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Q&A June 17, 1981 (third Q&A session)

Question: Would you briefly speak on your notion of natural law. How would your analysis of conscious intentionality be a reformulation of natural law theory?

Lonergan: Well, to the first part, my notion of natural law has not been worked out. If I were to work one out, I would start with Eric Voegelin's chapter 4 in *Anamnesis* (Notre Dame, 1978), What Is Right by Nature? It's Aristotle's *physei dikaion*. It's a very acute study of Aristotle, comparing the *Politics* with the *Ethics*. And one could go on and compare that with other commentators on Aristotle, and so on down, to see if they had anything new to say about natural law. In other words, proceed as in *Method*: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, and so on. Roughly, natural law is law as distinct from the laws formulated by civil or ecclesiastical authority. The written law began with Hammurabi at least.

And the second part: How would your analysis of conscious intentionality be a reformulation of natural law theory? Well, in a particular case, there is the human good in *Method*. [Here Lonergan is moving also to the second question: Please describe how you came to the structure of the human good that you employ in *Method*.] And there the basic step is to note that the notion of the human good, like the notions of intelligibility and rationality, is not any and every good but value, what is worthwhile, the end of rational appetite, what you intend when you ask, Is it worthwhile? The question, Why is it worthwhile, and what is worthwhile? The second step is to notice that human needs as human are common in humankind, and as recurrent over time. So they're common and recurrent. As common and recurrent, the common good is any arrangement that meets such needs regularly, the good of order. For that you need intelligence. For value you need responsible judgments, judgments of value. And the third step is to insert in these arrangements an ongoing supply of particular instances of the good that meets those needs. And we have the human good at least. It's not anything that anyone could call 'good.' It's specifically human: it fits man's cognitional theory. It doesn't get man to know. It falls in the proportion of objects of human intellect. And that's that. Any further questions?

Question: How are emergent probability and divine providence related?

Lonergan: Emergent probability is the arrangement that results from the combination in the same universe of both classical and statistical laws. And on classical and statistical laws you have chapter 2 of *Insight*. Classical laws are

abstract but hold in every case. Statistical laws are concrete but not fully determinate: 'So often under certain circumstances.' The classical law is the law of the lever. And the statistical law is, How many levers are there in such and such an area? Or something like that. So that's what I mean by emergent probability. And it is illustrated as the way in which this universe has developed and operates. And hence it is a human approximation to the way in which divine providence operates in this universe. So God operates by probabilities. But you can approximate good through the intelligibility of classical laws and statistical laws. And notice that statistical laws are not just counting noses, numbers. Anything further on that?

Question: On p. 116 of *Method in Theology*, you speak of the basic option of the believer once called by God – i.e., once touched by unrestricted being in love, by sanctifying grace. Again, at various places in *Grace and Freedom* you address the doctrine of God's will and grace as irresistible. Could you indicate how the tension between these two positions can be resolved? Is it possible to refuse the gift of sanctifying grace?

Lonergan: Aquinas's doctrine is that divine knowledge is infallible, divine will is irresistible, divine action is efficacious, simply. And he also affirms human freedom and human responsibility. How do you reconcile the two? By considering your statements, any of these statements. What is predicated of God or of a divine person contingently is true, and it has its truth, its objectivity, not by asserting contingency in God, as Whitehead and his followers think is necessary, but through the contingent object known eternally, willed eternally, permitted eternally, and thereby produced efficaciously in time. The object always is in time. But God never is in time. God is already always, forever already. And that's ... In other words, Caesar's horse and Alexander the Great's horse were both simultaneous with the sun, both lived in the life of the sun, but in different times, but not different times in God because God is not in time. God has no time. God is just an eternal 'Now,' and that's what eternity means. Eternity is not to be imagined as a long, long endless line. That would just be a long, long time. Such truth is eternally in God's mind, but arises in human minds only with the occurrence of the contingent eventuality. That's Aristotle's doctrine on future contingents. Is it true or false that there will be a naval battle tomorrow? If the naval battle is contingent, it's not determined in its causes yet, and if it's not determined in its causes yet, there's no way of determining whether it is true or false that there will be a naval battle tomorrow. That's in the *Peri hermeneias*, *De interpretatione*. It's one of the elements of the Organon.

Question from the floor: I'm reminded of Kierkegaard's dichotomy of the eternal and the temporal. It would seem that he would demand a decision that would relate the eternal to the temporal, and so there's this paradoxical choice that would be made.

Lonergan: Well, he doesn't know Aquinas's answer – that's very simple. He has to study to ... Anything else?

