

THE RELATION BETWEEN INTELLECT AND  
WILL IN FREE CHOICE ACCORDING TO  
AQUINAS AND SCOTUS

IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE that important differences exist between Thomistic and Scotistic theories of free choice. In another paper I have tried to show that these differences are important for moral theory.<sup>1</sup> Yet it seems to me that the points on which these theories agree are at least as important as those on which they differ. The basic difference between the theories has often been described as a contrast between an intellectualist view (Thomistic) and a voluntarist view (Scotistic). Significantly, Scotistic commentators seem to have been less satisfied than Thomists with this characterization. Some have claimed that this labelling is unfair to Scotus and obscures his views. Yet a difference can be exaggerated in two directions, and it may be that this labelling has also obscured Aquinas's position. In fact, it may be that exaggerating the contrast has led some commentators to explain Aquinas's views in a way that is apt to be mistaken for intellectual determinism.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to determine exactly where Aquinas and Scotus differ on free choice, and where they do not. I will first examine Scotus's position and then Aquinas's.

<sup>1</sup> "Aquinas and Scotus on Liberty and Natural Law," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> A very incautious dictum tossed about has been, "The intellect specifies the will." See below, p. 335f, for an account of the ambiguity in this expression. The common resort to the mutual causality of intellect and will does not answer the problem raised by this passage. The problem is this: if the intellect specifies that this object rather than that be willed, then the choice is not free but intellectually determined. If the objection is stated in precisely this way, I think it can be answered only by denying the antecedent. Yet Thomists have often been loath to deny it, for fear of falling into "voluntarism."

## Scotus on Free Choice

In the central texts where Scotus discusses the relationship between intellect and will in an act of choice he asks: "Whether the act of will is caused in the will by an object moving it or by the will moving itself?"<sup>3</sup> The first time he addressed this question, which is recorded in the *Opus Oxoniense* (Bk. II, d. 25), he maintained that the known object (or intellect) has no intrinsic causal role in the act of will at all, but is only a *sine qua non-not* intrinsically causing, but something whose effect is required for the effect in question (here, the act of will).<sup>4</sup> The will alone was cause, and total cause, of the act of will: "Nothing but the will is the total cause of the act of willing in the will:"<sup>5</sup>

Yet later in his life he altered this position, and we have the record of that alteration in some manuscripts of later writings. Carl Balic edited these manuscripts for publication, and attested to both their authenticity and their significance.<sup>6</sup>

In these later texts Scotus says there are three possible answers to the question: first, that only the known object is the cause of the act of will; second, that only the will is the cause of its act (his earlier position); or third, that the will and object concur in causing the act of will. He adopts here the third position.

<sup>3</sup> Scotus, *Opus Omoniense*, Bk. II, d. 25, q. un., Vives ed., vol. 13, 196a; see also next note. Two incisive articles on Scotus's position are: Bernardine M. Bonansea, "Duns Scotus's Voluntarism," in J. Ryan and B. Bonansea, (eds.), *John Duns Scotus, 1265-1965* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1965), pp. 83-121; Lawrence D. Roberts, "Indeterminism in Duns Scotus' Doctrine of Human Freedom," *Modern Schoolman*, 51 (1973), 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 18-19, vol. 13, 210-212.

<sup>5</sup> "Dico ergo ad quaestionem quod nihil aliud a voluntate est causa totalis volitionis in voluntate." (*Op. Om.*, II, d. 25, n. 22, vol. 13, 222b.)

<sup>6</sup> C. Balic, *Les commentaires de J. Duns Scot sur les quatre livres des sentences*. (*Bibliothèque de la Revue d'Histoire FJcclesiastique*, I) Louvain, 1927, pp. 264-301; hereafter, *Additiones Magnae*; C. Balic, "Une question inédite de J. Duns Scot sur la volonté," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, 3 (1931), 191-208, hereafter, *Secundae Additiones*.

Scotus rejects the first position—that the known object is the total cause of the act of willing—on the basis of several arguments. By known object, here, he means either the intellectually proposed object or the object as it exists in the phantasm. Taking the object in either of these senses, the position must be rejected essentially because it would lead to a denial of free choice and of moral responsibility.

In explaining his point Scotus introduces his distinction between natural agents and voluntary agents—two types of causes that act in radically different ways. A natural agent is one that acts in a determined and necessitated way, so that if the action is not impeded by an extrinsic agent, and the dispositions of the action and that on which the agent acts are the same, then its effect will always be the same. Voluntary agents, on the contrary, act freely. But the known object is a natural agent—and so too is the intellect—and so if the object (or the intellect) were the total cause of the act of will, then our acts would not be free; our acts would not be in our power:

Again, it is principally argued against the first opinion: the same natural agent, not impeded, cannot cause opposite effects in the same patient, equally disposed, for this is the character (ratio) of a natural agent. Hence in *II De Generatione* <Aristotle>, it says: the same, insofar as it is the same, is naturally ordained always to act the same, and this is specifically understood of the natural agent. But the object is merely a natural agent; therefore in the same patient, <the agent> remaining the same, it cannot cause opposite effects; therefore if the known object causes not-willing <*nolle*> in the will, it cannot cause willing, or vice versa. But to posit this is to destroy all liberty in the will, and contingency in human acts, which are in the power of man.<sup>7</sup>

Scotus also rejects the second position, the one he himself held earlier, namely, that the will is the total effective cause of its act, and the object (or intellect) only a *sine qua non*. He proposes eight arguments, but two will be considered here.

First, if the will were the total cause of its act, then it would

<sup>7</sup> *Secundae Additiones*, 195.

have within itself all that it takes to be in act, and so it could be permanently in act:

If therefore the will alone were the sufficient cause in respect of the act of willing, and were itself the sufficient receiving patient, then the will could always will just as a combustible would always burn itself if it had the active power of burning . . . .<sup>8</sup>

Second, the very notion of a mere *sine qua non*, something that does not intrinsically influence the effect but whose own effect is required, is not clear. The action of a *sine qua non* is required for the effect, and yet its action is supposed not to induce a disposition in the effect. But, to look at it the other way, how could the inaction of the *sine qua non* impede the action of another agent, unless it did induce some disposition in the effect? The very notion of a mere *sine qua non*, Scotus says in this later writing, does not seem reasonable.<sup>9</sup>

Hence Scotus rejects both extremes, and takes a middle position, namely that the will and the object (or intellect) concur in causing the act of will:

I reply therefore to the question, that the effective cause of the act of willing is not the object alone, as phantasm, because this in no way saves liberty as the first opinion affirms; nor is the effective cause of willing the will alone in the way the second extreme affirms, because then all the conditions that follow upon the act of willing cannot be saved, as was shown. Therefore I hold the middle way, that both the will and the object concur in causing the act of willing, so that the act of willing is from the will and from the object known as from an effective cause.<sup>10</sup>

Scotus's next task is to examine *how* the known object and will concur in causing the act of will. He explains that causes can concur to produce an effect in three ways. First, the causes may have only a *per accidens* order among them. In this case, each cause contributes the same type of causality, and if one cause possessed sufficient power it could produce the total effect by itself. His example is many men rowing a boat. In a

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-200.

<sup>9</sup> *Additiones Magnae*, 279.

<sup>10</sup> *Seo. Add.*, 202.

second way, one cause could receive its power of causing from another, as, he says, a particular terrestrial agent receives its power of causing from a celestial body.<sup>11</sup>

In neither of these ways do the object and will concur to produce the act of will. First, because the object and will are essentially ordered; their kinds of causality are not the same, but each is a distinctive, partial cause, presupposing the causality of the other. Second, because: "The object known by the intellect does not have its power of causing from the will, or vice versa, with respect to first act."<sup>12</sup>

That last addition, "with respect to first act," is an important qualification, for as we shall see, Scotus does hold that the object's transition to *second* act in influencing the act of will, *is* given to it by the will. That is, it is up to the will whether the object will actually influence the act of will (second a.ct), but its power and type of causality (first act) are not received from the will.

In a third way, many causes can concur unequally to produce the effect, without, however, any one of the causes receiving its power of causing (with respect to first act) from the other. His example (relying on the biology current in his day) is the procreation of a child by the father and the mother, the father being the principal cause but the mother having her own distinctive causality. In this way the object and the will concur in causing the act of will. Both have their distinctive causality, but the object's causality is subordinate to that of the will.

The object's causality is subordinate precisely because the will is in itself free or undetermined:

Thus in the proposed case: the will has the nature of one cause, namely of a particular cause in respect of the act of willing, and the soul having the act of knowing the object, has the nature of another partial cause, and both together are the total cause in respect of the act of willing. Yet the will is the more principal cause and the knowing nature a less principal cause, because the

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-203.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

will moves freely, to the motion of which it moves the other; hence it determines the other to acting; but the nature knowing the object is a natural agent, since on its part it always acts; yet it cannot be sufficient to elicit an act unless the will concurs. And therefore the will is the more principal cause....<sup>18</sup>

This is a significant text for understanding Scotus's final position. Because the will is free, the intellectually proposed object is not sufficient to determine the will to act toward it. A known object actually influences an act of will (i.e. specifies it) only if the will freely acts (inclines) toward it. Scotus expresses this point by arguing that the known object's transition to second act (its actual concurrence in causing the act of willing) depends on the concurrence of the will.

Put otherwise, the intellect does not specify that the will will *x* rather than *y*. If this type of specification is meant when someone says, "The intellect specifies the will," then that sentence is false. Given that the will wills *x*, then *x*, which is presented to the will by the intellect, specifies this act of willing. But the willing of *x* rather than not willing it, and hence the willing of *x* rather than *y* is due to the will. Or: nothing prior to the will's response to an object presented it is a sufficient condition of that response. The sufficient conditions of the choice include the choice itself. This proposition, Scotus argues, is a logical consequence of the fact of free choice and moral responsibility.<sup>14</sup>

Thus in this later writing Scotus admits that the known object is a partial cause of the act of willing, and that it has its own perfection in causing, not received from the will.<sup>15</sup> But the known object makes its unique contribution to the act only if the will acts. Scotus expresses this point by saying that the will is "the more principal cause."

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> This was the point of St. Augustine's claim that the only reason why two men in the same situation with all of the same dispositions make different choices is their different acts of will. See: *On the City of God*, Bk. XII, chap. 6. Scotus frequently cites this text.

<sup>15</sup> *Sec. Add.*, 203.

Given this relationship between intellect and will in an act of choice, there is a further question: namely, is the will free just of itself, or are there conditions explaining why the will is free or undetermined? Scotus's position leaves no doubt as to the answer to this question: the will is free just of itself, i.e., it does not make sense to ask *why* the will is free; that is simply the kind of agent it is.

This becomes clear when Scotus discusses the objection that the known object in some way does necessarily determine the will, namely when it is a question of practical principles. Scotus notes that some thinkers hold that the will is determined with respect to practical principles (or the end) but not with respect to practical conclusions (or the means toward the end). On this view the will is free only with respect to that which is ordered to the end (practical conclusions). Scotus seems to have Aquinas's position in mind here.

Scotus rejects this position. On this view, the indetermination of the will with respect to means would be due in part to (and hence partly explained by) the indetermination in the intellect's practical conclusions—the lack of necessity in its deductions of practical conclusions (means) from practical principles (ends). But whatever indetermination might be saved in this way (he argues) the will would be made a passive power, and its act would be determined by another. The will would be related to intelligibles just as the sense appetite is related to sensibles. This position would not in fact preserve freedom at all:

Therefore through this indetermination toward knowing something, liberty in the will is not saved ... because it would only incline toward intelligibles as the sensitive appetite inclines toward sensibles, and it would not be free...<sup>16</sup>

Also, Scotus argues, the indetermination in the intellect with respect to opposite choices is a defect, a lack of certainty. If liberty rested on the indetermination of the intellect, then it would rest on a defect, it would be a wretched thing and not

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

(as Scotus wants to insist it is) a perfection.<sup>17</sup> The known object does not necessitate the will either to principles (ends) or to conclusions (means). In other words, Scotus resists any move to make the will's freedom (indetermination) depend on some factor other than itself. The root of freedom—that on account of which the will is simply the will itself. The following texts illustrate this position:

The first potency is generally called nature, and the second is called will. Hence the first division of active principles is into nature and will.<sup>18</sup>

The will is an active principle distinct from the whole genus of active principles which are not the will, distinct because of its opposite mode of acting.<sup>19</sup>

The will's intrinsic indetermination also explains why Scotus insists that the will remains intrinsically free not to love God even when the soul has the beatific vision. That is, even when the intellect has a clear vision of the object that is pure goodness, that object containing no evil or lack of goodness, the will is not necessitated to it, but can either elicit its act or not, can either choose it or not choose it.<sup>20</sup> The root of freedom is intrinsic to the will, rather than grounded in any characteristic of the objects presented to it.

The will's indetermination is of a special kind. Scotus calls it an *indeterminatio limitata*, as opposed to an *indeterminatio contradictoria*. The second kind of indetermination is merely that of a passive potency, which is undetermined only because it lacks a form or act. (The prime example is matter.) Its indetermination is removed when another agent determines it to act, and so in the end it is not open to various effects;

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Cp.: *Op. Om.*, II, d. 25, n. 23, vol. 13, 222b.

<sup>18</sup> *In IX Metaph.*, q. 15, n. 4, vol. 7, 609a.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 8.

<sup>20</sup> That is, the will remains *intrinsically* free or undetermined. But for the blessed in heaven God *eventually* prevents any rejection of God. Hence the impeccability of saints is preserved in this doctrine. See Robert Prentice, O.F.M., "The Degree and Mode of Liberty in the Beatitude of the Blessed," in *Deus et Homo ad Mentem I. Duns Scoti*, pp. 327-342.

given the same conditions, the active agent always determines it to the same effect.<sup>21</sup>

But the indetermination of the will, the *indeterminatio illimitationis*, springs from perfection and act, rather than from any lack, and it removes its own indetermination rather than being determined by another. Hence its indetermination is open to various actions. That is, its indetermination results from its power to determine itself to various effects:

And therefore I say that the will is an active power that is undetermined with an indetermination of a different nature from the indetermination of any other cause. Hence it is an active power indifferently relating to opposite things, which power can determine itself to either of these.<sup>22</sup>

According to Scotus the will moves itself, without need of being moved by another to this act (Scotus denies the principle, "Whatever is in motion is moved by another"). Because the will is an active power, it can move itself; the will reduces itself from first act to second act:

But how does the will move itself as another? I say that the will has first act, and is in first act, and has an equivocal effect, so that it moves the volition insofar as it is in act, because it is not moved according to first act but moves according to first act; but it is in potency to second act and is moved according to second act. Hence, existing in first act, it is moved insofar as it is in potency to second act.<sup>23</sup>

In sum: (1) For Scotus the intellect and will are related in the following way. Each is a partial cause of the act of will. But the intellect contributes its influence (its specification) only if the will elicits its act, and in the presence of any object the will determines itself to act or not. (2) As to the question *why* the will is free, Scotus answers that the will is free of itself, that is the kind of agent it is. The will's freedom is

<sup>21</sup> *Sec. Add.*, 207, Cp. *Op. Ox.*, II, d. 25, n. 22, vol. 13, 212a.

<sup>22</sup> *Sec. Add.*, 207.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 206. See also: Roy E. Effler, O.F.M., *John Duns Scotus and the Principle "Omne Quod Movetur Ab Alio Movetur"* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1962), especially pp. 52-98, 159-167.

not a function of the kind of objects presented it, or of its relation to reason. The will has an intrinsic indetermination, independently of its relation to any other power in the soul. That is, the root of freedom is precisely the will itself.<sup>24</sup>

### Aquinas on Free Choice

The chief difference between Aquinas and Scotus appears even in their terminology. Unlike Scotus, Aquinas does not say unqualifiedly that the *act of willing* is free. Rather, for Aquinas only the act of *choice* (*electio*) can be free.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, because there are conditions for the act of choice, and because these conditions can be indicated, it follows that freedom of choice can be partly explained.

For Aquinas there are three types of appetite or inclination: natural appetite, sensitive appetite, and rational appetite (or will). The natural appetite is an inclination that follows upon the natural form of a thing. Aquinas posits such a principle to account for the constancy in the actions and reactions in natural (as opposed to artistic) things: things act and react in characteristic ways because there is in each a principle inclining it toward, and making possible, certain actions and reac-

<sup>24</sup> It has sometimes been claimed that Scotus denies that one wills whatever one wills under the aspect of good. But this is not his position: "I reply, that an act of positive assent <volitio> with respect to misery is impossible to the will and also an act of positive rejection <nolitio> with respect to beatitude, because misery is not naturally apt to be the object of a positive assent, nor beatitude the object of a positive rejection; just as the act of seeing is excluded from sight with respect to blackness, because it is not naturally apt to be an object of such an act." (Op. Om., IV, d. 49, q. 10, n. 7).

It is true that Scotus holds, contrary to Aquinas, that the will can act against its own natural inclination (Op. Om., IV, d. 49, n. 3). But that is not because he thinks someone can will to be miserable but because he has a different notion of natural inclination from that of Aquinas. Scotus seems to view natural inclinations as egoistical, whereas for Aquinas there is already in the natural inclination a tendency to the goods for others (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, Pt. I, q. 60, a. 4). For Scotus when someone acts against the will's natural inclination he pursues an objective good (hence *sub ratione boni*) even if *per accidens* this means a sacrifice of his own good.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, *ST*, I, q. 82, a. 1; I-II, q. 8, aa. 2-3.

tions and not others.<sup>26</sup> Because the actions and reactions serve to enhance or preserve the thing, Aquinas says that the things's natural appetite inclines it toward its appropriate fullness or perfection.<sup>27</sup>

The sensitive and rational appetites are similar in that they also incline toward a thing's perfection, and are also specified by a form, but in these cases the form is a cognitional form, not the thing's nature. The sensitive appetite follows upon, and is specified by, goods apprehended by sensation. The rational appetite follows upon and is specified by goods apprehended by intellect. By these inclinations, animals (including persons) can desire what they apprehend and not only what they are inclined to by their natures.<sup>28</sup>

For Aquinas each power in a living thing also has a natural appetite, the object of which is called its "proper object," for example color in relation to sight. Hence the will also has a natural appetite, a natural inclination to its proper object.<sup>29</sup> According to Aquinas this natural appetite is a natural and spontaneous desire to be happy (a desire for beatitude),<sup>30</sup> a desire that also includes a natural love for all of the objects of the several powers of man (such as life, truth etc.)<sup>31</sup> Hence this inclination is an act, and not as in Scotus merely a *pondus voluntatis*, a "leaning toward" or tendency prior to act and cognition. Aquinas also argues that since the will is a spiritual power, and since the object of this natural act is goodness as such, the will is moved to this act by God Himself.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to its necessary natural inclination, the will also has inclinations over which it has control, which are *free*. Given a natural love for the end (including a natural love for the objects of all of the human being's natural inclinations) the person begins to reflect or deliberate about possible courses of ac-

2a *ST*, I, q. 80; I-II, q. 1, a. 2.

27 *ST*, I, q. 5, a. 1; I-II, q. 8, a. 1; *Oontra Gentiles*, Bk. III, Ch. 2-3.

2s *ST*, I, q. 80; *OG*, III, 2.

29 *ST*, I, q. 82, a. 1; I-II, q. 1, a. 2.

so *ST*, I-II, q. 1, aa. 4-7; q. 10, a. 1; Cf. *De Malo*, q. 6.

s1 *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 1; q. 10, a. 1.

s2 *ST*, I-II, q. 9, aa. 4 & 6.

tion in order to realize the end (s).<sup>33</sup> In deliberation different possibilities occur, each of which has some aspect of goodness in it. Aquinas asserts that in such a condition the will is *free*:

For man can will and not will, act and not act; also he can will this or will that, do this or do that. The -explanation of which is drawn from the very power of reason. For whatever reason can apprehend as good the will can tend toward. Now reason can apprehend as good not only that it will or act, but also that it not will and not act. And again, in particular goods reason can consider an aspect of some good and a lack of some good, which has the aspect of evil, and according to this it can apprehend any of these goods as to be chosen or to be avoided.<sup>34</sup>

In certain situations (not all) the will is free or undetermined in relation to objects that it is within its power to incline toward. This is the basic meaning of "free" as applied to choice according to Aquinas, that is, not necessitated by other forces or conditions, having the inclination toward a particular good within one's own power.

The passage quoted above does not seem to be meant as a proof *that* there is free choice.<sup>35</sup> Rather, it seems to presuppose that the will's choice is free and then in some way to give an account of why it is.

Two points are involved in this account. First, Aquinas asserts that the will can tend toward anything that reason can apprehend as good. In other texts he makes this point by saying that the will has a natural inclination toward goodness in general. That is, the will is not, like sight for example, necessitated to a limited formal object. The formal object of the will is just goodness in general.<sup>36</sup> Second, at least in some situa-

<sup>33</sup> *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 4.

<sup>34</sup> *ST*, I-II, q. 13, a. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Perhaps a proof could be constructed from various texts of Aquinas: viz., by listing all the possible determinants of the will's act in relation to particular goods other than the will itself (e.g., in the orders of final, formal, and efficient causality), and then excluding all of them. The difficulty would be to make sure one had listed *all* possible determinants. Moreover, the proof that the will is not necessitated by an efficient cause presents particular difficulties. See *ST*, I, q. 82, aa. 1 & 2.

<sup>36</sup> *saST*, I-II, q.10, a. 1; *De Malo* q. 6.

tions each object (alternative for action) is good in one respect and lacking or bad in another respect. In the context this would mean that each alternative offers some good not offered by the others. This argument does not of itself prove there is free choice, for it has not excluded every possible way the will could be necessitated. But the argument does give, in some way, an account of *why* the will's choice is free. The will is free at least partly because reason can present to the will irreducibly attractive alternatives for action.

He elaborates somewhat on this point when, in discussing free choice in the *Summa Theologiae*, he considers the objection of intellectual determinism. The objection quotes Pseudo-Dionysius to the effect that one does not will evil as such. It concludes that therefore the will necessarily tends to the good that is proposed to it.<sup>37</sup> Aquinas answers that:

The will cannot tend to anything except under the aspect of good. But because good is multiple <*multiplex*>, on account of this the will is not determined to one.<sup>38</sup>

The point seems to be that what is better from one perspective might not be better from another. That the good is *multiplex* implies that it is not univocal, and therefore that there is no single scale one is compelled to use by which to measure the goodness of the various alternatives.<sup>39</sup> Hence in another place Aquinas says that nothing prevents two things being equal from one consideration while one excels the other from another consideration.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike Scotus, then, Aquinas holds that the question of why the will is free is legitimate, and he seems to propose an (at least partial) answer to it. The will is free in relation to particular goods (partly) because of two facts: 1) the will has a

<sup>37</sup> *ST*, I, q. 82, a. 1, obj. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, ad. 1.

<sup>39</sup> For a precise exposition and development of this point in a contemporary context, see: Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., Germain Grisez, Olaf Tollefsen, *Free Choice: A Self-Referential Argument* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1976), 15-26, 66-77.

<sup>40</sup> *ST*, q. 13, a. 6, ad 3.

natural inclination open to any intelligible good whatever; reason grasps in each alternative for action an aspect of goodness not had by the other alternatives.<sup>41</sup>

Yet this position does not settle the question of how the intellect and will are related within an act of choice. According to Aquinas the free choice occurs in the following way. The will is initially actualized by an act of love for happiness. Given this act, the will remains indifferently related to the particular goods that arise as alternatives to pursue.<sup>42</sup> The free choice consists in the will, being thus actualized, inclining itself toward one of the possibilities being deliberated. "And similarly the will, through this, that it wills the end, moves itself to willing those which are toward the end."<sup>43</sup>

This act is an actuation of a capacity, a transition from potency to act, in two respects. It involves an actualization both in the order of exercise (to act or not act) and in the order of specification (the kind of act done).<sup>44</sup> The act is essentially an act of will, but Aquinas argues that it also includes the influence (*virtus*) of an act of intellect. Already actualized by its tendency toward the end (happiness) the will must move the intellect to deliberate (or take counsel):

And indeed, as was said, the will moves itself. Insofar as it wills the end, it reduces itself to the willing of those which are toward the end. Now it cannot do this except by means of counsel: for when someone wills to be healed, he begins to reflect <*cogitare*> about how he can attain this, and through such reflection he comes to the conclusion that he can be healed through medicine, and this he wills.<sup>45</sup>

Aquinas argues that the act of intellect alone (or reason alone) could never put an end to deliberation or counsel, be-

<sup>41</sup> This point explains why Aquinas and Scotus differ on the question of the will's relation to God, pure Goodness. For Aquinas the conditions for free choice obtain only in relation to particular goods. Hence he holds that if the person has the beatific vision the will loves God by an intrinsic necessity. See *ST*, I, q. 82, a. 2; I-II, q. 4, a. 4; q. 5, a. 4.

<sup>42</sup> E.g., *ST*, I-II, q. 10, a. 2.

<sup>43</sup> *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 3c.

<sup>44</sup> *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 1e & ad 1.

<sup>45</sup> *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 4c; cf. q. 9, a. 3; q. 6, aa. 1 & 2.

cause none of the particular goods is necessary in relation to the end. What ends deliberation is the act of election: the will moving itself to a particular object, but moving itself to that object according to an order of reason, so that its act contains a specification from reason. The act is simultaneously volitive and reasonable (not necessarily of *right* reason, though). The following text explains this point:

Now it should be observed that, in the acts of the soul, the act which is essentially of one potency or habit, receives the form and species from the higher potency or habit, according as the inferior is ordained by the superior . . . . Now it is manifest that, in a way, reason precedes the will, and ordains its act: namely insofar as the will tends to its object according to the order of reason, since the apprehensive power presents the object to the appetite. Therefore, that act by which the will tends toward something that is proposed as good, in that it is ordained to the end by reason, is materially an act of the will, but formally an act of the reason.<sup>46</sup>

Several things should be noted here. First, although the will's act is influenced by reason, it is Aquinas's doctrine that the act of *electio* (choice) is essentially an act of will. To say that it is formally an act of reason is only to say that the form or specification of the act is from reason. Second, the assertion that the will tends to a particular object according to the order of reason could be misunderstood. Aquinas does not mean that one wills what he wills only because of reason's judgment. In fact, in a situation of choice there is not just one order of reason; there are many—as many as there are alternatives for action.

The point is that whatever is willed is willed according to *some* order of reason. Whatever is willed is willed because one has grasped through reason some goodness in the object, either as good in itself or as having an order to something good in itself. Aquinas puts it this way: the object is willed because of its order to the end, that is, because it has an order to one's overall flourishing, one's beatitude or happiness. That is, Aquinas is not saying that reason specifies *which* order will be

<sup>46</sup> *ST*, I-II, q. 13, a. 2c.

followed, but that reason provides the orders of the particular objects to beatitude (or happiness), no matter what object is eventually chosen. Hence for Aquinas the power which settles which object (along with its order to the end) is followed is precisely the will. "The will moves itself. Insofar as it wills the end, it reduces itself to the willing of those which are toward the end."<sup>47</sup> The will determines itself to will this or that particular object, even though the order of each particular object to the end, and hence its ability to attract the will, is provided by reason or intellect.

For Aquinas, then, the intellect's work is not sufficient to determine the will's choice. What ultimately settles which good will be followed is the will's moving itself to a particular alternative. But this is another way of saying: a) that the intellect and will are partial causes of the act of choice; b) that the intellect contributes its influence only if the will elicits its act; and c) that in the presence of any particular object the will determines itself to act or not. And that, of course, is the core of Scotus's doctrine. In other words, on the question of how intellect and will are related within an act of choice, Aquinas and Scotus are in fundamental agreement.

It might be objected that Aquinas's doctrine on apparent goods and their role in bad choices does not support this interpretation. Aquinas distinguishes between true goods and merely apparent goods, and holds that the will, "is never moved to an evil, unless that which is not good appear good in some respect to the reason; so that, the will would never tend to evil unless there were ignorance or error in the reason."<sup>48</sup> In other words, it might seem that Aquinas holds that somehow all evil choices, i.e. sins, are due to intellectual failures, not to failures in the will. And if this so, then it could not be the will that ultimately settles what is pursued in every free choice, as I have interpreted his position.

According to Aquinas the primary subject of sin is the will,<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *ST*, I-II, q. 9, a. 4c.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 71, a. 2c.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 74, a. 1.

but the other powers of the soul can be the subjects of sin secondarily, inasmuch as they either are commanded by the will or are somehow causes of the sinful act completed by the will.<sup>50</sup> The question is, what does Aquinas mean by "causes" in this context, especially with respect to the intellect?

Aquinas argues that a sin is essentially a free choice with a lack of due order to the rule of right reason or of divine law. In speaking of sin's causes, these two components, one positive and one negative or privative, must be distinguished.<sup>51</sup> His doctrine here can be divided into three points. (1) The will is the *direct* efficient cause (*per se causa, agens*) of the sinful act insofar as the act is positive.<sup>52</sup> (2) The will is only the *indirect* (*per accidens*) cause of the lack of due order in the act: this is because a lack is not something one can directly will. The sinner chooses an act that he *knows* is disordered, and he *accepts* this disorder as part of his act, in that he could do another act that does not have that lack. But this disorder is neither good in itself nor contributive to anything he views as good in itself, and so is not directly willed.<sup>53</sup>

(3) The direct cause of the lack of order in the free choice, in the sense of being a lack which is a necessary condition of the disorder, is a lack in the reason, namely, the lack of consideration of the rule of right reason or of divine law. Aquinas summarizes his position in the following terse passage: "Therefore the will lacking the direction of the rule of reason and of the divine law, and intending some mutable good, causes the act of sin directly, but the inordinateness of the act indirectly, and beside the intention: for the lack of order in the act comes from the lack of direction in the will."<sup>54</sup>

Aquinas's position here is a metaphysical analysis of the necessary conditions of a sinful act, and so the language is perhaps misleading. Nevertheless, he clearly holds that reason (or

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 74.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 71, aa. 1, 2, 6; q. 75, aa. 1-3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 75, a. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 73, a. 3, ad 2; a. 6c; q. 72, a. 5, ad 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 75, a. 1e.

the defect in reason) is not a *sufficient* cause of the sinful act, but only a condition of it. In another place, speaking primarily of a sin's external conditions, he says:

The internal cause of sin is both the will, as *completing* the sinful act, and the reason, as lacking the due rule, and the appetite, as inclining.... Therefore something external can be a cause moving to sin, yet not as sufficiently inducing to sin: but the will alone is the cause sufficiently completing the sin.<sup>55</sup>

That is, for an act to be sinful one must act according to some consideration other than the moral rule; hence the non-consideration of the moral rule is a necessary condition of the sinful act.<sup>56</sup> This doctrine in no way conflicts with the pre-eminence of the will in free choice but rather reaffirms it.

Two further points should be noticed. First, for Aquinas the consideration or non-consideration of the moral rule is within the will's control. On Aquinas's doctrine one is guilty for *voluntarily* acting according to some rule other than right reason or divine law, for he holds that the sinner thereby shows *contempt* for God's law.<sup>57</sup> Second, this non-consideration is not an ignorance or a forgetting of the moral rule; it is merely a focusing of one's attention elsewhere, on the limited good (pleasure, wealth, power, etc.) to be attained in or by the act.<sup>58</sup>

As for Aquinas's use of the term "apparent goods," he does hold that the sinner chooses an "apparent good" and not a true good. But, when he uses the term in these contexts, it

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 75, a. 3c.; Cf. q. 75, a. 2, ad 1.

<sup>56</sup> Explaining the causes of sin, Aquinas writes: "Now two causes may be assigned to a negation. First, the absence of cause, i.e. the negation of the cause is the cause of the negation as such. For the removal of the effect follows the removal of the cause." (*ST*, I-II, q. 75, a. 1e.) Applied in this case: the removal of what would cause order in the will is the direct cause of its disorder. The cause of due order in the will would be the direction of right reason. Hence the lack of this direction, Aquinas says, is the *per se* "cause" of the disorder of the will's act. And yet the lack of direction from right reason, he makes clear in the same article, is due to the will preferring a mutable good to the following of the moral rule.

<sup>57</sup> *ST*, I-II, q. 73, a. 3, ad 2; a. 6c; q. 72, a. 5, ad 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 77, a. 2c.

does not mean an object that has absolutely no good for a human being in it. Rather, in these contexts, the term refers to an object that may be good for a limited aspect of the person, but does not lead (at least in these circumstances) to the person's true ultimate end.<sup>59</sup> It is good in a certain respect, but not unqualifiedly.<sup>60</sup> When Aquinas says that the sinner chooses a merely apparent good, by "apparent good" he means simply any object the choice of which is immoral.

He uses this language to make a moral point. As we have seen, for Aquinas, in a situation of free choice the will is presented with various possibilities each of which has some goodness not had by the others. From one consideration one of the possibilities appears best while from another consideration another possibility appears best. To call the immoral object an apparent good is to say that the various considerations, according to which the alternatives can be compared, are not equal. One could consider the alternatives on the basis of pleasure, of wealth, of power, or so on. Depending on what perspective one takes, a different alternative will appear best. But the perspective of *right reason* denotes the *whole* perspective (not a utilitarian standard, but the love of God and neighbor and the respect for the human goods this entails).<sup>61</sup> This perspective is not equal to the others. Hence one can say, if all the alternatives except one are contrary to right reason, that, *absolutely* speaking, the morally good alternative is the best and the others are only apparent goods. Yet the other alternatives may offer some limited, real goodness. Moreover, the perspective of the whole takes on a kind of particularity in respect to human reason and will: following right reason, for the time being at least, brings one only some goods and not others. So, paradoxically, the whole perspective can appear to us in this life as limited.

But acting on this limited perspective is a deliberate, *volun-*

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., q. 73, a. 8, ad 2; q. 74, a. I, ad I; q. 75, a. 2c; a. 4, ad I; q. 77, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>60</sup>*De Malo*, q. 11, a. 1e.

<sup>61</sup>*ST*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2; q. 100, a. 3, ad 1.

tary act, not an intellectual error. Sin is a deliberate choice to do what one knows is morally wrong, accepting this moral wrong as the price one pays for obtaining the good one primarily intends.

At other times, when not speaking directly about sin, Aquinas uses the term "apparent good" to mean an object that is not really perfective of the agent at all but merely apparently so.<sup>62</sup> Yet, obviously, the fact that such an object can be chosen does not entail that such a choice is due only to a fault in reason. As indicated, for Aquinas there is no sin unless there is a conscious fault in the will. An object's appearing good, its appearing *best*, and its appearing *morally* good, are not the same at all. If one chooses what merely appears to be morally good then one is simply acting on an erroneous conscience, and if the conscience is inculpably erroneous there is no sin. And, as already noted, in a situation where free choice occurs none of the objects ever appears best from every perspective. Hence Aquinas's position that something can appear good which is not, is not incompatible with his position that it is the will, ultimately, that settles which alternative will be pursued, in bad choices as well as good ones. Aquinas's doctrines on "apparent goods" and reason as a "cause" of sin are not valid objections to my interpretation.

In sum, Aquinas and Scotus agree that the intellect causes the act of will in one sense and not in another. The intellect causes the act of will in the sense that, given that the will wills x, x specifies this act of willing and it is the intellect that presents to the will the object x. The intellect does not cause the act of will in the sense of specifying or determining that x rather than y be willed. Aquinas and Scotus agree on what free choice essentially means, though for Scotus the will's freedom has greater scope (extending even to the intrinsic ability not to love God, while seeing Him as He is in Himself). They agree on how intellect and will are related in the act of choice.

Where they differ is on the following points. First, for Scotus

<sup>62</sup> For example, *ibid.*, q. 8, a. 1e.

the will is free of itself; that is just the kind of agent it is. **It** seems that for Scotus, *The will is free* is a *per se nota* proposition.<sup>63</sup> For Aquinas the will's freedom has certain conditions, namely its relation to reason and the kind of objects presented to it. That is why for Aquinas, but not for Scotus, there are situations where the will is not free.

Nevertheless, one must be careful to distinguish two distinct questions. "Why does the will have the ability to choose freely?" is, according to Aquinas, a legitimate question. But this is different from asking, "Why did someone choose this rather than that; or in other words, what is the cause of someone's willing this rather than that?" For Aquinas as well as for Scotus, this last question has no *sufficient* answer other than, "Because he did." For Aquinas as well as for Scotus, there are no *sufficient* conditions of the choice antecedent to the choice itself.

