

NOTES

THE DEHELLENIZATION OF DOGMA¹

With considerable warmth Prof. Leslie Dewart appeals to Pope John's decision "to adopt a historical perspective: to 'look to the present, to new conditions and new forms of life . . . to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us'" (p. 172). This decision, he feels, and the unhesitating acclamation that greeted it reversed a policy that had been gaining strength for centuries. "This policy was, for the sake of protecting the truth and purity of the Christian faith, to resist the factual reality, and to deny the moral validity, of the development of man's self-consciousness, especially as revealed in cultural evolution" (p. 172).

His purpose, then, is "to sketch an approach to . . . the problem of integrating Christian theistic belief with the everyday experience of contemporary man" (p. 7). He aims at "the integration of Christian belief with the post-medieval stage of human development" (p. 15). He understands contemporary experience "as the mode of consciousness which mankind, if not as a whole at least in respect of our own civilization constituting man's cultural vanguard, has reached as a result of its historical and evolutionary development. And the integration in question must be a true organic process of co-ordination, interrelation and unification" (p. 9). What is at stake is the unity and coherence of Christian and, in particular, Catholic consciousness: ". . . the problem is, at its most basic level, whether one can, while complying with the demand that human personality, character and experience be inwardly integrated, at one and the same time profess the Christian religion *and* perceive human nature and everyday reality as contemporary man typically does" (p. 19).

So much for the problem. The suggested solution is "that the integration of theism with today's everyday experience requires not merely the *demythologization of Scripture* but the more comprehensive *dehellenization of dogma*, and specifically that of the Christian doctrine of God" (p. 49). Demythologization integrates no more than the Christian's *reading of Scripture* with his contemporary everyday experience; and it creates several dogmatic problems for each scriptural one it solves (p. 47). To go to the root of the matter, to become both coherent and contemporary, we have to transcend our Hellenic past and consciously to fashion the cultural form

¹ Leslie Dewart, *The Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1966. Pp. 263. \$4.95.

which Christianity requires now for the sake of its future. So "dehellenization means, in positive terms, the conscious creation of the future of belief" (p. 50). This future, he feels, is likely to depend on whether Christian theism "chooses to contribute to the heightening of man's self-understanding and to the perfection of his 'education to reality.' This would in turn imply that Christian theism should first become conscious that its traditional form has necessarily and logically been childish and infantile to the very degree that it corresponded to an earlier, relatively childish, infantile stage of human evolution. Theism in a world come of age must itself be a theism come of age" (p. 51).

I

The principal means for dehellenizing dogma and obtaining a mature theism seems to be "the theory of knowledge assumed here" (p. 168 n.). While its precise nature is not disclosed in any detail, apparently it involves a rather strong repugnance to propositional truth in some at least of its aspects.

In the theory of knowledge suggested here human knowledge is not the bridging of an original isolation but, on the contrary, the self-differentiation of consciousness in and through its objectification (of the world and of itself); and conceptualization is the socio-historical mechanism through which the self-differentiation can take place. Concepts are not the *subjective* expression of an *objective* reality (nor, therefore, a means whereby we become reflectively conscious of a self which already existed prior to reflection). Concepts are the self-expression of consciousness and, therefore, the means by which we objectify (the world and the self), and the means by which we self-communicate with another self (*including God*), that is, the means by which we objectify ourselves for another self, and by which we objectify ourselves for ourselves. (p. 116 n.; here and elsewhere italics in text)

Hence we are repeatedly warned against the view that truth involves an *adaequatio intellectus et rei*.

Truth is not the adequacy of our representative operations, but the adequacy of our conscious existence. More precisely, it is the fidelity of consciousness to being. (p. 92)

It is the result of the mind coming-into-being through the self-differentiation of that-which-is into self and world. (p. 93)

Now we have seen that . . . truth can be understood as an existential relation of self to being which must by definition develop in order to realize itself—and not as the relation of conformity to an objective thing which must by definition be stable in order to be at all. (p. 97)

Although truth is not the adequation of the *intellect to being* . . . truth might

nevertheless be called an adequation of *man to reality*, in the sense that it is *man's self-achievement* within the requirements of a *given situation* In this context *adequation* would not connote *conformity, correspondence, likeness or similarity*. It would connote *adjustment, usefulness, expediency, proficiency, sufficiency and adaptation*. (p. 110)

