The Hermeneutic of Greek Trinitarianism
An Approach Through Intentionality Analysis*

by Eugene Webb

The hermeneutic challenge in the study of the history of Christian thought is a complex one. To the extent that this tradition of thought is the authentic expression of both spiritual experience and rational intelligence, it demands of the interpreter not only a sensitivity to the experiences in question but also a willingness to insist upon the maximum of analytic clarity. Bernard Lonergan has developed what can hardly be doubted is the most fully explicit analysis of theological method currently available, and it is also one that does not evade either of the demands just mentioned. I would like in this paper to discuss the theological applicability of Lonerganian "intentionality analysis" to the interpretation of the idea of the Trinity as it was developed in the fourth and fifth centuries by Greek Patristic thinkers.

The question of the meaning of Greek trinitarianism is a problem well worth studying in a Lonerganian perspective both because renewed dialogue between the Eastern and Western churches will lead to a need for careful explication of basic concepts and because Catholic theologians have so far given the distinctively Greek line of thought comparatively little study and have made little effort to relate it to systematic theology as subsequently developed.

Though all subsequent trinitarian thought in both East and West has been founded on the conceptual and terminological distinctions made in the East in the fourth and fifth centuries, the focus of Catholic theologians has tended predominantly to bear on the western line of development from Augustine through Aquinas. Lonergan himself, in the last lines of that portion of his *De Deo Trino* translated into English as *The Way to Nicea* has said, "Given that later systematisation, however, it is only with the greatest difficulty that we who have inherited it can come to understand how the ante-Nicene authors could in fact have said what in fact they did say" (1976: 137). One might add that the same could be said of the post-Nicene Greek authors through Chalcedon. To discuss the terms and statements that were developed in this centrally formative period of the orthodox tradition through a consideration of what they could have been intelligently intended to mean by inquirers whose minds

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share with our own a common structure of intentionality should offer a valuable contribution to the hermeneutics of dogma, and perhaps also some useful preparation for the type of dialogue that would need to precede an actual rapprochement between the Eastern and Western Christian communions.

Briefly described, the method of intentionality analysis as I intend to employ it consists of the analysis of propositions into references to the particular types of object that may be intended by the various possible types of intentional operation. One of the major potential contributions of this method to theology, I believe, is that it is able to address questions of precise meaning without reductionism. It can seek specificity of reference, that is, without falling into the difficulties that have tended to beset the type of analytic philosophy founded on empiricist psychology (with its tendency to assume a perceptionist epistemology) or on "ordinary language" (with its tendency to canonize what Lonergan has termed "common sense" meaning). It can also seek specificity without ruling out the presence in religious experience of the unspecifiable. In fact, one of its advantages, as I hope to show, is that it can make clear what the exact place and significance of the indefinable and unanalyzable is in theological reflection without begging questions or letting enthusiasm for the numinous become an excuse for intellectual casualness in the areas in which analysis of meaning and critical verification have their own necessary role to play.

To describe more explicitly what I mean by intentionality analysis, it involves specification of the objects of the four basic types of intentional operation as analyzed by Lonergan: attention, understanding, judgment, and decision. This categorization of types of human intentionality is, of course, familiar to any reader of Lonergan as is the reasoning by which he derives it from experience of cognitional process and reflection upon the basic questions of what we are doing when we are knowing and what we know when we do it. To explain Lonergan's analysis and his arguments for it in detail and to lead the reader through the process of experiential and critical self-appropriation of intentionality that a full understanding of its terms requires would take more space than an essay allows, but in the context of the present Festschrift devoted to aspects of Lonergan's thought it should be possible to assume that the basic concepts are already understood.

It should suffice therefore to say that the method I mean to apply here consists of inquiry into the ways theological statements could be logically intended as references to the objects of the first three operations listed above: to objects of attention (data of sense and of consciousness), objects of understanding (ideas or intelligible possi-

bilities), and objects of judgment (the real or actual, considered as that which may be known through correct understanding as determined by critical reflection upon both interpretation and evidence). These operations will sometimes be referred to in what follows as level 1, level 2, or level 3 operations respectively. They are related as levels of operation in that understanding presupposes some experiential data that can be construed in some pattern, and a judgment of truth presupposes that there is an interpretation that can be judged adequate or inadequate to the data it construes.

