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The General Character of Lonergan's Natural Theology

1. In my little book, *Insight*, chapter 19 is devoted to presenting an argument with the conclusion, God exists.

I beg to substitute this argument for the more ^{prickly} ambitious topic, Natural Theology,

The General Character of Lonergan's Natural Theology

1. Such is the topic very kindly suggested to me for this talk by Prof. Gilkie

In so far as I have a Natural Theology, it consists mainly in an argument that concludes, 'God exists.'

I propose, then, to avoid any direct treatment of the notion of a natural theology and to confine myself limit my

I propose then

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The General Character of an Argument for the Existence of God

1. After promptly accepting the suggestion, very kindly made by Prof. Gilkie, that I take as my topic, The General Character of my Natural Theology,

on second thoughts, for second thoughts seem always best, I thought it wiser to retain the qualification, The General Character of, but to replace the broad topic, Natural Theology, with ~~for~~ the more ~~pnasama~~ limited term, Argument for the Existence of God.

~~I trust you will pardon this slight alteration. When I got it down to the work of preparing this talk, I shortly realized that I had never written anything on the topic of Natural Theology.~~

I trust you will pardon this alteration. I cannot very well discuss my natural theology, since I never got further in that field than ~~xx~~ composing an argument for the existence of God. And I cannot do more than indicate the general character of that argument, for it runs over fifty pages of fairly small print, and presupposes some eighteen previous chapters of a long book.

2. ~~The argument in its entirety involves six main terms: real, being, completely intelligible, an unrestricted act of understanding, God, and exists.~~

~~These may be put together in the following arguments:~~

~~If the real is being, and being is completely intelligible, then there exists an unrestricted act of understanding; and if there exists an unrestricted act of understanding, God exists.~~

~~But the real is being, and being is completely intelligible. Therefore there exists~~

These six terms come together in three related arguments.

The Main argument is:

If the real is completely intelligible, God exists.

But the real is completely intelligible.

Therefore, God exists.

Proof of the major premiss:

If there exists an unrestricted act of understanding, God exists;

but if the real is completely intelligible, there exists an unrestricted act of understanding;

therefore, if the real is completely intelligible, God exists.

Proof of the minor premiss:

Being is completely intelligible

The real is being.

The real is completely intelligible.

An Argument for the Existence of God

1. After accepting the suggestion, very kindly made by Prof. Gilkie, that I take as my topic, The General Character of my Natural Theology,

on second thoughts, for second thoughts are said to be always best, I think I had best confine myself to the argument for the existence of God set forth in Chapter XIX of my little book, Insight,

and touch the prickly subject of a Natural Theology only incidentally and occasionally.

I am not going to present the whole of this argument. It runs over 52 pages of fairly small print, and for the most part they presuppose the preceding 600 pages of the book.

Very emphatically, then, I cling to the qualification wisely placed in the original title. I am to attempt to indicate, not the argument, but the general character of the argument in Insight for the existence of God.

2. On page 672 there is written out the syllogism

If the real is completely intelligible, God exists.
But the real is completely intelligible. Therefore, God exists.

It is a hypothetical argument in the modus ponens. Technically, it is correct. Affirm the antecedent, and you must affirm the consequent.

There remain, however, two further questions. What does it ~~mean~~ mean? And is that meaning true?

~~The meaning may be clarified, first of all, by a series of amplifications.~~

3. The meaning of the premisses, then, may be clarified by the introduction of middle ~~being~~ terms.

So the minor premiss, The real is completely intelligible, may be replaced by the syllogism,

Being is completely intelligible.
The real is being.
Therefore, the real is completely intelligible.

Again, the major premiss may be replaced by the compound hypothetical argument,

If the real is completely intelligible, there exists an unrestricted act of understanding.

If there exists an unrestricted act of understanding, God exists.

Therefore, if the real is completely intelligible, God exists.

1. In chapter XIX of my book, *Insight*, I worked out an argument for the existence of God. Presumably this fact constitutes my 'Natural Theology,' and so an account of the general character of my 'Natural Theology' will be an account of this argument.

2. The nub of the argument is:

If the real is completely intelligible, God exists.
But the real is completely intelligible.
Therefore, God exists.

3. Perhaps the first thing to be noted is that the antecedent expresses a particular philosophic position.

The argument is not proposed to anyone at all, or to all men of good will, or to anyone with an ounce of common sense or with a glimmer of intelligence

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2. The arguement involves six main terms: real, being, completely intelligible, an unrestricted act of understanding, God, and exists.

These six terms combine into four propositions each of which has to be established, namely,

The real is being.

Being is completely intelligible.

If the real is completely intelligible, there exists an unrestricted act of understanding.

If there exists an unrestricted act of understanding, God exists.

If these four propositions are established, there is established an argument ~~for~~ that concludes, God exists.

