1980 Q&A LW Second Session, June 17

Question: Your Roman courses (System & Method etc.) give clues to a new systematics which would exploit the reversal of counterpositions and lead to 'an idealized version of the past' (*Method in Theology* 251) leading, through the categories (especially, *Method in Theology* 287), to a genetico-dialectic systematics which would sublate the old analytic-synthetic distinction. Would you please comment on this suggestion?

Lonergan: These were courses for graduate students, and the first one was on intellect and method, 'De intellectu et methodo.' I did that for a couple of years, and then one on system and method, and finally I got down to method in theology. I did that for three or four years. So I was feeling my way towards writing a book on method. '... give clues to a new systematics which would exploit the reversal of counterpositions and lead to 'an idealized version of the past' leading, through the categories (especially, *Method in Theology* 287), to a genetico-dialectic systematics which would sublate the old analytic-synthetic distinction.' The reversal of counterpositions occurs in the functional specialty 'dialectic,' in which the participants are invited to affirm what they consider positions and to reverse what they consider counterpositions. The operations of Dialectic are expected to be performed by people who disagree. Dialectic doesn't go on in some one man's mind. It's a group affair. You have to have a group to have dialogue, and you have to have a group to have dialectic in this sense. It is expected to be performed by people who disagree, and ideally who disagree to the extent not only that the one position of all three conversions – intellectual, moral, and religious – but the seven counterpositions – three cases of one conversion, three cases of one conversion missing, and one case of three conversions missing – that gives you seven in all. So you want the lot. When those holding the one position reverse the positions representing the other seven, they transform them into positions and so give an idealized presentation of them. All the counterpositions are eliminated by being reversed. But when less fortunate mortals who lack one conversion or lack two or lack three start reversing the counterpositions, they are reversing what's true and accepting what's false very easily. And they do it in all sorts of ways, according to the one they're missing or the two they've got, and so on, or the three they're missing. In other words, eight representatives give you a very confused view of the situation. And the function of this is that we want to arrive at something like a methodical approach to the question of values. Max Weber taught *Wertfreiheit*. There are a lot of distinctions to be drawn in what sense he held this but the sum and substance of it is that value judgments[?] are non-scientific. Well, on many views of science that's true enough, but not altogether true. They don't mean that science has no value, and least of all that their science has no value ... So the function of this dialectical presentation more or less put under a microscope, perhaps an electron microscope, revealing the diversity of judgments of value opens the door to people starting to ask themselves questions, wondering how this is so. It doesn't attempt to change their value judgments. To change their value judgments is to change them, and you can't do that; they have to do it. You can provide occasions. You can provide dialogue. You can change dialectic to dialogue, especially when people are well disposed. And that's the function of dialectic in *Method in Theology*. The distinction between analysis and synthesis is between successive stages in scientific development. First of all what you do is give names, and the linguistic analysts have the dope on that. Giving names is using the name appropriately. It's understanding that the word is a tool.

Just like you understand that a razor can shave any beard, so you understand that this word 'dog' can be used to mean any dog. But you can go beyond that, and then you have a process of analysis followed by a process of synthesis. Analysis moves from the world of common sense to the basic elements in the science. It's the movement from alchemy through chemistry to the periodic table worked out by Mendeleev, of a not determinate number of elements having variants according to the certain variations that are permissible in the table. And once that's achieved, subsequent development is constructing all the compounds, the synthesis. Analysis leads to synthesis. Schumpeter's *A History of Economic Analysis* is concerned with the work done in the history of economics towards the discovery of formulation of the elemental concepts and basic theorems of economic science. It's the box of tools as Joan Robinson says. Synthesis is the ongoing task of putting the elements together in various ways to account for economic phenomena. And you have analysis and synthesis in Aristotle, the *via analytica* and the *via synthetica*. You have it in Thomas. Genetico-dialectic is something that arises when you get a historical viewpoint. You're talking about the development of the science, its genesis, and its mistaken turns, its wandering down byways, its dialectical elements. And it does the history of the science under that. And of course the dialectical side propels the science forward because the byways get repudiated, and you're all the more solidly established on the right path.

Question: Could you say something about the emergence of generalized empirical method in your thought prior to *Insight* (pp. 72, 243), and its later development (e.g., Donald Mathers Memorial Lectures, 1976)?