The intentional object proper to a level 1 operation will be referred to as an "empirical" object and is meant to encompass both data of sense and data of consciousness in so far as the latter are in any sense objective. A feeling, for example, can be noticed and brought to focal awareness by the act of attention; this renders it objective in the sense in which the term is used here. This is not to suppose, however, that all experience can be rendered objective. The actual performance of intentional operations is immediately experienced and therefore irreducibly subjective.

The object of a level 2 operation will be referred to as a "theoretical" object, by which it is meant that the object is theoretically conceivable even if its reality may remain questionable. What can not only be considered as a possibility but also critically verified will be called a "real" object.

Because the theological doctrines this essay will be concerned with have to do not with world-immanent objects but with the personal and the transcendent, it will be helpful, in the case of an object known through critical judgment, to make a terminological distinction Lonergan has not made himself between a "real" object and an "existential" one. A "real" object, as was just explained, is that which can be not only understood but also judged actual on the basis of evidence. By an "existential" object, on the other hand, I will mean the objective presence of a subject or, to be more precise, of the subject's manifestation in operations. By a "subject" I mean the source of intentional operations.

The importance of the distinction between real and existential objects lies in the fact that subjectivity as such cannot except indirectly and analogously be the object of any intentional operation and is therefore "unspecifiable" in the sense mentioned above. One can inquire about a subject, and one can judge that there are sufficient signs of consciousness and purposefulness to warrant the judgment that observed behavior has its source in subjectivity, but strictly speaking one cannot focus attention on an objectively present subject, nor can one understand a subject through analysis of it into elements and their relations. One can analyze the operations in which

subjectivity manifests its presence, but the subject as such is not directly observable or intelligible and therefore cannot, I would suggest, be "known" in the strict sense, although it can be "known about" through inference, and its presence can be experienced immediately in the performance of intentional operations.

To speak of operations as intentional implies that they involve both a subject and an object. The "subject" is the one who does the intending. The "object" is what is intended. The term "intentional" implies the presence of both subjectivity and an object. An operation may be termed "intentional" in that its subject consciously performs it, i.e., experiences immediate self-presence in the operation and by this experiential self-presence controls its performance and directs it toward what is intended. The term "consciousness" will be used in this paper to refer to the experiential self-presence of a subject in the performance of intentional operations—his awareness, that is, of his intending and of what he intends. (Cf. Lonergan 1972: 7-10)

It will be useful for the purposes of the present analysis to distinguish between the subject as "immanent" and the subject as "transcendent." The subject is self-present in each operation; in this sense the subject may be referred to as "immanent" in the operation, i.e., the subject experiences immediate self-presence as consciously performing the operation. If a single subject performs more than one operation, then the subject is "transcendent" in relation to each of the operations. The term "transcendent" as used here does not mean that the subject stands beyond or apart from operations but rather that one and the same subject can be immanent in a variety of individual operations. This distinction between the subject considered as immanent and as transcendent can be helpful, as I hope to show subsequently, in interpreting the relation between the Patristic conceptions of *ousia* and *hypostasis* in trinitarian theology.

Kierkegaard was more directly concerned than Lonergan has been with the question of what it means to speak of transcendent subjectivity, and it may be helpful to consider him briefly in connection with the present theme, since what he had to say has a bearing on theological as well as psychological and epistemological issues. In his *Philosophical Fragments* Kierkegaard speaks of the paradoxical character of the drive to know objectively the subjective, and he suggests that this concern is the moving force of all fully conscious inquiry:

> . . . for the paradox is the source of the thinker's passion, and the thinker without a paradox is like a lover without feeling: a paltry mediocrity. But the highest pitch of every passion is always to will its own downfall; and so it is also the supreme passion of the Reason to seek a collision, though this

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collision must in one way or another prove its undoing. The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think. (1967: 46)

The goal of discovery Kierkegaard refers to here is subjectivity, which thought cannot think because thought cannot reduce it to an idea, i.e., to an object of intellection. But he also has something further in mind, as he makes clear a few pages later where he identifies the paradoxical object thought seeks with God, who for Kierkegaard is pure, transcendent subjectivity:

