

## 641A0DTE070

### Lecture 2: Part 1 Tuesday, August 2 1971

Yesterday we proposed the notion of method and also added an account of the structure of the human good. We're continuing on with the human good this morning, and perhaps we will get somewhere in the third chapter, on meaning.

#### [1 Skills]

The structure of the human good is something that could be verified at any stage of human development. But besides the constant structure there also are developments. We will consider two types of development, operational development and the development of feelings. With regard to operational development we shall be talking Piaget. He wrote a series of volumes on child development. His thought in English is best presented by J.H. Flavell, *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget* (University of Rochester).

Piaget, roughly, used three notions in his account of development: adaptation, group, and mediation. Development is learning new operations. The elements in any such instance involve an adaptation. Spontaneous operations or previously learned operations are adapted to deal with new objects, new situations. In such adaptations he distinguished two elements, assimilation and adjustment. Assimilation means to use an operation that has been employed successfully on a somewhat similar object, and that is assimilation. The other element is adjustment. By a process of trial and error one develops a different operation that fits this object or this situation more effectively.

As adaptations occur to ever more objects, a twofold process goes forward. First, there is an increasing differentiation of operations, that is, the adaptations affect different operations, and more and more different operations can be performed. Further, there is an ever greater multiplication of different combinations of differentiated operations. So the baby develops oral, visual, manual, bodily skills, and starts combining them; what it sees it grabs and puts in its mouth, and so on.

Piaget was able to distinguish stages in human development by invoking the mathematical notion of the group. One characteristic of the group that is really relevant here is that for every operation there is an opposite operation, for every combination of operations there is an opposite combination. When the subject unhesitatingly can return to his starting point, because the operations are grouped, he has a mastery at a certain level. He has acquired a mastery of a certain group of operations. By defining such groups, Piaget was able to say, 'Now this is the sort of thing a child of eight can do, and this is the sort of thing that a boy of nine can do. The British and the American students of Piaget were content simply to perform his experiments; it was only later that people like Flavell began understanding his theory, which made possible his experiments.

Besides the notion of group and conceiving mastery in terms of a grouping of operations, or a grouping of groups of operations, or a grouping of groups of groups of operations, he introduced the notion of mediation. Operations are immediate when their objects are present. What is seen is immediate to seeing, what is heard is immediate to hearing, what is touched is immediate to touch. But mediated operations are immediate to an image, a word, a symbol. By the mediation of the word or symbol or image, they refer to something else. And so you can operate with respect to the past and the

future as well as the present, with respect to the imaginary, the fantastic, the possible, the ideal, and so on.

So it is that by learning to speak the child moves out of the world of immediate surroundings to a larger world revealed by memories of other men, by the common sense of the community, by the pages of literature, by the labors of scholars, the investigations of scientists, the experience of saints, the meditations of philosophers and theologians.

This distinction between immediate and mediate operations has a broad relevance. It not only sets up the distinction between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning, but also it provides a basis for a distinction between lower and higher cultures. In the lower culture there is a defect in the control of meaning. The world is mediated by meaning but the meaning can be mythical or magical; they haven't got a control over their meaning that is able to prevent the penetration of the whole of human living by myth and magic. The Greek miracle, the victory of Logos over Mythos, was that ability to set up techniques for the control of meaning. You have the difference between the classicist type of control, which was in terms of universals, culture conceived normatively: 'the philosophy is perennial, our works of art are immortal, our laws and structures are the deposit of the wisdom and prudence of mankind,' and so on. On the other hand, in modern culture, culture is conceived empirically, and the controls are something that keep on developing all the time; it is not static, as in the classical period.

The fact that man lives in a world mediated by meaning gives rise to differentiations of consciousness. Children imitate or play; they are doing things not for real; they are living in a world mediated by their own meanings, invented for this occasion; let's play house, or let's play something else. Again, their elders shift to worlds mediated by reflective

techniques; they operate on mediating operations, shift from ‘real’ life to a world of theory or abstractions, as many say, that nonetheless have a very serious relevance for the ‘real’ world. Again, there is the aesthetic type of experience. One can listen to music, gaze on a tree or landscape, be stopped by beauty, freeing sensitivity from routines to follow deeper, fresher rhythms of apprehension and feeling. And there is the *ultima solitudo* of the mystic. There are different realms of reality.

