

1910ADTE070: Question and Answer session December 6, 1979

**Question:** This is a request for elaboration of the status of married love, of the 'we' beyond I and Thou (pp. 33 & 57 of *Method*). This clearly is of some significance since 'what holds for the love of a man and woman, also holds in its own way for the love of God and man.' (*Method*, p.113) Barth criticized Schleiermacher for suggesting the ideal of an undifferentiated 'we' beyond the 'I & Thou' of the individual marriage partners. Barth also criticized Roman Catholic theology for exalting this relation to something metaphysical or absolute. (*Church Dogmatics*, Vol 3, Part 4, pp.121-25). Both, Barth believed, lost sight of the essential dualism and the creaturely status of the relationship. Would you care to comment? Is this 'we' relationship possible between people of the same sex?

**Lonergan:** The 'we' prior to the 'I and Thou' is a way of speaking of intersubjectivity, which is spontaneous, indeliberate, prior to advertence. You don't have to stop and think when you see something coming: you put up your arms. It's automatic. It's inevitable. But it can also be true with regard to other people. If someone shrieks, it scares you. It doesn't merely startle you, it scares you. I recount an experience of my own. There's a ramp going up to the Borghese Gardens, and there was a mother and little child coming down, and the little child starting running ahead and was just about to tumble. I was some feet from her but I spontaneously went down ... to save her from falling. It's intersubjectivity. We're already part of one another before we think about it. That's the we prior to the I and Thou, that is, prior to knowledge of the other as other and dependent on that knowledge of the other as other. What is subsequently I and Thou supposes advertence to the I and Thou in some sense: you can say 'you' and 'I' and know the difference, with or without deliberation and choice ... and so on. Now the idea that Schleiermacher and Roman Catholic theology make this (the second one) metaphysical and absolute – well, 'metaphysical' has different meanings. In ordinary English, it's an adjective ... to express rejection, and so on. In its proper meaning it's an adjective to express a rational account of what is meant by 'real,' 'same,' 'distinct,' 'whole,' 'part,' 'finite,' 'infinite,' and so on. What do you mean by these words? What is the objective difference between the truth and falsity of such an assertion? And it goes on to anything. We will explain that more fully when we start a course in metaphysics, but you're able not only to assign the conditions of a proposition being true but of simultaneous propositions, of two different propositions both being true because of the same reality. The problem of God's foreknowledge: it's contingent because what's foreseen is something that needn't exist. It's contingent. Knowing that it exists or will exist is something contingent. But eternity is not infinite time. It's all at once. So at different instances

in the sun's existence, there exists Bucephalus, the horse of Alexander the Great, and some other horse that is the horse of Caesar. At different instances in time the horse's existence and at different instances in the sun's time there was coexistence with these two. But because God is eternal everything is coexistent with him. For example, if an angel were to look at a man and if we look at a man crossing the street, the time the man takes to cross the street is also the time we take to see him cross the street. They run concurrently. But because an angel doesn't take time to see a man crossing the street, he has to see the time as well. He's an Einsteinian. The time is already part of the object for him. It's not part of his own experience. So God knows future events but they are never future to him. So in God's non-time, the occurrence of the event is simultaneous with God's knowing it will exist or is existing or has existed. He knows them all at once, in the same eternal moment that never changes. And because of that simultaneity, there's no necessity imposed upon the event by God's knowing it. Thomas changed his mind on several things, but he didn't change it on that from the earliest writings right to the end. But it's a use of metaphysics. You require a term, a finite, contingent term to make a contingent predication of God. That event is future to us, but it isn't future to God because nothing is future to God.

Now that isn't the whole of the story but it will do to give you an idea of the use to which metaphysics can be put when you're talking about God.

