

RGT 5722HS
12 January 2006
'Philosophy of God, and Theology'

- 1 Our reading this week is the section 'Philosophy of God, and Theology' in CWL 17. The basic proposal is that the old conception of the relationship between philosophy of God and systematics is to be set aside, that is, the conception that the two are not only distinct but also separated. There has been a change in philosophic context, Lonergan says, or again, a change in the state of culture that makes it advisable to bring them together again. He is proposing something quite different, then, from what those of us who were educated in the old Scholastic framework were used to, but also from what he himself was proposing in his earlier work. The change of context or of the state of culture that is relevant to the issue has made us aware that, in the terms of *'Insight Revisited,'* 'our basic awareness of God comes to us not through our arguments or choices but primarily through God's gift of his love.' It is on this basis that an integrated approach would join philosophic reflection on God with systematic-theological reflection.
- 2 **Introduction and First Lecture: Philosophy of God.** 'Philosophy of God' refers to 'thought and affirmations or negations concerning God that are not logically derived from revealed religion' (160). The operative word here is 'logically,' though. For there will be discovered two opposed meanings of the phrase 'philosophy of God.' 172-73: 'There is an older meaning that considers philosophy in general, and philosophy of God in particular, to be so objective that it is independent of the mind that thinks it. There is a newer meaning that conceives objectivity to be the fruit of authentic subjectivity. On the former view, philosophy of God need not be concerned with the philosophic subject. On the latter view, philosophy of God must not attempt to prescind from the subject. This means that an intellectual, moral, and religious conversion have to be taken into account.' It is within those concrete contexts that the question of God arises. On the older view, philosophy of God and systematic theology are quite separate affairs. On the latter view, they are, of course quite distinct because they have contradictory premises: not from revelation, from revelation; and because philosophy of God aims at proving the existence of God and God's attributes, while the functional specialty 'systematics' does not attempt to prove anything: 'Systematics takes over the truths from the other specialties, and its aim is, not to find further proofs, but to understand as best it can what has already been established to be so' (160). But Aquinas found ways of interweaving them into a seamless whole that from the beginning was theology, and Lonergan is proposing that we have to find a way to do that again in our own context.
- 3 In some ways, then, the main point of the first lecture is to outline that context itself. 'Our basic concern ... will be an attempt to grasp certain fundamental contours relevant to an understanding of variations in philosophic context. It is those variations that account for the fact that the two for a number of centuries were not only distinct but also separated, and the change in the context makes it advisable to bring them together again' (161). Just how radical these proposals are is easily ascertained by anyone of my generation, for whom the separation of the two disciplines can simply be taken for granted. Had someone asked me thirty-five years ago, 'What do you

understand the phrase “philosophy of God” to refer to?’ I would have answered in terms of the position that Lonergan is here rejecting. So what has happened to render that separation no longer appropriate to a contemporary philosophical context?