So the relevance of Piaget goes beyond the field of educational psychology. It enables one to distinguish stages in cultural development and to man’s breaking loose from it in play, in aesthetic experience, in contemplative prayer. Any technical proficiency can be analyzed in terms of a group of combinations of differentiated operations. I gave an instance yesterday, applying that to St Thomas’s composition of the *Contra Gentiles*, but you can apply it to the proficiency of a team, of artists or skilled workers, a coach, an impresario, an entrepreneur bringing about new combinations to new ends.

So much for operational development.

## **[2 Feelings]**

The development of feelings – the third section, then, in this chapter on the human good. Dietrich von Hildebrand in his book *Christian Ethics*, New York: David McKay, 1953, distinguishes between nonintentional states and trends and intentional responses. Nonintentional states: fatigue, irritability, bad humor, anxiety. Nonintentional trends or urges: hunger, thirst, sexual discomfort. The states have causes. The trends have goals. But they are not responses to objects. You can be feeling hungry and then suddenly discover the trouble is I need something to eat. It is not itself a response to an object.

On the other hand, intentional responses are responses to objects, to something represented or presented. The feeling of hunger does not arise out of perceiving, imagining, the cause or goal; one feels tired and discovers the need for rest; one feels hungry and discovers that the trouble is a lack of food. The intentional responses answer to what is intended, represented, and so on. The feeling relates to an object. It gives intentional consciousness its mass, drive, momentum, power. Without feelings knowing and deciding are paper-thin. The world mediated by meaning is just skin deep if you haven't got feelings relating you to that world and making you dynamic within that world. Through feelings, then, we are massively and dynamically oriented in the world mediated by meaning. We have feelings for persons, for our respective situations, our past, present, future, about evils to be lamented, remedied, about the good that can, might, must be accomplished.

Intentional responses regard two main classes. On the one hand, there is the agreeable or disagreeable, the satisfying or dissatisfying; on the other hand, there are values. Values may be ontic, persons, or qualitative, beauty, understanding, truth, virtuous acts, noble deeds. The response to the agreeable or disagreeable, pleasure and pain, and so on, is ambiguous. What is painful can be what is truly good in a situation. And what is pleasurable may be what is not good, what is evil. On the other hand, values have not got that ambiguity. They call the subject to self-transcendence, and they are apprehended in a hierarchy. There are vital values: health, strength, grace, vigor. They are preferred to the trouble needed to preserve one's health, to restore it, and so on. There are social values; there are the vital values of the group, the value of the good of order, conditioning the vital values of the group. Besides the vital and the social, in the third place there are cultural values. Not on bread alone doth man live. It is the culture that reveals the meaning and value of the social order. Personal values: the person realizes

values in himself, he makes himself an authentic person. Finally, there are religious values: man's relation to what is transcendent, to which we will turn in chapter 4.

Like skills, feelings also develop. They are fundamentally spontaneous; they are not like the motions of our hands that are directly under the control of our decisions. But, though feelings arise spontaneously, once they have arisen, they can be reinforced or curtailed. We can advert to them, approve or distract ourselves from their occasion. One can modify a spontaneous scale of preference. One can enrich and refine feelings. In general, a great part of education is providing a climate in which the developing person will discern values more clearly, more finely, and respond more fully.

Feelings as intentional responses are not merely transient. Some are merely transient, they remain as long as the object is attended to. But some feelings can be so deep and strong, especially when reinforced, that they channel attention, shape horizons, direct one's life. And the great instance, of course, is love. One loves not only when one attends to the beloved but at all times. They are an 'I' and a 'thou' with one another and for one another; they think for each other.

