

Lecture, October 3, 2007

Theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion within that matrix. A cultural matrix is the operative set of meanings and values informing a given way of life. The mediation is in the realm of meaning, and for the sake of the human good. We have discussed meaning and value, and now turn to religion.

1 The Question of God

1.1 *The Transcendent Exigence*

Among the exigences promoting us to realms of meaning there is a transcendent exigence. It is discussed in chapter 3 on pp. 83-84: 'There is to human inquiry an unrestricted demand for intelligibility. There is to human judgment a demand for the unconditioned. There is to human deliberation a criterion that criticizes every finite good. So it is ... that [we] can reach basic fulfilment, peace, joy, only by moving beyond the realms of common sense, theory, and interiority into the realm in which God is known and loved.' There we reach what in *Insight* is called the absolute limit in the process of going beyond.

1.2 *Three Forms of the Question of God*

That statement from 83-84 states three ways in which the very unfolding of our conscious intentionality is a question of God, prior to any formulated question. We can make it a formulated question of God by reflecting on our own questioning in the three dimensions mentioned in the quotation. Then there emerge three explicit forms of the question of God: is there a ground of intelligibility, a ground of existence, and a ground of value? These are philosophic forms of the question of God.

1.2.1 The ground of intelligibility

In raising questions for intelligence we are assuming that the universe is intelligible. This assumption is confirmed every time we reach intellectually satisfying answers. But could the universe be ultimately intelligible if it did not have an intelligent ground?

1.2.2 The ground of existence

Our questions for reflection at times give rise to a grasp of the fulfilment of conditions required to pronounce a rational Yes. But is the fulfilment of conditions possible without an unconditioned reality that has no conditions whatever? Can there be mere matters of fact without explanation?

1.2.3 The ground of value

Our questions for moral deliberation ask is X is worth while. But is it worth while to deliberate at all? If so are we the only instance of moral agency in the universe? 102-103: '... is the universe on our side, or are we just gamblers and, if we are gamblers, are

we not perhaps fools, individually struggling for authenticity and collectively endeavoring to snatch progress from the every mounting welter of decline? ... Are cosmogenesis, biological evolution, historical process basically cognate to us as moral beings or are they indifferent and so alien to us?

There is, then, a question of God implicit in all our questioning, and reflecting on our questioning makes it explicit. So the question of God lies within our horizon. 23: '... the objects of theology do not lie outside the transcendental field. For that field is unrestricted, and so outside it there is nothing at all.' 103: 'There lies within [our] horizon a region for the divine, a shrine for ultimate holiness. It cannot be ignored. The atheist may pronounce it empty. The agnostic may urge that he finds his investigation has been inconclusive. The contemporary humanist will refuse to allow the question to arise. But their negations presuppose the spark in our clod, our native orientation to the divine.'

2 Self-transcendence

2.1 At each level

These questions for intelligence, reflection, and deliberation manifest our capacity for self-transcendence. It is in self-transcendence that we achieve authenticity, and each successive 'level' of intentional consciousness represents a greater degree of self-transcendence. See 104.

2.1 Fulfilled in being in love

But that capacity is *fulfilled* to the extent we are in love. 105: 'That capacity becomes an actuality when one falls in love. Then one's being becomes being-in-love. Such being-in-love has its antecedents, its causes, its conditions, its occasions. But once it has blossomed forth and as long as it lasts, it takes over. It is the first principle. From it flow one's desires and fears, one's joys and sorrows, one's discernment of values, one's decisions and deeds.'

2.1.2 God's love flooding our hearts

Lonergan consistently speaks of three kinds of being-in-love: the love of intimacy, usually manifest in the family; love in the community; and 'the love of God with one's whole heart and whole soul, with all one's mind and all one's strength ... It is *God's love* flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us' (Romans 5.5), grounding Paul's conviction that 'there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths – nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8.38-39). And (105) 'as the question of God is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality. [It] brings a deep-set joy that can remain despite humiliation, failure, privation, pain, betrayal, desertion. [It] brings a radical peace, the peace that the world cannot give. [It] bears fruit in a love of one's neighbor that strives mightily to bring