D0248

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Lecture 1, 1. 1. <u>Course description and assignments.</u>

Our concern in this course
is with the role of the Catholic church in the modern world
and with the role of theology in the modern Church.
Such a concern demands that we must first attempt to understand
the modern world in its main constituent features.
This will be the first major task of our course.
We will approach it in two ways. The first will be through your
reading and writing,
the second through lectures.
In your reading,
you will first see a statement from Vatican II's
<u>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World</u>. (ditto)
This statement will present the way in which the Church
at Vatican II described the modern world.
Your first written assignment, due two weeks from today, is
to construct your own synthesis of this description.
This will mean reading and re-reading the text several
times, and trying to organize its salient features in
your own systematic and coherent fashion. How did the Church
at Vatican II understand the modern world?
Then there will be readings from our text: Lonergan, <u>A Second
Collection</u>, which offer a contemporary Catholic theologian's
vision of modernity. These are: "Transition from a
Classicist World-View to Historical Mindedness," "Belief:
Today's Issue," "The Absence of God in Modern Culture."
On successive weeks you will read these papers, and answer in
writing a couple of questions on each one.

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The last part of the class on which these papers are due will be devoted to discussion of the papers. I will assign each of you to a discussion group, and each week will appoint one of the participants in each group to present to the others his or her treatment of the questions. That treatment will be the basis of the discussion in the group. John Cavadini and I will sit in with a different group each week.

There will be one more chapter from <u>A Second Collection</u> that we will treat in this way before mid-term, "The Future of Christianity." We will also deal with four others in like fashion during the second half of the course, and there will be one concluding assignment due at the end of the course using other reading materials.

While you are reading these materials, I will be lecturing on the constituents of modernity. I will treat the following 8 topics in my lectures: religion, modern science, modern human studies and history, modern philosophy, human interdependence on a worldwide scale, secularization and secularism, atheism, the broken image of humanity today, and integral human liberation. These I will characterize as <u>the main themes of modern culture</u>.

Then I will present Lonergan's understanding of the role of the Christian Church in such a world and of theology's role in the modern Church.

Depending on what kind of time we have, I may or may not lecture on the history of modern Catholic theology.

But our last major portion of the course will deal with the foundations of

a modern Catholic theology. The papers from the text that will be pertinent for this discussion are: "Theology and Man's Future," "Theology in its New Context," "Revolution in Catholic Theology," and "The Subject." These will be treated in the same manner as the earlier articles -- short written papers and discussions.

There will be three examinations for the course, no mid-term, no exam cumulative. The first exam will be on ~~Monday - Tuesday~~ Wed. - Thurs, Feb. ~~28 - 29~~ 23 - 24. Mar. 1.

Honors students _wanting honors credit_ will have to write a term paper, a _research_ paper, of 15 page minimum on one of the following four topics:

"A New Control of Meaning: Why? How?"

"Subjectivity and Theology"

"Theology in the Catholic Church Today: Task and Mission"

"Theology and Modernity: the Task"

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2. <u>The function of theology.</u>

Theology has been understood in various ways in the course of its history. The understanding of theology that we will be working from in this course is that theology is reflection on religion, and especially on the Christian religion, and that its task or function is <u>to mediate the Christian religion with modern culture</u>. The import of such an understanding of theology can only be illuminated as our course proceeds, but it will be helpful to say some things about it now. Thus I will speak of:

a. religion
b. the Christian religion
c. culture
d. modern culture
e. the mediation of the Christian religion with modern culture.

a. <u>Religion</u>. Religion is a dimension of human living, of human experience, that relates a person or a community of persons to the ultimate conditions of existence. The religious dimension of human living can be experienced, and has been described, in various ways. But basically it may be maintained that there are <u>two forms of religious experience</u>. There is numinous experience, the experience of the holy, experience in the realm of transcendence, ~~limit experience~~, specifically religious experience. This type of religious experience has been described in great detail in William James' <u>The Varieties of Religious Experience</u> and in Rudolf Otto's

The Idea of the Holy. An avenue to such experience is provided through the Jungian process of individuation, provided the latter is monitored by faith and the discernment of spirits. This kind of experience is out of the ordinary. It includes such things as visions, dreams of healing and vocation, parapsychological phenomena, emotions of great joy, ecstasy, and love.

