

Class 14
 Chapter 10, *What Is Systematic Theology?*
 System and History

1 We saw in the discussion of dogma toward the end of the chapter in *Method on Doctrines* that Lonergan felt he had to address the question of how to reconcile the permanence of meaning of the dogmas with the historicity of all human understanding and expression. A similar problem arises for systematics, namely, **Can the systematic ideal be reconciled with historical consciousness? What really is the systematic ideal? If the systematic ideal is conceived along the lines of a symbolic-logical type of system, the answer is No, the two cannot be reconciled. But if the systematic ideal is something else, then perhaps reconciliation is possible.** That issue takes up the first two sections of the chapter. The third section, which consumes most of the chapter, moves to complete the unified field structure by adding to it a theory of history, and a fourth section treats the historical responsibilities of systematics.

Section 1: Developing Synthesis

- 2 The first way in which system and history can be reconciled is by anticipating the possibility of **an ongoing genetic sequence of systematic theologies**. 145: ‘There must be acknowledged an indefinite series of efforts to construct systematic theologies. And there must be rejected the possibility of some single definitive *Summa* of theological understanding.’ Even though permanent achievements have been attained, **higher viewpoints** remain possible, calling for a shift in the basic terms and relations of the entire discipline, for a rearrangement of everything else, including the permanent achievements.
- 3 What is the **source** of these theological higher viewpoints? Sometimes they are occasioned by **cultural developments** that are relatively independent of theology. At other times, especially if they are proposed by theologians who are also saints, they are the fruit of **deepened insight** into the mysteries of faith themselves, in their distinctive supernatural reality.
- 4 The culturally occasioned advances are particularly long-lasting if the higher viewpoints occur in the development of the **categories** that theology shares with other disciplines. To take what is perhaps an overly simple and obvious example, the cosmology of Aquinas has been vastly superseded by modern physics and astronomy, and so no systematic theology can be written today relying on the scientific worldview of the Middle Ages. These general categories are particularly important in theology’s task of mediating Christian faith and contemporary culture. A theology without general categories is at best a matter of self-mediation from the events of revelation to the contemporary faith of the church rather than a mutual self-mediation with culture.
- 5 The way in which the succession of higher viewpoints can still be linked to the systematic ideal, however, is not yet clear until it is acknowledged that the series of systematic theologies is grounded in the **invariant structures** of intentional consciousness and the gift of God’s love. This is what makes for invariance, not the set of terms and propositions with which one begins. This alone makes for genuine continuity and systematic unity. See Lonergan’s section

*Permanence
Dogma*

in chapter 13 of *Method* regarding the sources of continuity: structures of consciousness, the gift of God's love, and permanent achievements reached along the way. And these structures themselves are subject to ever greater refinement of understanding and formulation. 146: 'We can envision today, I dare say for the first time in the history of Catholic theology, the possibility of an ongoing genetic sequence of systematic statements grounded in an ongoing clarification of the basic terms and relations' giving rise to 'a developing synthesis, a synthesis ... that in any of its stages will never be complete in any one person's mind, a synthesis that will reside rather in the collaborative community itself.' Theology can envision a future that is somewhat analogous to the ongoing history of the more successful empirical sciences.

Section 2 System as Witness

6 Here we get into the difficult and new area of understanding religious and theological **history** in a manner that is not only narrative and descriptive but also synthetic, systematic, **explanatory**. What will issue from positive research, Lonergan anticipated, is a new kind of synthesis, **an explanatory history of theological meanings**, where theologians will be able to relate to one another in genetic and dialectical fashion the various **stages in the evolution of the meanings constitutive of the Christian church**. Interiority analysis yields an understanding of both **differentiation and conversion**, and these provide an always **potential totality of viewpoints** that can be employed to understand the relations among various sets of historical data, **an explanatory grasp of the relations among stages**, where the relations are both genetic and dialectical. I am envisaging here ultimately **an explanatory comprehension of the universal religious phenomenon of humankind, a theology of theologies, as a dimension of systematics itself as that functional speciality is emerging**.

Section 3 History as Mediated Object of Systematic Theology

7 History is also reconciled with system by **becoming part of the unified field structure** of systematic theology, in the form of a theology of history. That is what is explored here. I begin in section 3.1 with data from the Lonergan archives in which it is clear that **Lonergan** intended systematics today to be a theory of history. *Geschichte* is to be the mediated object of systematics. And the history here is broader than the history of theological ideas discussed above.

