THE DYNAMICS OF GRACE IN AQUINAS: A STRUCTURAL APPROACH

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THIS PAPER, as the title indicates, will deal with content as well as method. However, content will be subordinated to method. Though I will present many of the basic results of my doctoral thesis, *L'Homme rénové par la grâce: Grâce médicinale et grâce élevante d'après Thomas d'Aquin*,[1] I will do so mainly to illustrate the methodological points I wish to make.

To some extent I was aware of having a structural approach as I went about my work of collating and interpreting texts of Aquinas on the healing and elevating dynamism of grace, but it was only after the work was done that I had the leisure to promote my use of structuralism from *pensée pensante* to *pensée pensée*. What I am presenting here is the *pensée pensée*, hoping that what I have formulated can be examined, improved upon, related to other areas.

Is the structural approach unknown in the interpretation of theological texts? Not entirely. Such a method is currently being used in France by some scriptural exegetes. A meeting took place in 1969, during which a number of exegetes and structuralists were joined by Paul Ricoeur as they reflected together on the implications of this coming together of structuralism and scriptural exegesis.[2] Some work has been done by the English linguist John Lyons in a cognate area, the philosophical vocabulary of Plato.[3]

In the first part of this paper I shall turn to structural linguistics to

[1] A thesis presented at the Université de Strasbourg in 1971, and to be published in a revised version at the Editions Bellarmin in Montreal. entitled *Les structures dynamiques de la grâce.*

[2] Proceedings of this meeting were published in R. Barthes *et al.*, *Exégèse et herméneutique* (Paris, 1971). Some of the articles can be found in the January 1970 issue of *Recherches de science religieuse.* Roland Barthes has also written an introduction to a new edition of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. In it he brings his particular brand of structural literary criticism to bear on the Exercises, analyzing their intimately interwoven levels of discourse. It is found in Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Paris, 1971). Barthes, Bovon, *et al.*, *Analyse structurale et exégèse biblique* (Paris, 1971), contains *rapprochements* between structuralists and exegetes of a more Protestant background. W. G. Doty gives an interesting account of the German "Generative Poetics" school in "Linguistics and Biblical Criticism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 1973, pp. 114–21.

[3] John Lyons, *Structural Semantics: An Analysis of Part of the Vocabulary of Plato* (Oxford, 1963).

expose in their original form some of the basic principles involved in my work. In the second part I shall describe my transposition of these principles to the work of interpretation I set out for myself in the thesis.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

A blow-by-blow account of the various trends and conflicts within modern linguistics, with detailed advertence to methods and to results achieved, is beyond my competence and the purposes of this paper. I am interested in basic principles, which can be readily transposed to other fields, rather than in detailed applications of these principles within linguistics. My acquaintance with the field is limited to some French and European authors. To delve (to give but one example) into Noam Chomsky's transformational grammar might open up fascinating perspectives, but for now I will concentrate on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), who has been recognized as a basic source of all structuralist thought. Dissatisfied with the state of linguistics in his day, yet sensing the inadequacies of his own formulations, he struggled to bring to birth a new linguistics, but published little during his lifetime. A group of students collated their course notes, and we now possess this *Cours de linguistique générale*. Another linguist I have found helpful is Louis Hjelmslev. He is perhaps more obscure than de Saussure, but his efforts at staking out the theoretical prolegomena to a theory of language are strikingly relevant to what I am trying to do.

Why a structural linguistics? Hjelmslev puts it this way:

> Evidently, there is no lack of points of view from which language can be, and has been, studied. But none of these ... provides the basis for an independent science of language; rather, language becomes an object of study, now for logic, now for history, now for physiology, physics, psychology, or sociology. And it can be argued that despite all this many-sided study, one point of view about language has been neglected, and, at that, the one that seems the most important and the most natural—the *linguistic* point of view. It should be possible to imagine a science that does not take language simply as a conglomerate of logical, historical, physiological, and sociological factors, but first and foremost as an independent entity, an integral formation of a special kind. Only such an integral view can account for the fact that all these apparently so heterogeneous elements are able to come together in a language.[4]

What is the basic method of this "linguistic linguistics"? Hjelmslev asserts:

> We gain insight into language, acquaintance with it, understanding or comprehension of it, in the same way as we gain insight into other objects—through

[4] Louis Hjelmslev, *Language: An Introduction* (Madison, 1970) pp. 4–5.

a description. And to describe an object can only mean one thing: to give an account of the relationships into which it enters or which enter into it. Such relationships, or dependences, we shall call functions. Thus we can describe a given object in two ways: 1) by dividing it up into parts with mutual function, or *analyzing* it; 2) by placing it within a whole whose parts have mutual function, or *synthesizing* it. In the first case, the object itself is viewed as a functional whole; in the second, it is viewed as part of a larger functional whole.[5]

De Saussure applies these general principles to linguistics by distinguishing the two sides of the linguistic coin, concepts and sound-images, *signifiés* and *signifiants*, as he puts it more technically. In both these areas, he seeks out linguistically relevant functions and relationships.

With respect to sound-images, what counts, linguistically and structurally speaking, is not the materiality of the sound, the way it is formed by the speech organs: it is the differences which distinguish one sound-image from another and permit each sound-image to play a distinctive role in the phonetic system of a particular language. As he puts it: "The important thing in the word is not the sound itself, but the phonic differences that make it possible to distinguish this word from all others."[6]

The same applies to the conceptual aspect of language. "If words stood for preexisting concepts, they would all have exact equivalents in meaning from one language to another; but this is not true."[7] The meaning of words within a linguistic environment will depend on the meaning of other words within that same environment: no concept has an absolute meaning in itself; its meaning always relates it to and differentiates it from other meanings. "Concepts are purely differential, defined not positively by their content, but negatively by their relations with other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is in being what others are not."[8]

The basic principle according to which significant units are ascertained and defined through relational opposition has been exploited in many ways by linguists. The sound systems of various languages have been set up using rigorous methods based on this principle; grammars have also been worked out to fit each individual language, replacing the old grammars worked out in terms of the Latin and Greek grammars of antiquity. Perhaps the least amount of headway has been

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[6] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York, 1966) p. 118 (p. 163 in French ed.). An example of this would be final d and t. In German there is no significant difference: *Rad* and *Rat* are pronounced alike. To the French ear, however, there is a significant difference. *Rade* evokes something quite different than *rate*.

[7] De Saussure, *op. cit.*, p. 116 (161).

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 117 (162).

made in the field of structural semantics, though Greimas' work in the field of conceptual oppositions seems to be significant.[9]

I might also mention the fact that microstructures seem to be much more amenable to structural analysis than macrostructures (e.g., unities broader than the sentence, including entire treatises and narratives). At first sight, the complexity of macrostructures accounts for this, but Benveniste offers another reason: with the sentence, we leave the world of linguistics and enter into the wider world of human discourse, of language in action.[10]

To this basic principle I will add a basic distinction, also found in de Saussure. It, too, is of direct relevance to our exegetical efforts.