The truth of human experience is the result of consciousness' incessant tending towards being—a tendency which, far from satisfied by the achievement of its goal, is further intensified by whatever success it may meet. Hence, the only valid "criterion" of truth is that it create the possibility of more truth. (p. 111)

. . . the concept is true *to the degree* that by its elevation of experience to consciousness it permits the truth of human experience to come into being. (p. 113)

. . . the concepts in which Christian belief are cast are true, not in virtue of their representative adequacy, but in virtue of their efficacious adequacy as generative forms of the truth of religious experience. (p. 113)

To conclude with a citation from Maurice Blondel's *Carnets intimes*: ". . . truth is no longer the *adaequatio rei et intellectus* But truth remains, and this truth that remains is living and active. It is the *adaequatio mentis et vitae*" (p. 118).

Prof. Dewart's grounds for his view on truth seem to be partly the flood of light he has derived from phenomenological and existential thought and partly the inadequacy of his interpretation of Scholasticism.

To the light I have no objection. I would not deny that the authenticity of one's living, the probity of one's intellectual endeavors, the strategy of one's priorities are highly relevant for the truth by which one is truly a man. I have no doubt that concepts and judgments (on judgments I find Dewart strangely silent) are the expression of one's accumulated experience, developed understanding, acquired wisdom; and I quite agree that such expression is an objectification of one's self and of one's world.

I would urge, however, that this objectification is intentional. It consists in acts of meaning. We objectify the self by meaning the self, and we objectify the world by meaning the world. Such meaning of its nature is related to a meant, and what is meant may or may not correspond to what in fact is so. If it corresponds, the meaning is true. If it does not correspond, the meaning is false. Such is the correspondence view of truth, and Dewart has managed to reject it without apparently adverting to it. So eager has he been to impugn what he considered the Thomist theory of knowledge that he overlooked the fact that he needed a correspondence view of truth to mean what he said.

Let me stress the point. Dewart has written a book on the future of belief. Does he mean the future of belief, or something else, or nothing at all? At

least, when he asserts that God is not a being, he assures us that what his statement "means is literally what it says, that God is not a being at all" (p. 175). Again, he wants his proposals tried by the touchstone of public examination (p. 50). But what is that examination to be? What can the public do but consider what he means and try to ascertain how much of what he says is certainly or probably true or false?

Dewart urges that the correspondence view of truth supposes what is contrary to both logic and observation, "as if we could witness from a third, 'higher' viewpoint, the union of two lower things, object and subject" (p. 95). But such a statement is involved in a grave confusion. The witnessing from a higher viewpoint is the nonsense of naive realism, of the super-look that looks at both the looking and the looked-at. On the other hand, the union of object and subject is a metaphysical deduction from the fact of knowledge, and its premise is the possibility of consciousness objectifying not only itself but also its world.

Again, Dewart urges that a correspondence view of truth implies an immobility that precludes development (p. 95) and, in particular, the development of dogma (p. 109). Now I would not dispute that a woodenheaded interpretation of the correspondence view of truth can exclude and has excluded the possibility of development. But that is no reason for rejecting the correspondence view along with its misinterpretation. Least of all is that so at present, when "hermeneutics" has become a watchword and the existence of literary forms is generally acknowledged. For the root of hermeneutics and the significance of literary forms lie precisely in the fact that the correspondence between meaning and meant is itself part of the meaning and so will vary with variations in the meaning.

Just as he discusses truth without adverting to hermeneutics, so Dewart discusses the development of dogma without adverting to the history of dogma. But the development of dogma is a historical entity. Its existence and its nature are determined by research and interpretation. Moreover, on this approach there are found to be almost as many modes of development, almost as many varieties of implicit revelation, as there are different dogmas, so that a general discussion of the possibility of cultural development, such as Dewart offers, can provide no more than philosophic prolegomena.

Unfortunately, it seems of the essence of Dewart's prolegomena to exclude the correspondence view of truth. Such an exclusion is as destructive of the dogmas as it is of Dewart's own statements. To deny correspondence is to deny a relation between meaning and meant. To deny the correspondence view of truth is to deny that, when the meaning is true, the meant is what is so. Either denial is destructive of the dogmas.

If there is no correspondence between meaning and meant, then, in Prof. McLuhan's phrase, it would be a great mistake to read the dogmas as if they were saying something. If that is a great mistake, it would be another to investigate their historical origins, and a third to talk about their development.