There are aberrations of feelings. And here I refer you to Max Scheler. On Max Scheler, there is a book by Manfred Frings, published by Duquesne University Press. And the term I am referring to is *ressentiment*. It is a French loan-word, introduced into philosophy by Nietzsche, and its meaning was revised by Max Scheler. He understood it as a re-feeling of a specific clash with someone else's value-qualities, with someone superior physically, intellectually, morally or spiritually. It is not aggressive but it spreads over all one's attitudes; there is a hostility, a non-repudiated anger, a continuous belittling of the value that one does not possess; and one wants somehow to

console oneself for not possessing it. It can distort a whole scale of values, spread through a whole social class, a people, an epoch. Consequently, it can be the basis of social criticism.

People dealing with feelings in the modern world, of course, have greatly drawn attention to the importance of taking full cognizance of one's feelings and not letting them just live underground; no matter how deplorable they may be, know them, and you won't be at their mercy.

### **[3 Progress and Decline]**

Our fourth topic [in chapter 2] is progress and decline. The operational development and the development of feelings, while they have their social contexts, they occur in individuals. But progress and decline affect the group.

Progress proceeds from originating values; it is a continuous flow of improvements. The opposite of progress is decline, and it proceeds from the opposite of originating value, from the selfish individual, the self-centered group, or general bias. In chapter 7 of *Insight*, I discuss bias in its various forms. The mechanism of progress, in terms of insight, is that insight reveals a possibility, something that might be done; it gives rise to a policy, a program, and the activities follow upon the acceptance of the policy and the program; and those activities change the situation. The change of situation can give rise to further insights and better ideas and still further activities to change the situation again and call forth still further insights. And the wheel of progress rolls along.

On the other hand, when you bump into egoism, well, the new idea may be a good idea but it really isn't practical, it isn't for us, it doesn't help us very much. And so the program becomes distorted; it gets subjected to

compromises, and so on and so forth. This affects the situation; it introduces into the situation the unintelligible, what is not a fruit of insight but of a refusal of insight. That situation can keep deteriorating, and so you get decline.

You have progress insofar as people are being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, and you get decline insofar as they are not. The trouble with decline is that it creates the unintelligible situation, which gives rise to *Realpolitik* – we've got to live! Principles that are valid can be worked out in the concrete, but no principles are going to work out of an unintelligible situation; therefore we have to change our principles. And if the change of principles is contrary to a good philosophy, well, we will get a bad philosophy, and so on; the thing mounts up.

#### **[4 The Notion of Value]**

I want to say something now on the notion of value and judgments of value. There is a transcendental notion of value, namely, the question, Is this worthwhile? Is it truly good? It is not putting that question into words; it is being stopped by moral reflection.

The transcendental notions are the dynamism of conscious intentionality. They promote the subject from the realm of just experiencing towards understanding, and beyond mere bright ideas towards truth, and beyond knowledge of what is so or could be so to values. The transcendental notion of value is our capacity for deliberation.

We speak of self-transcendence. In other words, it is being controlled by values, by the value of attention, intelligence, true judgment, and morally good decisions, as opposed to being guided by satisfactions and the avoidance of pain.



The judgment of value is the answer to the question for deliberation. Judgments of value are simple or comparative:  $x$  is truly good or  $x$  is only apparently good. That's the simple judgment of value. The comparative judgment:  $x$  is better than  $y$ , or more important or more urgent.

The judgments of value are objective or subjective, according as they proceed from the self-transcending subject or not. The criterion, then, of objectivity is authentic subjectivity, the self-transcending subjectivity. The criterion for the judgment of truth, the true judgment, is the virtually unconditioned, grasping the virtually unconditioned. The criterion for the true judgment of value is the good conscience of the virtuous man making that judgment. This is sound Aristotelianism.

The transcendental notions not only put the question, they also reveal when the question has been answered. You not only ask why; you listen to the answer and say, 'Well, that doesn't quite meet the point.' And how do you know that? Well, it is the transcendental notion again, which will put further questions if your answer is insufficient. Similarly, you know when you get sufficient evidence. You may find it difficult to explain what you mean by sufficient evidence, but when you have it you don't doubt any more. And similarly, the good conscience is what reveals the valid judgments of value: The good conscience not of the vicious man but of the virtuous man.