As a system of interrelated sound-images and concepts, as a "complex equilibrium of terms which mutually condition each other,"[11] language can be approached in two ways. It can be studied in a simultaneous cross section (synchronic linguistics) or it can be studied as it evolves through time (diachronic linguistics). De Saussure formulated this distinction in reaction to the almost exclusively diachronic linguistics of his time. Evolution was the fashion; thus it was not surprising that nineteenth-century linguistics consisted mainly in historical studies of the genetic interrelationships of the Indo-European languages. Insightful as these studies were, they were radically limited in scope, because they left out what was more fundamental still: the synchronic aspect of language. Indeed, what ultimately counts for de Saussure is the languages men do speak and not the complex processes by which the languages got there; just as in a game of chess what is basic is the present situation of the board and not how the players managed to get there by their successive plays.[12]

Both synchronic and diachronic linguistics are fraught with difficulties. Is it possible to have a purely synchronic linguistics, a rigorously simultaneous cross section, when language, even in the minimal system which a sentence is, implies a succession in time?

> In practise a language-state is not a point but rather a certain span of time during which the sum of the modifications that have supervened is minimal. The span may cover ten years, a generation, a century, even more. It is possible for a language to change hardly at all over a long span and then to undergo radical transformations within a few years. Of two languages that exist side by side during a given period, one may evolve drastically and the other prac-

[9] A. J. Greimas, *Sémantique structurale* (Paris, 1966).

[10] Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris, 1966) pp. 119–31.

[11] De Saussure, *op. cit.*, p. 122 (169).

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 89 (126–27).

tically not at all; study would have to be diachronic in the former instance, synchronic in the latter. An absolute state is defined by the absence of changes, and since language changes somewhat in spite of everything, studying a language-state means in practise disregarding changes of little importance, just as mathematicians disregard infinitesimal quantities in certain calculations, such as logarithms.[13]

For de Saussure, diachronic linguistics labors under still more considerable difficulties, because in his view it is not really structural at all. This would require terms that form a system, and this terms cannot do unless they occur simultaneously, which is not the case in diachronic linguistics.[14] Benveniste mentions this difficulty and indicates how the Russian linguist Troubetzkoy contributed to solve it. His use of the notion of equilibrium to show how system can be significantly studied in a time perspective dovetails with the preoccupations of this paper:

A language state above all results from a certain equilibrium between the parts of a structure, an equilibrium which however is certain never to achieve complete symmetry, probably because dissymetry is written into the very nature of language, on account of the nonsymmetry of the speech organs. The solidarity of all the elements results in this: a modification which has touched one part puts into question the entire system of relations, and eventually brings about a whole new constellation. As a result, diachronic analysis consists in positing two successive structures, in formulating their relations, showing which parts of the previous system were under attack or were modified, and how the movement took place towards the solution adopted in the later system. In this way the conflict between diachronics and synchronics, which de Saussure made so much of, is resolved.[15]

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 101–2 (142).

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 81 ff. (117 ff.).

[15] Benveniste, *op. cit.*, p. 9. We might evoke Lonergan's doctrine of the protean notion of being at this point (*Insight* [New York, 1957] p. 576). Differentiation within this protean notion involves relational opposition, of the type A is not non-A. The knowledge of any differentiated element within this notion will be the more precise and the more sophisticated the more differentiated our knowledge of the relationships this element enters into with all other elements. This can be verified in a common phenomenon within recent theology. At one time certain words (e.g., eschatology, charism, hope, kerygma) might have carried a relatively precise meaning. But this precise meaning was highlighted by some theologian. A fad was thus started, with lesser minds seeing that particular meaning everywhere. Everything becomes eschatological, or charismatic, or kerygmatic, or what have you. However, as the word becomes extended in use, it becomes thinned out in content. By losing its ability to differentiate itself precisely from other terms, it eventually becomes a meaningless cliché. No differentiation, no meaning, as de Saussure would put it.

TRANSPOSITION TO TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

What has been sketched in its broadest categories will now be transposed to the exegesis of Aquinas on healing and elevating grace. But before doing this, we must attend to the nature and implications of the transposition attempted here.

Jean Piaget, who surveys various realms in which structuralism is operative, defines its ideal as follows: "...an ideal... of intrinsic intelligibility, grounded in the postulate that a structure suffices to itself, and does not require, in order to be grasped, recourse to all kinds of elements extraneous to its nature."[16] This may serve as an affirmation of the wide-ranging relevance of the structural ideal. But what specific transposition of the structural ideal am I attempting here? What is its starting point and its end result? The linguist analyzes texts as instances of the language he wishes to describe. The exegete also studies texts, but he wishes to know what meaning those texts bear. I wish to transpose some of the structural methodology of the former to the latter.

The seminal distinction which de Saussure makes between *langue* and *parole*, or language and speaking,[17] sheds considerable light upon this transposition. Language entails a finite totality of words, grammatical functions, sounds, etc., and these the linguist attempts to grasp as an interrelated whole. Within the infinite totality of possible combinations of words, functions, sounds, the speaker chooses one combination to express his thought.[18] Language is collective and latent, speaking is personal and actual. In this section we are moving from a consideration of the text as an expression of the former to a consideration of it as an expression of the latter.

Relevant to this analysis is the difference which Ricoeur points out between oral speech and written text. Speech is an evanescent thing, bound up with and coterminous with the intention of the speaker. But once written, the text shares in the permanence of language. It does not vanish with the speaker's actual intention to express himself, but perdures, takes on a life independent of the author, as others read it, attempt to understand it, react to it.[19] Thus, while a written text undeniably bears the intention of its author, and as such pertains to "speaking" rather than to "language," it does share in some of the

[16] Jean Piaget, *Le structuralisme* (Paris, 1968) p. 6.

[17] De Saussure, *op. cit.*, pp. 17 ff. (36 ff.).

[18] Roland Barthes, *Elèments de sémiologie* (Paris, 1964), makes this point with great concision on pp. 88–89.

[19] Paul Ricoeur, in Barthes *et al.*, *Exégèse et herméneutique*, pp. 48–49. I do not pretend to reproduce Ricoeur's thought exactly in this paragraph. Attention should be drawn to a similar distinction made by H. Gouhier between the deed or word as intended by its author and as it assumes a meaning within history which can be uncovered

impersonality and objectivity of language, and is thus amenable in a special way to some of the structural techniques that are proper to linguistics.