Second, for Aquinas the will is moved to its initial act by God; in Scotus there is no need for this, since he denies the principle, "Whatever is in motion is moved by another." (For Scotus, God holds everything in being, including acts of willing, but He need not *move* the will to act.) Aquinas calls this initial operation the will's "natural appetite." For Scotus the will's natural appetite is not an act; it is only a *pondus* or a "leaning-toward," and it precedes cognition. **It** does not necessitate any act, but only makes actions consistent with it easier and more pleasant.<sup>64</sup> Hence for Aquinas the will's freedom occurs entirely *within* the scope of its natural appetite; for Scotus the will's freedom is identified with an ability to *restrain* its natural inclination (to self-perfection). Hence their theories of why the will is free seem to influence their attitudes toward natural inclinations; and their different attitudes to natural inclinations seem to influence their ethical positions.<sup>65</sup> These seem to be important differences, and *perhaps* they could

<sup>63</sup> Cf.: "Voluntas, quae est libera per essentiam." (Scotus, *Op. Om.*, I, d. 17, q. 3, n. 5.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Scotus, *Op. Om.*, IV, d. 49, q. 10, vol. 21, 318ff.

<sup>65</sup> See note 1.

justify calling Aquinas an "intellectualist" and Scotus a "voluntarist (in that the will is less integrated with the rest of the person for Scotus than it is for Aquinas)." <sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, to use these terms with any other senses in order to divide their positions would seem to me to be misleading.

Despite their theories about the source of the will's freedom—an inherent property for Scotus, an indifference resulting from the will's initial act given it by God together with its relation to reason, for Aquinas—the fact remains that Aquinas and Scotus agree on the fundamental tenet that, ultimately, in a free choice it is an act of will that settles which alternative will be pursued.

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<sup>66</sup> While Aquinas calls the will a "passive power" and Scotus calls it an "active power," this difference seems to be only verbal. What Aquinas means by "passive" when speaking of operative powers is simply a power whose object is related to it as measure of its immanent act (cp. *ST*, I, q. 77, a. 3c. with *ibid.*, q. 56, a. 1e). Being specified by an object (hence "passive" for Aquinas) is compatible with not being necessitated by the object. Scotus, however, seems to take "passive power" as meaning one for which the object necessitates its act. See above, pp. 9-11.

THE MORAL-NONMORAL DISTINCTION IN  
CATHOLIC ETHICS: THE STERILIZATION OF  
MORAL LANGUAGE

*Introduction.*

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• { CHARD McCORMICK has achieved an ascendancy among Catholic moral theologians, a position he has earned after two decades of reporting developments in moral theology and articulating his often judicious moral positions. He also stands as a principal partner in the dialogue between Catholic and Protestant ethics. McCormick's gradually emerging moral methodology and the ethical positions which he takes have received mixed assessments. The literature abounds with supporters who praise him for contributing to a nuanced and sensible *aggiornamento* in Catholic moral thought and with opponents who accuse him of serious deviation from the Catholic moral tradition.

I suspect that a weariness is developing in the debate over (1) whether McCormick holds a strictly teleological theory of moral justification; (2) whether such a theory is (a) compatible with Catholic moral teaching at least as far back as Thomas Aquinas and (b) philosophically tenable; and (3) whether the thrust of McCormick's position will be to (a) undermine a coherent Catholic morality or (b) make the entire enterprise epistemologically more humble and honest.

Not wanting to enter the debate on any of these points, I wish to probe McCormick's moral methodology at another, and I think, neglected level. I would like to subject his position, especially his employment of moral terminology and moral notions, to an analysis which moral theologians often fail to attend adequately to themselves, often at the expense of the cogency of their positions. One cannot avoid the impression that the language of Catholic moral theology has in the

recent past obscured rather than clarified Catholic moral teaching. In addition to the magisterial use of Latin phrases, the employment of scholastic distinctions unfamiliar to modern folk contributes to the impression that Catholic moral theology is written in a private language inaccessible to the unschooled. My reading of McCormick is that he strives for clarity. At the same time, he is acutely conscious of having been misunderstood at a fundamental level, namely, at the level of moral terminology, which, in turn, has made his moral position suspect.

McCormick's own moral methodology has been influenced decisively by continental theologians Peter Knauer, Louis Janssens, and Bruno Schuller. It is their approaches, albeit with refinements, which McCormick has adopted; consequently, an evaluation of their employment of moral terms and notions applies to McCormick's use of moral language as well. I shall argue below that Catholic moral theology these days suffers most from a lack of conceptual clarity that is perpetuated by-and perhaps originates in-the ethical analysis by these men. My modest contribution shall be to suggest why their moral arguments potentially obscure and misstate the moral issues at hand.

In a recent issue of the "Notes" McCormick faults opponents for not understanding the distinction between "moral" evil and "nonmoral" (or "pre-moral" or "ontic") evil. Defending the distinction he writes

For centuries Catholic theologians have referred to certain effects of our conduct as *mala physica*, in contrast to *mala moralia*. For example, what are we to call the killing that occurs in legitimate self-defense? ... *Malum* (mere) *physicum* was the traditional way of describing such evils.

Contemporary theologians rightly think the world *physicum* is almost invariably misleading, as suggesting and being restricted to bodily harms and harms due to commission. The concept is far broader. It includes not only harm to reputation, etc., but even the imperfections and incompleteness due to our limitations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Notes," *Theological Studies*, Vol. 42, no. 1 (March, 1981), p. 78.

In a footnote to the same passage he again tries to clarify the distinction:

If my legitimate self-defense resulted in the killing of a person, that killing would be classified as a nonmoral or ontic evil ...

The distinction, he notes, has been "so badly misunderstood, frequently distorted, firmly resisted." What of this moral terminology—which of course he has inherited from these European moralists? I will argue that it contains serious misconceptions and must be used very carefully, if not avoided altogether.

Two centuries ago David Hume spawned a serious misconception by claiming that our moral perceptions do not depend upon any "matter of fact or real existence" (*Treatise*, Book III, Part I, Section I). Other moral philosophers have followed suit, arguing that the ability to describe a human activity (its is-ness) bore no immediate relationship to making a moral evaluation of it (its oughtness). The history of modern moral philosophy has been one of attempting to correct the mistaken judgments about the nature of morality which have derived from the is-ought dichotomy. In what follows it will become clear that McCormick and those moralists who have influenced him are echoing the distinction that has plagued our moral life and discourse ever since Hume. My analysis and critique of the current distinction being made between "moral" and "nonmoral" will rely on Julius Kovesi's excellent analysis of the status of moral logic and language (*Moral Notions*, 1967), perhaps the best refutation of the is-ought distinction to be found.

Recall that McCormick aspires to reconcile two moral perspectives which he believes are only *apparently* opposed. From the first perspective certain specifiable acts, if done intentionally, are always morally wrong. Thus, if an act is accurately described as "killing an innocent person" then its evaluation as "murder" and "morally wrong" follow automatically. Description and evaluation are not separable operations but are done simultaneously. From the second perspective, act-de-

scriptions (e.g., "killing an innocent person") are never sufficient grounds for moral evaluations (e.g., the moral wrongness implied by the term "murder") ; rather, additional deliberation is necessary to determine whether there are reasons to warrant either a positive or a negative moral evaluation. McCormick wants to affirm both perspectives. The first perspective accurately reflects what happens much of the time: act-evaluations follow almost automatically from act-descriptions. But McCormick also supports the second perspective from which moral justification can be done. In principle, he argues, there is another step between description and evaluation, a decision-making process he calls "proportionate reasoning." The latter requires a determination of our course of action according to whether it produces or preserves a "basic human good" without sacrificing a more important human good. If this can be done, an act is evaluated as "morally right."

Although I have already indicated that I would not enter the debate concerning where McCormick belongs on the spectrum of moral teleologists, I must still remark in passing that the two moral perspectives McCormick wants to pull together cannot be merged because the first accepts a class of acts which always merit moral condemnation (if done intentionally) and the second does not. Although McCormick writes at length of the "virtually" exceptionless prohibitions of certain acts, it is never the nature of the acts themselves which makes them morally wrong but the negative effects which they can be expected to produce. As I conceive the matter, as long as a weighing of anticipated good and evil plays a *decisive* role in the moral evaluation of our acts, then there are no acts which in principle merit simultaneous description and (negative) moral evaluation (e.g., "killing an innocent person" if done intentionally is "murder" and thus "morally wrong") as is presupposed by the first perspectives. It is clear that McCormick cannot hold both perspectives and is in fact a proponent of the second position. My immediate objection to his position lies in the distinction he presumes between the de-

scription and evaluation of moral acts. **It** is one of two distinctions that have contributed to muddled moral arguments.

McCormick's advocacy of the second moral perspective relies upon his adoption of certain moral concepts from Janssens, Knauer and Schuller, concepts that mislead and do not serve McCormick's purposes well. Recall that by advocating the second moral perspective McCormick is claiming that in principle there is always more to moral evaluation than correctly describing an act (the "more" being a calculation of the possible good and evil consequences). Now McCormick is surely right that judging a moral agent requires more than description. **It** will be necessary to examine the circumstances: perhaps the agent was not fully responsible for his conduct or his action was "inadvertent," allowing for the agent to be excused from full or even partial moral blame. But McCormick's discussion of proportionate reasoning suggests that an act is first of all morally neutral, neither morally right nor morally wrong until its consequences can be assessed. In other words, acts are "morally open"—that is, they are open to more than one moral evaluation. I will argue that there are human acts which are not morally open in this sense and that to describe them is also to evaluate them. By making the distinction between "moral" and "nonmoral" (or "ontic" or "pre-moral") evil and between act evaluation and description Janssens, Knauer, Schuller and McCormick are making the claim that the moral evaluation of many acts remains an open question. While they may be providing a necessary corrective to the excessive certitude with which Catholic moral teaching is often advanced, I believe that they are doing so at considerable expense to the proper use of moral logic and language. These Catholic moralists ought to be especially wary in light of the heavy price moral philosophy has been paying ever since Hume made his distinction.

#### *Moral and Nonmoral Evils*

In arguing that the directness or indirectness of an agent's intention is never the decisive factor for determining the moral rightness of an act, McCormick writes

... if there are higher values, and if they will be lost or threatened unless one sacrifices the lesser values, and if this choice will not subvert the relevant values in the long run, then what is wrong with choosing, reluctantly to be sure, *to do the* nonmoral evil that the greater good may be achieved? Is there a reasonable, defensible alternative to this? If there is, I do not see it. This leads to the conclusion that in those instances where nonmoral evil has been viewed as justified because it is indirect, the psychological indirectness was not radically decisive at all. What was decisive is the proportionate reason for acting. Similarly, in those instances that have traditionally been viewed as immoral because the intentionality was direct, psychological directness itself is not decisive. The immorality must be argued from lack of proportionate reason.<sup>2</sup>

McCormick is not alone in making the distinction between moral and nonmoral, but follows the lead of a number of other Catholic moralists. For instance, William Van der Marek maintains that physical acts alone are not decisive for moral evaluation and that what is required is consideration of whether or not an act is "community-enhancing."<sup>3</sup>

Louis Janssens argues that there are two distinguishable kinds of evil effects of human acts, antic evil and moral evil. The execution of a convicted criminal produces an ontic evil (death) and is an ontically evil rather than morally evil act. Likewise, killing an unjust aggressor in self-defense produces an antic evil but is not morally wrong. In the first instance, the act of killing has been justified (though in many quarters that is being questioned) for preserving the common good and in the second instance for preserving one's own life. But despite Janssens's copious quotation of Thomas what is noticeably absent from both Thomas Aquinas's and subsequent accounts of

2 "The Ambiguity of Moral Choice," in *Doing Evil to Achieve Good*, ed. by Richard McCormick and Paul Ramsey. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1979) p. 41.

a Cf. *Toward a Christian Ethic*. There Van der Marek writes that the evaluation of an act can only be made "after its human significance and content have been established," and that "to call something 'good' or 'evil' is . . . a highly pragmatic statement that can be made only after the event, after one has been able to establish the 'results' actually produced by the action" (p. 61).

these moral issues are any references to an "ontic" evil being occasioned by capital punishment or self-defense. Furthermore, the killings involved are held to be justified exceptions to the prohibition against killing rather than immoral acts. Nowhere are they referred to as "ontic" or "non-moral" acts.

What does Janssens mean by "ontic" evils? He does not *only* mean negative states of human affairs such as the pain resulting from cancer or being hit by a falling tree, and death ("which radically defeats our will to live"), but he sees ontic evil as the result of universal human "handicaps and shortcomings" and "invincible ignorance and error which frustrate the reason and the will." That ontic evil is closely connected to what human beings *do to one another* becomes apparent when Janssens asserts that ontic evil exists because we are mortals who are unable to be all things to all people and to do everything we ought to do. This is, Janssens acknowledges, "our sinful situation," which I suspect he would agree involves more than simply evil which happened to us as part of our condition as mortals but is something we actively bring about by what we do (or neglect doing) to other people. After all, St. Paul's sorrow (Romans 7) for being unable to do the good which he knew he ought to do is more than a recognition of the human condition but is an acknowledgment of moral failure.

What is the relationship between ontic and moral evil and how are we to evaluate the acts which produce them? Janssens argues that while moral evil does produce ontic evil, ontic evil does not entail moral evil. While he concedes that ontic evil is significant because it is

harmful and detrimental to the development of individuals and communities [about which] morality is chiefly concerned<sup>4</sup>

he believes that a moral evil is present (and the act which produced it is evaluated as immoral) only when the production of the ontic evil is the *ultimate object* of an agent's intention. So unless an agent has as his primary intention to

<sup>4</sup> "Ontic Evil and Moral Evil," *Louvain Studies* 4 (1972), pp. 67 and 69.

bring about an ontic evil there is no moral evil present. Hence according to Janssens, "moral" evil is a very small class of evils and "immoral" acts a narrow range of human acts.

Bruno Schuller's definition of an immoral act is an equally narrow stipulation of moral evil. In his account, the only evil that is surely *moral* stems from acts whose effect is to turn the agent or others away from God. Thus, "leading another into sin" and "cooperating in the sin of another" are always morally evil acts. Schuller seems to have in mind only those acts solely intended to turn us away from God (e.g. apostasy, blasphemy) since all acts of hostility against other persons can be construed as alienating us from God. Does this mean that, strictly speaking, only acts directed against God are morally evil? Schuller would deny this, I am sure. Yet, he writes that under certain circumstances the killing of innocent persons may be a "nonmoral" evil, depending on the presence or absence of a "commensurate reason" for doing such. Schuller places other acts (e.g. infidelity, lying and acts of injustice) in the same light of moral neutrality as well.

The distinction McCormick makes between "moral" evil and "nonmoral" (or premoral or physical) evil is surely akin to if not directly informed by Van der Marek, Janssens and Schuller. Like Janssens, McCormick includes as nonmoral evils not only illness, accident and death but also acts done by human beings which have a significant impact on the welfare of other human beings. What makes these acts nonmoral (initially at least) from McCormick's point of view is the fact that they cannot be summarily evaluated for their human meaning and moral significance. While we can describe "what happened" as the producing of an evil effect, the evil has only the status of "nonmoral" until we consider two items: (1) such act-features as circumstances, agent intentionality and agent knowledge of what he was doing; and (2) the presence or absence of a proportionate reason (the preservation of a good of at least comparable value to the good not being preserved) which would render the act and the evil it produced "nonmoral" or "moral," respectively.

We are left with a number of senses in which an act may be called "moral" or "nonmoral": Janssens suggests the distinction rests on whether the agent's ultimate intentionality is to produce harm; Schuller suggests that the only real moral evils are those which cause irreversible alienation from God; Van der Marek and McCormick suggest that moral evil is at hand when no comparable moral good is being served. Schiiller's definition of "moral" has more to do with our relationship to God (i.e. acts done directly against God which have the effect of causing our (or another's) damnation) than with human relationships. The other definitions are equally odd because they miss the fact that a *moral* act and a *moral* evil effect are defined as such because they are recognized as having a significant impact upon other human beings. By creating the category "nonmoral" in reference to these kinds of human acts two confusions are likely to arise.

First, although acts need not necessarily be described and evaluated from a *moral* point of view (grounds such as etiquette, aesthetics and efficiency could also come into play) what would it mean to describe "nonmoral" or evaluate from a *nonmoral* point of view? The fact that it did not pertain to human beings? That it did not pertain to serious matters? That an agent could not be held fully responsible for it? What is suggested is that a range of human acts having serious effects on human beings, not only undesirable states of affairs such as pain and death, but also acts which human beings do to bring about these states, may be bracketed off from acts legitimately described as moral. Obviously, McCormick does not mean this, but only resorts to the term "nonmoral" to refer to acts and the evils they produce which there is proportionate reason for allowing. McCormick will respond that certainly the acts in question may properly be described as concerning a moral matter, but that we do not necessarily evaluate them as immoral from the agent's perspective" (i.e., something to blame the agent for doing) because we need to know more (e.g. did the agent *intend* it, was it *unavoidable*, was the agent fully responsible etc.). What McCormick has in mind

by "non-moral" is "not immoral under the circumstances." But what "nonmoral " suggests is " not in the moral arena at all."

A second and related misreading is liable to occur as well. By suggesting that what is at some point a nonmoral (or pre-moral) evil may become a moral evil, the misconception is being created that at a "preliminary" stage of moral evaluation there are only "brute facts" (to use Elisabeth Anscombe's phrase) which, taken alone, have no moral significance until certain moral criteria are introduced. Thus, it is being erroneously suggested that description and evaluation are logically distinct operations which are done in that order.<sup>5</sup>

It may be most helpful at this point to ask why the distinction has been viewed as an important one by a number of Catholic moralists. An answer would seem to lie in an excess of the manualist moral tradition which these moralists wish to correct, namely, the excessive moral certitude with which the manualists undertook moral evaluation. As a necessary corrective, what is now being said is that certain moral acts ought not to be given automatic moral condemnation, and that another evaluative step, determining the "proportionality" of the good and evil which is being brought about, must be done. To which moral acts do they refer? While they do make passing references to killing, lying, stealing, etc., it is the issues of birth control and sexual ethics in general where they think a corrective is most needed.

Peter Knauer cites as the "severe" moral position on contraception the one in which any form of artificial contraception for any reason is immoral. That position, he argues, rests on a misreading of *Casti Connubii*, which states that contraception is immoral when the conjugal act, by nature directed to the procreation of offspring, is deprived of this natural mean-

<sup>5</sup> McMormick implies this once more in a recent issue of the "Notes": "Thus moral evil, in contrast to premoral evil, is understood in an objective sense-as harm (deprivation, etc.) unjustifiably caused. But before we know whether it is justifiably caused, it is said to be ontic, premoral, or nonmoral evil." *Theological Studies*, Vol. 43, no. I (March, 1982), p. 81, n. 33.

ing and power *by intention*. What is being misread, argues Knauer, is the sense of "intention." For if the "commensurate reason" of intending to promote marital unity is present this intention gives the act its moral meaning (and rightness). Knauer writes that

In a case where there is a commensurate reason for the prevention of pregnancy, the moral content of the act is not the fact of contraception but the nature of the commensurate reason.

He continues:

In ethics, care must be taken not to identify the physical or psychological order directly with the moral order. A physical evil may be caused or permitted and willed in a psychological sense, and yet the act is not necessarily a moral evil. **It** is a moral evil if the act has no commensurate reason but in its existential entirety contradicts the value sought. **It** then becomes in a moral sense contrary to nature.<sup>6</sup>

Here, then, is the distinction between a moral evil and a physical evil. Louis Janssens's discussion of the moral-nonmoral distinction also takes as a primary example the morality of contraception. Given the dual ends of marital intercourse and the need to promote both of these "goods," he concludes:

Marital intercourse can be called neither moral nor immoral when it is the object of a judgment which considers it without due regard for its end. A moral evaluation is only possible if it is a study of the totality of the conjugal act, viz., when one considers whether or not the conjugal act (means) negates the requirements of love and responsible parenthood.<sup>7</sup>

While Knauer, Janssens and a number of other Catholic moralists who argue along the same lines may be right on the issue of contraception, their arguments are tortuous and misleading. Apparently the only effective strategy they can think of to counter the sin-against-nature charge of the tradition in the area of sexual ethics is to say not only that nature is

<sup>6</sup> "The Principle of Double Effect," *Readings in Moral Theology, Number One*, ed. by Charles E. Curran and Richard McCormick, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press), pp. 31-32.

<sup>7</sup> "Ontic Evil and Moral Evil," pp. 72-73.

no moral teacher but also that the issues are not moral ones until we know more about them. A linguistic confusion is also apparent. Although they refer to precisely the same thing, Knauer distinguishes moral from physical acts while Janssens makes the distinction between moral and immoral acts.

After demonstrating the distinction in the area of contraception, Janssens goes on to suggest that moral evaluation in other (all other?) acts as well may find us mentioning "moral" evil prematurely; having failed to consider adequately the end of an act and the agent's purposes, we now confuse "moral" and "ontic" evil. Janssens argues, for example, that simply to equate "saying something which is not true" with "lying" would involve an insufficiently discriminating moral judgment.

Originally applied to sexual morality, the distinction has been generalized to apply to all other moral categories, including acts once judged to be intrinsically wrong (e.g., the killing of innocents). McCormick recently insisted that we keep straight the difference between "evaluative" terms and "descriptive" terms. There are, he wrote, only a few value terms ("compound value terms," he calls them) which "contain their own negative moral evaluation."<sup>8</sup> From the acts he lists which do *not* contain their own evaluation, we can conclude that there are few value terms indeed. He says

... individual actions independent of their morally significant circumstances (e.g., killing, contraception, speaking falsehood, sterilization, masturbation) cannot be said to be intrinsically morally evil as this term has been used by tradition and the recent magisterium.<sup>9</sup>

**It** is my fear that if we take the moral-nonmoral evil distinction and apply it to issues beyond contraception and sexual conduct we will create serious misconceptions both in moral discourse and moral practice, especially in the area of life-taking.

To see why this is the case, let us consider McCormick's

<sup>8</sup> "Notes on Moral Theology," *Theological Studies*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (March, 1982) p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> *[ibid.]*

reliance upon the distinction in discussing the issue of killing non-combatants in wartime. McCormick has taken great pains to clear up what he views as a misinterpretation of his earliest position. If I understand him correctly, McCormick first argued that killing noncombatants is immoral because in the long run the practice would undermine respect for international law and thereby jeopardize future noncombatants. To kill in this instance would be "a capitulation to and encouragement of a type of injustice which in the long run would render more lives vulnerable."<sup>10</sup> McCormick viewed the prohibition as "virtually exceptionless" because we cannot, in practice though not in theory, avoid these disproportionately harmful effects. This seemed as close as McCormick would come to claiming that certain acts are wrong by their very nature. When McCormick's explanation for the wrongness of killing noncombatants came under heavy criticism by other Christian moralists, he tried to meet their charges of "utilitarianism" by refining his position. Killing noncombatants, he wrote recently, is unexceptionally prohibited because the disproportion of evil over good is "intrinsic."<sup>11</sup> This is so, he argued, because there are a number of interdependent and inseparably connected "basic human goods" which constitute a *sine qua non* of human flourishing. Life is one of the most basic; to attack it is to undermine the others as well. So now he speaks of an "intrinsic disproportion."

McCormick's latest argument may be conceding more than his theory of proportionality allows if that theory of moral justification is to cover all areas of moral judgments. For he now acknowledges a cluster of moral goods or values that dictate the moral norm prohibiting the killing of an innocent person. Has not McCormick rightly identified life as the most basic good, the *sine qua non*, for the realization of other human goods? Does this not vitiate a maxim which McCormick would also wish to defend ("Only kill an innocent person if a value

<sup>10</sup> "The Ambiguity of Moral Choice," p. 33c.

<sup>11</sup> "Notes on Moral Theology," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979), p. 61.

weightier than his or her life will be preserved by so doing ") since there is no value commensurate with life itself?

In a commentary on McCormick's methodology, Cahill defends her treatment of this moral issue and sees no difficulty with a weighing of the values at stake as the proper moral methodology. She concludes:

If the principle of noncombatant immunity can be absolute, it is not because premoral evil (killing) can be absolutely prohibited, but because moral evil can, and the principle specifies a disproportionate value relation, that is, a moral evil. Discussion about the viability of this prohibition should revolve around the relative gravity of the values at stake, and their relation to the greatest good, God.<sup>12</sup>

Do we, in fact, need to discuss the "viability" of this prohibition? Many statements made by Cahill, McCormick and others make the relationship between description and evaluation too distant. Note how ambiguous the prohibition is in the following statement:

'Killing noncombatants' is not a value term in the sense that 'murder' is, but it is more than a premoral term like 'homicide.' It contains a description of a situation in which killing takes place, and therefore enables a judgment expressed in a norm.<sup>13</sup>

Cahill is of course correct that our moral estimation of the variety of human acts is closely tied to our descriptions of those acts. For it is by getting the meaning of acts right that we are able to say whether they are right or wrong. Moral reflection is such a demanding (and frustrating) enterprise just because there *are* so many different human acts requiring our evaluation and there are no simple formulae for judging them all. Yet, over time, communities have come to formulate particular moral notions, based on their wants, needs, and interests, to assist in evaluating acts from the moral point of view. Let us examine the killing of noncombatants in light of the

<sup>12</sup> Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Within Shouting Distance: Paul Ramsey and Richard McCormick on Method," *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, Vol. 4, no. 4 (December, 1979), p. 409.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

moral notions that we, as a community of moral discourse, possess.

*Moral Notions and Descriptions of Acts*

In the above pages I have examined the way a number of human acts (e.g., adultery, killing noncombatants, lying, contraception and masturbation) have been discussed by contemporary moral theologians. I have not entered the debate over whether the moral significance they ascribe to certain acts is consistent with the meaning the earlier Catholic tradition ascribed to such acts. I am more interested in examining how it is we come to possess certain moral notions and are then able to recognize certain acts as requiring moral approval or blame. I rely upon the analysis of Julius Kovesi, which provides a clear account of how moral notions arise, how they are distinguished from other notions, and the limits within which moral notions function.<sup>14</sup> Kovesi's analysis helps us to see why the nonmoral-moral distinction and the distinction between "description" and "evaluation" of human acts are conceptually misleading if not properly understood. I will illustrate my discussion of moral notions by considering the acts of lying and killing. I will then argue why killing noncombatants in wartime is an act displaying the same morally significant feature as the notion of murder and is, therefore, an act having the same negative moral evaluation.

Contemporary moral analysis sometimes suggests that our moral notions are different from notions about the physical world because moral notions "evaluate" reality while the other notions "describe" it. Hence, our notions of "tables" and "lying" are alleged to be different kinds of notions because the former involves straightforward perception and the latter, interpretation. But Kovesi correctly points out that recognizing an object as a table and an act as a lie requires first that we know what makes an object and an act what they are (a table, a lie) and second that we are able to see an ob-

<sup>14</sup> *Moral Notions* (New York: Humanities Press, 1967).

ject or act we encounter as displaying those features especially relevant to tables and lying.

Kovesi distinguishes between two elements in all of our notions, the material and the formal, both of which must be understood in order to comprehend and to use notions correctly. The material elements of a notion "table " include the great variety of physical materials and designs by which a table can be made. The formal element of the notion " table " answers the question, What purposes do tables serve? (or, What is their point?) thus enabling us to say what will count as a table despite the many varieties of table constructions. Likewise, there are various ways of being false in speech (the material element of the notion of lying) but only when we have grasped the point of or reason for lying (the formal element) are we able to recognize a particular instance of lying and call it by the right name. While stressing that the material and formal elements are " one pair of concepts," Kovesi emphasizes the centrality of the formal element, saying

... without [it] there is just no sense in selecting, out of many others, those features of a thing or an act that constitute it as that thing or act. Not only is there no sense in selecting those features, but some of those features simply would not exist at all, e.g. in the case of inadvertent acts there just would not be a by-product of an act [without a formal element having as its point "inadvertence "]. That without the formal element we cannot see the sense of selecting the material elements is especially important in connection with our moral notions. For the contemporary distinction between 'evaluation ' and 'description' sometimes assumes that facts just *are* outside in the world waiting for us to recognize them; and that evaluation consists in selecting some facts on 'purely factual grounds ' and then expressing our attitudes toward them, or making a decision about them.<sup>15</sup>

What distinguishes moral notions from other notions is not that moral notions evaluate acts while the latter only describe them. The prominent feature of moral notions is that their formal features are different. They are about reality as it pertains to us in a particular way. Kovesi notes

<sup>15</sup> Kovesi, p. 24.

In the case of our moral and social life . . . it is our wants and needs, aspirations and ideals, interests, likes and dislikes that provide the very material for the formation of our notions.<sup>16</sup>

This is the subject matter from which our moral notions arise. The *raison d'être* of moral notions is our desire "to avoid or promote something, excuse or blame people for certain happenings or acts . . . ." <sup>11</sup> Furthermore, our moral notions have been formed to reflect the wants, needs and interests of *anybody*, and the "function and purpose of these notions in our lives must be such that anybody should be able to and would want to use them in the same way and for the same purpose." <sup>18</sup>

This being the case, contemporary references to acts or evils as "non-moral" contain a two-fold misunderstanding. First, it is incorrect to speak of acts as governed by "nonmoral" notions (prior to coming under moral evaluation) which are only descriptive. All of our notions about the world assist us in correctly identifying objects and acts. Whether we are identifying objects as tables or acts as lies, we are *evaluating* reality. Hence, our use of both moral and other notions involves us in evaluating, although from differing points of view. Second, since our wants, needs, and interests as well as our need to ascribe blame or excuse are closely associated with these allegedly "nonmoral" acts and evils, such acts and evils are subject to moral evaluation from the beginning or "automatically." Let me explain further why this must be the case.

### *The Misuse of Moral Notions*

Confusion can arise in our use of moral notions if we misapprehend either their material or formal elements. For example, if I fail to tell my doctor about my allergy to penicillin and I die from the penicillin he prescribes for an infection, he cannot be said to have "murdered" me. Because of the lack

<sup>16</sup> Kovesi, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> Kovesi, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Kovesi, p. 57.

of the formal element of his intention to kill me, the prescribing of penicillin cannot count as a material element of "murder." On the other hand, to err in the use of the formal element would be for an individual to acknowledge that while he intentionally killed an innocent person, it is not morally wrong for him to have done so. What gives the variety of ways in which killing is done the *form* murder is that the life of an innocent person has been intentionally taken. **It** is the presence of that formal feature, the "point" of murdering, which renders an act displaying that feature wrong and blameworthy. To the extent that we comprehend both the material and formal elements of the moral notion "murder" we are able to use it to describe certain acts (which of course includes a moral appraisal of them). Obviously, we readily recognize both of the above violations of a moral notion. But there are other ways in which confusion can arise in our use of moral notions. To this I now turn.

So significant is the act of killing that in addition to the notion of "murder" other moral notions exist to deal with the variety of acts of life-taking. For each notion there is a different formal element present "shaping the life and use of our term,"<sup>19</sup> which range from one specifying full blame (murder), to specifying degrees of excusability (e.g., killing in self-defense, killing while not in a rational state), to specifying no blame (e.g. capital punishment, accidental killing). This variety of formal elements reflects our social need to make moral discriminations. They have been formulated as a result of a slowly emerging consciousness concerning what kinds of killing will and will not be tolerated.

**If** the act of killing noncombatants has been judged "intrinsically" or "unexceptionally" wrong for many centuries in Western societies, as I believe it has, it is because such an act shares the same formal element as the notion of "murder." Quite simply, the term "noncombatants" has the force of "innocent persons." The innocence of the victim and the inten-

<sup>19</sup> Kovesi, p. 15.

tionality of the agent combine to be the central formal feature of both. When McCormick classifies the act of killing noncombatants as "nonmoral" (until it becomes clear that no more valuable "basic human good" is being served) he suggests that something else about the act—some fact not yet specified—must be known in order to make a moral judgment. In principle, it is implied, no formal element like "intentionally killing innocents" immediately evaluates an act, allowing us to say, "Ah, this is an instance of murder and, thus, is wrong to do (or to have done)!" When Cahill says that "'killing noncombatants' is not a value term in the sense that 'murder' is, but is more than a premoral term like 'homicide'" she suggests that there is no moral notion quite covering cases like killing noncombatants. But our variety of moral notions about killing do cover this instance, and "murder" seems to cover it quite adequately. Killing noncombatants is never a premoral act, since that would mean that it had no meaning, i.e., that we possessed no specified formal element applying to it. Our most significant moral acts are not so neutral, waiting for us to load them up with a moral meaning by finding a relevant moral notion. The notions are already present, or no moral discourse could exist, no moral reality be present.

Perhaps McCormick and others are only saying that in many areas of moral judgment we have too hastily identified *the* morally relevant facts and have excluded others as irrelevant. Their point is worth heeding in our reflections on sexual conduct and birth control. Seldom are our moral notions about such matters "complete."

### *Complete and Open Moral Notions*

It is necessary to distinguish between open and complete moral notions. The formal element of an open moral notion does not tell us all that we need to know to declare acts *always* morally wrong. Open moral notions require further specification to enable us to make moral judgments of cases covered by such notions. Lying is such a notion since although we say that lying is wrong, we admit that under certain circum-

stances it would be justifiable (e.g., verbal deception in order to save someone from a crazed pursuer). Hauerwas observes:

The great majority of our moral notions are [open ones] as our everyday experience does not require the rigor of definiteness envisaged in the idea of completeness.<sup>20</sup>

Open moral notions function like challenges, obliging us to cite more relevant facts to justify our acts.

Complete moral notions, on the other hand, have definite formal elements sufficient for us to make moral judgments. We do not need to specify acts covered by complete moral notions to determine their wrongness. To say that murder is wrong only serves to remind us of our consensus about murder and to call a specific act "murder" describes a particular act having the formal and material features of murder. Calling an act "murder" precludes the possibility that other facts could arise which would allow us to judge the act as morally right. Again Hauerwas notes:

. . . the more basic a moral notion is in regard to the significance of our lives together the more it tends to be a complete notion. For example murder, even in our common-sense usage, is a rather complete moral notion . . . because killing is such a significant human act we have learned by experience how important it is to understand it rightly.<sup>21</sup>

I have reminded readers that murder is a complete moral notion and, further, that killing noncombatants is covered by the notion of murder because of the status of noncombatants. May I suggest further why these notions are well-formed in order to avoid any misconceptions about and misuses of them. One of the most powerful arguments for "holding the line" against attempts to reevaluate the morality of several categories of killing is made by the moral philosopher Philip Devine. Recognizing the high regard for human life which is covered in our social norms and language, Devine argues sim-

<sup>20</sup> "Situation Ethics, Moral Notions, and Moral Theology," p. 21, in his *Vision and Virtue* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1974).

<sup>21</sup> Hauerwas, pp. 21-22.

ply that members of the human species, which includes "persons" however they be defined, ought to be protected and preserved because they have "interest" and "desires" for certain "goods" which should be respected and which cannot be realized if human beings are dead.<sup>22</sup> After examining the various philosophical reasons given for the moral wrongness of killing human beings, Devine offers a simpler explanation in two theses:

- (1) Acts of homicide are prima facie wrong because they are acts of homicide, and not for any supposedly more fundamental reason, such as that they tend to produce disutility or are unjust or unkind.

... it is not possible to determine by calculation whether a given life is worth living or not. This means not only that the 'rational suicide' defended by many utilitarians is impossible, but also that our ordinary desire to go on living cannot be explained as based on a calculation that we are on the whole better off alive than dead.<sup>23</sup>

I do not see how Devine's reasoning could be defeated. It is supported by a number of other philosophers, most succinctly by R. E. Ewin's remark about the observable structure of our moral world, that "our concepts are the way they are because the world is the way it is and because people believe, want, and need what they believe, want, and need."<sup>24</sup> This is not a rhetorical flourish, but a recognition that we have certain moral notions *and* that we need those notions or we could not exist as a society. (To claim that we *need* certain moral notions does not mean that their primary function is one of social utility.) Nor is it the case that we might have had another set of moral notions and moral rules derived from them.

<sup>22</sup> *The Ethics of Homicide* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978). For Devine, interests entail rights. I do not follow Devine in claiming that because human beings have interests they therefore have rights. While I do think there is a "claim" present, I find the language of "rights" inappropriate although Devine has the support of many contemporaries in using the legal notion of rights.

<sup>23</sup> Devine, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> "What is Wrong with Killing People?" *Philosophical Quarterly* 22 (1972), p. 130.

What can be said of "nonmoral" notions? First, we must be careful not to mistake either open or complete moral notions for "nonmoral" ones. Moral notions, both open and complete, are formed from the point of view of the wrongness of acts. An act is wrong which is correctly described by both complete and open moral notions, except that in cases covered by open moral notions certain facts might sometimes render acts morally right. Nevertheless, moral notions are formed from the point of view of the wrongness and blameworthiness of acts. Nonmoral notions of human acts also require more facts, but not in the same way open moral notions may. Here is the second thing we need to recognize about "nonmoral" notions: nonmoral notions by themselves never describe human acts. They only describe physical features of human acts. In this sense they are "nonmoral," that is, neither right nor wrong under their description. Further description, from the moral point of view, is necessary. Clearly, it would serve no one's interests to use nonmoral notions extensively. We need-and-want-to get to the heart of the matter in our speech. Describing only one dimension of a human act does not serve our needs; in fact, to speak of acts in nonmoral terms is to construe acts in an unrelated way, unrelated to their human meaning and significance. Hence, nonmoral notions of human acts are not part of our moral language-at least not until moral theologians and philosophers have recently tried to import them.

