

RGT 5572 HS  
Class 10 (used in Class 11)  
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Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon

- 1 How does philosophy view the religious phenomenon in terms of the viability or validity of that phenomenon? That is the question that this lecture addresses.
- 2 The **first part** of the lecture seems concerned with establishing the validity and limits of a philosophy of religion. The meaning of 'philosophy' is clarified by contrasting Scholastic positions with Lonergan's 'present position.' Scholasticism had no room for a philosophy of religion. For the Scholastic view, philosophy is concerned with ultimate, naturally known truths about the universe. Insofar as it was concerned with the universe, its material object was unrestricted. Insofar as it was concerned with truth, it was not aimed at setting up theories that it hoped would be improved upon, but rather wanted to determine for all time just what was so. As concerned with naturally known truths, it left supernaturally known truths to theology. As concerned with ultimate, naturally known truths, it distinguished itself from the sciences concerned with proximate truths about various parts and levels of the universe. But if it overlooked the supernatural, then if religion is supernatural it could not be a philosophy of religion, unless it would attempt to reduce the supernatural to the natural, in which case it would misrepresent and distort genuine religion.
- 3 For Lonergan, philosophy must honor an empirical principle. '... there is always required some empirical element in any judgment of fact or of possibility or of probability.' For philosophy, this means the three basic questions of foundational methodology: What am I doing when I am knowing? Why is doing that knowing? What do I know what I do that? This 'philosophy' is here called 'foundational methodology.' And several points are made about it.
- 4 First, it covers all that is basic in philosophy, at least in the sense that one cannot cover any other issues in philosophy without settling first the issues of cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics.
- 5 Second, from this standpoint metaphysics is not the first science, for philosophy now is concerned primarily not with objects but with operations. What is most basic is cognitional theory. Then there follows the validity of the operations, and that is the concern of epistemology. Only in the third place does there arise the question of objects, the concern of metaphysics.
- 6 Third, this shift allows us both to retain the Scholastic distinction between naturally known objects and supernaturally known objects and yet to deprive it of the absolute priority it had in the Scholastic context.

- 7 Fourth, the shift is from logic to method, from particular systems in their clarity, coherence, and rigor to movement: movement from nonsystem to system, and from one system to a better system.
- 8 The conclusions to be drawn in the first part of the lecture, then, are the following: (a) since philosophy is now identified with foundational methodology, there no longer holds the peremptory Scholastic argument against a sound philosophy of religion; (b) as philosophy is foundational methodology, so philosophy of religion is the foundational methodology of religious studies; (c) a foundational methodology of religious studies can pronounce on the viability or validity of this or that method of religious studies, but would go beyond its competence if it tried to pronounce on the nonmethodological aspects of religious studies: such as the viability or validity of a particular religion or the viability or validity of the results of religious studies.
- 9 The **second part** of the lecture takes the argument a step further. The priority of metaphysics implied a faculty psychology, that is, a psychology in terms of potencies, forms, and acts, since metaphysics provided the basic terms and relations of all the other sciences. But once the priority of metaphysics is rejected, so too is the implication of a faculty psychology. 395: ‘When philosophy is conceived as a foundational methodology, and when cognitional theory is its basic step, the empirical principle demands that cognitional theory take its stand on the data of cognitional consciousness. But cognitional consciousness is of operations and of the normative tendencies linking operations together. Cognitional theory, accordingly, will consist of terms and relations, where the terms name operations and the relations name normative tendencies. In this fashion faculty psychology gives way to an intentionality analysis.’
- 10 What is the import of this? The endlessly debated questions of the precedence and importance of the sensitive, conative, intellectual, and volitional components of human living and acting are automatically settled by comparing levels of operations linked by the operators that are manifested by questions. The relation between successive levels is sublation, where sublating operations go beyond the sublated, introduce something radically new, respect the integrity of the sublated, and bestow upon them a higher significance and a wider relevance. Lonergan shows how this occurs with questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, and questions for deliberation. And so the old questions of sensism, intellectualism, sentimentalism, voluntarism vanish. 397: ‘Experience, understanding, judgment, and decision all are essential to human living. But while all are essential, while none can be dropped or even slighted, still the successive levels are related inasmuch as the later presuppose the earlier and complement them, and inasmuch as the earlier are ordained to the later and need them to attain their human significance.’
- 11 Several notes and corollaries are added. First, the meaning of the successive levels is neither spatial nor chronological, but in terms of sublation and sublated operations.

