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Question session Thursday August 5 1971

Question: You say that the question of God rises inevitably when one questions the morality of the universe, when one questions one's own questioning of moral values. However, many philosophers hold that the question of God need never arise in this way. It can arise, either because one already has an idea of God, or just spontaneously; there is no inevitability involved. This would be against your view that man has a native orientation towards God.

Lonergan: I doubt if I used the word 'inevitable'; I consider the inevitable a marginal notion in any scientific or philosophical or theological discussion. God is the only instance I know of an intelligibility that is necessary. Any other intelligibility is just de facto; it is the realization of a possibility, not the realization of a necessity. It is something that has to be verified.

When one questions one's own questioning of morality, the question is whether it is worthwhile to ask whether something is worthwhile. The answer to that question leads us to ask whether the universe would not be absurd if morality began with man. That is the point I am making, but it is not going to be inevitable that anyone sees the point. If anyone does see the point, he will not be grasping a necessary truth; he will be grasping something that de facto is known.

Question: In *Insight* you say If the real is completely intelligible, God exists; but ... therefore. In recent lectures you seem to be at least implicitly saying: If the real is unconditionally worthwhile, God exists. But the real is unconditionally worthwhile. Therefore God exists. Would you relate the intelligible to value in the context of the God problem? Is it necessary to prove that being is not only completely intelligible, but also unconditionally worthwhile, in order to prove that God exists?

Lonergan: The first part, about what I say in *Insight*, is correct. The argument for God from the question of value is not that the real is unconditionally worthwhile. It is that the question, Is anything worthwhile? turns out to lack adequate meaning if man is the origin of morality in the universe. There's a weakening of one's attitude, one's actions. Camus' statement that the universe is absurd but we must be courageous is at best a paradoxical position, it seems to me.

'Relate the intelligible to value in the context of the God problem.' Well, there are three levels of questioning, three transcendental notions: the intelligible, the unconditioned, and the worthwhile (the value); the three are related to one another. They are three stages in the unfolding of human conscious intentionality, and each of them concludes to, or points to, God.

'Is it necessary to prove that the real is not only completely intelligible but also unconditionally worthwhile in order to prove that God exists?' Well, I did not say you have to prove that it is unconditionally worthwhile. You doubt the validity of saying that this is worthwhile, in a serious moral sense, when you think man is the beginning of morality in the universe, if there is no morality above man or beyond man or prior to him.

Again, when I talk about the real being completely intelligible I mean 'no obscurantism, no pushing questions aside.' This is something to which there is complete intelligibility somewhere. It's the illegitimacy of simply refusing questions wholly. You can refuse questions if you show that they are mistaken, but you cannot brush them aside.

Question: Often one has insufficient knowledge when one makes a judgment of value. One does not know what is good and one has to choose something. One chances a judgment. Is one acting irrationally?

Lonergan: That raises the whole question of the prudent judgment. Moral judgments are prudent judgments. Prudent judgments are not irrational. They are the best that you can do, and it is part of common sense or of ordinary, elementary humility to recognize that

they are only prudent. The free act is not a demonstrable, a course of action is not something that can be demonstrated; otherwise taking the course of action would not be free.

Question: If one actually makes a correct judgment of value, has grace, perhaps, or intuition, entered in? Or is there an unconscious response of our whole personalities to situations which affect our judgments?

Lonergan: Everything enters in. The unconscious enters in. Unconscious motivation was unseen until the present century. Grace enters in. God gives sufficient grace to everyone. Intuition? I do not use the word 'intuition,' because it is misleading. There are no intellectual intuitions in the sense of ... There are insights. You can grasp the intelligible in the sensible. But 'intuition' means more than that. It means something original, like ocular vision.

Question: The Christian solution to the problem of subjective and objectified evil, basic sin, is talked about in *Insight*, for example, on page 700, and in some late articles. The basic structure of a reply seems to be in terms of meeting evil with good. Could you give some instances of this meeting evil with good, in action?

Lonergan: The Crucifixion. And the whole doctrine of life through death, which one can see running through the whole of the New Testament. In other words, to insist on justice is to perpetuate the evils in the situation; you are repaying evil with evil. It is insofar as people can exercise charity, love their neighbors, love their enemies, that the evils in the situation, the social surd that has been created through mistaken courses of action, can be remedied at the least cost. More on that in Thesis 17 of my *De Verbo Incarnato*.

Question: In *Insight* it is stated that a value is an object of rational choice and must be apprehended by intelligence in order to be chosen. Is it only on the level of the supernatural that love is prior to intelligence?

