

NAME NOTES ON TRANSCENDENTAL
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① The method of metaphysics in contemporary scholasticism. (Transcendental philosophy?)

a) Rahner, Coreth, and de Finance agree that the method of metaphysics cannot be purely experimental or empirical. The reason for this is, according to de Finance, that being is not a given which can be examined by the senses or by interior experience. Being is neither physical nor psychological. It is not a thing nor a state of consciousness. Experience always attains being under its determinations, and so if we remain purely at the level of experience, we will never attain to being as such but only to now this and now that particular realization or determination of being.

Kant showed that a purely inductive method in metaphysics gives us knowledge only of the contingent and particular which is derived from experience. Experience is of the contingent and particular. The transcendental philosophers accept Kant's judgment that a synthetic-inductive method cannot of itself lead to a validation of the possibility of metaphysics. The synthetic-inductive method is basically what is to be found in the works of Klubertanz and Sweeney. The transcendental philosophers seem to feel that even when this method arrives at universal principles, it presupposes prior metaphysical knowledge, which of course remains unthematic but which is really supplied by the mind, not derived from an analysis of particular beings. The method of the Thomists in the Gilsonian pattern tends to forget the last four centuries or so of philosophical thought, writing it off as a major mistake; according to the transcendental philosophers this method also neglects some of the insights of St. Thomas Aquinas, namely those centering around the contribution made by human knowledge to the articulation of a metaphysics of the real.

The objection of the transcendental philosophers to the method employed by the Gilsonians is expressed differently by Bernard Lonergan. Metaphysics for him as for the others in this school is the total and basic science. It is total, for being includes everything that is; it is basic, for it accepts no presuppositions that it itself does not justify. The objection to the Gilsonians is that they do allow several presuppositions which they do not justify: namely, that the subject-object polarity should be allowed to stand, that knowledge consists in a looking at the object, and that this looking at the object is an adequate method for arriving at metaphysical truth. The transcendental philosophers not only object to the imprudence of allowing such presuppositions to stand ungrounded in philosophy, but also call these very presuppositions into

question and, in fact, deny them. The basic presupposition of the Gilsonian school of Thomism is stated as follows in a thesis which the students of philosophy at Ford are expected to be able to defend: that we directly perceive existent material things is a completely evident fact. Notice what is contained in this statement:

- ① the priority of the knowledge of the object over the knowledge which the subject has of himself;
- ② the concomitant condoning of the maintenance of the subject-object polarity;
- ③ the assumption that knowledge is a looking at something which is distinct from myself.
- ④ beginning with immediate knowledge in its immediacy and declaring that one's fundamental views are self-evident. Quod gratis asseritur, gratis negatur.

This does not mean, however, that metaphysics is not founded on experience and constantly referred back to experience. Just as scientific thought does not remain on the purely theoretical level, on the level of formulating hypotheses and laws, so too metaphysical thinking needs to see its results verified in reality; as de Finance says, "To despise the proof of experience is dangerous." Not only is it dangerous; it is a direct contradiction of what we have already seen to be the essence of the philosophical enterprise, namely, an articulation of the meaning of one's encounter with reality.

However, the real as known to us in immediate experience is still the world of finite and particular beings; if there is a God, He is certainly not known to us through immediate experience - if He were, it would be senseless to say, "if there is a God." This means that our reference of our metaphysical conclusions back to the various levels of our immediate experience is not a validation of their metaphysical character; since we do not know at the beginning of our study whether being is coextensive with the world which we can see and touch and feel.

The method of *us* in transcendental philosophy (2)

b) The members of the transcendental "school" also agree that the method employed in metaphysics cannot be one of analytic deduction. Such a method would begin with an abstract concept — in this case, the abstract concept of being — and would deduce from this concept whatever is implied in it. This is really not much of a problem today, for nobody seems to be philosophizing in this way. However, an examination of these philosophers' objections to such a method will be instructive with regard to some of their positive points of view.

De Finance states that the problem with this type of procedure is that the notion of being is not capable of being isolated, as for example the notion of triangle. It is not an object which I can put there before my mind and consider from without. I myself am "of being." I am involved, by what is most subjective in me, in the very object of my study. Agreeing with Gabriel Marcel, de Finance states that the question of being is not a problem but a mystery.

