

Philosophy and Theology

For every different notion of philosophy and for every different notion of theology there follows a different notion of the relations between the two. Obviously, several volumes would be required to set forth all notions of philosophy, all notions of theology, and all the resulting notions of the relations of one to the other. The aim of the present paper, accordingly, must be far more modest. I must be content to narrate, first, what has been ^{happening} ~~appearing~~ in theology and, secondly, in ~~the~~ what ^{contemporary} ways ^{does} theology stand in need of philosophy.

1. From Eternal Truths to Developing Doctrines

Owen Chadwick has contrasted Bossuet's and Newman's views on Christian doctrines. Bossuet would admit, of course, that St. Paul never used the word, homocousios. But he was convinced that ^{St. Paul} ~~he~~ knew exactly what the word meant and that he would ~~have~~ apply that meaning to the Son as related to the Father. Chadwick's illustration of Bossuet's position is the American in England that wants a pair of suspenders but is unaware of the fact that the British name is, not suspenders, but braces. As the American, so too St. Paul knew exactly the reality in question; he had his own way of speaking of it; but he did not employ a somewhat exotic name.

Now a vast chasm separates the static classicist view from the later affirmation of doctrinal development, and the originators of the change were ~~not~~ ^{early} ~~theologians~~ the nineteenth century Germans that introduced and developed the notion of the Geisteswissenschaften. There was Friedrich Wolf

A Need of Philosophy in Contemporary Theology

with the relation of God the Son to God the Father. X

In brief, St. Paul at Nicea would have been in much the same position as a transatlantic visitor in a London shop. The latter ^{may} does not know the British name, braces, but he certainly knows the thing that the name denotes, and he has his own name, ~~braces~~ suspenders, for referring to the thing.

Philosophy and Theology

There are many conceptions of philosophy and there are many of theology. Merely to enumerate and compare them would be le

2. From Logic to Method

Logic sets forth a static ideal. Terms are to be defined univocally or analogously and, once defined, their meaning is to remain ever the same. Every incoherence, explicit or implicit, is to be eliminated. Conclusions are to follow from their premisses rigorously.

But when knowledge is still in process of development, it is to aim at logical clarity, coherence, rigor, but that does not mean that that ideal can now be attained. Terms will be becoming clearer, but still will suffer from a certain haziness. Incompatible but grounded statements will both be retained because both may refer to different facets of some single truth that as yet is unknown. Rigor is welcome when it can be had but, when it cannot, then one is happy to have the merely postulated, the hypothetical, the probable, the statistical.

When knowledge, then, is in process of development, its form is not logic but method. Method includes logical operations such as accurate description, coherent hypothesis, deduction of the implications of hypotheses. But it also includes ~~and~~ operations of a quite different order, such as observation, inquiry, discovery, experimentation, verification. It is the inclusion of these further operations that gives method its on-going character and makes logical clarity, coherence, and rigor an ideal that no sooner is attained than attainment is disrupted ~~it is gone beyond~~ by new discoveries.

All statements are to be understood in their proper context, but it makes a notable difference whether the proper context is static or on the move. If it is static, the context is to be constructed on logical principles. If it is dynamic, the context is to be constructed on methodical principles. The trouble with the older theology was that its context really was dynamic, but the context was constructed not on methodical but on logical principles. The result was either anachronism or archaism: either the present was read into the past to yield anachronism, or the past was seen to have been different and the present was pronounced a corruption.

Where, then, logic wants unchanging definitions, method recognizes the existence of questions and lists the succession of answers that have been given. For St. Augustine the name, person, simply meant what there are three of in the Trinity. There there are three: Father, Son, and Spirit. But three what? There are not three Gods, three Fathers, three Sons, or three Spirits. What then are there three of? To answer that question the name, person, is employed. At the next stage definitions of person were attempted, and three were given respectively by Boethius, Richard of St. Victor, and Thomas Aquinas. All three were different but they were cast in metaphysical terms. To clarify the matter then the metaphysics of the person were examined and different results were reached by Scotus, Capreolus, Cajetan, Tiphanius, and Suarez. ^{The different results} ~~It~~ provided material for much dispute. Cartesian and subsequent attention to the psychological subject have led to the conception of the person in terms of the subject, while phenomenology has described the "I" and "Thou" ~~in their mutual communication.~~

2. What seems the key task in current Catholic theology?

The shift from eternal truths to developing doctrines brings to light an unreconciled antithesis in the older theology. From its religious sources it knew that faith was a gift of God's grace, that the mysteries of faith transcended human comprehension, that a science of the faith could attain no more than some imperfect and analogous understanding of the truths of faith.

on-going but so too are the realities they progressively reveal whether doctrines of faith or theological views.

