

Introduction

A method is an account of the cluster or clusters of operations to be performed in pursuing a given goal. So method in theology makes explicit the operations to be performed in doing theology.

Since a theology is a product not only of a religious faith but also of a cultural achievement, it follows that cultural change entails theological change. Further, it will serve to clarify our intentions in this book, if we list the cultural changes that the present account of ~~xxx~~ theological method wishes to meet.

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To ask about the method of theology is to ask what
is doing does
precisely one does when one is doing theology. It is to ask
one to make explicit or, as the phenomenologists would say,
to thematize the various clusters of operations performed
in doing theology.

Since a theology is a product not only of a religious
faith but also of a ~~x~~ cultural milieu, doing theology is a ~~xxx~~
variable that changes with the cultural milieu. So it
is that a late Scholastic would ask about the nature of theology,¹
but a contemporary thinker puts the more concrete question
of method.

1) I am thinking of the long introductory discussions of
Scotus and Ockham. See Ioannis Duns Scoti Ordinatio, Civitas
Vaticana (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis) 1950, vol. 1, and
Guillelmi de Ockham Opera philosophica et theologica, Opera
theologica, St. Bonaventure N. Y. (Franciscan Institute)
1967 and 1970, vols. 1 and 2.

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In Insight it was not said that the book had begun as an exploration of methods in other fields in preparation for a work on the method of theology. Yet that was the fact. Indeed my original intention was a book on method in theology. But after working at it for three years I was informed that in a year's time I should be teaching at the Gregorian in Rome

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Method in theology would determine what precisely one does when one is doing theology. It would make explicit or, in the language of phenomenology, it would thematize the various clusters of operations performed by theologians as they go about their several tasks.

While there is a broad similarity between the tasks of one age and those of another, there also can exist profound ~~six~~ differences. For a theology is the product not only of a ~~religious~~ religious faith but also of a cultural milieu, and cultural change can entail differences in the context in which theological operations are carried out.

A contemporary theology can meet ~~the~~ contemporary issues only if it operates in the context of modern science, modern scholarship, modern philosophy. It has to withdraw from the timeless realm of eternal verities, take its place in the ongoing process of human thought, seek to direct Christian and Catholic action for the good of the modern world. The problem of method in theology is the problem of spelling out the assumptions and procedures of a fully conscious, contemporary theology.

Forty years ago most ^aCatholic theologians subscribed to some variety of Neoscholasticism. Today Neoscholasticism lives on only in the realm of vague and unconscious assumptions. Of old scientists conceived their systems as permanent achievements. They aimed at setting forth the necessary laws of nature that not even God could violate, or the iron laws of economics with which governments were not to interfere even to avert a famine. Today, however,

scientists offer not necessary truths but only the best available opinions. Where before we were given certain judgements, now we obtain only the most probable way of understanding the known data. This change, of course, is in full ~~xxx~~ accord with the fact that systematic theologians have long regarded most of their propositions as no more than probable. But the shift in context means that the systematic theologian need no longer feel apologetic because he has no more than probable views to propound.

As science, so scholarship too has acquired a new meaning. Of old, the ~~x~~ scholar was the man of letters. He ~~x~~ conversed wittily. He spoke elo^lquently. He wrote effectively. But in the early nineteenth century in the German universities there was conceived Philologie. August Boeckh, a pupil both of Friedrich Wolf and of Friedrich Schleiermacher, defined Philologie as the recon^struction of the cons^tructions of mankind. Its tool was hermeneutics, the art of not misunderstanding documents. Its goal was critical history. Its operations began on ancient Greece and Rome and on modern Europe. But soon they extended to the biblical, patristic, and medieval fields to the notable embarrassment of dogmatic theologians. During the present century, slowly and painfully, modern and hermeneutical and historical metho^ds have penetrated the whole fabric of Catholic theology. But just how one can be both a sound historian and a sound theologian remains a key problem.

Philosophy too has suffered a ~~xxx~~ sea-change. Once it was the most general science of objects. But that view today

is challenged by another that would conceive philosophy as the most fundamental method of subjects. Basically philosophy becomes the articulation of the transcendental method that is the condition of the possibility of any other method. It sets forth ~~x~~ the structure of the operations performed by the consciously experiencing, feeling, understanding, judging, deciding subject.