- 4 The answer is to be found in differentiations of consciousness. The meaning of the terms ‘philosophy’ and ‘God’ differs at different times and places, and ‘the underlying fact is what I have named differentiations of consciousness’ (162). Thus most of the first lecture is devoted to a discussion of various differentiations, because these will determine what is meant by ‘philosophy of God’ at any one time. Some at least of the focus is on language as indicative of the differentiations. There are covered (1) the differentiation that language introduces between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning, (2) the further differentiation that occurs ‘when one learns a language rich and varied and supple enough to portray [people] in all their complexity,’ (3) the shift from ordinary and literary language to the technical language that expresses a systematic or theoretical differentiation, and the differentiation of systems themselves depending on contexts: metaphysical, empirical science, transcendental (thus introducing interiorly differentiated consciousness), (4) the post-systematic differentiation, and (5) the religious differentiation. Others, he said, ‘might be described’ (168), but these will suffice for making his point.
- 5 In early language (1) the divine, which cannot be perceived or imagined, ‘can be associated with the object or event, the ritual or the recitation, that occasions religious experience, and so there arise the hierophanies’ (163). With the enrichment of language (2) that occurs in what here is a second differentiation, there is a literary revelation of ourselves to ourselves; and with that, previous anthropomorphic conceptions and representations of the gods are criticized, and Heraclitus finds a logos or intelligence that steers through all things, divine and human and animal, etc. (We could go on to the anthropological differentiation that Voegelin finds in Plato.) With systematic meaning (3) and the theoretical differentiation, one enters into a new world, and here Lonergan deliberately devotes some time to discussion three contexts of systematic meaning. There are the problems that come with a logical and metaphysical emphasis such as was found in Aristotle. There is the break with necessary truth in modern science, along with the greater awareness of systematic exigence and its demands. And there is the kind of systematic thinking whose ‘basic terms denote the conscious and intentional operations that occur in human knowing’ and whose ‘basic relations denote the conscious dynamism that leads from some operations to others’ (167). Here basic terms and relations are cognitional and given to consciousness. These three systematic differentiations ‘are highly relevant not only to the conception of philosophy of God but also to the functional specialty entitled systematics’ (168), a point that he will come back to. With (4) the post-systematic differentiation, the achievements of more systematic thinkers are diffused into the culture by popularizers, even while people do not themselves move beyond common sense to theory. And with (5) the religious differentiation we get right to our point. It is ‘the differentiation that is of basic importance to the present inquiry’ (171). The religious differentiation lies in God’s gift of grace, God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. This gift and its fruits can be conscious without being known. It is also consciously unrestricted, a love that is with all one’s heart and all one’s soul and all one’s mind and all one’s strength, and only in that

unrestrictedness do we discover that it is in fact a love of God. It does not depend on any apprehension of God, but is God's free gift given so that we may seek and find God ourselves. It is not something that we produce but something that we receive, a completion and fulfilment of our being from on high. It allows for the affirmation that there can be an element in all the religions of humankind that is at once profound and holy. What is specific to Christianity is not God's gift of love but the outward expression of God's love in Christ Jesus dying and rising again.

- 6 This position on the religious differentiation cancels out the importance of the distinction between the god of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. '... if both the philosopher and the theologian had experienced the religious differentiation of consciousness, then both would be seeking to know the same God even though they employed means that were quite distinct' (171). In that context, to teach philosophy of God in one department and theology in another might introduce some ambiguity about the god or God that the philosophy of God sought to know. Philosophy of God, it is claimed, should be transferred into the theology department, where 'there may exist functional specialties named dialectic and foundations that are calculated to reveal whether or not the religious differentiation of consciousness has occurred in any given individual' (171). Philosophic accounts of God's existence and attributes can be done in a context that appeals to religious experience. Then philosophy is employed to help us determine precisely who it is that we are in love with. Even arguments that attempt to prove that God exists are done within particular horizons, and horizons are a function of religious, moral, and intellectual conversion. The subject's religious horizon is of enormous significance in assimilating any arguments for God's existence. (This issue is taken up in the question session following the second lecture, at 195-96, where it is emphasized that arguments may still be valid, but they are within systematics, not independent of it. And: '... proof is never the fundamental thing. Proof always presupposes a horizon. You can never prove a horizon. You arrive at it from a different horizon, by going beyond the previous one, because you have found something that makes the previous horizon illegitimate.'))
- 7 Religious conversion is what provides the horizon in which questions about God are significant. The key point to it can be had in all sorts of different contexts, but what is common is God's gift of God's own love. (This claim aroused at least one objection in the question period.) Conclusion: '... the abstraction that would separate the two is foreign to contemporary modes of thinking. We are not chopping up the world with a set of concepts and keeping it all in separate compartments. The whole purpose is the development of the person, and the more one can put together, the more integrated the person will be' (177).
- 8 The most important items in the question period were on the gift of God's love and its universality. We will come back to this, since the same issue arose in the questions following the second lecture.
- 9 **Second Lecture: The Functional Specialty 'Systematics.'** 180-81: 'A first question that arises is how the Christian religion ever allowed itself to be involved in systematic thinking.' It did so gradually, and section 2 of the paper outlines successive stages in the process. We may think of these as transitions in the church's preservation of the

word of God committed to it. (If time constraints demand, we can move directly to 14 below.)

