

99900DTE080

Q&A LW 1982 14 June 1982

**Question:** In the epilogue of *Insight* you allude to a ‘far larger work,’ which would be the context of a concrete study of personal relations, and which would be a ‘summary and completion’ of the project *Insight* undertakes. Could you suggest, however sketchily, the general lines of such a work?

**Lonergan:** Very sketchily, the larger work is theology, and the outline is my book on method in theology: the general lines. OK? How that relates to theology – to personal relations – we’ll see when we consider question 4.

**Question:** In *Insight*, in a discussion of dreams, you refer to drama as a public expression of a common fantasy. I would be interested in your interpretation of the continuing popularity of horror movies, depicting brutal violence and savagery. Why is this drama popular? What does it presage for society?

**Lonergan:** Well, ‘in *Insight* I refer to drama as a public expression of a common fantasy’ – and what I meant, for instance, Sophocles wrote two dramas on Oedipus. The common fantasy was, What would happen to one if he involuntarily murdered his father and made his mother his wife? Oedipus as an infant had swollen feet. His father exposed the infant on the mountainside. The infant grew up and bumped into the father on some occasion and killed him. Then he succeeded and took his father’s place and his father’s wife as his wife. And then he discovered that that was what he did. As a consequence of the discovery, he blinds himself, and his mother and wife commits suicide. The second play points out, makes the point, that the lesser violence of blinding oneself rather than suicide opens the way to ultimate peace of soul. So you have profound themes, horrifying themes, that set a moral problem, outrageous moral problem, and they put people in contact with morality, and they reflect on it. The theme sets a nest of moral problems that excite fear and pity, fear that it could have happened to me, pity for those to whom it did happen.

In contrast, horror movies are just thrillers. They evoke intense emotions to help one pass the time that otherwise would be empty.

**Questions:** In an article on ‘Consciousness and the Trinity’ (1963) you speak of Augustine’s ten years of difficulty with the notion of ‘body.’ Would you relate this to chapter 8 of *Insight*?

**Lonergan:** Well first, his problem. The Stoics were materialists. They had a very high morality, but they didn’t believe that there was any reality that was immaterial. That was out of the question. Anything you can see is material, and what you can’t see doesn’t exist. If you can’t see it or feel it or hear it, well, it’s nothing. Christians who were naive realists – everyone is a naive realist until he reaches the age of reason and probably the age of liability before the law at 21 or even longer – Christians who were naive realists conceived God as a body. Unless he had a body, he could not be real. Tertullian’s *Adversus Praxean*, one of his opuscula, represents this position with all possible clarity. Whatever is not a body just doesn’t exist. That didn’t mean a crude body such as we have: a refined body, but it was a reality, and the word too was a reality, it was not an empty and vain word, just moving the air a bit. The vast majority of Scholastic

writers really got no further than an innocuous variant on Tertullian's view. According to something I read recently, there were seven Scholastics that acknowledged the existence of intelligence in the sense of insight. They conceived all cognitional activities on the analogy of ocular vision. You see with material eyes, and you take another look with your intellect. And because your eye is material and your intellect is spiritual, the second look differs from the first. It is not a material looking but a spiritual looking. If you talk about insight, you will mean an act of understanding, grasping in the sensible data its intelligibility: why is it so? how does it work? or whatever other question for intelligence you happen to be raising. And until you catch on, your mind's a blank. Staring at it won't help in the least. Augustine got over his materialism when he discovered that truth is eternal. If here and now it is true that I am talking, then always and forever it has been true or will be true that at this time and in this place I would be or was talking. Truth takes you out of our finite world of space and time. In chapter 8 of *Insight*, I drew a distinction between body and thing. I was not trying to say that it is a mistake to call bodies things; I was trying to introduce the reader to the basic problem of the notion of insight, namely, that it is not taking a look, that it is an act of understanding, it's that which occurs frequently in the intelligent and rarely in the slow-witted. It's something that is clear to anyone. 'He's a bright boy.' That means he catches on easily.

**Question (part 1):** In various articles, you have called attention to Augustine's purely heuristic notion of 'person' as 'what there are three of in the Trinity.'

**Lonergan:** He didn't attempt to define 'person.' The first definition of person in a Catholic sense occurs in Boethius, the second in Richard of St. Victor, and the third in St Thomas. And from then on they started going into the metaphysics of these definitions of the person.

**Question (continued):** Similarly, you have stressed the 'rule of Athanasius,' which states that whatever is to be said of the Father is also to be said of the Son, except for the name 'Father.'

**Lonergan:** Whatever is said of the Father also is true of the Son, except the Son is not the Father. But anything else that's true of the Father also is true of the Son. And that's what he meant by *homoousios*. The contemporary writers tend to think that he was engaged in deep metaphysical speculation. According to Piaget, the psychology of operations says that a boy of 12 can operate on propositions, and a boy of 12 can understand what Athanasius meant by *homoousios*. He wasn't studying the seventh and eighth books of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which go on about *ousia* indefinitely and finally get it pinned down.

