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Q&A LW 1982 Thursday 17 June 1982

Question: Would you speak of the relations between the *patterns* of experience (generically) and the *differentiations* of consciousness (likewise generically)?

Lonergan: Generically, then, patterns of experience are patterns in data, in data of sense or in data of consciousness. For example, Thales was so interested in the stars that he failed to notice the well into which he tumbled. Generically, differentiations of consciousness are differentiations that result from different kinds of cognitional development. Common sense develops by adding insight to insight until familiarity with the milieu is attained, so that one feels at home, one spontaneously knows what to say, what to do, what not to say, what not to do, in any of the situations that occur in that milieu. Hence, there are as many brands of common sense as there are significantly different milieus. A stranger is found to be strange when he goes from one to another. A science accumulates insights, but at the same time develops a technical language that mystifies people of common sense and no technical attainments. A scholar becomes familiar with the language and literature and history of places and times different from his own. A philosopher lists differentiations of consciousness the better to understand different thinkers, and so on. Anything more on that? One is differences in cognitional development, the other is differences in the data, in the experience, what's given in experience, Bergson's immediate data of consciousness. And similarly you can talk about the immediate data of sense.

Question from the floor: Would you say something about the dramatic pattern of experience and its relation to the aesthetic as it relates to psychic conversion?

Lonergan: Well, Fr Doran's the specialist in that. The dramatic pattern of experience is acting it out. The aesthetic pattern – aesthetic experience, the perfect book on aesthetic experience is Collingwood on ... I forget the title of it. *Principles of Art*. It's a magnificent demonstration of exactly what he means by aesthetic experience. And it's thorough. He eliminates what it is not and says what it is, one point after another.

Question: What are the ontological correlatives of the distinct kinds of cognitional acts on the third, fourth, and fifth levels, respectively, of consciousness?

Lonergan: Well, the third, fourth, and fifth levels are judgments of fact, moral judgments, and religious judgments. Judgments of fact or possibility or probability, whatever exists or could exist or – could exist, you know, it's not what the conceptualists get by comparing concepts, and if they fit together you have something that's possible. If God does that, that's possible. But we know possibility, *ab esse ad posse valet illatio*. If something exists, it could exist. If something of a kind does exist, something of that kind can exist. And so on. And probability. So whatever exists or could exist or has a measure of probability. Moral judgments: the reality of good men and the reality of bad men, extending to all the different manners in which people can be good or bad morally. That's what corresponds there. Aristotle's *Ethics*, if I'm not mistaken, is built on the supposition that there are virtuous people. And religious judgments: the existence of God

and theological issues, moral judgments with a religious basis, factual judgments with a religious basis.

Question from floor: Would you say in terms of the cognitional distinction of potency, form, and act that the achievement of judgments of fact, moral judgments, and religious judgments in each case is a kind of *actus*, a kind of act, and if so, how do they differ?

Lonergan: Well, they differ in their objects. They're all acts, eh? Any judgment is an act.

Question continued: I'm speaking of the content of the judgment ... the isomorphism. If experience is correlative with potency [Lonergan, Oh, I see], understanding correlative with form [Lonergan again: Oh, I see], ...

Lonergan: Well, I take on the logical as real, eh? Was this your question?

Questioner: Yes.

Lonergan: Oh, I see. Well, the judgment is an act, it's insofar as they're knowing acts, eh? The cognitional correspondent, the ontological correlative, to an act is an act. And unless you're saying that the judgments of fact, 'Socrates existed' – you can have act of central form and act of accidental form. And in that case, what you know that's corresponding to the judgment as distinct from understanding and experience gives you the distinction of potency, form, and act.

Question continued: So on the third and the fourth and the fifth levels those respective judgments all achieve or are correlative with act as distinct from potency and form.

Lonergan: Right. If they're confined to an actuality.

Questioner: Yes. Now is there any further distinction that can be drawn within the act which those judgments respectively achieve by virtue of the fact that as judgments they differ as levels 3, 4, and 5.

Lonergan: Well, yes, they regard a mere fact, or a moral fact, or a religious fact.