Thus, the councils of the fourth and fifth centuries were not engaged in New Testament exegesis, for exegesis can answer only the questions that lie within the context of the New Testament, and the questions raised in the fourth and fifth centuries belong to the contexts of those centuries fifth centuries belong, not to the context of the New Testament, but to fourth- and fifth-century contexts.

on-going but so too are the realities they progressively reveal whether they are doctrines of faith or theological views.

Thus, the New Testament records the faith of the early church. Its proper meaning lies within the contexts of the early churches. The aim of contemporary exegesis is to discover that original context and reveal that proper meaning. But the New Testament has other functions. It exists not only as materials for the exercise of exegetical skills but also as a norm for the church at all times. Besides the original context of the New Testament, there are the many and diverse contexts of the successive periods in the church's history. Within these
These different contexts the New Testament is read; within them it gives rise to questions that did not and usually could not have arisen within New Testament times; inasmuch as such questions are answered legitimately, there is a development of doctrine; inasmuch as

on-going but so too are the realities they progressively reveal whether they are doctrines of faith or theological views.

Thus, the New Testament records the faith of the early church. Its proper meaning lies within the context of that time those times and places now is the time for all good men the early church. But the New Testament is normative, not only for the early church, but also for all time. That is, it is normative in contexts quite different from those of the early church; it is normative where it gives rise to very precise questions that were not precisely asked within the early church, that hardly could have been asked within that early context.

2. What seems the key task in current Catholic ^t theology?

The shift from eternal truths to developing doctrines shatters the thought-forms of the older theology. For that thinking was polarized and organized by a logical ideal of clarity, ~~and~~ coherence, and rigor. Clarity demanded sharply defined terms that were presumed to be abstract and consequently not subject to change. Coherence demanded the absence of contradiction. Rigor demanded that conclusions follow ^{necessarily} from ^{the} ~~deductive~~ premises of a deduction. From this threefold ~~and~~ requirement the theologian could not but expect that, even if he failed to attain it, at least he was headed towards an array of sharply defined terms, of completely coherent propositions, and of interlocking rigorous deductions. There might be unsatisfactory definitions with new distinctions regularly being introduced. There might be problems that resisted the ^{controversial} efforts of the ages. There might be a suspicious ~~lack of really convincing proofs. But this had to be regarded~~ ^{factor} lack of really convincing proofs. But this merely factual state of affairs only revealed the inadequacies or imperfections of the present. It did nothing to call in question the validity of the logical ideal. Out beyond the rainbow there must be the attainment of the eternal truths in their proper ^{determined} organization, by [↑] deductive logic.

Now it is this ~~our~~ outlook, this assumption, this viewpoint that is incompatible with the new methods in hermeneutics and history and with the conclusions they reach. For the new methods are on-going. They solve problems tentatively ~~and~~ rather than definitively and definitive solutions, even when reached, only uncover a further range of problems as yet unsolved. Not only are the methods

in their mutual communion. Finally, the notion of the person is not some isolated instance. On the contrary, theological terms generally have, not the single definition expected by the logical mind, but a series of definitions corresponding to the successive ways in which a basic issue was met.

Logic eliminates incoherence, but ^{the process to remove it.} method flourishes on ~~the effort to attain it~~ it. This was apparent in the high middle ages. Then evidence was ^ccollected on one side of an issue, Videtur quod non, and contrary evidence on the other, Sed contra est. The existence of incoherence proved the existence of a quaestio. For the quaestio there ~~was sought~~ were sought both the principles of a solution and their application to the relevant material. Further, the existence of many quaestiones led to a second level problem of coherence. How was one to assure that the many solutions to the many ~~one~~ quaestiones were themselves coherent. It ^{was} ~~is~~ at this point that the adoption and adaptation of some system of thought such as Aristotle's became relevant, and from this development many quite new questions arose.

