

RGT 5572 HS  
Fourth Class, 26 January 2006  
© Copyright 2006 by Robert M. Doran

Dialectic of Authority

- 1 Authority is legitimate power. Power is carried not by any individual but by the community, since the source of power is cooperation. There is cooperation down the ages: power today results from all the achievements of the past that have been accumulated, developed, integrated. There is also cooperation here and now: the group can do so much that the individual can't do and is so much more efficient than the isolated group. Again, groups can themselves be grouped again and again, and, with each reapplication that results in an organic whole, power is multiplied.
- 2 But the community in which power resides will be a community only inasmuch as it is an achievement of common meaning and value. 5-6: 'Without a common field of experience people are out of touch. Without a common way of understanding, they will misunderstand one another, grow suspicious, distrustful, hostile, violent. Without common judgments they will live in different worlds, and without common aims they will work at cross-purposes.'
- 3 The power that is carried by the community resides in what Lonergan here calls the word of authority, by which he means a quite complex set of realities: 'the current actuality of the power generated by past development and contemporary cooperation' (6), in effect the sum total of current institutions, in all the ways of cooperating that at any time are commonly understood and accepted, 'the sum of the ways of cooperating that commonly are understood and commonly are accepted' (6). This is what brings the achievements of the past into the present, organizes and directs the cooperating groups in the present, distributes the fruits of cooperation among the cooperating members, and excludes from social intercourse anyone who would disrupt the cooperating society. This sum total changes slowly, because it takes time to develop a new common understanding and a new common consent.
- 4 It is within this matrix that power comes to be entrusted to individuals within community. These individuals are known as authorities: leaders, arbitrators, judges, officials. Do not confuse authority with authorities, however. 7: 'The authorities are the officials to whom certain offices have been entrusted and certain powers delegated. But authority belongs to the community' with its common experience, common understanding, common judgments, and common aims.
- 5 All of this may seem abstract, but in fact it is heuristic, and the heuristic moves to another stage when it is acknowledged that there is not one and only one set of common meanings and values valid for all humankind. There are many, and they may be authentic or unauthentic. They will be authentic in the measure that cumulatively they are the result of people being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, and they will be unauthentic in the measure that they are not. And it is only the

authenticity of these meanings and values that makes the power that resides in the community and its institutions legitimate, that gives that power authority, that legitimates the authorities themselves, and it is the inauthenticity of those meanings and values that leaves power merely naked power, inviting the consciences of subjects to repudiate their claims to rule. But the subjects themselves may be authentic or unauthentic. Insofar as they are authentic, they will accept the claims of legitimate authority and legitimate authorities and resist those of illegitimate authority and illegitimate authorities. Insofar as they are unauthentic, they will resist legitimate claims and support illegitimate claims.

- 6 The heuristic structure is spelled out in greater detail on p. 8, only to reveal an enormous complexity: ‘Authenticity and unauthenticity are found in three different carriers: (1) in the community, (2) in the individuals that are authorities, and (3) in the individuals that are subject to authority. Again, unauthenticity is realized by any single act of inattention, obtuseness, unreasonableness, irresponsibility. But authenticity is reached only by long and sustained fidelity to the transcendental precepts. It exists only as a cumulative product. Moreover, authenticity in man or woman is ever precarious: our attentiveness is ever apt to be a withdrawal from inattention; our acts of understanding a correction of our oversights; our reasonableness a victory over silliness; our responsibility a repentance for our sins. To be ever attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible is to live totally in the world mediated by meaning and motivated by values. But [we] also [live] in a world of immediacy and, while the world of immediacy can be incorporated in the world mediated by meaning and motivated by values, still that incorporation never is secure. Finally, what is authentic for a lesser differentiation of consciousness will be found unauthentic by the standards of a greater differentiation. So there is a sin of backwardness, of the cultures, the authorities, the individuals that fail to live on the level of their times.’
- 7 One way to negotiate the complexity is to adopt a synthetic viewpoint. ‘By their fruits you will know them.’ ‘The fruit of authenticity is progress ... The fruit of unauthenticity is decline. The cumulative effects of each are described on 9-10, but especially to be noted is that situations can reach the state where ‘the remedy ... lies beyond any normal human procedure ... an irrational situation is just stony ground, and to apply intelligence to it yields nothing’ (9-10). Only the dynamics that result from self-sacrificing love can reverse such evils. What such reversal may mean in any concrete situation is left unanswered.
- 8 Finally, besides legitimacy, there is legitimation, that is, the assertion of legitimacy. This can be done in myth and ritual, in law, rhetoric, logic, codes, principles; but these external criteria are never enough. The assertion of legitimacy itself must flow from authenticity, or it simply further complicates the dialectic of authority, for illegitimate power can be ‘legitimated’ by inauthentic laws, codes, principles, ideologies, myths, rituals. A lot to think about!

