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Q&A session, November 8

Question: The first point is on the topic drying up. In some cases it does, and in some cases it doesn't. The question reads: In *Method* you argue that there comes a point in the flow of one's questions concerning a single topic 'when no further relevant questions arise' (p.163). Again on p.191 you state, 'Part by part, historical investigations come to a term. They do so when there have been reached the set of insights that hit all nails squarely on the head. They are known to do so when the stream of further questions on a determinate theme or topic gradually diminishes and finally dries up.' Yet in your article on 'Natural Knowledge of God' you state, 'But answers only give rise to still further questions. Objects are never completely, exhaustively known, for our intending always goes beyond present achievement. The greatest achievement so far from drying up the source of questioning, of intending, only provides a broader base whence ever more questions arise.' Would you clarify the nature of the 'drying up' process? Are the two quotations reconcilable? Do they refer to the same process, or perhaps to different stages of the process?

Lonergan: '... the stream of further questions on a determinate theme or topic gradually diminishes and finally dries up'; the relevant chapter is *Insight*, chapter 10, 'Concrete Judgments of Fact.' The example there is that a person finds his home in a mess, and he says, 'Something happened.' The stream of questions very rapidly dries up. There are no further questions that something happened. But he goes on to a different topic. Was there a fire? Where's my wife? These are further questions. 'In "Natural Knowledge of God" you state, "But answers only give rise to still further questions."' That's about God. God is an infinite object. But even finite objects: no one has ever claimed to know all about any particular object. The basis of relativism and a certain type of idealism: there's the fact that you never know all the relations of any given object. So the nature of the drying-up process is whether you're asking questions on a precise topic. And you may not be able to answer any of them. You may be able to answer half of them. But there can come a point if you work long enough where, as far as you can see, there are no further relevant questions on that question, relevant to that topic. Is that clear?

Question: On p. 254 of *Method* you state that '... man's deepest need and most prized achievement is authenticity.' On page 268 you seem to add a fifth transcendental precept. '... conversion is from unauthenticity to authenticity. It is total surrender to the demands of the human spirit: be attentive, be intelligent, be

reasonable, be responsible, be in love.’ (a) Why have you not framed the fifth transcendental precept as ‘Be authentic?’ (b) Does ‘be in love’ correspond to a fifth level of consciousness, and if so does it sublimate the previous four in the manner that they sublimate each other? Is this the sense of the statement on p. 290 that ‘There is in the world, as it were, a charged field of love and meaning ... but it is ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join, and join we must if we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving.’

Lonergan: ‘Be authentic’ would be simply repeating the first four. It wouldn’t be adding a fifth. Does ‘be in love’ correspond to a fifth level of consciousness, and if so does it sublimate the previous four in the manner that they sublimate each other? The answer to both is ‘Yes.’ Love pertains to the fifth level of consciousness as the high point of self-transcendence. It sublimes the preceding levels, a new basis, a broader finality, a transformation of previous values and insights. ‘Is this the sense of the statement on p. 290 that “There is in the world, as it were, a charged field of love and meaning ... but it is ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join, and join we must if we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving.”’ Well, that statement is a statement of Olivier Rabut. I quote it as illustrating my point ... I think it’s to the point.

Question: Walter Conn in an article entitled ‘Bernard Lonergan’s Analysis of Conversion’ (*Angelicum* 53/3, 1976) and Robert Doran in ‘Psychic Conversion’ (*The Thomist* April, 1977) note an ambiguity in the presentation of the three conversions. Intellectual conversion is sublated by moral conversion, which needs intellectual conversion and carries intellectual conversion ‘forward to a fuller realization within a richer context’ (p.391-92). The same is said for the relation between moral and religious conversion. Yet in the order of reality, religious conversion most often precedes moral conversion which together, though rarely, can carry one into an intellectual conversion. This ambiguity leads Conn (and Doran in a slightly different way) to speak of ‘uncritical religious, moral, and intellectual conversions’ and ‘critical religious, moral, and intellectual conversions.’ Do you agree with this distinction?

