

3. Notes from the class of 27 04 98

A few words on ontology, faith and science (7 pages).

(Editorial : Mr. T'Jampens is speaking.)

Christian Wolff was the great ontologist of the 18^{de} century. Following his model, this course is structured. He wrote more than 200 works, including 40 thick volumes, on topics such as theoretical and practical philosophy, ontology, general cosmology, psychology and theology. This is the great tradition. Kant and Hegel (1770-1831) also speak of Wolff with admiration. Hegel's influence was there especially from 1820 to 1914, he was then the great thinker of Germany and even of Western Europe, and known as far away as the U.S.. Hegel's aesthetics still remains worthwhile. He represents German Idealism, a philosophy that identifies the idea and being. In this sense it is a kind of Platonism,.

Fichte and Schelling are also considered part of German idealism. Schelling had a huge influence, but was more of a romantic. Hegel handled Romanticism well, with his *Fenomenologie des Geistes* (1807). Its theme: the description of the historical formation that the "spirit" assumes in the course of cultural history. In the early 19^{de} century, German idealism took off. Hegel grasped the significance of the crisis of ontology, expressed in the fact that a civilized people no longer has a metaphysical pedestal. That is beginning of the crisis of modern rationalism. The West is the first civilization on the globe to try to do without ontology and metaphysics. That is revolutionary. That explains the present crisis of culture. Hegel puts it this way: a nation without metaphysics is like a church brimming with decorations and statues of saints but without the most sacred. Which leads to a great emptiness. Until then, all civilizations have been founded on an ontology. This crisis lived strongly among the French materialists. Until then metaphysics provided the pedestal of a culture. With sought solid and rigorously provable foundations, on which then the building is logically erected, so to speak.

This type of thinking is now dismissed in post modern circles as foundationalism, i.e. still believing in foundations. Today many young people say: look, without foundations, without fixed values, you can't really live. But postmodernity consists in doubting this. We speak of fundamentalism, especially in Protestant circles, but also in Islam. In Catholic circles one speaks of integralism. And essentialism is the general name, it means fixed bases for thinking and living. The lack of fixed values led to a crisis of foundations.

Kant does not question metaphysics, he has a special position, he argues that reason is limited, and that is to the sense-perceptible world. Consequence: all that exceeds that world, the paranormal, the transcendental, gives us no certainties. Kant is a believing Protestant; he does not question metaphysics and ontology. He only says that he does not see how, with our modern scientific reason, we can ever get to the point of knowing that world. Kant knows very well that without foundations a culture cannot sustain itself, but he believes that, as reason is conceived by modern cognition, one can never derive a metaphysics from it. As a result, that which rises above and beyond that visible and tangible world becomes a problem for our knowledge. This is Kant's critique. Kant knows that a culture cannot live without foundations, In his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason), (in 18^{de} century feminine: die Vernunft, now masculine, der Vernunft) he says that faith does offer a way out. In other words, here you have a philosopher who says that the fundamentals can only be saved by a certain faith. That is actually Kant.

Most articles and even dictionaries emphasize only 1ste part: namely, the limits of human cognition, as understood by the moderns. So the result is that he gives the impression of not believing in other things. He says that "Gott, die Welt und die Seele" (God, the world and the soul) are basic ideas, which remain valid for him, they are not rationally provable and are "only" an act of faith. One must want to believe that man has a soul and that there is a deity. Our modern conceived reason is unable to transcend the sphere of visible things. Gott, Welt and Seele, however, are preserved as a kind of faith. Kant is not an underminer of modern culture. He merely poses the question of how to prove these foundations. Kantian criticalism is thus not postmodernism. Kant preserves theology, cosmology and psychology and says they are fundamental to our culture. Kant is a deeply religious Protestant thinker who addressed a major problem: How are we going to prove the metaphysical or the ontological foundational concepts?

With modern scientific means this is not possible. So it remains to a belief, a Glaube, a fideism (lat. fides = faith) no longer while reasoning, but believing. Kant, as a good believer, lets the Bible come through philosophically. The Bible also demands faith for those great truths. Metaphysics or ontology stands or falls with basic concepts: God, (theology) world, (cosmology,) and psychology (soul). He knows that Western culture and all cultures cannot proceed without those three basic concepts. He says there is a way out: a kind of philosophical faith in those foundations. Kant continues to fundamentally believe in a metaphysics. The German idealists: Fichte, Schelling, and especially Hegel, elaborate on that metaphysics of

Kant. They say Kant has shown them the way and build on what he presents as faith. It is a partial return to a kind of Platonism, which still lingers today. Schelling is a romantic in the philosophical sense of the word. Fichte also exerted a great influence on Romanticism. Hegel knew Romanticism very well.