Logic, finally, demands rigor, and the Aristotelian ideal of science demanded not only conclusions that followed necessarily from premisses but also first premisses that themselves were necessary truths. Thus cult of necessity is a thing of the past. While contemporary mathematicians want conclusions that follow necessarily, they do not think that their premisses are necessary truths. Again, while the nineteenth century spoke of the necessary laws of nature and even the iron laws of economics, contemporary science does not. The laws of nature are not intelligibilities that cannot be other than they are; they are intelligibilities

that could very well be other than they are; they are intrinsically hypothetical, essentially in need of verification, and to be rejected as soon as verification fails and another alternative view arises.

The transition of theology from eternal truths to developing doctrines implies a new manner of constructing the context of theological statements. The context of eternal truths is constructed on principles derived from logic. The context of developing doctrines is constructed on principles ~~derived~~ derived from method. It is a context in which similar questions get successively different answers, in which ^{incoherence} ~~incoherence~~ is removed not at a stroke but only gradually and, when ^{coherence} ~~it~~ is achieved, new problems emerge, in which the intelligibility attained, in general, is not ~~the necessity but possibility now is the time for all good~~ necessity that cannot be other than it is but the possibility that can very well be other than it is, in which, finally, developments themselves no less than aberrations are not historically necessitated but simply the steps that de facto were taken in given situations and either legitimated or not by the situations and their antecedents.

~~3. Theology's Needs of Philosophy~~

3. The Need of Philosophy in Theology

The basic need of philosophy in theology is its need of a method, the need of an answer, full and precise, to the questions, question, What is one doing when one is doing theology? Why is doing that doing theology? And what does one know when one does it?

For answers to these three questions presuppose answers underlying to three more fundamental questions. There is the question of cognitional theory, What am I doing when I am knowing? There is the underlying question of epistemology, Why is doing that knowing? There is the underlying question of metaphysics, What does one know when one does it?

Now answers to these three questions, of cognitional theory, of epistemology, and of metaphysics, traditionally are philosophic.

3. The Need of Philosophy in Theology

Contemporary theology needs to move from the abstract ideal proposed by logic to the comprehensive concreteness envisaged by method. To effect such a transition it has to be able to give full and precise answers to three basic questions: What is one doing when one is doing theology? Why is doing that doing theology? What does one know when one does it?

Answers to each of these questions have philosophic presuppositions. To explain what precisely one is doing when doing theology, one has already to know just what one is doing when one is knowing. In other words, a theological method presupposes a ~~conditional~~ ^{cognitional} theory. Again, to explain why certain performances are doing theology, one has already to know why certain more general performances are cognitional. On ~~this score~~ ^{the} this score a theological method presupposes an epistemology. Finally, to explain what one knows when one does theology, one has to be able to explain what one knows when one ~~here~~ performs cognitional operations. So besides cognitional theory and epistemology, a theological method presupposes a metaphysics.

It is in the quite traditional sense, then, of cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics that a theological method stands in need of a philosophy. But I must hasten to add that this need is not to be met in any routine fashion ^{and,} ~~and~~ to make this clear, let me adduce five different examples of the uses a contemporary theology has for a highly developed philosophy.

I have already remarked that new methods in hermeneutics and history have been accepted in Catholic theological circles. But the precise interpretation one assigns to the methods varies very considerably according as one is a naive realist, an empiricist, a positivist, an idealist, or a critical realist. Moreover, one has to know very accurately just what is meant by naive realism, empiricism, positivism, idealism, and critical realism, before one can begin to evaluate one's own interpretation of hermeneutics or critical history. Indeed, if one has never really been bitten by philosophy, in all likelihood one is a naive realist and one will steer one's ^{"positive", "scientific"} contributions to theology by a compass that a stray magnet is pulling off the mark.

