

Method in Theology Internal Problem

1 Christian theology is thematized knowledge of God mediated by the Body of Christ.

Knowledge of God is immediate in the beatific vision; it is mediated by unaided human reason in natural theology; it is mediated by the Body of Christ, objectively through the historic Christian community, and on the side of the subject inasmuch as the theologian is a new man in Christ Jesus and so neither Jew nor Greek (Gal 3.28).

Such knowledge is had by all Christians where knowledge is exercised, vécu, existenziell; it is theology when it is thematized, signate, existenzial, i.e., articulated, ordered, grounded, evaluated.

Thematized knowledge of God divides into positive, dogmatic, systematic, and foundational.

Positive thematizes spontaneous expressions of such knowledge and previous thematizations: it is theology in *oratio obliqua*; an account of sources and developments in their detail and particularity.

Dogmatic is concerned with dogmas in their genesis, content, implications; it stands to positive as, say, Butterfield's *Origins of Modern Science* to particular studies of each of the discoveries that led to modern science.

Systematic is concerned with attaining an imperfect and analogous understanding of the mysteries, i.e., paradoxes resulting from dogmatic definitions.

Foundational is concerned with the Catholic position as a whole, not in its entirety, but in its roots; in conversion;¹ in the precise location of differences from other positions; in the precise formulation of Catholic presuppositions, the divisions of theology, their respective methods, the integration of the separate parts.

From my standpoint, method and foundational more or less coincide.

2 Method is concerned with basic operations, their differentiation, various combinations of differentiated operations, mutually exclusive sets or groups of combinations, integration of these sets.²

Method differs from doctrine, which regards particular objects or classes of objects, in their relations.

It differs from logic, which regards objects in general in their necessary relationships.

1 'in conversion;' is added by hand in the margin.

2 'integration of these sets' is added by hand in the text.

It provides the basis for determining (a) what are we to do, first, next, in third place, etc., (b) how are we to do each of these, (c) what can we expect to result from performing the series of operations in that manner.

Note: it provides the basis for determining; it is not a cook book, but a study preparatory to writing cook-books, and still more to cooking.³

It is closely related to the subject, his religious, moral, intellectual conversion, his openness, his authenticity: *operari sequitur esse*; the operations of the theologian follow from what this theologian *is*. Method is unpleasantly existential.

3 Our concern is contemporary. We are not concerned with the method that holds for all times and places. We are concerned with the methodical problem of the present moment, and we now proceed to sketch what we believe this problem to be.

(a) The concrete and particular carrier of the problem is the enormous development of positive studies in contemporary Catholic theology.

From 1900 there was an outpouring of protest literature urging more positive study in theology, in academic teaching, in seminary teaching. Bibliography, B. Xiberta, *Introductio in sacram theol.*, Madrid 1949.

1 July 1931, 'Deus scientiarum Dominus,' AAS 23(1931), 241 ss. Professors of theology at the present time for the most part were formed under the provisions of 'Deus scientiarum Dominus'; younger professors were pupils of people formed under 'Deus scientiarum Dominus.'

The extent of the literature that has resulted (in part at least) may be gleaned from bibliographies in *Biblica*, Altaner, *Rech. theol. anc. med.* (Bulletin), *Ephem theol Lovan.*

Altaner: 7 pp sigla; 3 1-2 pp collections, key works; 23 pp survey general literature; rest specialized bibl for each Father.

Add the dictionaries, encyclopedias, collective works, handbooks, which publishing houses seem quite anxious to promote.

(b) The problem is not what it was 60 or 30 years ago: to teach and promote positive studies; by and large that problem has been recognized.

3 'and still more to cooking' is added by hand in the text. In the margin we find: 'Errors in method: one or two operations attended to, the rest overlooked, denied, occurring spontaneously without conscious control. Cook book idea with a poor cook. Gadamer accordingly contrasts *Methode, Wahrheit.*'

Nor is it simply a variant of Parkinson's law: there is much more coming into print than bibliographers can properly catalogue, than librarians can make available, than specialists can read.

Rather it may be described as Newman's theorem taken in reverse.

By Newman's theorem I mean the central argument in the *Idea of a University* [Fergal McGrath, *The Consecration of Learning*, Dublin Gill 1962.]

To omit a part of knowledge is (a) to be ignorant of that part, (b) to mutilate the whole, and (c) to distort the remainder.

In reverse, this becomes that to add a new type of study is (a) to add a new department to knowledge, (b) to demand an organic adaptation of the previous departments, and (c) to bring about a transformation of the whole.

This seems to me to describe [a first and very general approximation]⁴ the present situation: positive studies have been introduced and quantitatively at least are flourishing; organic adaptations are taking place in the older departments; but these adaptations have not yet been perfected and the transformation of the whole is as yet only a vast ferment and a disquieting confusion.