Romanticism as a philosophical movement emerges in 1790 century in literature, art, painting.... The main concept of romanticism is: life in all its forms. All romantic philosophy stands or falls with the concept of life. Theological, psychological and even cosmological. Romantics tend to conceive of the universe as a whole, holistically. They react against a kind of rationalism that makes abstract concepts central. They do not deny abstract concepts but say that life is much more than that. That makes itself felt in music, poetry, mind, feeling, and especially those disciplines they want to favor. Romantics do preserve logical reasoning. They retain the good qualities of rationalism but see its limits.

Goethe, who was in the midst of Romanticism, said it in winged words: *Grau mein Freund sind alle Theorien, Grün des Lebens goldner Baum* (Gray my friend are all theories, Green of life golden tree). Theory is contrasted with life, which is typically romantic. Here you have the romantic accent. There also circulates a superficial understanding of romance: rose-colored and moonshine. It's not about that here. Romantics have restored value to children's stories and fairy tales. Rationalists don't know how to deal with them, given their abstract notions. Romantics also stress the paranormal and occult. This is usually concealed in our textbooks. One knows too little about it, and one prefers to conceal it. But that is a form of negationism. Why should it be concealed? It is a historical fact. A certain stratum of the romantics also wants drug use: they want to broaden the narrow worldview of rationalism in all directions, but that can lead to derailments.

What is also definitely there with the romantics is community life, The rationalists were individualists. The romantics are not as individualistic in attitude as the rationalists. They argue that one comes to his full potential only in a popular community. The solitary abstract thinking man is only one aspect of total man. They emphasize the concept of "people. The National Socialists developed this idea further, in a strongly biological sense. Biological life was held in high esteem by the romantics. The basic concept was nature, not so much as an object of natural science but as a living environment. A beautiful forest, a lake, a mountain range ... these are for man much more than objects of abstract science. A very different life and worldview element

comes to the fore in Romanticism. Schelling is a full-blooded romantic. Hegel, too, knows this very well. Goethe in his youth belonged to the streak: Sturm und Drang (storm and stress). That expression is still used in psychology. In his youth, 16-17 years old, he cannot get along with himself and is brimming with tendencies and ideas that he has not mastered. Romanticism has definitely taken root in Western culture. The three return to a kind of Platonism.

I do not make you read books: you are going to lose yourself in them, I look up texts myself, at your level and a little bit above that you learn. And a kind of collective text that gives you a general basis. If you have eaten philosophy you don't understand how one can talk about something without including the philosophical basis.

You know I am a supporter of the theory that scientific psychology and people skills are two different things. Folk people can sometimes be better psychologists than university graduates. Some folk people immediately realize who they are dealing with. Here again Goethe's saying, *Grau ist jede Theorie*, applies....

From the romantics I have the poem: the lorelei. The lorelei is first of all that famous rock along the Rhine. But it is also a mythical figure associated with that rock, whose femininity led boaters to destruction. The Romantics adopted that concept. A lorelei is, from a psychological and occult point of view, woman who is beautiful, but destroys your happiness.

We are going to dwell for a moment on cosmology, the big bang theory. I have translated an article on this, because it is well written, but also to show you that cosmology is more than a mere theoretical activity or a pastime for philosophers. The U.S. is participating to the tune of \$3 billion, in the construction of the large hadron collider (LHC), Europe's most powerful particle accelerator, construction of which has begun in Geneva. This is a study of particles smaller than electrons or atomic nuclei, the most recent ones called strings or strings. It's all still in constant evolution. I want you to know something serious about that. It concerns Cern, the Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire. From Geneva, across French territory is a circular installation 27 km long underground to accelerate particles with ultra strong energy. Years ago, it was discovered that in a certain experiment, calculations and reality showed a difference of 1 second. They did not know from where this error came. Until a scientist checked the influence of the moon: and indeed, the moon affects that circuit. Galileo did not want to believe that the moon had any influence on the tides. He must have turned over in his grave.

