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Lecture 2, part 2, August 2 1971

Before studying the operations of theologians, which will be the latter part of this series of lectures, we need a certain amount of background. We have considered 'Method' and 'The Human Good,' and we have now to say something about meaning. Our remarks will fall mainly into two parts. In the first part we will consider the different carriers, the different ways in which meaning is embodied: in intersubjectivity, in art, in symbol, in language, and, finally, incarnate meaning – the meaning of a lifetime. Then we will consider the elements of meaning, the functions of meaning, the realms of meaning, and the stages of meaning.

First, then, with regard to the carriers of meaning, and first of all with regard to intersubjective meaning. Before speaking of intersubjective meaning, something will have to be said about intersubjectivity itself, the intersubjectivity of feeling and action.

[1 Intersubjectivity]

There is a 'we' that is prior to the mutual love of an 'I' and a 'thou.' It precedes the distinction of subjects and survives its oblivion. It is vital and functional. Just as one spontaneously raises one's arm to protect one's head, so too spontaneously one will prevent another from falling. We don't first advert to the need and then do it; we notice what we are doing as we are doing it. There is a functional intersubjectivity of human beings; there is a 'we' that is prior to the distinction between the 'I' and 'thou.'

Intersubjectivity appears not only in mutual aid but also in some of the ways feeling is shared. On this we distinguish with Max Scheler (the book

already mentioned, Manfred Frings, *Max Scheler*, Pittsburgh 1965): first of all a distinction between community of feeling and fellow feeling. Parents mourning a death of a child have community of feeling, they are both regarding with sorrow their dead child. A third person comes along, and he feels sorry because of the sorrow felt by the parents; and that is fellow-feeling. Again, people can be praying together in church, and their attention is devoted to God. But someone else comes in, and he may be moved by their devotion, not by the thought of God but by their devotion. In the second case, it is fellow- feeling. In the first case, it is community of feeling.

Besides community of feeling and fellow-feeling, Scheler speaks of psychic contagion. This has a vital rather than an intentional basis. It is sharing another's emotion without adverting to the object of that emotion. One grins when others are laughing although one does not know what they find funny. One becomes sorrowful when others are weeping although one does not know the cause of their grief. An onlooker, without undergoing another's ills, is caught up in the feeling of extreme pain expressed on the face of the sufferer. This is psychic contagion. Scheler considers it the mechanism of mass excitement in panics, revolutions, demonstrations, strikes, when personal responsibility disappears, intelligence decreases, a domination of drives over thinking emerges, along with readiness to submit to a leader. Such contagion can be deliberately provoked, built up, exploited by political activists, by the entertainment industry, by religious and especially pseudo-religious leaders.

Fourthly, besides community of feeling, fellow-feeling, and psychic contagion, there is emotional identification. Again, this has a vital rather than an intentional basis. In it either personal differentiation is as yet undeveloped or else there is a retreat from personal differentiation to vital

unity. Undeveloped differentiation has its basic illustration in the emotional identification of mother and infant. It also appears in the identifications of primitive mentality and in the earnestness of a little girl's play with her doll; she identifies herself with her mother and at the same time projects herself into the doll. This is an undeveloped differentiation.

There is also retreat from differentiation. Scheler takes it as his explanation of hypnosis. It occurs in sexual intercourse when both partners undergo a suspension of individuality and fall back into a single stream of life. In the group mind members identify with their leader, spectators with their team; they get very hot and bothered; they're identifying with their team; in both cases – the group mind and identification with the team [sic: in *Method* it is clear the two cases are members identifying with the leader and spectators with the team] – the group coalesces into a single stream of instinct and feeling. In the ancient mysteries the mystic in a state of ecstasy became divine; and in the writings of later mystics, experiences with a pantheist implication are not infrequently described.

So much, then, for intersubjectivity in action, spontaneously helping another, and in feeling, in its different forms: community of feeling and fellow-feeling, psychic contagion and emotional identification.

[2 Intersubjective Meaning]

I will attempt a phenomenology of a smile. It's a case of intersubjective meaning.

First, then, a smile does have a meaning. It is not just a certain combination of movements of lips, facial muscles, eyes. It is a combination with a meaning. Because that meaning is different from the meaning of a frown, a scowl, a stare, a glare, a snicker, a laugh, it is named a smile.

Because we all know that meaning exists, we do not go about the streets smiling at everyone we meet. We know we would be misunderstood.