I hope my point is clear: the moral-nonmoral distinction, like the description-evaluation one, is not real. "Nonmoral" notions are an empty set, just as the distinction between "describing the way things are" and "evaluating reality from the point of view of my attitudes, likes, dislikes" is nonsense. Kovesi is surely right in both what he denies and affirms:

... it [is not] the case that moral judgments express our attitudes, decisions or even evaluations of a different world, the world of our interpersonal life, for without moral notions there would be nothing to express an attitude to, nothing to make a decision about, nothing to evaluate.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Kovesi, p. 148.

Since moral language shapes the realities to which it refers, if we were to use that language in an unusual way we would either be accused of not knowing the rules for its proper use (material and formal features) or of attempting to change both our public language *and* the moral reality to which it refers. For this reason moral commentators must be careful in their treatment of formal and material elements, open and complete moral notions and "nonmoral" notions. There has been a tendency in contemporary ethics to regard certain complete notions as open ones and to create another category, the "nonmoral," whereby a number of acts are removed from the moral purview. McCormick and the other moralists I have examined may respond that I have misunderstood what they intend by their moral terminology. I can only respond that the use of language is very important. They must say what they mean in such a way that others will know what they mean.

My limited task has been to examine the use of a distinction that has borne much weight in the contemporary debate over moral methodology and specific moral problems. Calling an act or an evil "nonmoral" intends to make the point that certain moral judgments and norms need to be subjected to more data and testings. That is a point worth making. But we should not make it by using a peculiar distinction leading those who read and hear it to conclude that description and evaluation are separate functions and that the "nonmoral" and "moral" are distinct realms. What that invariably leads to is the conclusion that moral conceptions do not arise out of human life and action so much as they impose a meaning upon human activity. McCormick, I am sure, would not want to contribute to that conclusion. My hope is that he will want to avoid language which leads to such a misinterpretation of the moral life.

A final observation concerns the agenda of Catholic moral theology. While Catholic moral theology seeks to be more theologically related, it nevertheless retains its commitment to being catholic. Its desire to speak to all requires a philosophi-

cal mode of speaking. Catholic moralists need not become moral philosophers to do so. Nonetheless, they must be familiar with the philosophers' efforts to clarify moral language and concepts. If moral theologians are familiar with the various versions of the is-ought distinction that have held our notions of morality captive and are appreciative of recent efforts at releasing us from them they will proceed more cautiously in developing their ethical arguments.

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## KARL RAHNER ON MATERIALITY AND HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

IT IS DIFFICULT to think of any recent Christian theologians who have denigrated the materiality of human existence deliberately and in a straight-forward manner.

Nevertheless, in as far as Christian theologians entertain the possibility of a connection between human finitude and the need for redemption, a certain ambivalence towards human materiality and its consequences often remains.

Karl Rahner presents an example of this ambivalent stance towards human materiality. The first part of this essay will provide a discussion of Rahner's use of the concept of materiality in his metaphysics of human knowledge. The second part of the essay will show that Rahner's anthropology, as found in his metaphysics, contains two strands of argumentation which define the limitations of human materiality in different ways. One of these strands of argumentation seems to affirm that human materiality is essential and good, whereas the other strand seems to deny the goodness and the permanence of human materiality.

### I

Materiality functions as an important concept in Rahner's metaphysics of human knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Rahner uses materiality in

<sup>1</sup> Rahner explains his metaphysics of knowledge in the greatest detail in *Spirit in the World*. Our quotations will be from the English translation by William Dych, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968.) The original German edition is *Geist in Welt* (Munich: Kosel-Verlag, 1957.)

We will also refer to sections of *Hearers of the Word* which deal with the implications of materiality for human knowing and existence. Our quotations from this book will be, where possible, from *A Rahner Reader*, edited and translated by Gerald A. McCool (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975) and where not, from the English translation, *Hearers of the Word*, translated

order to explain such limitations of human knowledge as receptivity, spatiality and temporality, and potentiality.

1. Materiality is an explanation for the receptivity of human knowledge.

Rahner starts out with the assumption that knowing and being are one, adds to that the fact that human knowing is in fact receptive, and ends up with the concept of human materiality.

The problem that Rahner deals with in Chapter 10 of *Hearers of the Word*, "Man as a Material Essence," and in large portions of *Spirit in the World* is the following: if knowledge is defined as self-presence, how can one conceptualize human knowledge, which is receptive? Materiality is part of the solution to this problem, because "the materiality of the human existent thing is conceived as something that knows itself in the receptive knowledge of things."<sup>2</sup>

The problem of the seeming contradiction between the essential nature of knowing and the fact that human knowing is receptive is set up by the fact that Rahner conceptualizes human knowledge on the basis of a model which is a conceptualization of God's knowledge.<sup>3</sup> He starts out with the presupposition that knowing, in its essence, is the being-present-to-itself of the knowing subject. Thus knowing is perfectly actualized only in God. The cause of God's knowledge of other existing

by Michael Richards (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969.) The original German edition is *Horer des Wortes* (Munich: Kosel-Verlag, 1963.)

<sup>2</sup> *Hearers of the Word*, p. 135. (German edition, p. 167.)

a Rahner conceives of the problem of the metaphysics of knowledge as the problem of demonstrating that there is indeed a gap between the subject and the object and that human knowing is consequently receptive. It is well to keep in mind that this is exactly the reverse of what is usually seen as the basic problematic in epistemology. He sees himself as following St. Thomas in this regard: "for the Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge the problem does not lie in bridging the gap between knowing and object by a 'bridge' of some kind: such a 'gap' is merely a pseudo-problem. Rather the problem is how the known, which is identical with the knower, can stand over against the knower as other, and how there can be a knowledge which receives another as such." (*Spirit in the World*, p. 75. [German edition, p. 88.]

beings is always his own essence. He knows other beings through his eternal knowledge of himself. Human knowledge, on the other hand, is receptive. The initial cause of the human person's knowledge of anything is always other than the self. Human persons are present to themselves, i.e., know themselves, only through meeting other things in the world. In Rahner's language, one can return to oneself only through going out into the world.

Rahner wants to preserve both sides of human knowing—both the assumption that human knowing conforms to the basic structure of knowing as self-presence and also the fact that human knowing is in fact receptive. What he needs is an ontological category that is an aspect of the human person—that is a being present, not to the human subject him- or herself, but to something else. This other ontological category cannot be being, since, given Rahner's definition of being, it would be the cause of knowledge of itself and not of something else. Instead it must be another kind of ontological reality, which is nevertheless a real part of the human person. "This 'something else' is thus the subjective possibility of 'having being.' ... That is, it is not itself in a state of actual 'having being.' Accordingly, man's being is the being of an empty, unspecific, subjective possibility of being that is really distinct from actual 'having being.'" <sup>4</sup> Thus Rahner modifies the perfect self-presence of absolute being by describing one aspect of the ontological reality of the human person as potential self-presence to another.

This 'something else' that is essential to the structure of the human person as a receptive knower is, according to Rahner, equivalent to the Thomistic concept of matter. The being of the human person is actualized when the unspecified possibility of the human person, which is matter, is informed, not only in the sense that the basic constitution of the human person as an existent being can be conceptualized as the form of the soul informing the matter of the body, but also in the

<sup>4</sup> *Hearers of the Word*, pp. 123-124. (German edition, pp. 152-153.)

sense that the receptive act of knowledge of the human person can be conceptualized as an informing of the material aspect of the person. Rahner would maintain that matter, defined as the basis of the possibility of receptive knowing, is equivalent to matter, as it is defined by St. Thomas when he says that the body, in relationship to the soul, can be understood as prime matter, "the empty, real possibility of being." <sup>5</sup>

2. Materiality explains inner-worldly causality, which is a precondition for receptive knowledge.

Another way that Rahner argues for the necessity of the materiality of human knowing is by starting from the fact of inner-worldly 'real-ontological' influence and showing that materiality is a precondition for inner-worldly causality, which is itself a precondition for receptive knowledge.

This line of argument is also an answer to the objection that the equation that Rahner has made between the thing other than the knower, that must exist in receptive knowledge, and the thing other than the knower, "in relation to which the knower exists ontologically and in which he is supposed to subsist," is purely verbal. Rahner presents this objection in the following way:

One might think that we had wrongly denoted two totally different things by one and the same phrase, "the thing other than the knower," in which the knower is understood as existing and as knowing in like manner. It is true that the other thing known is a determination of the object that is distinct from the knower, whereas the "thing other than the knower," in relation to which the knower exists ontologically and in which he is supposed to subsist, is the *materia prima*.

Rahner overcomes this objection by showing that "the effect of one existent thing upon another which subsequently results in the substantial constitution of both the active thing and of the thing that it determines, is the reality of the active thing itself." <sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Hearers of the Word*, p. 125. (German edition, p. 154.)

<sup>6</sup> *Hearers of the Word*, p. 136. (German edition, p. 168.)

In other words, what must be shown is that the action of the mover and the action of the moved are identical, even though they may be distinguished by logical analysis. The only way in which they can be identical is if there exists a neutral, unspecified area of possibility, which is in fact what matter is.

The region of the possibility of the contact between the mover and the moved is the non-specific, empty, and yet real possibility which utterly permeates all material essences ...<sup>7</sup>

Thus materiality is necessary for inner-worldly causality to take place. And it is also necessary in order for both kinds of 'otherness' to be more than verbally identical.

Without this common medium of an empty "being other" which in itself is one, it would not be possible for specific uniqueness with respect to "quidditas" to be at once that which is proper to the active agent and that of the other that is determined.<sup>8</sup>

If one applies this model to human knowing, the active agent is the object known by the subject and the other that is determined is the knowing subject. The knowing subject could not be externally determined by the known object, i.e., could not know in this ontologically defined kind of way, unless it were material.

The answer to the objection is ultimately based on Rahner's assumption that being and knowing are one, though seen from a slightly different angle. The way in which the matter of the subject, in which the essence of the subject constitutes itself, is external to the subject even though it is, in another sense, part of the subject, is not very different from the way in which the known object is external to the subject, even though, in order to be known, it must modify the interior of the subject. These two kinds of externality are really not so different, because the nature of knowing is not very different from the nature of being what one is essentially. The ontological constitution of the knowing subject, in itself, is analogous to the structure of its relations with the world, precisely because the

<sup>7</sup> *Hearers of the Word*, p. 137. (German edition, p. 169.)

<sup>8</sup> *Hearers of the Word*, p. 138. (German edition, p. 170.)

human spirit is constituted as spirit by going outside itself and can gain knowledge of itself only through its knowledge of external objects.

Rahner's demonstration that matter is necessary for inner-worldly causality is thus also a demonstration of the necessity of matter for the constitution of human persons, regardless of their relations with external objects. In fact, it does not seem that relations with external material objects would be possible, unless the human person were inherently, in and of itself, material. That would seem to be the meaning of the materiality that is asserted to be a precondition for receptive human knowledge. The intimate connection, if not identity, of the materiality of human persons, as it is defined in terms of the relations of human persons with external objects in the world, and as it is defined in terms of the essential constitution of human persons as bodily beings, is revealed by the fact that Rahner's description of the aspects of the essential constitution of the human person which are due to materiality borrows to a great extent from vocabulary that is primarily applicable to the external world and not so obviously applicable to the structure of the human person as such. This is particularly evident in Rahner's discussion of spatiality and materiality.

### 3. Materiality explains human spatiality and temporality.

According to Rahner, materiality is the basis for both human spatiality and temporality. It is the basis for spatiality in the sense that it is the principle of the possible repetition of the same form, and thus the basis of number and quantity because it makes possible multiples of the same unit. But materiality is also the basis for the spatiality of the individual material being within itself.

Now the repetition of the same within one and the same thing is nothing but its spatiality, its being innerly affected by quantity, the real diversity of the same thing within its unity. Thus we may say: a being whose innermost make-up contains matter as an inner essential principle is spatial.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *A Rahner Reader*, pp. 52-53. (*Hearers of the Word*, pp. 130-131. German edition, p. 162.)

In a similar way, matter is the basis for the temporality of the individual material being. This is so first of all because matter's potential for determination is never exhausted, no matter how many times a certain kind of 'whatness' or quiddity is repeated in the material world. Thus the material world always remains to some degree potential and consequently also in a state of becoming. This applies to the individual in the material world because the individual material being is also always potential, to the degree that it is material, and is always in motion towards new determinations of its potentialities. Since the possible realizations of matter's unlimited potentialities partially exclude one another, the totality of possible realizations of potentialities is never given at once. The total realization of the possibilities of an individual material being is possible only in a succession of moments, i.e., in time. In this way, a material being is intrinsically temporal. As Rahner puts it, "temporality is meant here in the original sense, not as the extrinsic measure of the thing, as the inner protracting of the thing itself in the realized totality of its possibilities."<sup>10</sup>

Spatiality and temporality seem to be a kind of complexity which is the direct result of materiality, and they also seem to constitute an essential many-layeredness of the human person. Rahner argues that materiality is a necessary condition for receptive knowledge and the conclusion of his argument is not only that materiality opens the human person to possible determinations from the outside world, which is necessary for Rahner's ontologically oriented epistemology, but that materiality also makes human persons, within themselves, essentially non-simple, i.e., stretched out over both time and space so that all the potentialities of the human person are never present "in the same place," on the same level, nor at the same time.

It is interesting to note that, according to Rahner, one of

<sup>10</sup> A *Rahner Reader*, p. 53. (*Hearers of the Word*, pp. 131-132. German edition, p. 163.)

the reasons that all the possible determinations of a material being cannot be present at the same time and place is that some of them are mutually exclusive. It seems that materiality is the basis for the possibility of conflict within the human person. If one were to relate this to psychoanalytic concepts, one might say that the possibility of dynamic conflict within the person, between what is conscious and what is not, i.e., the possibility that one portion of psychic content can be pushed to another level or transformed in some kind of way because it conflicts with another portion of psychic content, is provided by a kind of structural diversity within the human person. For Rahner, it seems that one hand can possibly not know what the other hand is doing because the human person is stretched out in space and time.

#### 4. Materiality explains the potentiality of human beings and their knowledge.

As we have already seen in our discussion of human spatiality and temporality, materiality also creates a conception of the human person which includes the ideas of potentiality and becoming.

Andrew Tallon, for whom this conceptualization of the human person is very welcome, discusses this aspect of Rahner's metaphysics in "Rahner and Personization" <sup>11</sup> and "Personal Becoming." <sup>12</sup> He sees it as a positive step that Rahner conceives of the human person as a potential entity which must actualize itself and which is, as part of its essential nature, in a process of becoming. The classical definitions of 'person' have usually made every human being automatically a person, leaving no room for becoming a person through the historical actualization of possibilities within the person. This is because the human person was for a long time defined in

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Tallon, "Rahner and Personization," *Philosophy Today*, Volume 14 (1970), pp. 44-52.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Tallon, "Personal Becoming," *The Thomist*, Volume 43 (1979), pp. 1-177.

terms of substance and consciousness, whereas contemporary philosophy tends to deal more with the relations of a person to other beings and human freedom. In the latter kinds of definitions of personhood, greater attention is paid to the potentialities of the person. The actions of persons themselves are necessary for their becoming persons, and their relationships with others, which are not given immediately and all at one time but rather must develop, are essential to the process of fulfilling personhood.

In Tallon's discussion of Rahner, it is crucial that human finitude results in human materiality and not the other way around,<sup>13</sup> but the fact of the finitude of the human spirit is not enough to explain why becoming is an essential feature of human existence. In both *Hearers of the Word* and *Spirit in the World*, Rahner contrasts human beings with angels concerning the ability to dispose of oneself completely and in one act. The reason for the angels' ability to dispose of themselves completely is their immateriality. As Tallon puts it, "our inability to match the self-disposability of the angels is rooted in materiality, i.e., in the fact that finite spirit's mode of reaching for the horizon is materiality; multiplied spatio-temporal acts, which construct habits and stable attitudes, acts which 'take place' and 'take time,' are our attempt to match the self-enactment of an angel, which happens all at once, beyond space and time."<sup>14</sup> According to Rahner, "the self-realization of something immaterial as such takes place essentially all at once."<sup>15</sup> Thus it is human materiality which makes human existence essentially a becoming.

Tallon's analysis results in the formula that human finitude causes human materiality, which in turn results in becoming as an essential feature of human existence. Materiality is the way in which the finite human spirit becomes spirit, and it is pre-

m See "Personal Becoming," pp. 32 and 75 and "Rahner and Personalization," p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Tallon, "Personal Becoming," p. 81.

<sup>15</sup> *Spirit in the World*, p. 351, n.46. (German p. 352, n.47.)

cisely materiality that implies a kind of becoming, since it necessitates a 'going out' and return of the spirit.

For human action and knowing, this means that the materiality of human existence always involves the actualization of potentialities. For a material being, actualization always requires another being. As Tallon puts it, "there is no way metaphysically to understand how a being could be conceived, could be intelligible, that had totally within itself the power fully to actualize itself and had not already done so ..." "Becoming means that there is 'something from the outside' as well as 'something from inside' ..." <sup>16</sup> In other words, because of the fact that the human person is in some ways only a potentiality, it must be conceived of as needing other beings or external objects in order to actualize itself, since otherwise the potentiality of the human person would not make sense. The definition of potentiality is the need to be actualized from the outside. Human finitude and materiality necessitate a passive and dependent relation of the human spirit to others, since they imply a process of becoming. Thus materiality, the specifically human form of the limitation and weakness of finite spirit, involves becoming and receptivity and partial dependence on the external world.

Human beings are potential, not only in their relations to objects in the world but also in relation to themselves. Human materiality means that the emanation of the powers of the person from the core of the person is the embodiment or, literally, the bodiliness of the person, the essential constitution of the person, aside from his or her relations to other objects in the world. When Rahner discusses the concept of emanation, he makes a distinction between the powers of the soul and the substantial ground from which they emanate.

According to Thomas the powers emanate from the substantial ground. From this conception there follows the relationship, conceivable only dialectically, between the essential core of an existent and the powers emanating from it.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Tallon, "Personal Becoming," p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> *Spirit in the World*, p. 256. (German edition, p. 260.)

The origin is active in its emanation of the powers but it is also receptive, in that it receives its fulness and perfection from what it allows to emanate.

Thus the origin which lets emanate reveals itself as a receptive origin: *susceptivum principium*. The origin as receptive receives in itself what emanates as its fulfilment; it would be less perfect without the emanation which it retains in itself; it is related to it as being in potency for it; it grows to its fulfilment only through less perfect stages.<sup>18</sup>

The act of emanation is passive as well as active. For Rahner there is already a kind of receptivity of the subject that is identical with its activity, in the self-constituting act of the subject.<sup>19</sup> In order for emanation to be a true actualization of potentiality and in order for it to found a true plurality of powers, emanation cannot be "a simple essential determination." On the other hand, in order for the powers of the soul to form an essential unity with the soul, emanation cannot be merely an accidental determination from the outside. There must be an identity of the active and the passive, of what is internal in origin and what is external.

In this way, Rahner describes a potentiality which results in a plurality or non-simplicity within the human knowing subject, as it is in itself. The human soul is, in itself, irrespective of possible relations to objects, already embodied. Because of this, it is, in effect, already related to an "other," to matter which is the possibility of being related to external objects. It is as if the soul's essential relationship to its own body is already a relation to a kind of object, since it is already a relation to materiality. And the soul's essential embodiment, i.e., the emanation of its essential powers, is already an encounter with the external realm of matter, which the soul has in common with all material beings.

To summarize, for Rahner the human person is defined both essentially and functionally as a potential being who is, by

<sup>18</sup> *Spirit in the World*, p. 257. (German edition, p. 262.)

<sup>19</sup> *Spirit in the World*, p. 254. (German edition, pp. 258-259.)

nature, always in a process of becoming. This potentiality means the permanent openness to external, determining influences and the need for external agents in order for human subjects to actualize themselves. This means that human persons are always in a relation of receptivity and partial dependence and passibility with respect to the world, since they are themselves a part of that world.

5. Materiality is both the weakness and the strength of the human spirit.

In our discussion so far, it is apparent that materiality, in Rahner's anthropology, results in certain limitations of the human person. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that limitations such as the receptivity and potentiality of human persons are a kind of strength as well as a kind of weakness of the human person.

Take for example the notion of sensibility. Human knowledge, because it is receptive, is possible only through sensibility.<sup>20</sup> This means that human knowledge must be both act of spirit and act of matter. To put it another way, human knowledge, as sensibility, is dependent both on otherness and the spirit's own structure. It is dependent both on the spirituality of the human spirit and the limitedness of the human spirit as material. Rahner describes "the being of the sentient knower" as "the mid-point between a real abandonment to the other of matter and an intrinsic independence of being over against matter, so that the sensible act is in undivided unity and, as material, the act of the assertion of being (of form) over against matter."<sup>21</sup> The spirit is logically prior to materiality, but it asserts its priority in the emanation of sensibility as its own power, which makes it receptive.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *A Raimon Reader*, pp. 49, 51. (*Hearers of the Word*, pp. 126, 129. German edition, pp. 156, 159.)

<sup>21</sup> *Spirit in the World*, p. 81. (German edition, pp. 93-94.)

<sup>22</sup> It is important to keep in mind that the term 'matter' as used by both Thomas and Rahner is a metaphysical concept and has no direct correlation to the chemical or physical concept of matter. It is not only the human body

In his analysis of Thomas's concept of "possible intellect" Rahner points out, in another way, the weakness and limitedness of the human spirit.

The soul is essentially the lowest conceivable possibility of intellectual being, since it is understood as a being that is really able to come to itself, but of itself alone it is not present to itself. To that extent, and only to that extent, Thomas compares it with prime matter and calls it a "clean slate." Not as though, like prime matter, it were completely indeterminate in itself and received every determination only from another and absolutely passively. It really apprehends itself in every act of knowing, and what is really intelligible is its own light which it imparts to its objects actively and spontaneously, so that all of this is not given to it from without. But nevertheless it apprehends all of this only insofar as a sensible object of itself manifests itself to it, and must manifest itself, for the intellect of itself is only in potency to apprehend itself: it is possible intellect.<sup>23</sup>

The possibility of the possible intellect means that it only apprehends itself potentially. What it needs in order to actualize its self-apprehension is external objects that present themselves to sensibility. The human person has its own structure as spirit, but the human spirit needs external objects in order to actualize itself as self-apprehending, self-present spirit. Thus Rahner ties the 'possibility' and potentiality of possible intellect directly to the fact that human knowledge is receptive and dependent on external objects.

Rahner distinguishes angelic knowing from human knowing by saying that angels do not have possible intellect. Part of the receptivity and potentiality of human knowing is the pos-

which is limited by materiality but also the spirit. The materiality of human existence is not limited to the notion that human beings have a body that can be measured and controlled by the methods of the physical sciences. It is the materiality of the human spirit, the fact that human persons live in a material world, including the chemical and physical senses of that world, that makes the human spirit subject to limitations; but since it is the human spirit which is limited in this way, the implications of materiality cannot be measured and evaluated purely by means of a materialistic point of view. Cf. *Hearers of the Word*, p. 136. (German edition, p. 168.)

2a *Spirit in the World*, pp. 245-246. (German edition, p. 250.)

sibility of hiding from the object of knowledge and thus knowledge itself.<sup>24</sup> Human knowledge can be absent in a way that angelic knowledge cannot.

It is fairly clear that sensibility, materiality, receptivity, and potentiality bring an aspect of passibility to the human spirit, which constitutes its relative weakness compared to the standard of pure spirit. Nevertheless, sensibility is also itself a power of the finite human spirit, which is still spirit, even though it is finite. And possible intellect is still intellect, even though it is only possible. Sensibility and materiality are the strength of the human spirit, since they are the way in which the human spirit becomes spirit. This point is related to the reasons for Tallou's insistence that materiality is the result of finitude, and not the other way around. He wants to emphasize the fact that spirit has a position of eminence over matter and that, consequently, materiality is the strength and not just the limitation of spirituality.

## II

Because the receptivity and potentiality of human knowledge are necessary consequences of the fact that the human spirit becomes spirit by going out into matter, it seems that, in as far as materiality is a good and necessary feature of human existence, the limits of human knowledge should also be seen as neutral with respect to sin and as something that cannot and need not be done away with. Rahner often talks about the receptivity and potentiality of human knowledge in a way which makes clear that these limits are part of human finitude and creatureliness, but at other times it seems that these limits function as hindrances to the fulfilment of human nature.

This is so because Rahner, in his metaphysics of knowledge, provides two types of explanation for how human materiality results in a limitation of the human spirit and in a limitation of human knowledge. Rahner himself does not clearly distin-

<sup>24</sup> *Spirit in the World*, pp. 243-244. (German edition, pp. 248-249.)

guish between these two types of explanation, but it is the contention of this essay that they are logically distinct and separable.

- I. In one kind of explanation, materiality is seen as a necessary means for the human spirit to go into the world in order to become conscious of the self as a subject, i.e., in order to become spirit. This involves certain limitations to human knowledge, since any knowledge of objects or of the self is indirect and mediated through encounters with objects in the world, which in effect actualize the subject's knowledge of objects and the self in a way that can never be exhaustive and complete. Nevertheless, from this point of view, these limitations are seen as a good and necessary feature of human existence.
- ///. In another kind of explanation, materiality is seen primarily as an unfortunate limit to human spirituality, i.e., as a limit to the striving towards union with God in the beatific vision. We have already seen that Rahner uses his conceptualization of God's knowledge as the model for his conceptualization of human knowledge. An implication of this perspective is that human materiality can only be seen as a hindrance, since it makes it impossible for human persons to reach the implied goal of fullness of being—the perfect unity of being and knowing which is God.

We would contend that the function of materiality in the second type of explanation, in comparison with the function of materiality in the first type of explanation, is more amenable to the Christian doctrine of the permanent and essential materiality of human existence.

Tallon's work is useful for us because he also points out this ambiguity in Rahner's thought—the fact that both matter and the fullness of being, i.e., God, provide unreachable horizons for the human person and thus both define human nature as receptivity and potentiality, but in different

<sup>28</sup> See Andrew Tallon's discussion of the reference of Rahner's use of *Worauf*, *Woraufhin*, and *Woran* as nouns. ("Spirit, Matter, Becoming: Karl

Human receptivity and potentiality are defined in terms of the human spirit's inability to express itself completely in matter, but they are also defined in terms of the human spirit's inability to reach or know all being as such, except in the anticipatory way that Rahner calls the *Vorgriff*.<sup>26</sup>

Tallon provides a schema for dealing with the two ways in which the human spirit falls short of its goal in Rahner's thought. He distinguishes two kinds of gap, "the first gap" and "the second gap," both of which are related to the fact that human beings have to become persons.

1. The first gap is set up by the spirit, as self-presence, finding itself up against matter as the necessary medium of its self-expression. It is "constituted by the very composition of man as spirit and matter, because matter prevents absolutely the perfect self-identification that is the privilege of pure spirit; this is the metaphysical meaning of concupiscence, man's inability to dispose of himself perfectly and completely in any one act, but rather needing time and space, a whole lifetime, to actualize his potential, to become a person."<sup>27</sup> This first gap is natural, the result of the incarnate condition of human beings.

The second gap, on the other hand, seems to be created by the *Vorgriff*, i.e., the human spirit's openness to all being, and by the supernatural existential. It has to do with the transcendental horizon for knowing. The *Vorgriff* and the

Rahner's *Spirit in the World*," *The Modern Schoolman*, Volume 48 [1970-1971], pp. 151-165.)

<sup>26</sup> Rahner's explanation of the 'possibility' of possible intellect in terms of the *Vorgriff* seems to be related to the inability of the human person to fulfill the goal of the supernatural existential. Rahner wants to distinguish the *Vorgriff* and the supernatural existential because he wants to maintain the gratuity of the latter. We would question whether Rahner does in fact succeed in explaining why the *Vorgriff* does not inherently demand the supernatural existential. Consequently, our criticism of the second line of explanation for human potentiality and receptivity may, at times, seem to conflate the *Vorgriff* and the supernatural existential.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Tallon, "Personal Becoming," p. 37.

supernatural existential seem to represent something that lies beyond the grasp of human beings, something that is less natural than the goal described in the first gap. Thus the second gap seems to have to do with 'all being as such' or God as the horizon of the human spirit, whereas the first gap has to do with matter as the ground and the limitation of human spirituality.

Tallon occasionally expresses doubt as to whether the two gaps are in fact distinct from one another. He says that since matter is the human spirit's way of trying to close the second gap, the two gaps are really one and the same.<sup>28</sup>

But Tallon also says that the two gaps are parallel to the human duality of spirit and matter, or intellect and sense.<sup>29</sup> Since this duality is constant, it would seem that the two gaps would also have a permanent basis for being distinguished from one another. Also, it does not seem consistent that the two gaps should be identified, at first, with the spirit-matter distinction versus the issue of openness to all being as such, and that the two gaps could then also be identified in terms of spirit or intellect (the second gap) versus matter or sense (the first gap.) It seems likely that when Tallon identifies the first gap with the spirit-matter distinction, he means to emphasize the fact that the first gap is created by the spirit having to express itself in matter.<sup>30</sup>

The ambivalence of Rahner's stance towards human materiality is expressed in the ambiguity of how the two gaps are related in Tallon's schema. The problem is that the human spirit, even if it is seen in a more immanent, inner-worldly way, is nevertheless transcendent in the sense that the aim of its going out into the material world is self-presence, i.e., the knowledge of itself as a subject distinct from the objects of

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Tallon, "Personal Becoming," pp. 40-41.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Tallon, "Personal Becoming," p. 42.

<sup>30</sup> The issue of what the exact relationship and status of the two gaps is, is further confused by the fact that Tallon seems to switch his labels on pp. 95-96 of "Personal Becoming", calling what was previously the first gap the second gap and vice versa.

its knowledge. Consequently, when one speaks of the human spirit's confrontation with matter (Tallon's first gap), even though the emphasis is on the issue of materiality, the second gap is already implicit. This is part of what Tallon means when he says that the first gap is created in order to close the second gap—the human spirit becomes material in order to become transcending, self-present spirit. The second gap includes the kind of spirituality we have just described, but it also includes a kind of spirituality that is defined in terms of the transcendence of the human spirit towards something which is not naturally within the capacity of the human spirit. This is pointed out by Tallou's statement that the second gap can be seen as created by the supernatural existential. It is as if the human spirit had been set the task of becoming more like God's spirit and in this way transcending its natural created capacities. Because the human spirit is nevertheless still creaturely and material, it must turn to the first gap in order to attempt to close the second gap.

It is clear that this kind of description of transcendence gives a new sense to the transcendence that is already implied in the first gap and in that way also ascribed to the second gap. This sense of transcendence has to do, not only with natural creaturely knowledge, which is limited because it is material, but also with the fact that the human spirit strives to be transcendent more in the way in which God's absolute spirit is transcendent.

This second, expanded meaning of the second gap is not made explicit by calling the second gap the human spirit's openness to all being. Openness to all being can mean a potential openness to the influence of all other beings, which is already included in the definition of the materiality of the human spirit. This kind of openness always remains, for the most part, a potential openness, since the actualization of all possibilities cannot and will not take place. The openness to all being which is characterized in the expanded version of the second gap seems to strive to go beyond the potential openness to the influence of all being; and from this point of view, mate-

riality, reversion to the first gap in order to close the second gap, seems to be almost like giving up the goal which constitutes the expanded version of the second gap. Conversely, the successful bridging of the expanded version of the second gap seems to exclude the materiality of the human person.

The fact that there are two senses to what is characterized as openness to all being in the second gap is related to what we talked about earlier as the two basically differing ways in which Rahner explains how materiality results in the limitedness of human knowledge. The first type of explanation relies on comparatively immanent descriptions of the structure of human knowing and does not locate the final impenetrability and incomprehensibility of the human self in the basic unity of the mystery of God and the mystery of human persons. The second type of explanation of the limitations of materiality relies mainly on the intended unity of God and human persons in the beatific vision.

The confusion surrounding Tallon's description of the second gap is due to the fact that the transcendence and openness to all being, which constitutes the goal involved in the second gap, are colored by both these lines of argument. Tallon seems to define the second gap more in terms of the openness to all being which is the potential union of the human person with God, which is why it becomes confusing when the same openness to being is said to be present already in the first gap. It is as if 'spirit' were being defined in two different kinds of ways, which are not clearly distinguished but instead slide from one definition into the other.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Our argument also calls into question Rahner's attempt to distinguish between the *Vorgriff* and the supernatural existential. For Rahner, the intended goal of the unity of God and human persons in the beatific vision is based on the philosophical notion that God, as the transcendental horizon, already, in this world, makes possible human knowledge of the self as distinct from all possible objects of knowledge. I.e., the supernatural existential is based on the *Vorgriff*.

The problem is that it seems that the *Vorgriff* must be both a natural transcendence and yet also, implicitly, a supernatural transcendence which is possible only for God. The *Vorgriff* is an openness to all being, which, as it

The ambiguity in Rahner's definitions of human spirituality and the limitedness of the human spirit is certainly, to some extent, deliberate. Rahner believes that the openness to all being which is the openness to God and the portender of the unity of the mystery of God and human persons, is in fact also the openness to all being which makes it possible for the knowing subject to distinguish itself from the known object, which is a necessary condition for receptive knowledge. But it is the contention of this essay that the way in which Rahner explains the limitedness of the human intellect, in terms of the relation of the human spirit to matter, and the kind of transcendence of the human spirit that is necessarily implied in that, can be distinguished from the way in which Rahner explains the limitedness of the human intellect, in terms of the absolute being of God and the knowledge of God which is coterminous with his being.

The problem with Rahner's latter line of explanation, in our opinion, is that it tends to confuse the distinction between the creatureliness of human beings and the infinity of God. As a Catholic theologian, Rahner wants to affirm the goodness of all creation, including the materiality of human existence, but some of his explanations of the role of materiality in producing limitations of human knowledge seem to imply that human materiality should, ideally, be done away with in the process of redemption.

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were, possesses all being only in anticipation. This is repeatedly affirmed by Rahner in his discussions of the implications of human materiality for human spirituality. Nevertheless, the fact that the *Vorgriff* is, in a sense, a possession of all being, in a kind of all-encompassing knowledge, even if only in anticipation, shows that the goal for creaturely spirituality is the being of God. This is also apparent in the fact that Rahner, in his metaphysics of knowledge, makes perfect self-presence and an active knowledge of all being the standard by which creaturely spirituality and knowledge is measured.

## HARMAN'S "REFUTATION" OF THE FLOURISHING ETHICS

IN HIS "Human Flourishing, Ethics, and Liberty,"<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Harman argues that an ethics of flourishing—roughly of the sort I have called classical ethical egoism—implies "moral relativism, since what counts as 'flourishing' seems inevitably relative to one or another set of values" (p. 3rn). He adds that "it is difficult to see how one rather than another conception of flourishing is to be validated simply in 'the nature of things' or in the 'nature' of persons—except in the sense in which different sets of values yield different conceptions of nature or of the nature of a person" (p. 313).

Harman dislikes the argument that maintains we have basic (negative) rights since these rights are necessary for one to pursue one's happiness or flourishing: "From the mere fact that it ought to be the case from my own point of view that others not prevent me from developing my potential it does not follow that this ought to be the case (is desirable) from anyone else's point of view and certainly does not follow that others have sufficient reason to refrain from interfering with me" (p. 319). So Harman thinks an ethics of flourishing fails to support natural individual human rights. Finally Harman concludes that "the source of morality lies not in the nature of things but in human arrangements" (p. 321). He suggests that such a conventionalist view of morality also gives support to the doctrine of rights to (negative) freedom.

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 12 (Fall, 1983), pp. 307-322. A difficulty with arguing with Harman arises from the fact that although he mentions many people who advance a version of the flourishing ethics, he does not provide us with any of the arguments in their own terms. Moreover Harman does not fully develop any of his arguments, partly because he is aiming at too diffuse a target to be very specific.

<sup>2</sup> Tibor R. Machan, "Recent Work in Ethical Egoism", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 16 (January 1979), pp. 1-15.

There are several ways in which one could respond to Harman's criticism and I will put forth only some of the points one could advance.

First, Harman misunderstands the kind of value theory advanced by those who talk about the kind of flourishing relevant to ethics. They have in mind flourishing as *the* framework by which to evaluate conduct and institutions. By claiming that "what counts as 'flourishing' seems inevitably relative to one or another set of values" he betrays his misunderstanding. Any set of values pertinent to ethics is theoretically tied to flourishing for those who advance the viewpoint he is criticizing. For these philosophers, to know whether some course of conduct or some institution is of value, to evaluate some act, to criticize someone's behavior, the standard for doing so is supposed to be whether human flourishing is enhanced or thwarted. Flourishing, then, cannot itself be "relative to one or another set of values" since there are no values apart from flourishing, not at least in the morally relevant sense.