This structural approach to texts is not the only possible approach, but if it is used, it must be used with rigor. It demands, as Ricoeur puts it, that the text "be raised up to the level of an absolute object, considered for itself and in itself."[20] In interpreting what a speaker now says to me, I can ask him for clarification, I can to some extent rely on my empathic perception of his gestures, his looks, his silences. But as a structural analyst, I have only the text to rely on. To consider the text structurally is to banish all longings to enter into the psyche of the author, to relive his experience of thinking out and writing the text, to read his mind better than he can read it himself.[21] This means abnegation in a radical sense. If the structural analyst is to reach any insight into the mind of the author he is studying, he must limit himself to the text and to what can be ascertained solely by an analysis of the text. Only then does he have the possibility of coming to the only grasp of the author's mind that is verifiable, i.e., a grasp of that mind inasmuch as it has embodied itself in the text. The text likely reflects but a small part of the psychic life that its elaboration implied, but the structural analyst chooses a verifiable grasp of a small segment rather than the vain pretension to dominate the whole. In this perspective the notion of authorship ceases being a psychological notion and becomes a hermeneutical one, a function of the text itself. The author is "author of..." and as such is accessible only in his text.[22] In a paradoxical nutshell, it is to the extent that the text is handled as if it were nothing but an example of language that it becomes accessible as a speech event.[23]

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only by a retrospective vision from a standpoint beyond it. Cf. "Vision rétrospective et intention historique," in *La philosophie de l'histoire de la philosophie*, ed. E. Castelli (Paris, 1956) pp. 134-41. G. van Riet makes a similar point by distinguishing *exègèse stricte* (literal sense intended by the author) from *exégèse large* ("objective" sense of the text as others have understood it and reacted to it down the ages). Cf. *Philosophie et religion* (Louvain 1970) pp. 105-24.

[20] Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

[21] Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

[22] Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-93.

[23] Within a structural analysis of texts there can be a difference of emphasis. If one studies the theological texts of Aquinas in the light of prior texts which have or are likely to have influenced his thought, one obviously is leaning more towards the side of "speaking" in the speaking-language polarity. If, however, one studies the texts of Aquinas in the light of later texts which evidence the impact his ideas have had, then one is evidently interested in Aquinas' texts less as expressions of Aquinas' mind and more in the life they carry on, once the umbilical cord which linked them to their author is severed in the very act of writing. This is to lean to the "language" side of the aforesaid polarity.

I will now attempt to carry out the transposition which has been thus far described. I shall first briefly expose the basic structures of the structural method according to which I have transposed linguistic structuralism, and then, taking in turn each one of these structures, I shall explain their relevance more thoroughly, fleshing out the explanation with examples from my doctoral thesis.

Structural analysis deals with totalities composed of interrelated elements. In my exegetical efforts I dealt with three types of totality. These totalities fit into each other like three concentric circles, the totality represented by a smaller circle being an element within the larger circle. These totalities could be taken as a way of articulating what B. Lonergan refers to in *Method in Theology* as the hermeneutical circle.[24] We shall start with the smallest and work up to the largest of these circles: (1) *Terms within a text:* terms here are the basic elements which find their structural meaning within the text in which they occur. (2) *Texts within a doctrinal context:* texts find their significance within the broader context of a number of texts related synchronically or diachronically. (3) *Doctrines of an author within an era:* the doctrinal contexts of an author find their significance within the broader context of the era in which the author lived and worked.[25] Let us in turn examine each one of these structured totalities.

Terms within Texts

Just as the most tangible results came when strùctural linguistics dealt with the least complex totalities and the smallest units, so too my structural analysis was at its crispest and clearest when dealing with terms and texts. Such a straightforward totality can more easily be encompassed by the mind—though there is no need to hide the difficulty inherent in many texts of Aquinas: structurally clear, they can at times be of breath-taking intricacy.

[24] B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York, 1972) p. 159.

[25] These circles in some sense correspond to what Lonergan in *Method in Theology* would refer to as (*a*) understanding the words as part of the functional specialty of interpretation (pp. 158–60); (*b*) the movement towards the interweaving of questions and answers in limited groups (pp. 162–65), which correspond to doctrinal contexts in a more synchronic perspective; as well as the reconstruction of the development of an author's thought (pp. 165–66), which corresponds to more diachronic doctrinal contexts; (*c*) entering into the broader context of the author's world: his teachers, colleagues, their common perspectives. Lonergan alludes to this in the functional specialty of interpretation (pp. 160–61), but this seems to be an anticipation of what is done in history. The model I propose in this paper differs from Lonergan's in that it explores the relevance of structural linguistics to the work of interpretation/history, whereas L. acknowledges psychology and sociology as relevant human sciences (p. 180). I have little doubt that a profitable convergence of the two models can be worked out.

What is meant by text? In thirteenth-century theology a text can be as little as a sentence and as much as the two- or three-page article of a *Quaestio disputata*. In general, if the author is focusing on one particular question and giving it the longer or briefer development it warrants, we are dealing with a text.

The structural analysis of a text will vary in techniques and results according to the subtlety and/or elusiveness of the structure. In the case of Aquinas, a frequently useful preliminary step would be to write out the whole text in sense lines, to hasten the emergence of the interrelationship of terms and phrases. Here is an example from my work. The text which most patently deals with the topic of my thesis is Ia-IIae, 109, 2 c.[26] Man in his present state has a twofold need of habitual grace: he needs it in order that his corrupt nature might be healed, and in order that his healed nature might be elevated. In the first case grace enables him to accomplish the fulness of his connatural good; in the second case it enables him to attain his supernatural good. A complex set of statements like the above we would normally transcribe in the following shorthand:

$$\frac{\text{grace healing nature}}{\text{grace elevating nature}} = \frac{\text{connatural good}}{\text{supernatural good.}}$$

This shorthand representation enables one to see two sets of relationships: "healing" (*sanans*) is related to "elevating" (*elevans*), "connatural" to "supernatural" in one way; "healing" to "connatural," "elevating" to "supernatural" in another. In the first case, the terms coexist side-by-side in different but parallel sentences. These sentences manifest the author's intention to differentiate "healing" and "elevating," "connatural" and "supernatural." Using a Saussurian term, we shall call this type of relationship an "oppositional" relation. The healing role of grace is what it is precisely in its distinction from and relation to the elevating role of grace. In the second case, the terms "healing" and "connatural," "elevating" and "supernatural" are related by the role they play in the sentence in which they occur together. In our shorthand, the fact that this relation is similar in both cases is indicated by the = sign. This sign of itself indicates only similarity of relationship. Concretely, this similarity will be different in each case. Here, for example, the = sign means "enables it to attain," such that one may read out the statements as follows: grace healing nature enables it to attain its connatural good; grace elevating nature enables it to attain its supernatural good. This second type of relationship we will call a "functional" relation.

[26] With some help from Ia-IIae, 109, 9, which brings out certain structures more clearly.

