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# Taking A(nother) Look at Lonergan's Method

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I was given my first copy of *Insight*[1], about which I had heard some interesting rumours, in the mid-1960s, by a friend who said that the book was no good. (I swapped for it with him a copy of Max Scheler's *On the Eternal in Man*, which I had been sent for review.) Lonergan, said my friend, was one of those polymaths who you see through when you actually know something about one of the subjects on which he pontificates. The man was a Cambridge wrangler, so he knew something about the mathematical examples often cited by Lonergan in the earlier parts of *Insight.* When I started reading the book, I soon felt what one might describe as the pressure of philosophical genius, such as you get when reading parts of Plato, Descartes, Berkeley, Kant, or Wittgenstein; but I bore my friend's caution in mind, and wondered whether I might be being deceived. When I first met Fr. Eric O'Connor, in 1970, I came to realize that a distinguished mathematician might view Lonergan in a different way than did my friend.

O'Connor was a Jesuit and, as I understand, one-time President of the American Mathematical Association. He told a story of how he was once chatting with a fellow Jesuit about the philosophy of history. He suddenly felt as though he were the young Plato listening to Socrates; if only, he added, Plato had been in his shoes. Some years later, I met a man called Luke, who described how O'Connor had asked him whether he were coming to the Thomas More lectures some time (I think) in the late nineteen-forties. When Luke said he thought he wouldn't, O'Connor said that in that case he would be missing the greatest theologian since Thomas Aquinas. The joker in both packs was, of course, Lonergan; and the lectures to be delivered in the latter case were a preliminary draft of *Insight.* One might of course charge O'Connor with lack of proper academic caution; when fashion changes, may you not get egg all over your face if you express so unqualified an enthusiasm? But I must say that, for my part, I have some admiration for someone who will put himself on the line in that sort of way. Indeed, I have sometimes thought that

[1] *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*. Reference will be made here to the latest edition: Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992.

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a main function of university teaching is to communicate the right enthusiasms. 'Hats off, gentlemen; a genius'. In saying this, after a piece composed by a rather a solemn and awkward young man who was present had just been played, Robert Schumann was taking a risk, which it seems to me that a lesser man would not have taken. The young man's name was Johannes Brahms.

There is a danger, with any thinker supposed by anyone to be of importance, that those who take some account of her thought will polarize into one group that simply repeats her ideas in her own terminology, and another which rejects them without sufficiently careful consideration. Each extreme, of course, encourages the opposite, and plays into its hands. Nicholas Lash's article, 'In Defence of Lonergan's Critics''[2] takes an intermediate stance, of which I strongly approve. Those, including Dr. Lash himself, who mounted the symposium on *Method in Theology* at Maynooth in the mid-1970s, considered that the book was far too important to be ignored. On the other hand, they knew that it would receive a great deal of adulatory attention from those disciples of the master who appeared incapable of doing more than uncritically re-stating Lonergan's position in Lonergan's categories. 'One shows respect neither for the issues, nor for Lonergan's contribution to their clarification, if one simply leaps to his defence,' as some appear to do, 'without — apparently — attempting first to understand the standpoints from which other scholars offer a critical response to his achievement'[3]. It was felt that there was room for a collection of essays which did Lonergan the honour of attempting critically to come to grips with some of the issues he had raised in *Method*. It was a measure, thought Dr. Lash, of the importance of these issues, that such a stellar group of scholars, from such a variety of backgrounds and confessions, should have agreed to take part in the enterprise.

I prescind from the question of whether Dr. Lash is quite fair on the Lonergan disciples whom he takes to task, especially William Matthews[4]. I would regard the latter's exasperation as understandable in the light of at least two passages in the (revised) proceedings of the Maynooth symposium[5] — no names, no pack-drill. These, frankly, treated Lonergan as though he were a fool; and triumphantly and contemptuously refuted some flagrant misinterpretations of his thought. To act in such a way is not to treat either Lonergan or his followers with respect. I have dealt with this matter before, and don't intend to repeat myself at length here. But to say something seems unavoidably relevant. In writing of Lonergan's conception of the role

[2] 'In Defence of Lonergan's Critics', *New Blackfriars,* March 1976.
[3] Lash, 'Defence', 124–5.
[4] 'Lonergan's Awake. A Reply to Fergus Kerr,' *New Blackfriars*, January 1976.
[5] *Looking at Lonergan's Method*, ed. P. Corcoran. Dublin, Talbot Press, 1975.

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of experience, understanding, and judgment in knowledge, one symposiast represents him as saying that experience applies to matters of common sense, understanding to science, and judgment to history; such a distinction, as they remark, is too 'blurred' to be useful[6]. But Lonergan states and implies, as clearly as could well be, that *all* these alleged components of coming to know are employed in *all* these areas of actual and possible knowledge.

Lonergan is accused by another symposiast of 'staggering circularity' in inferring his doctrinal conclusions from his method, and his method from his conclusions[7]. But Lonergan does no such thing. He derives his method from what he presents, explains and justifies as first principles; it is not his business in this book to derive doctrines from the method — there is plenty of that in his other writings. He does not argue here for or from any (first-order as opposed to methodological) doctrine at all — for example, that of the existence of God or the special authority of the Catholic Church[8]. To have done so would have violated the distinction which he is at pains to draw between theology as such, and method in theology. The Christian and Catholic doctrines mentioned in *Method* are used as examples of the sort of thing that Christian and Catholic believers would want to affirm, and Christian and Catholic theologians to justify. This was sensible, given that Lonergan's primary audience was Christian and Catholic; in principle, he might as well have used Buddhist or Marxist ones. His basic strategy in justifying the method (to put the matter in my own jargon rather than his) is to display the self-destructiveness of the contradictories of its constituent injunctions. Few people are going to say that they have no awareness of what it is to exercise attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness or responsibility; and if they do, they thereby disqualify themselves from all discussion of theology or any other subject.

The two symposiasts whom I have just taken to task for their treatment of Lonergan are both writers whom I have admired in other contexts. But I must insist that, in their contributions to *Looking at Lonergan's Method*, they were not taking Lonergan's measure, and ought to have known that they were not. I admit that the views and procedures attributed by these two symposiasts to Lonergan were egregious blunders; but the blunders were not Lonergan's, rather those of his interpreters. Such criticism puts one in mind of that entry in Kierkegaard's journals, about the long agony which consists of being trampled to death by geese The article Dr. Lash published

[6] Corcoran, *Looking*, 67.
[7] Corcoran, *Looking*, 80.
[8] Cf. Lonergan, *Insight*, chapters XIX and XX.

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later in *New Blackfriars*, which is respectful though critical, is quite another matter[9].

Of course, to repudiate, even to resent these aspersions, is not to imply that Lonergan is beyond criticism. I think one symposiast was right that, in distancing himself from the older Scholastic 'faculty psychology', Lonergan may rather have misrepresented it[10]. I certainly have my own reservations about his method, though I believe them to be rather terminological than substantial. For example, I find Lonergan's talk of 'conversion' all very well for in-house talk among Catholics or Christians, but very misleading in a fully ecumenical context. It has led so intelligent and well-disposed a critic as Wolfhart Pannenberg to infer that, so far as Lonergan is concerned, since 'religious conversion' is a requisite for engagement in theology, only Christians or Catholics can profitably engage in Christian or Catholic theology. But it is obvious enough that, when it comes to a doctrine like that of the existence of God, some atheists have a great deal of importance to say, and they ought to be invited to discussion and listened to. Lonergan's philosophy, of course, by no means implies the contradictory of this; but his terminology may easily mislead people into thinking that it does. And, as one symposiast reasonably remarks, it seems a bit steep at first sight, at least without justification at length, to fault such theological giants as Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann for not being 'intellectually converted'[11]. Again, I think that Lonergan's very technical talk about 'positions' can be a trap to the unwary, who may understand the term in its more usual sense[12]; and that his writing about the human person of Christ is (to put it in his own terms) excellent 'systematics' but poor 'communications.' (I will expand this point further below.)