Lonergan: That remains true even in the case of the supernatural. A rational choice, even in the case of the supernatural, is an act that follows on the judgment of value, and the judgment of value is about some object that is known, so you have the whole process coming in.

God's gift of his love is something that can be independent of this process of experiencing, understanding and judging, because God's grace is not conditioned by us. And much spiritual literature is best understood this way. Even when falling in love and being in love follows upon experience, understanding, and judging, it goes beyond this, it has a plus value: a terrific plus, this being in love. Two people will be in love, and others will say, 'What does he see in her? What does she see in him?' And she says, But what do you not see? But It that is just precisely what it is to be in love. There's a plus there too, an enormous plus.

Question: Are the first four chapters of *Method* related in an explanatory fashion? Why are they in the sequence in which they are? For example, why does the chapter on the good precede the chapter on meaning?

Lonergan: The discussion of the good would have to be included in the chapter on meaning, if it did not precede it. What do you mean by the good? is a question in terms of meaning. And we don't have to discuss experience, understanding, and judging, because we studies those in *Insight*.

Question: Is you chapter on meaning explanatory or phenomenological?

Lonergan: It is a model.

Question: Could you indicate the precise distinction between a model and a hypothesis?

Lonergan: A model starts the process of inquiry and investigation going. It draws attention to features in the object, either by agreeing with them and categorizing them, or, on the other hand, differing from them. A model can be successful even though it is

something quite different from the reality you are investigating. Marrou illustrated that by taking Fustel de Coulanges' *La Cité Antique* and using it when employed as a model for the study of Sparta. It is very different from it. Sparta was a city very different from Fustel de Coulanges' idea of *La Cité Antique* but still, using Fustel de Coulanges, one notices all sorts of things about the Spartan constitution that would have escaped notice if one were not thinking along the lines of Fustel de Coulanges.

That is the general idea of a model, and that is the way I am presenting this doctrine on method. However, I am asking you, insofar as you are concerned to do so, to verify in your own experience the things I am talking about, as we explained on the first day.

Question: Is your thematization of cognitional process a model rather than a hypothesis?

Lonergan: It is presented as a model. It is more than that, and it is discoverably more than that by those who find out in themselves what they are doing when they are knowing and deciding.

Question: You spoke this morning of the problem for theology now being the integration of the heritage of past theology with the new methods of historical and critical research developed in the 19th century. Would you elaborate further on the historical and theological perspective within which the problem of method in theology, to which your work is addressed, has emerged?

Lonergan: The task of method in theology at the present time is to thematize the sets of operations performed by a theologian when he operates in the context of modern science, modern scholarship, and modern philosophy.

Modern science is something entirely different from the Aristotelian notion of science set forth in the *Posterior Analytics*, and theology conceived as analogically a science is something analogical to a *Posterior Analytics*. That notion of science is completely out. It is in terms of necessity; modern science, and even modern

mathematics, is not in terms of necessity. The conclusions of mathematics follow necessarily from premises, but the first premises are freely chosen and probably, only probably coherent postulates. As we said a short while ago, the intelligibility accessible to us in this world is not necessity but verifiable possibility.

Modern scholarship: we will be talking about that tomorrow when we talk about interpretation and history. We'll also be going to talk about historians further on Monday.

Modern philosophy is the type of philosophy in which the fourth level of operations sublates the previous levels. It is in the line of – not the same as – the priority of practical reason in Kant, the priority of the appeal to faith in Kierkegaard, the appeal to conscience in Newman, the appeal to life in Dilthey, the appeal to action in Blondel, the appeal to will in Ricoeur, and that same act of faith in the existentialists and in the personalists.

When theology is done in that context, you have the contemporary notion of theology. We will come back to that when we are talking about past theology in the course of these lectures.

Question: You spoke earlier of a change in your thinking, from faculty psychology to a study of consciousness. Does this involve a rejection of faculty psychology, or simply an addition to it and a new foundation for it?

Lonergan: It is a new foundation. In Aquinas, the relation between object and act is causal, it is not conscious intentionality. The fundamental terms are object, act, habits, potency, essence of the soul, and you can use those terms about plants just as well as about men and animals. It is not primarily an appeal to the data of consciousness, though that appeal is there. I think Aristotle and Aquinas understood an awful lot about human understanding, but they spoke about it within a context that fundamentally was metaphysical, and that is the source of faculty psychology in the strict sense. I put the

study of consciousness first; Why is that knowing? is second; What do you know when you do it? is third, and the third is metaphysics.

