

4. Developments

To relate the starting-point, the process, the end-result of any particular development of doctrine is a matter of exact historical investigation. To determine the legitimacy of any development is to answer the further question whether or not the process ~~is~~ was ruled by intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. But the deeper issue is the more general question that asks how it is that developments are possible. How is it that mortal man can develop divine revelation?

No small part of the answer to this question lies in a very peculiar feature of mortal man that I have called the differentiation of consciousness. This can occur in a number of different manners, and the different manners can combine in ~~and~~ quite a few ways. Let me first speak of the different manners and then of the different combinations.

A first differentiation arises in the process of growing up. The infant lives in a world of immediacy. The child moves exultingly towards world mediated by meaning. For the adult the real world is of course the world mediated by meaning but there is not too much awareness that it is mediated by meaning. Hence the problems of philosophers. For the criteria of the realities in the world mediated by meaning are not the same as the criteria for the "realities" in the world of immediacy; the former criteria are difficult to formulate; the latter are easy; and so epistemology begins with the systematically misleading image that one knows the real by taking a good look.

Next, there is not just one world mediated by meaning, for as human intelligence develops, it can discover new techniques in knowing. The most common technique of all I refer

to as common sense. It is the most common because it is not properly a technique, for it does not stem from some discovery or invention, but occurs spontaneously. For there ~~is~~ ~~spontaneously occur processes of wondering, understanding, speaking, doing, failing, getting a further insight now~~ spontaneously occur in the group processes of imitating and failing, teaching and learning, wondering and trying and watching again and trying again till practice makes perfect. The result is an accumulation of insights that enable one to deal with the ^{recurrent} situations that ~~have~~ have been dealt with successfully in the past and, as well, an alertness that notices what is novel and proceeds to deal slowly and tentatively with it.

Such common sense does not define. It uses common names successfully because it has come to understand on what occasions their use is appropriate. It does not appeal to universal principles. It is content with proverbs, pieces of advice that it is often well to bear in mind. Nor are proverbs sticklers for consistency for they are not theoretical tools. So ^{"Strike} ~~Strike~~ the iron while it is hot" and "He who hesitates is lost" are not so much contradicted as complemented by "Look before you leap." Finally, ~~see~~ common sense hardly syllogizes. It argues from analogy. But its arguments from analogy do not resemble the ^{logician's} ~~logician's~~ model in which the analogue is partly similar and partly different. Rather they resemble Piaget's adaptations which result from the combination of two elements: a first element of assimilation in which are employed operations found successful in somewhat similar cases; and a second element of adjustment that eventually at least takes into intelligent account ~~the novel element what is not~~ what is novel in the task.

When I say that common sense & neither defines nor appeals to universal principles nor syllogizes, I in no way suggest that it is unintelligent or unreasonable or irresponsible. It is highly intelligent, reasonable, responsible. But it is one thing to live in a world mediated by meaning; it is quite another to mediate the mediator, to operate on the acts of meaning by which one means one's world. An explicit logic consists in acts of meaning that refer to acts of meaning. It is an enterprise that becomes possible only at the summit of a long cultural development.

The pertinent illustration is Socrates. Particularly in the earlier dialogues Plato has Socrates explain just what he means by a definition omni et soli, seek the definition of courage, sobriety, justice, or the like, show the inadequacy of any proposed definition, admit that he himself is unable to give the answers to his questions. But a generation or so later in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics we find not only general definitions of virtue and vice but also definitions of a whole array of specific virtues each flanked by a pair of vices that sinned respectively by excess and by defect. However, the Nicomachean Ethics hardly was the product of discussions with all-comers in the market place. It rests on a sustained scrutiny of linguistic usage, on selecting the precise meaning ~~to the~~ assigned to the terms to be employed, ~~upon~~ on constructing sets of interrelated terms, and on employing such sets to systematize whole regions of inquiry. Once terms are defined, ^{their} relations acknowledged, and rules of procedure agreed on, thought becomes systematic and logic is in control.

contingent decisions. Today, however, mathematicians admit an axiom of choice, and all human knowledge of reality includes some empirical element. In no field is there met Lessing's demand for necessary and eternal truths.

Not only has Thomism ceased to provide a relevant philosophy and theology and so has become simply an object of historical study

contingent decisions. Today, however, neither mathematical nor scientific nor philosophic theory reaches necessary truths. ~~Lessing's contention that necessary and eternal truths cannot~~ Lessing contended against revealed religion that contingent events cannot yield necessary and eternal truths, but this contention has lost all point.

There was a time when most Catholic theologians were Thomists and, in terms of Thomism, Catholic doctrines could be shown to be intelligible and meaningful. It was an important stage in Catholic thought, for the new can be constructed only by those that understand the old they would replace. But the advent of hermeneutics and history has transformed Thomism from a philosophy and theology, which is recognized to be out of date, into an object of endless historical investigation and interpretation. Nor has there as yet emerged a generally accepted philosophy and theology to show that Catholic doctrines are intelligible and meaningful. This is the root of the crisis.

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