- 10 (1) First, the NT bears witness to the fact that preaching the gospel to all nations demands preaching it differently to different nations. '*Cultural differences can be overlooked only at the cost of creating misunderstanding and misinterpretation*' (181). Moreover, in the adaptations found in the NT (preaching to Jews who read the OT in their native language, to Jews who read the OT in a Greek translation, to Gentiles who did not read the OT at all) we see the first foreshadowing of the distinction between philosophy of God and systematics: 'The functional specialty presupposes revelation, as did the Jews that read the Old Testament. Philosophy of God does not use revelation as a logical premise for its conclusions, [and this was the case also with] the Gentiles that did not read the Old Testament' (181).
- 11 (2) The Apologists. Here the issue is more complex, for the apologists had to take into account the pagans who accepted neither the OT nor the NT, who misinterpreted Christianity, and who persecuted Christians. To make clear to such pagans what Christianity really held and taught, the apologists had to enter into the mind of the pagans, discern what they would accept as legitimate assumptions, and proceed from there to clarify Christian teaching.
- 12 (3) The interpretation of scripture. Fanciful interpretations had to be resisted, and the only successful way was to lay down principles of hermeneutics and apply them. Lonergan presents the example of Clement of Alexandria, who, he says, 'had found the tool that would cut short many an endless disputation' (183).
- 13 (4) The apprehension of God. Clement also urged Christians to interpret not literally but allegorically the anthropomorphisms of the Bible. Where, then, were Christians to find their notion of God, if they were not to take the bible literally? '... ancient Christian writers had philosophic problems, and gradually they discovered their existence' (184). These are dealt with abundantly by Lonergan in *The Way to Nicea* and in 'The Origins of Christian Realism.'
- 14 (5) The Middle Ages. '... theology did not seriously aspire to be systematic until the Middle Ages' (185). That aspiration arose out of the inner exigences of the situation. The *question* became 'a technique for reconciling differing authorities in matters of faith and apparent oppositions between faith and reason' (185). It was applied on smaller and larger (e.g., Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*) scales, and 'the larger the scale of the operations, the graver became a fresh problem. How was one to make sure that the many principles of solution that were proposed were themselves free from contradiction? The one obvious solution was to derive one's principles of solution from some system. If the system was coherent, the solutions too would be coherent. If the system lacked coherence, this lack would be magnified in the solutions, and this magnification would lead to a correction of the system' (185). One simple way to move to systematic differentiation is to adopt and perhaps also adapt a system that already exists, and this is what medieval theologians did especially with Aristotle. 186: 'Still, one cannot move from commonsense to systematic thinking without creating a crisis. One is introducing a new technical language, a new mode of formulating one's convictions and beliefs, a new mode of intellectual development, a new mode of verification. Automatically there is formed a new social group that understands the new technical language, that is expert in transposing from prior to

later modes of expression, that is raising new questions and solving them in a new way. Automatically there also is formed a far larger social group that greets the new movement with incomprehension' (186). There begins the social problem caused by differentiations of consciousness. In this particular context, it took the form of the Dominican-Franciscan conflict that eventually became the Aristotelian-Augustinian conflict in theology. The commonsense viewpoint, of course, simply did not know what was going on. 'Aquinas did not set Augustine aside or belittle him; he revered him, and his later works are more fully and accurately Augustinian than his earlier ones. Again, Aquinas did not derive his religious doctrine from Aristotle; he derived his religious doctrine from the Christian tradition, but he used Aristotle, partly as a master and partly as a quarry, to construct a systematic presentation of Christian doctrine' (186).