Lonergan: Well, I wouldn’t talk about ‘uncritical,’ but ‘precritical.’ The proper meaning of the word ‘critical’ was introduced by Kant, and it means a philosophy that authenticates its basic assumptions. The Indian guide who, when asked how do you know how to go straight back to camp, says ‘You know.’ He’s not uncritical. He’ll know how to do it again, no matter where he is, and he knows just why. But he just knows. He isn’t able to state it. He isn’t able to make it explicit. So he’s precritical; he’s not uncritical.

What Doran is talking about is the need of a psychic conversion, which underpins moral and religious conversion. It's taking care of your affects, through the use of symbol, knowing how the symbols work together into a set, with the terms defining the relations and the relations defining the terms, with the meaning of both verified in your own experience.

Question: What would precritical intellectual conversion be? Would it be conversion to the first three transcendental precepts?

Lonergan: It would be dogmatic. The Fathers of the Church who accepted Nicea and Ephesus and Chalcedon and Constantinople III never dreamt of settling just what was meant by 'nature,' 'person,' and so on. As a matter of fact it was seventy-five years after Chalcedon that someone made the bright discovery that if there was only one person, one of the natures wasn't a person. While there were Monophysites who really meant seriously one nature, still what they meant by one nature was one concrete reality. That's the meaning of 'Monophysite.' The Monophysites were a learned outfit, and they showed that all the preceding patristic usage of physis, nature, meant the concrete reality. And with that idea no one ... Monophysites. There's a long article on this in the first volume of *Chalcedon*, this three-volume work published in 1951 by Grillmeier-Bacht. It was a symposium, with various people writing. There's the article on the Monophysites in the first volume, and the fellow gives you in detail what was meant by 'one nature.' It meant one concrete reality. In other words, it was the point made by Cyril when he said 'one nature of the Word of God made flesh.' It's one concrete reality. Cyril's point at Ephesus was that in the Nicene Creed the first section – and his only Son, our Lord, and so on, God from God and Light from Light, true God from true God, consubstantial with the Father, and so on – was not somebody different from 'conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary and suffered under Pontius Pilate,' and so on. It's not about *two*. And later, at Chalcedon, that became the doctrine of one person and two natures. Nestorius's point was that Nicea did not say that the immortal became mortal and the immutable became mutable. They're contradictories. If it was immutable, it doesn't become mutable. If it's immortal, it doesn't become mortal. So to meet those contradictions they introduced two natures. And what did they mean by 'nature'? Well, read Leo I's letter to Flavian[?], which was prior to Chalcedon. It's a classic. He lists off all the attributes of God the Son and all the attributes of Jesus Christ our Lord, to say what he means by the two natures. He doesn't define nature. And Augustine didn't define person. He said, What do you mean when you're talking about person, three persons in God. You mean what there are three

of in God. Not three wills or three intellects, and so on, but three persons. What's a person? Well, that was left to the Scholastics to worry about.

Question from audience: So, inasmuch as religious conversion, when it becomes critical, it becomes foundational for theology, so intellectual conversion, when it becomes critical, does it become foundational philosophy?

Lonergan: No. Religious conversion is critical in the sense that you know what you're believing and why. 'Critical' is a property only of a philosophy or of a method. Every other subject has presuppositions. It's a property of a philosophy. You talk about critical editions, and so on, that's a minor sense. But the strong sense of the word 'critical' is explaining exactly why you have – Kant, his problem was, how do arrive at universal and necessary propositions? And he said that some universal and necessary propositions are analytic, what the linguistic analysts call tautologies. You're saying the same thing twice, once in the subject and again in the predicate. It's a mistaken use of the word 'tautology,' but it brings home the point. But mathematical and geometric first principles, and so on, are synthetic a priori. They're synthetic in that the predicate goes beyond what's meant by the subject. $7 + 5 = 12$ was his example.

Questioner (same): So for religious conversion to become critical it means that one knows why one is doing what one is doing.

Lonergan: Yes. When you – 'No one comes to me unless the Father draw him, and if anyone listens to the Father and learns from him, he comes to me.' That's one part. That's the inner grace. The outer grace is 'When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself.' The incarnate symbol, in which you get close to the meaning of Christianity ...

