

the Scriptures which is not inherently in tension with fidelity to the traditions of the Church. Sheehan's consensus seems rather old-fashioned to me. There is no necessary conflict between honest, intellectual analysis of the texts and adherence to the tradition. Wherever there does appear to be so, then we must believe that the tradition has hidden depths that we have yet to discover, or else we need to think more clearly.

- 1 Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, London 1979, p. 97.
- 2 Raymond E. Brown, 'Gospel Infancy Narrative Research; From 1976 to 1986: Part II (Luke)'. *CBQ*, Vol. 48, No. 4/October 1986, pp. 660—680.
- 3 *op. cit.* p. 678.
- 4 *idem.*
- 5 Geza Vermes, in *Jesus, the Jew*, Glasgow, 1976, pp 210ff, has argued that Jesus was not unique in calling God his Abba. I am unconvinced by the parallels that he draws.
- 6 '“My Lord and my God”': the locus of confession', *New Blackfriars*, Feb. 1984, pp. 52—62.

Lonergan's Method and the Dummett-Lash Dispute

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Not the least of the things that are interesting about the vigorous dispute between Professor Michael Dummett and Professor Nicholas Lash in the October and December 1987 issues of *New Blackfriars* is that it provides an excellent opportunity for testing the practical relevance of Bernard Lonergan's much-discussed method for theology. The dispute is at heart a dispute about the appropriate way of doing theology, at least within the Roman Catholic church, and here is a chance for seeing how Lonergan helps us to discern the flaws (and the strong points too). But first of all quite a lot must be said about that method of Lonergan's, and this will fill two-thirds of this article. Lonergan may well be the theologian who will best assist us in delivering Christian theology safely into the twenty-first century, and beyond. His thinking bears the stamp of the Catholic trust in the compatibility of reason and faith, of science and religion, of the God of philosophy and the God of revelation, while at the same time the foundational role he allocates to conversion accords with one of Protestantism's basic religious insights. And, in a world in which religious fundamentalism holds such sway, he also insists on the

indispensability for theological inquiry and doctrinal enrichment of objective research and scientific rigour. Nevertheless, in Lonergan's writings it is at times difficult to see the wood for the trees. So here is an impressionistic account of the wood.

I: *The method*

As a young Jesuit of about 34 years of age, Lonergan declared his ambition to be nothing less than the 'total transformation' of Roman Catholic philosophy and theology. No modest ambition. (And possibly the scale of Lonergan's thinking is another source of irritation to those of us used to working on a smaller canvas). But I think it is valuable to grasp that Lonergan's ambition was primarily a theological one; a theological ambition that encompassed a philosophical ambition. To fashion a method for theology was a task requiring considerable philosophical preparation, the construction of philosophical tools that could then be applied to theology. *Insight* (1957), with all its philosophical riches, was preparatory to *Method in Theology* (1972).

The successful completion of the philosophical task would, by itself, have merited lasting fame for the author of *Insight*. To have examined and vindicated the invariant pattern of human cognition in the context of mathematical, scientific and common sense knowledge was an outstanding intellectual achievement. Lonergan's technique is to examine how we come to understand and to know in highly respected disciplines such as mathematics and science. He begins with instances of human knowledge but shifts the focus from the object of this or that inquiry to the conscious operations themselves and the dynamic structure that relates them to each other. The operations, he argues, comprise three essential stages: experience, understanding and judgment. Binding the operations together and making them into a unified structure is the pressure in the inquirer to know something. It is a normative pattern because it represents the conditions that make knowledge possible; to claim that any one stage could legitimately be omitted is to commit intellectual suicide. Lonergan's epistemology rests on a totally harmonious and necessary reciprocity between the positive and the normative. Without the positive, if the operations were not actually performed, knowing would not take place. Without the normative, knowing would not be correct and knowledge claims would not be valid.

