

Even though, with my appropriation of Habermas' distinction between *Lebenspraxis* and *Diskurs*, I have no longer spoken of "fully reflective understanding," I find it interesting that I still speak—in effect, if not in so many words—of "fully critical reflection."

Thus, for example, I can argue that, in ordinary usage, "theology" refers, not to *all*, but to only *some*, of what Christians think, say, and do about God—namely, to "such as is involved in reflecting more or less critically on the validity of all of it" (*Doing Theology Today*: 7). Or, again, I can argue that "no theology is likely to be accepted as critical reflection in the full and proper sense of the words that excludes critically validating the credibility of the witness on which it reflects" (19). And in the same vein, I can conclude that "no reflection on the validity of the Christian witness can credibly claim to be fully critical that exempts its claim to truth or credibility from such validation. On the other hand, to hold that theology in the strict sense critically validates all the claims of Christian witness, including its claim to be credible, is simply to take seriously our own situation in determining what theological reflection has to do if its claim to be fully critical is still to be accepted in this situation" (77).

I find this interesting because it suggests that, notwithstanding my appropriation of Habermas' distinction, I have also recognized all along, as he does, that there are two levels on which questions of the validity of claims may be pursued and answered, and that the reflection required thereby may be more or less critical, depending upon whether it takes place immediately, on the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis, or rather mediately, on the secondary level of (fully) critical reflection and proper theory. To be sure, I have sometimes expressed this by distinguishing between "precritical" and "critical" levels of reflection, which hardly conveys the same idea as "more or less (fully) critical." But even then I was obviously struggling to make place for the same recognition.

Perhaps the important thing to take account of, in any case, is that one can be critical of claims to validity in two different ways: either by remaining uncritical of the norms by which validity claims may be validated; or by becoming critical even of such norms themselves, by reference to the criteria

by which the validity of the norms may in turn need to be validated. If the reflection involved in pursuing the first way is "critical," it is clearly rather less so than that involved in pursuing the second, which is literally more critical, because it criticizes not only claims, but also the norms by reference to which claims may be validated on the first, relatively less critical level of reflection.

In this connection, I think of Whitehead's statement distinguishing "the appeal to history" from "the appeal to reason." "The appeal to history," he says, "is the appeal to summits of attainment beyond any immediate clarity in our own individual existence. The appeal to reason is the appeal to the ultimate judge, universal and yet individual to each, to which all authority must bow. History has authority so far, and exactly so far, as it admits of some measure of rational interpretation" (*AI*: 207 f.). Immediate validation of validity claims on the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis is by way of the appeal to history, whereas mediate validation of such claims on the secondary level of critical reflection and proper theory is by way of the appeal to reason.

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