- 12 Second, complaints about the one-sidedness of an exclusive intellectualism are justified, but this does not mean that intellectualist products can be dismissed as just abstractions. 398: ‘The so-called “abstract” is usually the incompletely determined apprehension of the concrete, and all human apprehension is incompletely determined. Indeed, intellectualist apprehension is more complete than the apprehensions of undifferentiated consciousness, and it is just the ignorance of undifferentiated consciousness that complains about the abstractness of the intellectual.’
- 13 Third, this analysis reveals the significance of the existential. The level of deliberation, decision, action is both practical (affecting other persons and objects) and existential (the locus where the subject decides for or against his/her own authenticity). The two aspects of this level are linked: any practical decision reveals and confirms and intensifies the authenticity or unauthenticity of the practical subject; and any existential decision attains substance and moment in the measure that it transforms one’s conduct and pursuits.
- 14 Fourth, a foundational methodology can function as a philosophy of religion only by moving beyond the levels of experience, understanding, and judgment and including the higher significance and relevance of deliberation, evaluation, decision, and action. For every religion is involved in value judgments, which pertain to the fourth level of intentional consciousness. To judge that the object of religious belief should be believed is a value judgment.
- 15 The **third part** of the lecture acknowledges that the structure of the four levels of intentional consciousness ‘may prove open at both ends’ (400). Ibid.: ‘The intellectual operator that promotes our operations from the level of experience to the level of understanding may well be preceded by a symbolic operator that coordinates neural potentialities and needs with higher goals through its control over the emergence of images and affects. Again, beyond the moral operator that promotes us from judgments of fact to judgments of value with their retinue of decisions and actions, there is a further realm of interpersonal relations and total commitment in which human beings tend to find the immanent goal of their being and, with it, their fullest joy and deepest peace.  
‘So from an intentionality analysis distinguishing four levels one moves to an analysis that distinguishes six levels.’
- 16 The two added levels are particularly relevant to religious studies. ‘The symbolic operator that shapes the development of sensibility and, in its ultimate achievement, guides the Jungian process of individuation, would seem highly relevant to an investigation of religious symbols. And the soul of religion has been seen to lie in a total commitment that embraces the universe and frequently does so in adoration of a personal God’ (400). From a Christian viewpoint, this total commitment is ‘being in love in an unrestricted manner.’ It is associated with Paul’s statement that ‘God’s love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us’ (Romans 5.5). It is complemented by God’s manifestation of love for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus. But we may also attend to other religions. Scripture bids us do so: ‘By their

fruits you will know them' (Matthew 7.10); God wills to save all (1 Timothy 2.4) and so it may be presumed gives the charity described in 1 Corinthians 13 to more than Christians. But we may also move to a universalist view of religion by following Panikkar's move to lived religion or mystical faith prior to and beyond formulation, or Whitson's discernment of a convergence of religions, or by bringing these two standpoints together in a single integrated view. Lonergan ends this section by stating that 'what in a philosophic context I have named being in love in an unrestricted manner, in a theological context could be paralleled with Karl Rahner's supernatural existential' (402).

- 17 A **fourth section** provides two items in a heuristic structure for religious studies or, again, two contributions that a philosophy of religion can make to religious studies. The first element arises from the distinction between authentic and unauthentic. 402: 'The distinction is relevant both to the object of religious studies and to the subject. It is relevant to the object, for the followers of a given religion may represent it authentically or unauthentically to provide contradictory evidence on the nature of the religion under investigation. It is relevant to the subjects carrying out religious studies, for they may be humanly or religiously authentic or unauthentic and so offer contradictory interpretations of the same data.' A good page of material follows in which Lonergan argues for the importance of these questions.
- 18 The second element has to do with differentiations of consciousness or, again, the various contexts in which religious living occurs and investigations of religious living are undertaken. Here Lonergan speaks of eight headings of social arrangements: family and mores, community and education, state and law, economics and technology. He speaks of five areas of cultural interest: art, religion, science, philosophy, history. He speaks of four stages diversifying the scope of social and cultural initiatives: the linguistic, the literate, the logical, and the methodical. This distinction involves different apprehensions of social arrangements and cultural achievements, and differences in the social arrangements that are projected and realized as well as in the cultural achievements that are ambitioned and brought to birth. The stages are not universalized: there may live together people who can and people who cannot read and write, people who can and people who cannot operate on propositions and construct systems of thought, people who can and people who cannot grasp that systematic constructs last their little day eventually to pass away in favor of better constructs. This introduces stratification and alienation. Stratification: those in the more advanced stages are far more capable of initiating new and perhaps better social arrangements and of providing appropriate cultural justifications for their new social arrangements. Alienation: the less advanced will find themselves living in social arrangements beyond their comprehension and motivated by appeals to values they do not appreciate; and the more advanced will be alienated by *simpliste* social thought and crude cultural creations.
- 19 Now it is within these varying social and cultural contexts that religion discovers itself, works out its identity, differentiates itself from other areas, and interacts with them. In the linguistic stage it manifests itself as myth and ritual. In the literate stage