Harman appears to hold that one somehow has some values or standards of value (judgment) and then draws on these whenever some evaluative task arises. But what those who are talking about human flourishing are after is something Harman seems to take for granted, namely, where these values for judging various matters come from, what is their actual, best source. Their answer is, consider what constitutes flourishing for human beings, and that is where your standards lie. It is akin to medicine. If you want to know what doing well or badly comes to as regards your physical constitution, see whether it enhances or thwarts your life processes. There can be a lot of variation within all that, but at least in a very broad sense a standard of evaluation is available. If one appreciates the significance of this analogy, one will also see how Harman's talk about the alleged relativism of any flourishing ethics really amounts not to relativism but to contextualism: given certain basic valuations or theories of the morally good, just what these will mean for the wide variety of human con-

duct and institutions we need to evaluate will depend on many variables, including the individual person involved and his or her unique attributes. But this is not relativism, any more than it is relativism in medicine to recognize that general principles of human health apply differently to different people.

Now Harman might answer in the spirit of G. E. Moore by noting that "flourishing" is itself a term which invites such questions, "Ought one to flourish, or ought one perhaps attend to other matters?" Which then would suggest that a standard of values exists independently of flourishing by reference to which this question could be answered. That, in turn, would suggest that "flourishing" fails to be an ultimate standard, just as Harman claims.

But the Moorean approach is itself open to objections. It fails to appreciate that frameworks of value are theories and when others disagree with them, they can ask questions as if these frameworks were false. So the question, "Ought one to flourish, etc.?" would be answered by the reply, "But you fail to see that what I am trying to do is develop a standard for answering questions about what one ought and ought not to do." In short, the question is itself presumptuous since it treats the issue at hand as if it had already had a good solution. The reason that is common is that, after all, concepts such as "ought" and "good" are in common use and people speak as if they already had a good enough framework of values by which to justify their employment of them. Instead the matter should be viewed roughly as one views scientific discussions about theoretical entities which have common enough names-e.g., quarks, black holes, light, etc. When a theory is advanced as to what light is, people can ask "But is that really light?" as if they already know what light is. But what they are really asking is whether that is how light ought to be understood. And when one asks whether flourishing is really so vital to human conduct, what is really at issue is the more theoretical matter of whether flourishing is the best candidate for serving as the standard for value judgments.

Various recent efforts to secure a clear idea of human nature should serve to answer some of Harman's other criticisms, especially his doubts about attempting to validate a conception of flourishing by reference to human nature. His claim that the human flourishing approach to ethics leads to moral relativism and thus to the failure to establish any universal human rights would seem to be most vulnerable to serious doubt. **If** a conception of human nature can be found that is quite stable over time, moral relativism would hardly flow from it.

Harman claims that moral oughts are based on human values and because human beings are so drastically different, their values will be equally diverse. This denies the unity of human nature, which is a denial that seems unwarranted. As Professor Laszlo Versenyi has pointed out:

Barring all knowledge of human nature—that which makes a man a man—the word man would mean nothing and we could not even conceive of man as a definite being distinguishable from all other beings. Consequently anything we might say about man would be necessarily meaningless, including the statement that human nature as such is unknowable to man.<sup>3</sup>

Let me close with noting that Harman's confidence in the capacity of human arrangements to provide "the source of morality" is curious in light of the fact that morality is just the sort of system of standards which we need to invoke so as to assess, among other matters, the merit of various human arrangements. The sort of conventionalism Harman seems to have in mind—whereby we suppose that tacit or explicit agreements among people lead to the adoption of certain standards of conduct—fails to provide a standard which is fundamental enough and meets the criterion of universalizability so as to be able to judge the very actions which initiate the convention. Those who assemble, even hypothetically, may want to know whether they are doing the morally right or wrong thing.

<sup>3</sup> a Laszlo Versenyi, "Virtue as Self-directed Art," *The Personalist*, vol. 53 (Spring, 1972), p. 282.

But if they must wait for their work to be done before any such judgment is possible, then they will be paralyzed.<sup>4</sup> Morality is supposed to give us a standard for judging *any* human conduct, including "various arrangements".<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting, incidentally, that Harman's conventionalism might even involve a form of naturalism. After all, one reason Harman rejects the flourishing ethics is that he does not think we can agree on values-values, he claims, are relative. From this he concludes that we need first to convene and reach some minimal agreement for social life, which is how morality arises. But isn't this a form of naturalism? Based on the fact that human nature involves the relativity of values, we must arrive at some kind of arrangements for cooperation. Man, by Harman's account, is the disagreeing animal, and this implies a certain way of reaching moral conclusions.

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<sup>4</sup> See T. R. Machan, "Social Contract as a Basis of Norms: A Critique," *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, vol. 7 (Spring, 1983), pp. 141-145.

<sup>5</sup> I develop some of these points in detail in Tibor R. Machan, "Toward a Theory of Natural Individual Human Rights," *The New Scholasticism* (forthcoming).

## REVISIONIST AND POSTLIBERAL THEOLOGIES AND THE PUBLIC CHARACTER OF THEOLOGY\*

**W**HAT DAVID TRACY calls "revisionist theology" has come to dominate academic theology in the United States. Those familiar with Professor Tracy's analysis will recognize how much I am about to oversimplify it. But for present purposes suffice it to say that revisionist theology seeks to carry on the tradition of Schleiermacher and liberal theology, with its nineteenth century optimism appropriately chastened by the insights of neo-orthodoxy, indeed by the whole grim history of the twentieth century. Revisionist theologians tend to think that both theological language and Scripture symbolically convey a religious dimension of experience or a possibility for human existence.

Many of the most creative developments in Catholic theology since Vatican II have adopted such a revisionist model (often with results far more exciting than those of Schleiermacher's twentieth-century Protestant descendants). When Catholic theologians seek dialogue with their Protestant counterparts, it is generally revisionist theology with which they enter into conversation. To cite a somewhat random list. Catholics like David Tracy, Leslie Dewart, Gregory Baum, and Michael Novak, and Protestants like Langdon Gilkey at Chicago, Edward Farley at Vanderbilt, Schubert Ogden at Perkins, Gordon Kaufman at Harvard, John Cobb at Claremont-

\*.An earlier draft of this essay was presented to the American Theological Society (Midwest) in November 1984, and I am grateful for the unusually helpful discussion it received there. I wish I could have responded to all the critical questions raised on that occasion without turning an article into a book. I owe much of my understanding of "postliberal theology" to the continuing discussions of the Yale-Washington theology group, and several conversations with Stephen Webb led me to a better grasp of "revisionist theology."

most of the leaders of this country's academic theological community-share the assumptions and methods of revisionist theology.

On the other hand, persistent rumors hint at something different by way of theological method emerging principally at Yale. Even sympathetic observers must concede a certain air of mystery. Partly, there's a long Yale tradition of legendary manuscripts in progress that interminably fail to get completed and published. But even when books and articles appear after long gestation, they often address an idiosyncratic set of issues in a way that makes comparisons difficult, and they sometimes refuse on principle to discuss systematically questions about method and assumptions.

George Lindbeck's recently published book *The Nature of Doctrine* clears up some of the mystery.<sup>1</sup> Lindbeck makes it possible to see how a number of projects share some of the assumptions of what he calls "postliberal theology." In addition to Lindbeck's own work, a list could include David Kelsey's *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, Charles Wood's *The Formation of Christian Understanding*, Paul Holmer's continuing studies of Wittgenstein and theology, Brevard Childs' interpretation of the Old Testament as canon, William Christian's philosophical analysis of inter-religious dialogue, Ronald Thiemann's discussions of Biblical authority, and above all the work of Hans Frei—all published by people connected with Yale, most in the last ten years.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, Westminster Press, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> David H. Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, Fortress Press, 1975; Charles M. Wood, *The Formation of Christian Understanding*, Westminster Press, 1981; Paul L. Holmer, "Wittgenstein and Theology," in D. M. High, *New Essays on Religious Language*, Oxford University Press, 1969, "The Nature of Religious Propositions," in Ronald S. Santoni, *Religious Language and the Problem of Religious Knowledge*, Indiana University Press, 1968, and other articles; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, Fortress Press, 1979; William A. Christian, *Oppositions of Religious Doctrines*, Herder and Herder, 1972; Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1985; Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, Yale University Press, 1974, and *The Identity of Jesus Christ*, Fortress Press, 1975.

I do not want to claim too much. This is not a "school"-the writers I have mentioned would disagree on many issues. Moreover, they have as yet produced only preliminary sketches of a new theological approach-though even these "sketches" involve more detail than I can summarize here. Postliberal theology remains a minority position within Protestant theology; it has so far received little attention among Catholics. Yet perhaps it is time for conversation to begin. A number of important young Catholic theologians have done graduate work under Yale's "postliberal" influence. Lindbeck himself has been one of the Protestant theologians most active in ecumenical dialogue ever since he served as a Lutheran observer at Vatican II. Postliberal theology draws on many sources, from Clifford Geertz's anthropology to the philosophy of Wittgenstein and Gilbert Ryle to Thomas Kuhn's reflections on the history of science to Eric Auerbach's literary analysis, yet in theology it owes most to Karl Barth. And Barth often said that it was his Catholic interpreters who had understood him best.

As a way of introducing postliberal theology, I want to present Lindbeck's account of the nature of doctrine and Frei's analysis of biblical narrative. These seem to me the most substantial contributions this emerging movement has yet produced, and the hermeneutical questions of how we understand doctrinal language and how we interpret Scripture are central to any theological method. In a concluding section I will then turn to the public character of theology. Revisionist theology argues that theological discourse ought to be public. Christian theologians, on the revisionist view, should not simply address other Christians. They should not rest content with tracing the conclusions which follow if (but only if) one grants Christian assumptions. Rather, they should seek to "provide evidence to fair-minded critics inside and outside Christianity for the meaning and truth of the central Christian symbols."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, Seabury Press, 1975, p. 9. To cite three of the basic theses of Tracy's revisionist model: "The two principal sources for theology are Christian texts and common human experience and

Postliberal theology is not "public" in the revisionists' sense of the word. It does not consciously ground theology in evidence and warrants acceptable to any intelligent, rational, responsible person. But I will maintain that theology can be "public" in other, possibly more important, ways, and that in those other ways postliberal theology affirms theology's public character.

## I

Lindbeck defines his own postliberal way of understanding how doctrines function by contrasting it with two others—the cognitive and the revisionist. To oversimplify all three positions: On the cognitive model, doctrines function by making truth claims about objective states of affairs. On the revisionist model, doctrines express experiences and attitudes. On the postliberal model, doctrines specify rules for Christian speech and action.<sup>4</sup>

(1) According to cognitive theories, "church doctrines function as informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities."<sup>5</sup> "God is three persons in one substance" may be a good bit more complicated than "The Supreme Court has nine justices," but it is the same *sort* of proposition. We judge it by how accurately it corresponds to the state of affairs to which it refers.

language . . . The principal method of investigation of the source 'common human experience and language' can be described as a phenomenology of the 'religious dimension' present in everyday and scientific experience and language. . . . To determine the truth-status of the results of one's investigations into the meaning of both common human experience and Christian texts the theologian should employ an explicitly transcendental or metaphysical mode of reflection." *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 47, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, pp. 46-47. In order to avoid a morass of terminology, I am describing as "revisionist" what Lindbeck calls the "experiential-expressivist model" and calling "postliberal" what he labels the "cultural-linguistic" or "regulative" model. As I shall note later, Lindbeck's models may oversimplify some issues, and I may make matters worse by simply identifying his "experiential-expressivist model" with what Tracy calls "revisionist theology." With luck, however, even oversimplified models can help clarify the crucial issues.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Most contemporary theologians seem to assume that a cognitive model would interpret many doctrines too literally. Doctrines seem to develop over time, without our wanting to condemn either the earlier or the later stages as heretical, but on the cognitive model, "if a doctrine is once true, it is always true, and if it is once false, it is always false."<sup>6</sup> A cognitive model shuts off a good bit of ecumenical dialogue by implying that in most cases of disagreement one side must simply be in factual error. Lindbeck mentions how ecumenical discussions sometimes produce a result that seems paradoxical. The two parties arrive at agreement on an issue where they once disagreed. Yet neither party admits that it was wrong earlier.<sup>7</sup> A cognitive model cannot explain this. If two communions disagreed, somebody must have been wrong. If they now agree, somebody must have shifted.

Revisionist theology can deal with many of these problems. The revisionist, according to Lindbeck, "interprets doctrines as noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations."<sup>8</sup> On this model a doctrinal claim is more nearly like, say, the proposition, "My love is an angel." I do not literally mean to claim my love a place among the heavenly choirs. Rather, I seek to convey a feeling or an attitude, and my utterance ought to be judged by my success in doing so and the human authenticity of what I seek to convey, not by literal correspondence to some external state of affairs. Bultmann's demythologizing of the New Testament provides a familiar analogy to this kind of interpretation. The real, demythologized meaning of New Testament passages is not to present cosmology or predict history but to offer a new possibility for human existence.

A theory in which doctrines convey feelings and orientations through symbol and metaphor can explain things which the cognitive theory found puzzling. Doctrines develop as we find new and better symbols-but we need not say the earlier

*a Ibid.*

*r Ibid.*, p. 15.

*s Ibid.*

symbols were "false." Similarly, different religious communities may use different symbols without ultimately disagreeing, if their symbols express the same experience. Indeed, given the revisionist commitment to public theology, revisionist theologians tend to claim that religious symbols point to *universal* human experiences.

Lindbeck's account of "experiential-expressivism" (his term for what I have been calling "revisionist theology") may oversimplify an actually more nuanced position. Tracy (or Schleiermacher, for that matter) does not claim that there is some universally identical religious experience which different religions simply express in different languages. For thoughtful revisionists, the relations between experience and language are more dialectical than Lindbeck sometimes admits. That said, it is still the case that when revisionists talk about inter-religious dialogue (often with Karl Rahner's category of "anonymous Christians" in mind) or the communication of Christianity to secular folk by beginning with limit-experiences or the religious dimensions of ordinary experience, they do seem to presuppose a universal human something-or-other which various religions, in their various ways, express. Any slogan or label oversimplifies, but "experiential-expressivism" does seem a convenient first approximation of these admittedly diverse theologians.

(S) Postliberal theology, on the other hand, interprets doctrines in "cultural-linguistic" or "regulative" terms. Doctrines function primarily "not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action." <sup>o</sup> To accept a doctrine is to agree to speak and act in particular ways—not necessarily to make a claim about a state of affairs or to express a particular experience.

On this model, "God is three persons in one substance," is less like "The Supreme Court has nine justices" or "My love is an angel" and more like "Pronouns agree with their ante-

<sup>o</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

cedents." It states a rule for using language in a properly Christian fashion. Perhaps Trinitarian doctrine actually states three rules:

(i) Preserve monotheism.

(ii) Insist that the stories of Jesus refer to a historical human being.

(iii) Ascribe every possible importance to Jesus that is not inconsistent with the first two rules.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, the doctrine of predestination might express the rule, "Treat any hope or confidence that you have of salvation as an occasion for gratitude for God's grace, not pride in your own accomplishment."

Doctrines need not point to some shared experience. Nor need they claim accurately to describe some objective state of affairs. I might well say for instance, "I have a great deal of trouble with the *ousia/hypostasis* language of Nicea and Chalcedon, and I'm not sure I buy into that metaphysics . . . but still, those creeds seem to me to provide the best guide to how Christians ought to speak and avoid speaking about Jesus Christ." Even as I doubt the cognitive claims of the creeds, I find them good rules.

Of course even a doctrinal proposition can *also* function to convey an experience or to state a fact. Lindbeck indicates two ways in which doctrinal statements could function cognitively in the context of a generally postliberal, regulative model:

(a) One might believe that a doctrine in fact describes some objective state of affairs without making this belief doctrinally binding. Consider the analogy of grammatical rules. An Aristotelian might believe that the subject-predicate pattern of sentences corresponds to a substance-attribute pattern in finite entities, but one could agree with the Aristotelian about how language works and follow the same grammatical rules without accepting this metaphysical correlate. Similarly, a theo-

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94. It is interesting that Newman could define the nine "separate propositions of which the dogma consists" without mentioning "substance" or "person." See John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, Doubleday, Image Books, 1955, p. 119.

logian might hold that Trinitarian language does correspond to the metaphysical structure of the Godhead, but acknowledge that one *need* not to agree to this in order to speak correctly about Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup> Thus, for instance, Augustine might have himself believed the speculations in the later books of *De Trinitate* without wanting to accord them doctrinal status.

(b) We may manage to say things correctly about God in our doctrines without understanding our words. Aquinas seems to say something like this when he proposes that in statements about God the *modus signifficandi* does not correspond to anything in the divine being, but the *significatum* does. To say that God is good does not mean that *our* concept of good (our mode of signifying) applies to him, but that there is a concept, namely God's own concept of good (what is signified), which does apply. It is as when a non-physicist says, "Space-time is a four dimensional continuum." The statement says something correct about physical reality, but one would not want to claim much for the speaker's understanding of it.<sup>12</sup> On a cognitive model we need to understand what our doctrines mean. If doctrines function to make claims about states of affairs, then, if we do not understand the claims, they do not function at all. On the other hand, if doctrines function primarily as rules, then they could regulate our speech and action without our always understanding their cognitive meaning—a meaning which we might nevertheless accept as a matter of faith that they have.

Different rules may apply in different circumstances, and this can explain otherwise puzzling features of doctrinal change. Take the case mentioned earlier, where ecumenical dialogue produces agreement in the face of prior disagreement

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.13.3. Since it is a point I will not have the chance to develop elsewhere, this is a good occasion to mention that revisionist theology tends to appeal to process metaphysics, while Lindbeck's work and some other postliberal theology turns to the new interpretations of Aquinas by David Burrell, Victor Preller, and others.

without either side admitting error. Protestants might insist that *sola scriptura* offered a valuable rule for Christian speech and action in the circumstances of the sixteenth century. Roman Catholics might say the same of Trent's affirmation of the authority of tradition. Yet they might be able to agree on rules for speaking and acting on these matters today. On a cognitive model, what's true is true, and what was false still must be. On a postliberal, regulative model, rules can apply differently in different circumstances. Each side could continue to affirm that its forebears had said the right thing in the past, without that standing in the way of current agreement (on everything but historical questions).

Treating doctrines as rules also seems more compatible both with some aspects of how doctrines work and with some philosophical conclusions than the revisionist interpretation. It is often hard to identify what it is that a revisionist would claim a particular doctrine symbolizes. Particularly when the revisionist commitment to public theology leads to the conviction that doctrines express a universally human religious dimension of experience, then either the nature of that experience becomes so vague that it suffers the "death of a thousand qualifications," or else we end up asserting that other religions "really mean" to describe our Christian experience—only they use different language.<sup>13</sup> Even within Christianity—Matthias Grunewald and the creators of Byzantine Pantocrators affirmed essentially the same Christological doctrines, yet their art conveys radically different experiences of Christ.<sup>14</sup> As I gather with some of my fellow Presbyterians to draft a brief statement of faith for our newly reunited church, I have some hope that we can agree on rules for Christian speech and action; I am doubtful that we can or should insist on locating a

<sup>13</sup> Rudolf Otto and Bernard Lonergan come to mind because their insight and sensitivity make one doubt that anyone could do the job better, yet it seems to me that both finally see other religions in terms of Christian categories. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Herder and Herder, 1972, pp. 101-124, and Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey, Oxford University Press, 1958, especially the conclusion.

<sup>14</sup> Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 84.

shared religious experience which our statement will express. On a postliberal view, we need not try to do so.<sup>15</sup>

Some anthropological evidence and philosophical argument also indicate that a model in which, however dialectical the relationship, language seems to express a prior experience gets things backwards. We do not have human experience and then cast about for a language in which to express what we already mean. Wittgenstein's attack on the possibility of private language shows many of the problems with such an understanding. Lindbeck offers some empirical evidence: "It seems, as the cases of Helen Keller and of supposed wolf children vividly illustrate, that, unless we acquire language of some kind, we cannot actualize our specifically human capacities for thought, action, and feeling."<sup>16</sup> Only living in a language, created by a community, makes some kinds of emotions and dispositions even possible. One anthropologist tells how the members of a tribe with only one word for what we would call "blue" and "green" made only with difficulty if at all distinctions that seem obvious to us.<sup>17</sup> They lacked something more than the words to express what they saw. William James somewhere reports a deaf-mute who had learned language only in adulthood, describing how as a child he had often passed the time in thinking about God and matters religious. I do not believe it. Religious ways of speaking and acting do not simply express prelinguistic experiences, feelings, attitudes, ways of being-in-the-world. They create such possibilities. "Luther did not invent his doctrine of justification by faith because he had a tower experience, but rather the tower experience was made possible by his discovering (or thinking he discovered) the doctrine in the Bible."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Partly because of the influence of oversimplified versions of the revisionist model, partly because of the increasing influence of amateur psychology in seminary curricula, church bodies often waste a great deal of time these days looking for a common experience.

<sup>16</sup> Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37. The experiment is controversial. See B. Berlin and P. Kay, *Basic Color Terms*, University of California Press, 1969.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Of course this way of thinking about religious beliefs is hardly new. Anthropologists and sociologists look at religions as communal systems of speech and action all the time. Post-liberal theology wants to use some or that sociological approach to religion within theology. Part of the debate here concerns the way one thinks about a human self. Frei, Lindbeck, and Kelsey have all been influenced by Gilbert Ryle's arguments that our true self is not something distinct and separate from our speech and action. Revisionist theologians often draw on models from idealism and its heirs which put more emphasis on the interiority of the true self, so that speech and action can at most only *manifest* who one really is. Post-liberal theology therefore urges that we not treat Christian ways of speaking and acting primarily as ways of expressing something else.

## II

Similarly, Hans Frei has argued that we should not treat the biblical narratives primarily as ways of expressing something else—a religious dimension of experience, a new possibility for human existence, or whatever. Rather, our interpretation should preserve their narrative character and recognize that, precisely as narratives, they could define the shape of a Christian world. Doing this, Frei admits, involves overturning a dominant trend of the last 250 years of biblical interpretation.

Until the seventeenth century, "Christian preachers and theological commentators . . . envisioned the real world as formed by the sequence told by the biblical stories."<sup>19</sup> Except for occasional cases like the school of Origen, even the most enthusiastic proponents of allegorical interpretation never abandoned the *sensus literalis* as the starting point for understanding Scripture. As Erich Auerbach has shown, unlike Homer, the Bible does not invite us to escape from the "real world" for a few hours. **It** claims that the world it narrates

<sup>19</sup> Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, p. 1.

is the real world. Our lives have significance only if they fit into that narrative framework.<sup>20</sup>

Since the world truly rendered by combining biblical narratives into one was indeed the one and only real world, it must in principle embrace the experience of any present age and reader. Not only was it possible for him, it was also his duty to fit himself into that world in which he was in any case a member.... He was to see his disposition, his actions and passions, the shape of his own life as well as that of his era's events as figures of that storied world.<sup>21</sup>

Then round about the eighteenth century a change took place. For many Christian writers, the world of their own getting and spending came to seem the "real world." The Scriptures could be true only if the scriptural world fitted into this newly primary world. One could employ the new methods of critical history to show that what the Bible narrates, or some of it, is really part of history. Or one could discover the truth of Scripture in the moral lessons it provides for our lives. Or some Pietists could affirm the reality of the Bible virtually as an event in their own autobiographies—"I was a sinner until Jesus came into my life." In any event, "It is no exaggeration to say that all across the theological spectrum the great reversal had taken place; interpretation was a matter of fitting the biblical story into another world with another story rather than incorporating that world into the biblical story."<sup>22</sup>

All this changed the task of hermeneutics. When biblical narratives presented the primary world, then understanding them meant simply getting clear on the meaning of the words—the kind of low-level hermeneutics Frei's hero J. A. Ernesti continued to do in the eighteenth century. When I read about David fighting a battle or Jesus washing his disciples' feet, I

<sup>20</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, p. 3. "A scriptural world is thus able to absorb the universe. It supplies the interpretative framework within which believers seek to live their lives and understand reality." Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 117.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

know about battles and I know about feet, so I can understand what the story means. But if the *truth* of the story depends on some relation *it* bears *our* world, then its meaning needs redefinition. Following the story as a story no longer suffices for understanding it. Rather, the story has either (1) an ostensive reference, and it means by *referring* to a set of historical events, or (2) an ideal reference, and it means by teaching a moral lesson, symbolizing experience, or presenting a possibility for human existence. Since the methods of critical history soon implied that much of the Bible was not reliable history, the second alternative became the more popular-and we are back to revisionist theology.<sup>23</sup>

Frei maintains that this interpretative shift distorts the meaning of Scripture. As we read much of the Bible, its narrative structure is one of its most obvious characteristics. As in a realistic novel, the story means what it says; it invites us into a narrated world. We distort the meaning of a realistic novel if we ignore the irreducible particularity, of its interaction between character and incident. The "moral of the story" is not the story. And yet, Frei says, for 250 years nearly all Christian theologians have been convinced that a narrative as narrative could be true only by making ostensive reference to history. Since they thought the Bible did that badly, they felt that to save its truth they had to claim that it did not mean what it said, that "the *meanin'11*] of the stories was finally something different from the stories as depictions themselves, despite the fact that this is contrary to the character of a realistic story."<sup>24</sup>

If we start with the framework of critical history, Frei would agree, much of the Bible won't fit. Nor does much of Scripture seem to intend historical accuracy. The Gospel

<sup>23</sup> David Tracy's emphasis on the *referent* rather than the *sense* of the text follows in the tradition of Ernesti's opponent J. S. Semler-what the Wolffians called the *SacherkUJ,rungr* rather than the *WorterkUirung*. See Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, pp. 51, 76-77; Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 97-101, 248.

<sup>24</sup> Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, p. 11.

stories of Jesus, for instance, often function more as anecdotes to illustrate the sort of person Jesus was than as historical claims that he did this particular deed.<sup>25</sup> We can remain faithful to the obvious narrative character of the Bible, therefore, only if we consciously seek to recover something of the unconscious assumptions of an earlier age. That is, we need to take the biblical narratives as defining the shape of our world. Frei believes that Karl Barth has an important contribution for contemporary theology in part because he did just that in the *Church Dogmatics*. He could find a place for any imaginable topic, it seems, within a framework set by the biblical narratives.<sup>26</sup>

In order to interpret Scripture in this way, it is critical that one *not* begin with our questions, or contemporary issues, or a general phenomenology of religious experience. Any such starting point must assume that the biblical narratives have meaning by reference to *our* reality. When they fail to stand up under the scrutiny of critical history, one then saves their truth by ignoring their narrative character. To avoid these pitfalls, one must simply describe the world as seen from a Christian perspective, the world imagined within the framework of the biblical narratives. That description may have its own kind of persuasive power. Sometimes, as Barth said, a good dogmatics is the best apologetics. But, "there is no single road to Christianity, either as a matter of universal principle or in practice."<sup>21</sup> Often, indeed, that road "has very little to do

<sup>25</sup> See Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, pp. 43, 45; William C. Placher, "Scripture as Realistic Narrative," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 5 (Spring 1978), pp. 32-41.

<sup>2a</sup> "This world is a world with its own linguistic integrity, much as a literary art work is a consistent world in its own right ••• but ••• unlike any other depicted world, it is the one common world in which we all live and move and have our being." Hans W. Frei, "An Afterword," *Karl Barth in Re-View*, Pickwick Press, 1981, p. 114. See also Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, p. 48; Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>21</sup> Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ*, p. xii. Kelsey, similarly, argues that the "revelation" of the Bible for accepting a particular set of books as "authority" are

with any kind of talk and much more to do with the eloquence of a consistent pattern of life that has seemingly suffered an inexplicably wounding and healing invasion, rare though that sort of thing is." <sup>28</sup>

Critics of Barth-and Frei-often insist that their theologies must rest on a specially defined doctrine of the authority of Scripture. Lindbeck's Wittgensteinian analysis rejects efforts to "base" theology on a doctrine of authority as surely as efforts to "base" it on philosophical presuppositions. <sup>29</sup> A language-system does not "rest" on anything, and Descartes's metaphor of a secure foundation has gotten philosophy into a great deal of trouble. Only within the context of a set of beliefs does it make sense to talk about doubt. So, specific questions about the authority of Scripture or the magisterium may emerge in the context of a Christian life, and may even reach such an acute level that one no longer finds it possible to be a Christian, but general methodological doubt which can be resolved only by securing some foundation does not precede all theological inquiry:

With Lindbeck and Frei in mind, we can see some of the ways in which postliberal theology differs from the revisionist model. Revisionist theology is *experiential*. It takes doctrines to convey symbolically a religious dimension of experience or possibility for existence. It argues that, to understand Scripture, we must break down its narrative form and find the experience or possibility for human existence it presents to us. Postliberal theology is *descriptive*. The postliberal theologian takes doctrine, rather as an anthropologist might, to describe the rules which guide a community in its speech and action. One takes Scripture, in its narrative form, to describe a world, a world which we may take to be the world in which we live.

" as complex, unsystematic, and idiosyncratic as are the reasons individual persons have for becoming Christians." Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, p. 164.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> See also Ronald F. Thiemann, "Revelation and Imaginative Construction," *Journal of Religion* 61 (July 1981), pp. 242-263.

## III

All that makes a difference when we ask about the public character of theology. A good many discussions of this issue seem to me to conflate several different senses of "public," so it may be useful to begin by making some distinctions. Theology can be public in at least the following ways:

(1) **It** appeals to warrants available to any intelligent, reasonable, responsible person.

(2) **It** understands a religion as fundamentally a public, communal activity, not a matter of the individual's experience.

(S) **It** effectively addresses political and social issues.

My argument will be that revisionist theology is, or at least intends to be, "more public" in the first sense, postliberal theology is "more public" in the second sense, and neither is clearly "more public" than the other in the third sense.

(1) Revisionist theology views with suspicion the appeal to warrants available only to Christians. In fundamental theology, David Tracy has written, "The theologian should argue the case (pro or con) on strictly public grounds that are open to all rational persons."<sup>30</sup> "Personal faith or beliefs may not serve as warrants or support for publicly defended claims to truth. Instead, some form of philosophical argument (usually either implicitly or explicitly meta.physical) will serve as the major warrant and support for all such claims."<sup>31</sup> Systematic theology, on the other hand, seeks primarily to reinterpret a tradition and therefore works more within the assumptions and texts of that tradition.<sup>32</sup> Yet Tracy's theory of "the classic" provides a public context for systematic theology too. The great Christian texts, from Paul to Augustine to Aquinas to Calvin, are clearly among the classics of our culture, and therefore they (and contemporary reflection on them) "are not merely 'private' to the individual or the particular tradi-

<sup>30</sup> Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, p. 64.

<sup>31</sup> David Tracy and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Talking about God*, Seabury Press, 1983, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, p. 66.

tion. Their authentically public status should be honored." <sup>88</sup> If theology fails to address a public audience in this way, Professor Tracy has written, it reduces Christianity to "no more than a set of personal preferences and beliefs making no more claim to either publicness or universality than the Elks Club." <sup>34</sup> Thus revisionist theology seems fully "public" in the ffdst sense.

Postliberal theology is not. As we have seen, for the postliberal neither doctrine nor Scripture functions to express some universal dimension of experience against which it can be measured. Postliberal theology need not on that account turn to irrationalism or radical relativism. Although influenced by Wittgenstein in these matters, it does not adopt what has been called "Wittgensteinian fideism." <sup>35</sup> According to that view, at least on an extreme interpretation, different language games—the scientific language game, the Christian language game, the Buddhist language game—are self-contained and radically incommensurable. Each can be understood and justified solely in terms of the form of life of which it is a part. That seems to me neither true nor faithful to Wittgenstein. Productive dialogues can and do occur both among the different points of view that lie within each of us and among adherents of different religions.

To take the first case first, when Bultmann observed that no one who uses the electric light can accept the mythical view of the world, he may have been oversimple and (as Barth said) humorless, but he did raise a legitimate issue. I have one life, in which I am both an electricity user and a Christian, and I cannot cordon off one realm from the influence of the other. Wittgenstein meant rather that language functions in many different ways, and their interconnections will always be un-

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>35</sup> The classic critique is Kai Nielsen, "Wittgensteinian Fideism," *PMosophy* 42 (July 1967), pp. 191-207. It is partly because he moves in this direction that I have not treated Paul Holmer's work as central to my account of postliberal theology.

systematic. I should not try to interpret religion, language scientifically or vice versa, or to establish some universal criteria of truth and meaning to interpret both. Nevertheless, where their concerns overlap, I must compare them in ways, however, that will always be *ad hoc*.

The discussion of large-scale scientific theories by philosophers of science like Thomas Kuhn and Imre Lakatos provides analogies to this understanding of dialogue between a religion and other points of view--or among different religions.<sup>36</sup> According to Kuhn's familiar account, a scientific "paradigm" provides a way of looking at the world which seems to make sense of things and sets an agenda for research that we continue to find fulfilling. The paradigm shapes how we see data, and what count as data and arguments. We cannot appeal to "objective data" or rules outside the context of any paradigm to settle a dispute between paradigms. Indeed, there is "no neutral algorithm for theory choice, no systematic decision procedure which, properly applied, must lead each individual ... to the same decision."<sup>37</sup>

That does not mean that scientific theories cannot be compared or that choices between them are utterly arbitrary. On his view, Kuhn has insisted, there are "good reasons for theory choice. These are, furthermore, reasons of exactly the kind standard in philosophy of science: accuracy, scope, simplicity, fruitfulness, and the like. I am, however, insisting that such reasons constitute values to be used in making choices rather than rules of choice." The simpler theory may be less accurate, and one cannot measure simplicity and accuracy on

<sup>36</sup> For Kuhn, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press, 1970. For Lakatos, see Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press, 1970. Kuhn has had substantial reservations about the application of his theory beyond the natural sciences, but I mean here to claim only that the religious cases are analogous in *some* respects. For a good discussion of such issues, see Basil Mitchell, *The Justification of Religious Belief*, Oxford University Press, 1981.

<sup>37</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 200.

the same scale. Different scientists may see simplicity differently.<sup>38</sup> Choices between scientific paradigms cannot be settled by simple calculation. The choice depends on something far more like what Aristotle called "practical wisdom."<sup>39</sup> On the basis of a range of factors recognized by thoughtful practitioners, one can make intelligent choices and persuasive arguments, but one cannot specify a set of paradigm-neutral criteria to settle all questions definitively, or always "prove" one's point.

Similarly, we do preach the Gospel to non-Christians, and we listen to the views of our Jewish or Buddhist or atheist friends. Sometimes we do not even seem to be seeing the same data, but at other times we can see the power of a different perspective or recognize a problem within our own. The post-liberal claim is only that, while such connections do take place, we cannot systematically develop religion-neutral criteria for adjudicating them. What Christians share with partners in conversation may differ from one to another. Perhaps all human beings share some common assumptions-but perhaps not. In any event, dialogues need not wait until we find them.<sup>40</sup>

as Thomas S. Kuhn, "Reflections on My Critics," *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, pp. 261-262.

<sup>39</sup> See Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983, for a superb discussion of Kuhn, Gadamer, and Rorty as exemplars of a move toward a recovery of the tradition of practical wisdom.

<sup>40</sup> Further, dialogues need not begin by assuming that at an ultimate level we really agree. It is often, to my mind, more respectful of conversation partners to say that they are wrong than to say that we know what they "really mean." As Lindbeck writes, "There is something arrogant about supposing that Christians know what nonbelievers experience and believe in the depths of their beings better than they know themselves, and that therefore the task of dialogue or evangelism is to increase their self-awareness." Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 61. See also Christian, *Oppositions of Religious Doctrines*, and J. A. DiNoia, "The Universality of Salvation and the Diversity of Religious Aims," *Worldmission* 32 (Winter 1981-82), pp. 4-15. The postliberal model as I am describing it also resembles H.-G. Gadamer's argument that we should not try to free ourselves from "prejudices"-as if we could-but rather begin where we are and seek in dialogue

When conversations between revisionists and postliberals occur at the level of polemical slogans, revisionists tend to dismiss postliberalism as "fideism," while postliberals attack revisionism as "foundationalism." I have tried to show the unfairness of the first of these charges; the second no doubt also represents a distortion. Revisionist theology does not adopt the simple Cartesian model which seeks an absolutely certain foundational truth on which to rest the other parts of the theological edifice. For both Tracy and Lonergan, for instance, "fundamental theology" is one functional specialty among others within theology, not an enterprise which must be successfully completed before any other theological task can be undertaken.<sup>41</sup> This becomes ever clearer in Tracy's more recent work, as when he insists that, "Each of us contributes more to the common good when we dare to undertake a journey into our own particularity."<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, the revisionists' own polemics sometimes seem to justify-at least in part-the charges of their opponents. They deny that they are foundationalists, yet they often reject Barth-and Frei-as methodologically misguided from the start. They dismiss "fideism." Yet they do not make it clear to me what is so wrong with Barth or Frei-not merely in detail, but in fundamental starting point-unless it is the lack of a philosophical "foundation."