8 The section includes a review of the notion of functional specialization that we need not go into again. But attention is drawn to Lonergan's specification of a **mediating object for each step in the first phase and of a mediated object in each step in the second phase**. Furthermore the **mediating subject** is introduced at the end of the first phase as catalyst of the transition from hearing to saying, from mediating objects to mediated objects.

9 The mediating object of **research** is the given; of **interpretation** meaning; of **history** truth, 'what really happened'; and of **dialectic** or 'conversion' encounter. The mediated objects of the second phase are mediated through the offices of the mediating objects of the first phase as these have been processed by the mediating subject, the converted theologian. The respective objects of the second phase are mediated into the present by the subject's

processing of the data, meanings, facts, and encounters intended in, disclosed by, research, interpretation, history and dialectic. In the early formulation the mediated object of **foundations** is God; of **doctrine** redemption; of **explanation** or systematics *Geschichte*; and of **communications** world. I suggest that some shifts took place in *Method* itself. The object mediated in **foundations** is not God but the mediating subject. It is possible that the object mediated in **doctrines** is the affirmed meanings constitutive of the church as appropriated by the theologian, and it is also possible that the mediated object of **communications** is the reign of God. I continue to affirm with Lonergan in the early notes on functional specialization that the mediated object of **systematics** is history, that a contemporary understanding of the truth of Christian faith should take the form of a theological theory of history. According to these early notes, '**Doctrine**' is to be a doctrine on history, emphasizing redemption, '**Explanation**' is to be a theological theory of history. and '**Communication**' is directed to historical action in the constitution of the 'world.'

10 Section 3.2 takes up the question of how Lonergan regarded this '**history**' that is to be the mediated object of systematics. His familiar doctrine of **progress, decline, and redemption** is reviewed from the perspective of his paper 'Natural Right and Historical Mindedness.' Here the analysis of history is recast in terms of meaning, and especially in terms of the meaning constitutive of human communities. The three steps of progress, decline, and redemption are now spoken of primarily in terms of the **dialectic of the development of meaning**. 158: The **normative source of meaning resides in a tidal movement deeper and more comprehensive even than the several principles found in questions and answers for intelligence, reflection, and deliberation, even as it includes these principles**. The effects of this immanent source of meaning are embodied in the **social and cultural realities** that are the **infrastructure and superstructure** of human community, a manifold that sublates individual intelligence and reasonableness into the community faithful to the exigencies of ongoing self-transcendence. But the norms can be violated both by individuals and by communities, and so the **total source of meaning** in human history is more than the normative source, and from it we can expect not only social order but also disorder, not only cultural vitality and achievement but also lassitude and deterioration, not an ongoing and uninterrupted sequence of developments but rather a dialectic of opposed tendencies. The total source is **dialectical**, a **conflict** immanent in the society's carriers and embodiments of constitutive meaning. It **unfolds through the stages or plateaus of meaning**. Today there are emerging ideals of enlightenment and emancipation that are rooted, respectively, in interiorly differentiated consciousness and appropriated criteria of self-transcendence as found in the articulation of the conversions.

11 In section 3.3 I add to this account developments taken from *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, where **psychic conversion** joins intellectual, moral, and religious conversion as a dimension in the normative source of meaning. Psychic conversion leads to a **nuancing of Lonergan's notion of dialectic**, and the expanded notion of dialectic is part of a broader attempt to develop what Lonergan says about the **scale of values**. Dramatic bias and psychic conversion affect the total and dialectical source of meaning just as the other biases and conversions do, and so will affect our understanding of the dialectic of history.

