.

Question 96: Which functional specialty would you use for this problem?

Lonergan: This is a matter of theology; it isn't a functional specialty. It will be handled in the series of functional specialties. You may investigate the history of Scripture, the Fathers, and so on. But what I am concerned with is the shape of the machine, what will bring things together, that will prevent totalitarian ambition and excessive demands, that will offer some alleviation to dead ends, and so on, and oppositions as an ongoing process.

Question 97: And eventually this process should eliminate the difference between Protestants and Catholics?

Lonergan: I can't promise. But it will eliminate these fundamental differences of horizon. You can't promise more than that.

Question 98: Is conversion to go from one horizon to another, or just to go deeper into the same horizon? When a man comes out of the dark night of the soul, is it a different horizon from what he began with, or could it be a deeper realization of what he has already known?

Lonergan: This is an opinion with which I am inclined to agree: that mystical experience is just an intensification of sanctifying grace. In 'Existenz and Aggiornamento', I speak of the substance in grace and the subject in grace. The influence of sanctifying grace is more manifest; it is more concrete.

Question 99: So there is no real contrast, just a deeper process?

Loneragan: Well, there is a lot of contrast too, but it is on the same line.

Question 100: I am trying to come to grips with what the world of common sense is, in terms of an effective type of life. Much of the experiences you recount are logical and are data oriented in the sense, I get, of facts and figures. There is, it seems to me, a trend in the Church today of people who are aware more of their emotions and their affective parts, not necessarily the logical part. I think that it is important that we do ask for a change, for this type of theology, because we have had everything from the other standpoint for quite a while and I think that there are people to whom it will appeal. I wonder how significant this type of an insight would be?

Loneragan: You have experience, understanding, and judgment. Feelings are the mass and momentum of our lives. Experience, understanding, and judging mark the direction in which we are going but it is feelings that give this its full power. The two come together on the level of deliberation, evaluation and decision. Feelings, of course, are not confined to that: there are the various types of feelings that we spoke about. Thirdly, you haven't got a human person if you leave out feelings and values. The basic structure of consciousness simply gives you a direction. When you are talking about method, you are talking about direction and that's why you've got so much of it in these nine days: But you just talk about it, you don't live it.