If one denies that, when the meaning is true, then the meant is what is so, one rejects propositional truth. If the rejection is universal, then it is the self-destructive proposition that there are no true propositions. If the rejection is limited to the dogmas, then it is just a roundabout way of saying that all the dogmas are false.

II

The same view of truth is applied not only to the dogmas but also to faith and revelation. We are told that "belief must bear directly upon the reality of God, not upon words or concepts" (p. 167). In a footnote we are warned against the doctrine of St. Thomas which has faith terminating at God Himself through the mediation of the propositions of the Creed. Dewart holds that to believe in God by believing a proposition about God is to believe in a proposition and not to believe in God. But this follows only on Dewart's assumption that truth is not correspondence. On the contrary assumption, to assent to the truth of the proposition does not differ from assenting to what the proposition means. *Verum est medium in quo ens cognoscitur.*

With faith detached from assent to propositions (p. 167), it has to be ontic rather than ontological (p. 136 n.).

Faith is the existential response of the self to the openness of the transcendence disclosed by conscious experience. It is our decision to respect, to let be, the contingency of our being, and, therefore, to admit into our calculations a reality beyond the totality of being. It is a lived response, identical with our freely willing to exist in a certain self-conception and self-resolution . . . It is no less a coming-into-being than the "act" of existence which is, likewise, a perpetual achieving of the unachieved. In real life we find not the act but the life of faith. (pp. 64 f.)

Such faith seems to coincide with religious experience. This differs from ordinary knowledge inasmuch as it is an experience of a transcendent reality first adumbrated negatively in the empirical apprehension of the contingency of our own being. So it is a conscious experience of something inevent, something which unlike this desk and this chair is not seen to be there, even if it enters into the fabric of our personal relations to reality with at least as much force, relevance, and moment as things which are seen to be there. Further, in the traditional phrase, faith is due to God's initiative. Again,

faith as Christian is faith as conceptualized under some or other cultural form of the Christian tradition. Its continuity in truth requires the continuity of God's self-communication to man, and the continuity of man's correlative religious experience in response to God's initiative. But this is not the continuity of sameness or the continuity of that which remains (substantially) unchanged in the midst of accidental change. Truth cannot remain the same. It would make as little sense as to say that existence remains the same, that one moment of consciousness is the same as another, or that life is the same thing over and over again (pp. 113-16).

Correlative to faith is revelation:

. . . although God does not reveal propositions or formulae or concepts about himself, he truly reveals himself. . . . He does it personally, by his own agency, through his personal presence to human history, in which he freely chooses to appear and to take part. . . . His revelation to man in the Judaeo-Christian tradition is unique and extraordinary: the Christian religion and the Catholic Church are, in this extraordinary and unique sense, the true religion and the true Church to which all men are called. (p. 115 n.)

Dewart, however, does not seem to consider that the call to the true Church calls for some attention to the pronouncements of Vatican I and II on revelation and faith. Instead we have the caricature of a "popular faith" in which "revelation has indeed tended to become God's transmission of cryptic messages. Correlatively, the magisterium of the Church has tended to become the decoding of these messages, and faith the Christian's assent to the accuracy of the translation . . ." (p. 165 n.).

No doubt, Dewart's esotericism is inevitable, once the mediating role of propositions has been eliminated both from God's revelation to man and from man's faith in God. But if one is inclined to doubt the soundness of the "theory of knowledge assumed here" (p. 168 n.), if one's modernity includes a greater interest in exegesis and history than is exhibited in the opinion that "Christianity has a mission not a message" (p. 8), then one will find abundant evidence from New Testament times right up to the present day that the Church has been explicitly aware not only of a mission but also of a message. Moreover, while it is true that the message can be and has been abused to the detriment both of living faith and of the transcendent Revealer, such an abuse does not show that a rejection of the message is not also a rejection of the mission.