Judgments of value differ in content but not in structure from judgments of fact. They differ in content: you cannot affirm what does not exist, you cannot truly affirm what does not exist, but you can approve truly what does not exist. So there is a difference in content. There is not a difference in structure. In both there is a distinction between the meaning of the judgment and the criterion of the judgment. The criterion in both is self-transcendence but it is a different type of self-transcendence. The

meaning in both is something independent of the subject. Through self-transcendence you arrive at the objective.

The judgment of value goes beyond *cognitional* self-transcendence. It introduces one into the order of moral self-transcendence. You really see what you ought to do, but that is not yet attaining moral self-transcendence. [In other words,] you not only know what you ought to do but you do it through moral self-transcendence.

Intermediate between judgments of fact and judgments of value there are the transcendental notion of value, What ought I do? and apprehensions of value, namely, the intentional responses with which your whole being is illuminated when you are presented with the values you might realize. [RD: Note that this is different from *Method*, adding ‘the transcendental notion of value, What ought I do?’ to the apprehensions of value in feelings.]

In the judgment of value, then, we have a series of components. First of all, you have to have knowledge of human reality: what exists, what is possible, what can be done, what will be the probable results following this or that course of action. Secondly, you have to have intentional responses to values; without those apprehensions of values you will be merely concerned with figuring out what is most to your own advantage. Thirdly, there is the initial thrust to real self-transcendence that arises with moral deliberation. Finally, there is the attainment, at least of the first element in moral self-transcendence in the judgment of value itself.

Now development of knowledge and development of moral feelings head to existential discovery, the discovery of oneself as a moral being, the significance of personal value; the discovery that it is up to oneself to decide for oneself what one is to do with oneself. Your choices not only affect objects and other persons; they are the becoming of your own moral being.

Judgments of value occur in different contexts. There is the context of growth: knowledge, skills, responses keep on developing. One is always open to still further achievement. At the summit of the process one has the power and vigor of being in love with God. God is a supreme value. In Augustine's words, *Ama Deum et fac quod vis*, love God and do what you please. The love of God is what reveals all other values.

There is also the opposite context of deviations. There are neurotic needs. Abraham Maslow has a book called *Toward a Psychology of Being*, in which he distinguishes between neurotic needs and, on the other hand, this context of growth: the refusal to take risks, the distortion of one's scale of values, of preferences. One's feelings can become sour; one can be caught by biases, rationalizing, accept ideologies, a defense of a failure in self-transcendence. One can even be caught up in hatred of the good, of individuals and of the community.

Joseph de Finance, *Essai sur l'agir humain*, published at the Gregorian in 1962, has a distinction between two exercises of liberty: the horizontal exercise of liberty and the vertical exercise. Horizontal is exercise of liberty within a determinate horizon and existential stance. The vertical exercise of liberty selects a new stance and develops a new horizon. This vertical exercise of liberty may be explicit, you may be knowing just what is going on, or it may be implicit: you're being led by God's grace without too much awareness of what is going on.

The foundations of judgments of value are to be found in the exercise of vertical liberty. It is another way of stating Aristotle's principle that the criterion of good moral judgment is the good conscience of the virtuous man.

**[5 Beliefs]**

Finally, there is a section on beliefs. There is an equivalent section in the twentieth chapter in *Insight*. Perhaps there is something new in this account.

The appropriation of one's social, cultural, religious heritage is a matter of belief. What we find out for ourselves is a small fraction of what we know. Indeed, one could say, perhaps, that 98% of what a genius knows he knows by believing it. Science is often contrasted with belief but belief plays a large role in science. There are original contributions to knowledge. There can be the repetition of another's experiment. But scientists aren't engaged in a pointless mania of repeating other peoples' work. Each is endeavoring to make his own new contribution to the subject. Scientific work, just like the development of culture, is a matter of the division of labor. And what counts is not the experiments performed by the new man in the field; it is the indirect verification that goes on for centuries every time his conclusions are presupposed. The law of falling bodies was verified by Galileo but his experiments are not the only verification of the law of falling bodies; that law is verified every time it is applied in any scientific or industrial work; and if it were mistaken the results would have shown up millions and millions of times.

