

# Philosophy that is Mindful

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Last month I touched on the question of Who am I? as central to man's philosophic, dramatic and religious living. It is a question which is solitary but not selfish, as its full concrete expression makes evident. For, its adequate pursuit lifts the human person to the question to which the ultimate answer is eternal life: Who are we, finite persons and Infinite Persons? But the expansion of the question is through a variety of complementary questions posed by human groups. There is the "Who are We?" question of the man and woman in love, and it is the ever-present tonality of that question in their encounter, reflective and feeling, which alone can keep love fresh in dynamic growth. There is the wider expression, the "Who are we?" of a nation which is the genuine source of its freshened renewal only in so far as it is not tied to a narrow political allegiance inevitably yielding to uncomprehending short-term bias, but fostered by something apolitical, some group concerned with human values in depth. I am not a member of the Gaelic League, but I look to it as committed to raising that basic question adequately.

The adequate raising of that question requires a level of reflectivity which goes beyond the perspective of daily or monthly print to a perspective of historical dimensions. So, for instance, there is an awareness among theoreticians of culture of the significance of cultural and linguistic regionalisation for the continued enriched living of the human group. Such regionalisation has become, in these centuries

of rapid and widespread pseudo-communication, increasingly difficult. Now, the reflectivity which is to come to grips with the significance of this must span a dozen centuries, and the "we" of the question Who are we? must include many generations other than our own. It is a reflectivity which is not invited by the daily print, or by six-year economic programmes. It is a reflectivity which could well be absent from decision-making regarding the economic amalgamation of nations. Yet it is a reflectivity which in fact focuses on human happiness in its widest dimensions.

Concretely the human group is orientated towards deep exuberance and happiness. It is a happiness which is not always immediate, which regularly is mediated through darkness, but deeper for that. Now it is a strange fact that group bias towards immediate and apparent happiness both excludes depth of happiness and suspects any form of opposing idealism to be precisely an exclusion of happiness. Group bias has little comprehension of the fact that vice is undersirable not because of some extrinsic norms of a Legal God, but because it is a source of human misery. It has little comprehension of the fact that the condemnation of economic-minded exclusion of language revival is not a lunatic-fringe strategy of child-torment, but a reflective conclusion of historical dimensions regarding human happiness. To combat such bias, as Bernard Lonergan notes (*Insight*, chap. 7), is no mean task: it requires everything ranging from the delicacy of cultivated interpersonal feelings to the deep understanding tolerance which is charity. But generically it requires an ever-fresh dedication to concrete theoretic reflectivity on the on-going

answer given by the entire group to the question, Who are we? That concrete reflectivity can afford to leave no stone, no stumbling block to human happiness, unturned, uncriticised. Group bias can be challenged in a manner which it finds comprehensible only when in particular regions, be they entertainment or education or economics, the fruit of bias is feelingly made manifest.

In this context the truth and falseness of McLuhan's slogan, "the medium is the message," may be pointed out in relation to the cultivation of the medium of language. It is false in that words as media are precise possible carriers of reasoned meaning, and so I point to the need for reflectivity in all areas of activity of the group by those committed to the value of a particular linguistic medium, to be expressed in that medium, to come forth through that medium. But McLuhan's slogan is true in that the expression of man which is language, especially within cultures not technologically dominated, contains intrinsic relations to the range of feelings which constitute the specific dynamism of a people's progress. The reorientation of feelings, then, can be intrinsic to the revival of a language.

These are remote and difficult issues. Their precise consideration lies within the difficult sciences of methodology, anthropology, etc. It is within these fields that the question, Who are we? is most widely raised – for the question then is transcultural, scientific, and concerned with and for the meaning of all men. Nor can that transcultural question be neglected within any specific human group: it should constitute a radiating core of its reflectivity, and enlighten the more specific questionings which keep human meaning in life-giving growth.