### Method: Trend and Variations

- 9 Lonergan was invited to deliver the paper at the 1974 Southwestern Regional Joint Meeting of the societies affiliated with The Council on the Study of Religion, Austin College, Sherman TX. It is another instance of the more circular and less linear rhetorical style that he employed in his late years. The key to the paper appears on 20-21: ‘It was suggested that I speak on *Method: Trend and Variations*. I spoke mostly of the trend, ... of *the inner trend by which our grasp of method begins, develops, takes command*. Method begins with an apprenticeship, with doing what others have done, or advise, or demand. Method becomes meaningful in its own good time: when we discover for ourselves what a discovery is; and when we realize that the individual’s achievement is a breakthrough because it occurs in a scientific community that needs it, witnesses it, attests it, judges it, embraces it, and soon or later goes way beyond it. Method takes command when one assigns logic its subsidiary role, when one grasps how questions combine with answers, how they are woven together into contexts, how contexts merge into the horizons of subjects, how horizons can be open to and subjects can be eager for further development along certain lines yet, along others, subjects can be strangely inattentive, complacently obtuse, pompously irrational.’ And the variations are variations in this trend. They come from the resistance itself, and can be resolved only on the level of a philosophic methodology that takes its stand on authenticity.
- 10 So with this structure in mind, we will focus on a couple of things. We begin with the *origins* of method. There is a paradox in the notion of a scientific method: the goal is never known in advance, for that goal is discovery of what is not yet known or at times even expected. For this reason scientific development is a jump ahead of scientific method. Performance comes first. Only as a series of diverse reflections on performance are pieced together do there emerge the prescriptions of a scientific method.
- 11 Next, *learning* method. 13-14: ‘... a real apprehension, an intimate familiarity of [sic] what method means, and supposes, and implies, comes to most of us only through the long apprenticeship of studies ... Slowly, gradually, for the most part inadvertently, there are formed the habits, without formulating the precepts, of working methodically.’ The light and meaning of it all reside in the experience of discovery and breakthrough and in the meaning of it for the scientific community. It is in this discovery of discovery that the trend of method develops.
- 12 Next, the elements that enter into method’s taking command: (a) 15-16 on the contrast of method with logic: ‘In its most elementary form this contrast is that, what for logic are just propositions, for method are answers to questions. Just as propositions have their logical retinue of presuppositions and implications, so answers have not only their limited adequacy but also a larger inadequacy, by which they give rise to further questions. For a time answers to the further questions give rise to still further questions but, if they are restricted to a single topic, the flow of further questions will eventually dry up. There results a nest of interwoven questions and answers, and it is

that nest that gives the context of any of the questions or answers on the topic. Next, topics are allied, and so letter contexts merge to form larger ones bearing on a common theme. In turn, themes are related, to link larger contexts into still greater unities, and this process continues until there is reached what has come to be named variously, by Husserl one's horizon, by Heidegger one's world, by the analysts one's blik' (16).

13 The trend continues: Development takes place along the line of least resistance. 17: '... one's horizon, world, blik tends to extend and expand where extension and expansion are already under way; and it tends to remain contracted and stunted where the beginnings of growth and organization have been haphazard, and repeated efforts have met with diminishing returns.' Here is where variations in the trend arise, where its emergence becomes not only dynamic but dialectical. Some examples follow. (1) 21: 'One is told that the scientist is content to describe. But does that mean that he [or she] does not perceive? Or is perception identified with sensation?' 17: 'To learn is to perceive, and to perceive is to complete that hypothetical entity, the raw datum, with memories, associations, a structure, and one's emotive and expressive reactions.' Here the opening of scientific method onto hermeneutical insights becomes obvious, much more so than in Lonergan's earlier comments on scientific method. 'What the investigator needs, what the methodologist recommends, is a mind well stocked with questions ... The investigator needs a well-stocked mind, else [s]he will see but not perceive; but the mind needs to be well-stocked more with questions than with answers, else it will be closed and unable to learn' (17). In this way horizon and subject, world and self, blik and ego develop together. 'Object and subject are correlative. The broadening, deepening, developing of the horizon, world, blik is also the broadening, deepening, developing of the subject, the self, the ego. The development that is the constitution of one's world is also the constitution of one's self' (18). Confirmation is found in Heidegger, Freud, Neumann, Gerhard Adler, R.D. Laing. (RD: The mention of Neumann and Adler is interesting, since these are two books that I gave Lonergan to read in late 1973 or early 1974.)