Sociologists today talk about the sociology of knowledge. What do they mean? They mean that what most of us know is what we believe and learnt from somebody else. And besides the sociology of knowledge there is the historicity of knowledge. Gadamer in his *Wahrheit und Methode, Truth and Method*, says that a man's assumptions are not his personal opinions; they are the historicity of his cultural being. There is a difference in being born four-hundred-thousand years ago and being born in Ireland today. That difference is the fruit of millennia of human development. We don't start all over again. We start out from what others have taught us; they may have taught us to accept everything, they may teach us to think for ourselves and

so on, but we emerge from a patrimony. Human knowledge is a common fund; man draws on it by believing; he contributes to it by his own personal cognitional operations, but his contributions are not something separate from what he believes. His beliefs and his own personal knowledge are intertwined. He has no way of getting them separated.

Of course, one can believe what is false. The cure for that is not to reject all belief, because that just empties your head; the cure for it is, whenever you find that you have made a mistaken belief, find out if there are any more like it, find out those that come from the same source, that are somehow associated with it, and test them. And after getting rid of those mistaken beliefs, have a good look at the mistaken believer and what led him to make these mistakes.

The process of coming to believe, logically analyzed, consists in five steps. The first step is the possibility of belief. The possibility of belief is that truth is not something essentially private. Truth is reached through a self-transcendence, through going beyond oneself, reaching what is virtually unconditioned; it is independent of the mind that grasps it; it is an intentional self-transcendence. I cannot give another my eyes but I can truly report what I see or understand or judge. That capacity of making a true report takes advantage of a property of truth, namely, that it isn't something private. People talk about public knowledge. Public knowledge is knowledge that is true; it is not something that you can put your paws on.

The second step is a general judgment of value. It approves the division of labor, historical, social. It can criticize belief but it does not simply reject belief, because that involves a return to primitivism. So there is a general judgment of value: 'Man's division of labor in coming to know is the correct thing. Otherwise, there would never be any progress; or if there were it could not be passed on.'

The third step is a particular judgment of value: ‘This witness is trustworthy; this expert is competent.’ One accepts the judgment of a teacher or a leader or a statesman or an authority. And the point at issue is the question whether the source is critical of his sources, whether he achieves self-transcendence in his judgments of fact and real self-transcendence in his judgments of value. Solving that question usually is by indirect means. One consults different experts and if they agree one has something. Or one considers their past performance and finds that satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and so on.

The fourth step is the decision to believe. It follows from the general judgment of value that there should be this division of labor; this man is credible, therefore this man should be believed. It is the decision to believe.

And the fifth step is the act of believing itself. I shall consider as true what has been proposed.

Now you may find this analysis rather unsettling. So we will take an example of the engineer who whips out his slide rule and performs a calculation and proceeds to operate on the results. Now the slide rule is a compendium of logarithmic and trigonometric tables. The engineer has not worked out for himself those tables. He hasn’t immanently generated knowledge of the truth of those tables; he believes them. And you’re not going to require of engineers that they all work out logarithmic and trigonometric tables. Secondly, the engineer has not calibrated his slide rule and discovered that the markings on his rule correspond exactly to the numbers in the tables; he believes that too. He feels these people would be out of business if they sold inefficient slide rules. So again, he’s believing there. The analysis that I have given will illustrate the point that there is a reasonable acceptance of other people’s views – and that is belief.

The fact of false belief is a problem but its solution is not the rejection of all believing. It's s discovering particular beliefs that are mistaken and using them as starting points for further investigations of one's beliefs to eliminate further mistaken beliefs and, as well, to check up on the mistaken believer.