Secondly, a smile is highly perceptible. Perceiving is not just a function of the impressions made on our senses. Perception has an orientation; it selects, out of a myriad of other impressions, just those impressions that can be constructed into a pattern with a meaning. So one can converse with a friend on a noisy street, disregarding the meaningless surrounding tumult, and picking out the band of sound waves that has a meaning. So too, a smile, because of its meaning, is easily perceived, despite the enormous range of variations in facial movements, of lighting, of angle of vision. Even an incipient, suppressed smile is not missed, for the smile is a *Gestalt*, a patterned meaning, and it is recognized as a whole.

Smiling is natural and spontaneous. Both the meaning of the smile and the act of smiling are natural and spontaneous. We do not learn to smile as we learn to walk, to talk, to swim. Commonly we do not think of smiling and then do it. We just do it. Nor do we learn the meaning of smiling as we learn the meaning of words – we make the discovery on our own, and the meaning of the smile does not seem to vary from culture to culture, as does the meaning of gestures.

A smile has something irreducible about it. It cannot be explained by causes outside meaning. It cannot be elucidated by other types of meaning. This will be brought out by a comparison between the meaning of a smile and the meaning of language.

Linguistic meaning tends to be univocal, but smiles have a wide variety of different meanings. There are smiles of recognition, welcome, friendliness, friendship, love, joy, delight, contentment, satisfaction, amusement, refusal, contempt. They may be ironic, sardonic, enigmatic, glad or sad, fresh or weary, eager or resigned.

Linguistic meaning may be true in two ways: true as opposed to mendacious and true as opposed to false. A smile can be true as opposed to mendacious – a man can smile and smile and be a villain, because a smile can be simulated. But it cannot be true as opposed to false.

Linguistic meaning contains distinctions between what we feel, what we desire, fear, think, know, wish, command, intend. The meaning of a smile is global; it expresses what one person means to another; it has the meaning of fact rather than the meaning of a proposition.

Linguistic meaning is objective. It expresses what has been objectified. The meaning of a smile is intersubjective. It supposes the interpersonal situation with its antecedents. It is a recognition of that situation and a determinant of it, an element in the situation as process, a meaning with its significance in the context of antecedent and subsequent meanings. The meaning of a smile is not about some object, but rather an immediate revelation of the subject. It is not the basis of some inference, but rather in the smile one incarnate subject is transparent or, again, hidden to another, in a way that antedates all subsequent analysis of body and soul, or sign and signified.

Now from smiles one might go on to all the facial or bodily movements or pauses, all the variations of voice in tone, pitch, volume, and silence, all the ways in which our feelings are revealed or betrayed by ourselves or are depicted by actors on the stage. That is not our purpose. We just want to illustrate one category, one type of a carrier of meaning, the carrier of intersubjective meaning, what we are to one another.

[3 Artistic Meaning]

This I take from Susanne Langer's *Feeling and Form*. She defines art as the objectification of a purely experiential pattern. Each of these terms has to be expanded.

A pattern may be abstract – a musical score, indentations in grooves of a gramophone record. Or it may be concrete: in these colors, these tones, these volumes, these movements. Concrete patterns consist in the internal relations of colors, tones, volumes, movements, and so on. It is not in the colors as not related to one another and it is not in the colors as representative of something else. It is the set of internal relations.

Besides the pattern of what is perceived there is the pattern of perceiving. The pattern of perceiving is experiential. All perceiving is a selecting and organizing. Because the art [sic] is a patterned object, it is easily perceived. One can repeat a tune or melody but not a succession of street noises. Verse makes information memorable. Decoration makes a surface visible. Patterns are especially perceptible by drawing on organic analogies, repeated variations in movement from roots through trunk and branches to leaves and flowers. Complexity mounts, and yet the multiplicity is organized into a whole. So much, then, on pattern.

A pure pattern. A pattern is pure inasmuch as it excludes alien patterns that instrumentalize experience, where one's senses can become merely an apparatus for receiving and transmitting signals -- the ready-made subject in the ready-made world. The red light goes on, and he has his foot on the brake; when it goes green he puts on the accelerator. His senses are not functioning on their own, they are just instruments. There is the dramatic pattern of the ready-made subject in the ready-made world.