it becomes religion of the book: Torah, gospel, Koran. In the logical stage it issues dogmatic pronouncements and seeks overall reconciliation in systematic theologies. In the methodical stage, it confronts its own history, distinguishes the stages in its own development, evaluates the authenticity or unauthenticity of its initiatives, and preaches its messages in the many forms and styles appropriate to the many social and cultural strata of the communities in which it operates. The last 2-3 pages are devoted largely to the interrelations of the stages, especially as this is manifest in Christian history.

### Horizons and Transpositions

- 20 The paper was prompted by a remark by Gerald McCool to the effect that there was no logical connection between Lonergan's position and that of St Thomas, and by Fred Lawrence's response to McCool that Lonergan was not talking about drawing logical conclusions but about transpositions. Transposition is something that becomes necessary once one admits such a thing as a change of horizon, for changes in horizon take us out of the field of deductive logic and its conclusions. 'As soon as one changes one's horizon, one begins to operate in virtue of a minor or major change in one's basic assumptions. Such a change may be just a jump but also it may be a genuine transposition, a restatement of an earlier position in a new and broader context' (410). Example: 'Einstein's special relativity was a transposition of Newton.' So the first point is the link between the notion of horizon and that of transposition. A change of horizon cannot be demonstrated from a previous horizon. And so the genuineness of transpositions cannot be a simple logical conclusion. What is basic is authenticity.
- 21 The lecture will illustrate the notion of genuine transposition. The first question it raises has to do with the **transition from a Palestinian to a Hellenistic horizon**. And the first question it faces is whether the high Christology of the church emerged under the dominance of a Hellenistic milieu. Martin Hengel argues in the negative. For Hengel a high Christology is expressed in language of Palestinian origin in Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans, and it is almost impossible that this happened under Hellenistic influence. If it did, then 'more happened in the first two decades of Christian history than in the subsequent seven centuries' (411). Moreover, Eric Voegelin has shown that the real meaning of Hellenistic philosophy is quite different from the caricature painted by the History of Religions school, where all such speculation is reduced to ideology. It is personal morality and social order that motivate the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. It is therapeutic in a sense similar to the intellectual therapy of *Insight*. And Lonergan's own intellectual therapy has advanced beyond *Insight*, in terms of the same sort of analysis as that witnessed in 'Natural Right and Historical Mindedness': 'To think of human nature, we distinguish a series of horizontal processes traversed by a vertical process. Each horizontal process has its own principle, yielding moments, first of movement and then of rest, on the successive levels of sensitivity, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility. The vertical process springs from an undifferentiated eros [what earlier was called a tidal movement, or the passionateness of being], commonly referred to as the

unconscious, influences in turn each of the horizontal movements, and finds its proper goal beyond them in a self-transcending being-in-love that begins in the home, reaches out to the tribe, the city-state, the nation, mankind, and finds its anchor and its strength in the agape of the New Testament' (413). It is interesting to see how he here fills out the earlier 'passionateness of being' or 'tidal movement' with his speaking of an 'undifferentiated eros.' Running through all of the successive horizontal processes of discrete principles of movement and of rest is 'the vertical drive from undifferentiated eros to agape. It transmutes our sensitivity from a biological function into the carrier of artistic inspiration, into an instrument of practical and theoretical intelligence, into an embodiment of wisdom's concern for the true and the good' (415).