Notice how this objection of de Finance to an analytic-deductive method is more than simply an objection. Positively he is stating that the subject-object polarity in philosophy must be overcome. My knowledge of being is not a knowledge of something entirely other than myself, something which I can place over against myself and look at. I am radically involved in the object of my study. The meaning of being is also the meaning of myself.

Lonergan would object to the analytic-deductive method of metaphysics on the grounds that knowledge of the real is not gained through a concept or an insight but through the affirmation that the "what," the content of the insight is truly so. This act takes place in a judgment, not in the contemplation of a concept.

Corbett and Rahner object to a purely deductive metaphysics on the grounds that deductive knowledge is always mediate knowledge. Mediate knowledge, though, depends on immediate knowledge, to which nothing else is prior. This immediate knowledge must be one ~~to which~~ which cannot be proven because there is nothing prior to it. If everything has to be proven, then there is no possibility of any

knowledge. If metaphysics is so basic a knowledge that it presupposes nothing, then it must be based upon immediate knowledge. But a method which is purely analytic-deductive does not in principle hold itself responsible for the immediate knowledge which is the basis of everything.

c) Since this is the case, and since immediate knowledge in its immediacy will also not suffice, we need some kind of method based on immediate knowledge but also accounting for this immediate knowledge, i. e., mediating it to us and rendering it explicit. If metaphysics is possible, it must be fundamentally a mediation to us of our immediate knowledge of being gained in and through ordinary, everyday experience. There is another type of judgment — not analytic, not synthetic-inductive, but synthetic a priori. This type of judgment contains contingent knowledge and universal knowledge. These j's get their contingency from sense experience. But no universality can come from sense experience. However these j's contain universality, which must come from the mind. Therefore the validity of these judgments must be based on an intellectual insight into necessary contents that are previous to all sense experience. This is what is meant by synthetic a priori judgment. As Lonergan states, "There exists a latent metaphysics, present and operative in all our knowing; it is the metaphysical primitive insight in its immediacy; but it has to be thematized and made explicit, to be brought out into the open in accurately defined concepts & certain judgments. The main task of the metaphysician is not to reveal or prove what is new and unknown; it is to give scientific expression to what already is implicitly acknowledged w/o being explicitly recognized." ("Metaphysics as Horizon," Collection, p. 203).

If metaphysics is possible, then, it is only because it is already a fact and must only be brought to light. Kenneth Baker, in his synopsis of the views of Lakier and Corbett, says it this way: "We can only surpass the boundaries of sense experience if they are already surpassed. Thought can only know particular being if it already open

The method of *uq* in transcendental phil (3)

to being as such. Hence, *uq* is only possible if we already have an openness to being as being as the condition of the possibility of daily experience. Therefore, we affirm that a previous knowledge of existence is the condition of the possibility of any knowledge and that the denial of this previous knowledge really affirms it in the very denial (p. 5).

De France expresses himself in a similar way. The phenomenological description of man's being-in-the-world helps us to see that the human spirit, the affirming subject, is "of being" and is a living relation to being, open to being. The human spirit cannot know itself and interpret itself except in terms of being. Through a study of what we do when we affirm, we can truly grasp being "from within." He says: "Metaphysics seeks to detail whatever is necessarily given in the affirmation of the presence of being, that which we implicitly affirm whenever we affirm being." Perhaps the most frequently quoted statement of the method of transcendental metaphysics is that of Bernard Lonergan: "Thoroughly understand what it is to understand, and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further developments of understanding" (xxviii).

For these philosophers, then, metaphysics is only possible if we can establish that we do have a previous a priori knowledge which is a nonthematic knowledge of being as such and of the unconditioned horizon of being. This is what they attempt to do.