Now, is it possible to refuse the gift of sanctifying grace? Well, it certainly is possible not to live up to it. Else the repeated injunction of scripture, 'Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation' would be otiose. However, according to Aquinas, simultaneously with the infusion of sanctifying grace there occur the acts of faith and repentance of the person justified. They're dispositions for the reception of sanctifying grace. And as the fit of a glove is acquired by putting the glove on your hand, so these acts are given with the infusion of grace in the soul. For St Thomas, the infusion of sanctifying grace is an Aristotelian *praemotio physica*, an Aristotelian one. For Aristotle, the premotion occurs either in the recipient or in the agent, not only in the agent as the Bannezians would have it. Fire cooks the meat when you put the meat on the fire, not when you light it ... You get a premotion from the recipient. That's premotion in Aristotle's sense. He's not going to use the word 'premotion,' but it's his solution of the doctrine of determinism: 'Every cause has its effects. The effect of every cause necessarily follows from the cause. And therefore every effect is necessary.' That was the argument of the determinists in his day. Aristotle distinguished between a *causa per se* and a *causa per accidens*. Every *causa per se* produces its effects provided there's nothing to impede it. And what's a *causa per accidens*? It's something that gets in the way, or something that supervenes. St Thomas's illustration is of man who had eaten salted meat and then felt thirsty and went out to the fields where there was a well, to get a drink to overcome the excessive salt he had in his mouth. And on the way into the field he was assaulted by robbers and killed. Therefore, salted meat was the cause of his being killed! In other words, there's a *causa per accidens* in the presence of the robbers. And that was the cause of his being killed.

Now, this doctrine of St Thomas: you have to drop Thomas's idea of sanctifying grace causing the right disposition, if you hold that God can give the grace and man at the same time can say No. Any saying 'No, No' has to be doubtful, on Thomas's position. So, if any greater authority disagrees with Thomas, well then ...

Question: In the intellectual life of a given thinker, how does the religious faith or its absence affect the unfolding of the pure, detached, disinterested desire to know?

Does the presence or absence of religious faith among the practitioners of a given science impinge on the internal development of that science?

Lonergan: First, does the presence of religious faith guarantee intellectual conversion? I would say it certainly doesn't in the short run. The decree of Nicea set up an exigence for intellectual conversion. But it has not proved universally effective even among those that have accepted Nicea sincerely. It was effective in their rejection of previous theories of the Trinity. Previous theories of the Trinity were the Apologists, Stoicism, which is materialism, like Tertullian, 'Anything real is a body.' Not the sort of body that we can see and touch but a body nonetheless, otherwise it wouldn't be real. That type of thinking is found in a whole line. And the other was Origen, who was Platonist: Ideas, and the Ideas were concepts. He was a subordinationist. The Father is God, but the Son participates in divinity. He's not God. And the Father is Goodness itself, while the Son is not Goodness itself but participates in goodness. That's a subordinationism that's explicit. It was implicit in the materialism of the Apologists and earlier, people prior to Origen. And with Nicea what is defined is what is affirmed. 'If anyone says ..., then ...' ... what we say and what we reject. Knowledge is known in the judgment, the point that Kant missed, because he had knowledge in concepts. Compare the concepts and you get an analytic judgment. He introduced synthetic judgments as well, to account for insights, to include insights. It's not that he knew there were insights, but he knew there were propositions that were not analytic. With Nicea, then, there arose an exigence at least for a dogmatic realism, that is, a dogmatic acceptance that you know reality by knowing what is true. That's a great leap forward in philosophy, where what's true was if you could put your hand on it. [Pounds the table] It's true that the table's there. Or when Wittgenstein said to Bertrand Russell, Is there an elephant in the room? And Russell was wise enough not to answer yes or no. He said, 'I don't see one.'

Now, does the absence of religious faith affect the development of a science? Well, it does insofar as scientific work is fertile ground for the incubation of false philosophies. One can wonder which comes first, the false philosophy or the science. It can be, of course, that the false philosophy was first and found in scientific conclusions arguments for itself. And that has occurred. ? even falsified experiments to get proofs for his materialism. But it is also true that the average scientist in our largely secularist culture – secularist culture that in some countries is by law established provides little help to the scientist for evading erroneous implications in his conclusions. Up to 1926 modern science thought it was necessary truth. It was scientific truth; it's necessary. Newton said, 'Hypotheses non fingo.' But with Einstein it was clear that Newton's theory was a hypothesis. It didn't hold universally. And Einstein developed relativity mechanics to replace

Newtonian mechanics. Aristotle's argument for contingency of all terrestrial events was not heard ... modern science; and probably nor from the Aristotelians who didn't bother too much with Aristotle.

