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Tuesday, 15 June 1982

Question: It has been said that *Method in Theology* leads to the end of metaphysics, or at least almost to the end of it. In light of *Method's* emphasis on historical and hermeneutical categories, and considering your outline on Monday of a Trinitarian analogy using psychological categories, could you say something about how *metaphysical* categories would be used in the kind of theology envisaged in *Method*.

Lonergan: Well, *Insight* and *Method in Theology* lead to the end, not of metaphysics but of pre-critical metaphysics. Pre-critical metaphysics conceives metaphysics as the first science, in which to not know being is to not know anything. Being includes everything. Therefore being is first. *Primum est esse*. Put it in Latin, to make it more convincing. Critical metaphysics distinguishes three questions: What are you doing when you are knowing? Why is doing that knowing? And what do you know when you do it? On this showing, cognitional analysis is first: What are you doing when you are knowing? The objectivity of human knowledge is second: Why is doing that knowing? The reason why it's knowing. And thirdly, metaphysics, the analysis of proportionate being: What do you know when you do it? If you do not know what occurs when one knows, you cannot decide whether human knowing is objective or not, especially in metaphysics. We've been doing metaphysics in the West since the thirteenth century, probably the twelfth, and they've reached endless disagreements. There are just as many in theology as elsewhere. They're not as radical in theology, but that's because of the dogmas. And the dogmas are getting a hard time these days. But if you do not know what occurs when one knows, one cannot decide whether human knowing is objective or not. You cannot even say what objectivity is. And if you do not know what objectivity is, you cannot construct an objective and so critical metaphysics. And that construction you get in chapters 11 to 17, in the second part of *Insight*. Am I a Knower? chapter 11. Being, chapter 12. Objectivity, chapter 13. Chapter 14, The Method of Metaphysics. 15, The Elements of Metaphysics. 16, Metaphysics as Science. And 17, Metaphysics as Dialectic.

Metaphysics and theology, chapter 16, distinctions: There are three divine persons. Are there three divine essences? No. What is the ground of the distinction? Opposed relations: Father and Son, and breathing forth the Spirit and the Spirit breathed forth. Breathing means the word 'Spirit,' 'spirare.' The Son is not the Father, and the Father is not the Son. You have opposed relations. They can't be the same. You can't be your own Father. Are the relations really distinct from one another? Yes. Are they really distinct from the divine essence? No; the reality of each is constituted by the divine essence as an intelligibly ordered absolute loving, absolute approval of the absolute loving, and the consequent loving resulting from absolute loving and absolute approval of it. Are not the relations just modes of being? The Father is God, and being Father is not just a mode of being. It's a relation that's identical with the divine essence. There is no real distinction between the relations and the divine essence. It's the relations that are really distinct from one another. There are difficulties connected with that, and complex answers. With Aquinas, one can distinguish between relations as relations and relations as subsistent. The relations as relations are objects of abstractive thinking: relations as relations. The relation as subsistent is the relation as really identical with the divine essence. It is true that the concept of being is the first of concepts. But that is not what's first in our asking about being. It's the

transcendental question, the a priori question, what you're intending when you're asking *any* question: you're intending something real, unless you prescind from reality and go into some other order: the merely logical, the merely hypothetical, and so on. And we've had a lot of conceptualism since the thirteenth century, and especially from the fourteenth. They don't know about the transcendental notions, the significance of questions in human coming to know.

Question: On Monday morning, Professor McShane remarked offhand that 'Dave Tracy still doesn't know what a "thing" is.' (This remark was made in the context of *Insight*, chapter 8.) If you have read Fr Tracy's recent works – *Blessed Rage for Order* and *The Analogical Imagination* – would you consider McShane's remark accurate in regard to Tracy's thought as these books express it?

Lonergan: Well, I haven't got far in *The Analogical Imagination*. I went through *Blessed Rage for Order* but that's some time ago. My idea with regard to Tracy is as follows: Tracy teaches at the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. Catholic students are the largest number of any group represented by the student body, but they are not a majority group, and even if they were, they would not be the only ones to be taught. He cannot very well begin by teaching them *Insight*, and so he cannot get into a critical metaphysics. He feels the need of some metaphysics, else he could not claim to be objective. He seems to me to speak with the Whiteheadians, the process philosophers, but he has his own distinctions. And I've not done an accurate pinning down of just where he is. And that is needed if you're going to express a public opinion.