Where do they start? Rahner, Corbett, and Lonergan all have a similar starting point. We can say, to keep it as simple as possible, that they start with the performance of questioning. This is a presuppositionless beginning. It cannot be called into question without contradiction. To doubt questioning is to involve oneself in a counterposition, and so questioning is beyond the doubter's capacity to doubt coherently. . . . No doubt, the proper place to begin is at the beginning, but some say one

issue and others say another is the proper beginning. So there is a question about the beginning and, indeed, no matter where one starts, one starts from some question. For Fr. Coeth, then, questioning itself is the beginning." (Lonergan, "Meta as Horizon," p. 204).

"The beginning of $\omega\phi$ is the question. But I can also question the beginning. This means that I question the question. Therefore the question necessarily reflects on itself and becomes the question of the question. No matter which beginning I choose I can always question it as to its validity and correctness. If I say that the question of being is the beginning of $\omega\phi$, I can also question that. So the absolute first is the question and the question contains its own method built right in, that is, the question of the question." (Baker, p. 7).

When I question the question, I am asking the conditions of its possibility or the essence of questioning as such. In other words, what is found in every question to constitute it, not as question about this rather than about that, but simply as questioning? "It is claimed that the condition of the possibility of any and all questions is an awareness that goes beyond the already known to an unknown to be known" (Lonergan, p. 205).

In other words, then, in every question which I ask there is present an awareness of an unknown which I want to know. Otherwise, I would not ask the question. As Baker puts it, "If I ask the question, 'What is that?' in addition to the direct intention of the question, which anyone who understands English will grasp, additional knowledge is communicated or implied. In this question we know the questioned in a beginning way and designate it as "that." Inasmuch as it is a not-yet-known it is designated vaguely as a "what" that "is" in some way or other. The "that" is the known-

The method of metaphysics in transcendental philosophy (4)

questionable and the "what" is the unknown-questionable that we seek to know. The question is essentially composed, therefore, of knowledge and ignorance. The movement of the question is beyond the known to the unknown." (pp. 7-8).

What is the awareness of? The transcendental philosophers say there is an unexplicit awareness of being present in every question as the condition of its possibility. Lonergan summarizes Coreth's position as follows: "At least, it [the awareness] is of the questionable, for if nothing were questionable, there could be no questions. But, further, the questionable is unrestricted: to propose a limit to questioning is to raise the question of the legitimacy of asking questions beyond the limit. And raising this question is already beyond the limit. In other words, to limit questioning lands one in a counterposition. Finally, as the questionable is unrestricted, so it is somehow one. For the condition of the possibility of questioning is always the same going beyond the already known to an unknown that is to be known; it follows that the questionable, of which questioning is aware, must be as much one as the awareness that constitutes questioning.

"Still, what is it that is questionable, unrestricted, one? It is being. Being is the questionable: it is the great unknown, that all our questions are about... and never exhaust; it is unrestricted, for apart from being there is nothing; finally, it is one for, despite all other differences, every instance of being is." (p. 205).

Baker makes the same point this way: "Before I can ask this question ['What is that?'] I must know the meaning of 'what,' 'is,' and 'that.' If I did not have some knowledge of the 'that,' I could not ask the question. But I do not have exhaustive knowledge of it, for, if I did, I could not ask the question. You cannot question what you

already know. So the question implies, then, knowledge and lack of knowledge. Of especial interest is the ~~so~~ verb, 'is.' Before I can question anything I must know what 'is' is. Where do I get that knowledge? It cannot come from any particular experience because 'is' embraces absolutely everything and I can question everything that is. Therefore my knowledge of 'is' or being is prior to, or at least co-positing in the question. And notice this. I can also question my own question as to its validity, and again a performance-knowledge is co-positing in the second question that reveals a basic openness to being. This also shows that in every act of questioning there remains something that is questionable - this is the performance-knowledge or fulfillment-knowledge that is co-positing in every question & that can never be thematically or explicitly grasped by a concept.

"If I ask the question, 'What can I question?' I find the answer buried right in the question. The answer - everything. For in this question a performance-knowledge is co-positing or implicitly contained in the question, that answers the direct intention of the question. This performance-knowledge is a knowledge of everything that 'is.' When I say that I can question everything, this implies that I know that everything is, that I know the existence of the existent. This means that the horizon, so to speak, of my question is being. Anything that is being can be questioned." (p. 8).