I recall a recent meeting of the American Academy of Religion where, after having spent three days listening to Thomists, Marxists, phenomenologists, process metaphysicians, and post-structuralists, I heard an impassioned plea for theology to ground itself in philosophical warrants so that it could be pub-

to expand our horizons. Even if one takes some universal horizon as the ultimate goal, the process does not presuppose it-and certainly does not presuppose that we can know it in advance. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Seabury, 1975, pp. 239-241.

<sup>41</sup> See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 127-133; Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, pp. 54-98.

<sup>42</sup> David Tracy, "Defending the Public Character of Theology," *Christian Century* 98 (April 1, 1981), p. 353. See also Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, pp. 66-100.

lie discourse. I had seen no universal, public realm of commonly held assumptions, and so I find myself skeptical about the call for a public theology in this first sense. Phenomenologists and process thinkers and ordinary language philosophers all have their own paradigms. A Christian's paradigm may well have, *ad hoc*, points of contact with each of them. But buying into one of them completely as a starting point does not, to my mind, make theology unambiguously "more public."

Indeed, the effort to ground Christianity in the broader traditions of Western culture may make it less universally accessible. Tracy's theory of the classic says that reflection on the great texts of Christianity counts as a "public" activity because those texts stand among the classics of our culture. That suggests the kind of cultural argument for "Christendom" Kierkegaard attacked with such fervor. Somehow, I keep thinking of a missionary in a former colony once oppressed by its Western masters. Admittedly a postliberal approach which said, "This is the way the world looks to Christians," would not make direct contact with the missionary's audience and their presuppositions. But it would still, I think, get a better hearing than saying, "This is how the world looks to Christians, and that's worth your sympathetic attention because of the role Christianity has played in Western culture." Such identification with a culture seems a high price to pay in order to be public.<sup>43</sup>

(2) If being public means appealing only to universally acceptable warrants, then postliberal theology is not public. But in a different sense of the word, it can arguably make theology more public. Revisionist theology's claim that religious language expresses a dimension of experience always *risks* (I do not claim more than that) implying that religion is fundamentally, in Whitehead's phrase, something that individuals do with their solitude. Of course it will have corporate *expres-*

<sup>43</sup> In connection with the question of how postliberal theology addresses the non-Christian, I cannot resist noting that Frei grew up a Jew and Lindbeck grew up in a missionary family in the middle of China. One presumes they have thought about these issues, anyway.

sions, manifestations, but these express something that is in the end-well, private. Lindbeck argues that the institutional place of religious studies departments often encourages such attitudes. Teachers feel they can encourage students to explore the religious dimensions of their experience, even to engage in various forms of meditation, but it would be inappropriate in a "secular" college or university to urge someone to join a religious community. Such pedagogical values shape one's sense of what "religion" is. Religion takes "the experiential-expressivist form of individual quests for personal meaning."<sup>44</sup>

Postliberal theology, on the other hand, sees religion as something that exists irreducibly in communities. Doctrines define rules that grow out of a communal *praxis*. The authority of Scripture comes in the way a community uses it as norm for its communal speech and life.<sup>45</sup> Christianity is something we say and do, together, not something internal that our speech and action merely express. In that sense, this is a *more* public model of religion.

(3) Theology can also be more or less public in its ability to speak effectively to contemporary political and social issues.

<sup>44</sup> He continues, with uncharacteristic sarcasm, "Religions are seen as multiple suppliers of different forms of a single commodity needed for transcendent self-expression and self-realization. Theologians, ministers, and perhaps above all teachers of religion in colleges and universities whose job is to meet the demand are under great pressure in these circumstances to emphasize the experiential-expressivist aspects of religion. It is thus that they can easily market it." Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 22. See Michael Novak, *Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove*, Harper and Row, 1971, for an "invitation to religious studies" on this model. Novak's subsequent career, of course, provides an object lesson in other respects.

<sup>45</sup> Biblical writings come to bear authoritatively on theology only in the context of Christian *praxis*, that is, only in the context of the intentional activities of individual persons and communities who understand themselves to be having their identities shaped in distinctively Christian ways." David H. Kelsey, "The Bible and Christian Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48 (September 1980), p. 386. The role of *praxis* in postliberal theology offers some interesting possible connections with liberation theology. For a polemical look at such issues, see George Hunsinger, "Karl Barth and Liberation Theology," *Journal of Religion* 63 (July 1983), pp. 247-263.

Professor Tracy has argued that theology ought to be public in my first sense (appealing to universally acceptable warrants) in part so that it can be public in this sense. If Christians appeal only to other Christians, using only intra-Christian warrants, he says, they opt out of our pluralistic society's debate on its direction. "Narcissus may be allowed his curious pastimes. The polis, however, is both unaffected and unimpressed."<sup>46</sup>

Rather oddly, things do not seem to work that way. One would not want to claim complete methodological consistency for Reinhold Niebuhr. Sometimes he argued that the power of Christian categories to illumine our experience counted as the important evidence of their truth. But he never systematically developed a philosophical basis for theology, and he generally more nearly followed the postliberal model of simply describing a Christian point of view as powerfully as he knew how.<sup>47</sup> Yet no American theologian since has had Niebuhr's influence on the body politic. James Cone appeals to his experience growing up in the Macedonia A.M.E. church and to black spirituals without worrying overmuch about whether he is touching on universally shared experiences. Yet few contemporary theologians so forcefully address political issues. As James Gustafson has remarked concerning the Roman Catholic bishops' recent pastoral letter on the nuclear issue, "the bishops did not need to forge a hermeneutical theory, or a theory about 'public theology,' or a moral theory on which all rational persons could agree (when the moral philosophers quit arguing with each other because they have reached consensus I will be more persuaded that such is possible) in order to write a document that has been taken very seriously by some important persons in public life."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, p. 9. This particular remark addresses the role of the humanist, but Tracy later draws similar conclusions with respect to theology.

<sup>47</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, p. 242.

<sup>48</sup> James M. Gustafson, "The Bishops' Pastoral Letter: A Theological Ethical Analysis," *Criterion* 23 (Spring 1984), p. 10.

On the other hand, Schubert Ogden provides an example of a theologian determinedly public in my first sense—he addresses any intelligent, rational reader and grounds his Christology in Heidegger's ontology as a way of establishing its universal human reference. Yet as Dorothee Soelle has remarked, in Ogden's Christology, "salvation has been reduced to privatistic categories; in other words, it has been reduced to a matter that affects only the individual as an individual."<sup>49</sup> Ogden fails to be public in my second sense—he makes religion primarily a matter of the transformation of the individual rather than something that happens in and to communities. Partly as a result, he has a hard time being public in my third sense—his theology's central concern does not seem to involve social and political issues.

To be sure, thinking of Christianity as a description of a way of looking at the world *can* reduce it to a marginal aestheticism. Theology which addresses only the Christian community *can* consciously pull out of the wider public debate. On the other hand, theology for which religion expresses a dimension of experience *can* make Christianity a private matter for the individual. I deny only the possibility of *a priori* judgments in such matters.

Nevertheless, postliberal theology admittedly sometimes takes an elegiac tone. Frei describes how the biblical narratives once defined reality for Christian preaching—but he sometimes seems doubtful they could do so again. He thinks of Barth's effort to recreate a linguistic world single-handedly as heroic—but is Don Quixote the hero who comes to mind? Lindbeck's account of doctrine would make Christianity a disciplined linguistic community, not a collection of individuals seeking various forms of self-transcendence, but he admits,

<sup>49</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Postmodern Theology*, trans. John Shelley, Fortress Press, 1974, p. 93. Ogden's most recent work has tried to address the concerns of liberation theology, but, symptomatically, the question he thinks we should bring to the New Testament is still, "'Who are we?' or better, 'Who am I?'" Schubert M. Ogden, *The Point of Christology*, Harper and Row, 1982, p. 28, emphasis added.

The conditions for practice seem to be steadily weakening. Disarray in church and society makes the transmission of the necessary skills more and more difficult. Those who share in the intellectual high culture of our day are rarely intensively socialized into coherent religious languages and communal forms of life. . . . The implications of these observations do not bode well . . . for the future of postliberal theology.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand . . . Harvey Cox's recent *Religion in the Secular City* finds in the disciplined communities of liberation theology and fundamentalism the most powerful sources of energy for the future of Christianity. Alasdair Macintyre argues in *After Virtue* that only communities deeply committed to shared values can make meaningful moral discourse possible again. If our hopes lie with "communal enclaves . . . of concern for others,"<sup>51</sup> communities shaped by Christian language and dedicated to a Christian life, that would bode well for the future of postliberal theology.

Comparisons between revisionist and postliberal theologies thus need to take place on at least two levels. At the theoretical level, we can ask which captures the way doctrines function more accurately and interprets the Bible more faithfully. We can compare their views of the relationship between language and experience. At the level of *praxis*, perhaps the issue becomes one of tactics. Does one influence society most effectively by beginning with society's shared assumptions and trying to move in a new direction (revisionism) or by simply describing one's own world-view as forcefully as possible (postliberalism)? Should the moral and spiritual leadership of our society, and the future of the church, lie more with those who work within the common discourse, the established institutions (revisionism), or with those who create exemplary enclaves of speech and action (postliberalism)? I concede that it is too early to tell, though I trust I have made my own sympathies clear.

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<sup>10</sup> Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 124.

*UJbid.*, P. 127.

## THE RULE THEORY OF DOCTRINE AND PROPOSITIONAL TRUTH

**P**ROFESSOR GEORGE A. LINDBECK'S theory of doctrine \* is developed in a connected series of closely reasoned arguments which are often difficult in their details. At the same time his work is unified by two related themes which are well-defined. There is, first, the theme of ecumenical discussion. The author notes how much he has been impressed by the fact that participants in such dialogue insist that they have been compelled to conclude "that positions that were once really opposed are now really reconcilable, even though these positions remain in a significant sense identical to what they were before" (15). The second theme appears explicitly in the final chapter which outlines what might be the characteristics of a postliberal theology. In terms reminiscent of Karl Barth's wry plea (in *The Humanity of God*) for permission to use "a little of the patois of Canaan", Prof. Lindbeck proposes an "intratextual" theology which "re-describes reality within the scriptural framework rather than translating Scripture into extrascriptural categories" (118). In this context he alludes to Reinhold Niebuhr as "perhaps the last American theologian who in practice (and to some extent in theory) made extended and effective attempts to re-describe major aspects of the contemporary scene in distinctively Christian terms" (124).

The second theme represents, no doubt, the broader outlook that the author would have us share; but in order to clear the way to his point of vantage he is obliged to confront two theological assessments of religion and doctrine which, for very different reasons, are in apparent opposition to his own under-

\**The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1984. Numerical references in the present article are to pages.

standing of these phenomena. The first of these "emphasizes the cognitive aspects of religion and stresses the way in which church doctrines function as informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities". It is identified as the approach of traditional orthodoxies, of many heterodoxies, and is said to have certain affinities with much modern Anglo-American empiricist analytic philosophy "with its preoccupation with the cognitive or informational meaningfulness of religious utterances" (16). The second, named by the author the "experiential-expressive" approach, "interprets doctrines as non-informative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes or existential orientations" and is found to be typical of liberal theologies descending from Schleiermacher (16) and dependent on "the Continental tradition of idealism, romanticism, and phenomenological existentialism" (63). A third approach is also recognized, that of the "transcendental Thomists", which attempts to combine the two foregoing emphases: "both the cognitively propositional and the expressively symbolic dimensions and functions of religion and doctrine are viewed, at least in the case of Christianity, as religiously significant and valid". While recognizing advantages in this "hybrid" with respect to the "one-dimensional alternatives", Prof. Lindbeck considers that it may generally be subsumed under the two main approaches (16).

The strategy the author adopts when faced with his adversaries is one of a vast outflanking movement followed by deep penetration behind their lines; he then calls for an armistice. He starts off, innocuously enough, by defining the question at issue as one of a lack of adequate categories for conceptualizing current problems concerning doctrine. "We are often unable, for example, to specify the criteria we implicitly employ when we say that some changes are faithful to a doctrinal tradition and others are unfaithful, or some doctrines are church-dividing and others are not" (7). Both liberalism and pre-liberal orthodoxy have shown themselves to be unhelpful in this crisis, the latter because of its unbending rigidity, the former because of its unstructured excess of flexibility. There-

fore a third way must be found, and the one suggested here " derives from philosophical and social-scientific approaches " (7), specifically from a cultural-linguistic understanding of religion and, consequently, of doctrine. At first sight it appears as though what is being proposed simply a method adapted to the scientific study of religions, and the way in which it is applied seems to confirm this. Quite to the contrary: Prof. Lindbeck does not intend to withdraw from the theological enterprise; he wishes to carry over into it a method already established outside it. He readily concedes that there is nothing new about cultural-linguistic analysis; it is in fact the approach currently adopted by most non-theologians with respect to an increasing number of human phenomena. What is new, he claims (and he is undoubtedly correct), is the use of such a theory within theology in the conceptualization of doctrine. Very far from being an incursion into a distinct, even if related, science, his first move is aimed at the fundamental presuppositions of the alternative options within theology itself. It is these presuppositions that stand in the way of ecumenical agreement and Christian relevance. The path forward lies, if not in renouncing them, at least in agreeing that they are non-essential.

*Ecumenically and religiously neutral*

This strategy brings to light a feature of the work that must strike the reader as at least initially puzzling. The author insists at regular intervals that his approach to doctrine is neutral, with the implication that there is no reason why it should not be adopted by all parties to the discussion. Nevertheless, in the development of his proposal, he argues forcefully against both liberals and cognitivists. This is clearly an unusual form of neutrality. It is, however, an integral part of the view being put forward. In the cultural-linguistic approach " the function of church doctrines that becomes most prominent ... is their use, not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude and action " (18). This suggests to Prof. Lindbeck a way of thinking about

doctrines that is "meant to be ecumenically and religiously neutral", at least within Christianity (10-11). He goes on to say:

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that this attempt at doctrinal neutrality involves theological neutrality when theology is understood as the scholarly activity of second-order reflection on the data of religion (including doctrinal data) and of formulating arguments for or against material positions (including doctrinal ones). Much, perhaps all, theology in this specific sense is to some degree implicitly or explicitly dependent on ideas derived from one or other theory of religion, and is therefore subject to criticism from contrary theoretical perspectives.... Whatever else might be said about it, the recommended mode is clearly in conflict with traditionalist propositional orthodoxy and with currently regnant forms of liberalism. (10)

I find this passage difficult and have had to revise my reading of it several times. It is clearly stated that there is a methodological hierarchy at work. First there is a theory of religion which is avowedly next, and deriving from the first, there is a theory of theology; in the third place logically is constructed a theory of doctrine. Doctrines themselves appear here as something that is given with the phenomenon of a religion. The theory of doctrine, therefore, forms part of a theology that is controlled by a theory of religion; and neither of these last is neutral because they are both subject to criticism from contrary theoretical perspectives. In spite of this, the theory of doctrine is meant to be neutral.

The crucial point, it would seem, is to be found in the definition of theology as second-order reflection. It is a second-order activity in the sense that it is reflection, not on a supposed object of belief, nor on religious experience, but on the cultural-linguistic function of religions and their doctrines. This entails the postulate that doctrines are simply "rules", comparable to the rules of grammar which govern ordinary language. As such they are given as an integral part of a religious cultural tradition; they are prior to religious experience and they prescribe ways of speaking religiously that make no claims to objective truth but (what is much more important) impress on

those who accept them a way of life that is in conformity with the religion in question. In the case of Christianity this means conformity with the story related in Scripture.

All of this seems perfectly coherent—except for the claim that the theory of doctrine is ecumenically and doctrinally neutral. How can it be, seeing that it is logically deduced from a particular theory of religion which requires that doctrines are no more than formal rules? It is this pre-established theory of doctrine which then determines how doctrines are to be interpreted. It is presumably because of his ecumenical interest that Prof. Lindbeck would like his readers to accept the neutrality of his theory of doctrine. It is a neutrality that is very like that of the mathematician (several examples are taken from mathematics) or of the formal logician. Neither of these, however, would accept the responsibility of formulating arguments for or against the use their respective rules are put to; both of them are content to remain at the formal or abstract level of discourse. But for Prof. Lindbeck the very formality of his approach justifies his taking up very decided positions concerning the content of doctrine. If such an approach is to be carried through, it inevitably requires that doctrine itself be formal or "second-order"; or, more plainly, that it be contentless in the way that formal logic is, or in the way that the paradigm of a verb is contentless while still fixing a rule of conjugation for whatever other suitable verbs one substitutes for it. There is, indeed, a language that corresponds to the metalanguage of doctrine and theology, but it is the "language" of a life in harmony with a religion's myths or foundational story. The proposed armistice, then, is to be based on an agreement to restrict the use of the term "first-order statement" to non-informative, performative utterances.

When, in Chapter 5, the theory is tested by seeing how it can make sense of the doctrines of Christology, Mariology and infallibility, the recurring theme is that the theory "allows but does not require" various doctrinal formulations. This is because of the radical formalism of the theory; it is sufficiently abstract to allow for several logical possibilities in the way be-

lievers choose to talk. Still, Prof. Lindbeck does not hide the fact that he is distressed by the dialects spoken in some Christian churches and he would clearly have us purify the language by ridding it of extra-linguistic accretions-in particular, the intrusion of reference to objective reality. In the end the only thing that matters is scriptural discourse verified by action.

It will be seen that there are far-reaching consequences when a theoretically neutral method belonging to one of the sciences of religion is transferred unchanged into theology. Prof. Lindbeck is aware of the surprise his project is likely to provoke; he therefore advances his proposal in two stages. In Chapter 2 he adopts a pretheological perspective in order to discuss whether the cultural-linguistic approach is conceptually and empirically better than current alternatives as a way of picturing the phenomena of religion. Chapter 5 argues for its adoption in theology.

### *The pretheological enquiry*

The shift from the "experiential-expressive model" to the cultural-linguistic approach defines the postliberal aspect of Prof. Lindbeck's project. His criticism of the former is at its most devastating when it echoes the anguished debates within German neo-orthodoxy of the 'thirties ("Christian fellow travelers of both Nazism and Stalinism generally used liberal methodology to justify their positions" [126]). A list is made of the psychosocial, religious and theoretical factors that favor the present dominance of the approach (19-24), and these are referred to again at the end where the author seems resigned to a continuation of this situation (132-4). There is little here that will allow the author to ingratiate himself with his colleagues of the liberal or transcendental Thomist schools. He gives point to his criticism when assessing the capacity of the three theories (cognitive, experiential-expressive and cultural-linguistic) to give an account of the anthropological, historical and other non-theological data of religion. Of Bernard Lonergan's six theses on the nature of religion, "four, and to some

extent, five" are found to be characteristic of experiential-expressivism in general (81). Prof. Lindbeck is most critical, at this non-theological level, of the thesis postulating an underlying unity of religious experience. "Because this core experience is said to be common to a wide diversity of religions, it is difficult or impossible to specify its distinctive features, and yet unless this is done, the assertion of commonality becomes logically and empirically vacuous" (82). The author is as little impressed by Karl Rahner's description of preconceptual experience "in which what is meant and the experience of what is meant are still one". Such characterizations "create a nest of problems "(891).

The major contrast that is drawn up between the two approaches, the experiential-expressive and the cultural-linguistic, is formulated in terms of the origin of the inner experience admitted by both:

When one pictures inner experiences as prior to expression and communication, it is natural to think of them in their most basic and elemental form as also prior to conceptualization. If, in contrast, expressive and communicative symbol systems, whether linguistic or nonlinguistic, are primary-then, while there are of course noneflective experiences, there are no uninterpreted or unschematized ones. On this view, the means of communication and expression are a precondition, a kind of quasi-transcendental (i.e., culturally formed) *a priori* for the possibility of experience. We cannot identify, describe, or recognize experience qua experience without the use of signs and symbols. (36)

A number of arguments is presented in support of this contention. One set is empirical (the author admits they may be falsifiable); there is an appeal to Wittgenstein's contention that private languages are logically impossible, this being applied to private religious experiences that are claimed to be independent of any particular language game (87-8).

Of particular interest here to realists is the author's attempt to refute transcendental Thomism (with its hypothesis of unthematized yet conscious experience) by the simple expedient of pointing out that its hypothesis is superfluous. He formu-

lates this in terms of the classic medieval distinction between first and second intention. I do not think Prof. Lindbeck is altogether correct in applying the distinction to mental activities as follows: "the first intention is the act whereby we grasp objects, while the second intention is the reflex act of grasping or reflecting on first formal intentions". This is indeed what is meant by first intention; but the interpretation of second intention appears to confuse logic and rational psychology. Second intentions are predicates that are attached to the concepts we form of objects; this is the realm of logic, which is concerned with the relations we establish among concepts or propositions. Whatever else about this, the point he is making is that we are not consciously aware-or only unthematically or tacitly aware-of first-intentional activities while we are engaged in them; " Yet this does not lead us to suppose that the first-intentional experiences . . . are somehow preverbal or linguistically unstructured". Surely, he argues, the same could be said of religious experiences." They can be construed as by-products of linguistically or conceptually structured cognitive activities of which we are not directly aware because they are first-intentional. The sense of the holy of which Rudolf Otto speaks can be construed as the tacit or unthematic awareness of applying a culturally acquired concept of the holy in a given situation" (38).

Whether transcendental Thomists will be convinced by this use of Ockham's razor is a matter only they can answer for. Certainly a simple Thomist will see the point. He may perhaps wonder whether Prof. Lindbeck is prepared to take seriously the metaphysical epistemology that, for the Thomist, is implied in the judgment that Karl Rahner's prehension (*Vorgriff*) of being and Bernard Lonergan's dynamic state of being in love are, both of them, unnecessary criteriological hypotheses. It may be that the author does not sufficiently appreciate the epistemological soul-searching which went into the whole post-Kantian project of the Marechal school.

This is not to say that Prof. Lindbeck ignores the problem of the cognitive theory that his approach involves. There oc-

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curs, in fact, at this point one of several suggestions that the approach is one that should be acceptable to Aristotelians and classical Thomists. He recalls that affective experiences, for the Aristotelian, always depend on prior cognition of objects, and the objects available to us in this life are all in some fashion constructed out of (or, in medieval terminology, "abstracted from") conceptually or linguistically structured sense experience (39).

Certainly it is true that, for the Thomist, all knowledge and affectivity have their origin in sense experience. This means moreover that the Thomist will have a basic sympathy for the cultural-linguistic analysis. But, of course, a lot depends after that on how one construes the participation of the subject in the influences brought to bear from the cultural context.

As regards knowledge, a Thomist would agree that the intellectual concepts formed of the object are "abstracted" from sensible images; and, if he were prudent, he would insist at this stage on the imperfect grasp of concrete reality that is afforded by such necessarily universal concepts (even in the case of such a seemingly simple object as Prof. Lindbeck's Fido). But he would not be at all happy with the proposition that the object is therefore "constructed" out of sense experience. This is where first intention reveals its full significance: the knower is precisely the person who "intends" intellectually the object, in and through sense knowledge. More simply put, he forms the judgment: "Fido is an animal-in fact, on the evidence, I will go further and say that he is a dog". It is in this judgment, according to the Thomist, that the knower grasps, or is grasped by, the act of existence of what he knows. This is not any dramatic kind of "onto-logical" field of existence--just the simple (but marvellous) existence of Fido; (a developed metaphysics comes later). I think it is clear enough that Prof. Lindbeck is not willing to pursue his preferred alliance with Thomists as far as this. If he were, the whole discussion could take a new turn. .

Turning next to "affective experiences" which, as the author states, are to be considered as subsequent to cognition,

we find that things are not so simple. Are these experiences to be understood as no more than vague feelings related to sense knowledge? Or is one prepared to analyse them in reference to the kind of knowledge that is proper to the human psychosomatic subject in whom they may occur? The Thomist, at any rate, will want to distinguish, on the one side, sensible affectivities (which may or may not-but ought to-be integrated into the human personality as a whole) and, on the other side, deliberate acceptance of ends and choice of means (following on often prolonged deliberation and intellectual judgments). **It** is only in terms of the latter that he will find himself able to view with sympathy (and with awe) the dynamic state of being unrestrictedly in love of the Lonergan school. **It** is only in terms of one or the other or both (according to the case) that he will be able to evaluate the experiential school in general.

Given these admittedly far-reaching precisions of cognitive and affective theory, and at the pretheological stage, the Thomist should find no difficulty about accepting the cultural-linguistic approach in so far as it posits that affective experiences always depend on prior cognition of objects. Whether Prof. Lindbeck is right, at this stage, to suggest that this principle "raises questions regarding the meaningfulness of the notion that there is an inner experience of God common to all human beings and all religions" is another question (39-40). It is one which I can consider only in theological terms (by appealing to Christ's identity as the divine creative Word). But even on purely anthropological grounds, though not empirical ones, might not one suspect that ultimate questions concerning human values, to the degree that they are raised, would provoke answers bearing some similarities? Does the cultural-linguistic approach suppose that man is purely the creature of his environment? I wonder at this point whether a Protestant positivistic theology of the Word-with its radical separation of salvation and creation-may not have influenced the application of the pretheological theory. (The section on the salvation of those outside an "unsurpassable" religion, with

its purely eschatological solution, tends to confirm this. Regrettably, space does not permit discussion of this point.)

In fact, Prof. Lindbeck concedes that the pretheological enquiry may not be able to settle theological questions. While insisting that an experiential-expressive theory is unprovable, he goes so far as to allow that it might be superior for theological purposes ( . He does not, of course, think that this is really so since he is committed to transferring the non-theological method unchanged into theology.

*The theological application*

The discussion of the proposal becomes particularly difficult at this point. What the author puts forward in Chapter 3 pertains to what the Catholic tradition calls fundamental theology. It does not, in its primary inspiration, correspond to the apologetic function of fundamental theology in which the believer uses non-theological concepts and arguments in order to persuade non-believers as to the reasonableness or at least the meaningfulness of the religious way of life. The chapter is rather concerned with the definition that a religion gives of itself, with the concept of a possibly unsurpassable religion, with relations between religions, and with the question of the salvation of non-believers. Chapter 4, on doctrine, is an integral part of this line of thinking.

Now, Prof. Lindbeck proposes, and this is at the heart of his project, that these questions should be discussed in terms of his avowedly non-theological cultural-linguistic theory. This, of course, raises in its proper context the question, already touched on, of whether a religion can adequately express its self-awareness from this purportedly neutral point of view. It begs the question when the author writes:

Depending on the model that one uses, religions can be compared with each other in terms of their propositional truth, their symbolic efficacy, or their categorial adequacy. (47)

By using the term "model", which belongs properly to the method of the empirical sciences, and by applying it to all

three approaches, now understood as theological, he tacitly reduces them all to the level of his own explicitly empirical method. Whatever may be the case for experiential-expressivists, this simply will not do for those who claim some measure of truth for doctrinal propositions. They do not make the claims they do except from a context of faith (and this is why, for them, fundamental theology is an integral part of the theology of faith). To the degree that a claim is made to truth, the term "model" does not apply since it denotes, by definition, a refutable hypothesis—one, moreover, that (in the proper sense of the term) is based on empirical evidence. Prof. Lindbeck is, of course, quite well aware of the claim made by some traditions to doctrinal truth; he thinks it shows insecurity and naivete (21) and can easily be accused of vacuity (99), though he sometimes takes it more seriously. I venture to suggest that on the evidence of his book he is much more familiar with liberalism and its off-shoots than he is with what he terms cognitivism and propositionalism (so that one wonders about what goes on in some ecumenical discussions).

A preliminary point needs to be made. I very much doubt that any theory of religion or doctrine exists, at least within Christianity, which corresponds to the description given of cognitivism. Reasonable theories about such complex realities must themselves be complex. I have already granted that anyone who shares the metaphysical epistemology of Aquinas is likely to be open to the cultural-linguistic approach; but that means that a Thomistic theory of religion and of doctrine cannot be simply intellectualist, much less simply propositionalist. The Catholic tradition has placed too much emphasis on symbolism, as much in the realm of doctrine as in that of sacraments, for that to be true. Evidently, within this, a place must be found for truth expressed in propositions; but the latter (a part from the explanations it calls for itself) will be understandable only in the context of the whole Christian life, viewed—as it is put in linguistics—both synchronically and diachronically.

Prof. Lindbeck deals with the question of truth in Chapter

3, Sections I and IV, in particular. He proposes that the questions raised in comparing religions have to do, not with propositional truth, nor with symbolic efficacy, but with the adequacy of their categories:

Adequate categories are those which can be made to apply to what is taken to be real, and which therefore make possible, though they do not guarantee, propositional, practical and symbolic truth. . . . A categorially true religion would be one in which it is possible to speak meaningfully of that which is, e.g., most important. (48)

It may then be that different religions have:

incommensurable notions of truth, of experience, and of categorial adequacy, and therefore also of what it would mean for something to be most important (i.e., "God"). (49)

Now, here Prof. Lindbeck is being disingenuous at least in what he says about the openness of his position with respect to the possibility of propositional truth. His statement is no doubt correct so far as the cultural-linguistic approach itself is concerned, that is to say as it is used in a philosophy of religions. But now we are in theology. As transpires in what follows and as is indeed already implicit in the Foreword, the author attaches to the term "propositional truth" a purely pragmatic signification. Truth, it turns out, consists in correspondence between the way a religion is lived and "what a theist calls God's being and will". A religion as lived may be pictured as "a gigantic proposition" which is true:

to the extent that its objectivities are interiorized and exercised by groups and individuals in such a way as to conform them in some measure . . . to the ultimate reality and goodness that lies at the heart of things. (51)

There is little trace left here of the professed neutrality of the cultural-linguistic approach. A quite precise philosophical option has been made in favor of the moral or pragmatic definition of truth. We find later:

Despite its informational vacuity, the claim that God is true in himself is of utmost importance because it authorizes responding

as *if* he were good in the ways indicated by the stories of creation, providence, and redemption which shape the believers' thoughts and actions. 67 (my italics)

This is, of course, classical post-Kantianism. I am not persuaded that it derives from the cultural-linguistic method; it seems rather a presupposition that determines how the method is used. 'There is nothing at all surprising about this. The non-theological method is bound to be modified when it is transferred to the realm of ultimate convictions. This means, however, that the debate switches from Prof. Lindbeck's chosen ground to that of philosophical presuppositions. Despite his life-long refusal of the theology of the "and" (faith and reason, and so on), even Barth was a philosopher.

I leave it to members of the school to decide whether it was wise on Prof. Lindbeck's part to call upon Bernard Lonergan's notion of the systematic differentiation of consciousness in order to explain why some people still persist in thinking that propositions can be true because of their reference to the real. If I am not mistaken, the only way suggested out of that supposed intellectual crisis is that of "conversion" to unrestricted love. For the purposes of the discussion let us stay with the charge that these people "are likely to be suffering from vulgarized forms of . . . rationalism" of suspect modernity and unknown in the early centuries of the church where "ontological truth by correspondence had not yet been limited to propositionalism" (51).

The theme is developed, though with much greater caution, in an excursus on religion and truth (63-9). Christians, it is noted, generally act as if an affirmation such as "Jesus Christ is Lord" is more than a categorial truth; they assert that it is propositionally true that the particular individual "is, was, and will be definitively and unsurpassably the Lord". It is a "crucial theological challenge to a cultural-linguistic approach" to ask whether it is able to admit the possibility of such truth claims. A distinction is made between the "intra-systematic" and the "ontological" truth of statements:

Utterances are intrasystematically true when they cohere with the total relevant context, which, in the case of a religion when viewed in cultural-linguistic terms, is not only other utterances but also the correlative forms of life. [Ontological truth is] that truth of correspondence to reality which, according to epistemological realists, is attributed to first-order propositions. (69)

Prof. Lindbeck is concerned to maintain, despite what he has said earlier in the chapter, that his approach can accommodate ontological truth so defined. He does this, however, by supplying his own definition of first-order propositions:

For the cognitivist, it is chiefly technical theology and doctrine which are propositional, while [for the author] truth and falsity characterize ordinary religious language when it is used to mold lives through prayer, praise, preaching, and exhortation. It is only on this level that human beings linguistically exhibit their truth or falsity. (69)

This leads to the crucially important conclusion:

Technical theology and official doctrine, in contrast, are second-order discourse about the first-intentional uses of religious language. (69)

This, in turn, leads on to the evaluation of doctrine as rules.

It is quite clear what Prof. Lindbeck is getting at in his novel definition of "ontological truth" and no Christian will dispute his point that doctrine is purposeless if it is not incorporated into a way of life. But normally this is called sincerity, commitment, authenticity or something of the sort. The search for a different term indicates that the term "ontological truth" has already been preempted for another signification. Prof. Lindbeck knows this and he says himself that "Paul and Luther, at any rate, quite clearly believed that Christ's Lordship is objectively real no matter what the faith or unfaith of those who hear or say the words". But he at once weakens this by adding: "What they were concerned to assert is that the only way to assert this truth is to do something about it" (66). Cognitivists are said to hold, on the contrary, that the truth of propositions is "independent of the subjective dispositions of those who utter them" (66). The distinction

between formed and unformed faith (not to speak of the whole range of non-casuistic moral theology) would be useful to rebut this last claim; but this might complicate the discussion. Would not the principle, *simul iustus et peccator*, also suggest that there is too often a dichotomy between what one holds with genuine conviction and what one actually does? In any case it seems necessary to provide, even in a cultural-linguistic theory, for the traditional "become what you are", which suggests that, if moral exhortation is to have any persuasive force, it must be able to appeal to ontological truths which *ought* to be reflected in religious life. This would, of course, entail restoring to doctrine (and to a great deal of theology, I am happy to say) a first-order function.

Once again Prof. Lindbeck demonstrates his ability to anticipate difficulties such as this. He is led to make an interesting attempt to enter into the position of St. Thomas. He is prepared, as a final resort, to allow that the

performatory conformity of the self to God can be pictured in epistemologically realistic fashion as involving a correspondence of the mind to divine reality. This is true, at any rate, when one conceives of this correspondence in as limited a fashion as does, for example, Thomas Aquinas." (66)

He adds his customary warning that cultural-linguistic theories need not exclude, even though they do not imply, the kind of modest propositionalism represented by theologians such as Aquinas.

Citing *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 18, a. 3, and *Contra Gentes*, I, c. 80, he recalls St. Thomas's distinction between the human mode of signifying God (*modus significandi*) and the divine being, the signified (*significatum*). He takes this to be used in the sense that

although in statements about God the human mode of signifying (*modus significandi*) does not correspond to anything in the divine being, the signified (*significatum*) does. Thus, for example, when we say that God is good, we do not affirm that any of our concepts of goodness (*modus significandi*) apply to him, but rather that there is a concept of goodness unavailable to us, viz., God's own understanding of his own goodness, which does apply." (66)

Were this what St. Thomas really thought there would be no need for the inverted commas used by Prof. Lindbeck when he refers to it as agnostic (67). **It** is of absolutely no use to us if the only concept of goodness that applies to God is the one he is supposed to have of himself; not only is this unavailable to us; we would not even have the right to say that he has it or even that "he " is capable of having " it".

In fact, St. Thomas, using a rather undeveloped linguistic approach, but one that is guided by a highly developed theory of how we know God, says that some of the *words* we predicate of God apply to him properly as regards their formal signification (*quantum ad id quod significant huiusmodi nomina*). But not even these words apply to him properly as regards their mode of signification (*quantum ad modum significandi*); by which is meant their linguistic structure and syntax which inescapably belong to a language shaped in terms of the material world (the tenses of verbs, concrete and abstract nouns, and so on). In the context of his theory of our knowledge of God, this distinction regarding predicates is almost a banality, as is, it may be useful to add, the fact that he compares such a transfer of predicates, from normal use to propositions about God, to what the medieval rhetoricians called analogy (I, q. 13, a. 5). What the theory of knowledge has already established is that some of the *concepts* we draw from sensible experience (we have no other source to draw on) may be " properly " applied to God, though clearly they are incapable of expressing adequately his infinite perfection. Still, what they do express mediates a true knowledge of God. In logical terms this is termed "proper predication". This theory of knowledge, in its turn, is based on a metaphysics which moves from the act of existence of, for example, Fido, to judgments concerning the divine act of existence. This appeal to the order of *esse* implies a most profound criticism of all concepts applied to God (I, qq. 2-12). This results, however, not in agnosticism, but in the assimilation of the whole tradition of negative theology into a higher synthesis. **It** is a higher synthesis because it allows St. Thomas to claim that the *significatum*,

the divine being, is just that: our *language* can *signify* him because our *thought* is able to attain him.