It is unlikely that Lonergan would have been able to accomplish his work on cognitional theory without his prior research into the thinking of Aquinas. In the company of other distinguished scholars, Lonergan rescued Aquinas from those who portrayed him as a conceptualist. Lonergan argued with overwhelming cogency that Aquinas was an intellectualist. The difference between conceptualists and intellectualists is that conceptualists consider that concepts precede understanding

whereas intellectualists consider that understanding precedes concepts. Lonergan's espousal of the intellectualist position was to have profound and lasting consequences for his thinking on theological method. For the conceptualist position is rather stiff and mechanical, placing the emphasis, as it does, on the nexus between concepts, logical deduction and intellectual certitude. The intellectualist position, by contrast, is supple, creative and developmental. Concepts can be fashioned only if there occurs the intellectual breakthrough—insight—and this cannot be had to order. But when it does occur it transforms how we see things; the veil falls from our eyes; at the intellectual level we experience a greater or lesser conversion.

The intellectualist position is also highly moral. The move from ignorance to answer is not mechanical but creative and is often arduous and disagreeable. It requires hard work, steady application, learning from others; it entails keeping our knowledge claims adjusted to the scope of the data and the depth of our understanding. The moral dimension in knowing is important. If the pattern of knowing forms a triad (consisting of experience, understanding and judgment), the moral dimension, and the general area of values, represents a fourth layer of conscious intentionality. And so we come to what Lonergan terms 'transcendental method'—a fourfold structure comprising experience, understanding, judgment and (fourthly) valuing, deciding and acting. This is termed transcendental because it is the common core and ground of any and all successful and responsible empirical inquiry and subsequent action: we ask questions of our experience, if successful we come to an understanding, we test our understanding to see if it is true or probable, then we base our actions on what we know to be the facts of the matter. Omission of any one stage results in errors and blunders. The structure is unified and dynamic because, under the pressure of the desire to know and the desire to achieve valued objectives, each level summons forth the next and each subsequent stage builds on the preceding stage. When applied in the fields of scholarship and science transcendental method corresponds to a recurrent pattern of operations yielding cumulative and progressive results. Applied over time it builds up the various areas of knowledge represented by the many intellectual disciplines to be found in the school or university curriculum.

Transcendental method is the key to Lonergan's division of theology into eight functional specialities: this division is simply the fourfold division of transcendental method multiplied by two. There is, first, theology in its positive phase: research, interpretation, history and dialectic. As an intellectual exercise with claims to scientific respectability this positive phase of theology is indispensable. It is the guarantee that empirical scholarship plays an essential role in theology. Each of the first three functional specialities employs empirical methods

of investigation, seeking to establish conclusions as verified hypotheses. Not only does each of these functional specialities apply empirical methods, but also the manner in which the specialities relate to each other represents the methodology of empirical inquiry on a larger scale. With research we seek, primarily, to establish what the data are. With interpretation we seek, primarily, to understand the data. With history we seek, primarily, to establish what actually took place, the movements and events within the tradition, the contexts within which the meaning of the data was formulated and communicated. The fourth stage, dialectic, completes the process: conflicting positions and conclusions are drawn up, they are probed and examined, and those found wanting in respect of the norms of empirical inquiry are rejected or modified. Lonergan sees this first phase as one devoted to appropriating and understanding the religious tradition, of mediating the past, and this is a thoroughly empirical endeavour. As such it can be done by anyone.

But dialectic, the fourth stage in the positive phase of theology, brings the individual to a decision, a challenge, a crisis. And this gives rise to a second fourfold division of theology, this time in its normative phase. Because theology is scholarship designed for human beings and not for robots, the human subject is faced with the challenge of taking a stand on what has been established in the positive phase. The fourfold division of the second phase of theology into conversion, doctrines, systematics and communications corresponds to the four stages of transcendental method, this time running in inverse order from values to knowledge, from knowledge to understanding, from understanding to providing the data for others. As such, conversion is foundational—together with the four functional specialities that mediate the tradition—for the last three functional specialities. It provides the faith context in which one decides to give intellectual assent to certain beliefs and teachings (doctrines). It provides the faith context in which one maps out the relations of the various doctrines to each other (systematics). It provides the dynamism for creating the community in which new religious adherents will be nurtured and developed (communications). This second, normative division of theology will be determined by the presence or absence of religious conversion, by which Lonergan means the state of being in love with God, of responding to God's free gift of his love.