From the last pair, we have:

If the real is completely intelligible, God exists.

From the first pair we have:

The real is completely intelligible.

From these two:

God exists.

3. Such is the mere logic of the issue. There remain two questions. What does each of our four propositions mean? Are they true? Let us take them in turn.

4. The real is being.

The "real" and especially the "really real" is not merely an ambiguous term. It is even ambivalent. Its meaning for us is settled by long-standing habit, a habit contracted in childhood, a habit never perhaps submitted to scrutiny, a habit that despite the most searching scrutiny is very apt to survive.

The child is said to reach the age of reason about seven years. But long before reaching the age of reason, he has to learn to distinguish between the real and the mere story, the merely imagined, the merely dreamt, between what's really so and the siblings's trick, joke, fib. The problems ~~of~~ of epistemology begin early in our lives and commonly our childish solutions remain with us to our graves. The real is what is out there. Knowing it is taking a good look. Objectivity is a matter of seeing just what is there to be seen, no more, and no less.

Besides the epistemology worked out pragmatically in childhood, there also goes forward in us the development of a quite different

2. An argument consists of terms, propositions, and inferences.

We have to consider six terms, four propositions, and three inferences.

The six terms are: the real, being, completely intelligible, an unrestricted ~~an~~ act of understanding, God, and exists.

The four propositions are:
The real is being.
Being is completely intelligible.

The first three terms yield two propositions and an inference:

The real is being.
Being is completely intelligible.
Therefore, the real is completely intelligible.

The ~~an~~ last three terms yield two propositions and an inference:

If the real is completely intelligible, there exists an unrestricted act of understanding.
If there exists an unrestricted act of understanding, God exists.
Therefore, if the real is completely intelligible, God exists.

Combining the two conclusions, one has the third inference:

If the real is completely intelligible, God exists.
But the real is completely intelligible,
Therefore God exists.

3. The Real is being

a By being is meant

- (1) what is intended by asking questions
- (2) what is known by answering questions correctly
- (3) what is unknown but to be known by asking and answering still further questions

b Hence, being is all-inclusive.

It includes everything we know by asking and answering qq

b

3. The real is being

a Being: what is intended by asking questions
what is to be known by answering questions correctly

It includes more than we know: every genuine question takes beyond what we already know; it reveals the dynamism of the human mind. Being is the objective of that dynamism.

The dynamism is unrestricted. No matter how much may be known, one can always ask whether there might not be something further.

The unrestricted dynamism rules out every partial obscurantism. Questions can never be brushed aside without any reason whatever. No doubt, there are legitimate and illegitimate questions, useful questions and questions it would be a mistake to tackle now. But these distinctions are reasoned distinctions. The exclusion of every form of obscurantism is the exclusion of arbitrariness.

b To affirm that the real is being is to pin down what one means by "real".

It rules out objections of the type that 'this sounds fanciful,' or 'that does not seem real,' or 'how unreal!'

More specifically it commits one to the view that apart from being there is just nothing at all

It excludes the view that our cognitional process falls into two parts

- a first part in which we know reality by ineffable experience
- a second part in which we work ~~my~~ out hypotheses and theories

It is true ~~as~~ enough that animals know without asking questions and gradually working out answers

It is true that we can or might function by merely animal knowledge, though this is unlikely

b To affirm that the real is being is ~~is~~

- (1) to pin down what one means by real, and
- (2) indirectly, to pin down what one means by knowing and by objectivity.

There are three fundamental issues in philosophy

- (1) what am I doing when I am knowing -- cognitional theory
- (2) why is doing that knowing -- epistemology, q of objectivity
- (3) what do I know when I do it -- metaphysics, account of reality

5.

6.

3.2 I said that the argument is traditional with two modifications. The first of these was a variant on the appeal to a principle of causality. The second appears in the antecedent, namely, the affirmation that the real is completely intelligible.

That statement is a statement of horizon, that is, of the totality within which all ~~prop~~ statements derive their meaning

That statement is a philosophic position

4. Being is completely intelligible.

As being is what is intended in asking questions, so it is what is to be known by answering them.

But answering questions is a matter of understanding correctly, of exercising one's intelligence and doing so in the proper manner, of working out hypotheses and verifying them.

But what can be known in this manner, can be only the intelligible. What is known by intelligence is intelligible.

c Some pro further properties of this a priori notion had best be noted.

The apriori intention is not restricted.

It is not limited to some genus, like sight to colour or hearing to sound. We inquire about things in all and any genera and species.

It is not limited to what we can know.

Man's capacity to know is limited. But no matter where the limit is set, one can always ask (though not answer) whether or not there is anything beyond that limit to be known.

5. If being is completely intelligible, there exists an unrestricted act of understanding.

a If being is to be completely intelligible, there must be a completely intelligible being.