What needs to be insisted on is the fact that one who enters into this way of thinking would refuse to define (propositional) truth in terms of concepts or categories; and the idea that any religion could have "adequate" categories with respect to its Ultimate Concern strikes him as entirely rationalistic. He locates truth exclusively in the judgment which possesses its own dynamism towards reality and which can make do with conceptual imperfection; it has to make do with that even in the case of sensible objects and *a fortiori* in the case of God. A great deal of theology has to do with sorting out concepts and symbols, both scriptural and non-scriptural, and deciding on the way in which they may legitimately be applied to God. **It** is an occupational hazard of the theologian that he is easily led into thinking that concepts and symbols are all that enters into the act of faith.

St. Thomas's defense of human thought and language applies not only to philosophical approaches to God. **It** is just as much required to make sense of the "story" of the Scriptures to which Prof. Lindbeck appeals. Finally, ultimate questions have to be asked. Why should the sufferings of Christ be held to be meaningful for our existence, any more than those of Hamlet (to take the author's example)? Does not this imply the truth, prior to any action of ours, of the proposition, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (1 Cor. 5.19)? St. Thomas, at any rate, makes his own position clear:

The act of the believer is terminated, not by the proposition, but by the reality. For we form propositions only in order that, through them, we may have knowledge of reality; that is the case for ordinary knowledge; it is also the case for faith. (II-II, q. 1, a. 11, ad 2)

He is, of course, quite clear that we can affirm the propositions of faith and so attain the reality of God only through the power of the Holy Spirit. He is equally clear as to why some limited knowledge of God is revealed to us, and here he is found in agreement with Prof. Lindbeck's principal concern:

Man is directed towards God as towards his end ... an end which exceeds the understanding of reason.... But the end must already be known by men for they are required to direct their intentions and actions to the end. (I, q. 1, a. 1; cf. II-II, q. 1, a. 1)

We may not know how God is good, but we can draw a whole series of non-tautologous consequences from the true affirmation that he is good (cp. 67). Even more important, we can accept as true the promises of the New Testament; and we can take seriously the way of life it proposes. I cannot see how the narration of a story, without such a background of conviction, can fulfil the hopes that Prof. Lindbeck attaches to it in his final chapter.

There are, in fact, places where Prof. Lindbeck seems to call on first-order affirmations about God. This happens, significantly enough, when he adverts to failures in the performativity of Christians-in spite of their confession of Christ as Lord and as the express image of the Father (60). It seems to happen also in at least the first of the three regulative principles said to have presided over the formation of the early creeds (the monotheistic principle) and, it seems likely, in the third (the principle of Christological maximalism) (94).

### *Testing the theory*

In Chapter 5 Prof. Lindbeck proposes to test his theory by applying it to certain Christian doctrines. Given his method, it is hardly surprising that this turns out to be the kind of testing favored by Procrustes. The taxonomy of doctrines (Chapter 4, Section III) has already formulated a series of logical categories judged to be adequate for cataloguing doctrines in terms of the cultural-linguistic theory. Unfortunately, this division is based on the following hypothesis:

The disagreement centers on beliefs about what is ontologically true, rather than on practical doctrines (which are by definition rules rather than truth claims). This makes it desirable to start with practical doctrines in considering the various ways in which rules can be permanently valid. (85)

This is unfortunate because it assumes a purely positivistic concept of moral law (though the "law of love" is possibly excepted-why?). Some Christian traditions hold that truth is involved in moral law (and so are more hesitant about judging traditional sexual norms than is Prof. Lindbeck [85, U6]). This division means (as it was obviously meant to mean) that the formal possibilities established for categorizing beliefs postulate an abstraction from truth that ignores what, for some Christians, is constitutive of doctrine. This is highlighted in the discussion of infallibility which is given a purely empirical interpretation and could be exercised, so it seems, by anyone who took the trouble to find out what most Christians actually believe. The question of truth is not raised; nor is the (presumed) need for an infallible authority when the community is faced with a crisis of interpretations. As far as the First Vatican Council goes, it is quite accurate to say that the bishops never envisioned the possibility of "permanently conditional" doctrines ("whenever such and such conditions prevail, such and such a doctrine applies") (87). But that is because they construed the permanence of doctrines in terms of truth (cf. Dogmatic Const. "Dei Filius"; DS 3000-45; in particular, 3017). All of this stands in the way of accepting for theological purposes the proposed taxonomy of doctrines. Nevertheless, there are many points made about particular doctrines that merit attention. Given the limitations of space, it is preferable to look at one example discussed by Prof. Lindbeck—that of the definitions of Nicaea and Chalcedon (Chapter 5, Section !)-because of the interesting linguistic questions it raises.

For the sake of discussion, let us allow that the concepts used by the early councils are not only post-biblical novelties (though the fathers of Nicaea found themselves obliged to adopt *homoousios* because the Arians could give their own interpretation of any of the relevant scriptural texts), but also "dependent on the late-Hellenistic milieu" (though what the philosophical consequences of this may be is a question that merits discussion). (The comments in brackets are mine.)

Prof. Lindbeck goes on from this to conclude that, if doctrine is not to be irreversibly tied to Greek philosophy, it is necessary to distinguish between "doctrine and formulation, between content and form". The symbolic view of doctrine is unable to make this distinction while at the same time preserving the distinctiveness of a doctrine. "In contrast to this, it is self-evident that both first-order and second-order propositions (e.g., rules) are separable from the forms in which they are articulated" (93). Since there is

no way of stating independently what that content is ... the only way to show that the doctrines of Nicaea and Chalcedon are distinguishable from the concepts in which they are formulated is to state these doctrines in different terms that nevertheless have equivalent consequences." (93)

Here we return to the pragmatic or intrasystematic view of truth; and when the problem is put the way it is, there is probably no alternative.

What is wrong with this argument is that it assumes that the form of all first-order propositions is identical with the concepts they employ. If the concepts are historically conditioned, then so are the propositions in their entirety. I would maintain, on the contrary, that at least in some cases this is not so. What Nicaea was concerned to define was the proposition that "the Son is God", just as "the Father is God", though "the Son is not the Father". Likewise, Chalcedon was concerned to define that Our Lord Jesus Christ is "one and the same" as the divine Son (*hena kai ton auton*; DS 301). Unless one wishes to take up the question of the conceptuality involved in the proper names of "Father" and "Son" (which is a legitimate line of inquiry but not to the point here), one cannot separate the doctrine from the form of these basic propositions. That is because the terms "is" and "is not", which signify judgments and not concepts, do not, in this context, admit of substitution.

One who adopts a linguistic approach would be expected to pay attention to these essential words and to the significance attached to them in a given context by those who use them.

When, by the use of "is" (or by some other linguistic device in certain languages), it is asserted that what is signified by the Subject is identified in reality with what is signified by the Predicate ("one and the same"), a statement is being made (whether one agrees with it or not) that transcends the (by hypothesis) historically-conditioned concepts employed. This much at least is unchangeable in the doctrine of Nicaea. The way is open for theologians or others to suggest, if they can, -alternatives to the concepts used by this council or by Chalcedon, provided that the identity (or non-identity), unequivocally asserted, be preserved. This is not so easy as it sounds since the concepts in question are in direct relation to the order of existence with which the judgment is formally concerned - and this is why they are not widely understood today; but in any case they need to be explained by further discourse. Even more important, there is an untold number of ways in which may be developed the significance of the basic doctrines in terms of Christ, a living; and there is nothing that guarantees that those who are the most strictly orthodox will be open either to the hidden riches of the truth expressed in the doctrine or to the needs of mankind today. Nevertheless, it is more likely that those who maintain orthodoxy will have a firmer grasp, at least theoretically, of what is meant by saying that the Kingdom is not of this world - that humanity's God-given destiny in Christ is not immanent in history. And this is a criterion of action that is more likely to escape the notice of the pragmatist.

In support of his rule theory of doctrine, Prof. Lindbeck cites Bernard Lonergan's admirable studies of the development of the Trinitarian doctrine, while disagreeing with his conclusions concerning the desirability of the metaphysical precision brought by medieval theology (94, 105). What attracts Prof. Lindbeck's approval is the evidence that Athanasius expressed the meaning of consubstantiality in terms of the rule that whatever is said of the Father is said of the Son, except that the Son is the Father. This is taken as proof that the early theologians considered the doctrine to be a second-order rule

of speech. This is quite arbitrary interpretation and one that could be entertained only by projecting post-Kantian scepticism onto the Fathers. Once again, one who promotes the linguistic approach should be ready to recognize the role that language plays both in insisting on a real state of affairs and in clarifying how to conceptualize it. It was not until the Cappadocians dimly perceived the possibilities of the concept of "relation" that the fourth-century theologians disposed of a set of categories that might serve to express, however, inadequately, the universally acknowledged mystery of real distinction in real unity. Before that time, and after it too, the only sure way to preserve the revealed mystery was to revert constantly to the simple (first-order) judgments that can be traced to New Testament origins. Even St. Augustine failed to develop a fully satisfactory theory so that he frequently has recourse to the propositions that simply restate the doctrine. When St. Thomas succeeded in formulating the complex notion of "subsisting relation"-which is a chimaera unless it is deployed within his basic judgment concerning the transcendent *esse* of God-a. great part of his discussion of the Trinity is taken up with linguistic analysis and rules. Most of these have an exegetical purpose, being used to interpret the textual sources; the hermeneutic employed is one of reference to the real, grasped in the judgment of faith and elaborated, more or less successfully, in the new conceptualization. Throughout the whole historical development the rules of language are formulated in the light of the insight of faith and are concerned with what is held to be objectively true. Needless to say, theologians did not always succeed in maintaining the necessary balance.

Prof. Lindbeck concludes that, given the rule theory, propositional interpretations are superfluous; there is no need to go beyond their formal content and insist on an ontological reference. Rule theory does not entirely prohibit speculations regarding the latter but "simply says that these are not doctrinally necessary and cannot be binding" (106). -In fact, when they are indulged in, "language idles without doing any

work". The real question is not here but in asking" how contemporary Christians can do as well or better in maximizing the Jesus Christ of the biblical narratives as the way to the one God of whom the Bible speaks " (107). I conclude, on the contrary, that the ontological reference is given; speculation about it may not be binding but history continues to prove that it is necessary in order to preserve the simplicity of the revealed message. It is, besides, the tribute that the mystic as well as the theologian has always paid to the Triune God. Orthopraxis, on the contrary, appears to be an entirely speculative position and I take it to be characteristic of liberal theology. It may be that the cultural-linguistic approach marks an end to expressivist liberalism. I think it can become post-liberal only if it rediscovers the modest non-agnosticism of the Christian tradition. Perhaps Karl Barth, in spite of his philosophical hesitations, was moving in this direction.

#### *The question of method*

I am clearly in sympathy with Prof. Lindbeck's desire to maintain the epistemological priority and ethical significance of doctrine. I can agree with him when he speaks of doctrine as " the framework and the medium within which Christians know and experience" (84, 80). Equally clearly I am unable to agree with him when he distinguishes the doctrinal framework and "what [Christians] think they know" (84). This means that my disagreement centers on the crucial distinction between doctrines " taken to resemble grammatical rules " and taken as true propositions. Nor is my opinion changed when Prof. Lindbeck, reverting to his neutral stance, adds that the same sentences in which the rules are stated may function also as propositions or expressive symbols. I agree that they also function as expressive symbols; but I am unable, when it comes to doctrines, to distinguish between their function as rules and their truth, even though I am conscious of the historical and ecumenical problems that have to be solved.

The fundamental problem is one of method. The cultural-linguistic approach, with its affinities to the philosophies of

Aristotle and Aquinas, is one that I think is, in itself, valid. But what distinguishes the down-to-earth attitude of the Aristotelian tradition is its refusal to construct theories prior to examination of the facts. Now, in the case of church doctrines, the facts are only to be found in the particular understanding that a particular community has of particular doctrines. There is no possibility of generalizing about such matters; and ecumenical discussions (whether the participants be Aristotelians or not) can only adopt the painstaking research and dialogue concerning individual doctrines that this implies. Prof. Lindbeck, on the contrary, with his outflanking movement, wishes to propose a general theory which is not built up in this way. I am not, of course, forgetting that his own ecumenical experience suggested to him the idea of his strictly formal theory. But, in spite of this, the theory is formulated, not in terms of the "facts" -the way language is used in a given in terms of an avowedly non-theological theory of religion. For this reason it remains non-theological; and it would be understandable if it were greeted by certain philosophers of religion as a valuable development and application of their method.

Prof. Lindbeck may well protest that theologians, in their present disarray, need some such help from external sources. This is no doubt true. The Catholic tradition, at least, formally recognizes the role that scientific reason plays in the elaboration of doctrine; and all the main Reform traditions recognize this in fact. The difficulty obviously lies in the adaptation of the non-theological method to the context of faith. This is the classic problem of faith and reason. **It** is much more difficult to resolve when the contribution of reason is taken from contemporary human sciences because there is a material over-lapping between these sciences and the explicit or implicit anthropology of faith. This can easily confuse the issue for the theologian by blurring the necessary distinction of methods. **If** the human science is not to supplant theology, the latter must dispose of its own criteria and its own method. The only criteria-indeed the only conceivable criteria-are to be found

in doctrines with real content which are accepted as defining the wider perspectives on reality that are characteristic of faith and therefore of theology.

This does not attribute a massive power of veto to theologians of the churches that insist on doctrine so understood. Vatican II's *Decree on Ecumenism*, without further elaboration referred to an order or hierarchy of truths " since they vary in their relationship to the foundation of the Christian faith " (n. 11; W. M. Abbott ed., p. 354) . Whatever else this may mean, it clearly takes it for granted that there are fundamental truths that can be plainly stated. I have already indicated that it seems to me that such truths are to be found in the simple identity or non-identity judgments which issued from the Trinitarian and Christological debates. If to these be joined a like interpretation of the words of Eucharistic institution, an ecclesiological dimension is added to the theological and christological. The three, not surprisingly, correspond to the three major doctrinal crises of Christianity. The hypothesis might then be put forward that these are the propositions that constitute the foundation of the Christian faith. I venture to think that what is affirmed in such propositions is at once astonishing and plain. Their meaning is at the same time unfathomable and sufficiently clear as to constitute an invitation to ongoing meditation and discussion. The discovery of—and the debate about—their moral implications in ever new situations is the constant task of the churches. Still, the assent to their truth claim is simple since no one can say " Jesus is Lord " except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor., U.3) . The cultural-linguistic approach rightly suggests that there is more to any church's tradition than these central truths. But as one moves away from them (or " down " the hierarchy) the opportunity for diversity of insight is more likely to increase and, with it, the need for complementarity. Nevertheless (to revert to Aristotle), each significant element needs to be looked at on its own merits.

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## DOCTRINE IN THE DIASPORA

**G**EORGE A. LINDBECK'S *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*<sup>1</sup> is one of the very few novel theological proposals to appear since the collapse of Protestant and Catholic neo-orthodoxies in the 1960s. Indeed, I know of no other single text that in such brief compass—there are just over 100 pages of actual text—so effectively re-maps the theological scene. My aim here is to raise three questions about Lindbeck's proposal, but a sketch of the book's two main tracks will suggest why my questions risk doing an injustice to the book as a whole.

On the first track Lindbeck argues for—maps or sketches or charts might be better—his own theories of religion, doctrine, and theology. The centerpiece of his proposal is an interest in those respects in which religions resemble languages together with their correlative forms of life and are thus similar to cultures.... The function of church doctrines that becomes most prominent in this perspective is their use... as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action (17-18).

Lindbeck calls this theory of religion "cultural linguistic" and this theory of church doctrine a "'regulative' or 'rule' theory" (18). He unfolds the proposal in increasingly particular stages. That is, after a foreword describing the background and characteristics of his argument (7-13), he first sketches the ecumenical and cultural context (c. 1). His case is that cultural linguisticism is preferable 1) for nontheological purposes, i.e., for those interested in "how religions work for their adherents" (130) whether such religions are meaningless or meaningful, true or false (c. 2). **It** is also preferable 2) for theological purposes—whether on a) the interreligious issues of the "unsurpassibility" of a religion, dialogue between

<sup>1</sup> (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984). 142 Pages. \$16.95 H; \$9.95 P. References in this essay are to chapter (e.g., c.1) and page (e.g., 1). Italicized English words within quotes are mine.

religions, and the universality of salvation (c. 3), b) more christianly intrareligious doctrines dealing with christology, mariology, and ecclesial infallibility (c. 4-c. 5), or c) the more particularly theological issues raised by demands for dogmatic faithfulness, practical applicability, and apologetic intelligibility (c. 6).

A second and subordinate track in this movement from non-theological to theological uses of the cultural linguistic theory is a sustained dialogue with the three main rivals: cognitive-propositional theories (emphasizing the cognitive aspects of religion and the truth-claiming features of doctrines); experiential-expressive theories (emphasizing the experiential aspects of religion and the non-informative force of doctrines), and "two-dimensional" theories (attempts to combine-correlate or mediate, we might also say-propositional and experiential theories) (16). The argument with experientialism is largely in chapters 2 and 3; the argument with propositionalism is largely in chapters 4 and 5. Lindbeck's dialogue with these alternatives manages to compare and assess them on topics ranging from their theories of truth and scenarios of the eschaton to their christologies and views of Scripture.

What we have here is obviously something more than a narrowly honed treatise on doctrine. **It** is not only "a contribution to the theory of religion and religious doctrine" but also "prolegomena" to a future book "on the current status of the doctrinal agreements and disagreements of the major Christian traditions" (8). What makes evaluation difficult are what Lindbeck calls "the characteristics of the argument" (8). *The Nature of Doctrine* is "more concerned with how to think than with what to assert about matters of fact" (9), more concerned to provide a framework for settling issues than to settle material issues (10). The movement of the argument is from religious (c. 3) and ecumenical (c. 4-c. 5) "neutrality" to theological (c. 6) non-neutrality (9-10). Further, the argument as a whole is "suggestive rather than demonstrative" (10, 134); and, because the case is circular rather than linear, the "order of the topics is in some respects optional"

(11). Lindbeck wants to suggest the "availability" of cultural-linguisticism as a "serious option" whose ultimate test is "performance" (134, 78, 91); although he is candid about his own view of "the superiority of the regulative view" (104), the central argument of the book is that there is no non-theological, doctrinal, or theological reason for rejecting his proposal (134). Thus, despite his criticisms of proposition-ists, experientialists, and mediators, Lindbeck appeals to various strands of their thinking in positive ways throughout the book.<sup>2</sup> Even further, Lindbeck's diagnoses of how his own position might be criticized are probably as suggestive as we will see in any review—certainly in this one (e.g., 28-24, 124, 126, 128, 134-135). In short, the book raises a number of interesting issues that are important but not essential to the book's main argument. For example, Lindbeck thinks that the future of church and world will require some kind of "sociological sectarianism", i.e., small communal enclaves "like those of the early Christian movement (or of the more recent international communist one), or . . . *coolesiola in ecclesia* similar to those of monasticism, early pietism, or some portions of the contemporary charismatic movement" dedicated to socializing "members into highly particular outlooks supportive of concern for others rather than for individual rights and entitlements" and so inculcating "the moral and creedal absolutes that are necessary to maintain openness in a pluralistic democracy." (78, 127).<sup>3</sup> But, as befits an ecclesiology which is sociologically sectarian but ecclesiological.ly other regarding, this scenario is not essential to the book's thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Readers of the *The Thomist* may want to attend in particular to the critical as well as constructive use of Thomas, Lonergan, and Rahner; see the book's index for references.

<sup>3</sup> On this score, Lindbeck might be read as doing for dogmatic or systematic theology what Alasdair MacIntyre has done for a-theological, philosophical ethics in *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). Needless to say, Lindbeck is not only clearer about the Christian character of these communes but also (because of his quasi-universalism [55-63]) less pessimistic about what God, at least, can do with a fragmented culture.

This complexity becomes less perplexing than playful the more one tries to test the flexibility of the book, but it does make one cautious. As Lindbeck emphasizes, there are no neutral criteria for evaluating the "availability" of such comprehensive frameworks (11, 42, 78, 118, 181). If we use the criteria in Lindbeck's final chapter (which is "an addendum to the main argument of the book," although some might argue that the theological issues raised here are "more crucial and interesting than the doctrinal ones" raised in the body of the text) (112, 120), we ought to evaluate Lindbeck's proposal primarily on the basis of its intratextual faithfulness to the biblical world, secondarily on its futurological applicability, and thirdly on its cumulative intelligibility. But it is precisely such criteria-or, better, the priorities Lindbeck assigns to these criteria-that critics will dispute.

Given these two tracks and the characteristics of Lindbeck's argument, my three questions will focus more on the book's constructive proposal than on its criticisms of the alternatives-and more on its theological than its non-theological import. Further, although the three questions will not dispute Lindbeck's criteriological priorities (faithfulness, applicability, and intelligibility), they will call for a tighter systematic relationship between the criteria than Lindbeck advocates or perhaps even permits. This strategy might end up unfairly asking too much of a text with whose central thesis-the availability of the cultural linguistic theory-I thoroughly agree; but Lindbeck's proposal is such that I believe it demands this risk be taken.

### I. Idiom and Agency

Lindbeck's view of doctrine is firmly embedded in what he sometimes calls the Christian "idiom." Theology is parasitic on ordinary, common-sensical, and idiomatic life and language, e.g., on the "activities of adoration, proclamation, obedience, promise hearing and promise keeping which shape individuals and communities into conformity to the mind of Christ" (68) -or those "liturgical, kerygmatic, and ethical modes of speech

within which ... affirmations from time to time occur" (69). Lindbeck allows for a range of arguments about exactly who are the competent practitioners and speakers of this idiom (113), although he himself prefers to find generally accepted instances of such competence in the manner of "the contemporary linguist" or other non-theological investigator, i.e., by drawing from the mainstream "a sample from as large a cross section, as wide a consensus as is possible" (99-100; cp. 79, 82, 90 [n. 21], 113). And, Lindbeck suggests, what guides and holds together the diversities of the Christian idiom are those uses of Scripture (the exemplary instantiations of Christian communal language) as "an overarching story" embracing diverse materials (120).

One way to explore and test these claims is to consider how Lindbeck handles a contrast between two different ways he speaks of this idiom. On the one hand, he says that our cultural, linguistic, and religious idiom "functions," *does things*; on the other hand, he also says that individuals and groups "use", *do things with*, our cultural, linguistic, and religious idiom. The relationship between these two is obviously "dialectical" and "reciprocal" (33), but priority is consistently given to the first side. Thus, "cultures" are to be understood "semiotically as reality and value systems—that is, as idioms for the construing of reality and the living of life" (18, cp. 114). "Language," in turn, is a communal phenomenon shaping who we are (even some physiological states) by its distinctive patterns of lexicon and grammar, syntax and semantics (29) [n. 31], 33, 37, 42). "Religions" are, then, "comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world" (32; cp. 18, 22, 33, 34, 40, 42, 47-48). Thus, our culture, language and/or religious idiom is prior to my or our efforts to acquire them; language is prior to experience, the "outer" to the "inner," or (in theological terms) the *verbum externum* is prior to the *verbum internum*, the *fides ex auditu* to the *fides implorata* (33-4, 43). Becoming Christian consists of "prolonged catechetical

instruction," including practicing "new modes of behavior" and learning "the stories of Israel and their fulfillment in Christ" until the catechumens are "deemed able intelligently and responsibly to profess the faith, to be baptized." (132) More generally still, "the heights and depths of human knowledge, faith, and love are the effects and not the causes of the skill (whose acquisition is largely beyond conscious control) with which men and women learn to use their cultural and linguistic resources" (62). Religions, cultures, and particularly languages thus shape who we are.

On the other hand, Lindbeck also uses a network of (crudely put) agential concepts to emphasize that the priority of cultures, languages, religions, the *verbum externum*, and the *fides ex a,uditu* makes possible rather than evaporates my and our agency, the *verbum internum*, and *fides implicita*. Thus God is clearly a *character* or personal agent (rather than Being, a Natural Force, Pure Form, or Horizon) (121) best depicted in *narratives* of "the interaction of his deeds and purposes with those of creatures in their everchanging circumstances" (121)-*narratives* climaxing in the Gospel renditions of Jesus Christ unsubstitutably enacting divine and human intentions (121). The only way to assert the sort of truth Lindbeck proposes is "to do something about it, i.e., to commit oneself to a way of life" (66). Further, theology and doctrine are "second order *activities*" (69) specified by their purposes. Thus, theological intelligibility "comes from *skill*, not theory, and credibility comes from good *performance*, not adherence to independently formulated criteria" (131). The applicability of a theology is its ability "to shape present *action* to fit the anticipated and hoped for *future*" (125)-for Christians, "to discern those possibilities in current situations that can and should be cultivated as anticipations or preparations for the hoped for future, the coming kingdom" (125). Again, "the task of descriptive (dogmatic or systematic) theology is to give a normative explication of the meaning a religion has for its adherents" (113) and meaning "is constituted by the *uses* of a particular language ... rather than being distinguishable from it" (114).

Or, to give further examples of this agential agenda, Lindbeck recognizes that his theory of religions is "not the only angle from which religions can be studied"-different theories might be useful for other "particular *purposes*" (30). And even Lindbeck's own definition of religions (e.g., as ritualized narratives structuring experience) depends on the stories involved being told "with a particular *purpose* or *interest*," i.e., with an interest in "identifying and describing what is taken to be more important than everything else in the universe, and to organizing all of life, including both behavior and beliefs, in relation to this" (32-33). More generally still, "hammers and saws, ordinals and numerals, winks and signs of the cross, words and sentences are made comprehensible by indicating how they fit into systems of communication or *purposeful, action*, not by reference to outside factors" (114).

These are, I realize, large claims. But I do not cite them to dispute them. Indeed, I think that they form a rich network of interrelated concepts (e.g., skills and abilities, actions and practices, intentions and purposes, narratives and community) of which propositionalists, experientialists, and correlationalists cannot make good sense. The problem is that there might be two distinct reasons why Lindbeck does not sort out this agential agenda from the cultural linguistic framework that generates his theory of religions and the Christian idiom. First, to highlight the agential agenda might undercut Lindbeck's insistence that the key theological issue is faithfulness, not applicability or intelligibility (128). Put in confessional terms, highlighting the agential agenda might undercut the priority of "faith" over "works" (cp. 128) and (*perhaps*) of the *viva vox evangelii* over sacramental enactment of the story (cp. 118-19). This may be why the analogy of religions to languages so controls their analogy to cultures, ways of living, and forms of life (cp. 27-28 [n. 16]).

I am not claiming that such priorities are mistaken or that they are confessionally motivated. I am one of those Catholics who agree with Lindbeck's priorities, although I would locate the paradigms of the Christian idiom not only intratextually

but in the "heavily ritualized" use of the Gospel stories at the Lord's Supper.<sup>4</sup> My point is that Lindbeck's agential agenda provides the tools for further elaborating the priority of what our cultural linguistic idiom does to us and what we do to our cultural-linguistic idiom. What he needs to do is tighten the link between the two, the better to provide a thicker description (cp. 115) of the many ways we can, for good and ill, move and be moved into and out of our various and conflicting selves and communities and languages in our storied pilgrimage to the kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

Then again, this may be one of those cases of trying to develop complex explanations when simple ones will do. Perhaps the reason for not highlighting the agential agenda is simply that the subject matter of the book is "doctrine." For some purposes, Lindbeck might argue, we certainly do need to sharpen the agential agenda, expanding on the relationships between culture and language, skills (virtues?) and agency, narratives and rituals so central to any religion (32). But, for purposes of doctrine, what needs to be emphasized is that religions are like languages embedded in forms of life so that the nature of doctrines emerges from the background of competent speech and (other kinds of) competent practice. Thus, while Lindbeck's emphasis on the priority of the idiom to our uses of it may come to make a difference when he moves from prolegomena! to other issues (e.g., justification), I believe he makes a strong case that only such a priority can move for-

<sup>4</sup> I would emphasize that Lindbeck's theory of doctrine permits this alternative. But could not one go further, even on non-theological grounds? That is, what better place for the stranger to find a religious idiom than those times when religions are "heavily ritualized" -in particular, for Christians, at Baptism and the Lord's Supper?

<sup>5</sup> The agential agenda might also suggest ways to hold together Lindbeck's insistence on the importance of "neutrality" with his conviction that there is no "neutral standpoint" from which to adjudicate comprehensive "outlooks on religion, not to mention religions themselves. ••• (11; cp. 42, 73, 113, 130). Short of perfect conformity to the being and will of God at the eschaton, we are left with the movement from neutrality toward non-neutrality (and vice versa) depicted in Lindbeck's ordering of his chapters.

ward our discussions of doctrine. **It** is time, then, to turn directly to Lindbeck's notion of doctrine.

## II. Rules and Reconciliation

Doctrines are "communally authoritative teachings regarding beliefs and practices that are considered essential to the identity or welfare of the group in question" (74). **It** is important to note the soteriological context of Lindbeck's elaboration of this description. That is, Lindbeck intends to come to terms with anomalies he finds in the unity and diversity, permanence and change, conflict and compatibility of doctrines (9, 15). **In** particular, presuming that doctrines are both unified and diverse, permanent and changing, compatible and conflicting, Lindbeck wants to focus on the problem of "doctrinal reconciliation" (15). Presume Christians follow certain doctrines and that some of these doctrines are opposed. How, then, is it possible to account for the massive doctrinal reconciliation taking place among Christians without claiming doctrinal capitulation? How can we have "doctrinal reconciliation without doctrinal change" (15)? The function of Lindbeck's rule theory of doctrine, then, is to make room for doctrinal reconciliation. He is about the task of "seeking concepts that will remove anomalies" (8). **In** still other words, the rule-theory is doing soteriological work.

What, then, are "rules"? I think we can distinguish two features of Lindbeck's answer. The first, I shall suggest, solves doctrinal anomalies while the second creates some. First, doctrines as rules are extraordinarily various. Some rules have to do with the lexicon of a religion; others are syntactical rules and still others "provide semantic reference" (81). Rules can be informally operative and or formally stated (74-6). They can also be unconditionally and permanently necessary (e.g., perhaps, "Feed the poor"), conditionally necessary and irreversible (e.g., perhaps, doctrines against slavery or, for Catholics, doctrines about the papacy and Mary), conditionally necessary and reversible (e.g., perhaps, early Christian pacifism, the immortality of the soul), simply "accidentally nec-

essary " (e.g., perhaps, post-Scriptural liturgical developments; for Protestants, the papacy). Some doctrines "define" correct usage or are "explicit statements of general regulative principles" (perhaps the *sola gratia* or *sola fide*). Most doctrines "illustrate correct usage rather than define it"; they are "exemplary instantiations or paradigms of the application of rules" (e.g., perhaps, Nicaea) (81, 95).<sup>6</sup> Other doctrines might be characterized as tragic in the sense that they involve "a decision between two alternatives, both of which are bad, but one of which is worse than the other" (98; cp 103-104).

As these examples suggest, Lindbeck's vision of the various kinds of doctrines is rich in potential for settling doctrinal conflicts. From this point of view, the mistake of the propositionals and experientialists is to give one function of doctrines (e.g., referential or expressive) unwarranted precedence over these other functions.<sup>7</sup> Once we handle doctrines as rules parasitic on the Christian idiom, there is no such need to give one function such unqualified dominance.

What, then, is communally essential (i.e., doctrinal) *about doctrines*? In sum, a community must develop the sort of skills it takes to obey or follow (rather than "interpret") its rules, i.e., "to specify the circumstances, whether temporary or enduring, in which a doctrine applies" (107, 18). A second feature of Lindbeck's theory of doctrine is at work here, viz., a particular theory (in a loose sense) of truth. A religion is "categorially true," Lindbeck says, if it has the categories "which can be made to apply to what is taken to be real and which therefore make possible, though they do not guarantee,

<sup>6</sup> For these categories and examples, see the taxonomy of doctrines on pp. 84-88. It is important to add the "perhaps" before each example because Lindbeck is here interested in establishing the plausibility of his taxonomy while leaving room for arguments over which doctrines function in which categories.

<sup>7</sup> See the argument of William David Soloman, "Ethics II. Rules and Principles" in *The Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, Warren T. Reich, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1978), Vol. I, pp. 407-413. The reference to discussions of rules in ethics is important, for Lindbeck claims that "practical doctrines" are "by definition rules" (85, 104).

propositional, practical, and symbolic truth " (48). Utterances are " intrasystematically true when they cohere with the total relevant context which ... is not only other utterances but also the correlative forms of life " (64). A statement is "ontologically true" if it corresponds to reality, i.e., in a cultural-linguistic context, if what it signifies is part of a way of life which corresponds to "God's being and will" (51, 65-66). Given these senses of " true," doctrines (in contrast to first order Christian idiom) make intrasystematic rather than ontological truth-claims; like grammar, they are " second order rather than first order propositions and affirm nothing about extralinguistic or extrahuman reality" (80, 69). Such doctrines "recommend and exclude certain ranges of-among other things-propositional utterances or symbolizing activities" (19). In sum, as the analogy of religions to languages controls their analogy to cultures, so the analogy of doctrines to grammatical rules controls their analogy to rules taken more generally.

A number of epistemological issues are involved here, but the central issue would seem to be this: how does this theory of doctrinal truth help in dealing with doctrinal reconciliation? Lindbeck's theory of doctrinal truth (in contrast to his theory of the variety of kinds of doctrines) seems to make doctrinal reconciliation enormously difficult-in the following way. Faced with an opposition of doctrines, we need to ask questions like " what understanding of doctrine would make such a view intelligible without, however, excluding the contrary position" (9)? We need "to specify the circumstances, whether temporary or enduring, in which a doctrine applies" (107, 18), ultimately to track the " consequences " of such doctrines for ordinary life and language (93, 99, 100), including description of the way such rules will handle " the usages, especially the innovative ones, that prove acceptable or unacceptable in a given community " (109 [n. 10]) . Doctrinal reconciliation can thus occur without doctrinal change by showing that apparently opposed rules apply in different circumstances.

But, to do this-to "specify the circumstances "-involves

discovering or creating a narrative embracing diverse circumstances. Given Lindbeck's storied reading of the Christian idiom, we Christians-perhaps it is different for a non-theological interpreter-seem to be able to have doctrinal reconciliation without doctrinal change only by changing the Christian idiom. Whereas Lindbeck's view of the diverse sorts of doctrines renders doctrinal reconciliation possible, his theory of doctrinal truth makes doctrinal reconciliation seem an almost impossibly arduous affair.

The recent Lutheran-Catholic document on justification-which Lindbeck knows quite well-is instructive here.<sup>8</sup> The opposed parties engage not in "compromise" but in a "common search";<sup>9</sup> and most of the document is the construction of a narrative embracing the diverse circumstances of the opposed parties during and after the Reformation, eventually proposing that what is at stake are distinct (perhaps even theologically opposed) but doctrinally compatible models (grammars, Lindbeck might say) of growth and change-one soteriology modeled on "progressive transformation under the power of grace," the other modeled on the "simultaneity" of the *simul iustus et peccator*.<sup>10</sup> The document, I believe, succeeds in suggesting how Lutherans and Catholics can each claim doctrinal reconciliation without doctrinal capitulation. But, to make good its claim, it must make good the narrative. Even if, for example, Catholics do not have to learn a different doctrine of justification, they do have to learn how to employ skillfully a different storied context for their doctrine-but to learn a storied context is to change, if not a doctrine, the idiom in which Lindbeck (rightly, I think) proposes doctrines are embedded.

<sup>8</sup> See "Justification By Faith. U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue," *Origins. NO Documentary Service* 13 (# 17, October 6, 1983), pp. 278-304. Hereafter referred to by paragraph number (#).

<sup>9</sup> "Justification By Faith," Preface.

<sup>10</sup> "Justification By Faith," # 25 and # 154. It might be interesting to ask in what respects Lindbeck's theory of doctrinal reconciliation is and is not a subspecies of a more general soteriology.

In sum, Lindbeck's theory of doctrinal diversity opens up all sorts of possibilities for doctrinal reconciliation, but his theory of doctrinal truth seems to make doctrinal reconciliation extraordinarily difficult. Perhaps this is all any theory of doctrine can do. Perhaps a theory of doctrine can only offer hope for doctrinal reconciliation—where hope's object is a future good which it is difficult but possible to attain (*bonum futurum arduum possibile haberi* [*Summa Theologiae* IIa IIae. 17, 1]) . But perhaps the hope can be increased by tying Lindbeck's theory of doctrinal diversity not exclusively to a theory of doctrines as intrasystematically true but to a doctrinally (not necessarily theologically) more eclectic gestalt of distinct "senses of 'true'." Using the ad hoc strategy Lindbeck recommends for apologetics generally (HI9, 131), we could refuse to take one function of doctrines (i.e., referential, expressive, or grammatical) as the paradigm for the others while leaving room for theologians to construct (or deconstruct) epistemologies as is necessary to deal with the very real problems raised by competing theories of truth. This might encourage a more fluid distinction between intrasystematic and ontological truth and leave room for intelligibility more systematically to inform applicability, all the while maintaining the priority of applicability to intelligibility.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> I am not trying to avoid the issues raised by Lindbeck's discussion of various "senses of 'true'" but instead to focus the dialogue on Lindbeck's own terms, i.e., the contribution such discussions make to reconciling opposed doctrines. In matters epistemic, I believe that Lindbeck's key achievement may be the suggestion that the "correspondence theory of truth," christianly speaking, is not about the correspondence between an autonomous mind or *Geist* and a monistic abstraction "reality" but between the cultural linguistic "system" and God's being and will (51); thus, "the isomorphism of the knowing and the known can be pictured as part and parcel of a wider conformity of the self to God" (65). This suggests that competing theories of "truth" can only be adjudicated by theories of "reality" and that the metaphysics at work in theologies which aim to systematically wed faithfulness (contemplation, a Catholic might say) and applicability and intelligibility will be a descriptive, pluralistic, and corrigible map of a pluralistic narrative of which only God can ultimately be the judge. There is no space here to elaborate the meaning and truth of this wild claim.