2) There is another kind of religious experience, and it is much more common. It is the experience of the limit-dimension of our most profane activities. This kind of religious experience is so readily available to serious inquirers that it is easy to overlook its religious quality. We may call it generically religious experience. It has been very well dealt with by David Tracy in his book, Blessed Rage for Order, Chapter 5, "The Religious Dimension of Common Human Experience and Knowledge." Tracy deals with this dimension by treating limit-questions in science, limit-questions in moral experience, and limit-situations in the world of the everyday. In dealing with science and with morality, he tries to show "how, at the limit of both the scientific and the moral enterprises, there inevitably emerge questions to which a response properly described as religious is appropriate." (94)

a) In regard to science, there is an emerging consensus from various representative traditions that there is a religious dimension to science itself. Tracy calls upon Bernard Lonergan's analysis of modern science to demonstrate this religious dimension, the presence of limit-questions in science. What are these limit-questions?

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Tracy begins with the basic category in Lonergan's analysis of scientific knowledge, the category of self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is the central model, according to Lonergan, not only for scientific knowledge but for authentic human existence. First, then, we should investigate what Lonergan means by self-transcendence. Then we will see how he understands self-transcendence in scientific knowledge. Finally, we will see how self-transcendence or scientific authenticity gives rise to limit-questions on the part of the scientist.

Lonergan's notion of self-transcendence means essentially that one lives authentically insofar as one continues to allow oneself an expanding horizon, insofar as one goes beyond one's present state by being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, by developing, and if necessary by changing. The simplest level on which we transcend ourselves is by sensitive experience. Through such experience we are related not merely to ourselves but to a surrounding environment, a habitat.

But this simplest level of self-transcendence we share with the other higher animals. But we are different from the other animals in that we live in a world constituted by meaning, and not just in a habitat. We construct by our intelligence a world that extends beyond what we experience by our senses or even by our imagination and memory. This possibility of self-transcending <u>intelligence</u> is nowhere better exemplified than in <u>scientific questions and answers</u>. Scientific questions and answers

impel the scientist beyond both sense and imagination to the construction of a world by intelligence. This world is known, not by sensation, but by understanding. It consists of intelligible unifications, relations, constructions, generalizations: i.e., of scientific laws.

Does this mean that the world known by the scientist is just a product of his own mind? The fact that science has been so successfully applied in technology to changing our habitat and environment would seem to argue convincingly against such an interpretation of scientific intelligence. But an even more conclusive argument can be drawn from the process of scientific knowledge itself. For the scientist is not content with his constructions. He asks a further question, is it so? and, to answer this question, he devises and executes experiments. Through his experiments, he comes to discover that his constructions probably are correct, true, i.e., that in his constructions he is approximating a knowledge of what is so. He is advancing in self-transcendence, for now he is coming to know a world that is beyond not only his senses and his imagination, his desires, needs, and fears, but also even beyond his acts of understanding, a world that is, independently of his own mind. For the scientist, and especially for the scientist, the real world is constituted not only by our experiences of sound and taste and sight and hearing and touch of what is "out-there," and not only by our desires and fears and needs and feelings of what is "in-here," but especially of what we understand and affirm with evidence. We cannot imagine the theories of quantum mechanics. Yet we can understand them and affirm them. In affirming them especially, we achieve cognitive self-transcendence,

objectivity. And we achieve such objectivity precisely <u>in and through our judgments</u>, our own self-transcending subjectivity.

The scientist, however, is not content with cognitive self-transcendence, at least not if he is concerned with authenticity. He does not want to allow technology to develop w/o ethical criticism. He wants to find ways to use scientific knowledge in accord with critically determined values. He raises yet a further set of questions: questions for deliberation, evaluation, decision, and action. He answers these questions by deciding for some ideal of what is really worthwhile and not just for what gives pleasure or helps us avoid pain. He moves past cognitive self-transcendence to real, moral, existential, communal self-transcendence.

The scientific drive for self-transcendence, then, moves from sensitivity through intelligent inquiry and critical reflection to deliberate action. How does this drive for self-transcendence in science manifest certain limit-questions, and thus a religious dimension, in science itself? For Lonergan, there inevitably arises for the authentically inquiring scientist questions about <u>the final horizon of scientific inquiry</u>, questions about the <u>basic character of this universe</u>. Most concretely, the scientist is confronted by technological and ecological progress and decline. More philosophically, though, he can turn back and reflect upon the kinds of questions he asks as a scientist, and from this reflection on his own questioning there arise limit-questions which point to a religious horizon for his scientific performance.

