

**645Q0DTE070 – Questions, Monday August 9 1971**

**Question:** Could you briefly synopsise the basic significance of your division of the specialty 'history' into two chapters and what the core, essential thrust of each chapter is?

**Loneragan:** It's of the specialty 'critical history' as distinct from precritical history, as precritical history from story and legend. There are two movements, each of which is heuristic, ecstatic, selective, critical, constructive, and judicial. In the first, one is coming to know the authors of one's sources, the people you are relying on, where you get your sources of information: how good are they? where are they solid? where are they are weak? and so on. It's a full understanding of the sources. When you understand the sources and how good they are, you have information on events that took place. However, those events are not historical knowledge, they are historical experience. Historical knowledge is a further thing, and you have again the same process going, with a different objective the second time.

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

**Loneragan:** In *Insight* there is an analysis of understanding in mathematics, in natural science, and in common sense. The analysis of common sense depends upon the other two, because mathematics is exact and science is ongoing. So to understand insight, you need that preparatory try. But there is a distinct set of procedures called common sense; and it is that set of procedures that is relevant to an understanding of history. Because, just as one understands what is said and done in one's own situation by developing common sense, so one can find out what others, in a different situation, thought was to be said and done in their situation, by the same sort of process, although it is much more

deliberate and elaborate and so on. And that is the basis of my account of history. The condition of the possibility of historiography, of what we are talking about it, is an insight into commonsense insights.

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

**Lonergan:** Well, insofar as St John himself conceives truth, that's fidelity, and you have that in the epistles, 1 John. If you are talking about his mind, you are thinking in terms of validity more than in terms of truth or falsity. However, with regard to that business, in *Foundations of Theology*, the book Philip McShane just published, there is a chapter by Fr Crowe in which he makes the point that the mind of a writer is not just a set of theorems, to which he is saying yes or no. There are all sorts of things in a person's mind, and a lot of them have not been promoted yet to the level of truth; they are assumptions, things that represent his milieu and all that sort of thing. I think Fr Crowe's paper will be helpful in connection with this question. Applying the study of symbols to the Gospel of St John is not something you do on the spur of the moment. You spend your life studying St John before you start coming up with answers to a question like that.

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

**Lonergan:** Relativism is a doctrine that says there is nothing that is simply true, except, of course, this statement, that there is nothing that is simply true. Perspectivism is a grasp of the complexities involved in coming to know history, and the enormous complexity of history itself, the history that is written about.

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

**Loneragan:** There is every reason to desire that historians know science as much as possible and that scientists take advantage of the material supplied to them by history, so that they are not simply working on humanity at the present time, so that there's that mutual interaction between the two. It will diminish perspectivism insofar as the theoretical level is much more adequate. But there is a further level of intelligibility that the general never reaches. There is an intelligibility in the concrete that is only grasped when you have your insight into phantasm, your insight into a concrete presentation. When you are getting to the universal you are also abstracting, and you are abstracting from a type of intelligibility that belongs to the concrete and is not to be found anywhere else. And that is the place where perspectivism seems to be permanent, I would say.

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

**Loneragan:** I had two accounts of time: one in terms of 'when,' 'how long,' and the other in terms of 'now.' Then I went on and used the one with the 'now' to talk about psychological time. But there is, of course, that other aspect of time too, and it is there

that you have the aspects of time that are unapproachable through simply analyzing the subject in time. The subject in time is not always identical; he is always identical in the sense that is always changing. But it is the same person, it is not another person, even though he is changing.

Is this a major block to a scientific approach to history? Well, I am talking about history as a species of scholarship. To try to subsume history under science is, to my mind, a mistake. It just omits what history is. It omits a whole realm of knowledge.

**Question:** In your lecture on history last Friday, you explained the fact that contemporaries do not know ‘what is going on’ in history, by referring to our biases, weaknesses, errors, omissions, etc. May I suggest the following observations and alternative formulation: (1) You apparently locate the factors which explain the ‘impenetrability’ of history on the same logical level as individual’s conscious acts: intentions, wishes, omissions, and so forth. Does this mean that you reject positions, such as the materialist conception of history held by Marx, who said that the historian must present the individual and the group in history not ‘as they may appear in their own or in other people’s imaginations,’ but in their not consciously chosen relations to their societies, economy and technology? (Here I bear in mind that modern scholarship shows this conception of history to be quite other than the crude determination of popular caricature.) (2) Is there not, presupposed to the conscious activity of persons, groups, and societies a structure, the nature of which serves to explain, in answer to a question posed about such structures, rather than about individual projects and intentions, the actions of persons, groups and societies? (3) Does not your analysis emphasize the problem of historiography rather than that of the genesis of historical events? (4) If causes and laws explain contemporary events in the work of the sociologist: Paretian, Marxian, Behaviorist, etc., in what sense is the historian not seeking a similar explanation of past events? Is it not a false presupposition to separate ‘accounts’ of events from their

