

Questions (I)

9-8-71

Lonergan

(1) Could you briefly synopsize the basic significance of your division of the specialty history into two chapters and what the core essential thrust of each chapter is?

(2) In Insight you use the procedures of mathematics and science to exhibit the nature of the act of understanding. In your discussion of history in Method you seem to employ your analysis of insight in Insight to exhibit the nature of historical inquiry. Is it correct to say that your analysis of History in Method presupposes as its condition of possibility the analysis in Insight?

(3) You have spoken in turn of symbol, interpretation, and history. Would you show how the method might apply in an area of theology, for instance in the INTERPRETATION of St. John's Gospel, which is an instance of a SYMBOLIC and at the same time HISTORICAL narrative. Could one say that interpretation in such a case is better described in terms of validity and invalidity, rather than of truth and falsity?

(4) You seem to be treading a fine line between "perspectivism" and "relativism". Can you indicate more clearly the basis of this distinction, and why it is a more than verbal one?

(5) Taking as a given that perspectivism can never totally be removed, do you think that the employment of theories from the human sciences in historical analysis (e.g. personality-theories in biographic history, or economic theory in economic history) would in a significant way counteract the perspectivism in history?

(Bernhard Jensen)

Questions on August 9th 1971

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6. A propos your remarks on miracles; do you consider that they can be dealt with as exceptions to statistical laws or do they they involve suspension of classical laws?

7. (Jack Hanna) In your account of time you drew attention to the time-spans which underlie or struc are communal and individual activity. You based your analysis on a psychological or intellectual approach. Do you think this approach adequately accounts for the temporal structures that seem unreachable by this intentional approach whether applied to the individual or the group? I am think of, for example, the priority of structure over chronology or narrative in psychology (Freud, Lacan, Piaget) or a Marxist analysis of time in the production process. Is not your view of the subject in time as always identical, ever himself, (if I remember correctly) a major block on the development of a 'scientific' approach to history?

8. (John Maguire) In your lecture on history last friday you explained the fact that contemporaries do not know 'what is going on' in history by referring to our biases, weaknesses, errors, omissions etc. May I suggest the following observations and alternative formulation; (1) You apparently locate the factors which explain the 'impenetrability' of history on the same logical level as individual's conscious acts - intentions, wishes, omissions and so forth. (2) Does this mean that you reject positions, such as the materialist conception of history held by Marx, who said that the historian must present the individual and the group in history not 'as they may appear in their own or in other people's imagination' but in their not-consciously chosen relations to their societies economy and technology (German Ideology, Moscow Edition, p.37) .(Here I bear in mind that modern scholarship shows this conception of history to be quite other than the crude determination of popular caricature). (3) Is there not, presupposed to the conscious activity of persons groups and societies, a structure, the nature of which serves to explain, in answer to a question posed about such structures, rather than about individual projects and intentions, the actions of persons, groups and societies? (4) Does not your analysis emphasize the problem of historiography rather than that of the genesis of historical events? (5) If causes and laws explain contemporary events in the work of the sociologist (Paretian, Marxian, Behaviorist etc.) in what sense is the historian not seeking a similar explanation of past events? Ad B ab: Is it not a false presupposition to separate 'accounts' of events from their 'explanations' with the inevitable result of misleading ourselves as to the nature and limitations of human freedom and possibilities.? (6) Can it not be argued that the materialist conception of history is crucially relevant to the functional specialty history as it applies in theology in that this conception is the most explicit secular intimation of the restrictions and finitude imposed by our being incarnate spirit.

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1. How is the "dialectical method" explained in Insight related to the functional specialty "dialectics" ? Is dialectical method used in any of the other specialties ?
2. What do you now think of the notion of cosmopolis as found in Insight ? And what would be the place of functional specialties in that institution, if any ?
3. Must charity be a collective and institutional effort if it is to change a particular good of order ?
4. What are some other words or phrases you might use in discussing the word 'constitutive' from the phrase 'constitutive meaning' ?
5. In your response to various questions about your natural theology in the last few days on the one hand you stated that your proof for God's existence as developed in chapter 19 is valid and non-classicist and yet on the other hand you deplored the classicist proof approach as something that should be done away with. Could you indicate what the precise difference is between your non-classicist approach to God in chapter 19 of Insight and classicist proofs ?
6. You said that being is completely intelligible because one can keep on asking questions. How do we know that some questions, particularly fundamental questions, are not stupid ? Perhaps some answers to fundamental questions are only possibilities ? There is no way (excluding revelation) of getting certain knowledge here. Perhaps there are some questions to which there are no answers.

(James Kelly, SJ)

111. Monday, August 9th.

1. Your work Grace and Freedom has just appeared in book form. In the light of your current stress on intentionality analysis rather than metaphysics what is the contemporary import of Grace and Freedom?
2. Could you explain the difference between knowing another person as object and knowing him as subject? Is it true to say that to the extent that acts of insight and judgment occur regarding the other one is knowing the other as object rather than as subject?
3. Is 'intersubjectivity' the level of the 'we' prior to the 'I'-'Thou', an occurrence on the level of the psyche and feeling rather than on the level of reflection and decision?
4. Would you relate feeling to the levels of consciousness? In what sense may one speak of spiritual feelings? Are not feelings a matter of sense rather than spirit?
5. In the context of your comments on religion and your discussion in Doctrinal Pluralism of mysticism, could you remark on the following:
 - a) Is mystical consciousness to be understood as being on the level of the experience of grace? Is this why you say that it is beyond images and concepts?
 - b) Is mystical experience what you would designate as a subject-subject encounter with God?
 - c) Is mystical experience to be considered an extraordinary phenomenon or as the natural culmination of the Christian and religious life authentically lead?
6. In discussing intersubjectivity in Insight you mentioned the 'inner psychology and radiating influence of women'. What were the sources for this aspect of intersubjectivity? And where would such information enter into your methodological approach, given the theology of Our Lady?
7. With reference to prudential value judgments ~~XXXXXXXX~~ in the light of comments in Insight and 'Dimensions of Meaning':
 - a) Is a prudential moral judgment simply a probable moral judgment?
 - b) Does your recent description of 'prudential' judgments differ from? How?
 - c) If philosophy now deals with the concrete, is there a space for a unique, personal, moral imperative of the kind described by Rahner in his formal, existential ethic, i.e. one not derivable from moral generalization?