Now I can talk about potencies, but they will not be the same as the potencies that are understood when you read Aquinas. For me, the active potencies are the transcendental notions, the source of questions for intelligence, the source of questions for reflection, Is that so?, the source of questions for deliberation, Is it worth while? The passive potencies are what has already been achieved on the prior levels, as in the account of components in being, in the hierarchy of the ascent of nature in general. For example, the potency for the biological lies in the chemical, and the biological introduces a systematization that is only *per accidens* in the chemical. Similarly, the potency for the psychic is in the neural, and so on.

Question: How does the development of feelings relate to intellectual growth?

Lonergan: You have to have both. If you haven't got feelings you are a psychopath.

Question: It seems to me that there is a heuristic principle that you tend to overlook. It concerns the functional specialty of research into the data. The researcher, it seems to me, must be able to experience and describe not only the occurrence of the data, but their quality: the style of a poem, the tone of an utterance, the atmosphere of an epoch or an event, the quality of an incident. More than natural aesthetic sensibility is needed to experience the quality of the data proper to theology. The basic tone of St Augustine or St Thérèse of Lisieux is grasped only by one who is sympathetically attuned to them through community with them in charity, in the Spirit, in other words, by a fellow Christian. Thus at the pre-interpretative level, research, the theologian needs to be attuned to his data by the theological virtue of charity. Hence the need for a praying theology, for a theologian who does not pray cannot appreciate the quality of his data. 'Cor ad cor loquitur.'

Lonergan: All you are saying is quite true, except that I take it that the life of prayer pertains to the religious man as religious, not the man as theologian. If you are going to reflect on religion, the best source you can have on it, the immediate source of it, is your own experience. It is the opening of your eyes to the type of reality that makes it possible for you to be a very good theologian. But that possibility of the theologian is one thing; the actuality of the theologian is another. In *Method* we are talking about the actuality of the theologian, and we acknowledge the need for a religious life, but the religious life is not part of the method of theology; it is part of the equipment of the human being.

Question: Please relate your distinction between the categorial and the transcendental to your discussion of God in *Insight*.

Lonergan: Most of the things said about God are had from transcendental concepts. Knowledge of God is spoken of as general transcendent knowledge, not as transcendental knowledge. That is about it.

Question: In what sense is it proper to speak of God as an object and in what sense is it incorrect?

Lonergan: There is a whole series of meanings of the word 'object.' The best known is the term of the extroverted animal: the 'already out there now real.' The difference for a kitten between a painted saucer of milk and a real saucer is that they are both 'out there now' but the one with the milk which the kitten laps is the 'real' one.

Secondly, there is the meaning of 'object' as the object of a natural science, particularly if natural science is looked upon somewhat askance, as usually happens with continental philosophers and theologians. That object is object because it is something that can be dominated, manipulated, controlled. God is not object in that sense, and he is not object in the first sense.

A third meaning of the word 'object' is what is intended in questions and known through answers, and God is an object in that sense, insofar as people apprehend him by asking questions and talk about him by giving answers.

A sense in which God is not an object is insofar as God's love is flooding our hearts, through the Holy Spirit given us. That is a culmination of our movement towards self-transcendence. It is not a matter of asking a question; it is our being receiving fulfillment. God's gift of his love is a source of joy that is irrepressible, and it is a source of peace that the world cannot give. In that sense it is a fulfillment. However, a person writing about religious experience will be objectifying that experience and God, who comes to subjectivity, moves to the objective order when you start talking about religious experience.

Question: In *Foundations of Theology*, Professor Gilkey objects that chapter 19 of *Insight* is not intrinsically related to the first eighteen chapters. You reply that is related and that the use of the term 'intelligible' in chapter 19 is the same as in the earlier chapters. Could you elaborate on your stress on the fact that in *Insight* the primary meaning of the intelligible is always the same, even in your discussion of God?

Lonergan: Well, what is the book *Insight* about? Fundamentally, it is asking people to have the experience of insight. And they find that the same sort of thing occurs in mathematics, in physics, in common sense, and in philosophical reflection. The first seventeen chapters have been elaborating that theme, in various ways. We are not talking about something different when we move on to chapter 19 and still keep talking about the intelligible: namely, what is grasped in an act of understanding. There is, of course, an extrapolation from our understanding to the unlimited act of understanding. But we know what we mean by act, and we know what we mean by understanding. It is an extrapolation that is needed if one is to justify the rejection of all obscurantism.