To illustrate the adaptations one may note transitions:

from the single correct definition to the historical series of approaches and modes of thought on the point: e.g. person;

from the constant doctrine (quod ubique quod semper quod ab omnibus) to the development of doctrine, its stages, the causes of change, the relations between prior and later stages: NT to Nicea to Const III;

from metaphysically constructed definition to experientially constructed (evocative) love, life, insight, horizon.⁵

To illustrate the traps:

formerly theology was (12th century) to say what Augustine said or, later, to mean what Aquinas really meant;

today the appeal to Augustine, Aquinas, or any other authority runs into the endless complexity of an historical investigation, the bewilderment of unprepared students, the mere probability of historical conclusions;

eg *De Deo Trino*, II, no attempt to argue from Aquinas; appendix I & II.

formerly theology was a circumscribed, unified, coherent block of 'solid' doctrine;

4 The bracketed material is added by hand in the text.

5 This paragraph is added by hand in the text.

today the multiplicity of positive studies runs parallel with the division and subdivision of fields, the addition of new subjects, the extension of auxiliary subjects, the influence from the human or social sciences, the impact of phenomenology, personalism, existentialism,⁶ and to catch the student's fancy and absorb his attention such practical affairs as the biblical movement, liturgical movement, kerygmatic theology, catechetical movement, social problems, 'the pill, the priest, and the people,' etc.⁷

(c) The seriousness of the methodical problem in which theology at present de facto finds itself, the magnitude of the transformation that it seems called upon to effect, comes to light only when one adverts to the differences between:
 science as a Greek ideal and science as a modern achievement.
 classical consciousness and contemporary historical consciousness,
 a philosophy that fits in with Greek science and classical consciousness
 and a philosophy that fits in with modern science and historical consciousness.

What precisely these differences are and imply, are large questions; a sketchy answer will be attempted presently; let us for the moment assume them to be real and significant, to conclude to our second approximation [first = Newman's theorem in reverse] to the problem of MiT.

Within a unified theology (a) the operative notion of science cannot be both Greek and modern, (b) the effective mode of consciousness cannot be both classicist and historical, (c) the philosophic *ancilla* in actual use cannot be both of the medieval and the modern type.

But the more seriously positive studies are worked out and accepted, the more massive is the entry into theology of modern science, historical consciousness, and a modern type of philosophy. Nor is this entry on any secondary level: Catholicism is a historical religion; it stands on scripture and tradition; and positive studies tell what scripture means and what traditions have existed.

The logic of the process is: the historical character of Catholicism demands positive studies; positive studies remain a sham, a make-believe, until one moves from Greek to modern ideas of science, from classicism to historical consciousness, from a medieval to a modern type of philosophy; unless this movement occurs all along the line, one cannot have a unified theology – one pours the new wine in the old bottles, and the old bottles burst – there is the schism

6 'the impact ... existentialism' was added by hand in the margin.

7 The materail from 'catechetical' to the end was added by hand in the text.

between traditional and contemporary, between younger and older professors,⁸ between more advanced and less advanced countries and centres, between different departments, between administrators and professors – there is mutual incomprehension, suspicion, fear, unease – there is concern, doubt, anxiety – there are outbursts, violent accusations and replies, the withdrawal of issues from academic discussion and debate, and the determination of capable young men to serve God and the church in any manner except the study and teaching of theology.

(d) A third approximation to the problem of MiT is reached with the observation that the exigence for the shift tends to be hidden

first because the requisite shift is not in theology itself but in such extrinsic matters as a developed notion of science, a fuller apprehension of man's reality, the emergence of more fundamental philosophic techniques – the shift primarily⁹ is not towards a New Theology, not towards new doctrines, but towards the scraping of obsolescent equipment and the installation of a new plant and machinery;

secondly because both traditional and more recent trends in theology tend to regard such questions as the exact nature of science, the historicity of man, the new techniques in philosophy as 'speculative,' where 'speculative' is taken to mean (a) insoluble and (b) irrelevant.

(a') The decadence of Scholasticism in the 14th and 15th centuries was followed by the school theologies: Dominican, Franciscan, Jesuit, Sorbonne, Louvain, etc. School-theologies are phenomena in the sociology of knowledge, not the history of science.

K. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, London Routledge Kegan Paul¹1936
⁷1954, bibl. 281-304

Werner Stark, *Sociology of Knowledge*, Glencoe Ill Free Press, rev 1958

Werner Stark, *Montesquieu, Pioneer in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London 1960

Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe, revised ed 1957

On 15th cent. M J Congar DTC 29, 410; on 20th E Gilson, *Le philosophe et la theologie*, p. 172.

Melchior Cano, *De locis theologicis*, 3 vols Rome 1890, humanist, bishop, inquisitor, determined ten loci whence theologians prove theses.

A. Lang, *Die Loci theologici des Melchior Cano and die Methode des*

8 'between younger and older professors' was added by hand in the margin.

9 'primarily' is added by hand in the margin.

dogmatischen Beweises, Munchen 1925

MJ_Congar DTC 29 421 s.

A. Gardeil, *Lieux theologiques*, DTC IX 17 712-747

E Marcotte, *La nature de la théologie d'après Melchior Cano*, Ottawa ed de l'Univ., 1949 bibl.