On this view both operations and their structure are given in consciousness. There is no room for such metaphysical constructs as faculties. There are eliminated in consequence such notions as speculative and practical intellect, pure and practical reason, intellectualism and voluntarism. In their place there emerges an intentionality analysis that not only can ground an epistemology, a metaphysic, and an ethic, but also can reveal that the rules of logic envisage no more than the end-products of man's conscious and intentional operations.

While propositions that are logically first may still be named principles, still the whole emphasis shifts to the realities that are first. Such are the capacity to attend, to inquire intelligently, to judge reasonably, to decide responsibly, to fall in love. Such too is one's horizon: ^{which} the matrix ~~xxxx~~ one gradually builds up, in which are stored all one has learnt, into which must be fitted any further acquisition. Such above all is conversion: it is a reorientation and ~~xx~~ reorganization of one's horizon. It may be intellectual, as when one breaks out of a philosophic trap that has been distorting one's thinking. It may be moral, as when one increases the priority one gives values over satisfactions. It may be religious, as when one ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ surrenders to the gift of God's love that is flooding one's heart (Rom 5, 5).

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What is one doing when one is doing theology? Such of method. is the question. Our purpose, then, is to make explicit or, as the phenomenologists would say, to thematize the various clusters of operations to be performed by theologians.

Such an ~~inquiry,~~ inquiry, it may be thought, is quite superfluous. Surely, after all these centuries, theologians must know perfectly well just what they do when doing theology. Now this would be true enough were theology simply a product of a religious faith. But it happens also to be a product of a cultural milieu. Because the cultural milieu can change, because it can change in one or more ways that theologians have not made fully explicit~~x~~, there arises~~x~~ the need for fresh inquiries into theological method. Their purpose would be what that endeavor to bring to light the adaptations in are theological ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ assumptions and procedures required by cultural changes.

Forty years ago most Catholic theologians subscribed to some variety of Neoscholasticism. At present, most Catholic theologians have no interest in Neoscholasticism. In great part this change has its ground in a fuller awareness of contemporary culture. Let me make the matter explicit.

First, there is the shift in the scientific ideal. Of old scientists conceived their systems as permanent achievements. They aimed at setting forth the necessary laws of nature that not even God could violate, or the iron laws of economics with which governments were not to interfere

on behalf of the ~~XXXX~~starving. Now, however, scientists do not present necessary truths but only the best available opinions. Certain judgements have given place to the most probable way of understanding the known data.

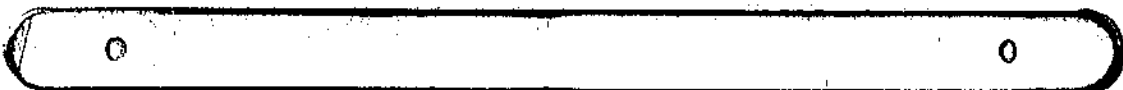
As ~~the~~ science, so too scholarship has acquired a new meaning. Of old, the scholar was the man of letters. He conversed wittily. He spoke eloquently. He wrote effectively. But in the early nineteenth century Germany conceived Philologie. August Boeckh, a pupil of both Friedrich Wolf and Friedrich Schleiermacher, defined it as the reconstruction of the constructions of mankind. Its tool was hermeneutics, the art of not misunderstanding documents. Its goal was critical history. If its operations began on ancient Greece and Rome and on modern Europe, they soon extended to biblical, patristic, and medieval fields to the notable embarrassment of dogmatic theologians.

Philosophy too has suffered a ~~XXXXXX~~ sea-change. It once was the most general science of objects. But that view today is challenged by another that would conceive philosophy as the most fundamental method of subjects. It is the articulation of the transcendental method that is the condition of the possibility of any other method. It sets forth the structure ^r of the operations performed by the consciously experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding subject. ~~In that structure it discerns that the old notions of speculative intellect or of pure reason were just mistakes. For the old notions conceived experiencing, understanding, and judging to be independent of the fourth level on which one deliberates, evaluates, decides. In fact,~~

In this fashion the old faculty ~~knowledge~~ psychology with its metaphysical presuppositions is replaced by an intentionality analysis. Instead of distinctions between sense and feeling, intellect and will, operations are distinguished on different levels. They are said to be on a higher level if they presuppose, complement, and sublate other operations

one experiences, understands, ~~en~~ and judges simply for
the attainment of fuller understanding and a closer
approximation to the ~~en~~ truth, only if one has appreciated
the value of such activity and committed oneself to it.
The level of decision is also the level of control.
The method on which one ~~decides~~ decides is the set of
controls that will govern one's investigations.

