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Question session first day, August 2 1971

Question 1: This morning it was demonstrated that in order to attempt a revision of the basic pattern of cognitional operations outlined one would, in fact, have to repeat this very pattern. But does this fact, that one would have to use this structure in an attempt to revise the structure, by itself prove that one could not achieve a revision? Might the structure be altered from within, so to speak? Or was the point of this argument simply to illustrate dramatically that any problem one tackles must necessarily be tackled according to this pattern of operations?

Lonergan: The topic is perhaps a little tricky. The fundamental question is, what does a person mean by a revision? Do you mean by a revision what one understands by the revision of a theory? For example, what happens is that data are discovered that the theory does not cover. The study of these data involves new insights, the modification of previous insights, a new expression of the theory, a change in the previous theory due to further data and further understanding, and the consequent judgment that this is a better theory than the previous one. That is what people mean by revision. If that is what is meant by revision, then, plainly, revision presupposes the pattern. And if it presupposes the pattern, then any time anyone is revising, he is not going to be setting up some new pattern, though he may fill out a cognitional theory. That is the argument. Whether that is to be called a dramatic illustration, or something else, is a further question that I do not think is important. The fundamental point is that revision has a determinate meaning. If you want to give it some other meaning, make it less complex, and so on, well, then your argument will not hold.

Question 2: Could you please explain further what you mean by originating values? How does the pure desire to know as developed in *Insight* relate to your recent stress on the good and value as being what is primarily intended in cognitional process and underlies it? Would it be correct to speak more fundamentally of the pure desire for value rather than the pure desire to know?

Lonergan: By originating value I mean authentic persons, and what we mean by authentic persons is something we will be going into more fully when we speak about religion, in chapter 4. The originating value is the person in his self-transcendence; it is the source of the values that people produce, the good things. (The hundred and one good things in British history, according to a famous little book.)

‘How does the “pure desire to know” as developed in *Insight*, relate to your recent stress on the good and value as being what is primarily intended in cognitional process and underlies it? Would it be correct to speak more fundamentally of “the pure desire for value” rather than “the pure desire to know?”’

In *Insight* we have a moving viewpoint; we are not saying everything at once. We studied understanding in mathematics, then in physics, then in common sense. We go on to knowledge of things. The first insights are into intelligible relations, but the unity-identity-whole is a thing. Then we go on to judgments. We have three chapters on judgments: What do you mean by a judgment? What is the criterion of a judgment? Will you please make one judgment, show us how it happens? This judgment is a self-affirmation of the knower. Then we go on to being and metaphysics, and so on. It is an open moving-on. In *Insight* the procedure is that of intentionality analysis, namely, it proceeds from the data of consciousness. Consequently, it really

is not talking about potencies or faculties, because faculties are not data. What you have is different kinds of acts in a conscious structure. The dynamism of the self-assembly of the operations of the knowing subject is something that comes out of the norms that constitute the subjectivity of that subject: attend, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible. From that structure it is evident, since each higher level introduces something new and directs the previous levels to new goals, that your top level is the fourth one. However, I did not draw that conclusion very fully, very explicitly, in *Insight*. You have the fourth level, and it is supreme, in fact. But since then I no longer speak of 'intellect' and 'will,' two faculties. I have a *voluntas volens* in this deliberation; to deliberate is to ask, Is it worth while, is it truly good? Kant acknowledged a superiority of the practical over the speculative intellect. The German idealists Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, attempted to re-establish speculative reason, and that attempt was not successful. What we got was Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Kierkegaard took his stand on faith. Newman took his stand on conscience. Dilthey took his stand on life, a *Lebensphilosophie*. Blondel: a philosophy of action. Ricoeur: a philosophy of will. And all the personalists and existentialists are more or less in the same boat. The speculative reason is no longer something that is important. It was due to Aristotle's exaggerated notions of necessity. Necessity in modern mathematics: modern mathematics gets necessary conclusions from its premises, but its premises are not necessary truths, they are 'probably coherent' postulates. What is true of mathematics is still more true of physics, and so on. As the mathematicians say, physicists are quite willing to be rigorous as long as it does not prevent them getting results. So, would it be correct to speak more fundamentally of the 'pure desire for value' rather than the 'pure desire to know?' Yes. But,

on the other hand, you do not say everything at once, and you must not misunderstand that. Truth is a value, and there are other values.