Lonergan: The critical breakdown of Scholastic thought occurred toward the end of the thirteenth century. Up to then theological thought had followed a method, and progress, while not always startling, was more or less continuous. If one compares the questions discussed in Peter Lombard's four books of the Sentences and the questions discussed by Aquinas 100 years later when he wrote on the same Sentences, you have before you the materials for a comparison that will reveal 100 years of theological development. The questions are entirely different. He isn't discussing the questions raised by Lombard at all, or very rarely. He's profiting from all the thinking that went on in the last hundred years ... in the natural sciences, like Roger Bacon: he was on to methodical science. The differences, then, between Aquinas and Peter Lombard are fantastic, and they represent the fruits of 100 years of development. The break occurred after the introduction of Aristotle's writings to provide – the Germans have a word – a *Begrifflichkeit*, a set of interconnected and explanatorily related concepts for Scholastic theologians to adopt and adapt in solving theological problems. If you're going to solve problems, and you have a lot of them, and you have a lot of people working at them, unless they have a common source for the distinctions they draws and use in solving these problems, if each one is thinking out different distinctions for himself, then you're just making the situation worse than it was before. The idea of getting a common *Begrifflichkeit* is to have a uniform front of some sort. That was the purpose of introducing Aristotle. The problems arose systematically. First there was a discovery of translation of texts from the Fathers and the Councils; secondly, commentaries on them and brief explanations called glosses; thirdly, books of Sentences that collected in an orderly fashion testimonies from the Fathers and Councils on each of a series of topics; and fourthly, *quaestiones*, questions. And who gave the lead on the questions? Well, the big lead was from Peter Abelard, in his book *Sic et non*, Yes and no. He took 158 propositions and proceeded to

demonstrate from scripture, the Fathers, the Councils, and reason both the affirmative and the negative of each of the 158. Yes and no. And that became the 'Videtur quod non' and 'Sed contra est' that you get in Thomas's *Summa*: 'It seems not to be so' and 'On the other hand.'

This was the first step. The second step was from Gilbert of Porreta. He defined the existence of a *quaestio*, of a question: namely, a question exists if propositions could be both proved and disproved by appealing to scripture and/or the Fathers and/or the Councils and/or reason. If you haven't got proofs leading in contradictory directions from your sources, you haven't got a question ... So first of all, you establish the existence of the question by the 'Videtur quod non' and the 'Sed contra est' and then you laid down – the development of the question was to lay down principles of solution: the body of the article, and to apply the principles of solution to each one of the points raised, in the responses afterwards. And as I've already suggested, to solve these questions distinctions were needed, and unless the distinctions were derived from something like a common source, all that would be ... would be the multiplication of unsolved problems.

Now this use of Aristotle on the grand scale was undertaken by – at first there were odd things like habit and act, and so on. But the larger use of Aristotle was undertaken first by Albert and then more profoundly by Aquinas. But the Augustinians, in practice the Franciscans, did not recognize this as an achievement in methodical development. They argued that the Dominicans were treating Aristotle, a mere pagan, as though he were a Father of the church. They were always quoting Aristotle, and quoting him more than St Augustine and the other saints. And that was unworthy of Christian theologians. And there was a first-class row about it. There was the 'Correctorium Fratris Thomae' and the 'Correctorium Correctorii Fratris Thomae' and the 'Correctorium Correctorii Correctorii' and so on. And it went on. And it wasn't gentle at all. And you have the condemnations of Aquinas both at Paris and at Canterbury.

Now a compromise solution came with Scotus. He held that Aristotle's *Organon*, his six logical works, were extemely useful and could be safely adopted and followed. But Aristotle's other writings were just the work of a pagan, and were to be eschewed. So, confine your attention to the *Organon*. And it would seem that the Dominicans went along with this. Fr Congar, in his history of theology, written originally for the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* where it goes over pages and pages in that great work, and translated into English by Hunter Guthrie (I forget who the publisher was) remarked that Scholastic terminology does not derive from Aquinas. If you learn the terminology of the manuals or the great theologians of the sixteenth century and so on, you're learning not the terminology of Aquinas but an entirely different terminology. Aquinas was not a logician. He'll say *actio*, action, is used in two senses. And you turn a couple of pages: *Actio* is used in three senses, and you'll read and find that none of the three correspond with the other two. And he keeps going on that way. He gives enough distinctions in each article to deal with the matter in hand. But he doesn't give a conspectus of how you put these things together. But Scotus would say, 'Action is used in fifteen different senses,' and he'd list the whole fifteen, cover the ground thoroughly. He was a logician. He could set up a terminology. The Scholastic terminology does not derive from Aquinas, but it is the vocabulary of Scotus, who perhaps derived it from Henry of Ghent. An interesting 'confirmatur' is that Peter Hoenen, a professor of cosmology at the Greg, discovered that Cajetan certainly and Aquinas probably held that intellect abstracted not only terms from phantasm but also the nexus between terms. Talking that way is using the Scotist terminology. Scotus talks about comparing terms, and then you get the nexus between them. In other words, understanding

