

**648Q0DTE070**

**Questions (Question session 7)**

**Thursday, August 12, 1971**

Tim Fallon reading the questions

**Question:** Would you please comment on the inadequacy of analysis in explaining what might be called the inspiration of a masterpiece. I am thinking of a particular case, where detailed study of a poet's sources, his psychology, his education, his religious background, and so forth, falls far short of accounting for a poem.

**Lonergan:** Well, it is the distinction already drawn between heuristic meaning of context and the actual meaning of context. The heuristic meaning is a detailed study of a poet's sources, of his psychology, his education, his religious background, and so on. That is the heuristic notion of context. If this detailed study is unsuccessful, you do not arrive at the actual context, and you are not able to understand the inspiration of the poem; you still have relevant questions to ask to which you have not got the answers. The actual context is when you get the answers, and then you have arrived at the adequate context of the poem.

**Question:** You have referred on numerous occasions to God's gift of his love, in Romans 5.5. Which of the various meanings do you intend? (1) God's love for us; (2) God's gift making it possible for us to love him; (3) or some interaction of divine gift and human response?

**Lonergan:** I mean the divine gift. I mean what Thomas means by sanctifying grace.

**Question:** You say in *Insight*, p. 698, that 'a man or woman knows that he or she is in love by making the discovery that all spontaneous and deliberate tendencies and

actions regard the beloved.’ In the case of love between man and God, to what extent is this description applicable, on both sides?

**Lonergan:** Well, on God’s side there is no difficulty, he knows everything, he is omniscient. With regard to the individual: do not worry about whether you have religious experience or not. Psychological introspection is a very difficult art.

There has been a whole series of theologians from the 16th century on, who held that grace was something that we had no experience of whatever. And they were people who were in the state of grace. Maslow thought that peak experiences were confined to very few people at the start of his inquiry into peak experiences; in the end he felt that everyone had them unless they suppressed them because of their behavioristic or rationalistic or ultra-scientific or other suppositions. As the Gospel says, ‘By their fruits you shall know them.’ You are in the state of grace when you do what is right. And you may look back over a lifetime that has been devoted to God and suddenly discover, ‘Yes, I guess there must have been God’s grace must have been working at me.’

**Question:** You have spoken of the grace of God filling our hearts as the indispensable moving force in religious conversion. In the present context you have appeared to treat one’s awareness of grace as self-authenticating. But in an early unpublished work you said, ‘... ipsa gratia supernaturalis non subest scientiae humanae.’ Is there a real difference between your thought then and now? How, and how far, can one be aware of the grace of God working in oneself? [**Note: this is where tape 01 Part 02 starts; that tape is almost inaudible.**]

**Lonergan:** Non subest *scientiae* humanae; subest iudicio prudenti. In other words, to have science of grace you have to have the beatific vision. In the Thomist doctrine, to have science of grace is to know grace by its essence. But grace by its essence refers to God as he is in himself. Unless you know God in himself you

cannot have science of grace; all you can have is indications that you are in the state of grace, and that is just what I am saying at the present time.

**Question:** What were your reasons for including a discussion of categories in the chapter on foundations? It would seem that the distinction between general and special categories might be more easily understood in the chapter on systematics?

**Lonergan:** I do not attempt, in foundations, to say what the categories of the theologian are going to be. I leave it to the theologian to pick their own categories; I offer models, which in systematics are adopted or rejected. Systematics is pronouncing, 'These are the right categories,' and so on. I am indicating the line in which categories are to be developed, namely, not basically metaphysical categories, but basically experiential categories, because I think theology should move to a basis in interiority and not to a basis in metaphysics as we had in the Middle Ages.

**Question:** Would it be true to say that the cultural lag involved in 'Humanae Vitae' is a failure of systematics?

**Lonergan:** 'Humanae Vitae' is perfectly right on the basis of Aristotle's 'De Generatione Animalium.' In that work it is held that the male seed is the instrumental efficient cause of the offspring which is materially contained in the catamenia, the menstrual discharge. The catemenia is dominated by this instrumental efficient cause, which makes a human being out of it. In the Aristotelian science of biology the seed is an instrumental efficient cause per se of the human being, and consequently any interference with that instrumental efficient cause is violating nature, obstructing nature in its end. In the 17th century there was discovered the existence of the spermatazoa in the human seed and in the 1880s ovulation was discovered. You have an entirely different setup biologically, subsequent to that.