So, absolute: it can mean what is infinite, formally unconditioned, with no conditions whatever, or it can mean logically absolute. *A* cannot be both *B* and not-*B*: the principle of non-contradiction. Or it can mean morally absolute, against the moral law. Or it can mean mathematically absolute. In any system of mathematics, 2 and 2 are going to be 4. Or it can mean absolute in the sense of absolutely true. If it was ever true that Caesar crossed the Rubicon, it will always be true. That Caesar crossed the Rubicon on such and such a day and at such and such an hour – that proposition is true at all times. It is ever true.

Now let's apply it to intersubjectivity, to 'We' and the I and Thou. I have two little fingers that are similar. The two are two in one flesh. To say that my two fingers are in one is metaphysical, in the sense that each is real and each is distinct from the other and both are parts of a whole greater than either. That's metaphysical.

Again, a validly married husband and wife are two in one flesh. It differs from the two in one of two little fingers, inasmuch as the unity of the fingers is natural and the unity of the spouses is moral, based on a decision made in common with lifelong obligations. So it's not the same kind of unity. But it's something that is absolute and metaphysical. It's true, absolute in the sense that it's true.

Barth didn't spend much time on metaphysics.

Is this 'we' relationship possible between people of the same sex? Well, it won't be the same ... It hasn't got the same foundation. There can be an intersubjective element in it. It won't have the duration and won't involve the maturation that occurs between husband and wife. When parents are old and one dies, the other one dies usually pretty soon afterwards: not necessarily but very commonly.

**Question:** If theology mediates between religion and its cultural matrix, a distinction between religion and theology is implied. This in itself implies the further possible distinction between religious authority and theological authority, that is, the difference between the *congregatio fidei* promulgating a doctrine, and Edward Schillebeeckx's publishing a work. But a closer analysis further distinguishes the theologian as subject (with his own religious life) and the results of his or her theological speculation. The theologian, in some way, provides religious authority for his or her theological conclusions. What is at stake here with regard to the problem of authority? Is the distinction between religious authority and theological authority a real one?

**Lonergan:** The basic distinction is between a religion and the culture in which it is embedded. The applied relation is of theology to the religion and to the culture; it mediates between the two. It presupposes the distinction between religion and culture. The distinction between religion and culture is not aboriginal. Religion for the ancients was part of the natural setup. You didn't have to have a church by law established ... Socrates was condemned for atheism because he held that the moon was earth and ... were water, and that was against the popular interpretation of Greek religion ... The moon was a goddess and so was water ... But that was an opening towards a distinction between religion and the state. The persecution of the Christians because they wouldn't sacrifice to the emperor – no one else had any hesitation about it whatever. It was the insertion of a distinction between belonging to a religion and being loyal to the state. Religion becomes distinct from the rest of a culture in various ways, and insofar as that distinction arises, then you start getting a relation between religion and the culture, and the transposition of what the religion means into the language of the culture. And when the culture changes, there is a corresponding adjustment in the talk about the religion.

Now the question goes on to two authorities. They're different types of authority. The basic type of authority is that of jurisdiction. There are jurisdictional disputes in labor unions. The root meaning is 'ius dicere.' What is right is what the appropriate person says is right. It's not something to be argued about indefinitely. The judge has jurisdiction in the court. The government has jurisdiction in the country. If the appropriate authority says that this country is at war with that

country, well, it *is* at war. The analysts discuss at length just what was meant when it was said that England declared war. After all, England didn't declare anything. Well, you could go on about that indefinitely. But it's the idea of jurisdiction. There are things in an orderly society that are so because an appropriate person or persons say so.

Other authority is due to the competence of an individual or a group of individuals. Schillebeeckx is an individual. A theological school is a group of individuals. And some theological schools have more influence than others. They have more authority. Or what they say counts for more with some people and counts for less with other people.

A theologian may declare on his own authority if he's eminent in his field. Or on the authority of the common declaration of the group: Most theologians say so. Or it's repeating what has been declared by the authority of jurisdiction in the religion. And then he's not acting on his own authority, he's acting out of a person competent to say what is determined within the religion, what the authority of religion claims.