Question from the floor: Faith as you define it in *Method in Theology* as the eye of religious love – I was wondering if they were thinking of faith in that sense in that question. When you speak about the way in which faith relates to the total universe ---

Lonergan: Well, this talking of faith is not faith without beliefs. What I call faith, in Scholastic terminology is *lumen fidei*, the light of faith. My works are not logical in structure, but a moving viewpoint. And we have a moving viewpoint. Like Thomas. He says enough for understanding that question. Scotus is entirely different. Scotus: *actio* is used in fifteen different senses, and he never used the word *actio* except in one of those senses. Thomas on one page says there are two meanings of *actio*, and he gives you both of them; and he uses both of them in that article. But turn a few pages: *actio* is said in three senses, and it's hard to reconcile those three with the two he gave before. And it keeps on going. He also has confused terminology, because he uses the terminology of the people he's addressing. When he's talking in Paris and when he's writing the *Summa theologiae* for students – he's purely Aristotelian in his commentaries on Aristotle, and then he'll revert to Averroistic terminology when he's explaining difficulties raised against Aristotle. And until you've spotted that, you don't get much sense out of Thomas.

Question: It seems that religious, moral, and psychic conversion can be operative without being thematized. Does this hold also for intellectual conversion? Why or why not?

Lonergan: About the thematization, the need of thematizing psychic conversion exists if you have any psychic quirks. The need for intellectual conversion arises in a certain cultural milieu, where there are many opposed philosophies and there's a sincere effort to get to the root of the trouble. Intellectual conversion is the solution to an intellectual problem. It's teaching people how to avoid the pitfalls that are implicit in the fact that we can use a language correctly before we know what operations we're performing in the use of that language. And to know the operations you're performing in the use of that language is rather advanced cognitional theory. You don't get it without modern science as an object you're working on.

Question: Would you elaborate on what the notion of the unconscious in psychology is when it is brought into an intentionality analysis?

Lonergan: Well, Fr Doran thinks that the unconscious is a developmental process on the neural level. It's the part of man that is not conscious, simply. You don't know it by being conscious of it but explaining things that ... Lévi-Strauss's remark that the discovery of the double helix was formulated by using his structuralist techniques – his techniques make linguistic development by way of binary contrasts: the raw and the cooked, and so on. He says that's the way language develops. You notice contrasts, and you use opposed terms. On Lévi-Strauss there's perhaps a two-page book review in the current *Cross Currents*. So, there's no doubt that the fact that Lévi-Strauss's analysis of language and its relation to the structure of the double helix gives you a clue to the presence on the neural level of something that is preparatory to the development of language, and something that is an instrument to the development of thought.

Question: How would you respond to those who would say that you are operating from an intellectual bias?

Lonergan: Well, at least my style is not their dish of tea. If they mean more, I'd ask them to explain their meaning on the basis of a conceptual cognitional theory, take what is not intellectual bias first. It's an application of Aristotle's suggestion that you get the skeptic to talk. If he talks, he gives away the fact that he knows something.

Question: Some of the Workshop papers have mentioned the process of intellectual, moral, and religious self-appropriation in the disciples of Jesus. Please comment on the further and seemingly crucial question in Christology today, the effort to gain some insight into the process of Jesus' own self-appropriation in his life, death, and resurrection. For example, in what sense can we speak of the intellectual conversion of Jesus?

Lonergan: A contemporary question arises from contemporary historical mindedness, understanding how people thought in previous ages. I worked at prose composition in Latin, Greek, and French. And the French introduced me to something quite different: studies of character in novels, descriptions of scenery, countryside, all this sort of thing, is a whole style of writing that is specifically modern. The Renaissance painters didn't bother their heads about the way biblical figures dressed. They dressed the same way as medieval and Renaissance man. There was no historical sense in that sense that things could have been different

then, and you try to figure out what was different then. The idea of historical study was – Wolf conceived philology as the philosophic study of human nature in the ancient world, in other words, in other words, a historical study of what human nature then was. It was something different from the classicists who say human nature's always the same. Contemporary anthropology has been discovering that while human nature may have always been the same, still there was a lot that was different.

Now, the medieval and subsequent theologians had criteria that were non-historical when they spoke about the qualities Jesus had, and so on. In their account, they're largely arguing from what is befitting for the Son of God. That runs into difficulties with the development of historical consciousness that has been seeping through all through the nineteenth century in non-Catholic Christians and in the twentieth century among Catholic Christians. But all along, of course, theologians and perhaps all theologians have held that God the Father withdrew a number of the exceptional powers and qualities that theologians had attributed to Christ in expression of their reverence and piety. They didn't see how that fitted in with the Passion. And you get a much more realistic grasp of the Passion. And you find things in scripture that don't fit in with those marvelous qualities and properties. Jesus grew in wisdom, age, and grace before God and man: asserting development in his wisdom and in his grace. The Council of Chalcedon: similar to us in all things save sin, which has a very similar statement in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Rosemary Haughton in *The Passionate God* treats of Christ's foreknowledge of his death as though it was by his understanding of the signs of the times. He sized up what his adversaries were capable of doing. He speaks of his transfiguration in terms of his need of others, with whom he discussed what was to happen to him and why. A human being needs that support. He has a transfiguration, but it wasn't too much help. He didn't really put the idea across. So it's a very delicate question. And the thing is if you go about solving it do so without disturbing the peace and unity of the Body of Christ.