III

Prof. Dewart dislikes the Greeks. He deplores the "inability of hellenic metaphysical thinking to discern *reality* except in *ens*, that-which-is"

(p. 180). He places at the sad root of both Greek and Scholastic thought Parmenides' postulate that "that which can be thought is identical with that which can be" (p. 153). He would get beyond "speculative-ideological metaphysics" (p. 163) and establish a metaphysics of presence (p. 169). Then we could get along without the training and education that only relatively few can afford. "Christian theology and philosophy would then cease to be 'academic' subjects, and theo-logical enquiry would once again take place predominantly within the public, everyday, real life of the whole Church" (p. 145 n.). In anticipation of this imminent utopia, he notes that "there is no need, if we discard Parmenides, to make God fit in the mould of being" (p. 176). Hence, he desires a philosophy concerned with the presence and reality of God, a God that is not even partially the God of Greek metaphysics (p. 170). Similarly, he suggests that Christian theology is not to assume any fundamental principle or essential part of that very mode of philosophizing on which was erected the concept of God which can no longer be integrated with contemporary experience (p. 41).

This hostility to Hellenism is of a piece with the already noted hostility to propositional truth; for not only do propositions mediate reality, but also the first-level propositions that do so may be themselves mediated by second-level propositions. So dictionaries speak of words, grammars of languages, logics of the clarity, coherence, and rigor of discourse, hermeneutics of the relation between meaning and meant, and, to come to the villain, metaphysics of what is meant. Such second-level mediation of the first-level mediator was the secret of the Greek miracle that effected the triumph of *logos* over *mythos*.

Obviously, then, if one does not want a first-level mediation of reality by propositions, much less will one tolerate the second-level mediation associated with Greek metaphysics. Moreover, if one does not care to be entirely cut off from reality, one will have to turn to some nonpropositional mode of access such as presence. So Dewart praises a metaphysics of presence but blames a Hellenic metaphysics.

Again, the Greek miracle had its price. It demanded a second differentiation of consciousness, a second withdrawal from the world of immediacy. In that world of immediacy the infant lives, but when the child learns to talk, he also learns to inhabit the far larger world mediated by meaning. For the student, however, there is the further learning that mediates the mediator, that reflects on articulate sounds to correlate them with an alphabet, that uses dictionaries, that studies grammars and logics, that introduces hermeneutics and even perhaps metaphysics. The basic purpose of this further learning is to control the mediation of reality by meaning, to hold in

check the affect-laden images that even in the twentieth century have the power to make myth seem convincing and magic seem efficacious.

But however beneficial, the second differentiation of consciousness is onerous. It is all the more onerous, all the more resented, when compulsory, universal education attempts to extend to all what once had to be endured by but few. So the word "academic" acquires a pejorative sense that expresses disapproval of any cultural superstructure. Despite his devotion to the mode of consciousness reached by man's cultural vanguard (p. 9), Dewart feels free to appeal to that disapproval and to look forward to the day when Christian philosophy and theology will no longer be "academic" subjects (p. 145 n.).

A similar ambiguity appears in Dewart's attitude to science. On the one hand, he assures us that "modern man creates himself by means of science, that is, by means of his scientific mode of consciousness," and "it is *scientific culture* that defines *contemporary man*" (p. 18). On the other hand, he is all for discarding Parmenides' identification of the possible object of thought with possible being (pp. 153, 165, 168, 174, 176, 181, 184). But to attack this identification is also to attack a cardinal point in contemporary science; for what is defined by a hypothesis is a possible object of thought, and what is to be ascertained by verification is a real state of affairs. But modern science demands that every hypothesis be verifiable, and so it demands that its hypothetical objects of thought be possible beings. Not only is it thoroughly committed to the Parmenidean identity, but also it has so extended and developed the second differentiation of consciousness as to erect a cultural superstructure far more elaborate and far more abstruse than anything attempted by the Greeks or the Scholastics.

One begins to suspect that Dewart is not a reformer but just a revolutionary. He is dealing with a very real and very grave problem. He would have written an extremely important book, if he had distinguished between the achievements and the limitations of Hellenism, if he had listed the ways in which modern culture has corrected the errors and so transcended the limitations of its ancient heritage, if he had pointed out the precise bearing of each of these advances on each of the many levels on which Christians live and Christianity functions. He has not done so. He fails to discern the elements of Hellenism that still survive in the cultural vanguard, and so he plumps for vigor. Let's liquidate Hellenism. He does not distinguish between integrated consciousness and undifferentiated consciousness, and so he thinks and talks and prescribes his remedies as if prayer, dogma, systematic theology, philosophy, and contemporary common sense were or should be a single homogeneous unity.