There is the intellectual pattern, where sense functions in service to scientific intelligence. Sense submits to an alien pattern of conceptual genera and species, of theoretical schemes and models, of judgmental concern for

evidence. [Or there is] the methodical pattern, where sense is subordinated to and reshaped by some a priori theory of experience drawn from physics or physiology or psychology or epistemology. In all of these sense is alienated by a utilitarianism or some other purpose, and it is not in a purely experiential pattern.

In art the pattern must be purely experiential. It is of colors that are visible and not of the stereotypes that are anticipated. It is of shapes that are visible and so in perspective and not of shapes as really constructed, as known perhaps to touch but not to sight. It is sounds in their actual tone, pitch, volume, their overtones, harmonies, dissonances. To these purely experienced colors, sounds, and so on, there accrue their retinue of associations, affects, emotions, incipient tendencies. So out of them may rise a lesson, but into them a lesson may not be intruded in the manner of didacticism, moralism, social realism. To them also accrues the experiencing subject with his capacity for wonder, for awe and fascination, with his openness to adventure, daring, greatness, goodness, majesty.

The purity of the experiential pattern is wanted not by way of impoverishment but by way of enrichment. It curtails what is alien, to let experiencing find its own full complement of feeling, its own proper patterns, to take its own line of expansion, development, organization, fulfilment. So experiencing becomes rhythmic, one movement necessitating another, and the other in turn necessitating the first. Tensions build up to be resolved; variations multiply and grow in complexity yet remain within an organic unity that eventually rounds itself off.

Meaning, when fully developed, intends something meant. But the meaning of an experiential pattern is elemental. It is the conscious performing of a transformed subject in his transformed world. The world may be regarded as illusion, or regarded as more true and more real. We are

transported from the space in which we move to the space within the picture, from the time of sleeping and waking, working and resting, to the time of the music, from the pressures and determinisms of home and office, of economics and politics, to the powers depicted in the dance, from conversational and media use of language to the vocal tools that focus, mold, grow with consciousness. So too the subject is transformed. He has been liberated from being a replaceable part adjusted to a ready-made world and integrated within it. He has ceased to be a responsible inquirer investigating some aspect of the universe or seeking a view of the whole. He has become just himself: emergent, ecstatic, originating freedom.

The elemental meaning of the transformed subject in his transformed world can be set within the conceptual field. But this reflects without reproducing the elemental meaning. Art criticism and art history are like the thermodynamic equations; the thermodynamic equations can control heat but they won't make us warm or cool. And similarly art critics don't reproduce art but talk about it.

The proper expression of elemental meaning is the work of art itself. That meaning lies within the consciousness of the artist. At first, it is only implicit, veiled, unrevealed, unobjectified. Aware of it, the artist has yet to get hold of it; he is impelled to behold, inspect, dissect, enjoy, repeat; and this means objectifying, unfolding, making explicit, unveiling, revealing.

The process of objectifying involves psychic distance. Where elemental meaning is just experiencing, its expression involves detachment, distinction, separation. The smile or frown expresses intersubjectively the feeling as felt. Artistic composition recollects emotion in tranquility. It involves insight into the elemental meaning, a grasp of the commanding form that has to be expanded, worked out, developed, and the subsequent process of working out, adjusting, correcting, completing the initial insight.

The result is an idealization of the original experiential pattern. Art is not autobiography. It is not telling one's tale to the psychiatrist. It is grasping what is or seems significant, of moment, concern, import, to man. It is truer than experience, leaner, more effective, more to the point. It is the central moment with its proper implications that unfold without the distortions, interferences, of the original pattern.

The proper apprehension and appreciation of the work of art is not any conceptual clarification or judicial weighing of evidence. The work of art is an invitation to participate, try it, see for oneself. As the mathematician withdraws from the sciences that verify to explore possibilities of organizing data, so the work of art invites us to withdraw from practical living to explore possibilities of fuller living in a richer world.

That account of art by Susanne Langer greatly abbreviated – you can fill it out by reading the book, where it is applied to all the different departments of art – just illustrates another carrier of meaning. We've considered intersubjectivity and art. In the third place, we consider symbols.

[4 Symbols]

By a symbol I mean an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling. We shall discuss feelings, objects and images, symbolic evocation, and some attempts at explaining symbols.