A few more examples will bring out various facets of this type of analysis. Later in the thesis I dealt with a text (Ia-IIae, 109, 8 c) whose structures were better expressed in a diagram than in proportional equations. The functional relations are represented in the vertical dimension; the oppositional relations are grasped by comparing the two columns horizontally. What is in parentheses does not have an oppositional correlate.

MAN IN THE STATE OF CORRUPT NATURE

BEFORE HEALING OF MIND	AFTER HEALING OF MIND (but before healing of fleshly appetites)
man can abstain from individual mortal sins, but cannot remain long without mortal sin	man can abstain from individual venial sins, but not from every venial sin
on account of a preconceived end and a pre-established habit (since his heart is not rooted in God)	on account of the corruption of his lower sensual instincts
his reason is not totally subjected to God	his inferior appetites are not subjected to his reason
therefore disorders occur in the very acts of his reason	therefore inordinate movements occur in his sensual appetites
because he cannot continually remain in a state of prior deliberation sufficient to avoid sin (unless he is soon brought back to order by grace).	because his reason cannot be sufficiently on guard to avoid such movements.

In chapter 4 I tried to come to terms with the nature of *habitus* by setting this crucial notion in its over-all context. Here I came in contact with various tripolar systems. The one most would be familiar with is the God/angel/man tripolarity. However, Thomas allows it to be broken down into two oppositional bipolarities. Let us retrace the process in two steps: (1) God (uncreated pure spirit)/angel (created pure spirit)/man (created incarnate spirit); (2) *a*) uncreated/created spirit, *b*) pure/incarnate spirit.[27] These two distinct bipolarities helped me to organize the matter of chapter 4 more coherently, and to break down the similar tripolarity of potency/habit/act.

The chapter which explicitly deals with *sanare* and *elevare* provides the most complete example within my thesis of an analysis of functional and oppositional relations. I started by taking these two verbs separately, in order to examine the functional relationships they enter into.

[27] E.g., *De veritate* 24, 3. This binary principle seems to be applied by Greimas; cf. *op. cit*, p. 19 and *passim*.

Then I focused on their oppositional relation to each other. Let us take the verb *elevare*, for example. I dealt with other terms which are its functional neighbors, as it were. *Elevare* takes place when a gap (*excessus*) between one level of being which is above (*super*) another has to be closed.[28] The lower level is raised to participate in the higher by means of a *dispositio*.[29] I analyzed the functional neighbors of *sanare* in like manner, and then went into the oppositional relation of *sanare* and *elevare*. To define it more accurately, I sought a context in which *sanare* and *elevare* interact functionally. The key word found to express this functional relationship was *ulterius* (beyond): with respect to *sanare*, *elevare* is something *ulterius*.[30] However, further pursuit of this led to a doctrinal context which will come up in the next section.

The analysis of functional relations has always been part of the analysis of any text. However, to go about this analysis in a sophisticated way can make the difference between reading some previously elaborated idea into a term and grasping the meaning which the term structurally bears. This can be briefly corroborated by means of the term "nature," which has frequently surfaced in our various analyses. The structural approach to finding out what "nature" means in a given text centres around the search for the structural relations which "nature" enters into in that text. In one text, "nature" enters into relation with "state";[31] in another, with "person";[32] in yet another, with "grace";[33] yet again, with "potency."[34] There is no absolute meaning-as-such to be found for "nature"; its meaning has to be found and verified as it functions in each text. Obviously, uses of "nature" will be classed into families; and one might eventually find some relationship between all these families. However, this will not be done as some kind of educated guess, but the type of analogy which is eventually found will be verifiable in the functional and oppositional relations which the texts bear out in their interrelations.[35]

[28] E.g., Ia, 1, 1 c.

[29] E.g., Ia, 12, 5 c.

[30] Ia-IIae, 109, 2 c. Cf. also III S, 20, 1, 1 c; *C. theol.* 1, 205; Ia-IIae, 109, 9 c; Ia-IIae, 114, 2 c.

[31] E.g., Ia-IIae, 109, 2.

[32] E.g., IIIa, 69, 3 ad 3.

[33] E.g., Ia-IIae, 85, 1 and 2; Ia-IIae, 112, 2 c; Ia-IIae, 114, 2 ad 1; *De malo* 2, 11 and 12.

[34] E.g., Ia-IIae, 110, 4 c.

[35] The ground of our lexicographical procedure here is expressed more technically by Lyons: "I consider that the theory of meaning will be more solidly based if the meaning of a given linguistic unit is defined to be the set of (paradigmatic) relations that the unit contracts with other units of the language (in the context or contexts in which it occurs) without any attempt being made to set up 'contents' for these units" (*op. cit.*, p. 59).

Texts within a Context

When we pass to the wider circle which represents the doctrinal context which is constituted by a series of individual texts, the problems become more formidable. The distinction between diachronic and synchronic linguistics will help us formulate them.

1) The first problem is that of determining whether a series of texts which are thought to form a doctrinal context are to be studied synchronically or diachronically. Even the elaboration of a single paragraph-text requires a certain time span. Conceivably, one might look for signs of an evolution in the author's thought from the first to the last sentence of such a text. However, structural linguists, and we in their wake, take for granted that a text represents a certain unity of thought, which means that it can be safely handled as if the elaboration of all its parts were strictly simultaneous.

However, when we pass from a single text to a doctrinal context, which can encompass a group of texts spread throughout a career or at least through a possibly significant stretch of time, one has to face the synchronic/diachronic alternative. There will obviously be differences of formulation and of thought in these texts. When can we consider these differences to be of the same order as the infinitesimal quantities which de Saussure referred to when he faced the same problem in dealing with language states?[36] When must we consider these differences to be significant enough to constitute the passage from one thought-state to another, and thus to demand diachronic treatment? A delicate discernment is in order here. In doubtful cases both approaches should be tried. In any event, one should not omit the synchronic analysis of each text in the series with other texts that are roughly contemporaneous with it.

2) The synchronic relationship of texts can be either explicit or implicit. Explicit relationships do not need much comment. Any halfway intelligent student of theological texts adverts to them and brings them to the attention of his readers, since no text can be understood except in terms of those other texts which constitute its immediate environment, according to the author's purpose and plan as evidenced by the sequence he has adopted. For example, there is an explicit synchronic relation between Ia-IIae, 109, 2 and the rest of Ia-IIae, or between *De veritate* 24, 12 and the other articles of question 24. It would be belaboring the obvious to bring attention to this, except that frequently enough failure to set a text within its context has led to disastrous results. This shall be exemplified when we come to diachronic contexts.