Question 3: You spoke of four transcendentals: the intelligible, the true, the real, and the good. Why do you distinguish between the true and the real as transcendentals, and what is their intelligible differentiation? Would you consider the beautiful as a transcendental? If so, is it distinct from the other transcendentals, or included in one of the others? Further, if it is a transcendental, how does it fit into a correlation with the four-level knowing structure?

Lonergan: The true and the real are distinct as transcendental concepts. It is through truth that we know the reality of a world mediated by meaning. So truth is a property of your judgment. Reality is what is known in a true judgment. On the other hand, you have the transcendental notion implicit in the question, Is that so? 'Is that so?' is a question, and since it is a question it has got to be met by an answer. The answer can be true or false. But the answer will tell you what you know, whether it is so or not. Consequently, there is, as it were, a double objective. It is knowing being through the true: 'ens per verum cognoscitur,' they used to say.

Next, 'Would you consider the beautiful as a transcendental?' The beautiful is a different sort of transcendental. It is concrete. It is not universal, unlimited in denotation. There are ugly things. It is, as it were, a total response of the person to an object. [The other] transcendentals are what articulate the type of knowing that is mediated by meaning, by words, and so on. Beauty is something that evokes a response from the whole person. It may be through meanings, as in poetry or drama, but it may be apart from meanings in any ordinary sense. It is a type of meaning of its own

kind. We will have more to say about this kind of meaning in our third chapter, which is a rather long one.

Question 4: Would you please explain the expressions ‘comprehensive in connotation’ and ‘unrestricted in denotation,’ as you use them in reference to transcendental method? Why are Heidegger’s existentials not elements of a transcendental method, equally as much as the ones you have explained? Are they comprehensive in connotation, unrestricted in denotation, and invariant through cultural changes? Would not Heidegger affirm that they are?

Lonergan: By ‘comprehensive in connotation’ I’m thinking of the concrete in a special sense of the word ‘concrete.’ One can mean by the concrete the sensible, the non-verbal. But one also can say that knowledge is concrete. Knowledge of something is concrete when it has the answer to every relevant question about the thing. That meaning of the concrete is what you have in the transcendental. The transcendentals intend concrete reality. That is why questions are unending – simply because they do want every relevant question answered. That’s why they keep on asking questions. So by ‘comprehensive in connotation’ I mean that when you talk of the intelligible, or the true, or the real, or the good, you are thinking of every aspect; you are intending (not knowing, but intending, moving towards) a comprehensive knowledge, an exhaustive knowledge. Unless you were moving towards that exhaustive knowledge your questions would not be *per se* unending.

By ‘unrestricted in denotation’ I mean that they are not tied down to some limited category. Everything is intelligible; otherwise we would be wasting our time trying to know it through understanding. Similarly, everything real is being. Reality in its every aspect is being. There is no

restriction. If you talk about man, or the earth, or anything else, you are talking in some category and you have something restricted in denotation.

‘Why are Heidegger’s existentials not elements of a transcendental method, equally as much as the ones you have explained?’ What Heidegger is doing is a hermeneutic phenomenology, as far as I know. He is describing the subject in his world. He is not picking out certain transcendental notions and attending simply to them. He is giving a description of the subject in his world, a description of a very wide validity. But he has not got my interests. He wants to be pre-Socratic; I am very definitely post-Socratic. So there is a difference of context.