Questioner: I'm still a little confused about ... Conn in the article says that a moral conversion becomes critical when one reaches the existential point where one realizes that it's up to oneself to make one's –

Lonergan: Yes, well, you've made a final step there, eh? That is, you become existential, you enter the existential order when you finally discover 'It's up to me.' There's no use blaming other people. You have to save your own soul.

Questioner: A pre-critical moral conversion, then, would be one in which one has merely shifted from satisfactions to values but is not aware that that's part of the process of taking responsibility –

Lonergan: Well, it may be that you seriously discover that you have to do it yourself. In other words, you don't make that shift unconsciously.

Questioner: How could it be pre-critical?

Lonergan: For me, there's 'critical' in the strict sense. There's no point in calling it critical. But it's critical with regard to 'existential,' entering the existential order.

Questioner: So the conversion isn't full until it's what we are calling right now 'critical.' It's merely ...

Lonergan: Well, it's existential, eh? Kant used the word 'critical' in his sense with regard to theoretical knowledge. Conn used the word with regard to existential.

Question: Much of the controversy in contemporary theology, particularly in the discussions concerning method, have centered on the question of authority. If I interpret *Method* correctly, the methodologist's commitments are to the authority that is derived from (1) an actualizing and mature (already partially differentiated) consciousness that is (2) intellectually, morally, and religiously converted. And so on. [The remainder reads: Yet if it is granted that these sets of factors are dynamic processes and no single theologian once for all appropriates these, then those who are neither methodologists nor theologians (lay persons) are left with the dilemma of choosing between what are, at least apparently, opposing theological systems. From a methodological standpoint, how does one choose? Moreover, how does one become aware if a theologian has undergone these conversions which are so essential for doing theology? Is this simply a matter of self-appropriation and 'an erring conscience binding?']

Lonergan: Well, the discussions under consideration in contemporary theological method center on the question of authority *if* they haven't read *Method in Theology*. The traditional view is – and it starts in the fourteenth century – that method, what is presupposed to be the only possible method, is deductivist. It's Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. It isn't borne out by the rest of Aristotle's other writings. And if you want to have a deductivist theology, then it has to be based on authority. Page 270 or the bottom of 269: 'Foundations may be conceived in two quite different manners. The simple manner is to conceive foundations as a set of premises [propositions, propositional truths], of logically first propositions [from which all other propositions can be derived]. The complex manner is to conceive foundations as what is first in any ordered set. If the ordered set consists in

propositions, then the first will be the logically first propositions. If the ordered set consists in an ongoing, developing reality, then the first is the immanent and operative set of norms that guides each forward step in the process.' Physics does not depend upon a set of immutable premises. Any physical theory can be replaced by another physical theory if sufficient evidence turns up. Verification does not prove. Logically it's a fallacy. Logically, where *A* is a set of propositions and *B* is a set of propositions, 'if *A*, then *B*, but *B*, therefore *A*' does not follow. The 'therefore' is a gratuitous intervention. If you said 'if *A* and only if *A*, then *B*, but *B*, therefore *A*,' it would follow. But in general the hypothetical ... affirm the antecedent or deny the consequent, your minor premise. 'Now if one desires foundations to be conceived in the simple manner, then the only sufficient foundations will be some variation or other of the following style: One must believe and accept whatever the bible or the true church or both believe and accept. But *X* is the bible or the true church or both. Therefore, one must believe and accept whatever *X* believes and accepts.' You're invoking authority: the bible or the true church or both. In that case, method depends on authority in theology. 'On the contrary, if one desires foundations for an ongoing, developing process [and that's the kind of theology we've had since history has become a part of theology, and you don't know all of history yet; we can hope to learn a little more], one has to move out of the static deductivist style – which admits no conclusions that are not implicit in premises – and into the methodical style – which aims at decreasing darkness and increasing light and keeps adding discovery to discovery.' In that case, it's the movement that is the critical thing. Your movement from each one to the next, did that work? So ... ongoing development, then it has to be based on the structure of the process, as in the sciences, which do not rely on first principles or logical premises supposed to be true and certain, but on the set of operations (method) that have brought about present theories and can revise them. And methods too can be revised. If you want to justify the thing, you have to get to the structure of the subject. The principle – in this case, the first principle is the subject, the concrete reality who may or may not be intellectually converted, may or may not be morally converted, may or may not be religiously converted, but that's the first principle that de facto you have. So we don't look around asking, Where do we start? We ... each one of us ... Establishing that structure is a matter of something each one must do in himself and for himself. It is the structure of his attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible being. It is not an authority. Parents are an authority to children, teachers to pupils, commanding officer to subordinates, and so on. But you're not an authority to yourself. The centurion did not say, 'I say to myself, Go, and I go, and I say to myself, Come, and I come.' He says, 'to one of my 100 men, Go, and Come.' It is not a matter of choosing someone else whom one believes to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and