Question: In your Tuesday evening paper you referred in passing to H.-G. Gadamer's 'discipline of questioning' as a guarantor of truth. Are there common touchstones in your epistemology and Gadamer's? Is there a similar notion of being in your thought and his?

Lonergan: Well, a conspicuous contribution of the Enlightenment to the modern mind was their dogmatic insistence that those who disagreed with their convictions or opinions were prejudiced. Gadamer took a resolute and lengthy stand against this assumption of the Enlightenment. And I'm very grateful to him for that. Further, he knew Collingwood's contention that one cannot understand a statement unless one discovers the question it is intended to answer. Collingwood urged logic should not deal simply with terms, propositions, and inferences. It should think in terms of questions and answers. Gadamer agrees with Collingwood, and so do I. I'm not really up on Gadamer. Where he seems to stand – I gather this from the beginning of *Wahrheit und*

Method – where he seems to take a stand is on the basis of Kant’s third Critique, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, which Copleston refers to as Kant’s aesthetics and teleology. It’s in vol. 6, chapter 15, where he [Copleston] treats this and notes that this *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is an intermediary between natural science and the science of human freedom. It touches on both. The exercise of freedom, making an art out of your life, making your life a work of art. I’m quoting Doran. And this stand on judgments of taste and *de gustibus non disputandum*, though Gadamer doesn’t insist on that, is a basis that suits Gadamer’s role as a philosopher of culture. I do not know whether Gadamer draws my distinction between notion of being and concept of being, where the notion is what one intends in asking questions. What you don’t know yet when you’re asking the questions. It’s what you’re intending. The concept of being is the sort of thing you can define.

Question: In response to a question asked yesterday about ecumenical discussions, you remarked that committees are not likely to come up with the kind of creative thought that is needed in addressing disagreements between Christian communions.

Loneragan: Well, that was not my fundamental point. My fundamental point was there’s a difference between the question whether it’s so and What is it? how do you understand it? Systematics deals with questions: Can you give us some glimmer of understanding on this point? It’s concerned with understanding. People understand or they don’t understand. But they don’t say Yes or No – yet. They may agree or disagree, but that’s a different act. You need to know more than the mere idea to agree or disagree. You have to verify, in some sense. Now, these discussions on the beliefs, different beliefs as held by different church bodies, is questions of a judgment, of saying yes or no. Doctrines exist to give yes or no answers to precise questions. Systematics exists to meet questions seeking understanding, questions that of themselves offer help to some insight, some grasp of the issue. Now, what discussion groups aim at is understanding one another and, through mutual understanding, seeking a common ground. They’re intelligent, very intelligent. But they’re not the sort of intelligence that tries to understand the reality that’s announced in the doctrine. That’s the systematic theologian. It’s an exercise of theology that commonly is disregarded. But it’s there nonetheless.

Question: It has been said – by a New England philosopher, I think – that consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. While I would not want to try to force a merely formal consistency onto your published remarks, I would be interested to know whether the difference between the following is of any significance; and, of so, what that significance is: (a) your discussion on Tuesday evening of a *fivefold* differentiation of consciousness (realms of theory, interiority, transcendence and scholarship differentiated from common sense); (b) the *six* differentiations – and thirty-one combinations – discussed in *Method*’s chapter on ‘Foundations’ (p. 272), there the realms to be distinguished from common sense are all of the above, *plus art*.

Loneragan: The significance, of course, is the significance of the word processor. It saves you the problem of typing and retyping and retyping indefinitely anything he’s trying to do, you can put together a book. The typescript of *Insight* was 1,350 pages. Anything that will cut that burden down is a marvelous invention. If one understands that a word processor is a rather recent thing and I haven’t one yet, and I don’t intend, I haven’t learned to use it really, I’m a little too old for that – you’ll understand that books are finished when a writer is sick and tired of this; he can’t bother doing it any further. It comes to a point where he says, ‘That’s enough.’ I was aware that

my lists of differentiations of consciousness varied. I was not exactly aware that I had assured the reader that there were as many as in each case I gave, but I did not think that anyone would be deceived. The whole point to these differentiations of consciousness is to give an inkling into the reason why people differ so much, all over the world, to understand differences, and some of the roots of differences. Whether you get them all is a further question. Of course, a logician would want to know that, but one can't write for logicians. You'd have to use symbols exclusively.