comes after you have the concept. Concepts don't depend on understanding at all but comes afterwards. And the whole problem is to know which are the right concepts, and the only way you can tell which are the right concepts is to belong to a school, and use their concepts. And there's no possibility of uniting the schools. He uses this Scotist terminology in introducing a doctrine is genuine Aristotle and genuine Aquinas, to my mind, but he can't get away from the Scotist terminology. In any case, this concentration on the *Organon* and the neglect of the rest of Aristotle was the omission of the context that could yield a balanced view of Aristotle's position. The *Organon* without the context of the rest of the *Corpus Aristotelicum* is a fragment. Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* presented a science as a deductivism from necessary truths to equally necessary conclusions. But for Aristotle in his *Physics* everything on this earth was contingent. What's the good of that science? Well it never occurred to the Scholastics. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries first ended up in scepticism and then in decadence. They weren't able to produce that sort of science. And they had very good arguments for skepticism, like: it was agreed by everybody that God could do anything that didn't involve a contradiction. There were limits to his omnipotence but this wasn't really a limit. They said, now, to say that you have an intuition of something existing and present *as* existing and present doesn't imply that there's anything existing and present. There's no contradiction there. If you said you have an intuition and you haven't got an intuition, well, that would be a contradiction, or something is existing and not existing, that would be a contradiction, or something was present and not present, that would be a contradiction. But having the intuition and having nothing there that's being intuited, well, that's no contradiction. If you say it's an infallible intuition, well, OK, but how do you know it's infallible? ... They were thoroughgoing skeptics. For Aristotle, everything on this earth was contingent. Necessity was confined perhaps to the planets and certainly to the fixed stars, the *primum mobile*, and the unmoved movers. Just how many unmoved movers he had was not too clear. There are different answers in different chapters. I think there were twelve. Moveover, for Aristotle understanding didn't follow the formation of concepts, it preceded them. In the *Metaphysics*, book Z, chapter 17, the last chapter in book Z, where the question all the way through is, What do you mean by an *ousia*? – and you get wonderful views of what Aristotle must have meant by *ousia* ... They obviously haven't read Aristotle. The meaning of the question, What is it? is, Why is it so? What is an eclipse? becomes Why is the moon darkened in this fashion? If you want to know what is an eclipse, ask why is the moon darkened in this fashion. And the answer is that the earth butts in between the sun and the moon depriving the moon of the light it reflects to us. And if you don't know that, you don't know what an eclipse is. He pins it right down. And the butting in of the earth between the sun and the moon is the *aition tou einai*, the *causa essendi*. It's the *eidos* and the *morphē* and the *to ti ēn einai* of an eclipse: all Aristotelian expressions for the form. The form is what promoted the matter to being something. Prime matter is not something or quantity or quality or relation or time or space or anything that ... but it becomes something when it has a form. It becomes *aition tou einai ti*, of becoming something. Similarly, a human soul is why these bones and flesh are a man or a woman. This became forgotten. Understanding was shifted to being a byproduct of concepts. One came to understand concepts as necessary or possibly conjoined by comparing them. And the never settled question was, Who had the right concepts? And the only answer was, the concepts of my school are the right concepts.

Now I imagine I never accepted this doctrine. I've always been very grateful to the professor of metaphysics I had in first-year philosophy because he not only taught metaphysics

to the first-year philosophers but he taught fundamental theology to the theologians. And he'd never taught theology before. And he limited his incursions into our classroom to three occasions in the course of the year. So I never had to learn and more happily never had to forget Frick's metaphysics, which was the text. But what I was familiar with was understanding. I thought it absurd to derive understanding from a comparison of abstract concepts. To understand, what you need is an image or a diagram. And it is from the image that one gets the common matter to combine with the form grasped by understanding.