Implicit synchronic contexts, i.e., series of texts whose synchronic rela-

[36] Cf. p. 206 above.

tion is implicit, are much more subtle but can be much more significant. They enable one to discover certain basic patterns which recur, as implicit leitmotifs, in whole segments of an author's thought and constitute its unifying rhythm. Unity at this level will not yield its secrets to a frontal attack. Patient and delicate perception of structures is required. Metz, who wanted to get at the overarching "form" of Thomas' entire thought, expresses this in the following way: "The fact that this form is an essentially background phenomenon, that it is continually implicated in the material content of Thomas' assertions, leads to the fact that we will be able to point to its presence not systematically but symptomatically."[37]

My ambitions were not so far-reaching as those of Metz. In my efforts to feel, as it were, the pulse that runs through and vivifies Aquinas' thought, I restricted myself to texts connected with healing and elevating grace. I refused to seek some kind of romantic empathy which would enable me to lay bare the psyche of Aquinas, because no matter how vivid my account of the unity of Aquinas' thought would have been on these terms, it would ultimately have proved vague and groundless. My purpose was to seek that inner unity to the extent and only to the extent that it is embodied in his texts and can be verified there.

How concretely did I approach this task? The general paradigm is as follows: Text A upon analysis yields a structural relation which can be expressed by the equation a/b = c/d; Text B yields a/b = e/f; Text C c/d = g/h. The implicit unity of these texts can be expressed as a/b = c/d = e/f = g/h. Previously the relatedness of these texts might have been sensed; but now this relatedness is brought to the light. Here are a few examples of this:

a) In chapter 2, the synchronic analysis of a number of texts yielded: infused virtue/acquired virtue = elevating grace/healing grace = supernatural good/connatural good = perfect beatitude/imperfect beatitude = God/creature.[38] This inner unity can be spelled out as follows, by specifying the content of the equal signs: the presence within us of infused (acquired) virtues is the result of grace as elevating (healing); these virtues enable us to attain our supernatural (natural) good, which leads us to the perfect (imperfect) beatitude which is intrinsically proportioned to God (our creaturehood). This equation enables us to see at a glance how wide-ranging is the relationship between healing and elevating grace which we are trying to circumscribe. Since we know from a different doctrinal context that the relationship between God and creature is a very complex one, involving total dependence of creature on God yet

[37] J. B. Metz, *Christliche Anthropozentrik* (Munich, 1962) p. 22.

[38] Some texts grounding this equation are found in Ia-IIae, 109, 2 c; Ia-IIae, 110, 3 c; IIa-IIae, 23, 7 c; *De virt. in comm.* 9 ad 7, and 10 ad 8.

ontological consistency of creature before God, we are invited to bring this fact to bear on the problem we are more directly concerned with, that of healing and elevating grace, of the connatural and the supernatural good of man. These latter terms are thus fruitfully grasped as implicated in some sort of participation or analogy relationship.

b) When analyzing the functional relationships which the verb *elevare* enters into, I uncovered a synchronic pattern uniting a series of apparently unrelated texts. The key to this discovery was in the following text, which shows the deep unity in Thomas' treatment of the nature/grace and of the spirit/matter bipolarities:

> So it is fitting that just as the first perfection of man, which is his rational soul, exceeds the power of corporeal matter, so too the ultimate perfection to which man can attain exceeds the power of his entire human nature.[39]

This text contains the following proportional relationship: first perfection/ultimate perfection = soul/union with God = above the power of the body/above the power of the entire nature of man. Other related texts enable us to continue the equation as follows: acquired virtues/infused virtues.[40] Replacing the equal signs with the specific functional relations they represent, we get: the first (ultimate) perfection of man, which is the soul (union with God), exceeds the power of corporeal matter (man's entire nature) to attain. To close this gap, to elevate the infraspiritual powers (the entire nature) of man to participate in what is above them (it), they (it) receive(s) the acquired (infused) virtues as the impression of the higher upon the lower.

This basic synchronic relationship is at the heart of Thomas' anthropology. It shows the deep continuity between the God/spirit and the spirit/body bipolarities which are continually manifest in his texts, as well as the many ramifications of these bipolarities.

c) The various aspects of the oppositional relation between *sanatio mentis* (the healing of the mind, or core of the person, in relation to God) and *sanatio carnis* (healing of the flesh, or the embodiment of the person) were alluded to in Ia-IIae, 109, 8, as we saw above. Analysis of these aspects, however, led me to formulate a wider implicit synchronic context, related to the one expressed in *b*). This context transposes in a dynamic key the mirroring forth of spirit/God in body/spirit. Grace rights the inner relation to God (*sanatio mentis*), and through this gradually rights the relation of man's psychic drives, body, world to his inner self (*sanatio carnis*).[41]

This process is expressed in the following proportional equation: *sana-*

[39] *De virt. in comm.* 10 c; translation mine.

[40] E.g., *De virt. in comm.* 9 c; Ia-IIae, 63, 2 c.

[41] Basic texts are Ia-IIae, 109, 8 c and 109, 10 c. The continuity of Aquinas' thought

tio carnis/mentis = gradual/instantaneous action = outer acts/inner orientation = venial/mortal sin = *conversio finita ad creaturas/aversio infinita a Deo.*[42] Expressed more fully, we get: *sanatio carnis* (*mentis*) is gradual (instantaneous); it touches more directly the outer acts (inner orientation) of man; by it the tendency to venial (mortal) sin is overcome, a tendency which turns man towards creatures (away from God).

It is my contention that this expresses the dynamics of grace according to Thomas: grace first has an impact upon the inner orientation of man (justification by faith), and then gradually embodies this inner transformation, bringing it to fruition by means of outer human acts, and eventually completing what was initiated (sanctification leading to full salvation, to use Pauline terms once again).

3) In passing from the synchronic to the diachronic study of a series of texts forming a context, we must note that no matter how far apart these texts are in time, they are present to the interpreter in strict simultaneity. Diachronic time sequence must pass through the needle eye of synchronic simultaneity. Only here and now can the seriation of the there and then find its grounding.

This can occur in a variety of ways. One might be studying a group of texts whose time-sequence is already known from other sources, with the purpose of ascertaining from internal evidence the nature of the thought process that led from text to text. One might be studying a group of texts whose dates are not known, with the purpose of ascertaining patterns of development and chronological sequence. As in the case of many Scripture texts, one might have an apparently homogeneous text before one's eyes, and by applying various methods (e.g., form criticism, redaction criticism) attempt to grasp clearly the various strata that are involved and how they are blended. An explicitly structural approach would comb such a text for structural irregularities which would manifest redactional strata:

> Structural method leads us back to genetic method in that it brings to light irregularities and anomalies: the persistence of the old in the new expresses itself through all the resistances the text opposes to an exclusively structural approach. . . . [We have here] a richer concept of structure . . . not a static structure, but a matrix which welcomes and integrates tensions which in turn will call for new solutions in further work of interpretation and of reinterpretation. . . .[43]

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with Paul, as he interpreted him, is shown in his *Commentary on Romans*, where he deals with 7:7–25.