But what is this unknown something with which the Reason collides when inspired by its paradoxical passion, with the result of unsettling even man's knowledge of himself? It is the Unknown. It is not a human being, in so far as we know what man is; nor is it any other known thing. So let us call this unknown something: *the God* . (Ibid.: 49)

The relevance for theology of this conception of God—as transcendent subject who manifests his presence in operations but who cannot himself be objectified for thought—should be clear when one remembers the role that the apophatic emphasis has played in Christian theology. Kierkegaard's thought on this matter virtually echoes that of St. Basil of Caesarea as quoted and commented upon by the Russian Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky:

God manifests Himself by His operations or energies. "While we affirm," says St. Basil, "that we know our God in his energies, we scarcely promise that he may be approached in his very essence. For although his energies descend to us, his essence remains inaccessible." This passage from the letter to Amphilocus . . . will have an importance of the very first order for the doctrine of the vision of God. Byzantine theologians will often quote this authority in formulating the distinction between the inaccessible *ousia* and its natural processions, the *energeiai* or manifesting operations. (1963: 65, quoting Basil, Letter 234)

To speak in such a way carries language and thought to their furthest reach, beyond which lies the silence of non-discursive contemplation. For the present purpose, however, what is important is the distinction between what can be objectively analyzed and what cannot. Any statement that purports to designate or express an understanding of anything at all, whether actual or merely possible, must refer to what can function at least in some aspect as the object of some intentional operation, since apart from such operations it is not possible for a human inquirer to intend anything.

It is here that Lonergan's analysis of intentional operations has such usefulness. There are, of course, many ways in which intending can take place, but one of the

great values of Lonergan's analysis of cognitional process is that it demonstrates the reducibility of all forms of intention to the basic types described above or to combinations of the same. This makes it possible to sort out what could otherwise be a confusing plethora of meanings and to determine the conditions under which an actual intention can take place. The latter point is of considerable importance for the philosopher or the historian of thought, since it is possible that some statements, including some that may have become uncritically sacrosanct either to religious or to secular common sense, may upon analysis be discovered incapable of expressing any actual intention.

With these methodological reflections in mind it should now be possible to consider how intentionality analysis can be used to clarify the meaning of theological propositions. As was mentioned earlier the example here chosen for analysis will be the Trinitarian theology that developed in the fourth and fifth centuries among the Greek Fathers. This will be treated as a development that culminated in the Christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. It is appropriate to consider this a distinct unit in Christian intellectual history, since after Chalcedon there were no further enduring new conceptions of trinitarianism on the part of the Greeks. The distinctly Latin development under the influence of Augustine of Hippo and of Marius Victorinus before him followed a different line of reasoning (that of analogy of the three "Persons" to the components of a human mind) and had its major influence after Chalcedon and almost exclusively in the West.

An important benefit of an approach by way of intentionality analysis to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, is that it can do much to clarify the difference between the Western and Eastern conceptions of the doctrine. It is a commonplace in the history of this issue that the Greek Fathers took their point of departure from our knowledge of the three concrete *hypostases* and went on to affirm their unity of essence (*ousia*) whereas the Latin line of thought took its from belief in the absolute unity of God and then inquired as to what there could be said to be three of within that unity. To phrase this in terms of the principles of intentionality analysis, the Greek discussion began with reference to what are known as three distinct objects of intention, whereas the Latin began with consideration of the unity of the subject who is God. Intentionality analysis can fit readily into the Greek line of thinking, since it can address itself to the question of what kinds of intentional objects *prosopa*, *hypostases*, *physeis*, and *ousiai* could be interpreted to be. The Latin approach, on the other hand, since it proceeds by analogy and inquires

not into objects in the proper sense but into the self-relatedness of a subject, would seem to require a quite different method of analysis.