Most of us have a positive and normative side to our thinking and living. We read newspapers, books and articles, absorb a great many facts and statistics, listen to the pronouncements of politicians, scientists and experts of various kinds. If we read and listen honestly we do so with an open mind, willing to change our mind in the light of new evidence, new interpretations, new developments. If we are truly engaged we read and attend critically, attempting to assess with precision the truth or

validity of the conclusions or recommendations put forward. Among other things, we test what we learn against what we already understand, know or believe to be the facts of the matter as well as what we perceive to be the honesty, sincerity and acumen of the writer or speaker. But most of all, in the field of policy, we judge what we hear or read guided by our prevailing values. From this process we build up our own personal store of opinions, judgments and beliefs, we establish norms to guide our behaviour, and so forth. In other words, we establish the normative side of our lives, we take part in the process of forming our personalities. The shift from the positive to the normative side of our thinking and living is perfectly natural and totally necessary if we are to become integrated human beings: if we are to have beliefs and opinions of our own, if we are to form something resembling a coherent world-view, if we are to build up the community and hand on understanding and discipline to our children.

The interplay between the positive and normative sides of our lives does not provide a perfect analogy with Lonergan's division of theology into a positive phase and a normative phase, but it may help the reader to catch on to what Lonergan is about. The pivotal point in the shift from positive to normative in the context of our lives is the area of values. In a similar way values are pivotal in the shift from the positive to the normative phase in theology. But prior to values and determining in turn what they will be is conversion to God. The objectification of authentic conversion is the bond tying together the normative and positive phases of theology. Conversion is, of course, a well-established religious ground for action with an excellent pedigree in both Old and New Testaments. But Lonergan sees the objectification of authentic conversion as being in complete harmony with the positive, empirical tasks of theology and indeed their culmination and goal.

For to be carried out according to the norms of transcendental method the positive tasks require the investigator to free himself of bias and place the value of achieving the truth above any merely personal satisfaction. This requires both cognitive and moral self-transcendence. By committing himself in love to God, Lonergan argues, man achieves the pinnacle of self-transcendence: as the source of the universe's intelligibility and the ground of its moral order, God is the final goal of man's intellectual and moral aspirations. Conversion to God, therefore, is the enemy of bias, the natural ally of right thinking and right doing. There is a fulfilling reciprocity between man in all his intellectual questioning and questing, his moral struggling and striving, and God in his gift of love to man. Through conversion man's capacity for self-transcendence meets fulfilment, in being in love without conditions or reservations. So it is that authentic conversion provides the pivot from the positive to the normative phase of theology. There is nothing false or

forced in the relationship between the two phases. Authentic conversion, as Lonergan depicts it, does not interfere with the freedom of the researcher to research, of the interpreter to interpret, of the historian to pin down exactly what was going on. Rather, conversion upholds and promotes the search for truth in every field of inquiry. The positive and the normative phases of theology, though distinct, complete each other.

II: *Practical gains*

There is a pleasing intellectual elegance in the theological method Lonergan proposes: the fourfold division of transcendental method yields, when divided into positive and normative phases, an eightfold division of the work that is theology. The one phase finds its completion in the other. But, as in the case of scientific laws, intellectual elegance can be matched by immense practical gains if and when the method is applied. What, we might ask, might these practical gains be? For a fuller answer to emerge further exposition in the next part of this article will be required. But straight off we can say that the method has the potential to bring clarity where before there was confusion, to place theology alongside other human studies, and to provide a basis for ecumenical encounter both within the Christian tradition and between Christianity and the other world faiths.