I have already remarked that to a great extent new methods in hermeneutics and critical history have been accepted in Catholic theological circles. But to say just what operations occur in the employment of such methods and what results can be expected from them demands a highly refined cognitional theory bolstered by an exact and cogent epistemology. Nor is this philosophic elaboration of the methods something superfluous

I have already remarked that to a great extent new methods in hermeneutics and critical history have been accepted in Catholic theological circles. But the acceptance has been more a matter of learning techniques than of understanding what precise operations are being performed, why they yield good results, where they might go wrong, what would be expected in either case. Now I am not saying that our exegetes and historians should get down to learning a highly refined cognitional theory. After all, one need ~~not~~ know nothing about electronics and yet be quite successful in turning on and adjusting the television set. On the other hand, if one is out to design a television set, one has to know electronics. Similarly, one needs a highly refined cognitional theory, if one is to devise a method for theology that will satisfy two conditions. First, it must know exactly ^{hermeneutical and historical} what the ^{new} methods are, or else its acceptance of them will not be genuine. Secondly, it has to find the way of integrating them with other components of theology, ~~namely the new methods~~ otherwise the new methods will continue to give us the Jesus of history, while the failure to integrate them with the rest of theology will leave us without the Christ of faith.

A second sphere in which philosophy is needed ~~is~~ has to do with religious studies. The second Vatican council established secretariats for ecumenism, for non-Christian religions, and for non-believers. If these secretariats are to function, if their leaders are to really understand the exact nature of the issues at stake, then we need to cultivate religious studies: the phenomenology of religion, the psychology of religion, the sociology of religion, the

history of religions, and at once underpinning them all and also overarching them a philosophy of religions.

A third requirement regards demythologization. Clement of Alexandria was demythologizing scripture on philosophic grounds when he wrote that, even though ^{the bible says so, the} ~~it is said in bible,~~ no one was to fancy that the Father of all stood and was seated, that he had a ^{right} right hand and a left, that he burst into anger ^{or that he} ~~and again,~~ repented. At the present time the Dutch catechism suggests that there may be further demythologizations on hermeneutical or historical grounds. It is in this connection that I think the philosophy that theology needs must be radically open. Its function is to help the individual person attain self-appropriation, a first-hand and exact grasp of himself, his operations, his capacities. It should be capable of leaving to theology the last word on man in his relations with God and on God in his relations with man.

A fourth requirement

history of religions, and at once underpinning ~~ex~~ them all and over-arching them a philosophy of religion.

A third requirement regards demythologization. When Clement of Alexandria wrote that one was not to think that the Father of all had a right hand or a left, that he stood or was seated, that he was subject to anger and repentance, even all though all this was to be found in scripture,

history of religion religions, and at once underpinning them all and over-arching them a philosophy of religion.

A third requirement is that the needed philosophy must possess a radical openness. By this I mean that the process of demythologization has to be left to theology, that a radical demythologization is not to occur on the philosophic level so that theological considerations are never given the chance to appear.

Secondly, cognitive theory, epistemology, metaphysics are needed but they are not enough. They have to be subsumed under the higher operations of deliberating, evaluating, feeling, deciding, acting, believing, moving from unauthenticity to authenticity. Moreover, this account is not to presuppose a metaphysics on the Aristotelian model

historical theology can become dialectical, for by revealing the philosophic source of aberration, it will be able to indicate what the patristic or medieval or later writer might have said had he not been misled.

Sixthly, there is the philosophy of culture. It is concerned with meanings and values and, ideally, with the meanings and values of each class in all cultures. There is no lack of detailed studies. But comprehensive works such as Bruno Snell's The Discovery of Mind and, still more comprehensively, Ernst Cassirer's Philosophy of Symbolic Forms are of the greatest value. Yet they provide models rather than definitive achievements. What is desired is an integration of what I have termed, transcendental method, with detailed positive studies, so that ~~the~~ the total human process of cultural undifferentiation, differentiation, specialization, and integration can be constructed. In that fashion one could move from a New Testament expression to modern expression

historical theology can become dialectical. By revealing the philosophic source of aberration, it can account for differences in patristic and in theological thought. Moreover, by discerning the manner in which aberrations have been overcome, it can sketch the genesis of a distinctive Catholic philosophy. Neither Plato nor Aristotle, neither Stoics nor Gnostics, knew the notions worked out at Nicaea, at Ephesus, at Chalcedon.

Sixthly, there is the philosophy of social structures and of cultures. Meanings, values, modes of group action have developed and diversified down the ages. There is no lack of detailed studies. There is no lack of the expertise in gradually -- through the self-correcting process of commonsense learning -- coming to understand alien cultures. But what is wanted is a phylogenetic set of schemata into which the fruits of expertise, at least to some extent, can all be expressed within a common mode and manner.