- 15 Problems with Aristotle (186-87) led to subsequent problems in theology. Scotus and Ockham accepted Aristotle's logical works but regarded his other writings as merely pagan, whereas Aquinas had seen through the limitations of Aristotle's logical writings. Scholasticism became decadent, but Scotist vocabulary became the vocabulary of subsequent Scholasticism. Moreover, with the commentaries on commentaries and the commentaries on purely systematic works such as the *Summa theologiae*, theology in the late Middle Ages 'seemed to be painting itself into a corner, to be getting away from its sources and just discussing systems' (188).
- 16 (6) The Reformation and what came in its wake. Lonergan emphasizes mainly Cano's *De locis theologicis*. 188: 'He insisted on a return to sources. Theology was to consist in a set of medieval doctrines to be proved by an appeal to scriptural and patristic writings, to the councils and the consensus of theologians, and from *ratio theologica* (theological reason), which sought to transform the ancient *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) into an argument that somehow did not prove. Perhaps more than a century passed before Cano's *De locis* became dominant, but his influence has extended right into the twentieth century.' This was the beginning of 'dogmatic theology,' and Lonergan places the date when theology definitively started to fall behind the times precisely with this 'development.' Cano dies in 1560, and 1680 is the date for Lonergan when theology lost it.
- 17 (7) The Modern Period. Changes in the notion of science, philosophy, and hermeneutics and history have forced the crisis of contemporary theology. And (section 3: Philosophy of God in Theology): 'It is only on the basis of a full understanding and a complete acceptance of the developments in the contemporary notions of science, philosophy, and scholarship that my account of the functional specialty "systematics" can be understood. Similarly, it is only on the basis of a full acceptance of the developments in contemporary notions of science, philosophy, and scholarship that there can be understood, let alone accepted, my proposal that philosophy of God be taught by theologians in a department of theology' (189). This was a task that used to belong to theologians, one that somehow they lost, one that they should reclaim.
- 18 How does Lonergan support his belief? We should read pp. 190-91. Conclusion: 'My proposal to unify philosophy of God and the functional specialty "systematics" is not compatible with what everyone used to hold about textual criticism, exegesis, history, fundamental theology, philosophy, and theological reason. My proposal is compatible

with quite different views. And it is only the latter compatibility that I can defend' (191).

- 19 Here I would like to take up the questions that followed both the first and the second lecture, and especially those having to do with the gift of God's love and its universality. We begin with p. 176, where an objection is raised against Lonergan's implication that there is genuine religious consciousness apart from Christian revelation. The objector is arguing that Lonergan's use of 1 Timothy, 'God wills all people to be saved,' is not based on accurate exegesis, that rather than Lonergan's interpretation the correct interpretation is that because God wills all to be saved, God has sent his Son to save the world. The gospel must be preached and believed. God is not providing salvation in any other way than by sending his Son to save the world. Lonergan's initial response: 'Well, that's another view, isn't it? But Paul has to say about charity that there isn't salvation without it; and there is lots of evidence of people leading extremely good lives without being Christians.' Then the objector counters with the statement that charity is not enough for salvation according to Paul, that faith in Jesus is necessary for salvation. 178: the element that is common to genuine religion is the love of God. This is a form of 'supernatural revelation,' but not complete revelation, since Christian revelation does go beyond it and bring in a specific difference: 'There is an intersubjective element to love that is present in Christianity, where God is expressing his love in Christ as well as giving you the grace in your heart; and this element is missing when you haven't got a Christian revelation.' God's grace has always been given.
- 20 These same questions are taken up after the second lecture. For Lonergan God's gift of love leads to a transformation more on the order of practice than on the order of intellectual knowledge, so one can deny God's existence when what one is really doing is rebelling against an unsatisfactory notion of God. There follows (192-93) some reflection on the free rejection of God's love. Then a question is raised about consolation without a cause: 'Could you explain more precisely what this content without an object is?' (193). Ibid.: 'The content is a dynamic state of being in love, and being in love without restriction. It is conscious but it is not known. What it refers to is something that can be inferred insofar as you make it advance from being merely conscious to being known. And then because it is unrestricted, you can infer that it refers to an absolute being. But the gift of itself does not include these ulterior steps. They are further steps. And consequently this content without a known object is an occurrence, a fundamental occurrence, the ultimate stage in a person's self-transcendence. It is God's free gift. It involves a transvaluation of values in your living, but it is not something produced by knowing. It is going beyond your present horizon; it is taking you beyond your present horizon.' Question: 'there would be no insight, no concept, no judgment?' Response: 'Not of itself, no. You can say it is on the fifth level. It is self-transcendence reaching its summit, and that summit can be developed and enriched, and so on. But of itself it is permanent.' Again (194): 'There isn't an already apprehended object. But you can find the object by reflecting, and that reflection involves insight, and so on ... It is one thing to have the experience. It is another thing to describe it and express it and talk about it and evaluate it.'
- 21 **Third Lecture: The Relationship between Philosophy of God and the Functional Specialty 'Systematics.'** The basic issue is whether we are going to work from the