Clarity can be imposed on confusion because the method makes it possible to say what theology is and who is doing theology. With the proliferation in recent decades of 'theologies of ...' there has been a danger of there emerging a confused or one-sided account of what doing theology is really about. Is the systematic theologian the one who is really doing theology or is the biblical exegete, perhaps, the truer theologian? What about the popular preacher or the scholar who spends his or her time tracing sources, editing texts and the like? The division of theology into eight functional specialities brings order to the whole field of endeavour that is theology. It indicates the value and indispensability of each function and relates each function to the others. Precisely because it encompasses the whole of theology, because it is completely comprehensive in its sweep, Lonergan's eightfold division provides a vantage point which allows the parts to be related to the whole. Such a vantage point brings clarity. Clarity is further enhanced by the major division of theology into positive and normative phases. This division allows the researcher, interpreter and historian, for example, to get on with their work unimpeded by considerations of doctrinal orthodoxy or heterodoxy. In so doing, it confers on theology the status of an honest intellectual discipline. At the same time, through its normative work theology becomes a palpable force in the present: it is not a museum piece or curiosity but something that speaks to us of reality, a source of vision and values.

Loneragan's eightfold division is of a high level of generality. It can be applied not only to theology but to all human studies that invite the student to appropriate the past in order to take a stand on the present and the future. Such an approach has provided educationists with a rationale for the study of classics, English literature and history; in each case the past is studied because it is considered to have something of importance to say to us in the present. Reading the great poetry of the past 'moralizes' us, as Matthew Arnold put it. F.R. Leavis truly hoped that frequent encounter with serious literature would so work on our sensibility and intelligence that we would undergo something akin to moral conversion. At the present time there is a dispute in the educational profession about the kind of history that should be taught in British schools. On the one side are those who advocate concentration on the process by which historians establish their judgments. On the other side are those who advocate that more attention should be devoted to the major events in British history, to what they term 'British heritage'; advocates of this position often make it clear that they wish to inculcate patriotism. Lonergan's method indicates how an answer to this dilemma could be found. In brief, both positive and normative sides of the subject can appropriately be taught; exclusion of either side would be a distortion. But confusion of one side with the other, so that, for example, evidence of certain unpalatable facts was suppressed or children were taught only those facts that revealed the nation in a good light—that would be the worst distortion of all. Because it does justice to other human studies besides theology, Lonergan's method helps to place theology among the disciplines pursued in school and university. This is valuable in breaking down the quaintness so often attached to theology, the air of oddity that surrounds theology in contemporary culture. Theology is not alone in investigating the past in order to bring it into significant relationship with the present and the future.

Finally, the method can provide a basis for fruitful ecumenical encounter. Precisely because of its high level of generality (which follows from its correspondence with transcendental method) Lonergan's theological method provides us with an instrument with which we can measure the various Christian traditions, as they have come down to us shaped by history, scarred by the battles of the past. There is nothing novel in saying that each of the traditions has its own basic orientation, biases and hang-ups. They have, all of them, been through a lot. The method proposed for theology should help us see the strengths and weaknesses of the various traditions in a clearer light than would otherwise be possible. It should help us to see where they fall short, where a particular emphasis, because it has been exaggerated, has led to a distortion of the Christian message. It might even help fundamentalists, who tend to be wedded to the normative phase of theology but eschew

132

the positive phase with horror, to become reconciled with agnostic scientific investigators, who can see point in research but view theology's normative phase with deep suspicion. The theological method Lonergan proposes could perform a similar service for the wider ecumenism, in promoting balanced and fruitful dialogue between the various world faiths. Because it is grounded on transcendental method it transcends cultural divisions and provides central human norms by which such dialogue could be guided.

III: *The necessity of change*

Those, then, are some of the practical gains that we might look to theological method to deliver. But besides assisting encounters between traditions and faiths, Lonergan's *Method in Theology* is written by a member of the Roman Catholic community who has something of value to say to his fellow members. He has an eye open to the hang-ups of the Catholic tradition, or so it seems to me. *Method in Theology* is concerned largely with the eight functional specialities that constitute theology, but running through the work like a musical motif is another theme. That theme is the necessity of change. In bringing this to the fore I am reminded of a scene when, as a young clerical student, I took part in Lonergan's seminars on the texts of St. Thomas. As others have observed, Lonergan was a rather laid-back, uncharismatic speaker on these occasions. But on this particular day he suddenly leaned forward and his blue eyes stared pugnaciously round the room. 'St. Thomas wasn't stupid,' he declared in Latin. 'He changed his mind.' And in case we had failed to grasp the point he repeated it, still staring. The significance of this incident dawned on me fully when I recognised the influence exerted on Lonergan by Matthew Arnold. One thing above all else Arnold wished to cultivate through education was 'openness and flexibility of mind', the characteristics of the ancient Athenians, the secret of their success.