explanations, with the inevitable result of misleading ourselves as to the nature and limitations of human freedom and possibilities? (6) Can it not be argued that the materialist conception of history is crucially relevant to the functional specialty history as it applies in theology, in that this conception is the most explicit secular intimation of the restrictions and finitude imposed by our being incarnate spirit?

**Loneragan:** As to the first point: You apparently locate the factors which explain the ‘impenetrability’ of history on the same logical level as individual’s conscious acts, intentions, and so on; the basic limitation is the fact that the individual is not everybody. And you want to know what is going on in every place, if you want to write a history of a movement. History is not biography and it is not autobiography. It is what was going forward at a given time or place. To reach that, you have to have information on all its aspects, and no one has information on all the aspects. No one, for example, has information on everything that has gone on in this Institute in the past week, and that is the difficulty in writing the history of this Institute. So it is something objective. ‘Does this mean that you reject positions such as the materialist conception of history held by Marx, who said that the historian must present the individual and the group in history not ‘as they may appear’? Well, I am not talking of how they may appear in somebody’s imagination; that is not what you are trying to find out, in this historical inquiry that I have been describing. ‘In their not consciously chosen relations to their societies, economy and technology?’ Well, what was I talking about when I talked of the structure of the human good last week, except precisely that? ‘Is there not, presupposed to the conscious activity of persons, groups and societies as structure, the nature of which serves to explain, in answer to a question posed about such structures, rather than about individual projects and intentions ...’ Well, yes, but that sort of structure is not what you are studying in history. That is what you are studying in sociology or something like that, or in a sociological study of something in the past. ‘If causes and laws explain contemporary events in the work of the sociologist, why do they not satisfy the

historians?’ Because what the historian wants is something different. The causes and laws are universal. What the historian wants is, perhaps, a set of such universals applied to a concrete situation, with all the further details added on, that you can only acquire through historical knowledge. And that’s what history is after. The more he knows about laws and so on the better. But the historical work still remains to be done, even though you know all the laws, you have to apply them to particular cases, and to know the particular cases is something like history, especially if it’s a complex of people.

‘Can it not be argued that the materialist conception of history is crucially relevant to the functional specialty, history, as it applies to theology?’ I would say that there is communication between disciplines, and it is in the interaction between theology and these other disciplines that that would arise. With regard to Marx and determinism, I think Marx was just as generous with necessity as was Hegel, whom he turned upside down. And necessity is determinism.

**Question:** How is the ‘dialectical method’ explained in *Insight* related to the functional specialty dialectic? Is dialectical method used in any of the other specialties?

**Lonergan:** The dialectical method explained in *Insight* is general; it is any case of the concrete, the dynamic and the contradictory. Dialectic, the functional specialty, is concerned with the conflicts between Christians. We shall have more to say about that tomorrow.

**Question:** What do you now think of the notion of cosmopolis as found in *Insight*? And what would be the place of functional specialties in that institution, if any?

**Lonergan:** Cosmopolis is still what it was in *Insight*. It is an ideal. The function of functional specialties in that institution would be coming to know its past and using the knowledge of the past to deal with the future.

**Question:** Must charity be a collective and institutional effort if it is to change a particular good of order?

**Lonergan:** The answer is yes. However, there is a process of its becoming institutional, and when it is becoming institutional it is not yet institutional.

**Question:** What are some other words or phrases you might use in discussing the word constitutive from the phrase constitutive meaning?

**Lonergan:** The meaning and values that make you the sort of person that you are.

**Question:** In your response to various questions about your natural theology in the last few days, on the one hand, you stated that your proof for God's existence as developed in chapter 19 of *Insight* is valid and non-classicist and yet, on the other hand, you deplored the classicist proof approach as something that should be done away with. Could you indicate what the precise difference is between your non-classicist approach to God in chapter 19 of *Insight* and classicist proofs?