If there is not a completely intelligible being, then being ~~is~~ is not completely intelligible

2. I am afraid that a brief outline of the argument may prove more distressing than helpful. But I do not know how else to begin, so counting on your forbearance, I repeat the syllogism that occurs on page 672 of Insight.

If the real is completely intelligible, God exists.
 But the real is completely intelligible,
 Therefore God exists.

The logic of the argument causes no difficulty: it is a straightforward hypothetical argument in the modus ponens.

But what does it mean. Let us begin by breaking down both premisses by the introduction of further ~~and~~ middle terms.

The hypothetical premiss can be concluded from the following:

the real /
The real

If there is an unrestricted act of understanding, God exists.
 If ~~being~~ is completely intelligible, there is an unrestricted act of understanding.
 Therefore, if ~~being~~ is completely intelligible, God exists.

Moreover, the antecedent itself may be concluded from the syllogism:

Being is completely intelligible.
 The real is being.
 Therefore, ~~the~~ the real is completely intelligible.

A: the real

B: being

C: completely intelligible

D: an unrestricted act of understanding

E: God

F: exists

If A is C, E is F; but A is C; therefore, E is F.

minor: B is C; A is B; therefore, A is C.

major: If D is F, E is F; if A is C, D is F; therefore if A is C, E is F.

3. The real is being

a By 'being'^{Chapter 2} is meant what is intended in questioning.

What is so intended is not yet known: else the question is not genuine.

What is so intended is not utterly unknown: at least one knows enough to ask about it

What is so intended, is intended a priori; it is not the content of something already perceived or known; it is about the perceived or known, but it goes beyond what is perceived or known to ask about that unperceived and unknown.

e/

b The a priori intention of being is not ~~not~~ restricted.

It is not restricted to any species or genus. No matter how well we know any one species or genus, we can always go on to ask whether there are others, and so intend others.

It is not restricted to any given department of knowledge: one can always go on to ask about other departments.

It is not restricted to human knowledge. One can ask whether there exist other beings that know ask about or know being, and one ask whether they know more than we do. I am not saying that we can know whether there are, only that we can ask. It is in the asking that there occurs the a priori intention of being.

s/

c The a priori intention of being is not abstract.

The abstract prescind from particular characteristics to attend to more general characteristics.

The a priori intention of being asks about all characteristics: as it is completely universal (concerned with everything) so also it is completely concretex (concerned with everything about everything).

d The a priori intention of being is not optional.

It is the nerve of all questioning, of all learning, of all correcting mistakes, of all inquiry, of all reflection, of all deliberation.

Were it not to function, we would cease to be human.

and intell
and judgem
and reasonabl
choice.

e It remains that, in a sense, we have to become human.

Besides our properly human knowing that is a ~~matter~~ compound of experiencing, understanding, and judging,

there is purely sensitive knowing in the animal, and the gradual process from the sensitive knowing of the human infant to the every more intelligent and rational knowing of the human adult.

f To affirm that the real is being is to commit oneself to properly human knowing. To mix the two is the critical problem.

EG Kant, Transcendental Aesthetic, first sentence.

Vs. immediately related by question. FCopleston VI xi §§1, 8

3. The real is being. Continued.

g Some may be wondering what this has to do with Christianity, with hearing the word, doing the word, living the word, bearing witness to the word, preaching the word.

The "word" presupposes, not merely looking, but also understanding, and affirming, and deciding.

It is part of the universe of being, concerned with the universe of being.

Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.

Especially dogmas, confessions, doctrinal dogmatic theology,

No less the problems of myth and reality, of hermeneutics, of history as science, of theology and other disciplines.

h Natural Theology

Not exclusive by conviction - changed horizon

Personalist authenticity
Existentialist

Not person - as subject-object

4. Being is completely intelligible.

a By the intelligible is meant what is to be known by intelligence.

One may distinguish the potentially, formally, actually intelligible.

The potentially intelligible is what can be understood: so data are intelligible in this sense.

The formally intelligible is what is grasped by understanding inasmuch as one is understanding: such is the idea, the content of an act of understanding.

The actually intelligible is what is rationally affirmed: it is the correctly understood, the verified idea, the fact.

b Any being we know or can know is intelligible.

As being is intended by asking questions, so it is known by answering them correctly.

But any being we know or will know must be intelligible, for it is only by the exercise of our intelligence and, indeed, the proper, reasonable exercise of our intelligence by that we ask appropriate questions and answer them correctly.

What is known by intelligence is intelligible.

c Being is completely intelligible.

Being is completely intelligible if every obscurantism, even every partial obscurantism, is to be excluded.

For if it is excluded, then no question can arbitrarily be brushed aside.

If none can arbitrarily be brushed aside, then every question demands an intelligent and reasonable answer.

This does not mean that there is no strategy in raising to be observed in raising questions, that there are not questions to be postponed, that there are not illegitimate questions, etc.