[42] E.g., Ia-IIae, 72, 5 c; Ia-IIae, 87, 6 ad 3; Ia-IIae, 109, 9; Ia-IIae, 113, 3; IIIa, 85, 5; *De ver.* 27, 5 ad 15; *De virt. in comm.* 10 ad 14; *De caritate* 10 ad 1 (second series).

[43] Ricoeur, in *Exégèse et herméneutique*, pp. 76–77. He is in this passage mainly dealing with the work of Beauchamp, *Création et séparation: Etude exégètique du chapitre premier de la Genèse* (Paris, 1969).

Ricoeur's appeal to irregularities and Troubetzkoy's equilibrium scheme point in the same direction, towards a widening of the notion of structure. For my part, it is Troubetzkoy's scheme which hits the nail on the head.[44] System ceases to be static and becomes dynamic when change occurs in some part of it. The basic thrust of system is towards equilibrium, so that even a minute change in one part will trigger off a series of modifications which will eventually have repercussions in the whole system. Unbalance is overcome by being spread throughout the whole system in a balanced way. One might say that system has its own built-in shock-absorption system, or, even better, that it is like the tightrope walker who advances by a succession of intricately controlled states of disequilibrium. Let us apply this to thought-systems.

First of all, a stimulus, in the form of new data which do not fit into the system as it is originally constituted, causes disequilibrium. The basic thrust of mind is to reduce disparateness to unity, to overcome disequilibrium. As a result, depending on the type of stimulus, there will occur a major shift in the thought-system and/or a minor shift. If the stimulus involves new data of an upsetting nature which were ignored or overlooked till then, the shift, a major one, will leave marked traces in the documents of the author. He will reverse a position which till that time was his, and in some cases will call the attention of his readers to this shift. The stimuli which give rise to minor shifts are not quite so blatant. They can simply amount to the emergence in the mind of the author of a correlation theretofore unnoticed by him, which enables him to broaden his perspective, and to reformulate his earlier position on some particular point, without reversing it as in the case of the major shift.

Major shifts usually lead to minor shifts. Let us suppose that the significance of some new data has been grasped by an author, and that he has expressed this significance by the reversal of part of the doctrinal system he had already built up. A major shift has occurred. But upon it will have to follow a whole set of readjustments and reformulations within the entire system, to restore the broken equilibrium. The major shift has introduced a jarring juxtaposition of incompatibles; minor shifts attempt to bring back smoothness and symmetry. The major shift stands out; minor shifts usually blend in with the persistent and discreet dynamism of thought as it continues its ceaseless search.

How in the analysis of Aquinas on healing and elevating grace did I deal with major and minor shifts? This analysis began with the time-honored approach which consists in seeking out series of parallel texts, in order to study them in their diachronic sequence. To discover evidences of in-

[44] Cf. p. 206 above.

tellectual evolution is quite the fashionable thing, and in this case fashion dictated the initial approach.

However, I found the situation more complex than I had thought. In one crucial instance Thomas seems to reverse his opinion. In the *Commentary on the Sentences* he claims that man without grace has the power to avoid all sins;[45] in the *De veritate*, a few years later, he denies that man without grace can avoid all sinning.[46] However, when I adverted to an earlier text in the *Commentary* which fits in very nicely with the later *De veritate* doctrine,[47] my evolutionary fervor was dampened. Reappraisal was in order. Was I really dealing with a major shift?

What eventually came home to me was this. The examination of a series of parallel texts A, B, C, D in their chronological sequence cannot be taken as the exclusive data-source from which the presence or absence of a major shift is to be ascertained. Text A is to be compared and contrasted not only with texts B, C, etc., but also with texts that are roughly contemporaneous with it, since the correct interpretation of text A implies a study of those texts which constitute its own synchronic doctrinal milieu. Thus, the diachronic study of parallel texts entails analysis of [text A synchronically related to texts A_1, A_2, A_3, etc.], [text B related to texts B_1, etc.], [text C related to texts C_1, etc.], and so on.[48] Only then can the exegete safely determine whether or not he has a major shift on his hands.

What seems to be a major shift might be exactly that, but it might amount to no more than a change of perspective, which the exegete can document (*a*) by adverting to the doctrinal context of the later text, in order to determine the perspective according to which this later text denies what the earlier one affirms; (*b*) by doing the same with the earlier text and its context; (*c*) by undertaking a wider search among texts roughly contemporaneous with the earlier text but not synchronically related to it, such as might yield evidence that the perspective of the later text is already present in the earlier thought of the author. When all the data have been collated, he might conclude to a minor shift that took

[45] *II Sent.* 28, 1, 3.

[46] *De ver.* 24, 12.

[47] *I Sent.* 39, 2, 2 ad 4.

[48] Lyons expresses something similar, *op. cit.*, p. 27. In his *Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961) James Barr incisively and repeatedly attacks the Kittel *TWNT* for its failure to study words in their contexts, i.e., in the sentences in which they function and the larger linguistic units to which they belong. Etymology and derivation alone are misleading. In this sense he stresses the need for a synchronic approach to be added to the diachronic. Cf. pp. 139, 263 ff. Ricoeur draws out the significance of Barr's contribution in the same manner: cf. *Exégèse et herméneutique*, pp. 308–9.

place more or less in the following pattern. (*a*) The author's thought in its earlier stage is marked by a juxtaposition. Proposition A is affirmed in an earlier text, according to one perspective; but the presence of another perspective can be documented from another text of this earlier period which is not related to the text in which proposition A is affirmed. This indicates that the two perspectives have not yet come into significant contact with each other, such as to form one doctrinal context. (*b*) In the later stage of the author's thought this juxtaposition is overcome. The perspective which was present in the earlier stage of the author's thought, but inoperative in the text which affirms proposition A, now becomes operative in the corresponding text of the later period, with the result that proposition A is now denied, from this new perspective.

I shall flesh this out with the example I have already adverted to. Study of the doctrinal context in which Thomas in II S, 28, 1, 3 affirmed that man without grace is able to avoid all sins led me to conclude that this affirmation was made within a perspective that considered human acts as discrete entities which can be totalized distributively: man able to avoid one sin can by that token avoid each and every sin. This doctrinal context appears in the very tenor of Thomas' arguments, in the surrounding questions and their *problématique*, in the tradition Thomas at this early stage was closely adhering to. Study of the doctrinal context in which Thomas denied in *De veritate* 24, 12 that man without grace is able to avoid all sinning led us to conclude that here a different perspective is operative: Thomas is no longer concerned with acts as individual entities, but with acts as they relate to the habitual orientations they form, flow from, and cohere in. From this perspective, one of collective as opposed to distributive totality, Thomas reversed the statement he made in the *Commentary*, without denying the truth the earlier statement contained. The presence of this new perspective can be documented in the intricate structural weave that unites *De ver.* 24, 12 with earlier articles of the same question.