14 Such reflections are relevant to a method of religious studies in at least two ways. First, they can affect our anticipations of other people, distant from us in place or time, in class or culture. They live in worlds as they know them, just as we live in a world as we know it. We must not expect them to live in our world or expect them to be like us. This is not a minor point but a matter of elementary intelligence 'making us open to others, having enough in common with them really to inquire into their differences, to find the grounds of such difference, and so to come to understand them as they were' (19) And second, these reflections can make us aware of our own personal equation, our own world, our own heritage with its distortions and aberrations, our own biases. But method is what elevates us into a scientific community and so compensates for the weakness of any one by the presence, the aid, the challenge of others.

### Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation

- 15 Since we did not cover 'The Scope of Renewal' last week, I suggest that we first go review quickly some of the issues covered there, since that paper in part addresses the same problem as this one.
- 16 In that paper Lonergan's question had been, How far-reaching and how radical is the renewal to be in contemporary Roman Catholic theology? The first symptom and measure of the change is the passing of Thomism due to the rise of historical scholarship, empirical science, and philosophy from Kant on. In that paper Lonergan also reviewed a number of current positions, only to conclude that, while Thomism itself has passed, something very much like it is to be desired on the level of our own time. What is desired is an assimilation of what is new that is in continuity with the old and dialectical. The assimilation of what is new must involve an understanding of modern science and of modern scholarship and a development in philosophy that is at home in modern science and modern scholarship. Continuity with what is old will be a matter of analogy: a theology continuous with Thomism will stand to modern science, modern scholarship, and an associated philosophy much as Thomism stood to Aristotelianism. And it will be dialectical if it distinguishes systematically between the authentic and the unauthentic, between positions and counterpositions, and if it can settle issues by appealing to this distinction. That philosophy will be empirical in the sense that all its statements will be in some sense verifiable, but in terms of the data of consciousness on which one can build a generalized empirical method. Here is where the foundations will be found to move through the norms of authenticity to the opposition between authentic and unauthentic and to the opposition of positions and counterpositions.
- 17 Now to 'Aquinas Today.' Here the effort is to understand the 'out of fashion' character of Aquinas theologically by referring to the ongoing interplay in human history of tradition and innovation. He begins with the innovations, but with the goal of exploring the ongoing relevance of Aquinas through these subsequent transformations of Western culture and of suggesting that the current lull in Thomist studies is not a demise but a pause for reflection and regrouping. Aquinas himself was an exponent of a particular tradition of *lectio* and *quaestio*, but he was also a great innovator. Can an analogous joining of tradition and innovation be instituted today?
- 18 The first consideration is specialization. He wishes in this section to outline 'different types of transformation a learned tradition may undergo' (36). He is using the word 'specialization' here not in the sense of a concentration on one field to the neglect of all others but in the sense of the modern scientific differentiation of consciousness that contrasts the sciences with other fields of human activity and sets up barriers to mutual communication in that it has people living in different worlds. To account for this kind of specialization one must understand the notion and implication of 'horizon,' and how it is that specialization passes a critical point and ushers one into a new world.