- 12 Thus, the **aesthetic-dramatic operator**, as underpinning intentional operations, is a **symbolic** operator; as accompanying intentional operations, it affects the mass and momentum of **feeling** that makes these operations dramatic; and as overarching intentional consciousness it is the power of **love** that releases total commitment. It is thus a **threefold** reality: symbolic, sensitive/affective, and agapic, and as such **it joins the intentional operators to form the normative source of meaning in history**.
- 13 **What difference** does this aesthetic-dramatic operator make as regards the dialectic of history? First, intentionality and psyche constitute a **dialectic of contraries** that is to be affirmed, strengthened, and assumed as the foundation of one's dramatic living. Second, **skewing** that dialectic in either direction is the source or roots of personal and social decline. The either/or is not between psyche and intentionality but between the integral dialectic of psyche and intentionality and their distorted dialectic. So the second component: *either* the solidary and creative tensions of psyche and intentionality *or* the dissolution of this tension through neglect of *either* pole. And third, the **redemptive** process resulting from the gift of grace and manifested in Christ Jesus is required for the integrity of the dialectic of psyche and intentionality in all its manifestations.
- 14 Section 3.4 contains a short summary of the **basic structure of history** proposed in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. It begins (3.4.1) with **three instances of the dialectic** of psyche and intentionality: the dialectic of the **subject**, the dialectic of **community**, and the dialectic of **culture**. They are distinct and related. Each has roots in both the psyche and intentional consciousness, and so in the total source of meaning in history.
- 15 The dialectic of the **subject** is foundational of the other two. The polar opposites here are the **ensorship** exercised by dramatically patterned intentional consciousness and imagination, on the one hand, and **neural demands** for psychic integration and conscious representation, on the other. Psychic conversion transforms the operation of the censor **all along the line** in the tidal movement, **from a repressive to a constructive functioning**.
- 16 The dialectic of **community** is constituted by the poles of (1) the **practical intelligence** responsible for technological innovations, economic systems, and the political and legal stratum and (2) spontaneous **intersubjectivity**. When these principles are working together harmoniously, they constitute an integral dialectic of community.
- 17 I have added to these dialectics, both of which are found in *Insight*, what I call the dialectic of **culture**, where the poles are culturally constitutive patterns of meaning, **anthropological and cosmological**. **Soteriological** constitutive meaning will be the condition of the integral dialectic of cosmological and anthropological constitutive meaning, something that, in my view, **does not yet exist** but should be evoked as constitutive of what I call a **world-cultural humanity**.
- 18 Section 3.4.2 relates these three dialectical processes to the **scale of values**, and this establishes their relations to one another. The integral dialectic of the subject constitutes **personal** value, the integral dialectic of culture **cultural** values, and the integral dialectic of community **social** values.

- 19 Section 3.4.3 proposes six points involved in an ‘**analogy of dialectic.**’ (1) Each of the three dialectics embodies a tension of **limitation and transcendence**, of the integrators and operators of development. (2) Each is in its integrity a dialectic not of contradictories but of **contraries**. The opposition is to be reconciled by functional interdependence, not by the choice of one to the exclusion of the other. (3) Each is **integral** to the extent that the relevant processes of change are a function of the harmonious interaction of the two internally constitutive principles, and **distorted** to the extent that the changes are a function of one of the principles at the expense or to the exclusion of the other. (4) In each case the integrity is a function, not of one or other of the internally constitutive principles but of a **third principle** of higher synthesis: grace (dialectic of the subject); soteriological constitutive meaning (culture); the integrity of the dialectic of culture itself (community). (5) Around the respective principles of higher integration there does function a dialectic of **contradictories**. (6) Inversely, the integrity of the dialectics of contraries provides **criteria** by which one can ascertain the authenticity of the principle of any higher synthesis. The issue of **good and evil** centers around the principles of higher synthesis of each dialectic, and is not an issue between the respective poles of each process. The integral dialectical tension of the poles is good, the breakdown of that tension in either direction evil.
- 20 Section 3.4.4 then presents a position on the **constitution of human society** from this standpoint of the levels of value. The section is concerned mainly with the relations of **social and cultural values** to each other, but divisions are made within each of these categories. Thus there are **five** elements constitutive of society: intersubjectivity, technological institutions, the economic system, the political order, and culture; and culture is itself distinguished into the everyday and the reflexive levels. The position on the constitution of society is stated in six points on p. 175, and the position thus stated is contrasted with the **Marxist** notion of society on 175-76. I insist that a theologian today must take an explicit stand on the relation of cultural values and the social order. We will review 175-76.
- 21 Section 3.4.5 outlines the **relations among the levels of value**. There are relations from above and from below. **From above**, the more inclusive levels are the condition of the possibility of successfully functioning schemes of recurrence at the more basic levels. **From below**, besides the obvious reverse conditioning, questions emerging at more basic levels evoke operations that will lead to consolidations at higher, more inclusive levels. And the scale or **proportion** of the problems that exist at the more basic levels determines the extent of the changes that must take place at the higher levels.
- 22 An application to our current situation begins with the acknowledgment that the problem of the effective and equitable distribution of vital goods is **global**, and so its solution must call for new technological, economic, and political structures on a global scale, and for new visions of intersubjective and interpersonal flowering. This will call for the generation of cultural values that are somehow **crosscultural**. Theology should be evoking that set of cultural values, mediating the emergence of a new cultural matrix. It can appeal to the transcultural validity of the **sources of personal value** and to the **universal gift of God’s love** as foundations for meeting its task.