Much of the fourth and fifth century Greek discussion of the developing doctrine of the Trinity was a gradual process of distinguishing the meanings of the terms just mentioned, especially *ousia*, *physis*, and *hypostasis*, to the point that they could eventually function with the precision they do in the Chalcedonian Definition. Just how gradual a process this was can be seen from the fact that although the Cappadocians developed a clear conception of the distinctions by the middle of the fourth century, numerous important figures, such as Athanasius and Jerome, continued to equate their meanings right up to the time of Chalcedon (Lonergan, 1961: 206). At that council, however, it was the generally agreed distinctions between *ousia*, *physis*, and *hypostasis* that made it possible to state an exact conception of their relations in the person of the incarnate Son. It will be helpful to consider the process by which these terms gradually took on the meanings they were to have.

During the course of its development the concept of *ousia* in theology took on several quite different meanings (Prestige, 1952: 190-92). The initial ambiguity had to do with whether *ousia* referred to some kind of ethereal "matter" or "stuff" (which could at least in principle, therefore, be an object of sense), or to an intelligible form or essential definition (an object of intellection), or whether it referred to the innermost, deeply hidden core of personhood. In this last meaning, *ousia* would signify the divinity considered as an "existential object," in the sense in which this term was defined above.

There are examples in Patristic usage of all three meanings, but on the whole the divine *ousia* was identified primarily with that which is expressed not in a definition but in the divine "I Am," i.e., in a statement expressing the existential presence of the divine subject. The fundamental tendency in Greek Patristic usage, therefore, was toward the use of the term *ousia* neither in the empirical nor in the generic sense but in the existential, and such figures as Hippolytus, Athanasius, and Epiphanius explicitly rejected the generic sense in favor of the existential when applying the term to God (Prestige, 1952: 160, 167). (This tendency continued also in the Latin tradition, as is exemplified in Aquinas's denial that God is composed of matter and form or that God is in any genus; cf. *Summa Theologica* 1, q. 3, a. 2 and a. 5.)

By the fourth century no theologian considered the divine *ousia* to be composed of any kind of matter. There was less agreement, however, regarding the question of whether it could be properly and not just analogously the object of an act of intellec-

tion. The writings of Basil of Caesarea can serve as an example of the ambiguity of discussions regarding this point. On the one hand Basil could say that "the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* is the same as that between the general and the particular; as for instance, between the animal and the particular man" (Letter 236,6; quoted in Stevenson: 115), which would clearly place God in a genus and thereby make his *ousia* an object of intellection. On the other hand Basil also stated explicitly, as cited above in the passage from Lossky, that the divine *ousia* cannot be an object of human understanding because we know God from his operations, not from intellection of his essence (*ousia*). The operations attest the presence of a subject as their source. We can know *that* he is, in other words, but except that he is identified as the subject of operations, we do not know *what* he is. In the same place Basil also objected against those who insisted on a statement of the intelligible form of the divine *ousia*, "if I confess I am ignorant of the essence, they turn on me again and say, So you worship you know not what. I answer that the word to know has many meanings" (Letter 234; Stevenson: 116).

Basil did not specify what those meanings might be, but his words suggest the relevance of an analysis in terms of cognitional operations and their objects. It is one thing to know through experience some datum of sense or consciousness. It is another to know the intelligible as a formal possibility. And it is something else quite different to believe in the existential presence of the divine "I Am," which cannot be expressed in any definition and does not answer to the question "what?" but only to the question "who?"

That *ousia* in the fully developed orthodox Trinitarian theology of the fourth century referred to the existential core of personhood rather than to categorial contents is clear from the way fourth century theologians conceived of the relation between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, which came to be used to refer to a concretely objective presence of the subject who was the *ousia*. As Prestige described it in a discussion of the usage of Athanasius,

> This term [*hypostasis*] . . . is commonly translated Person, but it does not mean an individual person in the ordinary sense.... Applied to God, it expresses the idea of a solid and self-supported presentation of the divine reality. All the qualities which modern speech associates with personality, however, such as consciousness and will, are attributed in Greek theology to the complementary term of the definition; they belong to the divine substance [*ousia*], the single being of God, and to the several "Persons" only by virtue of their embodiment and presentation of that unique being. (1948: 92)

Such "embodiment and presentation" of essential subjectivity is precisely the function

of what was defined above as the "existential object."