There is no question that consciousness stands out like a sore thumb in the worlds of science and of ordinary observation; in fact, the place of consciousness in the world has been called 'the last mystery.' Lonergan would solve the problem by making the world nothing other than what we can in principle become conscious of, in true judgments, which we tend to make so far as our judgments are well-founded in attentiveness to experience, intelligence in hypothesizing, and reasonableness in accepting in each case the judgment best supported by experience and intelligence. In dealing with consciousness in this way, some of us think that Lonergan has solved

[9] See note 2 above.

[10] Corcoran, *Looking*, 15.

[11] Corcoran, *Looking*, 72.

[12] As one might say that one's friend's political 'position' was somewhat to the right of Genghis Khan's; or that a pupil's 'position' on abortion changed while she was writing her thesis on that subject. In referring to a 'position' in Lonergan's special sense, as contrasted with a 'counter-position', I suggest one might coin the term 'L-position.'

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those twin problems, of the foundations of knowledge and of objectivity, which are such headaches in contemporary philosophy. If he has done so, this is surely a central element in such claim as he has to philosophical greatness.[13]

One could present the relevant developments as a kind of Hegelian triad — the wrong foundations (thesis), no foundations (antithesis), and the right foundations (synthesis). The foundations proposed by the logical positivists were, as is now notorious, demonstrably wrong; in fact, they self-destructed. Their Verification Principle states roughly that all meaningful statements which are not true by definition are such that they tend be verified or falsified by observation. But, unfortunately, the Verification Principle itself is neither true by definition, nor such that it can even in principle be verified or falsified by observation. Later philosophers have been inclined to infer, from the failure of the logical positivist or radical empiricist account of the foundations of knowledge, that we have to content ourselves with the conclusion that there are no such foundations. This seems distinctly awkward, as it appears to follow, if you take it literally, that there are no foundations for the opinion that the moon consists largely of silicon rather than entirely of green cheese, or that it is bad and wrong to torture children for fun, or that democracy is by and large a better form of government than non-constitutional monarchy. It is as though such philosophers were saying, 'Since we cannot solve the problem, let's say that it doesn't matter.'

So far as I am concerned, if the problem really cannot be solved, it matters very much indeed. There are serious disagreements between human beings about the fundamental nature of the world, and about how we are to run our lives and shape our institutions, and why. Short of some foundations upon which the resolution of such disagreements may, at least in principle, be found, we can have no other resort but to the guns and the thumbscrews.

The 'wide reflective equilibrium', which some have proposed as a viable alternative to foundations, is a wax nose that can be turned in any desired direction, yielding the existence of God if you are Alvin Plantinga or Nicholas Wolterstorff, the non-existence of God if you are Kai Nielsen or one of the majority of contemporary analytical philosophers. It seems to me a considerable part of Lonergan's claim to be a great philosopher, that he may have solved the problem of foundations. According to him, these foundations are (to express the matter again in my own terminology rather than his) the contradictories of self-destructive statements about basic mental capacities of which we are aware, can make ourselves more aware, and thus can gain knowledge through the 'differentiation of consciousness'

[13] Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd,).

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of 'interiority'. It is self-destructive to deny that we can make true judgments (what price the judgment that we can make no true judgments?), or that we can make rational judgments — that is, judgments for good reason (what would it be, to judge for good reason, that one could make no judgment for good reason?).

The real world is nothing but what true judgments are about, and rational judgments tend to be about. Rationality is a matter of attentiveness to experience, intelligence in envisaging ranges of possibilities, and reasonableness in determining as probably or certainly true, in each case, the possibility best supported by one's experience — as opposed to what suits one's prejudices or one's paymasters. The same basic principles apply to judgments of value as to judgments of fact; we tend to know what is good to the extent that we are rational about the needs, feelings, desires, delights and sufferings of sensitive and rational creatures including ourselves[14]. A world to be known by intelligent and reasonable inquiry on the basis of experience is an intelligible world; this is ultimately to be accounted for best as due to an intelligent will such as is generally referred to as God[15]. There may be good reason to suppose that God has revealed more of the divine nature and purposes than may be known just by reasoning from first principles (it is in these terms that Aquinas distinguishes between the realms of philosophy and theology). It is the business of theology to determine the content and implications of this revelation, given that there is one[16].

In his article in *New Blackfriars*, Dr. Lash puts three very useful questions about Lonergan's method, which I shall attempt to answer. 'Firstly, if one takes the facts of cultural and philosophical pluralism as seriously as Lonergan undoubtedly intends to do, in what sense is it possible' for any one person 'to grasp the nature of the total theological enterprise? Secondly, is the Christian response to truth such that so sharp a distinction between method and content in Christian theology is legitimate? Thirdly, does Lonergan himself, in *Method*, in fact succeed in keeping issues of method and issues of theological substance as sharply distinct as he would intend and claim to do?' Such questions not only seem sensible in themselves, but were asked by the Maynooth symposiasts. It will not do for Lonergan's defenders to write, as they sometimes may seem to do, 'as if such questions had not been, and should not be asked'[17]. Once again, I completely agree with Dr. Lash on the unsuitability of this kind of attitude to Lonergan's work, or indeed to anyone else's; but suspend judgment on who, if anyone, may properly be accused of such an

[14] Lonergan, *Insight*, chapter XVIII; *Method*, chapter 2.
[15] Lonergan, *Insight*, chapter XIX.
[16] Lonergan, *Insight*, chapter XX.
[17] Lash, 'Defence,' 125.

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attitude in this case. Lonergan points out that there is a significant difference between the conscientious interpreter on the one hand, and the mere controversialist on the other. In interpreting a document (a matter of functional specialty [f.s.] 2) by someone to whom she or he is opposed, the controversialist will be only too glad to attribute a meaning to a writer which casts a bad light on her intelligence or her motives — in plain words, which make her look a fool or a knave. If the document stems from a person of the controversialist's party, he will of course act in just the opposite way, exaggerating merits and overlooking or minimizing defects. The conscientious interpreter will be open to the possibility that her opponent might have meant something else which does her more credit[18]. Yes, Luther did admit to eating like a pig and drinking like a German, that is to say, excessively. But it surely makes a world of difference when you take the context into account — Luther is writing to his wife to reassure her, as she has been worrying whether he has been looking after himself on a busy tour of preaching and teaching.

When medieval Christians wondered about Muslim abstention from alcohol and pork, it was very satisfying for them to say that it was because their Prophet had met his death being trampled to death by pigs during a drunken stupor; but there is some question whether such an account of his death will bear very careful historical scrutiny. (Gregory of Tours, if I remember, was of the opinion that the heretic Arius had died voiding his entrails; while such may constitute a fitting end for a great heresiarch, its historical provenance is dubious.) So work in f.s. 3 ('history') may exercise a healthy control on work in f.s.6 ('doctrines', judgments of fact and value to be asserted here and now).

When I first read *Method*, I was disappointed that I didn't get more along the lines of chapters XIX and XX of *Insight*, where the reader is presented with arguments for theism and for Christianity; but rather a few laconic comments about the connection of the question of God with the second, third and fourth of the transcendental precepts (God may be worth invoking in explanation of the intelligibility of the world, and of its nature as a collection of facts; and as an appropriate cosmic background to momentous moral and practical decisions[19]). This was bone-headed of me; I had not fully grasped the radical distinction between arguing for doctrines on the one hand, and setting out the method by which one ought to argue for or against doctrines on the other.

One of the Maynooth symposiasts actually claimed that he had never been aware of performing an act of understanding[20]. If one is

[18] Lonergan, 'System, Common Sense, Scholarship' (*Cultural Hermeneutics I* (1973).
[19] Lonergan, *Method*, 101–3.
[20] Corcoran, *Looking*, 34.