**Question:** Yesterday, you referred to the apophatic theology which arose out of mystical experience. Granted the continuing presence of mystical experience in the church, can you foresee any particular ways in which the horizon of interiority might transform mystical theology? Would the data for such a theology be limited to the mystical experience of a person working theologically in the horizon of interiority, or could the writings, both the descriptive and the theoretic, of earlier mystics, e.g., St Teresa and John of the Cross, also provide data?

**Lonergan:** In the great mystics there is more going on than God's gift of his grace; there is the transformation of the subconscious, and all this sort of thing, and that makes it something very complex. You would have to have a terrific knowledge of psychology [to understand it.] The pure business of God's gift of his grace is simply a withdrawal, it is the Cloud of Unknowing; you are content to be for God, to surrender yourself to God, without naming God. Read William Johnston, *The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing*, and you will find a description of mysticism insofar as it is a matter of attuning oneself to the gift of sanctifying grace. But there are all sorts of further complications involved. You can read Johnston on Christian Zen; he talks about that in a very slim book of that title put out by Harper and Row in 1971.

**Question:** It would seem that the existential character introduced by interiority into other areas of theology, e.g., Fr. Crowe's 'Complacency and Concern,' is tending to cover the same area as was previously the predominant mark of spiritual theology, namely, concrete religious experience. Would a properly developed theology of grace, the theological virtues, the beatific vision, written from within the horizon of interiority, render the further department of Spiritual Theology superfluous? If not, what would distinguish this further department from the others?

**Lonergan:** The basis of a theology of grace is, of course, found in spiritual theology; you incorporate that, and make it your starting point in your development of theological categories. Specialized questions in connection with the spiritual life would still be in the department of spiritual theology, but the basic elements come right in at the basis of theology.

**Question:** In early lectures you spoke of the need for people to accept the God question. In speaking of Rabut's analysis today, you spoke of the need to let oneself experience the love of God. Without imposing a crude chronology, I would like to know whether (a) it is authentic to start the process by letting oneself be moved by intimations in one's life of what may be the love of God, and (b) whether this letting oneself go is a help, and if so a necessary one, towards recognizing and then answering the God question.

**Lonergan:** The important thing is to love God, not to experience him. Experiencing it is a plus value that may or may not arise. It depends on all sorts of factors; you can have very holy people that have no experience whatever that they know about, and less holy people that have a lot.

**Question:** In *Insight*, you say that one aspect of the significance of metaphysical equivalence is that 'it provides a critical technique for the precise control of meaning.' Would it be useful to clarify what you mean by feelings, conversion, and so forth, to specify their metaphysical equivalents?

**Lonergan:** Yes, but it would be extremely complex. Metaphysical equivalents that pin things down, and so on, are potency, form, act, central and conjugate, and to specify those in a question like 'What do you mean by "God became man?"' is helpful. But feelings are a whole gamut of different things, and the metaphysical equivalents of them I really haven't worked out yet. I have never attempted to work out a metaphysics of feelings. We're moving into questions that I'm moving

people onto, and it's up to people to find the answers for themselves. It is not for me to give them the answers.

**Question:** You speak of a certain similarity between traditional fundamental theology and foundations. In the light, however, of your stress on the state of being in love with God as the center of foundations, would it not be the case that foundations is more closely related to *De gratia* than to fundamental theology?

**Loneragan:** Yes.

**Question:** Please comment.

**Loneragan:** Well, I gave more than a comment; I gave an answer.

**Question:** Is your analysis of grace in *Gratia operans* a proper metaphysical equivalent to your intentionality analysis of love or is this statement an over-simplification?

**Loneragan:** Taken all in all, *gratia operans* occurs 'quando quis vult id quod prius nolebat,' when one begins to will the good that previously one was unwilling to perform. Now, if that change is a total shift in the personality, it is being in love; if it is just an incidental change, it is an actual grace, not sanctifying grace.

**Question:** How does the application of a doctrine to different types of conscience differ from what you call relativism?