This science organizes collisions between particles, which then break up into even smaller particles, in order to reveal something of the mystery of matter in their collisions. Otherwise, one cannot study it. Since a few decades, however, the ulterior motive has become the main one, namely to imitate the initial situation of the universe in this way: the big bang. The required 250 billion francs will be paid for this by the 19 European member states plus U.S., Canada, Japan and Russia. It is expected to begin in 2005. All over the world, the scientific community is busy trying to figure out the initial situation of the universe. The astronomer Hoyle, in 1960, used the term "big bang" mockingly. Friedman, a Russian, and our Belgian physicist Lemaître, prof at Louvain, already had an understanding of it.

Einstein's relativity only becomes understandable when all matter originally arises from a single atom. The explosion of the primordial atom leads to a universe expanding in all directions. The universe is in constant motion at tremendous speeds. Through careful study and mathematical calculations, Friedman and Lemaître came to argue that one can only understand Einstein's theory of relativity if one considers as the origin of the universe, one compressed atom. Many scientists could not assume that the universe had a beginning. The Bible has said for centuries that the universe had a beginning. We are now lapsing into a religious theory. But neither Friedman nor Lemaître relied on the Bible. They did rely on mathematical structural formulas. Now we have evidence for the residual radiation left in the universe. But back then one did not have experimental data. As recently as 1960, Hoyle mocked Lemaître as he entered an auditorium in Pasadena: "this is the big bang man. 1929 Hubble discovered that galaxies are expanding. In 1965 they discovered fossil radiation rather by accident. The discoverers even received the Nobel Prize for it. It is considered vitally important because it is thought to provide new technical applications in the fields of physics, medicine and even space travel.

Classical cosmology now belongs to physics, 20 years ago cosmology was scoffed at in physics circles: even science has its fashions. Even 15 years ago one could read articles saying that cosmology made no sense. Now the world of physicists is brimming with cosmology.

Philosophy we have with the question: how real are sciences and how are they real? That is method from Kant. Kant says that modern science relies on reason, but that reason is bounded, the boundary question makes it philosophy. How far do the discoveries of natural science extend? Whether that is physics or religious science, genetics or paranormology that does not matter. A science is limited to a sector of total reality. Philosophers want to situate those

subjects in the totality of reality. But if you do that then you exceed the domain of the subject science. And Kant saw that very well, that scientific reason, when it comes to the big questions, has its limits.

The cosmos, the deity and the human soul and its freedom. This is the philosophical side of things. We start with the professional sciences but we pay attention to the boundaries. What method do those sciences apply and what axioms do they have. The limits are exposed in the method: what axioms apply? The premises determine the method and vice versa. You can distinguish but not separate. That is the purpose of the course. I am looking for solid articles. Since 1940 I have been doing that. In 2000 I will have been at that for 60 years, and I am at it lol. I regularly read professional literature to stay informed. With that, some of my courses remain the same, but some are updated. It is with that that I observe that science exhibits fashions. Philosophy evolves, professional science evolves, explosively, but the basic traits that remain the same,. And especially the concept of culture is in the background. What is the general concept that is called culture in all these worldviews? It always comes down to the same thing: the grasping of the given and the requested and the method of resolution.

NASA was the first to have observations of the ozone hole in stratosphere in 1983, the scientific world was not prepared for it, and the existence of that opening was not taken seriously In Britain and Japan, scholars saw that this NASA discovery did matter. Physical observation is valued with delay. The term "indirect observation" is not poorly chosen. Direct is not. There is a theory in devices, which makes observation indirect perception. Kant states: physical reason does not see reality as it is, but reality seen through theoretically constructed instruments as an intermediate term. Totally objective is not that perception. Those instruments are an intermediate term that imposes limits on that perception. You see Kant is still relevant today. The rationality of science is fixed, space travel, the atomic bomb.... and yet there are limits and science is still constantly evolving. Science is extraordinarily precise and real but it is bounded. Hence the term subject science is a lucky term. Indeed, you are in a subject with well-defined premises and methods, and what lies beyond them does not belong to subject science because the method and axioms of science impose it. Discovering the ozone hole was not appreciated, because of the preconceptions and methods prevailing at the time.