**Lonergan:** A difference of context. A thing is classicist when it belongs to a cultural outlook that conceives culture normatively. If culture is conceived normatively, then there is only one true culture. The others are approximations to it or a falling away from it. That was the idea of culture that was dominant from about 2,200 years, or more. The contemporary notion of culture comes from the anthropologists: a culture is a set of meanings and values that inform a way of life, and you have just as much right to talk about Eskimo culture as about Greek culture. On the empirical notion of culture, there are many cultures, and so if one is going to talk to everybody one has to have a transcultural language, a transcultural form of thought, and so on. And that is what *Insight* is aiming at.

**Question:** You said that being is completely intelligible because one can keep on asking questions. How do we know that some questions, particularly fundamental questions, are not stupid? Perhaps, some answers to fundamental questions are only possibilities? There

is no way, excluding revelation. -of getting certain knowledge here. Perhaps there are some questions to which there are no answers?

**Lonergan:** Being is completely intelligible, not simply because we can always keep on asking questions, but first of all because being is what you know through asking and answering questions, and secondly, because your answers to questions are not acceptable unless they are intelligible, and thirdly, that you can't brush a question aside simply because you do not want to be bothered with them. You need a reason. Now, how do we know that some questions, particularly fundamental questions, are not stupid? Any given question may be stupid, but it has to be shown that it is stupid, not just asserted that it is stupid. If you can show that it is stupid, then you can exclude it. The fact that the question is asked ... the probability is that it's asked intelligently. The exclusion of obscurantism, of simply brushing a question aside, means that the nature of our intellect is such as to demand full intelligibility. Consequently, being is completely intelligible in the sense that all obscurantism is excluded. If you want to assert a certain amount of obscurantism, you can brush aside the statement that being is completely intelligible, but on no other condition.

**Question:** Your work *Grace and Freedom* has just appeared in book form. In the light of your current stress on intentionality analysis rather than metaphysics, what is the contemporary import of *Grace and Freedom*?

**Lonergan:** It is historical knowledge, first of all, and, in the second place, it reveals the fact that there was a good deal of intentionality analysis quietly performed by Aquinas without his talking about it.

**Question:** Could you explain the difference between knowing another person as object and knowing him as subject? Is it true to say that to the extent that acts of insight and judgment occur regarding the other, one is knowing the other as object rather than as subject?



**Lonergan:** Knowledge that is explicit, that is not only understanding and judging, but fully explicit, is objectifying. But is objectifying precisely in that sense, the sense in which an object is what is intended by questioning and known by answering. Now, knowing someone else as a subject: that arises insofar as one is intersubjective with that other person. It is the case of intersubjectivity; it is the case of the 'we.' And the 'we' as 'we' is the subjects as subjects, the intersubjective subjects as subjects. When they start talking about themselves, they become subjects as objects. There are a whole series of meanings of 'object,' but I think we have been already through that.

**Question:** Is 'intersubjectivity,' the level of the 'we' prior to the 'I-Thou,' is this an occurrence on the level of the psyche and feeling rather than on the level of reflection and decision?

**Lonergan:** Yes.

**Question:** Would you relate feeling to the levels of consciousness? In what sense may one speak of spiritual feelings? Are not feelings a matter of sense rather than spirit?

**Lonergan:** There are very different feelings. There are certainly feelings on the level of sense, very somatic feelings. But they are not the only kind. I would place the love of God at the root of the fourth level of consciousness, the level of deliberation, evaluation, and decision. As a matter of fact, it is the fulfillment of the whole effort towards self-transcendence that comes through attention, questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, and questions for deliberation. It is the grace of God at the apex animae. Whether you call it a feeling, or say that feelings result from it, are further questions that you need to get someone like Max Scheler – he has done a very fine study of feelings – to go into.

**Question:** In the context of your comments on religion and your discussion in *Doctrinal Pluralism* of mysticism, could you remark on the following: (a) Is mystical consciousness

to be understood as being on the level of the experience of grace? Is this why you say that is beyond images and concepts? (b) Is mystical experience what you would designate as a subject to subject encounter with God? (c) Is mystical experience to be considered an extraordinary phenomenon or as the natural culmination of the Christian and religious life authentically led?