Let me ~~make myself~~ illustrate this idea by comparisons. Aquinas interpreted scripture in largely Aristotelian terms. Bultmann has interpreted the ^NNew Testament in early Heideggerian systematic terms. On the other hand, the philosophic element is unobtrusive in Ernst Cassirer's Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, and it is hardly detectable in Bruno Snell's The Discovery of Mind.

In answer I should say that our choice is not limited to eternal truths on the one hand and on the other the relativist historicism of Ernst Troeltsch. Theoretically there is the position presented in my book, Insight, of a metaphysics that is invariant in structure yet keeps developing as the nature of human knowledge is more accurately known. Theologically, there is the pronouncement of the first Vatican council on the advance, ^{down the ages} of our understanding, knowledge, and wisdom with respect to the objects of faith. Historically, there is multitudinous evidence of the many diverse contexts within which the Christian message has been assimilated, accepted, and lived.

There is, then, a certain type of philosophy that in many ways is very relevant to Catholic theology in its current crisis. For the current crisis is a shift in horizon, a shift from a basic outlook in terms of logic and eternal truths to a basic outlook in terms of method and developing doctrines. A philosophy relevant to that shift in horizon is one that deals with the three basic questions: (1) what am I doing when I am knowing; (2) why is doing that knowing; and (3) what do I know when I do it. Such a philosophy is directly relevant to settling the core of any method and so to settling the core of theological method. But it also makes possible an analysis and a much needed critique of the methods of hermeneutics and critical history. It underpins a philosophy of action, of deliberation, evaluation, decision, deed. It opens out upon a philosophy of religion, the history of philosophy, and a philosophy of culture and of communications. In all of these respects it blazes trails for theology to enter, to enlarge, to enrich.

There is, then, a certain type of philosophy that in many ways is very relevant to Catholic theology in its current crisis. For the current crisis is a shift in horizon, a shift from a basic outlook in terms of logic and eternal truths to a basic outlook in terms of method and developing doctrines. On the old view changes in context could be neglected. On the new view changes in context can be enormous and they cannot be neglected. They have to be brought to light through the techniques of hermeneutics and critical history. Once they have been brought to light, continuities and contrasts emerge: what once was apprehended in one fashion, now is apprehended in another

Let me say, then, that the methods yield relativist results in so far as they are interpreted in the light of a merely absolutist or a merely relativist philosophy. However, my contention was, not that the methods are to be accepted as they are propounded by mere technicians but only as they are analysed and clarified on the basis of transcendental method, ~~and differentiated~~ differentiated in the light of various philosophic contexts, and accepted inasmuch as epistemologically validated.

To the first objection I would point out that the methods will yield relativist conclusions in so far as they are understood within the context of a relativist or other inadequate philosophy. But in contrast with this

A third element in modernity is philosophic. The new natural science and the new human studies have had their repercussions on philosophy. One tendency has been to ~~deny~~ claim that science is the only valid form of human knowledge, as does positivism, or else to confine philosophy within logic and the clarification of every-day language. ^{Another} ~~The other~~ tendency ~~is~~ has been to see in philosophy the foundations of science, as in Kantianism and in Husserl's phenomenology, or a super-science, as in the absolute idealisms, or the basis of human choosing and acting, as in Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, ~~and~~ Nietzsche, Blondel. The third tendency was regressive. Inaugurated solemnly by Leo XIII's Aeterni Patris, it made mandatory a return to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas; it flourished in the early part of this century, but in the last decade it has completely collapsed, first, because historical studies of the medieval period ^{made any statement of Thomist thought enormously} ~~discredited official representatives~~ and permanently open to revision ^{of Thomism} and, secondly, because the infiltration of the new types of human studies into theology necessitated a type of philosophy far more sophisticated than the medieval period could furnish. However, that more sophisticated philosophy is, as yet, not a matter of general acceptance. Until it is, we can only expect a theological pluralism far more radical than the old-style pluralism of Thomists, Scotists, Suarezians, and so on. Such pluralism is the first item on the agenda of the recently formed International Theological Commission.

complicated