J M Levasseur, *Le lieu théologique, histoire* Trois-Rivières 1960

Theology as determined by Cano's method uses ten loci whence it derives 'proofs' of traditional theological theses: it is innocent of the development of dogma, unaware of the fallacy of anachronism, unprepared to conceive that new issues arise, and unequipped to develop theology.

Medieval decadence, school theology, and Cano's method determined a 'dogmatic' theology that consists in (a) soft-pedaling disputed questions which are regarded as insoluble and not really relevant to the substance of theology and (b) in clearly and stoutly affirming what is common to all believers, all Catholics, all theologians.

Questions concerning the nature of science, the historicity of man, the techniques of critical philosophy fall in the category of disputed questions and so are not disputed much or very seriously, though they are more apt to be disputed than studied.¹⁰

(b') Unlike the modernists, contemporary contributors to positive studies are not theoretically inclined.

They have studied philosophy and theology but chose positive studies because they were little inclined to speculative thought. Their main energies have been devoted to mastering the enormous range of positive erudition that is their stock in trade.

They know the techniques of a modern science, but they rarely have reflected on the nature of modern science or its precise differences from the medieval notion.

They know historical facts and the differences of historical cultures but they have not reflected on the historicity of man or on the problems involved in a cognitional theory and epistemology of historical investigation.

They consider philosophic issues as alien to their specialty and as something that quite safely may be, if not neglected, at least left to other specialists engaged in the specialty 'philosophy.'

¹⁰ 'though they are more apt ... studied' is added by hand in the text.

E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1954.

(e) If the exigence for a shift to modern science, historical consciousness, and a modern type of philosophy is hidden both to traditional ‘dogmatic’ theology and to positive investigators, it remains that both of these positions are highly unstable.

The ‘dogmatic’ theologian can arrive at what is commonly held only by sacrificing understanding: when different people understand the same thing in different ways, one arrives at what is common by omitting the different understandings; what is left is formulae to be recited and believed.

Such ‘dogmatic’ theology is being brushed aside by positive studies, which embarrass its assertions with endless unsuspected difficulties, undermine its proofs by reinterpreting or banning¹¹ proof-texts, and capture the students’ minds by offering an intelligible account of Christian doctrine.

At the same time the efforts of the positive theologians are being undermined by the application of epistemological and ontological doctrines to the methods employed in positive studies. Leopold von Ranke is moving from the role of *Venerabilis inceptor* of historical science to that of the myth-maker of the Prussian state.

Hans Meyerhoff, *The Philosophy of History in Our Time*, Doubleday Anchor Original, N.Y., 1959.¹²

John Bligh, ‘The New Testament and the Training of the Clergy,’ *Letters and Notices*, 69(1964), 30-62. Announces review Ebeling HJ 1964.

A. Richardson, *History Sacred and Profane*, London SCM 1964, bibl.

H.I. Marrou, *De la connaissance historique*, Paris 1954 (ed du Seuil)

K. Heussi, *Die Krisis des Historismus*, Tübingen 1932.

J. Cahill, *Rudolf Bultmann and Post-Bultmannian Tendencies*, CBQ 26 (1964), 153-178.

R. Brown, *After Bultmann, What?* CBQ 26(1964), 1-30.

P. Gardiner, *Theories of History*, Glencoe, Free Press, 1959 bibl.

W.F. Albright, *History Archaeology and Christian Humanism*, New York Toronto London, McGraw-Hill 1964.

H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* Tübingen 1960.¹³

11 ‘or banning’ is added by hand in the margin.

12 This entry is added by hand in the text.

(f) The instability of the opposed schools hiding the problem gives the problem its opportunity to emerge.

The method of positive studies destroys the method of ‘dogmatic’ theology; investigations of the method of positive study destroy the ambition of positive studies to communicate the intelligibility of the Christian religion to people of our day.

The spring-board is provided by the cumulation of three factors.

Semi-rationalism (influence of Kant and Hegel on Hermes, Gunther Frohschammer Rosmini?)¹⁴ was met by Franzelin leaping back to Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, to affirm an imperfect and analogous *intelligentia fidei fructuosissima*.

The grasp of this *intelligentia* was prepared by Leo XIII’s prescription of St Thomas and by historical studies of basic Thomist ideas and procedures (being, *intelligere*, Trinitarian theory). DDT II.¹⁵

It can be employed not only to resuscitate a mediaeval *intelligentia fidei* but also to set up critical techniques that liquidate the QQ DD. Insight.¹⁶

It can be employed to ground and criticize modern notions on science and on history.

It can be employed to work out a notion of dogmatic theology as the reduction of dogmas to sources

and to distinguish this task from the preparatory and basic detailed work of positive studies. De Deo Trino I.¹⁷

13 This entry is added by hand in the text.

14 The question mark is added by hand in the text.

15 The reference is added by hand in the text.

16 The reference is added by hand in the text.

17 The reference is added by hand in the text.