Finally, what is at stake here with regard to the problem of authority? Well, you can have endless things at stake, but the main thing is to distinguish different meanings of the word 'authority': a right to determine what is so. 'You shall die.' 'You shall be hanged until you die, at such and such an hour.' And that's what right. He just pronounces it. Or it has jurisdiction. The authority of a bricklayer is to tell you how to lay a brick. And it isn't that easy. You have to get it straight, otherwise the wall ... That's why they're paid so highly!

All these things can be developed indefinitely.

**Question:** Revelation, while mentioned and assumed in *Method*, receives little explicit attention. Why is that? Is it because of the distinction between religious living and theological reflection, where religious living provides the 'given' for theology?

**Lonergan:** Revelation is mentioned or assumed in *Method* but not treated in *Method*, because *Method* treats the operations of theologians. It asks, What is the theologian doing? It decides what theology is by saying what theologians do. Revelation is one of the things that, when theologians are doing what they're supposed to do, they treat. So if you want to know what revelation is, you learn from *Method* what to tell the theologian to do, and he's finding out the answer to your question, and when he's found out, then he'll be able to tell you what revelation is, or the different opinions on revelation and the one he prefers, and so on. And we're doing method.

**Question:** How do you respond to the Marxist critique of religion that suggests religion is not only the opiate of the people but also the sigh of the oppressed?

**Lonergan:** Well, secularism in general, and also Marxism, which is secularist, had a common major object of faith, the rejection of the prayer ‘Thy kingdom come,’ as if the future depended primarily upon divine wisdom and divine providence. For them the real future and the only good future depends on the activists in this world and will occur in this world. So religion is the opiate of the people because it makes them think of something different from having the ideal state of affairs, and it’s the sigh of the oppressed because we acknowledge that the present state of affairs is not ideal. It isn’t. The state and, in general, society is constituted by meanings, and people can be authentic or unauthentic in their judgments, their plans, and so on. One can have a plan for something that would make things ever so much better. But there are all sorts of vested interests, and they want compromise here and compromise there and compromise in another place, and so on, and what ends up is not an excellent plan that would improve things, but the source of another mess. And the messier the situation becomes, the more difficult it is to have a good plan for anything.

**Lonergan:** The empirical notion of culture has given rise to a number of theologies: black theology, feminist theology, liberation theology, theologies of hope and play. Would you call these attempts theology as *Method* understands theology, or are these attempts in the eighth functional specialty of Communications?

**Lonergan:** Well, today the name ‘theology’ has a broad meaning, just like religion. The occultists consider themselves a religion. They want to have their share in any ... discussing religion. But more generally, it has come to stand for the teaching formerly known as catechism or religious doctrine – what 50 years ago was counted as religious doctrine, and you got credit for religious doctrine, not for theology. Now in many places it’s counted as theology. Catechism, religious doctrine, or even ideology – theologies that are black, feminist, liberation, of hope and play, may be instances of my eighth functional specialty when they are worked out on the basis of the previous seven functional specialties. You can’t have an eighth unless you have the other seven. Again, they may be communication of some less evolved theology, of some catechism, religious doctrine, or ideology. And just what they are, it would take too long to work out an opinion on. If you want to write a book on one of those topics, you’re quite free to do so.

**Question:** The recently reported disciplining of William Callahan raises this question: how does one weigh one's responsibility on the fourth level of consciousness with respect to religious obedience under the vow?

**Lonergan:** Well, the general answer is 'by the discernment of spirits.' And the best way to consult that technique, which was also known to Plato in a more natural sense but not entirely, is in the course of a retreat. And on the discernment of spirits, the local expert is Professor Harvey Egan, who wrote on the subject in a doctoral dissertation under the direction of Karl Rahner. He gives a course on that.