- 19 Horizon is the boundary of a person's interest and knowledge. It is a variable in extent (some know more than others), in intensity (interest grows or slackens), and in selectivity (interest centers now in one area and now in another). One's actual horizon is the fruit of one's past development, which in the main is one's participation in the earlier developments of others and only on rare occasions the product of one's own originality and creativity. Horizons are differentiated in terms of prelinguistic, commonsense, religious, scientific, scholarly, and philosophic developments. (Note the tantalizing description of 'the *philosophic* development that, in what now may seem its final phase, reflects on all of these, assigns each its proper competence, and relates each to the others.) In each of these spheres advance continues until there begin to emerge in each sphere proper procedures and characteristic products, varying styles of growth and inner organization, functional separateness and disparate goals, and the seeming impossibility of any overall synthesis of the various spheres. This is 'a source of radical cultural differences not to be identified simply with the diversity of traditions, the varieties of religious experience, the proliferation of languages, the conflicts of philosophies' (38). The first instance discussed here is in the scholarly realm: 'Exegetical and historical works have ceased to be composed principally for the general public. Their primary audience has become an in-group of professors and graduate students. From being the servant of a particular though multinational culture, scholarship has become a distinct, self-sufficient, autonomous specialty' (39).
- 20 So too in science. 40: 'A few centuries ago scientific discovery could be communicated to the whole educated public and there be understood and discussed competently. But now there are two worlds. A different, technical language is needed to speak of the scientist's world. Only a new and distinct social group masters that language. Specialist journals report to the initiated new advances and discoveries. Specialist books are written to set forth their achievements and their aims. Specialist methods are developed to reach their distinctive goals, and specialist criteria are employed to test their success.' Parallel characteristics are traced in other areas on p. 40.
- 21 The second and third sections have to do with Aristotle today, and they indicate that the kind of specialization he has been talking about brings it about that 'thought that was quite brilliant and investigation that was quite thorough in fourth-century Athens today easily enough is out of date' (41). But here we have to get more specific. The very conception of science has changed. Here the change is traced to a stand against verbalism and an exigence for empirical control, but the result was (1) a shift from an excessively rigorous to a practically attainable ideal of science, (2) the dropping of Aristotle's concern with essences in favor of empirically grounded conceptual systems, and (3) the division of the sciences not by material and formal objects but by fields and methods, giving them their autonomy from philosophy. Lonergan expands on each of these. Moreover, there has emerged a new scholarship, one whose ideal is 'the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of [humankind].' Its key element is 'the acquisition of the common sense of another place and time,' a notion barely known to Aristotle. But the more complex and delicate area of comparison is in philosophy. '... a notable and serious modification of Aristotelian philosophy seems needed, if it is to continue to fulfill [its] mediating function in a contemporary

Thomism' (44), since Aristotelian philosophy denied the sciences their autonomy. But this does not mean total rejection. The transition needed is from logic to method. The shift is 'a change rather in structure than in content. Both logic and method start from principles, from what is first in an ordered set ... But the order of logic differs from the order of method' (45). The differences are spelled out on 46-47, in terms that are probably familiar enough to us. The major difference is that, while both logic and method start from principles, the principles of logic are premises, while the principles for method are 'concrete realities, namely, sensitively, intellectually, rationally, morally conscious subjects' (46). A related difference is that speculative intellect loses its primacy, and the key position now pertains to the existential, interpersonal, practical subject deliberating and deciding. A final difference is that the self-appropriation of the subject can provide a basis that is not subject to basic revision.

- 22 Concern shifts in section 4 to 'Aristotle in Aquinas.' The topic is approached by way of five observations, three of them theoretical, two of them factual. The first theoretical observation is that method, so far from excluding logic, includes it, along with non logical operations. The second theoretical observation is that inferences can be explanatory without their premises being necessarily true, just the best available explanation at the present time. The third theoretical observation is that sustained advance, ongoing development, continued progress is not a matter of deducing conclusions that follow necessarily from premises that are both true and necessary, but it is a succession of fresh insights, of increasingly accurate hypotheses, or the emergence of quite new theories, of an ever greater command of data in precision, in variety, in extent, and of a constant openness to still further ideas. And such sustained advance is the work of specialization in community, as 'specialization' has been considered in section 1.
- 23 The first factual observation is that Aristotle in his own writings left necessary premises and conclusions to the mathematicians, and in other areas sought no greater exactitude than the matter permitted. And the second factual observation is that the theology of Aquinas was not more influenced by the *Posterior Analytics*, where Aristotle put forth his notion of necessity, than was the rest of Aristotle's philosophy itself. Aquinas was a teacher, but he taught in the medieval period when theology became a specialty, as outlined on 49-50. He was an innovator, but not just an innovator. He carried on work begun by his predecessors, within the academic framework they had developed. But the vehicle for his greatest innovation was his mastery of Aristotle. Here is where he found a coherent conceptual system, underpinning theological invention by a comprehensive system of thought. Here is where he found a unified apprehension of nature. Here is where he could launch an apologetic for Christian faith in response to the Arabic studies of Aristotle.
- 24 Finally, section 5, 'Aquinas Today.' Aquinas was the first to think through a theology with philosophic aid. This was a very novel and controversial procedure. The motives Aquinas had in 'baptizing' Aristotle are just as operative today. 'As when, so today there can be needed an apologetic clarification of issues. As then, so today systematic thinking in theology stands in need of a broad and coherent basis. As then, so today an account of [our] salvation cannot get along without an adequate

understanding of [humanity itself]' (51). Lonergan has been led to expect a rather notable continuity with the past: the continuity from the implicit to the explicit in method, a continuity to be found even in the shift from the Aristotelian ideal of science to the modern reality (see the paragraph 'Secondly' on p. 52), and a continuity by analogy in many regards (see 53).