**Loneragan:** With regard to the third, I would say: Yes. But an awful lot depends upon the individual, I think. As Maslow remarks, people have peak experiences without knowing it. So, it is the natural culmination of the Christian religious life. Is it a subject to subject encounter with God? Well, in the sense of the *mysterium*, the mystery, the unknown, the fascinating, what you are in love with, the *tremendum*, what is totally other. To be understood as on the level of the experience of grace? Yes, insofar as it is ordinary mystical experience. There are extraordinary experiences as described by St. Theresa and others, and I do not think they are simply an experience of grace. According to William Johnston, there is the whole business of the transformation of the subject in the Dark Night, and so on, and it is a matter of the subconscious being straightened out, and consequently, there can be an awful lot of psychological events quite distinct from the experience of grace.

**Question:** In discussing intersubjectivity in *Insight*, you mentioned the ‘inner psychology and radiating influence of women.’ What were the sources for this aspect of intersubjectivity? And where would such information enter into your methodological approach, given the theology of Our Lady?

**Loneragan:** First, the sources were concrete. Where would it enter in? Well, I think that there are things in theology that a woman could write far better than a man, and I would give as an example, Rosemary Haughton’s writing. She has a marvelous capacity for speaking about the education of children and the solving of the personal problems, and so

on that reflect precisely the type of thing that a woman can do better than a man. Her writings are quite relevant to theology, especially to a moral theology.

**Question:** With reference to prudential moral judgments, in the light of comments in *Insight* and 'Dimensions of Meaning,' (a) is a prudential moral judgment simply a probable moral judgment?

**Lonergan:** A probable moral judgment is general, it is a judgment made by a moralist; a prudential one is made by a person in a concrete situation.

**Question (continued):** Does your recent description of prudential judgments differ from Aquinas, and how?

**Lonergan:** I wouldn't attempt to go beyond that. That's about ten questions or something, isn't it? It's extremely detailed. It's almost the whole of Aristotle on *phronesis*.

**Question:** If philosophy now deals with the concrete, is there a space for a unique, personal, moral imperative of the kind described by Rahner in his formal existential ethic, i.e., one not derivable from moral generalization?

**Lonergan:** I think ever election is that sort of thing, particular and concrete in regard to me; I would not tell someone else that he has to do the same thing.

**Question:** Because functional specialization is based on cognitional structure, it would seem that such specialization should be possible in every scientific discipline. Although you may plead lack of competence in many fields of science outside theology, it might help us understand better the implications of the notion of functional specialization if you would give a few opinions on how it might occur in some of the natural and human sciences. Such questions as these crop up: First, are the two phases of listening and speaking to be found in the natural sciences? Could one speak of a phase of 'listening' to nature or would it be rather a listening to the past of the science? Would the functional

specialty 'research' in physics include the work of those who, for example, man the cyclotrons or those who are engaged on, for example, producing a good edition of Newton's work, or both?

**Lonergan:** I think the edition of Newton's works would pertain to research in the *history* of science. The scientists do not make a great deal of use of the history of their science, except perhaps in the teaching of science, or something like that, and then they have to schematize the history to make it something that prepares the way for an understanding of a theorem. Do they listen to the past? They do, insofar as they are in their training, that is the whole point to the training, and in so far as they read journals. They listen to other people; they are carrying on a cooperative effort. The cooperative effort is essential to the science, but it is not listening to nature, except metaphorically.

**Question:** Second, would the functional specialties, dialectic and foundations, occur in each science, or would they belong rather to the philosophy of the science?

**Lonergan:** They belong to the philosophic issues that the science raises. In physics, up to 1926, it was taken for granted that mechanist determinism was the nature of the world. That just vanished when quantum theory emerged and they came up with a theory of complementarity. Whether that makes sense or not they are not too worried about; it is more or less a dogma, which they do not discuss very much. If you do start discussing it you are involved in philosophy of science, because you are not going to settle the issue by any experiments that exist at the present time. Though just as there were experiments that eliminated mechanist determinism, so there may be experiments that eliminate complementarity, I do not know.

**Question:** In the human sciences, where the two phases seem clearer, can you indicate briefly the role of the specialties, doctrines and systematics?