The term *prosopon* is closely related to *hypostasis*, but it was also sufficiently distinct in meaning to have been preserved in the Chalcedonian Definition as a separate term. According to Prestige, "strictly speaking, *prosopon* was a non-metaphysical term for 'individual' while *hypostasis* was a more or less metaphysical term for 'independent object'" (1952: 179). The emphasis of *prosopon* (which could be translated by "face" as well as by "person") was on objective presence as apprehended, i.e., as an object of experience or understanding. The emphasis of *hypostasis* was on the same concrete phenomenon as able to stand up to verification, i.e., as objectively real.

From the point of view of intentionality analysis, the relations between *prosopon*, *hypostasis*, and *ousia* in the Greek doctrine of the Trinity presupposed by the Council of Chalcedon, can be logically interpreted, in the following manner, as involving a successive series of steps in the penetration to the existential core of an instance of concrete, objective presence of the subject who is God. This can be formulated as follows:

Prosopon would refer to the empirical perceptibility (in the case of the incarnate Son) and the intelligibility (in the cases of each of the *hypostases*) of the divine presence as manifested in particular operations. In the terms of the theoretical framework assumed in this paper, the *prosopon* could be said to constitute the subsidiary "theoretical" object of the level three operation by which the concrete presence of the divine subject is known; i.e., it defines the point of focus of the operation of judgment. It was the operations of the Persons, for the Greek Fathers, that distinguished them and rendered them individually identifiable. It was a commonplace that the characteristic operation of the Father was to be the eternal source of all that is, that of the Son was revelation (i.e., presentation or manifestation), and that of the Spirit was sanctification.

Hypostasis would refer to the concreteness or objective actuality of this intelligible presence. It constitutes the "real" object of the operation of judgment—objective in that it can be inquired into and known by way of intentional operations, "real" in that it is judged to be actual and not just conceivable or imaginary.

Ousia would refer to the inner core of subjecthood, the "I Am," wholly present in each *hypostasis* as the transcendent subject immanent in each. It constitutes the "existential" object that is affirmed when one judges that this "real" object (the *hypostasis*) is the presence of the one subject who is true God. As that which cannot be defined but only named as God, the *ousia* is unanalyzable into any elements

and therefore transcends intellection absolutely (since intellection involves discerning relations among elements). Here is found the inherently unspecifiable actuality of God, which is approachable only through *apophasis*, the way of negation.

Despite his somewhat different terminology, this analysis accords exactly with Prestige's comment that "when the doctrine of the Trinity finally came to be formulated as one *ousia* in three *hypostaseis*, it implied that God, regarded from the point of view of internal analysis, is one object [i.e., one subject or "existential" object]; but that regarded from the point of view of external presentation, He is three objects [i.e., "real" objects]; His unity being safeguarded by the doctrine that these three objects of presentation are not merely precisely similar, as the semi-Arians were early willing to admit, but, in a true sense, identically one" (1952: 169). As Prestige phrased it in his own graphic analogy: ". . . if Christianity is true, the same stuff or substance of deity in the concrete has three distinct presentations—not just three mutually defective aspects presented from separate points of view, in the sense that the Matterhorn has a northern face and an eastern face and an Italian face, but three complete presentations of the whole and identical object, namely God, which are nevertheless objectively distinct from one another" (Ibid.: 168). Or to put the same point in the language of intentionality analysis, the Greek Fathers believed that God could be discovered as an objective presence along three lines of inquiry terminating in three distinct objects of understanding and judgment, each of which manifests the presence of a single subject who is present as a whole in each of the three. As Prestige phrased it, for the Greek Fathers, "as seen and thought, He is three; as seeing and thinking, He is one" (Ibid.: 301). Or to state it in terms of intentional objects: as "real" object God is three; as "existential" object God is one.[1]