IV

Prof. Dewart conceives the development of the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas to have been a matter of taking over Hellenic concepts for the expression of Christian doctrine; for he feels "it would be unhistorical to suppose that at the first moment of the development of Christian consciousness this consciousness could have created the concepts whereby to elaborate itself—it is not until our own day that such a possibility has begun to emerge" (p. 136). Further, he laments that the Church still retains such outworn tools, for today this results in a crypto-tritheism (p. 147) and in a crypto-docetism (p. 152).

It is, I should say, quite unhistorical to suppose that the development of Catholic dogma was an effort of Christian consciousness to elaborate, not the Christian message, but Christian consciousness. Further, it is unhistorical to suppose that Greek philosophy supplied all the principal elements in which we have for centuries conceptualized the basic Christian beliefs of the Trinity and the Incarnation (cf. *America*, Dec. 17, 1966, p. 801). My first contention needs no elaboration, and so I turn to the second.

It is true, then, that profound affinities may be discerned between Hellenic thinkers and some ecclesiastical writers. The Stoic notion that only bodies are real seems intrinsic to Tertullian's account of the divinity of the Son in his *Adversus Praxean*. Middle Platonism is prominent in Origen's account of the Son in his *De principiis* and *In Ioannem*. But the subordinationism of these two writers, along with Arianism, was rejected at Nicaea. Moreover, the term enshrining that rejection was *homoousios*, and while one might speculate that here if anywhere one has a concept forged by deep Hellenic thought and simply taken over by the bishops at Nicaea (see p. 136), it happens that historical research does not justify such a view. According to G. Prestige (*God in Patristic Thought* [London, 1936], p. 209; cf. p. 197), down to the Council of Nicaea *homoousios* was understood in one sense and in one sense only: it meant "of one stuff"; and as applied to the Divine Persons, it conveyed a metaphor drawn from material objects. The Fathers at Nicaea, then, did not find ready to hand a sharply defined, immutable concept which they made into a vehicle for the Christian message; on the contrary, they found a word which they employed in a metaphorical sense.

It may be urged, however, that the metaphor meant something and that meaning must be some other Hellenic concept. It happens, however, that while the metaphor had a meaning, still the meaning was determined not by some Hellenic concept but by a Hellenic technique. What *homoousios* meant exactly, was formulated by Athanasius thus: *eadem de Filio quae de Patre dicuntur, excepto Patris nomine*. The same meaning has been expressed in the

Trinitarian Preface: *Quod enim de tua gloria, revelante te, credimus, hoc de Filio tuo, hoc de Spiritu sancto, sine differentia discretionis sentimus.* Now such a determination of meaning is characteristically Hellenic. It is a matter of reflecting on propositions. It explains the word "consubstantial" by a second-level proposition to the effect that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, if and only if what is true of the Father also is true of the Son, except that only the Father is Father.

Let me add five observations on this typically Hellenic technique. The first is that it offers an open structure: it does not determine what attributes are to be assigned to the Father and so must be assigned to the Son as well; it leaves the believer free to conceive the Father in scriptural, patristic, medieval, or modern terms; and of course contemporary consciousness, which is historically minded, will be at home in all four.

The second is that, when reality and being are contrasted, the technique decides for being; for being is that which is; it is that which is to be known through the true proposition; and the technique operates on true propositions. On the other hand, reality, when contrasted with being, denotes the evident or present that provides the remote grounds for rationally affirming being, but, unlike being, is in constant flux.

The third is that specifically Christian thought on being came into prominent existence in Athanasius' struggle against Arianism and, in particular, in his elucidation of *natum non factum*, of the difference between the Son *born* of the Father and the creature *created* by Father and Son. No doubt, such an explanation presupposes a Hellenic background for its possibility. But the problem and the content are specifically Christian. A divine Son was simply a scandal to the Hellenist Celsus; and the Christian notion of creation is not to be found in Plato or Aristotle, the Stoics or the Gnostics. When Dewart talks about the God of Greek metaphysics (p. 170), one wonders what Greek metaphysician he is talking about.

My fourth observation is that the Hellenic technique of second-level propositions is not outworn. The modern mathematician reflects on his axioms and pronounces them to be the implicit definitions of his basic terms. This technique, then, pertains not to the limitations of Hellenism antiquated by modern culture but to the achievements of Hellenism that still survive in modern culture and, indeed, form part of it.