Question: In what sense is the question of God of more importance than the proof of God's existence?

Lonergan: People today are denying the existence of the question of God. The question of proof, then, cannot arise. If one establishes that the question of God exists, then people cannot simply brush the whole thing away and refuse to consider it.

Again, proof has become something entirely different from the use of the syllogism in the Aristotelian context. That is one of the sources of the tendency to brush the question aside.

Question: Could you relate questioning questioning, inquiring about inquiring, reflecting about reflecting, deliberating about deliberating, to your proof of God's existence in *Insight*?

Lonergan: An underpinning to the major premise in *Insight*, If the real is completely intelligible, then God exists, is that the world as we know it is not completely intelligible, and that is shown through contingency, through reflecting on reflection. The major premise in its positive style, about the real being completely intelligible, is the term of inquiry. What you are aiming at when you inquire is what you mean by the intelligible. If our understanding of the world is not to be a mere subjective satisfaction, if it is to be knowledge of the world's reality, then the world is intelligible, and it cannot be intelligible without an intelligent ground. What we are doing here is putting in the form of a question the argument that is put in the form of a syllogism in Chapter Nineteen of *Insight*.

Question: How would you conceive of a contemporary natural theology in terms of your shift from metaphysics to interiority?

Lonergan: I would not separate natural theology and systematic theology. I think the separation was a mistake; it took place under Cartesian influence. Natural theology has a lot to gain from the support of a systematic theology. On the other hand, systematic

theology does not function properly if it is isolated from a natural theology. People have just one mind, and you cannot divide it up into compartments. How would I go about it? You will see the structure more in our chapter on foundations, when we discuss categories. I think we'll postpone that until we go on to chapter 11.

Question: What is the difference between the horizon of faith and the horizon of belief?

Lonergan: Well, everyone believes. Mathematicians do a lot of believing, less than most people, but a lot. Scientists do an enormous amount of believing. Most of what any man of culture knows, he believes, and that does not mean that he is specifically religious. The horizon of faith is the horizon which results from God's gift of his love, when that love is taken in conjunction with God's objective revelation of his love in Christ Jesus. Being in love is not merely a state of mind and heart; it is also a process, an interaction between persons. And you get that in the Christian community, in the Mystical Body of Christ.

Question: If we consider the position of good people who are not Christians, what is the difference between their horizon and the horizon of explicit Christian faith?

Lonergan: Consider the difference between two people who are in love, but do not avow their love for one another, and two other people who do. The first pair are not really in love. There is no overt self-donation, self-oblation; there is no ongoing process of interaction between the two, of sacrificing for one another, and so on. In the second case there is. Now that is just an analogy, but in the Christian religion you have God's revelation of his love, given us in Christ, and we have the inner gift. Outside the Christian religion you have helps from the community, and all the acquired wisdom of the religious tradition, but you are lacking that central figure, or you have a substitute for it.

Question: How is being completely intelligible? I have difficulty with that.

Lonergan: Being is what we know through understanding, know through questions for intelligence and questions for reflection, what we intend when we ask those questions.

Those questions are not to be brushed aside, unless they are mistaken. Therefore, unless the questions are mistaken, there are the answers to the questions, all along the line.

Question: Suppose that God created other kinds of beings, which could be ‘known’, in an analogous sense, by other kinds of faculties than ours, then they would not be intelligible in the strict sense.

Lonergan: All I am giving is the state of the question as it exists. You want to jump out of your shoes. The fact remains that you cannot accept obscurantism, and if you do not want to accept obscurantism, then you must accept that there are answers to the questions for intelligence, even though we do not know them.

Question: In 1968, in your paper on ‘The New Context of Theology’ you spoke of theology as empirical science, and again in 1969 in ‘The Future of Theology’ you spoke of Catholic theology today being largely engaged in the process of becoming a modern science. In the last few days you seem to be reluctant to use the term ‘science’ in relation to theology. Does that indicate any change in your position? If so, what are the reasons for the change.

Lonergan: I haven’t kept note of everything I’ve said in the last ten years, but the empirical element in science is opposed to the deductivism that was characteristic characteristic of the philosophy manuals that were handed out to me over forty years ago. The empirical element is not to be taken as an empiricism. The two are quite different if you start from data,

I discovered this eightfold division in February, 1965. I approached it, first, by writing a textbook, *Divinarum Personarum Conceptio Analogica*, a systematic theology of the Trinity. My problem there was to get systematic theology separated from doctrinal theology, and I have a very vigorous contrast in my introduction. The second step was *De Deo Trino, pars analytica*. This was doctrinal theology, and my struggle in the introduction was to get doctrinal theology separated from positive theology, which was

more or less what are now the first four parts. In an institute at Georgetown in 1964 I had four divisions and the following February I went on to eight, and I have remained at that ever since. Does that answer your question? Or do you want something more?