Was this later perspective already present in texts earlier than II S, 28, 1, 3? Yes, in I S, 39, 2, 2 ad 4 Thomas is aware, in a different context however, of the *De veritate* 24, 12 perspective. In I S, 39, 2, 2 ad 4 he is dealing with the problem of reconciling the prevalence of moral evil and God's providence. He states that without acquired or infused habits man in most instances (*ut in pluribus*) is turned towards evil. Habits were already relevant to him, but in II S, 28 he did not advert to their relevance to the precise question at hand, that of man's power to avoid sin without grace. However, at a later date, in the *De veritate*, the I S, 39, 2, 2 perspective strikes him as quite relevant, and the doctrine of II S, 28 is not so much reversed as it is deepened, integrated within a fuller view.

The basic work of documenting this shift was done in the third chapter of my thesis. To a certain extent this diachronic study was episodic to the main concern of the thesis, but nonetheless it highlighted the crucial importance of habit in the anthropology of Aquinas, of habit not merely in the sense of the acquired modification of an infraspiritual power of man, but in the sense of the fundamental and total orientation of man as a person, towards God or away from God.

The Author within His Era

We have finally come to the widest of our three concentric circles. The search for fuller understanding has led us from terms to texts, from texts to contexts, and now it leads us from the narrower contexts yielded by the works of the author to the broader context constituted by the era in which he worked. Again I will attempt to give structural clarity to themes that already have an obviousness of their own. The more one understands the era in which an author wrote, the tradition which nourished him, the problems he discussed with his disciples, confreres, and adversaries, the more accurately will the thought pattern of the author under scrutiny emerge. However, we are now entering into structures so intricate and subtle in the interactions they entail that they are very difficult to formulate with clarity. My methodological contribution in this area is quite limited, principally because in my thesis I dealt more directly with Aquinas himself. However, what work was done in the wider context of his era has led me to suspect that as one moves into it the diachronic approach becomes more appropriate. This guess was corroborated when I discovered a striking instance of Troubetzkoy's equilibrium model for explaining language systems on the move. Because this instance is methodologically relevant and because it sums up the basic historical context of Aquinas on healing and elevating grace, I will present it in a simplified version.

Resolute Augustinians that they were, the earliest thinkers of the Middle Ages saw but one good as ultimately of value: union with God. There was not much place in their work for human values defined in terrestrial terms. Thus the basic division is between activity which puts man on the way towards this union (meritorious activity) and other activity which is deficient. For Augustine, the good acts of pagans, though of some apparent value, are ultimately sham, because they do not bring pagans any closer to union with God.[49] This finds a counterpart on the level of grace: there is in the life of man no grace before the grace of justification, which heals godless man and puts him on the way to God, making it possible for

[49] *De spiritu et littera* 28, 48; *Epist.* 138, 17; *De civitate Dei* 19, 25.

him to act meritoriously. This grace is radically gratuitous because it comes to a man who is sinful through and through, in no way deserving of the initiative by which God transforms his bad will into a good will.

However, one has no difficulty in documenting a constant pressure exerted on this rather vulnerable spot in the medieval armor. The Pelagian problem had been settled, and as far as we know the Semi-Pelagian controversy as such was not known at this time;[50] but some of the data which Augustine had not handled fairly in the heat of controversy kept on popping above the surface. What about the good deeds of pagans? Can they be written off with such dispatch? Do not Scripture and the Fathers give evidence of the godless preparing themselves towards justification by their own activity? If God does not deny His grace to the godless who do what is in their power, can what the godless do without grace be judged sinful or without value?

What we have just described is the pressure exerted on the system. However, pressure, according to Troubetzkoy's model, leads to an eventual shift of one part of the system. In this case it led to a major shift. Before this major shift clearly emerged in the work of Philip the Chancellor (around 1225), it was adumbrated by his early medieval predecessors.

Because of this constant pressure, early medieval theology of grace and of man's activity can be compared to a lush garden built on shifting sands. New efforts at coping with this data crop up, only to be discarded or incorporated into yet another effort. The basis of the distinctions that are formulated keeps on shifting. The impact of this pressure led to a distinction, roughly speaking, between two types of good activity: meritorious activity and good activity which is not yet meritorious; and between two types of grace: the grace of justification which alone heals man and enables him to act meritoriously, and a mysterious assistance, not a grace in the proper sense of the word, often termed *gratia gratis data*, which enables sinful man to do what is in his own power. The basic gratuity of grace is still grasped in the immediate descriptive terms of Augustine: grace is gratuitous because the godless man who receives it is completely undeserving of it. But what then was the ground of the gratuity of the grace Adam received in the Garden of Eden? The theologians came up with some freewheeling answers to this question. Their apparently unproductive fluctuations were, however, the prelude to a creative shift.

This was the picture when Philip the Chancellor came upon the scene. The major shift emerges in his writings. What constitutes the intrinsic ground of the gratuity of that grace which justifies man and enables him

[50] Henri Bouillard, *Conversion et grâce* (Paris, 1944) pp. 91–122.

to act meritoriously? Theological reflection for some time had hovered around the classical medieval answer; Philip put it into words. Ultimately grace is gratuitous because it is supernatural, because it brings man to a fulfilment over and beyond what the forces of his nature can achieve. However, this basic break-through brought disequilibrium in its wake, a glaring dissymetry. Previously the categories were basically psychological and descriptive: meritorious and nonmeritorious activity, grace in the proper sense and *gratia gratis data*, were seen in their historical sequence, as following and preceding justification. With Philip a profound change occurred in one member of the correlation. Meritorious activity is now seen as an activity radically beyond the powers of human nature, and the grace making it possible as a supernatural, elevating grace. Both grace and meritorious activity were handled in a more radical, ontological sense, but the nonmeritorious activity was not.

The theological system had to be made symmetrical again. The major shift had to be followed by a series of minor shifts which would adjust the other parts of the system to the part that had already been changed. In this paper I will simplify, ignoring, for example, the differences in approach of the early Franciscan and Dominican schoolmen. Generally speaking, the grasp of the meritorious activity of man in its supernatural quality was followed by a similar grasp of the nonmeritorious activity of man in its quality of being connatural, i.e., of being within the natural scope of man's powers. The moral impotence of man, unable to avoid sin without grace, is now seen in its ontological dimension. It stems from man's inability to fulfil himself even connaturally without healing grace. Habitual grace is then understood to heal man as well as to elevate him. The healing function, instead of just being expressed in general descriptive terms, now relates precisely to nature on the one hand and to the elevating supernaturalizing function of grace on the other. This is the process which comes to term in the writings of Aquinas.