My fifth and last observation is that the technique is not within everyone's competence. The matter seems to have been settled with some accuracy; for, in his celebrated studies of educational psychology, Jean Piaget has concluded that only about the age of twelve (if my memory is correct) do boys become able to operate on propositions. It follows that other means have to

be found to communicate the doctrine of Nicaea to less-developed minds. So much for my five observations.

For Dewart, "person" is a concept taken over from Hellenic thought and, though we have not managed to improve on it, we must do so (pp. 143 f.). I find this a rather inadequate account of the matter.

For Augustine, *persona* or *substantia* was an undefined, heuristic concept. He pointed out that Father, Son, and Spirit are three. He asked, three what? He remarked that there are not three Gods, three Fathers, three Sons, three Spirits. He answered that there are three persons or substances, where "person" or "substance" just means what there are three of in the Trinity (*De trin.* 7, 4, 7 [PL 42, 939]). Obviously, such an account of the notion of "person" does no more than indicate, so to speak, the area to be investigated. It directs future development but it cannot be said to impede it. The only manner in which it could become outworn would be the rejection of the Trinity; for as long as the Trinity is acknowledged, there are acknowledged three of something.

Moreover, the original heuristic structure, while it has remained, has not remained indeterminate. It has been developed in different ways at different times. There was the stage of definitions, indeed, of the three main definitions contributed by Boethius, Richard of St. Victor, and Thomas Aquinas. There was the Trinitarian systematization that conceived the three Persons as subsistent relations and based the relations upon psychologically conceived processions. If I may cite my own views, I have maintained not only in my classes but also in a textbook that the three Persons are the perfect community, not two in one flesh, but three subjects of a single, dynamic, existential consciousness. On the other hand, I am of the opinion that the Christological systematization, from Scotus to de la Taille, had bogged down in a precritical morass. For the past thirty years, however, attention has increasingly turned to the consciousness of Christ, and my own position has been that the doctrine of one person with two natures transposes quite neatly into a recognition of a single subject of both a divine and a human consciousness.

I may be more brief on such terms as *substantia*, *hypostasis*, *natura*. All three were ambiguous. We have just seen Augustine use *substantia* in the same sense as *persona*, a usage that had vanished by the time the *Quicumque vult* was composed. Next, in the *Tomus ad Antiochenos* there is the account of Athanasius reconciling those that argued for one hypostasis with those that argued for three; he asked the former if they agreed with Sabellius, and the latter if they were tritheists; both groups were astounded by the question put them, promptly disclaimed respectively Sabellianism and tritheism, and

dropped their now obviously verbal dispute. "Nature," finally, which for Aristotle meant either the form or the matter, and the form rather than the matter, meant neither of these to Christians some eight centuries later. They, however, had their own ambiguous usage, and it was recognized solemnly and explicitly in the sixth and seventh centuries. In successive canons Constantinople II explained the correct meaning both of Chalcedon's two natures and of Cyril's one nature (*DS* 428 f.). More abruptly, Lateran I imposed both the Cyrillian and the Chalcedonian formulas (*DS* 505 f.).

So much for the process of Hellenizing Christian doctrine. Let us add a few words on the meaning of the technical terms; for Dewart roundly asserts that no Christian believer today (unless he can abstract himself from contemporary experience) can intelligently believe that in the one hypostasis of Jesus *two* real natures are united (p. 150). Let me put the prior question. Does Dewart's Christian believer today accept the positive part of the Nicene decree, in which neither the term "hypostasis" nor the term "nature" occurs? If so, in the part about Jesus Christ, does he observe two sections, a first containing divine predicates, and a second containing human predicates? Next, to put the question put by Cyril to Nestorius, does he accept the two series of predicates as attributes of *one and the same* Jesus Christ? If he does, he acknowledges what is meant by one hypostasis. If he does not, he does not accept the Nicene Creed. Again, does he acknowledge in the one and the same Jesus Christ both divine attributes and human attributes? If he acknowledges both, he accepts what is meant by two natures. If he does not, he does not accept the Nicene Creed.

What is true is that Catholic theology today has a tremendous task before it, for there are very real limitations to Hellenism that have been transcended by modern culture and have yet to be successfully surmounted by Catholic theology. But that task is not helped, rather it is gravely impeded, by wild statements based on misconceptions or suggesting unbelief.