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[1] The idea that God is a single subject who is nevertheless three real objects could perhaps sound implicitly Sabellian, but Basil himself argued against Sabellianism in a way that can help to clarify the central issue because it correlates closely with the terms of intentionality analysis as defined and applied in this paper. His objection was that "merely to enumerate the differences of Persons (*prosopa*) is insufficient; we must confess each Person (*prosopon*) to have an existence in real *hypostasis*. Now Sabellius did not even deprecate the formation of the persons without *hypostasis*, saying as he did that the same God, being one in matter (*to hypokeimeno*) was metamorphosed as the need of the moment required, and spoken of now as Father, now as Son and now as Holy Ghost" (Letter 210, 5; Stevenson: 112). Basil argued, in other words, that neglecting the question of the actuality of the *hypostases* as real objects of the operation of critical judgment, Sabellius reduced the objectivity of the Persons to something merely phenomenal. He treated them, that is, as objects only of experience and understanding, but not of judgment. For further discussion of Sabellianism, see Prestige, 1952: 160–62. Also cf. Prestige 1948: 93, explaining the thought of St. Athanasius: "The entire difference between the Persons is one not of

To state more explicitly the basic issue of the identity of *ousia* in the three objective *hypostases* in terms of a distinction between transcendent and immanent subject: God, the one divine subject, considered as trinitarian Person or *hypostasis* is immanent in the hypostatic operations and is in this sense intelligible as theoretical object by way of the characteristics he manifests in the operations. As the single, identical subject of all the operations, on the other hand, he is transcendent in relation to the operations that distinguish the *hypostases*. To say this does not imply that as transcendent he is a fourth something beyond or apart from the *hypostases*. Without operations he would not be a subject at all, as that term is used in this analysis, and therefore he could have no separate existence as subject apart from the *hypostases*. In the context of such an analysis, therefore, God must be interpreted as one subject who is objectively present in his entirety in the intelligible and affirmable reality of three distinct objective presentations.

This consideration of the history of usage in the fourth century, then, makes clear what the Council of Chalcedon was affirming in its endorsement of the trinitarian teaching that came to it from the councils of Nicea and Constantinople, and it establishes the meanings of the terms *homoousion*, *ousia*, and *hypostasis*, in the Chalcedonian Definition. *Ousia* developed in the Greek theological milieu into a technical term referring to the existential reality of the one divine subject manifest in each of three concrete presentations (the *hypostases*). Among these, the Son was also phenomenally distinct (as *prosopon*) as well as distinctly knowable (as *hypostasis*) through a judgment of his objective historical reality. The term *homoousion*, which Nicea had left undefined, took on in this context of usage the clear meaning of a reference to the single identity of the one transcendent subject in the three *hypostases*. There was one God, in other words, who was concretely present as a whole in each of three presentations, each of which could be individually considered, inquired into, conceived of, and judged to be a real object (*hypostasis*) that was the actual presence of a single existential object (the concretely present *ousia*). The Father could be understood as the source beyond the world of the presence of both the Son and the Spirit in the world. The Son was knowable as the God-man in whom the one divine subject (*ousia*) became incarnate as the performer of human operations. And the Holy Spirit was the immanent, dynamic presence of the same divine subject within him which

content but of manner. Nothing whatever exists to differentiate between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit except the difference of aspect with which each presents the whole reality of God. God exists Fatherwise, Sonwise, and Spiritwise . . . ."

he, operating as man, could reflect upon, inquire about, experience in immediacy, and judge to be the presence of God within him. The title "Christ" ("anointed") as attributed to Jesus was in Biblical usage a reference to the fact of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit as the principle of his inner life and his actions and was so understood in Patristic thought. The status of each of the trinitarian *hypostases* as affirmed reality lay in the fact that each could be known objectively by way of distinct lines of inquiry.

The focus of the Chalcedonian Definition itself is not on the doctrine of the Trinity as such, which it presupposes, but on its major corollary, the Incarnation. The principal contribution of Chalcedon to the theology of the Incarnation lay in the clear distinction it made between *physis* and *hypostasis*. Its use of the term *hypostasis* carried forward that developed in the Trinitarian controversies of the preceding century. The only difference lay in the emphasis placed on the fact that the *hypostasis* was the presence of a subject. For the earlier discussion what was emphasized was that each *hypostasis* was an *objective* presentation of the divine subject; for Chalcedon the emphasis lay on the fact that the second *hypostasis* was an objective presentation of the divine *subject.* Chalcedon was concerned with the way in which one subject could be interpreted as the point at which two natures became linked. The Chalcedonian explanation of the Incarnation was in essence that one and the same subject, objectively knowable as the second *hypostasis*, could and did perform operations according to the operative capacities of both the divine and the human natures. The Chalcedonian Definition itself, however, does not express this in exactly this language. It will be necessary therefore to consider the possibilities of meaning implicit in the Definition itself especially with regard to the meaning of the term *physis* or "nature."