(Part of question that Lonergan doesn't read): This leaves the believer free to conceive the persons of the Trinity in biblical, patristic, medieval, or modern terms.

**Lonergan:** These heuristic definitions are completely open. A scriptural account of divine persons, a patristic account of divine persons, a medieval account, and a modern account will all be saying the same thing if they agree with Athanasius. What is true of the Father also is true of the Son.

**Question (continued):** Could you indicate briefly some of the issues that would need to be addressed if *you* were to go about filling in these heuristic notion of the divine persons?

**Lonergan:** That takes a little more time. First, key data in scripture on the Father, Son, and Spirit – that is, what do you find in scripture that you can use towards an understanding of the Trinity, not a perfect understanding, but, as the First Vatican Council said, an imperfect but very helpful understanding. And the first is the first letter of John, chapter 4, verse 16, where *ho theos agapē estin*. *Ho theos*, according to Rahner, that is *theos*, God, with the definite article, means the Father wherever there is no contextual evidence to the contrary. For example, when *ho theos* occurs and in the same context you're not reading that the Son also is *theos*, then it means the Father. In other words, the word *theos* means the Father when it's preceded by the article, if the Son is not being spoken of, or even if the Son is being spoken of at the same time.

The second is John 1, the first three verses: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Jesus Christ the Son is the Logos, the Word. 'Logos' in Greek has two meanings. It means what is said, and it also means the reason why. *Logon didonai* is 'to give your reason.'

And Romans 5.5: God's love has flooded your hearts through the Holy Spirit given to you. Hence the Holy Spirit also is God's love. No one can give what's not his own. But it does not follow that the Father and the Spirit are identical. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son what he is. The Father is originating Love, the Spirit is proceeding Love. So this is the psychological analogy, elements of the psychological analogy. First of all, to put it in our own terms, there's an experience: falling in love, a judgment of value ('falling in love is great'), and an act of choice: I choose to be in love, I don't just fall into it.

Now the note on the connection between the elements in the analogy: the judgment of value is because of the experience of falling in love, and the deliberate choice is because of the judgment of value. The transition to the Trinity notes, points out, what's imperfect in our analogy and is not had in God. In us the judgment of value is not only because of the experience but also is caused by the experience: the difference between cause and 'be-cause.' 'Because' is not producing something; it can be the ground of something. Similarly, the deliberate choice is not only because of the judgment but also is caused by the act of judging. So, because the divine Word is 'because' without being caused by the Father, because of the Father without being caused by the Father, the Son is because of the Father's excellence, of being *agapē*, but not caused by the *agapē*, he's because of it. It's an immanent procession, a 'because' that is not causation. It's causation in us, but not in God. Similarly, the Spirit is not caused by the Father and the Son. He is proceeding Love because of the Father's excellence and the Son's judgment of value. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, or from the Father through the Son. And that is filling in these heuristic categories.

The simple statement, what there are three of in the Trinity? What is the distinction between person and nature; well, those terms occur in the second paragraph of the Council of Chalcedon. In the first paragraph, you have 'one and the same' is truly God and truly man, God from all eternity and man in time, and so on. That contrast is running, and if someone reads this first paragraph and says, Well, if they're one and the same, then is the human nature the divine nature, or the divine nature human nature? Are they the same? And then they make the distinction between nature and person: different natures but the same person. That comes in the next paragraph. But the key thing is what's in the preceding paragraph. The words are perfectly plain; it can be said in ordinary language. And they say it time and again.

**Question:** Would you comment on the uses and limitations of the cybernetic (input – processors – output) model of the mind, both in general and in understanding your thought. Do you think that everything we know is the output of the ‘processor’?

**Lonergan:** Well, sensitive activity is caused by sensible objects. Colors move the eye to seeing colors. It has to be an eye to be moved. In other words, you have to have sight for the eye to be moved by color. But what you see depends upon the color. And if there were no color there in any sense of the word, there wouldn't be any seeing either. And so on for everything else in the matter of sensibility. The elaboration of the sensible data is due to the spontaneity of sensibility: imagination, feeling, associations, and so on. And that's the processor: the set of other faculties that are moved because one faculty is moved. Going beyond the sensible has its origin in the transcendental a priori, in questions for intelligence, reflection, deliberation. Questions are the link. Questions for intelligence are what give rise to your effort to understand. On the question follows the effort to try to understand, and when you do understand you say, 'I've got it.' Archimedes said 'Eureka,' I've got it. Similarly, the question for reflection, Is that so? is something original. You're satisfied that you understand, but is what I understand what really is so? That is another a priori, to be able to ask that question. It doesn't come out of sensibility. The determination of the act of understanding comes out of the phantasm, and Aristotle divides up parts of the form and parts of the matter. 'Parts of the form' is what you need if you're going to have the insight. And 'parts of the matter' are what you don't need, even though you have the insight. To draw a circle, what you need is a locus of points equidistant from the central point in the same plane. But the color of the circle, whether it's of chalk or of ink or steel, and so on, that's parts of the matter. The essential is what's needed to have the insight, and the accidental, the irrelevant, is what you needn't have to have that definition satisfied. And similarly for judgment and judgments of value, and finally, Who'll save us? What will save us? The source of salvation, the ultimate, and the religious question.