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to take this literally, it was a pretty serious admission; that the author had never been aware of puzzling about a set of data, whether in a matter of common sense, of physical science, or of interpretation; and of suddenly arriving at a possible solution to the problem. (So far as Lonergan's 'insight' or 'act of understanding' is concerned, of course, the solution may not even be the correct one; whether it is so or not can only be determined by another kind of mental act, that of judgment.) But if he has never been aware of performing an act of this kind, how can he be taken seriously on theology, or indeed on any subject whatever? Consciousness, as is by now notorious, sticks out in the scientific world-view like a sore thumb; which so affects Anne and Paul Churchland, bless them, that they go so far as to deny that consciousness exists at all. Yet surely you have to be conscious to be a scientist, philosopher, or theologian, or even a philatelist or greengrocer.

The symposiast who accused Lonergan of confusing philosophy with psychology was onto something — and something which Lonergan shares with Descartes, Locke and Husserl, though certainly not with Ryle or the later Wittgenstein; and there is no question that Wittgensteinians by and large look askance at it. According to Lonergan the right basic method, for philosophy or theology, is to attend to one's own performance of certain basic mental operations; most importantly, of having experiences, grasping possibilities, making reasonable judgments in terms of those possibilities, and deciding accordingly. 'But the whole enterprise is mistaken, if one is a behaviourist or a Wittgensteinian.' Yet couldn't the unregenerate conclude, that that itself be taken as a rather compelling reason for not being a behaviourist or a Wittgensteinian in the first place?

I myself must admit to being a Lonergan enthusiast (still). That is, I am, and have been for several decades, not so much quite impressed and moderately enthused, as astounded and overwhelmed, by what I take to be the man's genius as philosopher and theologian. I may well be wrong about this; I hope I am open to rational conviction on the subject. A very good philosopher, and a dear friend of mine, told me that I was the only person she knew who took Lonergan seriously. But to be a Lonergan zealot is not necessarily to be a Lonergan fundamentalist. I believe *Method in Theology* to be better in overall conception than detailed execution (a view pertinently suggested by William Mathews in the article already cited). I should say, moreover, that some of Lonergan's terminology, particularly with regard to 'conversion', rather hinders than furthers the ecumenical potentialities of his thought. In connection with what one might call the human person in Christ (I choose my words carefully), his language may well give rise to misunderstanding and even offence — so far as it may seem to derogate from Our Lord's full humanity.

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Furthermore, to say that those who have not undergone 'religious conversion' cannot usefully contribute to the last four or five functional specialties, as Lonergan appears to do, is at least very misleading. It has misled so fine and unprejudiced a thinker as Wolfhart Pannenberg into thinking that, so far as Lonergan is concerned, one can have no useful contribution to make to the last five f. s.s if one is not a Christian, or even a Catholic. Yet it is obvious that, for example, first-rate atheist philosophers have a great deal to contribute to that aspect of f. s. 6 which has to do with the question of whether God exists; and first-rate non-Christian New Testament historians on whether the historical Jesus was the kind of person who is compatible with Christian doctrine. (Evidently Morton Smith's conjuror and practising homosexual will not do; nor will the entirely fictional personage presented by Earl Doherty in *The Jesus Puzzle*.)

And to say that atheists are 'religiously converted' so far a they are passionately engaged in finding out the truth, as I think Lonergan would (he seems to admit as much at one place in *Method*), is very misleading at first sight. I think they are in love with God without knowing it, just as an uneducated person who has fallen into a pond is floundering in H2O without knowing it; but this is a different matter. As I have suggested elsewhere, the relationship of the intensely virtuous atheist to God is surely rather like that of Emma to Mr. Knightley through most of Jane Austen's novel; she is in love with him without knowing it.

Some have attributed to Lonergan a confusion of philosophy and psychology, and the attribution, it seems to me, is not without insight. The matter is somewhat difficult, and very controversial; but it goes to the heart of the Lonergan enterprise, so here goes. As Lonergan saw the matter, some of the results of what one might call introspective psychology, if properly engaged in, have a transcendental and so philosophical bearing. The essence of such introspection is to become more aware of our mental operations and activities. Some 'introspective psychology', where what is at issue is a matter of taking a kind of inner look at the contents of one's mind, is bogus; such 'introspection' is impugned by Lonergan as vigorously as any Wittgensteinian could wish. But the former kind of 'introspective psychology', according to Lonergan, is by no means bogus; it is that which, if Descartes, Husserl and Lonergan are right, is supremely relevant to philosophy. This is because, as Lonergan at least sees the matter, the real world is nothing other than what we come to make judgments about by envisaging a range of explanations for our experience; and to experience, hypothesize, and judge are all mental activities. By applying such introspection, and consequently by becoming more aware of the contents of our minds and our mental activities, we can get to know the nature of our inquiring, coming to understand, forming concepts, making judgments and so on.

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The judgments which we make on the basis of our experience and conception are primarily of a public and interpersonal world (here Wittgenstein and the philosophers of ordinary language are right); by means of our judgments on the basis of our understanding and experience, in other words, we come to know about a world of things which largely exists, and is as it is, prior to and independently of ourselves. (Oxygen and quasars existed, and were as they are, before any creature came to know about them.) But, by a secondary and derivative use, we can go on to make true judgments about our experience, and the mental acts which we apply to our experience, as well.

It has been claimed that Lonergan would have been better employed in examining the concepts of knowing and understanding, than making the kind of inner investigation of what it is to understand and to come to know which one finds in *Insight*. I think that Lonergan might have replied, that examination of the 'concept' of a quasar, a positron, or an Ashy-Headed Wagtail, is useful, if it is useful at all, mainly as a preliminary to investigating quasars, positrons and Ashy-Headed Wagtails themselves. In the case of understanding and coming to know, he would add, the relevant investigation is of our own mental processes and performances.

Pace Berkeley, the blue-and-white patterned wallpaper is on the wall of the room whether anyone is looking at it or not; it is only, however, by means of sensations as though of blue-and-white patterned wallpaper that we come to know this. The divine, so far as we have any conception of it, is analogous to human consciousness. By attending to our own experience of conceiving possibilities, and willing to bring some of them into effect, we can gain some conception of a Being who conceives all possibilities, and wills those which are instantiated — God as creator. Furthermore, by attending to the ability of our intelligence to produce a conception of itself and other beings, and of our love or failure to love as arising from this, we may gain, if Aquinas and Lonergan are right, a remote but very useful notion of the divine 'processions', of Father 'begetting' Son, and of Father and Son together 'spirating' the Holy Spirit, which underlie the divine Trinity. Again, as human individuals, we are conscious both of features of our mental life which we have in common with other animals, and of those which are more or less peculiar to us as human beings; so we may acquire some remote conception of what it would be to be a Person aware of self as both human and divine.

'But such talk as this, about "features of our inner mental life" and so forth, violates Wittgenstein's aspersions on private language.' If it did, I would be quite inclined to say 'So what?' But in fact it doesn't. A Lonerganian has no need to deny that language primarily arises and is used, as the *Philosophical Investigations* illustrates over

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and over again, in relation to public and practical dealings with the world, and can be used only secondarily and derivatively for describing, identifying and explaining mental acts and events. Wittgenstein's amusing polemical phrase, 'Language gone on holiday', trips easily from the tongues of contemporary philosophers. But those most inclined to resort to it should remember, that you often need a new development of language to do new things, like making or expressing a theoretical discovery in science, or, in the manner of Lonergan, producing an original philosophy, or method for theology.