**Lonergan:** For doctrines take policy, for systematics take planning, and you will see where they would come in, in the human sciences. Your human science as science will

investigate your situation. A critique of sociologies you'll find in Gibson Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic*, MacMillan, hard cover, 1966, paperback, 1968. Winter is professor of Social Ethics in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, and he has a degree in sociology from Harvard; last year we had him do an institute at Regis College, Toronto, last year. He distinguishes four ways in which sociology is done: the Behaviorist, the Functionalist (Talcott Parsons), the Power-and-Conflict (C. Wright Mills), and the Intentionalist approach, the New School of Social Research, the influence of phenomenology (Schutz) in the New School of Social Research in New York. He points out that the outer two schools do not talk much to anyone else but the inner two are in conflict, in a much as the Functionalist approach ends up with a view that favors the status quo, while the Power-and-Conflict approach is opposed to the status quo. Then he asks whether this difference is scientific or ideological, and the mere fact that he puts that question, he puts the question out into the field of social philosophy. He does a certain amount of social philosophy and adds on the ethics of the *Lebenswelt*, and he has basic principles to guide social policies. The distinction between social science and social policy is Max Weber's, but in between the two he intercalates this philosophical and ethical reflection. From this he gets policies, and then the planners come in and figure out the best of current resources to effectuate the aim determined by the policies. Then the scientists come in again and feed back to the policymakers and planners, and you have an ongoing process. You have to be creative in some such manner as Gibson Winter, if you want to transpose from method in theology to method in some other field. But in any of the human sciences, because values really are involved, the empirical part of the science is not enough. You have to have some sort of way of introducing values and using them to guide policies, and then you need planning, to carry out the policies.

**Question:** Fourth, where would you place Talcott Parson's *The Social System* and Harry Stack Sullivan's *Tie Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* in a functional specialty?

**Lonergan:** They are involved in theory: data, understanding, judgment. Their values are implicit, as far as I know. It is not enough to have four levels in human consciousness to have functional specialties. What you need is a high degree of specialization, and a full consciousness not only of the science but also of its implications, of its fall-out. And it is when you take that into account that you start wanting dialectics, foundations, policies, plans, or whatever you want to call them.

**Question:** Can one distinguish functional specialties within the science of Method? If so, to which of them will the book *Method in Theology* primarily belong?

**Lonergan:** Method is not highly specialized yet.

### **Questions from the Floor**

**Question:** Granted that critical history is a functional specialty, and to that extent is the fulness of historical knowledge, is there any sense in which one can speak of pre-critical history as historical knowledge? It is more than historical experience.

**Lonergan:** Pre-critical history is a richer structuring of historical knowledge. Critical history pares the thing down and drops all the rhetoric. We want communications, but we don't do communications through critical history; in communications you will use a pre-critical style. Just as I said that Bishop Descamps didn't want an overall view of the two testaments as the fruit of biblical theology, at least insofar as theologians are communicating to other theologians; still I said that sort of thing may be very useful in communications where what people need is the big view that they can fill out.

**Question:** When you spoke of the psychological present with the twofold dimension embracing past and future, you illustrated the presence of the past by showing the effects of amnesia. How might one similarly illustrate the presence of the future? Would lassitude, in the sense that a person or a group has 'no future,' or possibly a very great complacency with the status quo, serve as illustrations?

**Lonergan:** The presence of the future is seen in anything that anyone does, if he does it for a purpose. Even if he is just resting, like the Neapolitan boatman lying on the shore, he is concerned at least with being fresh for some other occasion.

**Question :** I was really looking for something to illustrate the presence of the future, as your discussion of amnesia was a very valuable illustration of the presence of the past.

**Lonergan:** I see. Well, I cannot talk these things out so quickly.

**Question:** Do you see the possibility of applying the functional specialties to each of the human sciences, or is it rather meta-science?

**Lonergan:** I think the interdisciplinary aspect is extremely important, when you start getting down to concrete policies and plans. If you draw on just one specialization your planning will lead to pollution. It will take certain things into account and overlook others.

**Question:** In some of your earlier writings you spoke of an explanatory history of science. To what extent would you say there is an explanatory history of theology?

**Lonergan:** Well, insofar as the historian picks the key points and makes clear just what they are and what they imply and what they led to, and so on, he is explaining. In other words, he is teaching the dogmas or the doctrines through the history that brought them about. And that is a very important part, I think, in the teaching of doctrines. To know the doctrines, you have to know their history, but it is also true that to know the history you have to understand the doctrines. And an explanatory history will interrelate these.