**Loneragan:** Relativism is a philosophic position that involves a contradiction: nothing is absolutely true, except the statement that nothing is absolutely true. What we are moving into is the fact that no proposition is true outside of some context; that contexts develop over time, as understanding develops over time; that to know the context in which propositions are true you have to do historical research and come to understand the mentality of another place and time, and this involves an awful lot of work; that you do not just utter propositions that are

eternally true. Eternal verities, according to St Thomas, are only found in an eternal mind. This has been overlooked by the classicist culture. Eternal verities are only in an eternal mind. In a temporal mind, what is true is true within a context, and as the contexts change significantly, your enunciations have to change. That is not relativism; that is human historicity. Relativism does not mean that propositions are relative to a context; everyone has to hold that. There is not some logical machine that can be applied to anyone's assertions, to grind out all their necessary presuppositions and implications. What an assertion presupposes and what it implies is something to be found out by asking the person who made the statement; the idea that it must presuppose this and it must imply are the assumptions of a controversialist, who does not give a hoot what you really do mean.

So, while any statement is relative to its context, while any context is a matter of its time and place, and the mind that utters it, still, what these contexts are is something that can be discovered by the proper exegetical and historical procedures. So you have an ongoing set of contexts that you find out empirically by research, interpretation, and history, and within these contexts you find out what the meaning of statement is. But each of the statements can be true within its context, and to say that a statement is true in its context is not relativism; relativism means you can never find out what the context is, or that the context is infinite.

People like Bradley and Bosanquet went on to assert the infinity of contexts, and said you cannot know anything unless you know the whole universe. That is the sort of statement that is relativist. There is a section in *Insight* on that sort of thing, towards the end of chapter 11, in which we deal with the relativism that maintains that the universe is a matter of internal relations and, consequently, to know what any statement means, you have to know the whole universe. [Lonergan said he thought this was in chapter 10, but it is in chapter 11.]

**Question:** In view of your recent stress on value, and the denial of the primacy of the speculative intellect, would you say that the first part of *Insight* should be rewritten in such a way that there should be discovered there not three but four fundamental operations?

**Lonergan:** *Insight* is from a moving viewpoint, and by the time you get to chapter 18, on ethics, you have moved into the fourth level of operations. You can't say everything at once. You get people to discover insights, first of all in mathematics, where they are very precise, then in physics, where they are developing, then in common sense, where it is very difficult to pin them down because common sense does not use principles or definitions. Finally, you move on to the integral viewpoint in metaphysics, and so on.

**Question:** You have approved the sublation of the desire to know into the pure desire for value. Could one still speak of God, even in his most fundamental meaning, as the object of this pure desire for value?

**Lonergan:** Yes, but that does not mean that your relationship to God, through God's gift of his love, is a matter of questions and answers. The desire to know or the desire for value is a matter of questions and answers. God's gift of his love is the fulfillment of that drive as implicit, as not explicitated in questions and answers. God's grace gives a fundamental joy and a fundamental peace that reveals it as the fulfillment of the aspirations of the human spirit.

**Question:** Is the permanent element in doctrine always a structure, e.g., the preface of the Mass of the Trinity, or can there be a determinate meaningful content at all stages, and if so, how could such a content be determinable from culture to culture?

**Lonergan:** In different cultural contexts you get an entirely different statement. This is a very difficult thing to treat. Daniélou, in his book *La Théologie du*



*judéo-christianisme*, and his book on Christianity and classical culture, has hundreds of pages detailing what the differences are. You get very determinate contents there. But these are not counters that you can pick up and throw out in conversation. You have to get down to reading enormous areas of stuff. But you will find, if you read Daniélou, the way in which Palestinian Judaism understood Christianity; it was real Christianity, but it was an entirely different way of thinking of the Son and the Spirit from what we have. Are the two equivalent? Well, one is to one culture what the other is to the other culture. You don't get an equivalence; you have a sort of analogy. They were just as devoted to God the Son as we are; they were just as worshipful as we are; but they thought about it and imagined it and spoke about it in an entirely different fashion.

**Question:** You have in a number of your writings spoken of the heuristic character of the homoousion of Nicea. Is there a heuristic element in all dogma, and if so, is the heuristic element relevant to the permanence of dogma through cultural change?

**Lonergan:** It is extremely relevant. Just as the question: What is fire? is permanent, although 'Fire is one of the four elements,' 'Fire is a fruit of phlogiston,' or 'Fire is a process of oxidation,' are different answers in time, so the dogmatic element usually is that heuristic element, and it is up to the theologians to determine it. That is a generalization, and you can have exceptions to it. Theology is a matter of research, interpretation and history, not just of general principles.

**Question:** This presses the same thing. I do not understand how you can justify the permanence of dogmas by the fact they are revealed truths. You have often pointed out that truth never exists independently of minds. Presumably dogmas exist in human minds, and are subject to all their conditions and limitations. Therefore the

truth of dogmas would seem to be no more and no less permanent than any other human truth. Would you agree?