‘Would not Heidegger affirm that they are?’ Well, are they comprehensive in connotation? No. They are specific, they are categories, as it were, categories as lived. For example, he is describing all the different aspects of a man’s being-in-the-world, his *Sorge* and so on. They are all true enough and general enough; I am not disputing them on either score. But I say that he is not talking about what I am talking about. By transcendental notions I mean the influence, the power, the drive, that keeps adding further elements. [When it does not understand experience,] it wants to understand. And wanting to understand is a transcendental notion. The transcendental concept is the intelligible, what you know when you do understand. It wants to know whether the intelligibility it has uncovered is possibly or probably relevant to the data in hand, and so you go on to judge. That is the subject in his rationality. He wants to have sufficient evidence. He does not want just to think, have bright ideas; he wants to know. That is a transcendental notion again. Finally, there is deliberation. When you stop short and say, Is doing this just nonsense or is it worth while? Is it truly good? that again is a transcendental notion. It is not a concept. It is not an act of understanding,

either direct, or inverse, or reflective. It is not a proposition. It is not the words of the question, but the actuality of the questioning, the questioning that opens, still further, the world.

Question 5: The subject is known as subject and not as an object, yet the subject becomes an object of inquiry. What is the difference between an object and an object of inquiry? Does the awareness of the subject necessarily involve an awareness of the act? Is the awareness of the act separable from the awareness of the subject or is it the same awareness that constitutes both?

Lonergan: The subject is the unity-identity-whole (the thing), as present to himself in his operations. We have not only understanding. For example, these are the data on this dog. Here you get unity-identity-whole, as distinct from all sorts of intelligible relations which you have. But you also have that unity-identity-whole as something present to itself, and that is the subject. Now, the subject present to himself in his conscious operations provides a set of data, a field of data. You cannot pin them down until you have inquired into them, identified them, and named them. That is quite a process, and that is the basic challenge of this method.

What do I mean by 'object'? There are different meanings of the word 'object.' There is the object in the world of immediacy, the world of the infant, the world of that narrow strip of space-time that is my immediate experience. But there is also the object in the world mediated by meaning, which is a far larger world. You know about thousands of years of history, and you have read the lives of the saints, and you have studied the theologians and the philosophers. This world that is mediated by meanings is a terrific thing, and that is what we mean by the real world. In that world

there are partial objects and compound objects. The partial objects are what is given in this or that sensation, this or that insight, what is intended in this or that formulation, and so on. The compound object takes bits from all over and puts them into one object, and in that you can see the principle of isomorphism. It is one and the same set of operations that combines operations into one knowing and combines partial objects into a compound object.

Now, just as the natural scientist will start from the data of sense and through inquiry, insight, formulation, experimentation, verification, move on to judgments, so too the subject can start from the data of consciousness, his consciousness, and move on through inquiry and insight and naming and identifying, to an understanding and an affirmation of himself in the structure, the pattern, of his conscious and intentional operations. It is that inquiry into the self that properly is what is meant by introspection. Consciousness is having a subject offering data that could be investigated.

What do we mean by objects in the world mediated by meaning? We mean what is intended by questioning and known by answering: partial objects in single operations, compound objects when you have got the complete answer. [Introspection] is a matter of applying the operations as intentional, as concerned with objects, to the operations as conscious; it is experiencing, understanding, affirming and accepting the norms of one's experiencing, understanding, affirming and deciding.

Question 6: In the Middle Ages theology was known as the queen of the sciences. I got the impression this morning from your lecture that perhaps today epistemology or cognitional theory has become the queen of the

sciences. To what extent is this a mistaken and to what extent a correct impression?

Lonergan: The word ‘science,’ as it is commonly employed today, refers to natural science. Besides science there is scholarship. Science wants systematic knowledge: knowledge of laws, correlations, and so on. Scholarship wants to enter into the common sense of another place and time. It does not want to learn how to be a fifth-century Athenian, but to know the way a fifth-century Athenian would behave in any of the sort of situations that then arose, and how he would feel, and so on. August Boeckh, a pupil both of Friedrich Wolf (the man that wrote the *Prolegomena to Homer*), and of Schleiermacher, conceived *Philologie* as the reconstruction of the constructions of mankind. Theology is much more in that genus of scholarship than in the genus of science. Further, while our kicking-off point is cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics, we won’t stop there. We have other things which are much more important and will come up in our fourth chapter, on religion. The important thing: you pursue values insofar as you are in love and (Romans 5.5) ‘God’s love has flooded our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.’ That completes this picture, provides a new range of values and a new field of study, religious studies.