Question: Could you comment on the task of the functional specialty Foundations as the task of articulating a *Begrifflichkeit*?

Lonergan: Well, in the fifth functional specialty in *Method*, there are enumerated types of concepts to be developed putting into practice the second part of *Method*. That's, I think, what gives rise to the question. However, to clarify the notion of a *Begrifflichkeit* distinguish the idea or concept of a *Begrifflichkeit* and particular instances of that general term. My third lecture at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, had for a title 'The Ongoing Genesis of Methods.' The question was, theology and religious studies. And there's an ongoing genesis of methods. And that's just a particular case of an ongoing genesis. And to get hold of this ongoing genesis of methods is essential to historical work. The ongoing genesis of methods is the idea of a *Begrifflichkeit*. The actual genesis of another method is an instance in which a *Begrifflichkeit* is developing. Tying the two together, of course, came to me last night. 'The Ongoing Genesis of Methods' is a thing I wrote but the notion of a *Begrifflichkeit* is something I picked up from Matt Lamb, who spent years in Germany.

Questions from the floor

Question: Gadamer's judgment of taste – would you correlate that with your judgment of value?

Lonergan: Well, taste is aesthetic. Value is moral.

Question: Would you mind a slightly different question from the ones down here? Could you face it? In *Insight*, at the end, it says that God's answer to the problem of evil must be a history and not just a story. Now, in connection with that, I wondered how worried the Catholic believer should be about the problem of the historical Jesus. Couldn't historical evidence converge on the view that he was a vicious man or a charlatan like in Morton Smith's fairly recent book?

Lonergan: Well, I think it comes more out of the judge than the judged. A psychoanalyst, an Englishman, studied various tribes in India and Africa from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. And then he came to the States and was practicing the same method here, and he didn't attempt to say anything about Texas because that was different from any of the other states, and he found the West Coast quite different too. But he did pick on different things. For example, the great devotion to mothers in the American scene he explained on the grounds that in the immigrant family the mother is always the beneficent – she stays in the home and takes care of the family, she does everything for them, and they all love their mother, and she goes right up on a pedestal. But the father can't speak the language; he can't compete on even terms with other people his age, and so on; he's at a terrific disadvantage, and none of the sons want to be like their father.

So you have this negative influence from the status of the father, and the positive [for the mother], and that accounts for this enthusiasm for the mother. This sort of thing, eh?

Well, that's fairly possible for a person who's on the spot, eh? But to go off into these theories about someone who lived 2000 years ago and spoke a language that probably your psychoanalytic training didn't make you very familiar with and so on and so forth is quite a different thing. The problem of the historical Jesus is the problem of a theological method. There's a very well known Christian, Catholic scripture writer who says that you study the life of Jesus Christ the same way you study the life of Julius Caesar. And while I believe it's historical that Julius Caesar ordered the right hands of ten thousand men he'd defeated in a battle to be chopped off, there is, I presume, historical evidence for it, I was told that in a classics class, and in general a history of the classical writers is regarded by historians as the most competent type of history there is, because every line has been scrutinized over and over again by experts, and their correcting what has been done is cut down to a minimum. If you want to be original, you have to get into some other field. And insofar as studying the history of the life of Jesus the way you study Julius Caesar, you have to ignore an awful lot of the evidence to think there was a great resemblance between the two. But the problem is that if the history of Christianity is the same as any other history, why bother about it? It's what's different that's important. And it's just the cult of a clique to think that everything has to be watered down to one technique. That point was excoriated by Husserl, in *The Crisis of European Sciences*, that the more they become specialized, the more there disappears any idea of what a science is, and the greater becomes the domination of the opinions of a clique. If you want to be received in the best journals, well, you have to think the way the people who edit those journals and contribute to them think. But that doesn't settle much.