Fr. Fergus Kerr argues that there is some absurdity in supposing that 'understanding' is the same thing when it comes to cooking spinach, as it is when applied to scientific discovery[21]. I would like to subject this example to detailed investigation. (Alas, I am by no means an accomplished cook; but I have run my treatment of this example by those who are.) Let us suppose that the prima facie good of palatable cooked spinach may be achieved by steaming for 2 minutes, while the prima facie evil of the gangrenous mass produced by Granny is to be caused by boiling for 222 minutes. (I say prima facie evil; Granny's recipe might be just the thing, if one were giving a hint to visitors who had outstayed their welcome.) It may be as well to add that according to Lonergan, as opposed to many contemporary philosophers, one comes to know what is good in much the same way as one comes to know what is otherwise the case, by attending to evidence in experience; by envisaging possibilities or excogitating hypotheses; and by judging to be so the possibility best supported by the evidence — rather than the one that suits the biases of one's group or class, or the interests of one's paymasters (think of working for a tobacco company, and investigating the effects of second-hand smoke). To put it succinctly in Lonergan's terms, if I wish to determine what is true or good in any matter, I have to be attentive, intelligent and reasonable.

In the instance before us, I am trying to find the solution of a problem which I have encountered in my experience. I have often sampled the dire results of Granny's method of cooking spinach, which are by no means examples of the good; I want something more palatable, which would be such an example. I am in the state

[21] See Fergus Kerr, 'Objections to Lonergan's Method' (*New Blackfriars*, July 1975); and 'Beyond Lonergan's Method: A Response to William Mathews' (*New Blackfriars*, February 1976). Rather as Anselm once undertook to give Gaunilo his perfect island, so I undertake to give Fr. Kerr his properly-cooked spinach. Fr Kerr writes slightingly of 'the Platonic metaphysical tradition' and of 'the varieties of idealism that continue to dominate' ('Objections,' 318). Certainly Lonergan, who stresses intelligible reality as opposed to sensible appearance quite in the Platonic matter, is guilty on this count. But metaphysics is not now so unfashionable for analytical philosophers as it once was; cf. A. Beards, *Method in Metaphysics. Lonergan and the Future of Analytical Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

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of puzzlement or questioning so often described by Lonergan; how might a better end be achieved than that to which I am accustomed (viz., the results of Granny's no-doubt well-intentioned hospitality)? My state of puzzlement may end, at least temporarily, with what Lonergan would call a direct insight, or with the performance of what he would regard as an 'act of understanding'; perhaps I may achieve my end by steaming the spinach for two minutes, rather than boiling it for 222 as I was brought up to do; and observing the results.

As Lonergan remarks, such direct insights are a dime a dozen, and grasp only a possibility; now I have to be 'reasonable' as well as 'intelligent,' and ask another sort of question — is the possibility a reality, does my hypothesis represent what is so? In the particular instance in question, will steaming for two minutes produce palatable cooked spinach? Sometimes, the question for reasonableness may amount only to, does my hypothesis come closer to grasping the truth than others in the field? (This is often an issue in science; Newtonian physics is closer to the truth than Aristotelian, but farther from it than Einsteinian. And as Sir Karl Popper remarked, from a post-Einsteinian point of view, Newton's theories are an excellent approximation to the truth.) How do I determine whether my direct insight into the cooking of the spinach is probably or certainly true? In this common-sense case, as in the sciences, I perform an experiment and make an observation; I steam the spinach for two minutes, and then try whether the result is indeed palatable.

Such considerations, I submit, suggest that Lonergan is right against Fr. Kerr; that there is more than a mere 'family resemblance' between instances of coming to understand in matters of common sense and of science. As to the 'reflective insight' which is the goal of reasonableness, the following example may prove helpful. When Einstein first propounded his general theory of relativity, it was not at first clear how it was testable by observation or experiment. Then it occurred to someone that advantage might be taken of the fact that, if the theory of general relativity were true, rays of light would bend in the neighbourhood of large heavenly bodies. An eclipse of the sun was soon to take place in the southern hemisphere; if general relativity were true, or truer than its Newtonian rival, the stars in the general direction of the sun would appear in a slightly different position than what was otherwise to be expected. And indeed, when the relevant observations were made, this turned out to be the case. Furthermore, there were apparent anomalies in the motion of the planet Mercury, which had even led some to postulate the existence of another planet, Vulcan, between Mercury and the sun. But, as a consequence of general relativity, these motions of Mercury were no longer anomalous.

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The general theory of relativity is quite hard to understand — or at least I find it so. But any fool can grasp in practice, even if she or he cannot spell out in theory, that if there are two conflicting possibilities or hypotheses p and q, and observations are made and experimental results obtained, which are to be expected if p is the case, but not if q is the case, this is quite good reason for accepting p and rejecting q; or at least for holding p more likely than one did before, q less likely. If you are indoors, and don't know whether it is raining or not raining, and someone enters the room in a dripping raincoat, then this gives you some reason to believe that it is raining. Of course, such reasoning is often cumulative, and very seldom if ever infallible; someone may deliberately be out to deceive you to the effect that it is raining, when in fact it is not, by setting up the scene with the raincoat, which he has, say, drenched under the village pump. If the mental operations of the scientist or historian were quite discontinuous with those of the person of common sense, we would never be able to get the hang of them. But, clearly, we can. I have just illustrated the continuity of the processes of scientific investigation with those of common sense; and a little reflection on the reader's part will show that just the same applies to investigations in history or interpretation.

I am not good at crosswords, and am very slow at guessing the murderer when I read a detective story; but I can get some pleasure from following, and so in a manner repeating, the insights, or acts of understanding, which are elicited by the authors of such things in persons more ingenious in the relevant respects than myself. Many years ago, in some British paper, there was published a crossword clue, 'Back shows result of strokes of the cat in profusion.' The answer was 'larruped', which, if you spell it backwards, gives you 'purr' in 'de . . . . al'; 'purr' being a result of stroking the back of a cat, and 'deal' being interpretable as 'profusion.' To infer the solution from the clue would be a feat of 'abduction' or 'retroduction' — to use C. S. Peirce's terms — far beyond my capacity; but I can express my 'intelligence' and 'reasonableness', to return to Lonergan's, in appreciating the result. Intelligence is to be employed, as the reader will gather from the examples already discussed, in envisaging possible solutions, 'reasonableness' in determining which of these, if any, is probably or certainly right. (The late Vincent Potter S.J. suggested that the work of Peirce, who has the reputation of being America's greatest philosopher, provides a good point of entry into that of Lonergan.)

To each of these steps, that due to intelligence, and that due to reasonableness, there corresponds a kind of question addressed to the data of experience. The former asks '*What* may this be?', or '*Why* may that have come about?'; the latter 'Is this probably or certainly so?' A serious answer to the latter kind of question

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presupposes an answer to the former; only the latter can be answered 'yes', 'no', 'probably', or 'perhaps.' In P. G. Wodehouse's story 'A Slice of Life'[22], Sir Jasper ffinch-ffarrowmere, Bart., is understandably peeved when this principle is absent-mindedly violated by his valet, the disguised Wilfred Mulliner. Sir Jasper has asked Wilfred for some explanation of the fact that he himself, though extremely abstemious, finds it almost impossible to lose weight; whereas Wilfred, though eating three large meals a day and perpetually snacking in between, remains very thin. (Actually the explanation of Wilfred's thinness is that he is pining for love of the baronet's daughter.) Wilfred inappropriately and absent-mindedly answers, 'Yes, Sir Jasper'; and when this irritates the baronet, emends his reply to 'No, Sir Jasper', thereby violating the principle yet again.