**Lonergan:** The Christian church is described on p. 363 as a process of self-constitution. Read antagonistically, this might be construed to mean 'arbitrarily self-legislating.' But a fundamental concern of your work is the control of meaning. For the subject, the foundations of this control are to be found in the transcendental precepts and the threefold conversion. What analogous controls operate for the church? Does the word *Selbstvollzug* have a different connotation to German ears? What is the background to the use of this term which led you to use it here?

**Lonergan:** Constituting and legislating are two different things. Legislation is a manner in which things are constituted, a very specific manner. It's a juridical manner of constitution. You can have societies and states without any constitution. England has never had a constitution, and glories in that. Justinian composed a code of law, but the next one to do so was, I think, Napoleon. He was highly praised by Hegel and codes of law began to emerge in all parts of the world. And of course as often as a code is formed, there arise further difficulties. Aristotle explained what he called *epieikeia*, the Latin form *epikeia*, equity in English. The function of equity arises because the universal never ... squarely and honestly with the concrete. The universal is abstract. You can go from the universal to the particular in two ways. All horses have four legs. This is a horse. Therefore this has four legs. That's very simple, and anyone can do it. But if you administer a code of law in that fashion, you arrive at all sorts of difficulties and inequities. There's another way of going from the universal to the concrete, and that is by recovering the insights that led to that universal. And you do that by examining the precedents, the previous cases in which the law was applied, and the differences between those cases. The differences result in differences in the application of the same law. That comes out of the medieval canon law, especially as it existed in England. So you get judge-made law as ... working from precedents to the intelligent application of the law in this different case. Hilaire Belloc once

remarked that law cases are argued in England with an abundance of distinctions that you don't find anywhere else.

So you can have all sorts of things constituted without legislation, without a constitution ... They decided what would be constitutions in other ... is decided ... in England, starting with the Magna Charta, which King John signed on a memorable occasion ...

A process of self-constitution: self-realization would be an equivalent expression. So it's not arbitrarily self-realizing. It's self-realizing in the sense that it's self-transcending, realizing the true self.

'A fundamental concern of your work is the control of meaning. For the subject, the foundations of this control are to be found in the transcendental precepts and the threefold conversion. What analogous controls operate for the church?'

Well, the same controls operate in the church, with one addition. The specifically religious control is found in individuals in the gift of God's love in their hearts, and in the Christian community in the promises of our Lord: 'He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me and he that sent me.' I'm quoting by memory ... verses. 'And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.' And things like this.

'Finally, does the word *Selbstvollzug* have a different connotation to German ears? What is the background to the use of this term which led you to use it here?'

The original background is a book by Coreth on metaphysics, in which he distinguished between *Vollzug*, concept and performance. And he based his solution to the critical problem on the contradiction that can arise between one's conception of knowledge and what one is asserting in positing that conception. David Hume held that one arrived at opinions through custom. But David Hume's opinion was that no one knew anything really. If that was his account of knowledge, then he didn't know anything, or he didn't arrive at it through custom. At least there were rather exceptional people. And you can apply it in very many ways.

Now the connection with the church: there's a five-volume *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*, with five editors, F.X. Arnold, F. Klostermann, Karl Rahner, Victor Schurr, and L. Weber. It was published in Freiburg-Basel-Wien by Herder: vol. 1 in 1964, part 1 and part 2 of vol. 2 in 1966, part 3 in 1968, part 4 in 1969, and some 2,652 pages in all. I found the notes I've taken on that, and I have an English translation of the main headings in the table of contents. The table of contents goes I don't know how many pages, something like 46. I cut it down in half ... If anyone thinks they'd be interested in reading through that table of contents, getting an idea ... But it's mainly on this *Selbstvollzug*, the church conceived not as simply a juridical organization depending on canon law and

