

**646B0DTE070**

**Second part of lecture 7, August 10, 1971**

**[The Dialectic of Methods: Part One]**

In general, the conduct of dialectic, of the functional specialty 'dialectic' has to be done by theologians. However, there are certain radical objections to the method here and in *Insight* that should be considered even by the methodologist.

The first one comes from the analysts. It has been set forth at some length by Edward MacKinnon in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 23 (1968). It is to the effect that you cannot define meanings or clarify meanings by appealing to mental acts. Mental acts are something private, and meaning is something public. And you can't clarify the meaning by appealing to these mental acts.

Now, it is true that mental acts do not occur without a sustaining flow of expression. Expression is not something accidental that can be omitted. One really is thinking insofar as one also is expressing. Cassirer – I think I have already given the reference for this – in the third volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, has a long discussion in which he maintains that non-expression, aphasia, inability to speak, is coupled with inability to perform and inability to perceive. It is true, then, that mental acts do not occur without a sustaining flow of expression.

Secondly, 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. So, as far as the ordinary meaningfulness of ordinary language, certainly that is something that is essentially public and only derivatively private. You learn the language by learning how the language 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, it is communicated and perfected through expressed mental acts, and it attains ordinariness when the communication is extended to a large number of people. The new use of a word, the new use of language, is always originated from a new mental act. The creative writer, the original thinker, the inventor, the scientist that discovers something new, will introduce new terms, a new way of using words; he will give new meanings to old words and introduce new words. And these words are due to private acts of meaning. Others will understand them insofar as they are able to perform similar private acts of meaning. And that meaning will become ordinary when there are a sufficiently large number of people who now understand, are able to perform that private act of meaning. To the rest of the people those new words are just gibberish, they don't know what they mean. For a long time there was a mystification about Einstein's relativity; people didn't know what it meant and were saying all sorts of stupid things. Bertrand Russell had a long series of contradictions following upon it, I believe, in the *Britannica*.

So the ordinary meaningfulness of ordinary language is one thing, but the new meanings that arise from inventions, from discoveries, from original artistic work, those new meanings are the fruit of mental acts, they are communicated by other people catching on, being able to perform the same

mental acts, and insofar as such communication becomes general they become ordinary meanings that are the source from which you will get something that is essentially public.

If one conceives language as the expression of mental acts, 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. But these are decisions. You are deciding what kind of a game you are going to play. If you make one decision you are not forcing other people to make the same decision.

So insofar as one opts for a philosophy that excludes attention to mental acts, that decision really doesn't oblige anyone else to follow the same procedure; one can conceive language as originally the expression of mental acts, and there are ways of bringing people methodically to an apprehension of their own mental acts; and that is what we have been trying to do.

Talk about mental acts can occur in quite different horizons. In fully differentiated consciousness there are four realms of meaning: the commonsense, everyday meaning of ordinary language; in theory, the realm of theory, language is technical, it is objective in its reference, and fundamentally objective, and the basic terms are not given in experience; mass is not something that anyone can experience, you can experience momentum and acceleration, but not mass. Similarly, with temperature, you can experience the warmer and the cooler. The metal is the same

temperature as the wood, but the metal feels much cooler. There is the realm of interiority, which is based upon a heightening of consciousness, a self-appropriation. One has to work through the fields of common sense and theory to arrive at an accurate self-appropriation. But once one has arrived one can take that as one's starting point and proceed from that to a language that is based upon interiority, in which your mental acts, your experience of your own mental acts, provides you with your fundamental terms from which you derive all else. It is the sharp differentiation of the worlds of common sense and of theory, of Eddington's two tables, that forces, leads to the movement towards interiority as the basis from which you can account for the existence of the two worlds, and the two tables.

That differentiation of common sense and theoretical worlds is adumbrated in Plato's distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal; it is expressed accurately in Aristotle's distinction between what is first for us and what is first absolutely; it is contrasted in Aquinas's two styles of writing systematic theology and writing hymns, in Galileo's secondary and primary qualities; the primary are objects of possible theory, the secondary are mere sensation, purely subjective. The differentiation of these two realms places technical science, philosophy, and theology, all in the realm of theory. But the development of science into something autonomous that refuses to take its fundamental terms from the philosophers, that develops its own fundamental terms, sets up an opposition between common sense and theory, and if philosophy is to bridge that opposition, overcome it, it has to take its stand on the data of consciousness and make it the logical first.