First then, feelings. Feelings are related to objects, to one another, and to their subject. They are related to objects: one desires food, fears pain, enjoys a meal, regrets a friend's illness. They are related to one another through changes in the object: one desires the good that is absent, hopes for the good that is sought, enjoys the good that is present; one fears absent evil, becomes disheartened at its approach, sad in its presence. Again, feelings are

related through personal relationships: love, gentleness, tenderness, intimacy, union go together; similarly, alienation, hatred, harshness, violence, cruelty form a group; and then there are such interpersonal sequences as offense, contumacy, judgment, punishment, or offense, repentance, satisfaction, forgiveness. Again, feelings may conflict yet come together: one may desire despite fear, hope against hope, mix joy with sadness, love with hate – the *coincidentia oppositorum*. Feelings are related to their subject: they are the mass and momentum and power of conscious living, the actuation of his affective capacities, dispositions, habits, the effective orientation of his being.

The relation between objects and images. The same objects need not evoke the same feelings in different subjects, and, inversely, the same feelings need not evoke the same symbolic images. There are two points: difference in affective response, and how this affects the symbols as images of real or imaginary objects. There is a difference in affective response; this may be due to difference in age, sex, education, state in life, temperament, existential concern. More fundamentally, there is in human beings an affective development that may suffer aberrations. It is the history of that process that terminates in the person with a determinate orientation in life and with determinate affective capacities, dispositions, and habits. What these latter are in any individual can be specified by the symbols that awaken determinate affects and, inversely, by the affects that evoke determinate symbols.

One can go on to undifferentiated and transformed symbols. Symbols are affectively undifferentiated when different symbols result from the same affective orientation and disposition. Such symbols are interchangeable for a given individual and may be combined to increase their intensity and reduce ambiguity. It is such combination of equivalent symbols that reveal the

difference between the aesthetic and the symbolic. The monsters of mythology are not aesthetic, they are just bizarre. But they have a capacity to express feelings. Compound affects call for compound symbols, and each member of the compound may be a conglomeration of undifferentiated or only slightly differentiated symbols. St George and the Dragon present all the values of ascensional symbolism and all the disvalues of its opposite. According to Durand ascensional symbolism has its basis in the dominant reflex, that whenever you are going to lose your equilibrium, lose your balance, everything else is dropped, and you regain your balance. And at a very important stage in one's life one has to learn to stand on one's feet and walk; one spends a good deal of time learning that. And being on one's feet is being in a position to use your hands, to look around; there are all sorts of advantages to it.

On the other hand, falling is a disaster. St George and the Dragon – he is up high on the horse; he has one hand to control the horse and the other hand to hold the spear. The Dragon, on the other hand, represents all the evils of falling; it's on the ground; fire, dirt, being devoured by it, and so on and so forth. Besides, then, the expression of the ascensional values and the opposite disvalues of falling, there can be a transvaluation.¹ What before was moving no longer moves ...

fills out logic and dialectic, for it meets a need that these refinements cannot meet. The need is for internal communication. Organic and psychic vitality must reveal themselves to intentional consciousness, and, inversely, intentional consciousness has to secure collaboration of organism and psyche. The apprehensions of values occurs in intentional responses, in feelings: here too it is necessary for feelings to reveal their objects and,

¹ The remainder of the recording of this particular lecture is distorted almost beyond recognition. A part of the text is skipped on the recording, marked here by the ellipsis.

inversely, for objects to awaken feelings. It is through symbols that mind and body, mind and heart, heart and body communicate. And the proper meaning of the symbol is the meaning in that internal communication. It is an elemental meaning, not yet objectified, like the smile prior to a phenomenology of the smile, the purely experiential pattern prior to its expression in a work of art. It is a meaning that fulfils its function in the imagining and perceiving subject as his conscious intentionality develops or goes astray, and as he takes his stance to nature, to his fellow men, and to God. The proper context of this meaning is in this process of internal communication in which it occurs. To this context with its associated images and feelings, memories, and tendencies, the interpreter has to appeal if he would explain the symbol.

To explain the symbol, of course, is to go beyond the symbol, as thermodynamic equations go beyond being warm or cool. The interpretation is in the context of the linguistic meaning. It involves, expresses possible relations, clues, suggestions in the construction of the elemental context of the symbol. Such interpretative contexts are many and the many contexts reflect the many ways in which human beings can develop and suffer deviation.