Question 7: What is the difference between doing theology and doing method in theology? (Long-winded question, hard to decipher, seems to confuse method and theology.)

Lonergan: There is a difference between doing theology and doing method in theology. When doing method you are not presenting a theology, you are presenting the set of operations that theologians perform, in their generality. You are not talking about theological objects, you are talking about

theological operations. You *can* distinguish objects and operations. Intentionality is not a part of the psychology of Aristotle and the Aristotelians. In Aristotle and St Thomas an object is an efficient cause or a final cause; they think of objects in terms of causality. They are objects in the vegetative order, without consciousness. The Aristotelian correlation between objects and acts (as though you cannot talk about the act without talking about the object) is a mistake. The whole point of this coming to know oneself is to be able to talk about the operations independently of the objects, and to determine the kind of objects you are going to be handling by determining just what operations you are performing.

Question 8: You have spoken about thematizing our structure of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, and this happens in the introspective mode of knowing. I can see quite well what is meant by understanding the structure or judging about it or deciding about it. But what is meant by experiencing the structure? You have also mentioned the first level. It seems that the first level is the direct mode itself?

Lonergan: It is consciousness.

Question: I mean, all acts are already experienced.

Lonergan: You have to heighten the experience.

Question: What does this mean?

Lonergan: It means enlarging your awareness, your field of awareness.

People are baffled by what is meant by consciousness. It does not mean that they are not conscious.

Question: Yes, then you are moving from an experience of your acts as conscious towards an understanding of them which you have not yet reached, perhaps, but are moving towards. It seems not to make sense.

Lonergan: Did anyone get a clearer notion of what is meant by ‘insight’ from the diagram on the board this morning? The book *Insight* is a series of exercises that will lead people to have insights and gradually to find out, in themselves what an insight is, from their own experience. I believe there is a Professor in University College who holds that it is impossible to experience an insight because it is a spiritual act, and of course, if one claims that one has no experience of insight, one is in the difficulty of admitting that though one may appear to be intelligent, really one is not. But there is a heightening of awareness that arises when you do not merely attend to the object but advert to the attending. When you do this you are taking your data of consciousness as data for another inquiry. Just that. But you have to be able to broaden your field of attention so as not merely to attend to the object. You want to attend to the subject as well.

Question 9: You said this morning that when we have a treatise which is systematic, there is no problem of hermeneutics, and in this context you contrasted Euclid’s *Elements* with the Gospels. I would say this statement needs to be qualified. You have, for instance, the *Contra Gentiles*, which is surely systematic, yet there are many disputes about it.

Lonergan: Yes, but is it systematic?

Question: Well, at least according to Fr. Lonergan.

Lonergan: Not quite. Scotus is much more systematic than St Thomas.

Question: Nevertheless, there are disputes.

Lonergan: Yes, but not in the same way. Scotus will say *actio* is used in fifteen different senses, and he will list them. St Thomas will say, ‘*Actio dicitur dupliciter,*’ and he will give you the two meanings. Then you turn the page and ‘*Actio dicitur tripliciter,*’ and they do not correspond to the other

two. And again, '*Actio dicitur dupliciter*,' a page on, and you get a couple more. It is the sort of thing that sets up one aspect of the problem. If you want to understand the *Contra Gentiles*, the model I propose is Piaget. Read chapter after chapter of the *Contra Gentiles*, and what do you find St Thomas doing? You find the same sort of ideas being turned this way and that way to deal with this question and that question. He will have 28 arguments on this point and 23 on the other and none of them will be exactly the same, but it is a matter of having a group of groups of operations applied, adapted to different circumstances, this way and that, and so on. St Thomas is not just a systematic thinker.

Question 10: You have said, if I am not mistaken, that theology is interested in those three questions, cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics, not as philosophical but as methodical. Could you please clarify this distinction?

Lonergan: There are people who, as soon as you start doing anything in any way systematic in theology, will say, 'This is just more philosophy, it has nothing to do with religion. Let us forget about it.' To meet that head-on you say, 'You are a theologian, you have a mind, you use it. What are you doing when you use it?' Is it not worthwhile for you to know that?