Now, 'openness and flexibility of mind' have not exactly been outstanding Catholic characteristics in recent centuries. The Catholic church has been characterised by its fixed and unmoving position in matters theological. There is indeed a suggestion that the church is imprisoned behind a carapace of past decrees and affirmations from which it cannot break free. Lonergan was no liberal Protestant but he wished to liberate Catholicism from the straitjacket in which certain attitudes and assumptions had placed it. In *Method in Theology* he sets about laying the axe to the roots of these attitudes and assumptions. These roots are the classicist notion of culture, the Aristotelian conception of science and the logico-deductive model of establishing theological conclusions.

The classicist conception of culture is of a single, unique culture

open only to the initiated, from which the vulgar, the barbarians, the others are excluded. Within the classicist notion of culture theology is viewed as a permanent achievement, something fixed and immutable, in which there is no room for change of any consequence. Opposed to the classicist notion of culture is the empirical notion of culture. Culture is conceived as the set of meanings and values that shape a way of life and, as such, cultures change, develop, impact on each other. Hence Lonergan's repetition in the sixties and seventies that what Catholics were experiencing was not a crisis of faith but a crisis of culture. Catholics were having to adjust to the notion of change.

The Aristotelian conception of science is of true, certain knowledge of causal necessity. But modern science is not true, is not certain, is not strictly speaking knowledge, and is not concerned with Aristotle's four causes nor with necessity. Modern science instead speaks of hypotheses, the best scientific opinion of the day, of verifiable possibility, and it addresses itself to contingent facts. Scientific theories are permanently open to revision, they can be and are superseded by new theories that offer a more fruitful and powerful account of the data. The problem is that Catholic theology has been conceived as analogous to science understood in its Aristotelian sense. Now Lonergan is no more a relativist than he is a liberal Protestant; he believes in the permanence of truth. But he argues for permanence not on the basis of truth that is fixed and immutable but on the basis of the open-ended structure of transcendental method that yields cumulative and progressive results.

If the classicist conception of culture and the Aristotelian notion of science have been two powerful reasons for the failure of Catholic theology to develop—to take on board other influences and to work out a method that is scientifically respectable—then a third reason has been the habit among Catholic theologians of arriving at conclusions by often dubious deductive reasoning. Examples of this type of argument are the following: 'The bible says X; but the bible is the inspired word of God; therefore X is true, or 'The church teaches X; the church was founded by God; therefore X is true'. I explained earlier that Lonergan is an intellectualist. He does not regard knowledge as a branch of logic, as some epistemologists do, but rather assigns logic an essential but subordinate role within the movement from question to answer. For the intellectualist what is prized above all, what brings about progress, is insight, the understanding of the data. And for insight to occur there is required imagination, openness of mind, the ability to envisage a range of possibilities. Development of understanding consists of a series of verified imaginative leaps. Conceived in this way, theology is an ongoing process developed by means of collaborative creativity and open-ended dialogue. And because there occur among people at different times and in different places many varieties of common sense as well as a variety of

134

differentiations of consciousness theological development takes place by making the Christian revelation intelligible in terms of these variations. In Lonergan's scheme the logico-deductive model of establishing theological conclusions is somewhat rudely demoted.

Hand in hand with this demotion of deductive reasoning is Lonergan's displacement of traditional fundamental theology. The student embarking on the traditional Roman Catholic theology course began by studying a series of tracts—Divine Revelation, Inspiration, Jesus' Testimony about Himself, the Church and so on—which were regarded as somehow fundamental. The reason was that they were considered to provide the foundations on which the study of other doctrines, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation and Grace, could take place. It was an approach that guaranteed plentiful use of the logico-deductive method of argumentation: 'Scripture says... therefore...'; 'the church says ... therefore...'. The trouble with this approach is that it builds one set of doctrines on top of another set of doctrines. As doctrines both sets presuppose a faith context for their intelligibility to be grasped and the relations between them plotted. As doctrines, that is, they presuppose conversion. Hence the foundational role Lonergan assigns to conversion.