There are therapeutic interpretive systems: originally, the psychoanalysis of Freud, the individual psychology of Adler, the analytic psychology of Jung. The initial oppositions are diminishing. Charles Baudouin (Paris 1963) proposes a psychagogy that considers Freud and Jung to be complementary: he uses Freud when he wants to go to causal origins and Jung when he wants to attend to the development of the subject; and there is some confirmation of this view in Paul Ricoeur's essay on Freud: *L'Interprétation: Essai sur Freud*. He claims that the Freudian system of interpreting symbols is an archeology that presupposes but never explicitly

acknowledge a teleology, an ongoing movement of development. The author of a *psychologie religieuse*, Vergote, professor of religious psychology at Louvain whose book was published in Brussels, is in many ways rigorously Freudian but he's able to cut Freud's philosophic suppositions short; he has never accepted them. Then there are people in therapeutic work who withdraw from any interpretation of symbols. They say the mythology's there, but it's not the important thing. Carl Rogers aims to provide the patient with an interpersonal situation in which the client gradually comes to self-discovery. Frank Lake, an Englishman who has written *Clinical Theology*, gets his psychological theory from Pavlov on conditioning and particularly on going beyond the threshold of tolerable pain, the effects of that, and he uses LSD 25 to sensitize his subjects. More recently, there is *The Primal Scream* by Janov. (Difficult to follow because of sound.) It's a theory What ... is the existence ... of the reaction to a pain that's never been admitted into consciousness. And he cures these patients by having them let these pains come into consciousness, and letting them scream. And they scream for about nine months! Besides the therapeutic contexts, there are non-therapeutic contexts. Gilbert Durand has proceeded from a physiological basis in three dominant reflexes – maintaining one's balance, swallowing one's food, and mating – to organize vast masses of symbolic data, to balance ...

[5 Linguistic Meaning]

By its embodiment ...

Conscious intentionality develops in and is molded by its mother tongue. We not only learn the names of what we can see but also we can attend to and talk about the things we can name. The available language

takes the lead. It picks out aspects of things that are pushed into the foreground, relations between things that are stressed, movements that demand attention. So different languages develop in different manners, and the best of translations expresses, not the exact meaning of the original, but the closest approximation possible in another tongue.

Besides molding developing consciousness, language structures the world about the subject. Spatial adverbs and adjectives relate places to the place of the speaker. Tenses of verbs relate times to his present. Moods correspond to his intention to wish, or exhort, or command, or declare. Voices make verbs active and passive and shift subjects to objects and objects to subjects. Grammar, on the one hand, almost gives us Aristotle's categories of substance, quantity, quality, relation, and so on, and Aristotle's logic and theory of science are deeply rooted in the grammatical function of predication. Modern logic does not put that insistence on predication; it is more on conjunction and juxtaposition.

As language develops there emerges a distinction between ordinary language, technical language, and literary language. Ordinary language is the vehicle in which the human community conducts its collaboration in the day-to-day pursuit of the human good. It is the language of the home and school, of industry and commerce, of enjoyment and misfortune, of the mass media and casual conversation. It is transient; it expresses the thought of the moment at the moment for the moment. It is elliptical. It knows that a wink is as good as a nod, that full statement is superfluous and would only irritate. It is based in common sense, and common sense (chapters 6 and 7 in *Insight*) is a nucleus of habitual insights such that the addition of one or more will bring one to the understanding of any of an open series of concrete situations: how to behave, what to say, how to say it, what to do, how to do it, in the currently emerging situation. Hence ordinary language is centered in

the subject: it regards the world as related to him, as the field of his behavior, influence, action, as colored by his desires, hopes, fears, joys, sorrows. As shared by a group, the nucleus of insights is the common sense of the group; when it is just personal, it is thought odd; when it pertains to the common sense of a different group, it is considered strange.

There is, besides ordinary language, technical language. Insofar as there are different walks of life, primitive fruit-gatherers become hunters and fishers and so on, they need new words and they have new instruments. And the greater the specialization the wider the division of labor. You have the ordinary language which everyone can use and the very special language that craftsmen in their particular field use for their tasks and their tools. And, finally, when a theoretical division occurs you get technical language which is a still further set.

Finally, there is literary language. It is the vehicle of a work, to be learnt by heart or to be written out. (Lonergan coughing: I think we will call it off. That practically finishes it for language. and tomorrow we will go on to the elements of meaning, the functions of meaning, the realms of meaning, and the stages of meaning.)