Exercise of these basic mental capacities is illustrated, once more, by the reader of a typical detective story. The evidence available to her at the beginning of the story seems clearly to show that the murderer was the butler; but the sleuth Desmond Stench, hero of many such fictions, has a hunch that things are not quite right, due to a clue to which the other characters and the police have failed so far to attend. Perhaps the second footman, or the third housemaid, is the culprit? At the end of the narrative, the initial appearances, the inconspicuous clue, and any number of other phenomena, are all accounted for due to the intellectual labour of the indefatigable Stench. He has obeyed to a notable degree the first three of the 'transcendental precepts' distinguished by Lonergan, 'be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable.' That is, he has carefully attended to the relevant evidence; he has envisaged a range of possibilities, probably not considered by the other characters; and he has affirmed as true the judgment which best fits the evidence. The reader in her turn in entertained by exercising the same capacities. We get pleasure in the exercise of such basic capacities of our minds, souls and hearts, rather as we may get it from exercise of our bodies. Something should briefly be said about Lonergan's fourth 'transcendental precept', 'be responsible'. To be responsible is to act according to the value-judgment at which one has reasonably arrived. Thus a prospective whistle-blower may come to judge that to complain publicly of the unjust practices of her employer is the right thing to do, even though she thinks it likely that reprisals may be taken against her. She may then responsibly decide to act accordingly; or fail to do so owing to fear or sloth. It may be remarked, that it is itself a responsible decision, to follow the first three transcendental precepts in a thoroughgoing manner.

[22] P. G. Wodehouse, *The World of Mr. Mulliner* (New York: Taplinger, 1974), 29. Oxford: Blackwell, 1978, Part I, section 66.

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Lonergan distinguishes a number of 'differentiations of consciousness' (let us say 'd. c.s' for short, as the phrase is cumbersome, especially if one has to use it a lot); that of 'interiority', which we have just been exercizing, is in his view crucial both for philosophy and systematic theology. The common-sense d. c. is shared by all normal human beings everywhere. The Biblical authors also enjoyed the transcendent and aesthetic d. c.s; the author of Isaiah 40–55 both had experiences of God, and could express them in great poetry. The theoretical d. c. was the special achievement of the Greeks, particularly Socrates, Plato and Aristotle with their search for definition and penchant for theory; it is exemplified in medieval thought as applied to theology, and modern science as applied generally to the natural world. Certain states of affairs are admitted by common sense as being so; the business of theory, in theology as in natural science, is to explain *why* they are so. The historical d. c., in which we can come to know the common sense of other places and times than our own, is the special achievement of the German nineteenth-century historical school. This last has to be integrated into Catholic theology, which has already applied theory to the data of revelation, outstandingly in the work of Thomas Aquinas, much as Dmitri Mendeleev and others have applied theory to the data of chemistry. We have to enter the d.c. of interiority, as explored in *Insight,* to see how all the other differentiations of consciousness originate and are related to one another.

I agree that what Lonergan calls 'insights' or 'acts of understanding' *needn't* have anything in common, just by virtue of all being thus appropriately labelled; this is what is to be learned from the famous discussion of 'games' in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. But according to Lonergan one finds, in attending to what it is to come to 'insights' or 'acts of understanding', that in fact they do have something in common; and the same applies to the operations of reason, whereby one grasps that one's hypothesis is or is not the correct one. An ornithologist might be puzzled by anomalies in the plumage of what she had assumed was a sedge-warbler, and the thought suddenly occur to her, 'it could be an aquatic warbler.' A Lonerganian would urge that there is more in common between this example and similar instances in astronomy or physics, or in respect to fluctuations in my bank account or my friend's unusual behaviour ('Perhaps some family member has been abusing my bank card'; 'Maybe she is upset that I forgot her birthday'), than is to be adequately accounted for by mere Wittgensteinian family resemblance. And the same would apply to coming to a reasonable judgment on any matter. (I wonder, by the way, whether Aristotle's analysis of the concept 'healthy' does not in some ways have the edge on Wittgenstein's discussion of 'games'. Aristotle remarks that instances of healthiness in food, urine and complexions do not exactly have anything in common; but

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if you press the question of why they are all after all examples of healthiness, I may give the positive reply that they are related to the healthy person or animal, as what she tends to consume and excrete, and how her face tends to look. Wittgenstein might have done something similar with his 'games', I think. One might say that a paradigm case of a game is a rule-governed activity indulged in for itself, or for pleasure, rather than as a means to some other end. Perhaps bridge played for money, and tennis played to reduce one's weight, do not have anything in common; but they are both games, at least in a sense, by virtue of the fact that bridge and tennis are characteristically played for fun. (I might say, 'She's making such heavy weather of this set (or this rubber) that I'd hardly say she's playing a game.')

If what Lonergan calls 'dialectic' is to be done properly, as between these two putatively great thinkers Lonergan and Wittgenstein, both '*Locutus Ludwig; cadit quaestio*', and the same attitude applied to Lonergan, must be sedulously avoided; and the mediating position, so admirably set out by Dr. Lash in his article 'In Defence of Lonergan's Critics', strictly adhered to. It will not do, to quote Lonergan himself, to show a 'starry-eyed' devotion to one's own champion, along with an 'insecure resentment' of his rival. It is of the greatest importance, here as elsewhere, that the discussion should not be polarized, and that things should be managed so that opposed parties may learn as much as possible from one another. Though I want in this article to avoid polemics except when strictly necessary, I cannot say, for reasons which I have already given, that I am quite satisfied that these principles were always followed to the letter by the Maynooth symposiasts.

In a way, as I have maintained elsewhere and will try briefly to illustrate here, Lonergan might have made his point more clearly by taking as examples Theravada Buddhist, or Marxist, or secular humanist doctrines. The method for dealing with all of them, by application of the functional specialties (f. s.s) would be just the same. The *Questions of King Milinda* is usually agreed to be one of the best introductions, as it is certainly one of the most lucid and charming, to the doctrines of Theravada Buddhism. In dealing with this document, it is as well to start by obtaining the most accurate available version (the first f. s., research); then determining what the original author or interlocutors probably meant (the second f.s., interpretation); setting book, author and meaning within their original milieu of events and ideas (the third, history); and assessing how far the author was enlightened and in good faith in what he was writing (rather than, say, trying to flatter those who were paying him, or deceive his enemies or get them into trouble — the fourth, dialectic). Moving from the 'mediating' to the 'mediated' phase, one has to articulate the nature of the more or less authentic or inauthentic

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individual who is to receive the Theravada Buddhist message (number five, foundations); to assert and justify (six) the *doctrines* constitutive of Theravada Buddhism — the *anatta* or no-soul doctrine, that of *dukkha* or suffering and of the *tanha* or craving that inevitably causes it, along with that of *nibbana* (bliss or annihilation — 'blown-out-ness'), and of the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to that. These are to be recovered by the authentic human being who is the subject of foundations, from what is offered to him in the material presented in the first three functional specialties, and evaluated for him through dialectic (the fourth). Then work has to be done in ironing out *prima facie* inconsistencies between the doctrines — there is a well-known crux in Buddhism about how the no-soul doctrine is to be reconciled with that of reincarnation, which seems to imply a that there is a soul to be reincarnated; and showing how the doctrines are to be fitted in with the rest of what we know — for example, how the doctrines and value-judgments which define the Theravada relate to modern science (f. s. seven, systematics). Finally, the doctrines thus proclaimed and understood have to be re-expressed (f.s. eight, communications) in terms intelligible to each ordinary Buddhist layperson in the street, the bank, or the paddy field, who has problems about how to cope with his alcohol addiction, his melancholic wife, and the escapades of his mildly-disturbed adolescent son.