So the first cause gives the origin of the spontaneous acts of sensitivity and of the a priori questions. The man, the person, is the operator of consequent acts. So the processor: probably it would be Whitehead's notion of process. Whitehead doesn't want substances.

... 'everything we know is an output.' Everything we know is an activity of our own. But an activity of our own means that it's an actuation of our nature. 'I know' and 'I cause' are not the same thing. Knowing is an operation in us, or we wouldn't be knowing. But do we cause the knowing? Well, it has different causes, and you produce prior acts on which this knowing depends.

**Question (continued):** How does your own thought deal with the question of 'who is looking at the screen'?

**Lonergan:** Well, the 'who' is the person, the subject, the *ens quod*. I am the subject of my operations. They're predicated of me. Looking at the screen: you have to have a sensible object to have a screen, unless it's a metaphorical object, such as Hume's impressions, all you can see and feel, and so on. You can't get beyond them. They're the screen between the reality people think they know ---

**Question (continued):** Do you think that the emergence of insights is unconscious (largely 'autonomous') process?

**Lonergan:** Well, ‘unconscious’ does not mean ‘autonomous’ or ‘largely autonomous.’ ‘Unconscious’ means you’re not aware of it occurring. And it can be true of most people; they’re not aware of having insights. But that doesn’t mean they can’t become aware of them. They have to learn what it is to introspect. If you take the word ‘introspect’ according to its etymology, intro, going in, and try to take a look within yourself, you usually find nothing. But that doesn’t mean you’re not conscious. It means you have not got a clear idea of what consciousness is. All our cognoscitive activities are both intentional and conscious. As intentional, they make present to us objects. As conscious, they make present to us ourselves and our operation. An insight is always a conscious activity, but when you start going into yourself trying to find it, you don’t find it. You have to have the insight. ‘I never understood that before.’ You know you’ve had the insight when you say that. You can identify any insight, but it takes a special – it’s the capacity to heighten the occurrence of the event. And reading *Insight* profitably is a series of exercises in having insights. And if you have them, and catch on to what I’m talking about, you’ll be recognizing them. But you really have to have the act of understanding. People can be held up by the fact there are elements of mathematics mentioned in *Insight* that they may not have studied. And they won’t be able to have the insights they refer to. But there are always a lot of very simple insights that anyone can get if they studied arithmetic and a bit of geometry and so on. And those are the ones to attend to.

**Question (continued):** Do you think that the transformation of insights and concepts is an unconscious process?

**Lonergan:** Well, it’s a very conscious process if you’re doing that. It’s moving to a new horizon, the transformation of insights and concepts. It’s providing a different setting for insights you’ve already had. You can think of elementary arithmetic algebraically and understand the ground of what you were taught to do in elementary school. (Goes to board.) What’s the square root of 1764? (Boardwork – see *Topics in Education* 128-30, it’s the same material.) The first thing you do, you start from the right and you count up to 2 ... etc. And so the answer is 42. Why does it work? (More boardwork.) ... If you see the reason why, you have an insight. And if you ask why and don’t see it, at least you’re intelligent, you know there is an answer. And that’s the transformation of insights and concepts. You had them in elementary school and it was like this (taking the square root) and when you learned a little bit of algebra (back to example). If you have cube, of course, you divide the number up, not into twos but into threes.

**Question:** Would you comment on your discussion of who says I-Thou in God (*De Deo Trino: Pars systematica*)?

**Lonergan:** Well, the I-Thou comes in – Buber laid great stress on the I and the Thou, and his personalism. And certain theologians want to take this wonderful idea of a person that Buber had and apply it to the Trinity and clarify the mystery in a way it hadn’t been clarified before. My discussion of it in *Insight* [sic: *De Deo Trino*?] is – well, in the psychological analogy, if you’re using that, then you won’t have each of the persons, or one being an I and another Thou. Now, you can have that with the Father and the Son, if the Father’s speaking to the Son; but the Father’s the only one that speaks: in Thomist terminology, *Pater dicens*. The Son is the Word, the *dictum*, what is said. And the Spirit neither speaks nor is said but proceeds. So you can’t just

simply transfer that to the Trinity, unless you're willing to work out a new theory, which mayn't be impossible. But the present one is complicated enough.