In any such case an intelligent and reasonable answer is given when the inappropriate or illegitimate question is raised.

Obscurantism is arbitrarily brushing questions aside.

d The significance of this step is that it restores the philosophic as distinct from the scientific notion of causality.

For Descartes, while phil and theol were not only distinct but separate, a similar separation of phil and sc did not exist. He proved the conservation of momentum from the immutability of God.

Later, virtually with Newton's phil nat princip math, formally with Laplace's demonstration of the periodicity of planetary motion and the conclusion, Nous n'avons pas besoin de cette hypoth, phil and sc became separate as well as distinct.

There was developed a purely scientific notion of causality that related effects only to finite causes.

It became necessary to develop a complementary purely philosophic notion of causality.

= The real is completely intelligible.

6. The real is being

I remember when I was a boy being surprised by a companion who assured me that the air was something real.

I said, No, It's just nothing. There's nothing there.

He said, There's something there all right. Shake your hand and you will feel it. ~~axi~~

So I shook my hand, felt something, and concluded that the air was real.

Now we all in childhood, long before reaching the age of reason, have to work out implicitly and pragmatically the solution to problems in epistemology and metaphysics.

We have to distinguish between dreams and waking, between stories and what really happened, we have to discover the possibility and learn to suspect the sibling's joke, trick, fib.

The point to these remarks is, of course, that the solutions we arrive at in childhood remain with us for the rest of our lives. They are manifest, self-evident, unquestionable; in recent German philosophy they are Selbstverständlichkeiten

When Edmond Husserl bids us practice the phenomenological reduction, gaze at the tree, retain all the phenomena, everything that appears with all its light and glory and majesty, but put within brackets what is conveyed to us by our deep sense of reality, and so move away from the natural attitude, die natürliche Einstellung

he is taken a first step and a necessary step to what I mean when I say that the real is being

Not only is being what is intended by questioning, what is to be known by asking and correctly answering questions, but so also is the real

No other intelligent and reasonable answer is possible

7. The real is completely intelligible

For: Being is completely intelligible. The real is being. Therefore, the real is completely intelligible.

N. B. When the real is identified with the given, the empirical, the merely factual, then it is identified with what as yet is not understood. It is distinguished from the intelligible.

EXPOSURE OF
COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY...
A...

7. The realities of this world give rise to questions that take us beyond this world.

Any occurrence can be reduced to other occurrences, and any existence to other existences.

But the others are just as much in need of explanation as what they explain. In fact, they are and they occur. But why should anything exist? Why should anything occur?

Proof: occurrence as such, existence as such is known inasmuch as we judge; judgement proceeds from grasp of virtually unconditioned, (= what has conditions which happen to be fulfilled).

8 The question is not answered by concluding to other incompletely intelligible beings beyond the re

8 If being is completely intelligible

1. The question of the complete intelligibility of beings

5. If the real is completely intelligible, there exists an unrestricted act of understanding.

No one
a ~~None~~ of the realities in this world, taken by itself, is completely intelligible.

We explain them by going beyond them to other things or persons.

b Nor are the realities of this world, taken together, completely intelligible. p. 653.

One existence can be reduced to another; one occurrence to other occurrences; but the others are just as much in need of explanation as the ~~first~~ one explained.

Whether one goes off to infinity or round in a circle, one reduces one matter of fact to another matter of fact; one does not get beyond mere factuality to explanation.

Again, the properties of things can be explained by their natures, and their natures by an evolutionary process.

But the evolutionary process is just a matter of statistical law: it is what happened to happen that way; it is not ultimate explanation.

c Still, unless reality is the intelligible by identity, we cannot know it: for what we know by intelligence is just the intelligible; and our knowing is centrally intelligence.

Moreover, unless we are going to block questioning in an arbitrary manner,

we shall demand an intelligible ground for the existence of what de facto exists and for the occurrence of what de facto occurs

and we shall not stop until we reach an completely intelligible ground

d Such a completely intelligible ground is an unrestricted act of understanding

because it is unrestricted, it understands itself completely and it understands completely everything about everything else.

6. If there exists a completely intelligible being (an unrestricted act of understanding), God exists.

a The properties of a completely intelligible being coincide with the properties traditionally attributed to God

pp 657-669

b As our account of human knowing is essentially openness and process,

so ~~xxx~~ the foregoing account of God is not closed off but open to further developments, specifically to the developments of Christian faith

Deism: rooted in separation of phil and theolo, and philosophy rationalistic denying the possibility of legitimate faith

Natural theology, not necessarily natural religion,
Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der reinen Vernunft
Deductivism plus negation of openness, a cult of
necessity not found in modern math

W. Heidegger

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I have been credited with a 'Natural Theology,' most probably, because in chapter XIX of my book, Insight, there is worked out an argument for the existence of God.