A paper such as this cannot be rounded off with a neat conclusion. What I hoped to achieve is an open-ended presentation designed to lead beyond itself. The three concentric circles contain within themselves the seeds of their own expansion. If we pass from terms to texts, from texts to contexts, from the doctrinal contexts of an author to the context of his era, should we not also in our search for understanding leave the era and enter into the whole sweep of theological development from its initial faltering steps to its as yet undisclosed future, and into the present community which interprets the past in order to create the future?[51]

[51] This latter aspect is very much highlighted by Ricoeur; cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 290–91. Lonergan and van Riet seem to point in the same general direction. The movement from

This vast question I am not ready to tackle. However, I am ready to offer two observations on the structural approach which I have tried to describe in theory and implementation.

First, structure, it seems to me, is far from static. Our initial contact with individual texts gave the impression of rounded-off patterns, with everything neatly in its place, but as we widened the basis of our investigation, we had to confront the much more baffling reality of system on the move, system handled diachronically rather than synchronically. Troubetzkoy's useful equilibrium model seemed to offer the key to the dynamic vitality of structures. What is the difference between a dead system and a vital system? In more general terms, what is the difference between life and death? Equilibrium and disequilibrium help us define it in a rudimentary way. Total equilibrium is immobile, therefore dead; total disequilibrium is chaos without order, therefore dead. Life is a dialectical synthesis of equilibrium and disequilibrium, a relatively disturbed equilibrium which seeks its balance, and finds it ever anew because it keeps on losing it.[52]

In my view, this applies to intellectual as well as to biological life. We have been dealing with the thought of Aquinas, a man both praised and condemned for being a scholastic. Our equilibrium model enables us to account for the phases of scholasticism, the one commonly praised, the other commonly blamed. The first phase is scholasticism as a method for systematically adverting to the discrepancies between sources of evidence so as to bring the system into better and richer equilibrium. This freewheeling scholasticism, carried on in the spirit of Abelard's *Sic et non*, welcomed disequilibrium as a challenge, as a stimulus to disputation. To this phase of scholasticism Thomas belonged. The over-all impression left by his work is a calm one, but a closer examination will reveal constant shiftings and reformulations, a never-ceasing effort at integrating new data and formulating new correlations. The second phase is scholasticism as the expression in definitive categories of vast bodies of already equilibrated knowledge. Such crystallized knowledge must be handed on in its purity. Nothing is to disrupt it. This phase of

interpretation to history to dialectic, which opens up ever more pressingly the issue of personal conversion and collaboration within a community according to Lonergan's functional specialties, seems to dovetail with our preoccupations. Similarly, van Riet, *op. cit.*, has us pass from a strict literary exegesis of the text to a broader literary exegesis of the text within its historical context (cf. n. 19) and finally to a critical exegesis which encounters the text as a challenge, as a revelation within God's overall plan of salvation (p. 121). This is the entry into the broadest context of exegesis which Lonergan deals with under the rubric of dialectic and foundations.

[52] In his *Le structuralisme*, Piaget has a section on biological structures (pp. 40 ff.). He refers there to the notion of inner equilibrium and of self-regulation.

scholasticism amounts to little more than the enbalming of dead thoughts.

The second observation has to do with the epistemological underpinnings of structuralism. Structuralism is a method, but it can be expanded into a philosophy. We have attended to the method of some structural linguists. However, as they describe their method, they lay bare certain philosophical assumptions which, I feel, could lead to a structuralism that is needlessly constricted in scope.

These linguists seem to imply a distinction between a noumenon which is absolute and a phenomenon which is relative and therefore accessible to their method. De Saussure, for example, when dealing with oppositional relations, will distinguish between the meaning of a term with respect to another term, which the linguist can get at by his method, and the meaning "in itself" of the term, which is beyond the pale of scientific knowledge. There is for him no positive definition of terms, only a negative one.[53] For Hjelmslev, there is a distinction between form and substance which seems to resemble the Kantian distinction between phenomenon and noumenon: systems of relations which linguistics describe are the form; language as a substance, as a formless reality, as such is beyond scientific knowledge.[54] As he puts it:

> The recognition of this fact, that a totality does not consist of things but of relationships, and that not substance but only its internal and external relationships have scientific existence, is not, of course, new in science, but may be new in linguistic science. The postulation of objects as something different from the terms of relationships is a superfluous axiom and consequently a metaphysical hypothesis from which linguistic science will have to be freed.[55]

I subscribe to the positive thrust of Hjelmslev's statement. However, it

[53] De Saussure, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–17 (160–62).

[54] L. Hjelmslev, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (Madison, 1961) p. 76.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 23. Benveniste quotes a text of de Saussure which says about the same thing: "As we deepen our grasp of the matter linguistics deals with, we become more convinced of an unusual truth, which, we must admit, makes us stop and think: the relationship which we establish between things, at least in this field of study, exists before the things themselves and serves to determine them." (*op. cit.*, p. 41).

[56] Lonergan's view on relations finds its most systematic expression in an appendix to his *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* (Rome, 1964) pp. 291–315. Basically what he attempts to do is to relate the relative and the absolute rather than absolutize them and isolate them from each other. Other relevant texts from Lonergan's *Insight* are found on pp. 12–13, 291–93, and on p. 496: "Now within the limits of proportionate being, whatever is grasped intelligently is never a term without relations or a relation without terms. To express insight, one needs several terms and relations, with the terms fixing the relations and the relations fixing the terms. To suppose that there are any terms without relations or any relations without terms is to suppose an oversight."

contains a basic ambiguity. One can take for granted that a deeper noumenal substance exists behind the relations, and declare it inaccessible to scientific method. But one can, along with a thinker such as Bernard Lonergan, dismiss such a noumenon as a figment of man's biological extraversion. On this view, there is no substance *behind* the relations; the substance is itself relational, because it is a concrete unity of elements which are related to each other and which relate the substance to other substances in the vast system on the move which the universe is.[56] It is only in its relativity that the absolute is grasped. To use the noumenon/phenomenon language, it is only in its phenomenality that the noumenon is grasped. The noumenon, on this view, is the unknown, which, as intended in its totality, is a known unknown; the phenomenon is the noumenon as it gradually appears in its structural patterns and becomes less and less inadequately known.

In the widest sense of the term, the noumenon is the universe. Texts are part of that universe. To confront a text in an integrally structural perspective is to seek in it not only the structural patterns embedded within it, but to be aware of the whole range of structures to which it pertains. It is related to the author whose thought it embodies, to the vast collaboration of human minds on the move, to the universe.

Structuralism, pursued to the full, can bring new breadth as well as new depth to the task of interpreting theological texts.