Thus the scientist raises ~~fo~~ <u>questions for intelligence</u> and answers

these questions by positing scientific laws. But he can push the matter further and question his questions for intelligence? He can ask: can these laws be meaningful if the world is not intelligible? Can the world be intelligible if it does not have an intelligent ground? These questions disclose a limit-dimension to his inquiry. They are religious questions. He is asking the question of God.

Beyond his questions for intelligence, the scientist raises questions for judgment: is it so? He answers these questions by his experiments, which may show that the evidence supports his hypothesis. Then he affirms or judges that, as far as he can tell from the evidence, such and such is the case. But he can push this matter further also, and he can note that his judgment merely happens to be probably true. It is not the ultimate ground of itself, but is invested with contingency. It is, in Lonergan's technical vocabulary, merely <u>virtually</u> unconditioned -- i.e. its conditions <u>happen</u> to be fulfilled by the evidence. But can there be any virtually unconditioned, any contingent matter-of-fact, unless there exists a formally unconditioned, an unconditioned being in the strict sense of having no conditions whatsoever, a necessary being who is by reason of <u>his own essence</u>? Again, the scientist is at the limit of the conditions of scientific inquiry and scientific truth. Can there be any contingent matter-of-fact without a grounding fact that is necessary? Again, if the scientist pushes his analysis to the point of reflecting on his own scientific performance, he is faced with the question of God.

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Finally, the scientist not only asks questions for deliberation, evaluation, decision, and action, ~~but also~~ and thus evaluates his findings in the light of ethical values. But he may reflect upon these questions, too, and ask: is there any point to asking whether our goals, purposes, and ideals are worthwhile? Would they be worthwhile if there were no intelligent, rational, and responsible ground of the universe, if human consciousness were the first and only instance of moral consciousness? (cf. Dostoyevsky: if God does not exist, everything is permitted). Is there any point to moral concern if there is no moral ground of the universe? Again, by questioning his own performance as an inquirer, the scientist comes to the question of God and of the basic character of our universe?

c) Limit-questions in Morality. At this point, Tracy draws upon the analysis of moral language proposed by Stephen Toulmin. A man makes a promise to another person, a commitment. Included in his promise is a commitment to certain behavior. He may be inclined to cancel his promise, however, and he may reflect on his situation to the extent of asking the question, "Why ought I to keep my promise any way?" This kind of question Tracy calls a limit-question in morality. There is no moral argument for answering it. We cannot really produce a moral argument for being moral. Such questions, as limit-questions, have rather a religious character to them. In answering

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them, we appeal to such things as our own natural desire for reassurance and for a general confidence about the future. Such an appeal leads us to use religious language, to develop theological arguments: a language of limit-questions and limit-answers. We use religious language to reassure ourselves that the "whole" and the "future" are trustworthy. This language, however, does not cause a confidence or trust in the meaningfulness of existence, but recalls us to it, re-presents it, discloses an already available confidence that has been threatened and needs to be reassured, and helps us to live again in accord with that basic confidence or trust.

(Specifically religious exp.) [→ generically]

c) Limit-situations in the world of the everyday. Existentialist thinkers have analyzed other limit-situations in everyday life besides those which occur in scientific inquiry and morality. These situations are those in which one inescapably finds a certain ultimate limit to his or her existence: boundary situations of guilt, anxiety, sickness, and the recognition of death as one's destiny; ecstatic experiences of intense joy, love, reassurance, creation. For example, when we are told of a serious illness either of ourselves or of someone we love, we are demanded to reflect on the existential boundaries of our present everyday existence. We begin to experience the everyday as suddenly unreal: petty, strange, foreign. We are faced with a starkness we cannot avoid and we find whether we believe or do not believe in life's very

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meaningfulness. In positive experiences of love, joy, the creative act, profound reassurance, we find again that we touch on a dimension of experience that cannot be described in ordinary language. We feel gifted. We feel enabled to transcend ourselves also in the world of the everyday. We feel put in touch with a final, trustworthy meaning to our lives, and perhaps we feel inclined to affirm a religious limit or horizon to our lives. These experiences, whether of boundary ~~of~~ or of ecstasy, are not merely strange. They are uncommon, but mainly because we try to keep them from surfacing by inauthentic strategies. We not want to find that we are not the masters of our fate, that we are radically contingent, limited, in need of being gifted or graced. These experiences reveal to us that the final horizon of our situation is not of our own making nor under our control. We can't even talk about such experiences in conceptual language, but employ instead metaphors or narratives, symbols and myths, to express the experience. For the final dimension can't be spoken in literal terms.