IV The Dummett-Lash dispute

Precisely in what way, then, does the exchange between Professor Dummett and Professor Lash test the practical relevance of Lonergan's proposed method for theology? Let us consider the methodological issues the dispute raises.

From within the perspective of Lonergan's method Dummett's failure (for so I adjudge it) is a failure to distinguish between the functional specialities of theology. There is a major failure to distinguish between the positive and the normative phases of theology. This gives rise to further confusions.

Dummett adduces the proposition of 'the paramountcy of unity' as a norm to be invoked as a guide to how theology as a discipline ought to be conducted. Explaining the proposition, he says, 'it is enjoined on us, whatever the provocation, never to take any step to disrupt the unity of the Church.' Now, the unity of the church is a matter of doctrine. To propose that a doctrine should act as a guiding norm to the empirical investigations of research, interpretation, history and dialectic represents an unwarranted interference by theology's normative phase in the work conducted within theology's positive phase. The empirical investigations of theology's positive phase do not rest on doctrine; rather, the reverse is the case. Doctrines are grounded on conversion, together with the four functional specialities which constitute theology's positive work. Dummett proposes church unity as a point of departure for theology; but

doctrines are not a point of departure but a point at which we arrive. Dummett's is yet another Roman Catholic attempt to make ecclesiology, or some part thereof, the foundation on which theological argument rests. It is characteristic of this approach that the argument is presented in the deductive mode: 'If ... then ... If ... then ...'. Lonergan's writings repudiate this approach.

If Dummett wished to take issue with Professor Sheehan's conclusions he would have been better advised to investigate the quality of Sheehan's scholarship: to engage, that is, in the positive task Lonergan terms 'dialectic'. The empirical investigations of research, interpretation and history have their own legitimate procedures and their own proper autonomy. These procedures cannot be decided by reference to some doctrinal norm. Dummett's confusion of doctrinal matters with matters of empirical scholarship leads him to undervalue scholarship and to fail in the respect due to its autonomy. His short way with the vast and complex literature on the subject of 'the Son of Man', his impatience with the painstaking scholarship of Father Raymond Brown, and his derogatory comments on the use made of the notion of literary genre are all part of the same pattern. His preoccupation with doctrine leads him to depreciate scholarship and make light of complex issues. It also leads to the misguided rebuke of Raymond Brown for failing to tell us what we are required to believe. Lonergan's treatment of the speciality of interpretation makes it clear that it is not the function of the exegete to tell us what we ought to believe as a matter of doctrine. The use of doctrine to control or confine scholarly exploration also indicates an absence of historical awareness. For history teaches us that scholarly hypotheses are a necessary forerunner to the development of church doctrines; the restriction of such exploration is a recipe for doctrinal stagnation. Two quotations from *Method in Theology* help sum up the shortcomings in Dummett's approach so far considered. 'People with little notion of modern scholarship can urge that attending to the literary genre of biblical writings is just a fraudulent device for rejecting the plain meaning of scripture' (p. 329). And, 'a second phase (of theology), which interferes with the proper functioning of the first, by that very act is cutting itself off from its own proper source and ground and blocking the way to its own vital development' (p. 143).

The exchange between Dummett and Lash on whether or not Jesus could be said to have believed in the Trinity raises interesting questions concerning the development of doctrine. Here I think Lash is technically correct. To ascribe Trinitarian belief to Jesus is anachronistic since the term 'Trinity' and the notions of substance, consubstantial and person with which it is historically associated are patently post-biblical; they belong to an intellectual and linguistic culture distinct from that inhabited by Jesus. It is also true that church doctrine relating to the