But perhaps all this is unnecessarily abstract. The ultimate way to evaluate Lindbeck's theory of doctrine would be to focus less on doctrines in general than on the several dozen doctrines Lindbeck discusses. The next section is a modest start at doing just this by rather arbitrarily focusing on one of Lindbeck's sample doctrines.

### III. Word and Spirit

Do Lindbeck's trinitarian and christological rules account for his own appeals to the work of the Holy Spirit? The question arises this way. Lindbeck proposes that the classic Christian trinitarian and christological consensus was the product of "the joint logical pressure" of "at least" three rules:

First, there is the monotheistic principle: there is only one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus. Second, there is the principle of historical specificity: the stories of Jesus refer to a genuine human being who was born, lived, and died in a particular time and place. Third, there is the principle of what may be infelicitously called Christological maximalism: every possible importance is to be ascribed to Jesus that is not inconsistent with the first :rules. (94)

Using these three rules, Lindbeck persuasively argues that his rule theory "allows (though it does not require)" treating Nicaea and Chalcedon as "permanently authoritative paradigms, not formulas to be slavishly repeated" (96). The rules also leave room for Lindbeck's theological (in contrast to doctrinal) claim that the story of Jesus yields not primarily Jesus's "historicity, existential significance, or metaphysical status" but Jesus's identity as unsubstitutable enactor of divine and human intentions (120-121).

But where, one might ask, is the rule governing appeals to the Holy Spirit? This question would be less important if Lindbeck's appeals to the Spirit were not crucial to his treatment of the Christian idiom as well as Christian doctrine. Thus, the demand that competent Christian speakers and practitioners ultimately test the truth of doctrines is "the empirical equivalent of insisting on the Spirit as one of the tests .of doc-

trines" (100). Here we find doctrines working "as part and parcel of a wider conformity of the self to God" (65, 51). The work of this Spirit is catholic in its broadest sense, i.e., the linguistically competent "are to be sought in the mainstream rather than in isolated backwaters or ingrown sects uninterested in communicating widely" (100).

On the other hand, in dealing with the Christian idiom, Lindbeck excludes Christian boasting by claiming that the Spirit is at work in Christians as "the pledge of, not the participation in, future glory" (60). Like children learning a language, even mature Christians have only begun "speak the Christian language, the language of the coming kingdom" (60). They therefore stand ready to recognize that other languages can speak of truths of which they know nothing and from which they can be enriched and even that "there is a sense in which those unskilled in the language of faith not only fail to affirm but also cannot deny that 'Jesus is Lord.'" (54, 61, 68) It is this eschatology that, it would seem, partly accounts for the priority Lindbeck gives to the *verbum externum* over the *verbum internum* (the latter "traditionally equated by Christians with the action of the Holy Spirit" [84]), to prospective or eschatological accounts of the salvation of all humanity rather than presentist accounts (although both are doctrinally permissible) (56f), to decisive confirmation of the Christian God and the Christian life at the end of history rather than now (181).

Once again, I agree with Lindbeck's priorities, viz., the priority of Word to Spirit. My intuition is also that Lindbeck is right in claiming that in "cultural-linguistic categories the role of the Spirit can be more easily stressed than in cognitivist ones, and is less subject to enthusiasm or *Schwarmerei* than in an experiential approach" (100). My problem is that the rules for the perichoresis of Word and Spirit are unclear. The strain is particularly apparent when Lindbeck relates economic and immanent Trinity, asserting at some points that the biblical stories do not depict God *in se* (121) and at other points that, while assertions about God *quoad nos* involve assertions

about God *in ae*, we can only know how this is so at the eschaton (67).

Perhaps the relationship between Word and Spirit could be clarified by expanding the three rules: the monotheistic principle could be expanded to include a God of Adam and Eve as well as Abraham and Isaac; the principle of historical specificity could be expanded to include not simply the unique individual Jesus of Nazareth but also other specific individuals (e.g., Mary and Peter and Paul) and groups (e.g., at Jerusalem and Antioch and Rome); the principle of christological maximalism would then apply to the Spirit's work of judging and guiding the Christian community's pilgrimage toward the kingdom. The "maximal Christ" would then be the *totus Christus*. Such revisions might also help assure that the three rules operate jointly. In Lindbeck's formulation, the principle of christologica.I maximalism seems clearly subordinate to the other two principles, perhaps suggesting (in Chalcedonian terms) granting firm priority to the divine nature (the monotheistic principle) and the human nature (the principle of historical specificity) over Christ's "person." But, if the Holy Spirit is the maximalizer of Jesus Christ by creating a new heaven and earth out of sinful Church and world, the regulative principles could leave such issues open to theological debate. If the first section a.hovecalled for a tighter link between faithfulness and applicability and the second section for a tighter link between applicability and intelligibility, the proposal here calls for a tighter systematic link between intelligibility and faithfulness: our faithfulness follows on God's faithfulness in Word *and Spirit*.

With this last point, I have clearly gone beyond the scope of Lindbeck's book. Undoubtedly my proposed expansions generate rules which are not as compendious as Lindbeck's three principles. But I do not think he would disapprove of such efforts to test his theory. All the issues I have raised propose a tighter link between faithfulness and applicability and intelligibility than Lindbeck *requires-a* link preserved from skewing Lindbeck's priorities by the Spirit's activity

transforming us into a new humanity. I did not, I should say, set out to do this. More than a decade ago, Lindbeck's course "on the current status of the doctrinal agreements and disagreements of the major Christian traditions" (8) awoke me from sundry skeptical and dogmatic slumbers. Knowing that Lindbeck thrives on reconciling the apparently irreconcilable, I originally thought I might oblige by unthinking his characteristic weave of the Christian idiom, doctrine, and theological speculation. I will have to leave it to others to succeed (or think they succeed) where I have failed (or think I have failed).

It should be noted that Lindbeck knows his proposal " may not fit the needs of religions such as Christianity when they are in the awkwardly intermediate stage of having once been culturally established but are not yet clearly disestablished" (184). This will not be the first book that had to wait its time. But if postliberal inclinations are "undeterred" by this (184), it will be not primarily because of the "younger theologians" Lindbeck mentions (185) but because of the exciting way Lindbeck maps the complex tasks before us. *The Nature of Doctrine* will also whet any reader's appetite for the deployment of these prolegomena throughout the whole range of Christian doctrine. *Tolle lege*, if you dare.

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LINDBECK'S NEW PROGRAM FOR THEOLOGY:  
A REFLECTION

**G**EORGE LINDBECK HAS WRITTEN an important and what promises to be an influential book. In a sense he has written two books. One study (as the title indicates) is on the nature of doctrine. There his original and suggestive 'rule-theory' reading of doctrine is developed. The second study (as the sub-title indicates) is yet more ambitious. Here Lindbeck articulates a new paradigm (a cultural-linguistic paradigm 'borrowed' principally from Wittgenstein and Geertz). This paradigm is geared to understanding religions as analogous to languages and cultures as well as to understanding theologies as largely grammatical enterprises. No minor ambition this. The book, therefore, is not simply a modest programmatic statement of the new 'Yale school'- however couched in the typically modest and cautious prose we have all become accustomed to from Lindbeck.

I will forego summary of the argument of the book as a whole, and instead confine my remarks to three major moves in this argument. Two issues I shall discuss at some length: viz. Lindbeck's interpretation of the major alternative model for theology as 'experiential-expressive'; and, second, Lindbeck's own 'cultural-linguistic' approach to 'truth' claims in theology. A third issue I will discuss very briefly-viz. his suggestive interpretation of doctrine by means of rule-theory. All these issues are clearly major strands in the overall argument.

It must be clearly stated, however, that, even if Lindbeck is erroneous (as I shall suggest he is) in his interpretation of what he names 'experiential-expressive' theologies, he might still claim that his cultural-linguistic model for theology nonetheless is more adequate than alternative models. He could still claim, for example, that a cultural-linguistic model is more

comprehensive in its scope or more attuned to some contemporary social-scientific and some linguistic philosophical analyses of religion than alternative models. Similarly, even if his model has problems which this present book does little to resolve (e.g. on truth-claims), Lindbeck could still claim that the interpretation of doctrine, as principally second-order rules not first-order referential propositions, could still stand. My own beliefs, indeed, can be summarized as follows: first, Lindbeck's analysis of the alternative model he names 'experiential-expressive' is seriously, even fatally, flawed; second, his own 'cultural-linguistic' model needs to manifest far more than the present work does its ability to handle the question of truth-claims in theology to avoid (as he himself sees) the obvious charges of 'relativism', 'confessionalism', and even 'fideism'; third, Lindbeck's interpretation of the nature of doctrine is nonetheless both original and suggestive, although questions on the non-propositional character of the 'rules' he enunciates are, to me at least, not yet clear.

To state my own conclusions thus bluntly should not indicate that even I ('experiential-expressivist' as Lindbeck clearly believes I am) should be unable to learn from this learned and careful programmatic work. Indeed, I believe, as my second and third beliefs cited above suggest, that, even if my other criticisms are correct, Lindbeck has nevertheless aided us all by his interpretation of doctrines as principally second-order rules rather than simply first-order propositions. If that is true, then the title of the book (*The Nature of Doctrine*) and thereby the sections of the book on doctrine are his most important and enduring contribution. The sections discussing the subtitle ('Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age') are the most problematic. To provide a new paradigm for interpreting doctrine is a major contribution. It is an especially welcome contribution from George Lindbeck, the major theological contributor in North America to genuine ecumenical dialogue among the major confessions. Although Lindbeck's interpretation of doctrine clearly does cohere with his interpretation of religion and theology, I fail to see how his grammati-

cal reading of doctrine entails a grammatical reading of theology or a cultural-linguistic reading of religion. But just this question of 'coherence' or 'entailment' between the title and sub-title of this programmatic work seems to me the greatest puzzle of Lindbeck's argument as a whole. In fact, this book is really two books which roughly cohere with one another. The first book (on doctrine) is, I believe, one that any theologian, however different his or her paradigm for theology, can and should learn from. The second book (on religion and theology in a post-liberal age) is, at least for this theologian, provocative but thoroughly unpersuasive.

The first issue is Lindbeck's analysis of what he calls the 'dominant' liberal theological paradigm since Schleiermacher. This liberal trajectory he describes as using an 'experiential-expressive' model for theology. He has many comments on and critical descriptions of this model. But all these sometimes disparate descriptions seem geared to make, as the name indicates, one principal point: viz. that all these models are based on typically modern liberal 'turn to the subject' paradigm. All of them, willy-nilly, are grounded in the mistaken belief that 'inner experiences (are) prior to expression and communication' (p. 86). Indeed, "whatever the variations, thinkers of this tradition all locate ultimately significant contact with whatever is finally important to religion in the prereflective experiential depths of the self and regard the public or outer features of religion as expressive and evocative objectifications (i.e. nondiscursive symbols) of internal experience' (p. 21). In sum, the theologians in this dominant tradition understand inner-pre-reflective experience as 'foundational' and all language and culture as merely 'expressive' of that foundational, non-discursive experience. They possess a 'unilateral' understanding of the relationship of experience and language as well as of experience and culture when what we need is a 'dialectical' understanding of these complex relationships.

The problem with Lindbeck's descriptions of the 'dominant' theological model is not that his analyses do not point to real problems within the tradition from Schleiermacher to Tillich,

Eliade, Rahner, Lonergan, et al. The problem is that Lindbeck is apparently unaware that thinkers in the very tradition he targets for criticism have addressed precisely these issues as their own major questions for at least fifteen years. Indeed, the turn to an explicitly hermeneutical position by many theologians in this 'dominant' tradition as well as the turn to a radical 'de-privatizing' of the same tradition by political, liberation, and feminist theologians are the major attempts within the general 'liberal' paradigm to address both the 'linguistic' (hermeneutical theologies) and the 'cultural' (de-privatizing social-political theologies) issues which Lindbeck announces as news.

Indeed, anyone who has read modern hermeneutics in either philosophy or theology can discover that the major claim from Gadamer (whom Lindbeck does not mention) through Ricoeur (whom Lindbeck bizarrely lists as one more 'experiential-expressivist') has been to rethink the dialectical (not unilateral) relationship between experience and language. They have, to be sure, attempted to do this without abandoning the classical liberal insight into a non-empiricist notion of experience which both the Continental tradition and the American tradition (James, Whitehead, Dewey, et al.) first forged. But such attempts, if successful, would prove 'dialectical'—indeed far more dialectical than a seeming new 'unilateral' move from 'experience' to 'language' in Lindbeck's 'cultural-linguistic' model. In fact, the major argument of the hermeneutical tradition since Gadamer has been against Romantic 'expressivist' understandings of language's relationship to 'experience'. This work, in turn, has been what has allowed a major transformation of the Schleiermacher-Tillich-Rahner-Lonergan experiential paradigm into an explicitly hermeneutical one. Moreover, this hermeneutical transformation has been continuous with the major 'correlation' schema of the liberal theological tradition, and with its discovery of a non-empiricist notion of 'experience'. Hermeneutical theologians (in the broad sense) have also argued for the correctness of the linguistic-experiential *performance* of the great liberals and neo-

orthodox as distinct from some of their theories on experience and language: witness B. A. Gerrish's work on Schleiermacher and Troeltsch, or L. Gilkey's work on Tillich and R. Niebuhr.

The argument among explicitly hermeneutical theologians has been consistent: one can maintain the richer and broader understanding of 'experience' forged by the great liberals (both European and American) only by dialectically relating it to recent understandings of 'language' (and thereby, inevitably, also to history and society). 'Experience' cannot be understood on a Romantic 'expressivist' model (or any other purely instrumentalist model). But this crucial insight does not mean that we should, in effect, abandon half the dialectic by simply placing all experience under the new guardianship of and production by the grammatical rules of the codes of language. Insofar as these familiar hermeneutical claims hold, theologians can continue the liberal analyses of the broader notion of 'experience' without yielding to the earlier 'expressivist' temptations of that tradition. To do so, of course, theologians in the liberal tradition must become both explicitly hermeneutical and explicitly socio-political-cultural. But this, indeed, is exactly what most of them have become: consider Schillebeeck's recent work in hermeneutics and critical theory in relationship to his own earlier work and to Rahner; consider Ogden's use of Toulmin and, more recently, Habermas and Apel in relationship to Whitehead and Hartshorne; consider, if I may cite it, my own explicitly hermeneutical turn in *The Analogical Imagination* in contrast to the hermeneutically informed but underdeveloped position on 'common human' experience' in *Blessed Rage for Order*.

Hermeneutically informed theologians, moreover, usually also find themselves called to become (via their own analyses of the dialectical relationships of experience and language) more cultural-historical-political. At the same time, explicitly 'political' theologians like Metz and Moltmann as well as 'liberation' theologians like Bonino and Segundo and feminist theologians like Schussler-Fiorenza have found it necessary to concern themselves with hermeneutics in order to achieve an

adequate political theology. None of these theologians, to be sure, would describe their positions as 'cultural-linguistic' as distinct from something like 'hermeneutical-political'. Why they resist this formulation can be a concern in our next section. For the moment, it seems sufficient to state that the '*betenoires*' of Lindbeck's position should hardly feel overwhelmed by his charge of 'experiential-expressivism' when their own work has challenged the 'expressivist' and 'privatist' tendencies of the earlier liberal experiential traditions. They have done so by developing explicitly hermeneutical-political theologies: theologies critical of the earlier liberal accounts of language and experience and self-critical of some of their own earlier formulations. But they have also done so without abandoning the noble correlative enterprise of the great liberals and their self-critical successors, such dialectical or neo-orthodox theologians as Tillich, Bultmann, early Barth, Rahner, and Lonergan. To recognize an 'anomaly' is not necessarily to abandon completely a paradigm. It is to rethink the paradigm in such manner that its accomplishments are not rejected in the transformation of its problems.

Lindbeck's problems with this 'liberal' tradition, I suspect, are finally less methodological or formal than his paradigm-analysis would suggest. His problems are substantive or material. As his frequent references to Barth and his colleagues at Yale, H. Frei and P. Holmer, make clear, Lindbeck's substantive theological position is a methodologically sophisticated version of Barthian confessionalism. The hands may be the hands of Wittgenstein and Geertz but the voice is the voice of Karl Barth.

In sum, the label 'experiential-expressivism' does not fit as an accurate philosophical description of the alternative 'liberals' Lindbeck paints in such broad strokes. For Lindbeck's real problem, I repeat, is theological: like Karl Barth (of the *Church Dogmatics* rather than *Romans*) and like some of his colleagues at Yale he is theologically troubled by the liberal tradition. He wants theology to be done purely from 'within' the confessing community. He wants a new ecumenical con-

fessional theology. He does not, therefore, finally approve even of such 'dialectical' methods of correlation as Tillich's or Rahner's or Lonergan's. He wants something purer, cleaner, more economical—a 'cultural-linguistic' model from the social sciences become a 'confessionalist' model for theology. Lindbeck's 'cultural-linguistic' model is, I fear, less a new paradigm which eliminates the anomalies of the old than a new paradigm which first ignores the accomplishments of the old and then develops new-old anomalies of its own (as on 'truth-claims').

Moreover, cultural descriptions of the need for our American theologies to become 'Anglo-American empiricist' rather than remaining trapped in 'nineteenth-century' German idealism and romanticism and twentieth century existential phenomenology are curious as cultural descriptions. Such analyses of what constitutes 'Anglo-American' culture conveniently overlook three cultural facts: first, as mentioned above, the very traditions he cites as the problem have all been involved for some years in rethinking hermeneutically and politically-culturally precisely the issues he requests they address; second, even the Anglo-American linguistic philosophical tradition in many of its major proponents (e.g. Rorty, Putnam, Hampshire, Toulmin, Cavell) no longer understands itself as culturally alienated from the Continental tradition in its explicitly hermeneutical form; third, the major accomplishment of the *American* philosophical tradition from James through Dewey has been to challenge the British empiricist traditions' narrow understanding of experience as sense experience alone—further *cultura*. I proof, perhaps, that the 'American' part of Lindbeck's 'Anglo-American empiricist culture' needs rethinking.

In sum, I am not persuaded by Lindbeck's interpretation of the alternative theological paradigm presently available as 'experiential-expressive'. That title, as Wittgenstein might say, is a good example not of 'naming' but of 'language idling'. Lindbeck may, of course, have good reasons to dispute my claim that the hermeneutical-political model works in

addressing the issues of language and experience and the related issues on language-experience-history-and-culture. But until he interprets the easily available and familiar texts employing that model, I and others must remain as unpersuaded by his charge of 'experiential-expressivism' as I remain unpersuaded by his theological call for a new confessionalism.

The second issue is the 'cash-value' of Lindbeck's own 'cultural-linguistic' model for the crucial issue of 'truth-claims' in theology. For perhaps Lindbeck would claim that, even if his description of the alternative model I name 'hermeneutical-political' and he calls 'experiential-expressive' is inadequate, nevertheless his own 'cultural-linguistic' model is still preferable. The reasons for that preference would perforce have to be different from those he actually gives for rejecting his own 'experiential-expressive' construction. What those reasons might be is, inevitably, a guessing game. The fact is that a fruitful and critical discussion between Lindbeck's 'cultural-linguistic' model and a 'hermeneutical-political' model has not yet been posed sharply by anyone-and surely not by Lindbeck's description of the alternative as 'experiential-expressive'.

His puzzling and rather begrudging comments on the transcendental theologies of Rahner and Lonergan (viz. that they are too 'complicated' and 'hybrid' or not 'economical' enough) lead me to infer that the paradigm I name 'hermeneutical-political' would prove, for Professor Lindbeck, too 'complicated' and 'non-economical' for his Occam-like tastes. These hermeneutical-political models are 'complicated' (like reality itself). They do demand the employment of several disciplinary approaches including ones (e.g. transcendental analysis or metaphysics) which Professor Lindbeck seems to find (without argument) admirable candidates for Occam's razor. Moreover, he also seems to believe that any theologian who agrees with the basic thrust of Rahner or Lonergan (as I clearly do) must also end up agreeing with Rahner's 'anonymous Christian' position or Lonergan's belief that F. Heiler had located a unified essence to all religions. **If** this material

theological issue of the possible unity of essence of religion is the real theological problem for Lindbeck (he devotes considerable space to it), this one difference, at least, is easily resolved. For no one of their later hermeneutical-political descendants any longer agrees with the positions of their great predecessors on this 'unity of essence' issue: witness Gilkey vis-a-vis Tillich, Metz or Kiing vis-a-vis Rahner, or Burrell or myself vis-a-vis Lonergan on these crucial issues of 'dialogue', 'essence' and 'unity-plurality'.

But, Lindbeck might say, why work with the complexities of hermeneutics, metaphysics, and critical theory if all theology really needs is a clean 'linguistic-cultural' model? We can understand religion as like a language or a culture (i.e. 'a comprehensive interpretative scheme with an interest in the maximally important). We can understand theology as a grammatical analysis of the depth grammar or logic of the religion. This seems, and indeed is, one plausible social-scientific way to describe religions and to analyze one crucial task of theology. The question for theology is: is it adequate for the full range of theology's task? Lindbeck, with his admirable desire to avoid relativism and fideism, is fully aware of this larger theological task. Indeed, he devotes two crucial sections of his compact book to addressing these issues: his 'Excursus on Religion and Truth' (pp. 63-73) and his entire last chapter entitled 'Toward a Postliberal Theology'. I regret to say that I do not believe that he has resolved the issues he has set for himself (viz. relativism and fideism)-at least on the basis of the analysis set forth in those sections.

There the strength of his 'cultural-linguistic' model, to be sure, does come through. It is the strength of the truth of 'intra-systematic' coherence or of fidelity to interpreting the tradition by maintaining a rigorous notion of 'intratextuality'. No theologian should deny that one major task of all responsible theology is to show how it is the tradition itself that is being interpreted and not interpreted away or invented. Lindbeck's grammatical model for this task is illuminating. This remains the case even if hermeneutical-political theologians like

myself would hold that, on Lindbeck's own grounds, grammar alone is not sufficient. Theologians also need rhetorical analysis (i.e. the ancient discipline which is the correlate of modern hermeneutics) to encompass adequate interpretations of the concrete plural narratives, symbols, doctrines, etc, and not only of the narratological (or doctrinal or symbolic) codes. Moreover, Lindbeck's long footnote (p. 136) on the Yale deconstructionists leads me to believe that he has not reflected very much on the rhetorical (hermeneutical and/or deconstructive) aspects of the question of interpretation of texts and thereby on how grammar and rhetoric (like code and use) inevitably interact in all concrete interpretations—even of grammatical codes. But even this important issue, however central to many modern discussions of the interactive relationships of grammar and rhetoric (e.g. P. De Man and W. Booth), need not detract from the power of Lindbeck's partial but real contribution: his kind of grammatical analysis does illuminate one way to analyze the rules and codes, especially of 'doctrines'. Further rhetorical-hermeneutical analysis can illuminate how those codes become actual discourse.

But however pressing the concern with the relationship of grammar and rhetoric for interpreting the concrete discourse of the tradition, the major problem lies elsewhere: how can theologians assess the truth-claims of Lindbeck's grammatically analyzed traditions? Professor Lindbeck is fully aware of this set of problems and tries many ways to meet it: by distinguishing between the intrasystematic truth of coherence and 'performative' ontological truth, by agreeing with the need for *ad hoc* apologetics, by appealing to the need for skill and practice over theory, by disputing illusory claims to pure neutrality, by developing a notion of applicability as futurology, etc. Even those who agree that a 'purely neutral' theory of rationality is never 'purely neutral' and who agree that skill, practice, etc., are crucial ingredients in any attempt to assess rationally all theological claims will remain unpersuaded that Professor Lindbeck's 'epistemological realism' is other than relativism with a new name or that his 'cultural-linguistic'

grammatical model for theology is other than confessionalism with occasional 'ad hoc' apologetic skirmishes.

Professor Lindbeck's position, as far as I can see, is one new linguistic version of one side of classical pragmatism. More exactly, the one aspect of pragmatism's response to assessing truth-claims he clearly holds is an analysis of 'consequences' in life as criteria of assessment (note his analysis of assessing the truth-claims of God-language exclusively by seeing how that claim 'performs' to order a whole life). Two other aspects of even William James's pragmatic position receive, at best, shorter shrift. First, consider James's insistence on assessing if one's present religious belief is an illuminating suggestion (or, as James put it, a 'luminous possibility'). Here, at least in hermeneutics, the understanding of truth as manifestation (with the categories disclosure-concealment and recognition) is, I believe, available-and in non-Romantic-expressivist ways. Second, recall James's insistence on assessing how what we believe through our religious tradition coheres or does not cohere with what we otherwise know, practice, and believe.

This latter nest of issues, it should be emphasized, does not necessitate a capitulation of traditional religious beliefs to contemporary secular beliefs. Rather as the revised correlation model for theology implicitly or explicitly involved in all hermeneutical-political positions suggests, any correlation should be, in principle, one of *mutually critical* correlations of an interpretation of the meaning and truth of the tradition and the interpretation of the meaning and truth of the contemporary situation. Such a revised correlational model provides a heuristic guide; no more, no less. The model, like all models, guides. The concrete subject-matter at issue alone rules. And there all the rational and religious skills available are needed to discern the proper response here and now. On the correlation model, a response may, logically, be one of identity, similarity-in-difference, or pure non-identity (existentially confrontation) between tradition and situation. That heuristic correlation model is one way to keep alive the noble project of our liberal and neo-orthodox predecessors without

claiming either control through purely neutral, a-historical notions of 'rationality', nor purely Romantic notions of 'inner feelings', nor deceptively 'economical' notions of the purely grammatical task of theology.

To conclude: I have discussed only two crucial aspects of Lindbeck's provocative and programmatic book. If I have contributed suggestions that Lindbeck himself may find helpful for developing or revising his program I shall be very content. I, in turn, certainly have learned much from his book. This is especially the case on two questions which have aided me greatly in my own distinct theological program: viz. his sophisticated and illuminating analysis of one way to formulate the grammatical aspect of theology's wider task and his original interpretation of the nature of doctrine via rule-theory. I hope to continue to learn on these and other questions from the careful and compact writings and ecumenical spirit of George Lindbeck.

I wish to emphasize these gains as strong and solid ones. For even if I believe that the interpretation of the tradition, as suggested above, is more complex than a grammatical analysis alone can encompass, any hermeneutical thinker can and should still learn from Lindbeck's careful analysis of one way grammatical analysis can function in theology. On his analysis of doctrine, moreover, I still have some lingering questions as to the adequacy of Lindbeck's rule-theory interpretation of doctrine: for example, the 'rules' he actually cites as implied by Nicaea and Chalcedon do make sense as rules; however, at least the first two rules (on the 'one God' and on 'Jesus of Nazareth') are also clearly referential propositions. Nevertheless, the interpretation of doctrines as '*regula fidei*' is genuinely illuminating. Lindbeck's interpretation of doctrine does seem a way forward out of many propositional-confessional impasses.

As for the rest, I have given some reasons why I cannot count myself among those for whom Lindbeck wishes, in the final line of his book, 'May their tribe increase'. But then I have not 'from within' the 'cultural-linguistic'

world of the present Yale school. Can we meet? Can we converse critically? Can we even 'translate' our positions to one another? I believe we must try-as I have here, however inadequately. So, despite his protestations against 'translation' to the contrary, does George Lindbeck. That is why he wrote his book. That is why I read it. That is why others read reviews like this along with the book itself. That whole critical-conversational process is what hermeneutics is finally all about. And no labels of his or my minting, 'whether experiential-expressive' or 'hermeneutical-political' or 'cultural-linguistic' or 'Yale' or 'Chicago') should becloud our common ethical and religious-theological responsibility to converse and translate. George Lindbeck is foremost among those who have proved themselves those rarest of theologians-confessionally and doctrinally really ecumenical. I hope he can also carry that same rare ecumenically confessional spirit into becoming more ecumenical with theologies as well. Then a genuinely new paradigm for theology, and not only for doctrine, may be forthcoming.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Rational Theology and the Creativity of God.* By KEITH WARD. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982. Pp. 240. \$17.95.

This volume, an expanded and revised version of the Edward Cadbury Lectures of 1980 by the Dean of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, proposes that the traditional picture of God as a self-existent and necessary being is intelligible and coherent only when elements of potency and temporality are attributed to Him. To use a reviewer's quick schema, the author has in mind a theism which stands mid-way between Thomism (or neo-Thomism) and process metaphysics. God is *per se notus*, in this argument, precisely because necessity and eternity are registered in and with the time-bound careers of free creatures; the aseity of God is a doctrine based primarily on the experience of agents in the midst of a moral struggle-by those who find themselves exploring a standard of action or an objective set of obligations seemingly devised to fit the freedom of their wills like a glove. Thus the absoluteness of God is the sheer freedom in such contingent decree; his self-sufficiency is the singular accrual of temporal value, regarded and loved, bringing His purpose to consummation.

This picture of the relation of God and man is the overriding worth of the book and I suspect that the image of man as a moral explorer who finds his freedom and self-becoming as he finds the temporal off-print of divine decree will be the empirical generalization behind the final schema of those theists who want to assert both the "priority" of God (as Ward terms it) and real human freedom and independence. This is enough to commend the book. But Ward offers little or no metaphysical scrutiny of this relation; nor does he seem to feel the need to do so. He sustains his position by pure dialectic, aimed at St. Thomas for the most part, and, briefly, the process thinkers. One finds here the learning and precision and persuasion found in his other works; but without a new battery of categories and concepts, and a new analysis, the reader, in fact, cannot know finally what it is he is to accept. Most of his time will be spent returning a volley.

Ward's dialectic also consistently disregards the categories and the analyses of his opponents. He begins the book, for instance, by including the first three "ways" of St. Thomas into his own argument for the priority of God. But he approves of them for the sole reason that *first mover*, *efficient cause* and *necessary being* are needed for a full explanation of the universe and a valid commitment to its intelligibility (pp. 12-48). We

have no word from him on the propriety of substance metaphysics, or St. Thomas's use of it, which accounts for explanatory force and intelligibility.

I think that here at the outset Ward has combined two tasks, that of giving the reader an overview of the incorrigible convictions of traditional theism, and that of beginning his own case for his partial acceptance of it. (My criticism applies to the latter project only. Perhaps it is possible to defend the Thomistic vision entirely through appeals to explanation and intelligibility.) This confusion mars his procedure, for Ward wants to use explanation and intelligibility as the sole warrants for a fiat dismissal of the fourth way, the way of timeless simplicity. His claim is simply that God, the designer, the Being of all possible perfections, is incoherent: "How can there be," he asks, "a being which combines in itself all possible properties, since a very large number of them are incompatible with each other" (p. 52) ! If the world begs, according to this argument, a designer, we need only say that there exists a being who contains the "ideas" (p. 63) of all possible properties, together with a principle governing the "actualization" of some of them. This is at the heart of the book's appeal. For if he can establish, he claims, a creation which does not derive from the simplicity of essence, but from the conceptions and acts of a mind perfect *in* conceptualization and final actualization, then he will have a world *of* such freedom. But to do this one must use categories and analyses. In particular, one must specify the *ordo* of the Designer; one must say how the *ordo already at work* in the first three ways as thing moved, efficiently caused and, thus, contingent, fails, as metaphysical schema, to provide an answer to the question of design. Further, Thomas's natural scale is the principle upon which the impossibility of infinite regress is based. (*Summa Contra Gentiles* Ch. 13, par. 14). What should take its place! The argument from design is the support of analogical attribution. How now, we need to ask, does human language apply to God!

This usage of St. Thomas not only disregards subtleties, it also misreads, flagrantly, the few subtle arguments taken into account. St. Thomas did say that God possesses all possible perfections, but he said it with extreme caution. Perfections, he said, are attributed to God only by a "certain extension of the word:" What is not made (*factum*) cannot really be called perfect (per-fectum); the word properly applies only when the journey from potency to act is complete and the thing *is* made. The word may be "extended" to God only in that he is already and always complete act (*Contra Gentiles* Ch. 28, par. 10). In this wise, we *liken* the thing made to that actuality through which it is made. The reverse does not hold; we do not say that God *is* what the creature becomes, that God is likened to the creature, so that he could contain incompatible properties.

Ward shows all the animosity of a Hartshorne for this God of utter simplicity, this "monarch," this absolute of abstract form who "leaves everything in the world basically unimportant " (p. 71). The doctrine, he says, is not only morally unacceptable, it is finally incoherent. And, like Hartshorne, he traces the problem to St. Thomas's theory of relations. St. Thomas, he recalls, said that "the relations that God is said to bear to creatures . . . really exist not in God but in creatures." Taking this statement at its face value, Ward argues that it is "analytically true that if I am related by relation  $r$  to God, then he is related by some cognate relation to me; and any view which issues in a denial of this logical truth must be mistaken (p. 77). This plea for common sense concludes that this theory is evidence of the "strain" St. Thomas must have been under in his attempt to affirm both the simplicity and creativity of God. But a careful use of the distinction noted in the last paragraph—claims about God based on inherent qualities or natures and claims based on finite reason-will at least clarify St. Thomas's point and show that he was not propounding a logical absurdity. For St. Thomas, any relation is either *realis* or *rationis*. If *realis*, the relation refers to a natural process or property; if *rationis*, it is "set up as part of our thinking." Thus, St. Thomas said that God is not *really* related to his creatures, for no process or property in Him necessitates his creative act. His relation to us is "part of our thinking" because we cannot fathom, as creatures *down the causal scale* (admitted in the first three ways), the nature of the voluntary and intellectual act through which we are made and in which God is related to us. Such explanation, no doubt, may be verbal sleight-of-hand, but it is evidence that St. Thomas is not "straining." If this explanation breaches a logical commonplace, Ward needs to give the categorical and analytical reasons.

His treatment of St. Thomas is so hasty and unanalyzed that at one point he takes from St. Thomas with his left hand what he has granted with his right. He has granted, we have seen, the validity of the third way—the way of necessity. But necessity, he later states, will not square with a doctrine of creation through intellect and will. If God is a necessary being "all that he does will have to be done of necessity" (p. 73). Here, Ward claims, is an "old dilemma" of tradition: "either God's acts are necessary and therefore not free, or they are free and therefore arbitrary" (p. 73). But if the third way is accepted, there should be no dilemma here. God is a necessary being, St. Thomas said, for those creatures arguing from effect back up to cause, but what they reason towards, necessarily, is *ipsum esse*, one whose act is Himself, whose existence is the freedom of His own will. In this sense God is moved by no other and is the efficient cause of other existences.

The misunderstanding also leads one to believe that Ward's reading of

St. Thomas is hampered by a common notional absurdity: [viz.,] that the reasons necessary to a self-defining act are constraints upon the freedom of the will. The absurdity, obviously, is doubled when applied to God seen as a necessary being. Then the freedom of simply being one's own act becomes a total constraint so to act. Perhaps St. Thomas did not foresee that we would one day think this way.

If Ward is committing this fallacy here, he implicitly rejects it in his own portrayal of God's activity. The ratiocinative yet prior God whom he offers as the final explanation of a free universe is in no way constrained by the conceptual and complex set of best possibilities he chooses to actualize. And Ward's moral creatures, too, know that obligations and objective foundations of irreducible moral claims bear the stamp of sanctioned freedom. These are "temporal applications" ... of eternal values. But why should the notion of a conceptualizing God make for an easier fit for necessity and freedom than a God who simply has what is necessary in his own being and who, then, simply is the creativity so to act?