viewpoint of a deductivist logic or from a moving viewpoint. On the first option, philosophy of God and systematics cannot form one and the same deductivist system, for one and the same deductivist system either does or does not have premises derived from revealed religion. If it does, then philosophy of God is eliminated; and if it does not, then systematics is eliminated. The situation is different in a moving or dynamic viewpoint. 200: ‘The philosophy of God and the functional specialty “systematics” may have something in common in their origin and in their goal; each may go its separate way and yet, at the same time, each may borrow from the other and reinforce the other. While their procedures differ, this does not imply that they must be kept in different departments, treated by different professors, expounded in different books. While they cannot have the unity of a single deductivist process, they may very well have the unity of a single collaborative process.’

- 22 The basic issue, then, can also be formulated as being between logic and method. A methodical view ‘recognizes to the fullest extent the value of the clarity, coherence, and rigor that logic brings about. But it does not consider logic’s achievement to be permanent. On the contrary, it considers it to be recurrent. Human knowledge can be constantly advancing, and the function of logic is to hasten that advance by revealing clearly, coherently, and rigorously the deficiencies of current achievement.’ (201). It is method that ‘shows the way from the logically clear, coherent, and rigorous position of today to the quite different but logically clear, coherent, and rigorous position of tomorrow’ (ibid.). The two are contrasted more fully on 202-203. Conclusion (203): ‘I advocate the unity of the functional specialty “systematics” and of the philosophy of God not on any and every set of assumptions but only on one precise meaning of unity, and only on certain assumptions concerning the meaning of objectivity, the content of the basic disciplines, the relationship between the basic and other disciplines, the nature of system, and the concept of theology. It is on these assumptions that I shall proceed to argue that the philosophy of God and the functional specialty “systematics” have a common origin, that each complements and reinforces the other, and that they have a common goal even though they proceed in different manners.’
- 23 The relevant assumptions are: (1) unity: not the static deductivist notion of unity where everything is already implicitly present in the premises but the unity of a common origin and a common goal; (2) objectivity: not the fruit of immediate experience, self-evident and necessary truths, and rigorous inferences, but of authentic subjectivity; (3) the basic discipline: not metaphysics but cognitional theory; (4) relation to other disciplines: not specifications added to basic terms and relations, as in Aristotle’s psychology and ethics, for example, but the relationship of a transcendental method and the categorial determinations appropriate to specific enterprises; (5) system: not the realization of the deductivist ideal, where there is only one true system, but the empirical notion that regards systems as successive expressions of an ever fuller understanding of the relevant data, and the transcendental notion that results from the appropriation of one’s own conscious and intentional operations; (6) theology: not the science of God and of all things in relation to God but reflection on the significance and value of a religion within a culture, where culture is conceived not normatively but empirically.