**Loneragan:** Any truth is true in its context, and the permanence of dogma is the truth that was defined in a determinate context. That context can change, and you move along. You have the apprehension of the divinity of the Son in the Council of Nicea; you have more about it in the Council of Ephesus; you have more about it in the Council of Chalcedon; you have more about it when the theologians start talking about Christ as God and Christ as man, and whether Christ as man is free, whether he has sanctifying grace, whether he knows everything and whether he can sin, and so on. In all these further questions your context is developing. The subsequent ongoing context does not change what was defined at Nicea. It reveals the fruits, the subsequent fruits, of the developing context after Nicea. But what is defined is what was defined in that context, and you have to know history to know what that statement means.

So what is true at any time is true permanently, but what that truth was is a matter of historical research. ‘Caesar crossed the Rubicon.’ The context is that the Rubicon was the boundary between Gaul and Italy. Caesar, taking his army across the Rubicon, was defying the Roman senate, asserting his superiority over the Roman senate, and so on and so forth. You have a whole political situation that gives the meaning of that statement. You do not get it in the words ‘Caesar crossed the Rubicon,’ because you may not know that the Rubicon was a river, that the river was a boundary between Italy and Gaul, that Caesar was moving beyond his jurisdiction in Gaul with his army. And you need to know that context to know the meaning of the statement; the statement is true in that context of Roman political and military history. Similarly for any other statement, and similarly for dogmas. Dogmas are particular statements made at particular times in particular contexts, and to know what the dogmas mean you have to move into those contexts. They

are not eternal truths; the only eternal truths are the truths in God's mind, and the mind in which the dogmas are true is the mind of those particular places and times. The way you state a dogma at a later time is a matter of the later context. In other words, things are true in historical contexts, not apart from them. That is moving out of classicism into modern culture, and it is a terrific step.

**Question:** In speaking of the truth of systematic theology, you said that generally it will attain to probability only. But presumably there will be lesser and greater degrees of probability. What will be the criteria of making such judgments?

**Lonergan:** The explanatory power of the hypothesis: does it move right across the board or is it just something stuck in a hole in the corner? Is it some ad hoc explanation, or is it something you can apply right across the board? Now, examples of that presuppose a lot of systematic theology; you cannot just throw out an example and show that you know that it applies in twenty different cases.

**Question:** In connection with your distinction between truth and understanding the truth, I would like to ask how you would understand the 'fuller sense,' *sensus plenior* of Scripture.

**Lonergan:** Well, I think this business of the *sensus plenior* is something antiquated. Today we think of it in terms of development. The *sensus plenior* was trying to find in scripture something that was not there, something that was implicit. There is nothing implicit. Scripture means what it says. And there is the ongoing tradition of the Church that understands more and more and places more and more weight on it. But that is a subsequent development. It is a development in understanding. Scripture is true, and the fuller understanding that people arrive at is due to scripture and their own intelligence, and faith, and religious experience, and so on.

**Question:** To what functional specialty of economics does economic theory belong? It seems to aim at systematic understanding yet it differs from ‘policies,’ which you place on the level of understanding in the second phase.

**Lonergan:** To apply functional specialties to economics is a new departure. I do not think the economists have ever done it. And if anyone wants to do it, it is up to him to decide what is what. In general, economics has been a matter of experience, understanding, and judgment. Economists have been concerned to set up laws or models; they move on to policies insofar as they get the ear of the government and tell people what to do.

**Question:** I would like to press again my question whether there is not a considerable difference between the universal viewpoint of chapter 17 of *Insight* – proximate achievement, the basis of an actual hermeneutical method – and the comprehensive viewpoint of dialectics, a high and distant goal.

**Lonergan:** I have read through the contrasting passages. (The questioner, Terry J. Tekippe, had submitted to Lonergan, in parallel columns, what he considered contrasting passages from *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. He treats this topic, and refers to this question session, in an appendix to his doctoral dissertation: ‘The Universal Viewpoint and the Relationship of Philosophy to Theology in the works of Bernard Lonergan,’ pp. 163-170, Fordham University, 1972) here but I am not convinced. I never thought that I had attained the high and distant goal of a comprehensive viewpoint when I was writing *Insight*. I said there is this possibility, and this could guide the movement towards attaining a universal viewpoint, and I said what sort of a thing this universal viewpoint would be. But to state it would have been to write a Hegelian treatise, and I never aimed at rivaling Hegel. I am still of that position: that it is a matter of experience, understanding,

and judgment, and a matter of dialectic, to arrive at an account of all the different positions that different people have held.