Trinity does not concern itself with Jesus' self-understanding. However, there is some sympathy between Lonergan's position and that enunciated by Dummett in so far as both speak of doctrinal development as making explicit what is implicit in revelation. Dummett, it is true, does not indicate the process by which this occurs, and here Lonergan's treatment of doctrinal development could throw some light on the controversy. Lonergan's approach to the development of doctrines requires us to keep certain points clearly in mind. The first is that we learn about the development of doctrine by empirical research and interpretation of what occurred in history. The second is that when we speak about doctrines we are speaking about truths and not theories or hypotheses. Theories are superseded and replaced by new theories as the data become better understood. But truth is permanent; it can become more fully understood but it remains the same truth. The third is that the historical contexts in which the truths of revelation are formulated and disseminated are subject to change. The intelligibility of the development of doctrines is the intelligibility of historical process.

Lonergan cites as an example the manner in which Christological doctrine developed from the time of Nicea (325 AD) to the time of the third council of Constantinople (680 AD). The questions that reverberated in the wake of Nicea met with ever fuller and more detailed answers in the five ecumenical councils that followed. What happened is depicted by Lonergan as a shift towards systematic meaning. Nicea began the process by its use of the non-scriptural term 'homoousion'. This term does not directly regard things but propositions about things: it is a rule controlling the legitimacy of what can be said about Christ. It is a heuristic device allowing us to say that what is true of the Father is also true of the Son, except that the Son is not the Father. The need for systematic meaning derived from the many and various interpretations placed on the New Testament revelation of Jesus in the culturally diverse Judaeo-Christian, Greco-Roman world in which Christianity was first disseminated. Jesus was variously represented as a man chosen or inhabited by God, as an angel (at times identified with the Archangel Michael), or as a creature through whom God made the heavens and the earth; the Son was identified with the Father, or was presented as the benign God of the New Testament, or was considered divine but subordinate to the Father, and so on. In the face of this welter of interpretations the church had recourse to elements of systematic meaning in the prevailing hellenistic culture. The church's intentions were perfectly clear: it wished to preserve what it considered to be the true meaning of the scriptures. The process is often referred to as a transition from what is implicit to what is explicit; in reality it is a shift from a lesser to a fuller differentiation of consciousness—from a common-sense and literary differentiation of consciousness to

consciousness that has, in addition, at least a measure of systematic, philosophical development. It is the latter type of differentiation of consciousness that has imparted church doctrines (as well as to systematic theology) the precision, conciseness and organisation they lacked in earlier times.

If the foregoing helps to clarify the issues between Dummett and Lash, it may also have brought us to what is valid in Dummett's diagnosis of the problems afflicting Roman Catholic theology. I have already indicated that Dummett's 'cure' is profoundly misguided; but it is possible that what he has gathered from Sheehan and from his contacts with clergy in the United States and Britain is not entirely amiss. One of the outstanding developments in contemporary Roman Catholic theology has been in the area of scholarship. Now, the scholarly differentiation of consciousness is not the same as the systematic differentiation of consciousness. Briefly put, scholarship is a development of common sense, for it consists in grasping and reconstructing the common sense of another time and place. If the scholar has no taste for systematic meaning he will be unable to grasp the meaning of such dogmas as Nicea and 'may gaily leap to the conclusion that what has no meaning for (him) is just meaningless' (*Method in Theology*, p. 330). Scholarship can build a wall between systematic theology and its historical sources. The other major development in Roman Catholic theology since the Second Vatican Council is the decline in the teaching of scholastic philosophy. We have, then, twin, asymmetrical developments in contemporary Roman Catholic theology—a flourishing scholarship and a rapid decline in the philosophical system that endured through the middle ages and right up to Vatican II. This could well provide the conditions for a loss of confidence in technically-worded church doctrines and for a return to the naive theorising of the pre-Nicean period. The remedy does not lie in a return to scholastic philosophy. Nor does it lie in having recourse to a doctrinal norm; this will not solve the problem though it may lead to the problem being suppressed. The remedy lies in the discovery of the common core in knowing on which the common sense and the systematic differentiations of consciousness both rest. This allows us to understand how the one faith can be validly and fruitfully expressed in a plurality of forms. This, Lonergan claims, is an important task confronting modern theologians.