responsible. How do I know whether this fellow is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible? That's not the question. The question is whether *you* are, and whether you are ... taking theology seriously or not, whether you've made it your own, whether it has become bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh.

Question: What are the relations between theologians and the Magisterium, especially regarding the infallibility of the pope?

Lonergan: Distinguish theology and religious instruction. A great leap forward was made in our high schools and colleges when the course in religious instruction was given the name 'theology.' The reality remained pretty much what it had been, but it looked better in the syllabus and in the transcript of marks. If the method – on the deductivist view, the distinction vanishes, and so in the past religious instruction and theology, well, there wasn't any cheating done in calling religious instruction 'theology.' Both were appeals to authority, only in the instruction side the authority was the teacher. 'Why? I tell you so.' The distinction vanishes. If one's basis is authority, then all one can do is be instructed by the authority. When theology becomes methodical, the distinction becomes necessary. On the one hand, there is a religious process in which one is given the grace of the light of faith and proceeds to believe the relevant authority. On the other hand, there exists a developing body of reflection on the religion. So you have two processes: the process of the developing religion and the process in the people who accept that religion. The process of accepting it depends on authority. God is the first truth. He revealed. You believe God, who neither deceives nor can be deceived. And you believe Christ because also he's God. And you believe the church because Christ told you. He who heareth you, heareth me. He who despiseth you, despiseth me and despiseth him who sent me. The method of theology is the method of that reflection. The only presupposition is that the religion exists. If you didn't know of any religion, you wouldn't be in ... theology. You wouldn't have anything to reflect on. The relation between the theologian and the magisterium is the relation between a person who accepts a religion and the person who exercises authority within that social group that accepts that religion. It is a relation of the theologian not *qua* theologian but *qua* member of the church, a communion. It is as a member of the church that he has a duty not to mislead other members of that church, especially in view of the fact that the church employs him to teach the theology of that religion. But it's his duty as a member of the church, not *qua* theologian.

Question: Is it possible to know revelation? How does one experience, understand, judge revelation? Does one start with revealed truth or does one arrive at revelation?

Lonergan: Distinguish knowing and believing. God knows the truth of what he reveals. We believe that what he reveals is true. Basically, John 6.44 ff. and 12.32, which I've already quoted. That's knowing and believing: God knows and we believe. The relation of the theologian to Christian doctrine is like the relation of the historian of a science to the science. Thomas Kuhn wrote a book on *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. How does it come about that a science gets transformed. The transition from chemistry before Mendeleev and afterwards: there's a whole new setup, a radically new setup. For physics, there's Newtonian physics and Einsteinian physics, and Einsteinian physics and quantum theory. You get entirely different setups. How do these changes come about? That's what he was writing on. And he would have had nothing to write about if they didn't occur. He presupposed those things, and he tries to explain them, understand them, and say exactly what happened. As theologians normally are believers, their relation to Christian doctrine is not solely the relation of the theologian to the doctrine but also the relation of a believer to the doctrine. He's wearing two hats at the same time. But you can draw up problems on one basis and problems on the other basis. If you suppose he has one hat on and is thinking in terms of the other hat, you're ... confusions ... So one is not experiencing, understanding, judging revelation. One is coming to understand what were the words used in the revelation, and in transmitting the revelation, to get the right texts, critical texts, and select the texts relevant to the point you're discussing, and then going on to interpreting the texts. And when you have a series of different texts, understand what was going forward. What was going forward from Tertullian to Origen, and from Origen to Arius, and from Arius to Athanasius, and from Athanasius to Cyril of Alexandria, and from Cyril of Alexandria to Chalcedon, and so on. You're understanding that movement. And that's what's going forward. So the method answers the question, What do I do when I'm doing theology? When you're doing theology, you're not proving the faith. You're getting clear ideas about the faith. You're filling in the blanks that were left out in the religious instruction you received.