All parties seem to agree, that a new basis for Catholic theology is urgently needed, now that neo-Scholasticism has collapsed. The question is, whether Lonergan has found such a basis, or at least has pointed out a promising way towards finding one. Several people of intelligence and good faith, who have as good claims as any to be at the cutting edge of contemporary Christian thought, have been convinced that he has not; that while he may have helped many to clear away the rubble of the older way of thinking, his attempts to erect a structure for the new have not in general been effective. In spite of listening to these criticisms, and trying to attend to them carefully (how successful I have been in doing so is for the reader to judge), I continue to be a card-carrying Lonerganian. I dare say that no great thinker has ever given his disciples less of a pretext for not thinking for themselves. It is an essential part of his method, after all, that he invites his readers to attend to the mental operations which they are in the habit of practising. One of the Maynooth symposiasts claims he has never been aware of performing an act of understanding — that is, after being puzzled by a range of experiences, of coming to understand, or even to misunderstand them. Is not such an admission somewhat peculiar, not to say damaging? One is reminded of Thomas Aquinas' argument against the Averroists. This philosophical school maintained that the actively thinking aspect of us was a single transcendent being, the *intellectus agens*, which was distinct from any human individual.

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Thomas inferred that the individual Averroist did not think; and was consequently not to be argued with.

In one of the questions that Dr. Lash listed as worth putting to Lonergan, it is suggested that no-one can say what theology is, or how to do it. This seems to me odd. Should not any educated person be able to make an informed shot at saying what science, art, or theology, Christian or otherwise, amounts to? I can say of science, for example, that it consists of theories and judgments that are the results of applying a method, that the method is a matter of propounding hypotheses and testing them by observation and experiment, and that the mature sciences result from applying this method to a field of data, being 'attentive, intelligent and reasonable', in Lonergan's terms, over many or at least several generations. Similarly, friend and foe alike may rightly say of Christian, or for that matter Islamic, theology, that it is a matter of interpreting a faith originating in one historical and cultural milieu in the past (Lonergan's 'mediating phase' including the first four functional specialties), and applying it to the different historical and cultural milieus which prevail at present (the 'mediated phase' which consists of the fifth to eighth functional specialties).

At the center of the business of method in theology, as conceived by Lonergan, is attending to our own mental operations. 'But', it may be objected, 'we can't do that.' According to Lonergan and common sense, we can; and a view like behaviourism, from which it may be inferred that we cannot, is *ipso facto* false. (Anthony Quinton has remarked on the strong behaviourist tendency of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, in spite of the inviolate nature of the theoretical virginity attributed to him by some of his disciples[23]). Apparently each of us is aware of undergoing experiences and feelings, asking questions, coming to understand or misunderstand something, and so on; and we can increase our awareness, as Lonergan sees it, by suitably directed attention. A sceptic, whether Lonerganian or otherwise, might regard Wittgenstein as a brilliant thinker who has led philosophy to the two dead ends represented by the *Tractatus* on the one hand, and the *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty* on the other.

On many matters in the philosophy of mind, Wittgenstein in his later work is certainly right. Knowing how to play bridge, or to load a bren-gun, does not consist in two parallel sets of actions, an inner and an outer, but in outer dispositions to behave in the right way in the right circumstances. You won't trump when you can follow suit in the former instance, or try to put the magazine in upside-down in the

[23] See A. Quinton, 'Extract from Modern British Philosophy' in G. Pitcher, ed., *Wittgenstein. The Philosophical Investigations* (London: Macmillan, 1968). Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979). On Wittgenstein on private language and pain, see *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), Part I, sections 243–6.

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latter. The same applies to understanding elementary trigonometry, or Renaissance Portuguese; what is in question is just being apt to behave in the appropriate way in the appropriate circumstances, not some private process in an inner mental theatre.

I don't care a bit for Wittgenstein's application of these principles to pain; he says that 'I am in pain' is not giving information, but rather equivalent to a cry. Richard Rorty, who has made this view of Wittgenstein his own, says that to maintain that babies and the nicer-looking animals are liable to feel pain is to be disposed to treat them in a certain ways and not in others; rather than our treating them thus being justified by the fact that they are capable of feeling pain. Rorty protests that what may seem to follow from this, that one might just as well not use anaesthetics when one cuts the limbs off babies or the more appealing animals, does not follow; but it seems to me, quite frankly, that it *does* follow, and I consequently find the doctrine not just absurd, but horrifying.

What is at issue, to put a very complicated matter as simply as possible, seems to amount to this. Unless there were characteristic public expressions of the mental events of having experiences, coming to understand, making judgments and decisions, and so on, we would not be able to speak of these mental events as we do. Here Wittgenstein and his followers are perfectly right. But it does not immediately follow that there is nothing more to them than their public expression. As to the 'concepts' we have of such mental events and activities, a scientific parallel may be suggestive. A preliminary and elementary concept of 'silver', a grasp of what silver is and what 'silver' means, is a part of ordinary public discourse. But to study silver properly, in the manner of a physicist or chemist, we have to take the matter further. Something similar, Lonergan would say, applies to the basic mental operations which we perform, whether with regard to matters of common sense, natural science, interpretation, or theology. Here again, we do our observations and experiments, this time though in our inner conscious selves — which admittedly we would not have access to at all short of outer criteria.

One has to have some grasp of the concept of a positron or neutrino to engage in contemporary nuclear physics; but this is surely merely a preliminary step to investigating positrons and neutrinos themselves. And it does not seem obviously foolish to suppose that the same applies to human questioning, coming to understand, and making judgments; one may wish to investigate these things themselves rather than resting content with a mere concept. Lonergan would say that the right way of doing this is to attend to one's own practice of these kinds of mental act, and to question, hypothesize, and make judgments accordingly. The methodologist, one might put it, *mentions* rather than *affirms* (first-order) religious doctrines, like the existence of Allah or God, and the special authority of the Koran,

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in the case of Muslims. She mentions them as the sort of thing a believer of whatever stripe would assert and an unbeliever deny, and a theologian would justify or impugn, by being an authentic person (as described in *foundations*) approaching material coming to us from the past as said or written (*research*) and meant (*interpretation*), set into an objective narrative of what was going on (*history*) and evaluated (*dialectic*), to be understood thoroughly (*systematics*) and put over effectively here and now to Joe Blow or Richard Dawkins (*communications*). Which of these steps, in communicating the Gospel (or the Koran or the Tripitaka) to a contemporary individual, are superfluous? What further step is there that Lonergan has left out?

It seems to me that these are the most pertinent questions that a serious critic of Lonergan's method might first address. Paul Ricoeur makes a useful distinction, alluded to and used by Lonergan, between the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and the 'hermeneutics of recovery.' A good rule of thumb, as I think Lonergan himself says somewhere, is to be especially concerned to apply the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' to those one tends to agree with or approve of, the 'hermeneutics of recovery' to one's opponents. Our natural tendency, of course, as is only too evident from the unlovely history of religious polemics, is to do exactly the opposite. But the best way to extend one's own insights, and to correct one's own oversights, is deliberately to counteract this natural tendency. It seems to be conceded to Lonergan, by most of those who stress the supposed defects or limitations in his thought, that he assisted in the process of bringing Catholic theology out of the bad state in which it had been earlier in the twentieth century. One is told that for all the lip service paid to Aquinas, the guiding spirit of neoscholasticism was not really St. Thomas, but rather the big bad Wolff. Christian Wolff was a disciple of Leibniz who flourished in the middle of the eighteenth century, and was the representative philosopher of the German Enlightenment. Now my recollections of Wolff, when I first heard this claim, were not of the most vivid; I had thought of him as a reliable second-rater, worthy if rather stodgy, voluminous but unoriginal. But there must have been something exciting about him, for better or for worse; he was exiled, on pain of death, by the Prussian King Frederick William I (known to posterity as 'the crowned sergeant-major'), since his rationalism had given offence to the more politically powerful Pietist party within contemporary Lutheranism. One is glad to read that he was later reinstated, by Frederick the Great no less. As a result of rereading brief accounts of Wolff's philosophy[24], I regret to say that I rather approve of him. Certainly, rationality and piety have to be balanced in a satisfactory theology, and Wolff may have given excessive

[24] See Charles A. Corr, 'Wolff, Christian', in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Routledge: London and New York, 1998).