Physis can be interpreted in two ways, one essentialistic and the other what might be called dynamic. In the essentialistic use of the term, the "nature" of a thing is equivalent to its intelligible form or "essence." In this use "nature" must be considered as the focal object only of a level two operation.

A dynamic conception of *physis* or "nature," on the other hand, would be quite different. In this use of the term, the *physis* or "nature" of a thing would be that which determines its operative capacity. If *physis* is interpreted in the latter way in connection with the Chalcedonian Definition, then its reference to the human *physis* refers to the capacity for specifically human operations, i.e., operations determined by the limiting conditions imposed on operations by the characteristics of a human organism. Since for Chalcedon the doctrine of the Incarnation has to do not with a

static object of contemplation, but with concrete human operations on the part of God become man, it is clear that the term *physis* here must be interpreted in the dynamic sense, i.e., as referring to that which determines operative capacity.

Evidence for this interpretation can be found in the historical context as well. Part of this is the *Tome* of Leo, addressed to the Council, which speaks of Christ as involving two "forms" (i.e., natures) in such a way that "each 'form' does the acts which belong to it, in communion with the other; the Word, that is, performing what belongs to the Word, and the flesh carrying out what belongs to the flesh. . ." (Percival: 256). This statement involves some ambiguity, since in the case of the human nature ("the flesh") it could on the face of it be interpreted as though it meant the nature were the subject of the operations, but it seems clear that what Leo actually intended was the idea that there is one divine Person ("the Word") who as subject performed operations by way of the human nature as well as by way of the divine nature. Leo stated this more clearly in a subsequent letter (after the Council) explaining the meaning of the Tome and trying to win support for the Chalcedonian Definition: "...the actions were of one Person all the time...but we perceive from the character of the acts what belongs to either form" (Stevenson: 344).

An additional part of the historical context is the use of the term *physis* among the Cappadocians, for whom, according to Prestige, the term was descriptive and bore on function, as compared with *ousia*, which was more metaphysical and bore on reality (1952: 234). In the sixth century an essentialistic conception of *physis* did become prominent along with a similarly essentialistic conception of *ousia*, with which it came to be treated as virtually synonymous, but that was a later development (Ibid.: 273-5). At Chalcedon it is clear both that *physis* had to do with operative capacity and that it was distinct from *ousia*.

What, however, can be meant specifically by the concept of the divine *physis*, if *physis* is interpreted as the determinant of operative capacity? In the case of the human *physis* of Christ, what is referred to is the capacity to perform human operations. God operating as man in Jesus was able, this would imply, to operate under conditions of limitation, to perform cognitive operations, asking questions and seeking answers, moving from ignorance to knowledge by rational operations, and also to suffer pain as well as experience pleasure, emotional satisfaction, or distress, and so on. It was such a capacity in Jesus that the Chalcedonian Definition affirmed by the phrase "truly man, of a reasonable soul and body." To operate according to the capacity determined by the divine *physis*, on the other hand, would be to

operate without such limitations. The term "divine nature," therefore, must refer to the absence of limiting conditions.

At this point it may be useful to clarify the ambiguity of the term "divine." Like any other term that may be used to refer to the object of an act of judgment, it may be intended to refer either to the object as intelligible or to the object as actual. In the first case the term will designate a conceptual category; in the second it will designate the existential object, i.e., the actual subject. In the terminology of the Chalcedonian theology as explicated in the present analysis, when the term is used to refer to the divine nature, "divine" implies categorization: there is a category labeled "natures," with such subcategories as "divine," "human," "animal," etc. When used to refer to the existential object, on the other hand, the term "divine" refers to the subject of the operations manifested in the *hypostasis*. Since this subject is interpreted not only as immanent in particular operations but also as transcendent in relation to both categories of operation, there is a single, identical subject who is the agent of each. This means that it is one and the same divine subject (i.e., God) who is the source of human operations and of operations that are divine in the categorial sense (i.e., operations according to the capacity of the divine nature).