So the relations between language and mental acts: First of all, a language that refers to mental acts must be developed. And that development

is described by Bruno Snell in *The Discovery of Mind*. The whole succession of Greek literature up to the philosophers was gradually an objectification of the human spirit, and it was achieved with the philosophers, and poetry had to move off to something else, after the philosophers had explored the realm.

This differentiation of consciousness and the development of systematic thought, even though not all writers are systematic thinkers, vastly enlarges the capacities of ordinary language. Augustine, Pascal, Newman could speak about the human soul in an enormously refined manner, even though they were not systematic thinkers. But when one moves into the world of interiority, one bases one's language on one's mental acts as experienced and as systematically conceived; they can form a logical first from which one now proceeds to do one's work.

MacKinnon is quite willing to admit systematic thinking but he is less appreciative of the fact that the systematic thinking of the scientist has ultimate terms that are not given in experience, while the systematic thinking of a work like *Insight* and *Method in Theology*, its basic terms are also given in experience, given to consciousness. That is one type of objection.

Another type of objection would come from a philosopher like Karl Jaspers, in general from anyone in the Kantian tradition, but in particular Karl Jaspers because he formulated it more clearly. Jaspers wants self-appropriation, he speaks about an *Existenzerhellung*, a clarification of one's *Existenz*. But he emphasizes the point that this clarification of one's own being, one's own subjective being, is not objective knowledge. I, of course, hold that it is objective knowledge. My view is that the heightening of consciousness that constitutes self-appropriation supplies data just as much as sense supplies data. And just as the scientist can move from the data of sense through inquiry and understanding and formulation and

experimentation, observation, verification, to objective knowledge, so too you can move to objective knowledge from the data of consciousness through inquiry, understanding and formulation, marshaling and weighing the evidence, and passing judgment. Again, you proceed to objective knowledge. Jaspers is in the Kantian tradition, as practically all German philosophers are, and he does not share this view. And here we have to deal again with the notion of object.

There is the meaning of object, the term of animal extroverted consciousness, the already-out-there-now real. There is the object in the sense in which Continental philosophers speak somewhat derogatively of science: science deals with objects, namely, something you can dominate, manipulate, control, and that is essential to having an object. Consequently, we are not having objective knowledge unless you are dominating, manipulating, controlling.

A further meaning of the word 'object' is the object in the world mediated by meaning, what you intend in asking questions and what you know by giving answers. Similarly, the meaning of objectivity will vary: you're objective if you have extroverted animal consciousness, or you're objective if you are dominating and controlling, or you're objective if you are attending, if you are concerned with the criteria relevant in the world mediated by meaning.

The typical confusions are: the naive realist; the naive realist holds the world mediated by meaning is known by taking a good look. The naive idealist, Berkeley, *esse est percipi, esse*, what you know by the world mediated by meaning, consists in having it perceived. The rigorous empiricist empties the world mediated by meaning of everything you don't know by taking a good look, anything above that is not known, it is merely

subjective. You see succession but you don't see causality, and therefore causality is just subjective habit. You have the critical idealist, and he is straddling the thing. Kant in the first paragraph of the 'Transcendental Aesthetic' in the *Critique of Pure Reason* says that no matter how many may be the ways in which mediately we come to knowledge of objects, there is only one kind of operation that is immediately related to objects and that is *Anschauung*. So what is not sensibly perceived is not an immediately known object. Consequently, the categories of the understanding refer to objects only mediately, insofar as they are applied to *Anschauung*; apart from that they have no objectivity. And similarly the ideas of reason: there is a double mediation before they can be objective; they have to guide understanding that is applied to the data of sense. And the absolute idealist, he restores reason as the source of knowledge.

But there has been an ongoing reaction to that idealist business, that idealist position, that restoration of pure reason. Kierkegaard took his stand on faith, Nietzsche on power, Dilthey on concrete human living, Newman on conscience, Bergson on the *élan vital*, Blondel with a philosophy of action, Ricoeur is writing a philosophy of will, and the American pragmatists, the European existentialists, and the personalists are concerned with authentic subjectivity, or the pragmatists with results and the existentialists and personalists with authentic subjectivity. And with this last trend the relevance of values to objectivity is coming to the fore.

I think that will do for that.