While I was a student in philosophy, I spent a great deal of time on two books: H.B.W. Joseph's *Introduction to Logic* – a big book on logic, between 600 and 700 pages, which is a lot on logic! – but he didn't have merely deductive logic. He also had inductive logic and scientific method. He handled Mill's method a little cavalierly, the method of difference. If a Don finds he can't sleep at night, and doesn't know whether it's because he had a cup of black coffee before going to bed or because he ran around the quad five times, well, the first night he may take the coffee and omit running around the quad, and find it as hard to sleep as ever; and the next night he does the running around the quad and doesn't take the coffee and finds he sleeps all right. He arrives at the cause, the coffee. He made the point very clear. But anyway, it was something you didn't get in a course in Scholastic philosophy, an introduction to science, and a very acute introduction to science. Joseph was a brilliant man. It is said some people doubted he ever believed anything but he certainly could pull anything apart. All these people had tutorials, and they'd assign papers, and a question he always assigned somewhere in the course was, What evolves? They all believed in evolution; well, what evolves? It's a little hard to answer, because after it has evolved it's no longer evolving and what have you got before to say it is evolving? The other book was John Henry Newman's *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, and along with it a refutation of the *Grammar of Assent* in six or seven long articles in the Jesuit periodical of the 1870s *The Month*, which still exists. These were written by an Oxford convert who had become a Jesuit. He argued that unless one thought in syllogisms, one was not thinking at all. I didn't believe that. It struck me as just queer. Later on, a book on Plato's Ideas by the same man who wrote on Plato's myths, Stewart. For him Plato meant by an idea pretty much what was meant by the Cartesian formula for a circle. And that means, or it meant to me, an understanding of what makes a circle round. That's all the Cartesian formula is doing. It's arguing that the circle has to have the same radius all the way around. $x^2 + y^2 = a^2$. Further influences were from Fr Eric O'Connor and from Lindsay and Margenau's *Foundations of Physics*. I would transpose Lindsay and Margenau, who did a rather brilliant job at foundations of physics, into terms of insight, and then check with Eric, who had a Ph.D. in math from Harvard and knew his stuff cold. Another mathematician said, 'He's clear!' And when a mathematician says that about another mathematician ... In the fall and winter of 1945-46 I gave a course of lectures at Thomas More in Montreal on Thought and Reality, and when that was over I knew I had a book. I had 45 people coming in November – we started in November; we couldn't start sooner because the war was winding up – and 41 at Easter time, and for people to listen to 'Thought and Reality' all that time – so when I finished the *verbum* articles in 1949 I began writing *Insight*. I taught in Rome from 1953-1965 and had among my students Germans, French, and Belgians and northern Italians familiar with the phenomenological movement, hermeneutics, and the techniques of modern history. When you directed a thesis for one of those people, you didn't have to tell them ... they knew just what to do, they had already been trained in the mechanics. That brought into my thinking the background from the *Geisteswissenschaften* that I use in *Method in Theology*.

When one has a sound analysis of natural science, physics, of human studies, the *Geisteswissenschaften*, one is in a position to effect an intentionality analysis of all three, and so one arrived at the ongoing genesis of methods, which is the last of the Donald Mathers lectures at Queens. And that's for question 2.

Question: What evidence would emerge in the life of an individual which would lead him to question the authenticity of his tradition and community? What process would provoke his making a valid judgment in this question?

Lonergan: Well, when a person finds his community talking nonsense and finding it impossible to take into consideration anything but the nonsense they are talking, one is finding it to have some failure in authenticity. One keeps the peace and quietly works it out. There's no point in going about breaking plate glass windows. That would only prove to them that you were out of your mind and should be restricted to the funny house. So that's the business. What do you do about the community? Now, you can be rash in those judgments. A person can have bright ideas but they're anything but right. It's important to be sure you're right. And it may be the people can't pay understand anything else because they can't pay attention to what you're saying. And so on and so forth.

Question: The theme of common sense as a differentiation of consciousness appears frequently in your writings. [Not read: The realm of common sense is the realm of the concrete, the particular, the practical, and the interpersonal. My question is: Would you speak also of a moral differentiation of consciousness? Would not a moral knowing also deal with the concrete, the particular, the practical, and the interpersonal? If such a moral differentiation could be admitted, how would it relate to common sense? Would common sense become just one component of a broader differentiation of consciousness - call it,perhaps, an existential differentiation - to which moral cognition as a further component would also belong?]