Questions: On the judgment level the critical realist is engaged in ascribing to positions and reversing counterpositions. [**Lonergan:** Well, in *developing* positions and reversing counterpositions.] Does one necessarily undergo intellectual conversion before he or she becomes a critical realist? If so, will the critical realist who has not undergone religious or moral conversion be capable of discerning positions from counterpositions; or will such a person only be able to see the antithetical nature of the positions while not discerning which is position and which is counterposition?

Lonergan: The mentality is early fourteenth-century. Questions are questions of what's necessary and what's impossible. Our knowledge of necessity is hypothetical. *If* you define it in such and such a way, then this proposition can be accepted. God knows himself. God is necessary, and he necessarily knows himself to be necessary. But we're contingent beings. Our existence is not necessary. When we come to understand something that wasn't necessary, probably it's largely a matter of luck. The number of people in a class that understand the presentations is statistical. It's not necessarily 100%. There can be exceptions.

So, if one distinguishes data and percepts – I talk about experience, understanding, and judgment, and by experience I mean data, the givenness of data. A percept says an awful lot more. A percept presupposes your previous development. Not even a kitten perceives all that it's going to perceive ... Someone once told me he saw a mother cat training her kittens what to do with a mouse. She caught the mouse, and she tossed the mouse over to the kittens, and they would take a look at it, and the mouse would run away, and the mother cat would grab it again and give it back to the kittens. This happened three or four times, and the mother cat gave it a slap ... to teach it that the mouse was food. But the kittens would become very alert to the importance of ... It perceived the mouse as food. What's true of kittens also is true of us. Piaget did two volumes on the first forty-four months of his three children's lives, and he studies them in detail, in total detachment. You'd never know they were his children from the way he talked about them. And he said now when the baby is born, the first time that it feeds at the breast you just have to accept ... But within twenty-four hours, the breast can touch the baby anywhere on the baby's face, and the baby is right bang on. You learn, and in the early years there's an enormous amount of learning that goes on. You take it all for granted ... to us. But it's the time of great alertness. And it usually stops because they'll ask why, why this and why that, and they'll get the answer, Well, you can't understand that yet. And the answer's perfectly true. There are some questions that can be answered only after other questions are asked and answered. Knowledge is cumulative. But they just get turned off, put off, and they give up, they find something that will be more useful or more fun.

So if one distinguishes data and percepts, and when people want to talk about experience in the sense of the man of experience and that's really the way we know, and so on, we should recommend Santayana's *Skepticism and Animal Faith*. People who appeal to their experience are just appealing to their animal faith. The habits they acquired as useful animals they are absolutely certain of. They're developed percepts. So if they understand experience as the givenness of data, and know from experience what understanding is and what it reveals, and how we arrive at judgments, then both empiricism and idealism are out of court. One has a choice between skepticism and animal faith, and also critical realism ... People will

wonder what's meant by critical realism, and whether they're not being invited to become idealists. Mere words – all the opposition to propositional truth, especially religious truth: terrific objections at the present time, all over. Why? Because critical realism takes time to digest and get hold of and take seriously. In Christianity the first emergence of critical realism is at Nicea. And it took fifty years for that to sink in. It was ... very promptly in the discussion with Nestorius, and so on. The third possibility, that of critical realism, has not occurred to many people since philosophic thinking began. The Greeks and the Scholastics were all good talkers. They weren't throwing language aside. Scholastic disputations and the Greek dialogues, and so on: they were all good talkers. So they stuck to language. But they didn't get on to critical realism. Aristotle left people under the impression that when you had an evident proposition ... the things ... in the proposition, the things named in the proposition ... taking a look. Verifying is taking a look ... you're using the look to find some evidence for it.

Does one necessarily undergo intellectual conversion before he or she becomes a critical realist? Well, one does undergo intellectual conversion insofar as one becomes capable of taking critical realism seriously, knowing what it means and taking it seriously, when you know from your own experience why people object to propositions, true propositions. Voegelin – I've quoted him a lot – (end of tape)