Question: I am still not satisfied. You seem very reluctant to use this term ‘science’ for theology in answering the last couple of questions I asked.

Lonergan: I am including value judgments in theology. You cannot do theology and dodge value judgments. You can do natural science and dodge value judgments. You can try to do human science and dodge value judgments; that is Max Weber’s distinction between social science and social policy.

One cannot determine what the word ‘science’ means in the English language. That is not up to a theologian to do, and current usage is that natural science is science, and the rest of them have a lower position in the pecking order. And the more they are involved in judgments of value, the more they are not called scientific, and they do well to accept the designation ‘academic disciplines.’ The meaning of the word ‘science’ changes. The way Thomas handles the objection that science is ‘de necessariis et universalibus’ but Christ is particular and the Incarnation is contingent, and so on, is not satisfactory. There is room for scholarship which is distinct from science. And at the present time the sociologists, or some of them, are trying to force the historians to do just sociology, and they do not know what scholarship means, that history is an entirely different sort of thing from sociology.

Question: So the difference, primarily, regards the question of values?

Lonergan: That, and the change in the nature of science, and also the development of philosophy, the movement to interiority. If science is undertaking the understanding of all phenomena, then philosophy is not something out there with the sciences; it takes as its data the data of consciousness, as also does psychiatry.

Question: Do you see any connection between Fr Crowe's notions of complacency and concern and the first and second phases of theological method? The first phase would be, in a sense, theological complacency, and the second phase would be theological concern?

Lonergan: You could say that, I think. I will ask Fr. Crowe what he thinks of it.

Question: In what way is systematic understanding of doctrines connected with faith?

Lonergan: There is a passage in the First Vatican Council: *Ac ratio quidem fide illustrate ... aliquam, Deo dante, mysteriorum intelligentiam ... assequi potest, tum per analogiam eorum quae naturaliter cognoscit, tum in nexu mysteriorum inter se et cum fine ultimo hominis.* This is an expression of the 'crede ut intelligas' of St Augustine and St Anselm, and of the practice of Aquinas, though he didn't use the expression much. It presupposes the doctrines, and the doctrines are doctrines of faith, and seeking some understanding of them. Unless you give a meaning to the doctrines they become just formulae.

Question: In *De Deo Trino*, with reference to systematics, you talk of antecedent truth and consequent truth. What would be involved in the consequent verification of systematic understanding of doctrines, in finding out how true, or how probable one's understanding is?

Lonergan: The basic criterion in theology is whether a work is that of a person who has been converted intellectually, morally, and religiously. We will be saying more about that later on. This business of antecedent and consequent truth comes up, for example, in critical history. There's the truth of your judgment on how well these men used their sources. And then there's the further judgment as you use those sources to find out what's going forward. That's the second truth. The first truth provides guidance for one's movement into the second. And one's attainment of the second has repercussions on the first. When we discuss critical history we'll see more of that. The whole issue is that you have that recurring in each successive specialty as it goes on from what has been established in the previous one.

Question: Would the principle of coherence be a factor too?

Lonergan: Yes, obviously. But what is basic from the specifically theological point of view is the fact of the conversion of the author.

Question: Is there a good sense in which you would still speak of the proof for the existence of God as valid and authentic, and not just ‘classicist’?

Lonergan: Well there are classicist conceptions of it. If you eliminate the classicist conceptions, Yes.

Question: Then your proof in *Insight* would not be classicist?

Lonergan: I do not think it is. I have not seen it anywhere else.

Question: Reflecting on your remarks about conversion, a question arises about the new sort of meaning that results from conversion. Has the believer a new dimension of meaning, which is inaccessible to the unbeliever, and cannot be described in a way that the unbeliever would understand?

Lonergan: Conversion is a matter of moving into a different horizon, living in a different world. To some extent we all live in different worlds, but conversion involves a change of level, outlook. The unbeliever will not understand, not until he is converted. However, he can be moving towards it; there can be a fundamental conversion, God’s gift of his love. Someone told me a story recently of a woman who was inquiring into the Catholic faith, with all sorts of questions, and she did not believe one of the answers that were given to her, but the next morning she came along and asked to be baptized.