- 24 Next, then, how do we work toward a detailed account of the relationship between philosophy of God and the functional specialty “systematics”? We begin by positing a common origin to the two. That common origin is in religious experience. At the root of religious experience is God’s gift of his love. It leads us to seek knowledge of God. ‘Religious experience at its root is experience of an unconditioned and unrestricted being in love. But what we are in love with remains something that we have to find out. When we find it out in the context of a philosophy, there results a philosophy of God. When we find it out in the context of a functionally differentiated theology, there results a functional specialty, systematics. So it turns out that one and the same God has unknowingly been found and is differently being sought by both philosopher and theologian’ (204).
- 25 Next we investigate the various forms of the question of God. ‘... the question of God arises on a series of successive levels, ... it may begin as a purely metaphysical questions but it becomes a moral and eventually a religious question, and ... to deal with all of these levels requires putting an end to the isolation of philosophy of God’ (205). The basic form of the question of God arises when one questions one’s questioning. But there are questions for intelligence, for reflection, for deliberation, and the religious question. Each of these gives rise to a form of the question of God: (1) intelligence: Does not the intelligibility of the object presuppose an intelligent ground? Does not an intelligent ground for everything in the universe presuppose the existence of God? (2) reflection: Can everything be contingent? Must there not exist some necessary being, whose existence is unconditioned, to account for the existence of the beings whose existence is conditioned? (3) deliberation: Does morality or moral concern begin with the human race? If not, then is the ground of the universe a moral being? (4) religion: ‘... some have found that these exists an unrestricted being in love, a mystery of love and awe, a being grasped by ultimate concern, a happiness that has a determinate content but no intellectually apprehended object. Such people will ask, “With whom are we in love?”’
- 26 The four questions are distinct, yes, but they are also cumulative; they belong together, and so again philosophy of God and systematics should not be isolated from each other. And the basic question of God is not the philosophic question but the religious one. The philosophic forms require a philosophically differentiated culture, but the religious question is common to all who have had some religious experience.
- 27 So next Lonergan investigates the common objective of the two. The philosophy of God flourishes only in the climate of religious experience, and so has much to gain by being joined by the functional specialty ‘systematics,’ and the functional specialty has much to gain as well by the same union by helping it to gain some general categories. This is important for theology: ‘... theology, insofar as it acquires a method, becomes a reflection on the significance and value of a religion within a culture; because it treats of a religion, it has its own special terms; because it is concerned with the significance and value of the religion within a given culture, it has to have recourse to the general terms that refer to significance, value, and culture in their many aspects’ (209). When the concern of the theology is a concrete religion as it has been lived, is being lived, and is to be lived, it has to draw on the resources not only of scientists and historians but also of philosophers. The static viewpoint would isolate theology from these concerns, but the dynamic viewpoint will not allow this.

- 28 Again, in terms of differentiations of consciousness, when the religious, the linguistic, the literary, the systematic, the scientific, the scholarly, and the interior differentiations have all occurred, the consequent notions of philosophy and theology are quite different from what they were when only the first four of these had occurred. Thomist and especially neo-Thomist conceptions of philosophy and theology are quite different from those conceptions that flow from Lonergan's work.
- 29 The final consideration is the contemporary notion of person. It comes out of genetic biology and psychology, where what is primordial is the community. 211: 'It is within community, and through the intersubjective relations that are the life of community, that there arises the differentiation of the individual person.' The person is the resultant of the relationships he or she has had with others and of the capacities that have developed in him or her to relate to others. 'Person' is never a general term. And the strongest and best of the relationships between persons is love, and if this is the case, then religious experience and the emergence of personality go hand in hand. The real common goal of the philosophy of God and of systematics is the development of persons. And because the person is one, a whole, not just a set of parts, the study of what makes persons persons should not be carried on under different principles and in different departments.