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deciding subject. Automatically there vanishes the old faculty psychology with its metaphysical presuppositions.

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In its place there emerges an intentionality analysis, capable of grounding an epistemology and a metaphysics, and eliminating such notions as speculative intellect, pure reason, and such stances as intellectualism or voluntarism.

deciding subject.

In this fashion there vanishes the old faculty psychology with its metaphysical ~~x~~ presuppositions. There are eliminated such notions as speculative intellect and pure reason and such stances as intellectualism or voluntarism. In their place there emerges an intentionality ~~and~~ analysis that can ^{not only} ground an epistemology, ~~and~~ a metaphysics ~~and~~ but also can reveal that only the end-products of man's conscious and intentional operations come under the rules of logic.

While propositions that are logically first may still be called principles, the whole emphasis now shifts to the principles that really are first. Such are the capacity to attend, to inquire intelligently, to reflect reasonably, to ^{to fall in love,} decide responsibly, Such too is one's horizon: the matrix in which is stored what one has learnt and into which has to be fitted whatever one is going to learn. Such also is conversion: a reorientation and reorganization of horizon, ~~x~~ such as breaking out of a philosophic trap that was distorting one's thinking, or giving complete priority to values over satisfactions, or ~~and~~ ~~surrendering~~ ~~to~~ God's gift of his love that is flooding one's heart (Rom 5, 5).

It may be ~~x~~ felt that such principles are merely subjective and that a theological method is unacceptable if it is not strictly objective. But "subjective " and "objective" are ambiguous terms. If by "subjective" is meant the already-in-here-now and by "objective" is meant the already-out-there-now, then certainly the principles indicated above are purely subjective, but a method that

in that sense was objective would be astoundingly superficial. However, by "subjective" one can understand man's capacity for self-transcendence and by "objective" one can understand the fruit self-transcending subjectivity. In that sense, the fact that the principles are subjective is the guarantee that results will be objective.

Still, how can one tell whose subjectivity is self-transcending and whose is not? The answer is that the process is dialectic. It distinguishes positions and counter-positions. Positions are defined as compatible with intellectual and moral and religious conversion. Counter-positions are defined as incompatible with intellectual or moral or religious conversion. Next, it assembles conflicting opinions, classifies them by family resemblance, reduces them to their roots, decides which roots are positions and which are counter-positions, and finally develops the positions and reverses the counter-positions. In that final step both the converted and the unconverted will reveal themselves. For the converted will be developing what really are positions, and reversing what really are counter-positions, while the unconverted will be developing what really are counter-positions, and reversing what really are positions. By their fruits you shall know whose subjectivity is self-transcending and whose is not.

These shifts in scientific, scholarly, philosophic ideals are all relevant to ~~theology~~ theological method. Just as one asks what one is doing when one is doing theology, so one can ask more generally what one is doing when one is knowing. ~~That~~ The answer to that more general question will assign the ground and core for answers to ~~such~~ such further questions as, What is one doing when one is doing natural science? Or what is one doing when one is doing human science? Or what is one doing when one is interpreting an ~~author~~ author or doing critical history? The simple matter is that human knowledge today is not so much a permanent achievement as an ongoing process, with the result that it cannot be unified by unifying its ever changing results. The ~~key~~ step towards unification is to shift from results about objects to methods of subjects and, indeed, to the basic structure of the human subject's conscious and intentional operations. With that step one has come upon the dynamism that makes contemporary knowledge an ongoing process. From that base one can proceed to the differentiation of different fields by the differences in their methods, and then to the integration and cooperation of different disciplines because one knows how the assumptions and procedures of each differ from ~~the~~ those of the others.

It may be felt, however, that this shift from the object to the subject is unsound. It makes method something subjective, when more than anything else it should be objective. The problem here is a common one, and a first step in meeting it will be to distinguish three different meanings of subject and object. First, then, the object is the already-out-there-now,