created by canon law but as a religious community, with a religious origin and all the rest of it. Most religious people never – a parish priest said to me, ‘I was a parish priest for 25 years, and I never bothered my head about canon law.’ Well, of course he had the excuse that the Code came out after he’d done his theological studies. Before that, studying canon law was almost a doctoral work. You want by everything that had been put together since the *Concordia Canonum Discordantium*, by Gratian, the reconciliation of contrary canons ... Councils ... giving a ... statement of what the decree of the council meant. If ... And just as Abelard started the theologians trying to reconcile various opposed statements with scripture, the Fathers, and reason, so they went about those statements in the canons, with all the not only universal councils but also the provincial councils. That could become and has become in a way the whole idea of the church. What is the church? It’s a perfect society. And what has the society got? It’s ruled by law. And that’s what people perceive the church to be, and also dispensing the sacraments according to law. And you have legitimate ministers, and so on and so forth ... To break that concept you have this *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*, and they’re talking about the self-constitution of the church, the self-realization of the church, a realization in Christian lives, and how that is organized, and all the rest of it. I can’t begin to read off all the divisions they have, and so on ... And I doubt very much if you can ever get a book like that published in English. Grillmeier’s *Christ in Christian Tradition* was published in English translation before it was published in German. That’s very ...

**Question from audience:** I was rereading the chapter in *Insight* on metaphysics as dialectic and comparing it with the chapter on interpretation in *Method*. Would you say that ‘Metaphysics as Dialectic’ was trying to describe the upper blade of methodical hermeneutics and what you have here Interpretation is the lower blade?

**Lonergan:** Well, yes. In other words, there I have the operators, and the materials they operate are contradictions, oppositions in the materials. But the operators – we have those same operators in *Insight*. You affirm the positions, develop the positions, and negate the counterpositions. It’s the same idea. Dialectic fundamentally is contradiction, and in this connection it’s a real contradiction: attentive and inattentive, intelligent and stupid, wise and silly, responsible and irresponsible.

**Same questioner:** Do you think one can understand the chapter on Interpretation here without having that background, and all these functional specialties: understanding them against the background of all you’re doing in *Insight*. Does the

chapter here on Interpretation need the background that you developed in 'Metaphysics as Dialectic'?

**Lonergan:** Oh, it doesn't need it. We can get along.

**Same questioner:** But it does the other functional specialties, particularly Dialectic and Foundations.

**Lonergan:** Yes, yes. The eight functional specialties are interdependent. They're all interdependent. The other books represent my gradually finding that out.

**Same questioner:** You can't just talk about hermeneutics without putting it in the context of all those functional specialties.

**Lonergan:** Yes, oh yes. And there are approaches to hermeneutics that combine it with communications. Read the scripture in such a way that you have your sermon prepared ... Any questions, then, on anything up to chapter 14?

**Question from audience:** Reason illuminated by faith: that would seem to be a term – would you put it in terms of *Method*?

**Lonergan:** Well, you have the general thing, that the successive levels – each higher level sublates the lower levels. That is, it introduces a new principle. You see something and you ask, Why? You come to understand why and to say why. And that, so far from interfering with the previous level, makes you see things ever so much better and to operate at the lower level much better. It preserves and enriches. Scientists see ever so much more than other people. Artists do too. But the top order is a sublation of all the others, and that's reason illumined by faith. Faith is the eye of love. The heart has reasons that reason does not know.

**Same questioner:** So it's reason illumined by love.

**Lonergan:** ... misunderstood ... faculty psychology ... that's will. When you say that faith is the eye of love, what you you're really talking of is not faith in the sense of Vatican I. It's faith in the sense of the *lumen fidei*, the light of faith of the Scholastics. Thomas will talk about the light of faith. And that's what love is. Love is the light of faith. And that's why they say reason enlightened by faith.

**Same questioner:** question not clear.

**Lonergan:** It's going up, and going up not spatially but through the successive sublations. And finally you reach the point that's ... by St Augustine. 'Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.' Or as Dante put it, His will is our peace. If you accept God's will, you will have peace.