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weight to the rational side. A couple of generations later, Hegel and Schleiermacher, who one might consider representatives *par excellence* of rationalism and pietism, did not get on well as colleagues at the university of Berlin, Hegel remarking that, on Schleiermacher's account of the essence of religion, he (Schleiermacher) would be less religious than his dog. I find wholly admirable Wolff's high regard for the principle of sufficient reason; which reminds me of the scholastic pearl of wisdom, *quod gratis asseritur, gratis negatur*. This is surely related closely to Aquinas's practice in the *Summa Theologiae*, of justifying every claim that he makes; even with regard to the existence of God, he notoriously begins his discussion with, 'It seems that God does not exist, for the following reasons.'

'Evidentialism' tends to be a term of abuse in recent philosophy of religion; but surely Aquinas is the most obsessive of 'evidentialists', and I would say rightly so. That he was so thorough in this matter is surely an important aspect of his greatness, and of the high reputation which he continues to hold in the Catholic Church. The whole thrust of classical Protestantism (of which Luther and Karl Barth are the paradigm cases) is to assert faith gratuitously; they say you can't do it rationally due to the radical nature of the Fall. 'Belief cannot argue with unbelief; it can only preach to it', as Barth famously put it. But preaching to unbelievers may *include* argument from first principles, and according to me, Aquinas, Wolff and Lonergan, it *should* do so. According to an influential strand in contemporary philosophy, which chimes in well with classical Protestantism, there are no overall principles of rationality, commendable to everyone, by which basic principles of religion may be attacked or defended. Accordingly, as Alvin Plantinga puts the matter, belief that there is a God may be a 'properly basic belief.' But to maintain this seems to have some consequences which are absurd, others which are alarming. If belief in God is to be taken as a 'properly basic belief', why should not the same apply, to take Plantinga's own example, to the Great Pumpkin which descends every Hallowe'en, or, for that matter, to the moon's consisting of green cheese, or to all apostates from one's own religion being worthy of death? It is all very well proclaiming the mighty works of God on the authority of the Church; but it does evoke the question, why should one believe in God, or in the authority of the Church? It is very fashionable among contemporary philosophers to maintain that, on such important matters as the existence of God, one simply has to plump one way or the other. But people disagree on fundamental matters, some of which are practically important. If we cannot resort to reason as an honest broker, are we not left with the shrug of the shoulders on unimportant questions, the guns and thumbscrews on important ones (is democracy or Islamic theocracy the best form of government? should we abort healthy foetuses during the third trimester? ought we to stone adulteresses to death?)?

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Rousseau said of the Government of Poland (of all things), that if you got rid of it without sufficient reflection, you might be left with something even more to be deplored. ('Always keep a hold on Nurse', sang Belloc, 'for fear of finding something worse.') Neoscholasticism in its way showed a proper respect for argument; it gave answers, perhaps not wholly satisfactory ones, to basic questions like 'Why believe in God? Why believe in the soul's immortality? Why be a Catholic, and give assent to what the Church teaches? Why do believers and unbelievers quite largely agree on morality?' You may say, it was all too cut and dried; it gave answers without really listening to the questions. But the questions must be asked and answered. I once saw a parody of neoscholasticism which included the phrase, *Kantius est wrongus*. But, for better or for worse, it has been essential to traditional Catholic teaching that there are good theoretical as well as practical reasons for belief in God; and this involves rebuttal of famous arguments to the contrary by Kant. Neoscholasticism filled a gap, and it would now be generally agreed, filled it rather badly; but the gap exists and does need to be filled. It is not very satisfactory, in the manner of the Anglican theology with which I was brought up, to move straight from 'history' (an account of what others have thought about the Christian faith) to 'communications' (the attempt to commend it to people, with their different backgrounds, preoccupations, and levels of education, here and now). Lonergan, with his account of the fourth to seventh functional specialties, has suggested how this gap might be filled.

William Shea has charged Lonergan with propounding a confused and confusing blend of empiricism and classical rationalism in his theory of knowledge. Now it would surely seem, as a matter of common sense, that both experience and reason are apt to be relevant in cases where we come to know something. If I want to know whether the secretary of the Department of Needlework is in her office, it seems to be largely a matter of experience. I may go and take a look myself, or consult those who are in the know. If, however, I wish to ascertain whether 34567 is a prime number, I have to go through a course of reasoning, or perhaps consult someone else who has done so. (Our old friend Wolff counts as a rationalist, Locke and Hume as empiricists; Kant's theory, like Lonergan's, combines elements of both, one would have thought very sensibly.) How could one choose between rationalism and empiricism, or perhaps combine them coherently? As Lonergan sees it, one adds to the brew what R. G. Collingwood would have called a 'logic of question and answer'[25], and the job is done. Our experience, whether in the realms of common

[25] R. G. Collingwood, *Autobiography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). For Lonergan's alleged confusion of empiricism and rationalism, see William Shea, 'The Stance and Task of the Foundational Theologian' (*Heythrop Journal*, 1976).

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sense, science or history, gives rise to questions, and these questions are (so far as knowledge is concerned) of two kinds, those asking on the one hand for a hypothesis or a possibility, and those asking whether such a possibility or hypothesis is certainly or probably so or not so on the other. In the course of such questions and answers intelligence and reason, as championed by rationalists, come into operation. Such is what Lonergan calls 'generalized empirical method'; it might as well, perhaps, have been called 'comprehensively critical rationalism'[26].

What might a Catholic theological formation be like on the basis of Lonergan's method? Evidently the alleged sources of divine revelation in the Bible must take pride of place; though always with the awareness, acute in our own time, that the sociocultural and linguistic background of the authors is different not only from our own, but from each other's. What of the traditional respect for the work of Thomas Aquinas? What place is there, if any, for what Fr. Kerr has jocularly referred to as 'the higher Aquinatics'?[27] Impressive as Aquinas may have been in his day, what relevance could he possibly have for us now, living as we do in an age dominated by science? His defenders might point out, as Lonergan has done, how impressively his position dovetails with what seems implicit in science; one could even argue, as indeed Lonergan does[28], that Aquinas applies to reality as a whole much the same assumptions as the scientist applies to some particular aspect of it. Thomas distinguished essence and existence; the scientist knows in practice, even if she does not spell it out in theory, that it is one thing to excogitate a hypothesis, another to judge that it is so. Aquinas gives scope to both reason and experience, following his master Aristotle; it is of the essence of science not only to attend to experience, but to theorize as well.

In general, the excellence of Aquinas is as a thinker who shows how the Christian faith can be rationally commended, and how its elements can be set out in a manner which shows their self-consistency — how one can believe in one God and yet be a Trinitarian, how one can affirm divine grace without denying human freedom, how one may reconcile the conviction that morality is a matter of divine command with the view that it is something to be worked out by human reason; how faith may be harmonized with secular values, even enhance them. That is what Aquinas is supposed to be good for, and be good for still. But, for all his resplendent genius, his work needs revising and supplementing, as Lonergan says, not

[26] This expression is due to W. W. Bartley III.

[27] Corcoran, *Looking*, 34.

[28] 'Isomorphism of Thomism and the Scientific Worldview', *Collection* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1967, 142–151). Cf. 143: '(S)cientific hypothesis stands to verification as Thomist definition stands to judgment.'

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least because it preceded the historical differentiation of consciousness which was the special achievement of the nineteenth-century German school of historians. A truly ecumenical theology will tend to emphasize the good that is to be found in the views of one's opponents. It will not, however, be so charitable as to give up the principle of non-contradiction; it cannot be the case both that the Koran provides humanity at large with the unique, final and definitive account of the divine nature and the divine purposes for humankind, and (in exactly the same sense) that it does not do so; or that all human beings cease to exist for ever when their bodies die, and that we are to expect some kind of conscious existence after death.