- 22 What all of this has to do with the question of Christology and the emergence of Christianity is shown in the subsection on Voegelin's paper 'The Gospel and Culture.' Lonergan's own development presents a 'contemporary context for Voegelin's account in 1974 ['Reason: The Classic Experience'] of the classic Platonic and Aristotelian experience of reason. But the earlier and longer paper 'The Gospel and Culture' argues that Christianity could become dominant in the decaying Roman empire and the subsequent history of Europe because it was in tune with a question to which it gave an answer, and that the reason it is not given a hearing today is that the very question has been lost. The question is expressed by Voegelin as 'the search for direction in the movement of life.' There is a direction in existence; and as we follow it or not, life can be death, and death be life eternal. This double meaning of life and death is the symbolism engendered by our experience of being pulled in various directions and our need to choose between them. There is a tension of existence between the human and divine poles, experienced as a seeking from the human side and a drawing from the divine side. This experience is basic, 'original,' prior to the emergence of any philosophy, and it is only from the travail of this movement that the questioner emerges and that God emerges as the mover who attracts or moves us to himself. Voegelin finds these pulls and counterpulls in Greek philosophy, and they also constitute the tension of Christian existence, so that there is need for a discernment of spirits if one is to follow the call of God's grace, and even of different rules to be applied under different circumstances. Thus Justin Martyr saw Christianity as philosophy in its state of perfection, which is true as long as philosophy is the love of wisdom. Still, why does this philosophy have to become metaphysical, and why does Christianity include metaphysics implicitly in its early councils and in the better theologians? The question basically is postponed until the third section of the paper, although Lonergan points to a difference between Voegelin and John A. Wilson in the understanding of the hymn to Amon as the Sole God. What he claims to have done in this first section is to have shown that there is a connection between the gospels and certain aspects of Greek culture, so that transposition of the gospel meaning across horizon shifts is possible.
- 23 A second example is what happened in **the medieval rise and fall of Scholasticism**. The argument is that the medieval rise of Scholasticism was due to the emergence of a theological method and that the medieval fall of Scholasticism in the fourteenth century was due to the decline of method and the dominance of deductive logic. We

have seen this argument before, so we may skip to the final subsection (2.6) on 'Horizon and Wisdom.' The rise and fall of medieval Scholasticism was a succession of horizons. The rise culminated in the wisdom of Aquinas. The fall lost that wisdom through 'an initial contentiousness, followed by an overmastering concern for science strictly so-called, *scientia stricte dicta*, a notion of science set forth in the greater part of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*' (426).

- 24 A third example treats **some elements in a transposition to the post-Vatican II horizon**. Lonergan applauds the pastoral intent of Vatican II as interpreted by Chenu, but also suggests that 'an outstanding characteristic of the post-Vatican II horizon is a certain disregard of doctrinal issues' and that 'the pastoral office will suffer if we simply jettisoned our doctrinal past' (427). What, then, is the post-Vatican II horizon with which we must be concerned?
- 25 A first issue is secularism, whose roots Lonergan traces to Descartes and Kant but which he finds also in ecclesiastical and state politics and even in an initial draft of Vatican I attributing more to the human intellect than it is capable of under the conditions of actuality permitted by the aberrations of human history.
- 26 A second and related issue is, Where does philosophy begin? Classical philosophy, Voegelin says, begins from the pulls and counter-pulls of existential experience. It is from that base that we can develop the love of wisdom that is philosophy. But that base is not explicit but tacit knowledge, becoming explicit only in the practical rules for discernment and in intentionality analysis. 'But, now that it is in the open, it supports the view of (1) beginning from a phenomenology of coming to know as a series of acts and (2) using that as a basis for an epistemology that explains why such acts constitute knowledge and (3) concluding with a metaphysics of proportionate being that is critical in the sense that its terms and relations have their empirical counterpart in the experienced terms and experienced relations of cognitional theory' (429).
- 27 A third issue is the new notion of science. The ideal expounded in the *Posterior Analytics* has broken down. Modern science is concerned with the intelligibility of the possible, not of the necessary; it proceeds through hypotheses to more or less probable theories; it aims at theories that are universally valid, but it still is concerned with the further determinations that bring about an ever closer approximation to the concrete, and it reserves a notable role for statistical laws that speak of concrete events that are likely to occur.
- 28 A fourth issue is critical history, or more broadly hermeneutics and history as *Wissenschaft*, human studies as opposed to human science; and especially the method of critical history, which is not a matter of believing testimonies but of intelligently investigating evidence.
- 29 A fifth issue is method, which is expected to yield a cumulative series of different and better results, and which sets the mold for all modern sciences and academic

disciplines. Empirical method as developed in the natural sciences can be expanded into a generalized empirical method that yields an 'Ongoing Genesis of Methods' to meet the exigences of different fields of inquiry and calls for interdisciplinary studies that move the many fields towards a unified view.