- 23 Section 3.5 complicates this structure. **Two new complications of the basic structure** are presented in this book, namely, **the reception of communally transmitted meanings and values discussed in chapter 9 and the elaboration of the scale of values**. The latter is what I'm developing here. And I'm adding the affirmations that psychic conversion is itself a further complication of the basic structure, that the distinction of dialectics of contradictories and of contraries is a further complication, that the structure of the scale of values itself can be further complicated, and that this opens a way for a fuller account of collective responsibility and social grace.
- 24 So in 3.5.3 it is argued that the affirmation of the tidal movement establishes **psychic conversion as a complication of the basic structure**. The symbolic operator, the feelings that permeate the structure, and the topmost operator of interpersonal relations and total commitment provide a needed complement to the operators of intellectual and moral development. They themselves contain criteria of authenticity and promote it. This dimension is released into the possibility of appropriation by a set of aesthetic-dramatic operators that mediate between the two dimensions: **symbolic operators, affective operators, and intersubjective operators**.
- 25 In 3.5.4 the notion of dialectic in the two forms of **contraries and contradictories** is shown to be another complication of the structure. Dialectics of contraries are grounded in a tension between intentional consciousness and the tidal movement or passionateness of being that *has a dimension of its own*. That tension has to be brought fully into consciousness and made the creative source of one's further development. Essential here is distinguishing the duality of consciousness and the duality of knowledge. Confusing them leads to treating contraries as though they were contradictories. Breaking the duality of knowing entails affirming, maintaining, and strengthening the unity in duality of consciousness.
- 26 Section 3.5.5 indicates how I have complicated the **scale of values itself** by specifying that the levels of personal, social, and cultural values are dialectics of contraries. The structure is set in motion by specifying how the three levels are related to one another. When it is set in motion, we have the beginnings of a notion of collective responsibility and a theology of social grace.
- 27 These two themes are the subject of section 3.5.6. I begin by noting that for Lonergan the **state of grace** is a social and intersubjective or interpersonal situation, where the subjects involved in the situation are the three divine subjects and a very widely inclusive community of human subjects, all who have said 'Yes' to God's offer of God's own love.
- 28 Lonergan conjoins natural right and human historicity to approximate some notion of collective responsibility. I suggest that the notion of society that I have suggested results from the scale of values, which itself is a complication of Lonergan's own normative source of meaning: the levels of value are isomorphic with the intentional dimension of that normative source, while the psychic components in the levels of personal, cultural, and social value are a function of the tidal movement that is the other component of the normative source. The relations from above and below of the levels of value would be informed by the four-point

hypothesis regarding created participations in the divine relations to yield a doctrine of social grace.

29 Section 3.6, then, expresses the commitment to develop a systematics from these foundations, including psychic conversion as it illuminates the three dialectical processes. This would involve a systematic understanding of transposed church doctrines, transposed theological doctrines, and the new theological doctrines that emerge today, in the form of a theology of history. The categories of a theory of history are to be added to the four-point hypothesis to generate the unified field structure of systematic theology.

Section 4: Theology as Praxis

30 Section 4 treats a fourth manner of reconciling system and history, namely, by considering theology itself as a form of historical praxis, especially in its relation to communications. Preeminent in such concerns is the option for the poor. But the principal praxis issues for theology have to do with culture and mediation. The doctrinal component in this insistence has to do with the universality of the mission of the Holy Spirit. But the culture that is adequate to the proportions of a globally interdependent technological, economic, and political order in dialectical relationship with a crosscultural intersubjectivity is at best emergent in our time. Theology's mediation with current cultural matrices is for the sake of catalyzing the emergence of a new set of cultural values.