I think that Karl Rahner's account of classical Protestantism, in his *Foundations of Christian Faith*[29], provides a good model.

Rahner takes the 'three onlys' — only grace, only faith, only Scripture — as typifying such Protestantism. 'Only grace' — the Catholic may well be reminded by this that all the goodness we have is by the grace of God. 'Only faith' — faith is our fitting response to grace, as Catholics, for all their stress on freedom, and on works as the proper expression of faith, should never forget, 'Only Scripture' — Catholics do well to bear in mind that, for all their deference to tradition and for doctrines which have developed later, their ultimate concern is with the message originally proclaimed in Scripture. And yet, there is still a clear sense in which the Catholic Church has a continuity with the tradition of the Church at large to the degree that the Protestant denominations do not.

Lonergan says, of the modern notion of culture which has displaced the classical, that it allows for variety of expression of what is really the same faith. Yet the Catholic cannot contradict what has been solemnly defined by the *magisterium* of the Church, or what may be logically deduced from this, without ceasing to be a Catholic. Whatever the wonderful merits of the great Reformers, Catholics cannot give assent to what they said on the points where they contradicted essential Catholic doctrine. At the time just before the Reformation, nearly every thoughtful person agreed that the Church needed radical reform. The baby of authentic Christian faith had to be retained; the bathwater of corruption and misrepresentation had to be thrown out. The trouble was, that Christians disagreed about what was baby, and what was bathwater; was the Papacy bathwater, or the Epistle of James? Ought one to say, in defiance of the Council of Orange in 529, and the general intuitions of humankind about justice in punishment, that the reprobate are predestined to hell without regard to their demerits?

[29] Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 357–369.

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Martin Luther was one of the greatest preachers and teachers in the history of the Church, but not a great systematic theologian in the manner of Aquinas, Scotus or Calvin. Getting a systematic theology out of his work is rather like trying to lay a carpet in a room which it will not quite fit; you have to cut a bit off somewhere. If you cut off one bit, you get a reformed Catholicism such as was looked forward to by most thoughtful Catholics at the time[30]. If you cut another bit off, you get Calvinism, of which more anon. If you cut off another bit still, you end up with 'Antinomianism.' ('Dr. Martin is inconsistent, and does not take his insights far enough. He rightly says that the work of Christ is all-sufficient for salvation; why then should the Christian apply herself to the moral life, let alone obey the dictates of the state in the way that he demands of us?')

Luther clearly stated, against Erasmus, that human beings have no freedom to accept or refuse divine grace. But Lutherans, as opposed to 'Reformed' (Calvinist) Christians, have followed Melanchthon on the matter; human beings must freely cooperate with the grace of God. Most Christians as a matter of course accept implicitly, even if they do not spell out, the distinction made in Catholic theology between God's 'active' and 'permissive' will. God wants all human beings freely to accept divine grace, and so be saved (I Timothy 2.3–4); but permits them to refuse grace, and so they are responsible for their own damnation. Calvin regards this distinction as 'childish,' and makes in its stead a distinction between God's 'secret' and 'revealed' will. Absolutely everything, including the sins of sinners, happens in accordance with the secret will of God; his revealed will puts sinners in the wrong. If someone should say that this is unfair of God, Calvin would reply that we have no right to criticize God, whatever God does; we should rather be grateful that a minority of humankind are saved, when all of us deserve to be damned. Do we really think that God is under any obligation to us?[31]

People have parodied the style of the older neoscholastic theology: *Kantius est wrongus*. Well, great thinker as Kant is, he *is* wrong on crucial issues, and it is important for Catholic philosophy to show this. In particular, it seems to be of the essence of Catholic faith, that not to believe that there is a God is irrational in a more robust sense than would be conceded by Kant. Atheism, as far as Catholic philosophy is concerned, can definitely be shown to be irrational. On the Kantian view, as one might put it, it is rather that theism cannot be shown to be wholly irrational — which is not so strong a position. If it is conceded to Kant, an important element of traditional Catholic belief is lost. Of course, this is not of itself to show that Kant is

[30] This was in effect the position of Melanchthon, who wept over the failure of his attempts to reconcile Catholics and Protestants.

[31] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II, chapter V.

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wrong; only that his rightness would have awkward consequences or worse for the faith as traditionally understood, which maintains that there are better reasons than not for believing that there is a God, not taking revelation into account, and not assuming what you have to prove. It has been suggested that there must have been elements of the old bad neoscholasticism in Lonergan's thought, for them to have taken him on as a teacher in Rome. I concede that there must have been, and were, elements in Lonergan's thought corresponding to the older neoscholastic views; what I fail to concede, is that these were necessarily wrong. One does, as a Catholic as opposed to a classical Protestant, have to argue for the *praeambula fidei* ---- for the existence of God, and for the authority of the church to teach what God has revealed. (Some, including St. Thomas himself, would maintain that the same applies to the immortality of the soul. Others, like Duns Scotus, would say that this, like the Trinity and the Incarnation, must be and remain an article of faith.) On the matter of neoscholasticism in general, I conclude that revision, perhaps radical, is in order, rather than outright rejection.

There is virtually no religious or irreligious position from which there is not something useful to be learned. One may appreciate, by listening to the secularist, the scandal given by religious believers, when they use the life to come as a pretext for neglecting the demands of the present. It is be learned from Liberal Protestants, that it will not do to be so obsessed with the niceties of theological definition as to neglect the simple but radical moral demands of the gospel. Positions which at first sight seem to be opposed can sometimes be reconciled, and the ecumenically-minded theologian will be disposed to reconcile them where this is possible. Professing theists and professing atheists do not always really contradict one another; for example, those who affirm the existence of an intelligent first cause on the one hand, and on the other those who deny that there is an old man sitting in the sky about eighty miles above Woolwich. Yet the fact remains that not everyone can be right, because people sometimes do really contradict one another. Theists contradict materialists; evolutionists contradict those who believe in the special creation of species less than twenty thousand years ago; and persons who maintain that Jesus was really and truly divine contradict those who hold that he was deluded or a liar, or a homosexual conjuror with political ambitions.

I take it that a theological formation, in the light of Lonergan's method, would inform students on the manner in which Christian and Catholic doctrine grows out of Scripture by a series of questions, answers, and definitions. They would grasp from this that there is implied some kind of teaching office in the Church, which is able to assert authoritatively against Arius, for example, the strict divinity of Christ. As in chemistry, so in Christian theology; the questions gradually lead to a framework of theoretical ideas, which may be

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said to be represented supremely in the theology of Aquinas (though, as has already been pointed out, this needs revising in the light of modern historical consciousness). Here the faith is presented in such a way that it can be seen to form a consistent whole, and to be related to the rest of what human beings know or believe; from there, it can be transposed in such a way as to be comprehensible to each culture, and to every human being at any stage of education or sophistication.

It would be shown too how systematic theology also makes possible an informed apologetics and polemics — the articles of faith have to be rationally defended, in the light of reason or reasonably-defensible revelation[32], and their contradictories refuted. In an ecumenical age, the unlovely rancour which has disfigured the history of religious controversy must be sedulously avoided; opponents should be courteously yet firmly refuted, and an effort must be made not only to make the best out of their positions, but to learn from them, in the manner sketched earlier.

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[32] This may sound like a contradiction, but of course is not so, as Aquinas demonstrates. It can be shown, on first principles, that there are good reasons for supposing that there is a God; and for maintaining that such a God might have revealed more of the divine nature purposes for humankind than can be worked out from first principles; and for holding that some particular institution on earth is the source of such divine revelation. What is revealed, again, if not deducible from first principles, may commend itself by its internal coherence, and its appropriateness to our condition. See also Lonergan, *Insight*, chapters XIX and XX.

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