V

Prof. Dewart has treated many other topics besides those I have been able to mention, but his principal concern, no doubt, is "theism in a world come of age," for that is the subtitle of his book. The substance of his proposal here seems to come in two parts. Positively, it is that God is to be thought of, not as being or as existing, but as a reality that at times is present and at times is absent (pp. 173 ff.). Negatively, it is that atheism is fostered by unsuccessful efforts to prove God's existence, and such failures are due to the real distinction between essence and existence (pp. 156-58).

He contends, then, that one need not conceive God as being, once one gets

beyond the metaphysical method grounded on Parmenides' identity. Remove that method, and "being" need no longer be identified with that-which-is. So the way is opened to giving to "being" a new meaning, and this new meaning is to be found in man. It is because he is present to himself as object that man is most truly a being; for through that presence man may transcend the subjectivity of mere objects and the objectivity of mere subjects to reach an understanding of himself as being. But to associate being with man is to disassociate being from God. As God is simply beyond man, so He is simply beyond being (pp. 173-75). By the same token, God cannot be said to exist (p. 176). He cannot because to exist is proper to being (p. 180).

We are reassured immediately, however, that the denial of being and existence to God takes away nothing of His reality and presence. To exist and to be present are quite different things. A man could be in the same room sitting beside me without being present to me, without making his presence felt. Conversely, God's real presence to us (and, therefore, His reality "in Himself") does not depend upon His being a being or an object. On the contrary, to postprimitives a reality beyond the totality of being reveals itself by its presence (pp. 176 f.).

I do not find this very satisfactory. First of all, Dewart's views on truth are not defensible. Moreover, the cultural vanguard has not yet surmounted the requirement that hypotheses be verifiable, and so Parmenides' identity still stands. It follows that "being" still is that-which-is, that intelligence still is related to reality, that "is" and "is not" are not open to reinterpretation, and that there do not exist the premises for the conclusion that "being" and "existing" are appropriate only to creatures.

Secondly, it is obvious that a person can exist without making his presence felt and that he cannot make his presence felt without existing and being present. But it is also obvious that one can have the feeling that someone is present when no one is there. Especially in a world come of age such feelings should be examined, scrutinized, investigated. The investigation may result in the judgment that someone really is there. It may result in the judgment that really no one is there. It may result only in an unresolved state of doubt. But in any case, what is decisive is not the felt presence but the rational judgment that follows upon an investigation of the felt presence.

My point here is that man's coming to know is a process, that the earlier stages of the process pertain to knowing without constituting it completely, that in each instance of coming to know it is only with the rational act of judgment that the process reaches its term. Dewart does not want propositional truth and so he does not want "being" or "existing" or "that-

which-is" or assent to propositions or judgments issuing in propositions. He does very much want the reassuring sense of present reality that can be savored in the earlier phases of cognitional process and, I have no doubt, is to be savored all the more fully if the unpleasant and tiring business of questions, investigations, and possible doubts is quietly forgotten. But this seems to be less "coming of age" than infantile regression.

Thirdly, maturity is comprehensive. It does not refuse to acknowledge any part of man but embraces all from the entities of Freud's psychic embryology to the immanent norms of man's intellectual, rational, existential consciousness. As it does not deny propositional truth, so it does not disregard or belittle religious experience. On the contrary, it is quite ready to claim with Karl Rahner that a mystagogy will play a far more conspicuous role in the spirituality of the future (*Geist und Leben* 39 [1966] 335), and it is fully aware that spiritual advance brings about in prayer the diminution and at times the disappearance of symbols and concepts of God. Still, this differentiation and specialization of consciousness does not abolish other, complementary differentiations and specializations, whether social, sexual, practical, aesthetic, scientific, philosophic, historical, or theological. Nor is this multiplicity in any way opposed to integration. For in each of such diverse patterns of conscious operation one is oneself in accord with some facet of one's being and some part of one's universe; and while one lives in only one pattern at a time in some cycle of recurrence, still the subject is over time, each pattern complements, reinforces, liberates the others, and there can develop a differentiation of consciousness to deal explicitly with differentiations of consciousness. That pattern is, of course, reflective subjectivity in philosophy and in theology. It follows the Hellenic precept "Know thyself." It follows the example of Augustinian recall, scrutiny, penetration, judgment, evaluation, decision. It realizes the modern concern for the authenticity of one's existing without amputating one's own rational objectivity expressed in propositional truth.