**Question:** Could you indicate in what way *Method* can be a guide in setting up a properly ordered division of subject matter within the subject specialty systematics, e.g., is there a proper order in which the natural theology that is within systematic theology can be related to the traditional *De Deo uno* and the other treatises? Again, does your method provide a clue as to what the proper sequence in the tractates on grace, Christology, Trinity, eschatology would be?

**Lonergan:** Well, this business of the sequence and the order and so on, is, I think, has presuppositions that are mistaken. There is not some one order that is sacrosanct. You can set up things in different orders, and you use the order that suits this present occasion, that suits the resources of this particular group, and so on. Grace depends on Christ, Christ is the source of grace, and so on. But where you start is not the important thing. The important thing is to arrive at the goal, when you know all about everything.

**Question:** You seemed yesterday to distinguish between oppositions that are non-dialectical and ones that are really so. The criterion of the latter is that they cannot be removed outside the context of a conversion. Is this an accurate surmise? If so would you agree that the opposition of A and B because B has a higher viewpoint in a field F in which A has a lower viewpoint is non-dialectical in this strict sense and is removed by the mere developments of A?

**Lonergan:** Yes.

**Question:** Would you agree that, regarding a characterization of dialectical situations as situations which are concrete, dynamic, and contradictory, dialectic in the strict sense is an instance or species of this, and that it is the revelation of these

strictly dialectical oppositions which is the basic axis of dialectics as a functional specialty?

**Lonergan:** Yes.

### Questions from floor

**Question:** [Inaudible] Can you clarify the 32 different possible types of consciousness mentioned on p. 271 of *Method*?

**Lonergan:** Do you know Newton's triangle? (Goes to board)

You have common sense, the transcendent differentiation of consciousness, the theoretical differentiation of consciousness, the interiority differentiation of consciousness, the aesthetic differentiation of consciousness, and the scholarly differentiation of consciousness. You need 6 to arrive at 64 and 5 to arrive at 32. You take 2 at a time, 3 at a time, 4 at a time, 5 at a time. If there are six in all, you take 6 at a time and you have 1 after the 6; and none at all is 1; 2 at a time gives you 6; 3 at a time gives you 10, 4 at a time gives you 20, and so on. It is just a matter of combinations.

**Question:** (The questioner asks, to what extent one can grasp the virtually unconditioned and still not utter a judgment. Then he asks, whether the demand for a critical grounding of the three types of conversion does not come out of a classicist misunderstanding, namely, that if one grasps the virtually unconditioned one must necessarily utter a judgment.)

**Lonergan:** When one has grasped the virtually unconditioned one utters a judgment necessarily, insofar as one is rational, but psychological upsets can interfere with one's rationality. I do not know that it is classicism that wants critical grounding for moral and religious conversion. I think it is just a carry-over; if critical grounding is right for what is cognitional, it must be right for what is

purely existential. It is not taking freedom into account, where freedom becomes important. It may be classicist insofar as it thinks of speculative intellect as controlling everything.

**Question:** Is freedom operative in intellectual conversion also?

**Lonergan:** Insofar as it is a conversion. Insofar as it is a person making a decision, and saying, 'I am no longer going to confuse the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning; I am no longer going to apply the criteria relevant to the world of immediacy to the world that is mediated by meaning.' There can be a decision there, and that decision is important. Fundamentally, everything depends on decisions, because the level of deliberation, evaluation, and decision-making sublates the previous levels, it goes beyond them and brings in a new principle, namely, the self-realization of the subject. We are not computers plus a will.

**Question:** (The questioner asks how a theologian who is not a mystic can, without hypocrisy, talk about mysticism as if he understood it.)

**Lonergan:** Well, if he has a spiritual child who is a mystic he can learn an awful lot about it.

**Question:** (A suggestion that self-knowledge through introspection is more difficult than self-knowledge through others, whom one knows and loves.)

**Lonergan:** Yes, one can often be more objective about another than one can about oneself. You recall that when I distinguished between biography and autobiography, I said that the biographer is not pressed to reticences to which the autobiographer is pressed. Does that meet your question?

**Question:** (A follow-up, on the importance of love-Ed.)

**Lonergan:** Well, yes. I think that is extremely important.