The possible ambiguity of the term "divine" in discussion of the Chalcedonian Definition lies in the possibility of trying to apply it without distinction between these two meanings to the operations of the God-man and to the subject who was incarnate as the God-man. What could be logically intended by speaking of the human intentional operations of the God-man as "divine" is not that they are operations of the divine nature, which would imply that they lacked those limitations that make human intentionality possible. This is what the Definition excludes when it speaks of "the distinction of natures" as "being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved. . .." What it could logically mean, however, is precisely what is implied by the continuation of the statement just quoted: ". . . and concurring in one *prosopon* and one *hypostasis*, not parted or divided into two *prosopa*. . .." "Divine," in other words has one meaning in reference to the divine nature and another in reference to the subject of both divine and human operations. The first is categorial; the second what might be called "nominative," i.e., it names the subject as "God" and thereby indicates him without defining him. To use the categorial meaning with reference to the subject would be to confuse an object of intellection with an object of judgment, a "theoretical" object with an "existential" object.

It would also undermine the central point of the Chalcedonian theology, which is that God, the divine subject, could and actually did become a man in the proper, literal sense of the word. This is something God could not do if he were limited to operating only according to the capacity of the divine nature, i.e., to performing only unlimited operations. The Chalcedonian affirmation is that the same transcendent subject who performs divine (in the categorial sense) operations could and actually did perform genuinely human operations, i.e., operations in which he operated not "as God" (i.e., without limitations) but "as man" (i.e., in a manner involving all the limitations characteristic of human operations).

As was stated earlier, it is an assumption of the present theoretical framework, as it is also Lonergan's, that consciousness is the experiential self-presence of a subject in operations; it is the subject's immediate experience, that is, of performing the operations in question and intending what they intend (Lonergan, 1972: 8). Applied to the Chalcedonian theology, this would imply that operating as man the divine subject is humanly conscious. It would also imply that operating as God (i.e., in a way that is not subject to limiting conditions) the divine (in the nominative sense) subject is divinely (in the categorial sense) conscious. A subject is conscious in his operations (i.e., he operates consciously), and therefore he is conscious in a way determined by the character of the operation. Consciousness, in other words, belongs to the subject as a function of the subject's operations and therefore of the "nature" according to which they are performed. Interpreted in such terms, the doctrine of divine Incarnation means that the one God could and actually did in a humanly conscious manner perform human intentional operations: experiencing, wondering, inquiring, interpreting, verifying, deliberating, deciding, and acting in a genuinely human way with all the limitations that are essential to genuine human consciousness. This is clearly what was implied at Chalcedon in the affirmation that the same Jesus Christ who was "truly God" was also "truly man, of a reasonable soul and body" and "in all things like unto us, without sin" (Schaff: 62).

It was such an understanding of the doctrine of Incarnation that culminated the line of inquiry running from the Cappadocians to Chalcedon. It was to clarify this central mystery of the Christian faith that the doctrine of the Trinity was developed. The distinction between the divinity of the Father and that of the Spirit-filled Son was implicit in the early Christian belief that in some as yet undefined way God had become man in Jesus. The development of the Trinitarian doctrine with its distinctions between *prosopon*, *hypostasis*, *ousia*, and *physis* made it possible for the

bishops assembled at Chalcedon to state with concrete understanding and precision of expression the belief that the one eternal subject Who is God did without change take on the limitations of human nature and live both objectively and subjectively as a concrete human person, a man among men. What they achieved in the way of understanding through that long effort of clarification is easily lost sight of, especially if the imagination seizes on their terms and uses them imprecisely and in a reifying way. One of the great benefits of the methodological clarity to which Father Lonergan has contributed so much in his study of human intentionality is the possibility it offers of preserving (or perhaps recovering) what the Fathers won through such labor and bequeathed to the faithful of both East and West.

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