

# Philosophy that is Mindful

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The problem of a mindful methodology is to conceive of man adequately, concretely, heuristically. Traditional efforts at reaching the meaning of man expressed the results of those efforts in words such as *rational animal*. More contemporary efforts result in such expressions as *symbolic animal*. But such efforts have not yielded adequate concrete definition, and if they do yield something heuristic, they do so only in a veiled and unhelpful manner. Man currently is the subject of a range of sciences running from physics through botany (man's turning in the sun is surely sometimes not thoughtful but tropismic!) and psychology to the fields of history and religious studies. Nor are these sciences unrelated; a man's weight may be linked to his nervous system, his morals tied to his history, his prayer improved by his posture. An adequate concrete definition of man must take account of these factors, and if such a field of methodology, or heuris-definition emerges from the tics, then the permanently open heuristic nature of the definition will be helpfully unveiled.

Such a definition does in fact emerge out of the complex and difficult self-attentive reflections of methodology, but it cannot be expressed at present briefly: for it grasps man as a historical integrable many-levelled hierarchy, to be understood by a parallel hierarchy of sciences to be moved to integration through artistry and graceful dramatic living. It is to be noted that the word "integrable" and not the word "integrated" occurs here,

for we are permanently orientated towards more adequate integration and growth, whether we be six or sixty.

Again, I say that such a definition emerges (and it emerges only in the minds of individuals); but it emerges now in a culture where for centuries the inadequate classical definition of man has been ignored or verbally respected, and where the operative definition of man has tended more and more to be *economic animal*. Nor am I speaking here only of the operations of the rulers of nations. I think too of the operations of contemporary parents with regard to themselves and their children. I think of the pressure such parents, and their industrial world, would seek to bring to bear on education for many of them would seem to be, not the initial effort to orientate the human subject to integrable culture and exuberance, but the effort to render the youthful adequate to the contemporary obscenity of values. Nor obviously, do I here hint at an allegiance to some league of decency which deplores an apparent divine error in inventing sex. The great obscenity of our time is the obscenity of mere economic valuation of life and living, an obscenity that cuts us down to a strange scale, measuring us by the length of our car or the weight of our wallet. And of course economic valuation gives a price to sex: neat coverage distracts from psychic and human meaning but will sell the related print or commodity.

I have illustrated in this aside the result of the lack of methodological reflection within the field of human science and human living. One might continue with equally evident illustrations. So, for example, the question of contraception has been juggled with both by those who have inherited a definition of man

as *rational animal* and by those who think symbolically, and the results have been at times obscure, at times alarming. There has yet to emerge a clear-headed reflection mediated by an adequate heuristic which would take account integrally of the range of sciences and arts contributive to human happiness in history. Again, there has been considerable inconclusive debate about bilingualism; but in the contemporary intellectual scene that debate should shift gradually to a methodological clarity that would exploit adequately the significance of such factors as linguistic isolation (Cf. M. Brennan S.J., "The Restoration of Irish Studies," 1964), psychic flexibility and multipotential, and the continually transformable phonemic expression and objectification of cultural advance on the scale of history.

I have deliberately brought my last illustration into realms which are remote. For, I have been writing here not of philosophy which is mindful but of methodology that is mindful – a distinction that I made in the first article of this series – and the difficult scientific reflections of methodology are not popularly communicable. Still, in so far as they are given some expression that can be popularly recognized, that recognition can slowly become a mindful popular philosophy of a people. Thus the complexity of an adequate methodological definition of man may be only dimly understood; but its dim and psychic acknowledgement could lie as component in the implicit assumptions of our dealings with each other. We would find each other mysterious, meaningful, not measurable on the balance of a budget.