Fourthly, maturity understands the immature. It has been through that, and it knows what it itself has been. It is aware that in childhood, before reaching the age of reason, one perforce works out one's quite pragmatic criteria for distinguishing between the "really real" and the merely imagined, desired, feared, dreamt, the sibling's trick, joke, fib. Still more clearly is it aware of the upset of crisis and conversion that is needed to purge oneself of one's childish realism and swing round completely and coherently to a critical realism. So it understands just how it is that some cling to a naive realism all their lives, that others move on to some type of idealism, that others feel some liberation from idealism in a phenomenology or an existen-

tialism while, at the opposite extreme, there is a conceptualist extrinsicism for which concepts have neither dates nor developments and truth is so objective that it gets along without minds.

Such is the disorientation of contemporary experience, its inability to know itself and its own resources, the root of not a little of its insecurity and anxiety. Theology has to take this fact into consideration. The popular theology devised in the past for the *simplices fideles* has to be replaced. Nor will some single replacement do; for theology has to learn to speak in many modes and on many levels and even to minister to the needs of those afflicted with philosophic problems they are not likely to solve.

There remains, finally, the contention that "the ultimate epistemological consequence of the real distinction between essence and existence in creatures is to render the *intellect* incompetent for knowing the actual existence of *any* essence, be it created or uncreated, necessary or contingent" (p. 158). In this statement the emphasis seems to lie not on the reality of the distinction but on the mere existence of any, even a notional, distinction. For the author has just argued:

... the doctrine that there is in God *no real* distinction between essence and existence implies that nonetheless there is a *conceptual* distinction between them. We *cannot* empirically intuit the real indistinction of essence and existence in God. We *must* nonetheless conceive the two as distinct. There is, therefore, an unbridgeable difference between the way in which God is *in himself* and the way in which he is *in our knowledge*. Therefore, unless God were the object of empirical intuition, our concepts are *in principle* unable to make known to us the actual existence of God. For, as Kant was to conclude. ... (p. 158)

Now this argument has a certain validity if in fact human knowing consists in concepts and empirical intuitions. But empirical intuition is just a misleading name for the givenness of the data of sense and of consciousness. In linking data to conception, there are inquiry and gradually developing understanding. The result of all these together is not knowledge but just thinking. To reach knowledge, to discern between astronomy and astrology, chemistry and alchemy, history and legend, philosophy and myth, there are needed the further activities of reflection, doubting, marshaling and weighing the evidence, and judging. Finally, this process of judging, in an important because clear instance, is like scientific verification, not as verification is imagined by the naive to be a matter of looking, peering, intuiting, but as verification in fact is found to be, namely, a cumulative convergence of direct and indirect confirmations any one of which by itself settles just nothing.

I quite agree, then, that our concepts are in principle unable to make

known to us the actual existence of God. I would add that they are in principle unable to make known to us the actual existence of anything. For concepts are just thinking; thinking is not knowing; it is only when we reach judgment that we attain human knowledge of anything whatever, whether of essence or existence, whether of creature or Creator.

There is, however, a further point; for Dewart asserts an unbridgeable difference between the way in which God is in Himself and the way in which He is in our knowledge. This, of course, while absolutely possible, is not possibly known within our knowledge, and so the reader may wonder how Dewart got it into his knowledge. The fallacy seems to be Dewart's confusion of thinking and knowing. In our thinking we may distinguish a concept of divine existence from a concept of divine essence. In our knowing we may affirm (1) that we think in the above manner and (2) that there is no distinction between the reality of the divine essence and the reality of the divine existence. The contrast is, then, not between God in Himself and God in our knowledge, but between God in our knowledge and God in our thinking. Nor is there anything unbridgeable about this contrast or difference; for the thinking and judging occur within one and the same mind, and the whole function of our judging may be described as determining how much of our thinking is correct.

But let me conclude. On the dust cover of *The Future of Belief* Harvey Cox is credited with the opinion: "A mature, highly erudite, and utterly radical book. It could be epoch-making." If for my part I have made certain reservations about the first two epithets, I must express the hope that the book will be epoch-making in the sense that it will contribute forcefully to the removal from theology of the many limitations of Hellenism. To that topic I shall in due time return.

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