The burden of such an essay will obviously be one of squaring the eternal nature of God with his temporal nature. On this issue Ward is, again, more suggestive than metaphysically exact. He claims that we may understand the eternal nature of God under the heading of "evaluative perfections" (p. 161); from this, Ward thinks, His mutability logically follows: "Any cause of (such) contingent entities (viz., valued actualizations) must itself be contingent, since its causal acts could be other than they are." But this merely restates the empirical generalization which raises the issue: How, the critic must ask, can one be in time *and* out of time, **if** time itself, as opponents of a purely formal and simple God contend, is a function of created process, and not vice-versa? Is God's act of coll<eptualization literally a *process*? Does he thumb a copy book of possible worlds? Or is his action so conditioned by what he creates that he is literally *in* this process, part of finite time itself? Ward does not want to be this precise, though he does write the phrase, "divine time" (pp. 164 ff.). By it he means a divine relating to each phase of the infinity of created space-time systems, and a divine sustaining of the alternatives charting each course and each existence. But this would seem to make God profoundly non-temporal. **It** would make Him the focus of all temporal process, the final act in which they all comprise a world. Perhaps we could speak of a temporal "dimension" to God's knowledge, since His act is to sustain temporal careers; perhaps we could qualify this as "part of our thinking"; it remains that God does not relate sequence A to sequence B by any sequence C, which is what it means to be *in* time, or to have a time.

Ward claims that such notions as "God's time" are the points at which we must rest content with the "silence of wisdom" and bow before God's

incomprehensibility (p. 167). The theist must specify such points, but the reader of this text cannot be satisfied with this advice at this juncture. Ward has built his theism on explanatory force and final intelligibility. Had he structured his appeal with rigorous metaphysical scrutiny we might know the terms of silence. As it stands, his advice has the ring of indiscriminate fideism: What is *simply* explanatory and intelligible is supported with ultimate silence. This is a shame, for his image of the moral agent sets forth the true nobility of the religious life, and his "suggestion" that God is the free determinant of free determinant agency incites the best of metaphysical speculation.

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*Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics.* By JOHN D. CAPUTO. New York: Fordham University Press, 1982. Pp. 308. Clothbound and paperback.

Heidegger's thinking has inspired many fine critical dialogues with the history of philosophy—Pierre Aubenque on Aristotle, John Sallis on Plato, Jean-Luc Marion on Descartes, Jean-François Courtine on Suarez, Gerard Granel on Kant—but a substantial study of Thomas Aquinas from a Heideggerian standpoint has yet to be produced. John D. Caputo performs an invaluable service of demystification in pointing out the various confusions from which Etienne Gilson, Johannes Lotz, Cornelio Fabro, Bertrand Rioux, John Deely, Gustav Siewerth and Max Miiller suffer in their differing efforts to situate Heidegger on a Thomistic map. He makes it clear that Thomistic thought falls under the rubric of what Heidegger calls onto-theo-logy and that the attempt to present Thomas as the unique exception to the general "forgetfulness of being" in Western metaphysics is based on an inadequate grasp of the phenomenological, or, as Caputo prefers to write, "aletheiological", sense which the word "being" has for Heidegger. No doubt this has been pointed out before, for instance in Josef Van de Wiele's *Zijnswaarheid en Onverborgenheid* (Louvain, 1964), and in reviews of the above-named authors' works but Caputo's is perhaps the most lucid and meticulous treatment of the issue, providing a foolproof antidote to the tiresome misunderstandings which the interferences of Thomistic and Heideggerian diction can generate.

Even more valuable than this critique of his predecessors is Caputo's nuanced account of the stages of Heidegger's dialogue with scholasticism,

from his early efforts " to bring the results of medieval logic to bear on the problems of contemporary German logic " (p. 21) to his critique of scholasticism from the position of *Being and Time* in 1928 and the more radical critique worked out in the Nietzsche lectures of 1941. Caputo's discussion of Carl Braig's influence on the young Heidegger (pp. 45-57) reveals how a blend of Schelling and scholasticism could nourish the project of a phenomenology of being, for instance when such words as the following are translated into phenomenological observations: " All the attempts to give Being conceptual determinations are defective and contradictory. Being is a 'position,' 'positing,' 'doing,' 'energy,' 'affirmation,' 'ground of possibility ': these and similar definitions mix up the primary characteristic marks found in beings with the essential character of Being" (Braig, *cit.* p. 51). Caputo suggests that the young Heidegger's reflections on " the Being of meaning, the status and 'realm' of meaning" (p. 31) might have led to "a breakthrough in Scholastic thought comparable to the initiatives of Marechal and Rahner" (p. 17). But his quest for "a really *philosophical* assessment of Scholasticism" (Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 18) was abandoned during 1917-1918, years in which he sought "a fundamental clarification of my philosophical standpoint" (Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 56) which made "the *system* of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me-but not Christianity and metaphysics (the latter, to be sure, in a new sense)" (*ibid.*).

In 1928 Heidegger sees the obscurities in the scholastic discussion of existence and essence as arising from a failure to trace these concepts back to their foundation in experience. " On this account, Scholasticism is a species of objectivism; that is, it takes the products of thought to be things in themselves which have somehow entered our world without our cooperation" (p. 72). Heidegger finds the origin of both concepts in the horizon of human productivity; they represent being as deduced; other modes of being cannot be constrained within their limits, least of all human being. Thus " medieval ontology, despite all its talk about the 'analogy' of Being, in fact moved within a univocal horizon of Being as presence-at-hand" (p. 80), missing the many other ways in which the ontological difference comes into play. A transcendental, phenomenological Thomism could elude this critique, in Caputo's opinion. But when Heidegger later situates medieval ontology in a " history of being " it becomes clear that the basic structure of Thomistic ontology, as a participational interplay of *esse* and *ens*, is only one of the epochal variants of the difference between being and beings, all of which fall short of the underlying difference (*.Austrag*) whose phenomenality metaphysics cannot apprehend. " In opening up the difference which prevails at any given time, the difference determines the whole horizon of manifestedness, the whole shape of appearance in a given epoch" (p. 156). Caputo

develops superbly the implications of this view for Thomistic participation-alism.

But he then lamely describes the limit of Thomism in the following quite different terms: "Though he knows that there are matters higher than *scientia*, such as faith itself, mystical and finally beatific union, he is nonetheless content to confine his experience within the concepts and propositions of a science, without insisting that the meaning of *esse* is destroyed by the very scientific mode of expression" (p. 157). What is wrong with this is that faith, mysticism, and the beatific vision do not seem to have anything to do with being in Heidegger's aletheological sense and that Heidegger's effort to trace the texture of metaphysical thought back to its non-metaphysical origins is here simply abandoned in favor of a stark contrast between experience on the one hand and concepts and propositions on the other. Caputo has run together two possible deconstructive approaches to Thomas, a theological deconstruction which would contrast his experience of faith with its conceptual articulation (by playing on the internal tensions of that articulation) and a philosophical one which would overcome his ontological categories in view of an underlying experience of being. The result of this conflation is that both the goal and the target of the deconstruction are blurred-undifferentiated "experience" is a far less precise goal than Heidegger's "clearing" (which is not at all mystical and has nothing to do with faith) and a war against "concepts and propositions" in general is a poor substitute for the patient and strategic questioning of a particular set of concepts in view of their inadequation to a particular theme. A deconstruction of Thomas is immensely difficult by reason of the seamless, dispassionate character of his thought, which reveals no *faillies* to the naked eye. The latent tensions between whole mountain ranges of argument would have to be uncovered before a deconstruction could begin. A theologian might seek tensions between the biblical material and its rational formalization. Caputo indicates a promising opening for a philosophical deconstruction when he suggests that "the unmediated unity of *intellectus* and *esse*" (p. 256) is the goal of Thomist thought and that the "enigmatic and non-conceptual element" (p. 257) of *esse* generates a paradox at the heart of his otherwise so rational and conceptual system. Yet he goes on to admit that "the paradigms of Being as presence and of thinking as the beholding (*intuitus*) of pure presence" (p. 273) are quite essentially metaphysical. This would not be such a damaging concession if Caputo had traced the tensions between *esse* and its formalization in the actual texture of Thomas's writing and shown how they point beyond the explicit content of his texts. But as it is Caputo does not even convincingly demonstrate the existence of these tensions; form and the formless have happily coexisted in metaphysics at least since Plotinus.

Much less does he solicit these tensions in order to prise open the text of Aquinas to a counter-metaphysical reading.

Instead Caputo looks to what he calls the "sphere of *possibilities* which inhere in [Thomas's] thought" (p. 274) and to which he is guided by tales of Thomas's last days attributed to Reginald of Piperno, his secretary, and by Meister Eckhart who is seen as finally making explicit the mystical sense of Thomistic *esse* and *intellectus*. Heidegger is accused of losing his earlier sensitivity to "the depth dimension in the medieval experience of Being" (p. 251) and of taking medieval ontology at its face value instead. But this depth dimension as Caputo explains it seems to have little to do with being at all. He says that Thomas is largely free of ontotheology because "reason is subordinate to faith, to mysticism" (p. 250) in his thinking. But this seems to be not a philosophical freedom (a freedom in view of the phenomenality of being) but a theological one (the Christian vision is not absorbed by metaphysical reason). The principle of sufficient reason may still be at an incubatory stage of development in Thomas and its hold may be broken when the mystery or freedom of God are in question. But what intrinsically philosophical opposition to this principle can be found in Thomas is never clarified by Caputo. To speak of Thomas's statement that "all that I have written seems like straw to me" as "a 'step back' out of metaphysics which enables him to see the 'essence' of metaphysics, to see metaphysics for what it is, the straw of *scientia*" (p. 254) and as an admission "into the very *Sache* of metaphysics, which metaphysics itself is unable to name without distortion" (*ibid.*) seems to me an abuse of Heideggerian terminology. Heidegger's elegant account of the history of being depends for its coherence on the notion that being is the matter for thinking, rather than for faith or mysticism. The "step back" out of metaphysics is a return to the origins of metaphysical thinking, origins which cannot be located in biblical faith or mystical experience.

It is true that Eckhart's *Gelassenheit* can be interpreted as "the sheltering of the mystery of God from the assault of metaphysics" (p. 278) and that Heidegger can imitate the Eckhartian attitudes in his thinking on being. One might also trace a certain ontological *Gelassenheit* in Thomas, differentiating it from more strictly religious attitudes with which it is conjoined. But the relation of this to the overcoming of metaphysics as a philosophical project may not be as direct as Caputo supposes. In Eckhart's abandonment to God "the paradigm of the Greek spectator, of the onlooker, which reaches all the way from Parmenides to Husserl, is entirely overcome" (p. 277). But are Eckhart's images of "the naked unity of the soul and God" (*ibid.*) really so non-Hellenic? Are we not still within the orbit of Neo-Platonism? As for poor Parmenides, it is odd to find him transferred to the divine bosom as follows:

" There in the Godhead itself, a concealed unity of Being and thought holds sway, which eye has not seen and ear heard" (p. 280). This togetherness of being and thinking has nothing in common with the Parmenidean one Heidegger tried to explicate phenomenologically. Caputo points beyond Heidegger to "a thinking which has been released from the conditions of finitude " and for which " there is only presence and only manifestedness " (p. 280). But to the ear of those as yet unbeatified such language can only be understood as that of the metaphysics of presence, which occludes the true phenomenality of being as a wresting from concealment. It is unclear how these religious representations can help us in the thinking of being, which is a rather sober, this-worldly task, since by "being" Heidegger never means anything transcending world.

For its account of Heidegger and scholasticism and for its critique of previous studies on the topic this book is of great value. The positive suggestions of its last chapter remain, however, unconvincing, and leave unmet the daunting challenge of a deconstructive Heideggerian reading of Aquinas. Every student of philosophy or theology concerned with the task of "overcoming metaphysics " will nonetheless be grateful to Caputo for his original and thought-provoking contribution to the debate.

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*Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language.* By SAUL KRIPKE. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982. Pp. x + 150. \$12.50.

Saul Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* is an account of the argument in §§ 137-243 of *Philosophical Investigations*. This central section of the book, as Kripke reads it, constructs a "sceptical paradox" concerning rule-following, and then presents a "sceptical solution" restoring the intelligibility of rule-following through appeal to actions performed in the context of public practices. The paradox is stated in *PI* 201: "No course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule." This problem amounts to a paradox that destroys the notion of acting in accord with a rule, since "there would be neither accord nor conflict" in such a situation. The solution is also stated in *PI* 201: "There is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*, but which is exhibited in what we call 'obeying the rule' and 'going against it' in actual cases."

Both paradox and solution involve rejection of the idea that our assurance that we are following a rule stems from private, "internal" awareness of the rule's guidance through our apprehension of its

import in the particular ease. But this idea seems especially difficult to reject in two sorts of cases: our recognition of our own sensations, and our application of mathematical rules. In these cases the persistent intuition that private mental activities actually *constitute* rule-following seems very attractive. The chief apparent counter-examples, then, to Wittgenstein's approach to rule-following lie in two fields: philosophy of mind and philosophy of mathematics. Thus his otherwise disparate interests in these two areas are united by their supplying the cases in which as Kripke puts it, "Wittgenstein's basic approach is most likely to seem incredible" (p. 4). So the so-called "private language argument" following *PI* 243 is "a special case of much more general considerations previously argued" in the book (p. 2).

This way of fitting the "private language argument" into the thematic structure of the *Investigations* will be familiar to readers of Robert Fogelin's *Wittgenstein* and of the collection of essays called *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule*, edited by Holtzmann and Leich. Kripke, however, noting in his preface the recent prevalence of this view, mentions his own discussions of it stretching over the past twenty years. Wherever its origins may be in published and unpublished discussions of Wittgenstein's work, Kripke's approach is more than a current fashion in the long and complicated process of interpreting Wittgenstein. It rests on an insight that allows Wittgenstein's later work to be organized, in large part, around a central theme whose defense and application unites much that seems otherwise only loosely related. It also allows Wittgenstein to be located, in the history of philosophy, with those who have taken the chief philosophical task to be the deflation of the pretensions of rationalism. Kripke, for instance, devotes considerable attention to the comparison of Wittgenstein's arguments with the mitigated scepticism of Hume.

Though he designates the problem of rule-following as "the central thread" in Wittgenstein's later work, Kripke is aware that many students of Wittgenstein are likely to find troublesome any strategy that treats his literature as a skein of argumentation. He says that the argument is neither quite his own nor quite that of Wittgenstein's text. Rather, it is "Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke" (p. 5). Within this understanding, he keeps to his role as expositor rather than commentator. He reminds the reader repeatedly that he is just unpacking, not endorsing, Wittgenstein's position. These disclaimers convey the impression that Kripke has much to say critically about Wittgenstein's arguments, and that he is only holding his fire for the time being in order to preserve the stylistic unity of this book as an expository essay. Indeed, after an unflattering comparison of Wittgenstein's tactics with Berkeley's extravagantly counterintuitive claim to be defending common sense, Kripke lets his prose trail off into a series of dots. The reader is

struck by the impression of the author's having exercised great forbearance.

The dominance of Humean parallels in Kripke's exposition reflects his vision of Wittgenstein's position as "a new form of philosophical scepticism" (p. 7). His main example is an elaboration of *PI* 185: the continuation of a series of numbers derived according to an ordinary computational rule. The sceptic challenges whether there is any *fact of meaning* a computational rule that justifies its extension to new cases in one way rather than some other. What justifies our confidence that in summing 57 and 68, and coming out with 125, we have consistently followed the rule we followed in saying that "57 + 66 = 123," and that "57 + 67 = 124"? When doing those earlier sums, did we already mean that the sum of 57 and 68, when we came to it, would be 125? If so, what did that "meaning it" consist in, and what gives that act of meaning its remarkable force! Or if not, what justifies our confidence that in the new computation we have gone on in the *same way*?

Wittgenstein, of course, devotes much of the *Investigations* to the repudiation of the idea that an inner act of meaning travels ahead of our actual practice, fixing as it were in advance what will count as following the rule in all future applications. Then in what *does* rule-following consist? Without appeal to a private apprehension of the rule that guides us in its application, how can we meet the sceptic's challenge and show that we do know what counts as going on in the same way? Unless the challenge can be met or evaded, we cannot distinguish following a rule from acting against a rule, or acting indeed in the absence of rules. The very notion of regular, intelligible action would vanish. The problem of rule-following, thus, is at the very center of our concerns about the nature of rationality.

Because a dispositional account of rule-following has enjoyed some currency as the resolution of this sceptical predicament, and because Wittgenstein's own solution has sometimes been read as dispositionalist, Kripke, at some length, criticizes dispositionalism as neither adequate nor properly Wittgensteinian. He argues that the dispositionalist misconceives the sceptic's challenge. The appeal to dispositions cannot tell me what to do in applying the rule to a new case; it can only describe whatever it is that in fact I do. By way of arguing this point, Kripke offers a valuable aside: "Wittgenstein does not base his considerations on any behavioristic *premise* that dismisses the 'inner.'" On the contrary, much of his argument consists of detailed introspective considerations" (p. 44).

Having rejected dispositionalism, he moves to his own reading of Wittgenstein's "scepticism." The main expository device here is a series of comparisons to Hume. Like Hume, Wittgenstein eschews what Kripke calls "straight solutions" in favor of a "sceptical solution." A "straight

solution " is one that directly refutes the sceptic's challenge. A "sceptical solution," on the other hand, begins by conceding that the challenge is unanswerable, but goes on to justify the belief or practice in question by showing that it does not need the kind of justification which the sceptic has shown it to lack. On the strength of this Humean parallel, Kripke enters an extended discussion of Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language, blending in useful remarks on the thematic structure of the *Investigations*.

The idea that dominates Kripke's account of this topic is, naturally, the essentially public nature of rule-following: its dependence on social convention, accepted practice, and the fact that—in a case like addition—we agree in our results sufficiently to give our rule-governed procedures their continuity and coherence. He discusses, briefly, "agreement," "form of life," and "criteria," concluding the main body of his essay with a recapitulation of the "private language argument" in which its major thrust is construed as a general refutation of the "private model" of rule-following. Whatever his own reservations about its adequacy, Kripke here articulates succinctly and accurately the central themes of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

In an extended "Postscript," he applies this reading of Wittgenstein's "sceptical solution" to the problem of other minds. Kripke traces Wittgenstein's concern with this issue from the *Tractatus* (where he again emphasizes the parallels with Hume) through the transitional literature (where he emphasizes the influence of Lichtenberg). Recognizing both that these problems antedate Wittgenstein's stress on the sceptical problem about rule-following and that these problems involve traditional issues rooted in Descartes and Hume, Kripke's project in this postscript is to show how Wittgenstein handles them in the *Investigations* as instances of his more general "sceptical solution."

The "sceptical paradox" in this case, as Kripke puts it, is that "it seems impossible to imagine the mental life of others on the model of our own" (p. 133). He says that Wittgenstein concedes this conclusion, rather than attempt a "straight solution" by overcoming the challenge with an inferential argument from my own experience to the existence of other minds. So the "sceptical solution" must be to show how it is that our practices of ascribing sensations to others can be intelligible without backing from the kind of theory attacked by the sceptic. In his portrayal of that solution, Kripke manages adroitly to avoid certain typical misconstruals of Wittgenstein's view on other minds. He avoids the pitfall of reading Wittgenstein as a behaviorist (especially tempting in third person sensation language) and the opposite trap of reading him as a dualist who supposes that we infer the sensations of others on the basis of behavioral criteria. These misconstruals share the idea that the

logic of sensation language differs drastically between first and third persons because I possess in my own case a privileged, *arlicul«te* acquaintance with my own sensations. But this notion is just what the repudiation of private rule-following makes impossible. My acquaintance with my own sensations becomes articulate (becomes part of a rule-governed system of identification, description, etc.) only in a setting that already involves a complex of learned and instinctive behaviors and practices in which others-and their pains-are intimately implicated. Thus the logic of all sensation language is pushed into a public domain, in which alone the idea of consistent, intelligible practice can gain a footing.

But Kripke concludes with an expression of dissatisfaction over Wittgenstein's handling of the issues. He writes: "Clearly much more needs to be said here: a few sketchy remarks . . . hardly give a complete theory" {p. 145}. But what sort of theory is it that Kripke, in the face of Wittgenstein's "sceptical paradoxes and solutions," believes to be both needed and possible! One sort of theory would be a more complete account of the ways in which sensation language is taught and acquired, a detailing of the place various sorts of sensation language hold in human Jives, a deeper account of the social conventions supported by or required by our talk about sensations, and so on. But what philosophical problems would these explorations into what Wittgenstein called "our natural history" solve! Or does Kripke aim for a theory in a more ambitious, more traditionally "philosophical" sense—a theory that would overcome the "sceptical paradoxes" and provide a "straight solution" to the problem of other minds! If so, is such a theory to be more general, anchoring perhaps all our rule-following in something other than human agreement in the use of public criteria! Would the theory constitute an attempt to restore the rationalism under attack in Wittgenstein's "scepticism!?"

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*Supererogation*. By DAVID HEYD. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Pp. 191. \$29.50.

This book remedies the lack of proportion between the importance of acts of supererogation in everyday life and the attention they have received from philosophers. Relying heavily on both the Christian origins of the theory of supererogation and on J. O. Urmson's seminal article "Saints and Heroes" (1958), Heyd shows: (1) how supererogation fits (or does not fit, as the case may be) into the major ethical theories in the

history of philosophy; and (2) how a contemporary philosopher can defend a theory of supererogation.

(1) The idea of supererogation was, strictly speaking, alien to the classical ethics of virtue, since *arete* was not above and beyond the call of duty. Nonetheless, some distinctions between what is strictly required and what is virtuous but partly optional can be found in Aristotle and others. Thus, classical ethics is pre-supererogatory rather than anti-supererogatory. The theological roots of supererogation in Christianity can be traced back to the New Testament and to the Church Fathers, and especially to Saint Thomas Aquinas's treatment of the distinction between precepts (like the ten commandments) and counsels (like perfect chastity). *Opera supererogationis* aroused one of the most heated theological disputes in the sixteenth century when Protestants criticized the idea of supererogation, largely because of the Catholic view that supererogatory acts created a surplus of merit that could be tapped in the form of indulgences (even though the Protestants also indirectly held this view by believing that Christ redeemed humanity from sin).

Perhaps because of this Protestant background, Kant became the most forceful philosophical anti-supererogationist. Deontology conquers axiology, so that an act is moral only if it is a duty. Even here, however, Heyd finds Kantian texts that grant the intrinsic value of moral conduct which transcends what is strictly required. The wider definition of "moral" maintained by utilitarians makes it easier for them to explain supererogation than Kant, especially if they are defenders of what Heyd calls "negative utilitarianism." The most successful of all major ethical theories, however, in explaining supererogation is contract theory, since it takes justice (rather than virtue, duty, or utility) as the fundamental concept of morality; Rawls and Richards are treated here.

(2) Heyd's own theory of supererogation is based on the following definition: An act is supererogatory if and only if (A) it is neither obligatory nor forbidden; (B) its omission is not wrong; (C) it is morally good, both by virtue of its consequences and by its intrinsic value; and (D) it is done voluntarily for the sake of someone's else's good (p. 115). Two further features of supererogation are needed to distinguish it from duty: correlativity and continuity. The former means that supererogation derives its special value from being more than duty requires. The latter feature is necessary to show *some* interdependence between duty and supererogation. This feature is needed to avoid a Nietzschean escape from duty altogether. Supererogation generally presupposes that one has already met one's duties.

The author is to be commended for giving supererogation a solid footing in contemporary philosophy, and for rehabilitating the moral hero or saint as paradigms in moral education. One small criticism: Heyd ad-

mits that most moral heroes or saints say (perhaps mistakenly) that they were only doing their duty when they performed their heroic or saintly actions. One wonders whether a virtue-based morality or a version of Kantianism which distinguishes between perfect and imperfect duties might be better able to account for supererogation than Heyd admits.

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*Euthanasia and Clinical Practice: Trends, Principles and Alternatives.*

Report of THE WORKING PARTY OF THE LINACRE CENTER. London: 1982. Pp. 73 with Glossary and Note by A. J. L. GOIDULLY. £2.75.

On June 28, 1980, John Pearson was born in Derby City hospital in England. Four hours after his birth, Dr. Leonard Arthur learned that his parents did not wish him to survive on account of the fact that he suffered from Down's Syndrome. Dr. Arthur ordered "nursing care only" which meant that the child was to be placed in a corner of the nursery, given only water, and sedated so that he would not cry out for food. After the baby died from starvation because the duodenal atresia from which he suffered prohibited his taking food and because an operation for this condition was not permitted by the family, Dr. Arthur was charged with attempted murder. However, on November 5, 1981, Dr. Arthur was acquitted. *Euthanasia and Clinical Practice: Trends, Principles and Alternatives* is a book written by a number of noted physicians, moralists, jurists, theologians and health care professionals in response to this case, and it challenges this decision and the arguments proposed by euthanasiasts and courts to justify this and similar decisions. This work is of topical interest on account of the recent decision of the Indiana Supreme Court which forbade ordinary life-saving surgery on a Down's Syndrome baby in order to uphold the supposed right of parents to allow their handicapped child to die. As an attempt to reverse the trend to give legal protection to infanticide, this work is a good and noteworthy contribution. For the current practices of euthanasia are reviewed in this book, along with criticisms of the arguments supporting this practice.

The ethical arguments presented by the working party are generally in agreement with the principles enunciated by the magisterium. But, as I will try to show here, the understanding of the authors of this work of

these principles is not as complete and adequate as one would expect from a group such as this. The principle of double effect is regularly invoked by the authors to deal with difficult cases, but their understanding of this principle is not fully clear, and this unclarity may confuse some readers. This principle is explained as permitting an act that does not intend the death of another even if the act does cause the other person's death. Legitimate purposes and necessities can permit this kind of act in which death is a side effect. A fuller explanation is needed if this principle is to be properly used by clinicians and health care professionals. One may not only not intend the death of the other person as an end in itself, but also as a means to another end, and the death of the person cannot be entailed by the act of the agent as being caused necessarily, universally and principally. The means chosen by the agent must be such that the good effect which is brought about by the cause is not subordinated to the bad effect in the intention of the agent and in what the act itself does. For, if there is a subordination of the good effect to the evil effect, then the good effect will be brought about by means of the evil effect.

The authors of this book appear to base their rejection of the morality of euthanasia on the principle that euthanasia violates the rights of persons, and hence is a violation of the virtue of justice. There is nothing inherently wrong with this view, but it does not go to the real heart of the Roman Catholic criticism of euthanasia. The principles of the rights of persons and of justice can be invoked, but the ultimate principle that prohibits euthanasia is that which demands that life not be attacked in either its being or its becoming. This principle is the foundation of the magisterial teachings on contraception, abortion, murder and euthanasia. The qualities and traits of human life are such that human life can never be directly and intentionally destroyed or attacked. But what are these qualities that warrant this absolute and unconditional prohibition of direct attack? What is it about human life that justifies such a severe restriction? In the mind of the magisterium and noted Catholic theologians, human life is inviolable not precisely because it is a gift from God, as the authors of this book contend, but because human life is created in the image of God. The authors miss this point when they refer to a pronouncement of Pope John Paul II who said that human life was not only a gift from God, but was also created in the image of God. As human life is made in the divine image with reason and knowledge, it shares in divine sovereignty over the universe by exercising dominion over creation and giving it reason and order. Human life shares in divine wisdom, glory, power, life and knowledge and is created with the capacity to act virtuously which enables it to share in the divine struggle against evil in the universe. Even after the sin of Adam, this image was retained, and

it permitted a limited knowledge of God. Because human life is created in the image of God, a certain intimacy between God and the human being exists, and on account of this intimacy, it was believed by certain Fathers that one who touched the human being was in a sense touching God Himself. This intimacy with God on account of being made in His image is not without responsibilities, for it is necessary to undertake certain duties to be faithful to this image. It is on account of the divine image existing in human life that sacredness is ascribed to human life, and not precisely because human life is a gift from God. The mere fact that human life is a gift from God does not generate an absolute and unconditional prohibition against direct killing, as does the fact that human life is created in the image of God.

This perspective is critical to any attempt to deal with the contentions of euthanasiasts that selective killing of individuals is a better way to preserve respect for the value of human life. They contend that it is permitted to take human life when it is of very low quality, when the prospect of life with dignity is poor, and when human life will have very little ability to function in a fully mature, responsible and independent manner. In opposition to this view, it must be stressed that the theological opinion that human life is never to be directly taken is not only theologically sound, but is an opinion that serves the ultimate ends of secular humanism better than does the opinion allowing selective euthanasia. For these humanists claim that the dignity, freedom, order and reasonableness of human life and community is served better by selectively killing handicapped individuals. But an absolute prohibition of any direct killing serves this aim better because it never allows human life to be intentionally and directly destroyed even when its supposed dignity, freedom, intelligence and capacity for exercising its capabilities is most burdened, debilitated and handicapped. For if one allows human life to be taken when it suffers from these conditions, then one is not acting in behalf of and in alliance with reason, freedom, knowledge and dignity, but in alliance with those elements and forces that handicap and destroy these human qualities. In destroying human life that suffers from these handicaps, one is doing more to harm human life than what these diseases and handicaps are able to do. In proposing euthanasia as a solution to problems of debilitation, the euthanasiasts are being unfaithful to the aims of secular humanism which they claim to be so sincerely and faithfully espousing and defending.

The sections of this book that deal with medical practice are probably the best as they delineate the rights of patients to refuse medical treatment and the duties of health care professionals to treat patients. The discussion would have been helped if more emphasis was given to the necessity of prudence and discretion in providing and accepting medical

care. This work contends that one of the criteria which would allow a patient to refuse medical treatment is that the patient be unable to cope with the treatments for the reason that they are too burdensome. This formulation could cause confusion as a clear distinction between the subjective capabilities of the patient and the objective characteristics of the treatments was not drawn. And further confusion could result from the failure to clarify what it is that constitutes a treatment as burdensome. Burdensome treatments are those which cause or are associated with such conditions that they are beyond the common and ordinary capabilities of persons to tolerate. These treatments require an exercise of extraordinary or heroic fortitude, and therefore they cannot be made obligatory. There are burdens and risks that are common and ordinary, and it can be expected and demanded that ordinary persons tolerate these burdens. But others are so radical and extreme that only persons of rare and uncommon fortitude can tolerate them, and even for them, there is no moral guilt incurred if they should choose to refuse to tolerate them. If a definition of this nature was proposed by the working party, more light might have been shed on this difficult problem.

This work is of value in that it is a clear and concise statement of the substantial arguments and principles to be made against euthanasia. It also presents a clear and up-to-date picture of the practice of euthanasia in the English-speaking world. More works from this working party are planned, and they should be eagerly awaited, for their quality should be quite superior. *Euthanasia and Olinical Practice: Trends, Principles and Alternatives* is of great value of health care professionals who are in need of a brief and clear statement of the Church's teachings on euthanasia. And moralists and theologians who are interested in this issue will find the picture of current practices of euthanasia to be enlightening.

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*Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience*, W. W. MEISSNER, S.J., M.D.;  
 New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984; pp. 244 with index. \$25.00.

The title of this book, "Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience", should rather read, "Religious Experience and Psychoanalysis", since the subject directly discussed is religious experience, and psychoanalysis is only the investigative tool. Perhaps the reason for inverting what would ordinarily be chosen as the appropriate order is to emphasize the func-

tion of the tool—that psychoanalysis provides uniquely effective devices for understanding religion.

The author, priest and psychoanalyst, has been researching and publishing on the interface between psychoanalysis and religion for more than twenty years. This, his latest opus, is intended to move the *status quaestionis* several steps further towards a mutually more beneficial interaction between Freudian theorists and Christian theologians. During the past thirty or more years, the climate of psychoanalytic/theological dialogue has ripened to a degree, with attitudes on both sides of the issues expanding and compenetrating. Theologians are more aware of the darker, less tractable sides of human nature; psychoanalysts have expanded their systematic accounts to embrace the freer, more responsible dimensions of the mind. Fr. Meissner sums up the advances that have been obtained, presents some thoughtful analysis of issues that profit from a cross-disciplinary exchange, and points to future directions.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first part, Freud's works on religion, especially "The Future of an Illusion", are re-examined, with closer attention to the inner dynamics of Freud's own personal attitudes, how they emerged out of his early life experiences and how they influenced his later conceptualizations and evaluations. Reading this section of the book, one can get the impression that Freud's writings are to be taken as a kind of scripture, to be interpreted and enlarged upon and modified in the light of broader perspectives, to be sure, but always to be taken reverentially, acknowledging a privileged position for them in the corpus of psychoanalytic literature. For non Freudians, this reverential concern can seem to lead to an over-investment of time and energy in a debate that is no longer intrinsically active. On the other hand, this section can be read simply as a speculative psychoanalysis of Freud's own religious complexes.

The second section of the book, which is for this reviewer the more illuminating and valuable study, analyzes phases of religious development in the light of psychoanalytic concepts and formulations, and proposes an epigenetic view of religion in which various beliefs, attitudes, practices and rituals are related to stages of psychological growth, and represent successful developmental achievements integrated into the healthy, mature personality, along with residual deficits and archaic remnants which reflect difficulties which were encountered in the process of moving from one stage to another, and the persistence of unresolved elements from various developmental strata.

In particular, the author designates five modes of religious experience which he relates to five stages of psychological development, four of which are presented from the psychoanalytic perspective. Primary narcissism is the original psychic condition, which proceeds successively to

the first and fundamental differentiation of self and other, then to the achievement of a cohesive self capable of relating in a stable fashion to others, and then to the formation and consolidation of the superego. The fifth and final mode of religious experience is signaled by the integration of drives and their derivatives with autonomous ego functions, representative of a religious sense which is mature and realistic.

The author indicates that there is also a sixth mode of religious experience, the experience of the mystics who, while maintaining a high degree of ego structure and function in their day-to-day relationships with the real world and real people enter from time to time into an embrace with the Transcendent in which ego boundaries are dissolved in ecstatic union. His interesting speculation is that the energies involved on the human side of ecstasy and the psychic level touched in the embrace belong to the level of primary narcissism—the most primitive and deepest drive components of the psyche obtain expression and discharge at the point where reality is touched by the Beyond and nature is raised to supernature.

The author suggests the use of the concept of the 'transitional object', as this concept is being elaborated in contemporary psychoanalytic literature, as a tool for examining the whole array of religious beliefs, attitudes, conceptions, symbols and rituals. A transitional object is an object which has its own reality independent of the psyche, but is also invested with instinctual energies which create a psychic reality that may be called illusion or symbol. The transitional object functions as an intermediary tool, enabling the psyche gradually to relinquish attachments appropriate to one stage of development and to move on to the next stage with its greater degree of reality orientation. In this understanding, religious beliefs and attitudes and rituals of one stage of psychic development are illusions, or contain illusory components, which are only perceived as such and relinquished when a higher stage of development is achieved. Meanwhile, although illusory, they exert a valuable influence by facilitating transition. Perhaps St. Paul expressed it when he wrote: "When I became a man I put away the things of a child" and yet in this life we never get beyond seeing things as in a mirror darkly.

It would be interesting to see what Scripture scholars could produce, using these psychoanalytic concepts and formulations as tools for interpreting the Bible, starting from the earliest and most primitive expressions of religious beliefs and attitudes, which are akin to representatives of the second and third modes of religious experience, comparing them with the sense of religion in post-exilic Judaism, which shows developments characteristic of the fourth mode, and with the New Testament, which opens to the fifth mode and invites to the sixth.

In the third section of the book, Meissner closes in on the gaps which

separate psychoanalytic theorizing from the concepts and formulas of theologians, beginning with the over-all image of man. He expresses satisfaction that middle grounds are emerging in which fruitful dialogue can flourish. Freud's original models of human nature were dynamic but also mechanistic and reductionistic, in sharp contrast to the static theological models focusing on free will, human responsibility and openness to Divine grace. Now the lines have shifted and blurred. Psychoanalysis has developed an ego psychology and in its clinical literature relies more on concepts of interpretation and meaning to further its research. Theology has moved from ontological to phenomenological perspectives wherein interpretation and meaning are also central issues. The rapprochement is evident.

The particular issues which illustrate the rapprochement to greater or lesser degree are the tensions and balances of consciousness vs. the unconscious, freedom vs. determinism, teleology vs. causality, epigenesis vs. reductionism, morality vs. instinct, and the supernatural vs. the natural. On the issue of consciousness vs. the unconscious, the author sees little ground left for serious disparity between the points of view of religion and psychoanalysis. The debates over the issues of freedom and determinism, teleology and causality and epigenesis and reductionism have similarly diminished in intensity. The two areas in which a deeper and perhaps ultimately irreconcilable tension remains are the issues of morality vs. instinct and the supernatural vs. the natural. However the disagreements in these areas do not arise precisely from the psychoanalytic point of view as psychoanalytic but from broader and deeper divergencies wherein psychoanalysts assume the postulates of naturalism and scientism. There is nothing inherent in psychoanalytic techniques or theories which necessitates these particular philosophical stances and nothing to prevent psychoanalysts from assuming others.

In sum, Fr. Meissner's study makes a healthy contribution to the ongoing dialogue between religion and psychoanalysis. On the side of religion, a serious reading would profit theologians, biblical scholars and students of comparative religion, although a pre-requisite is a fairly thorough-going grasp of psychoanalytic concepts and theories. On the side of analysts, the book provides insights into religion from perspectives familiar to them and compatible with their habits of thinking, and undoubtedly useful for understanding the religious attitudes of their patients. Hopefully, this study will provide impetus for further research on the same interface.

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