Question: How would you distinguish between man's person and nature in *Insight*? How, in *Method in Theology*? Can this distinction or an analogous distinction be drawn adequately by using intentionality analysis? If so, what would it be? On the other hand, might it require complementation by a metaphysical analysis? An example would be helpful.

Lonergan: According to Aquinas, a being is a person on three conditions: if it is subsistent, distinct, and with an intellectual nature. It is distinct if a subsistent *A* is really distinct from any other subsistent *X*. *A* is not *B*. That's the basis of all distinctions. But what *A* and *B* stand for give you the different kinds of distinctions. A major real distinction is between subsistent beings. A minor real distinction is, e.g., the distinction between your two hands: the right hand is not the left; or between metaphysical components of your reality – potency, form, and act, and so on. And the distinction between person and nature is the distinction between the subsistent thing and an aspect, a part, a component of the subsistent thing. Aristotle defines a nature as an immanent principle of movement and rest. The questions behind all our knowing are questions for intelligence, reflection, evaluation, and salvation. Such questions intend what we are to know, and so they are immanent principles of the movement, the inquiry. When in each inquiry we arrive at a correct answer, that inquiry ends, and so we rest. And so we have immanent principles of movement and rest. And they are nature. That's an intellectual nature. We are asking those questions.

Now, a critical metaphysics begins from an analysis of knowledge and concludes to the components of proportionate being. And from knowledge of proportionate being, anything within the world of our experience, and from that grasp of proportionate being, you go on to other beings that are beyond the proportion of our knowing. We do not know them properly. We don't know them by their essence. We don't know the essences of the angels, and we do not in

this life know the essence of God. But we desire to know it. Aquinas's argument is that we ask, what is God? The question *Quid sit?* is asking for the essence. And it's natural to ask *What?* with regard to anything. So you have a natural desire to know God.

Question from the floor: The word was left out: Can this distinction or an analogous distinction be drawn adequately by using intentionality analysis *alone*? Must you make the transition to metaphysical categories in order to draw that distinction?

Lonergan: Yes, you have to. The transition is what I call metaphysical equivalence. What are the conditions of the possibility of this proposition being true? Socrates was an Athenian, wise, and so on. You can take all the things you can say about Socrates. What's the condition of each of those statements being true? Well, he wasn't an Athenian because Athens was something in him. It was because he belonged to the city of Athens: it's an extrinsic denomination. He was wise: he had the habit of wisdom, an intellectual habit. He sought definitions, or he provided the ultimate proof that you can't define on the basis of common sense. You have to get into a technical vocabulary if you're going to define. And to get into a technical vocabulary you need a whole set of connected terms. You can define all the chemical elements, the atoms, because you have the periodic table. And you can define the compounds because you can define each of these elements that go into the compounds and put them together, and so on. And when you're doing that, you have a science. And without that, you haven't got a science. You're like the old-style botany, where you describe each flower. In the new-style botany you tell where the different species come from.

Question: On more than one occasion you have stated that, for the most part, the question of pluralism can be resolved to the question of the relations between various types of differentiated consciousness. *Method in Theology* offers some rules for handling the situation (p. 330). Would you be willing to comment on how far the above applies to 'pluralism' in the sense of different Christian communions, as well as to pluralism within a particular communion?

Lonergan: Well, it depends how radical the differences are. They talk about special issues today. People are all agog about some one issue, and that's the only thing they think about. Single-issue groups are a people who need to express themselves publicly and cannot get their minds off some single point. And you don't need differentiated consciousness for that. The things we'll be saying tonight on pluralism will use that idea of the differentiation of consciousness, so there's probably no need to go into it now.

Question: How would you distinguish between a theology that is (a) methodical and (b) theoretical? Is a methodical theology *also* theoretical? Is it a particular *kind* of theoretical theology?

Lonergan: Theoretical theology and systematic theology differ as Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee. They coincide in a methodical theology with the seventh functional specialty that I name 'systematics.' In the second phase, you have foundations, doctrines, and then systematics. The doctrines – you arrive dialectically at the doctrines that you think are correct. That's based on the dialectic, which is the fourth specialty. But when you arrive at these truths, well, how can it be so? What on earth can they mean? That's a different question. Unless you have the two distinct,

then when you're giving the reason for holding that there are three persons in God, or one person and two natures in Christ, when you're trying to establish that that enunciation is correct, people will ask, How can it be so? And when you're trying to explain how it can be so, they'll be asking, Well, is it so? You've got to keep them separate if you're going to treat either of them intelligently. And that's the distinction between the sixth and seventh functional specialties.