Well, the subtitle of *Insight* is 'A Study of Human Understanding,' and it's within *Insight* that I treat common sense. And I treat common sense insofar as it is a matter of understanding. But common sense is not a specialization. It doesn't prescind from morality. Common sense is the source of the proverbs. Proverbs are not moral rules but pieces of advice that it may be useful to pay attention to in concrete circumstances. Look before you leap! He who hesitates it lost! You can take either one. They're both just advice. Take the one that's useful. Common sense in its proverbs is a non-pretentious ethics. It doesn't attempt to settle what's intrinsically wrong, what is necessarily wrong under all possible circumstances anyone can think of. *Insight* is not a book about everything. I'm talking about understanding, and I talk about other things insofar as my account of understanding is ... by these other things. If I'd stopped at chapter 13, I'd have said what I had to say directly about understanding and truth. But I could imagine all sorts of people saying, Without our intuitions and being, we'll never have a metaphysics. So I had to do metaphysics, so I threw in four more chapters. And if I convinced them that metaphysics was not ruled out by the lack of an intuition of being, they might say, Well, at least you can't do ethics. So I threw in a chapter on the *possibility* of ethics. And 'obviously this all excludes the possibility of a natural theology,' so I threw in another chapter on that. And 'it destroys the possibility of apologetics,' so I threw that in the final chapter. But it's all about understanding.

That's the question that the book is about. Common sense includes all four levels. It's not a differentiation of consciousness at all. It's the case of *un*differentiated consciousness. It's man's living in the concrete, where man lives most of his life.

Question: (3 questions requiring an introduction) Method (55) promises that 'the practical problem of deciding who is and who is not alienated comes up in this book in the chapter on Dialectic.' Dialectic deals with 'gross differences of horizon' (246), such that 'what for one is true, for another is false' (236) etc. Each side attributes the other's horizon to 'wishful thinking ... ignorance ... illusion ... to a refusal of God's grace' (237). In such a case 'the proportionate remedy is nothing less than a conversion' (246), but each side thinks it is the other that needs converting.

Lonergan (pausing here before end of question): That's the situation, the situation on value judgments, in the world as it exists. If you're going to have a theology, you have to have a way of handling that. And if it can't be a method that's sure-fire, and it can't be because it means that people have to change, and if they're going to change their values, they're changing themselves. A person *is* a value.

(i) Can the chapter on Dialectic shed any further light on which of these two is alienated and needs conversion?

Lonergan: Well, it sets the problem. The solution comes from Foundations, the next functional specialty. It just gives the variety of alternatives that are actually making a mess of things, and points to the need for foundations ... A method of theology, unless it tackles the problem ... is not going to be theology.

(ii) Does the functional specialty Dialectic have any further advice to give these two besides confronting their actual dialectic differences? Do they now just wait for one or for the others to be converted?

Lonergan: Well, it also confronts them with the implications of their positions and counterpositions. It gives a magnified view of their differences. It helps them to reflect, 'Well, I do not intend to hold *that*.' That's not what I mean. Moreover, dialectic can be prolonged into dialogue among well-disposed people, and there you're bringing into action the spirit of inquiry, of reflection, of evaluation that constitutes the humanity of each individual. You're turning the fellow against himself, and that's the start of a conversion. So dialogue is a peaceful form of dialectic.

(iii) Other functional specialties correspond at least roughly to traditional parts of an academic theology program. Does Dialectic? Can it be taught or is it a personal achievement?

Lonergan: Well, it corresponds to the public disputation. There's a need for a Holy Office if theologians can't get out of the mire all by themselves. The advantages of reducing that need by method, the function of a methodical theology, is to cut down the need for papal decrees. There's no method in theology at the present time, and there hasn't been. Method has never entered into

the question. Can it be taught or is it a personal achievement? Well, it can be helped along, but it has to be a personal achievement. Only you can change your values, can change what you consider right, what moves you. And learning is not an impersonal process. It's governed by your horizon, and the big chore is to get horizons to shift ...

(*The Way to Nicea* seems not an adequate example, because it gives only one view (yours) of dialectic development through a period of history.

Lonergan: *The Way to Nicea* is dialectic at an earlier stage. It's a translation of part of a book published in 1964 and written before that.