

HUMAN AUTHENTICITY AND THE QUESTION OF GOD IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF BERNARD LONERGAN

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Abstract. In his *Insight*, Lonergan presents a general form of the argument for the existence of God: „reality is completely intelligible, therefore, God exists.” Its framework may be characterized as a Leibnizian version of the cosmological argument from the contingency of empirical reality to the unrestricted act of understanding. The acceptance of Lonergan’s argument presupposes familiarity with his theory of being and objectivity. In my analysis, since Lonergan uses heuristic (second order) definitions and dialectical method in his justification of the complete intelligibility of reality, the argument invites continuous examination of the proposed alternative metaphysical theories.

Bernard Lonergan’s *The Method in Theology* (1972) is quite well known among theologians. They are, however, only rarely familiar with the preceding book, *Insight* (1957), which was supposed to provide a philosophical foundation for Lonergan’s theology. It has been more than 35 years, since Lonergan said that the situation (cultural change) demands „the development of a new theological method and style, [...] *meeting all the genuine exigencies* both of the Christian religion and *of up-to-date philosophy, science, and scholarship* [...]. The worthy successor to the thirteenth-century achievement will be the fruit of a fourfold differentiated consciousness, in which the workings of common sense, science, scholarship, intentionality analysis, and the life of prayer have been integrated.” (Lonergan 2004, pp. 85-86). In the second part of the quote about integration, Lonergan does not mention up-to-date philosophy, but instead „a fourfold differentiated consciousness” and „intentionality analysis.” It is as if the achievement of

FORUM PHILOSOPHICUM 13(2008), pp. 31-49

a philosophy which could be important for theology were the achievement of the basic fourfold human (or philosophical) differentiated consciousness. This is certainly true and significant for the new theological method and style, and it is one of the major achievements of Lonergan's *Insight*.¹

If this were the only achievement, the particular philosophical positions presented in *Insight* would not be interesting anymore (except for historical reasons). The philosophical problems dealt with in the book would be relative to a past philosophical context, and if necessary, they could/should be updated, in order to better mediate intentionality analysis. Nevertheless, there seem to be several philosophical positions here which are important for theology, even though some of them may need further elaboration and sometimes a reformulation in a more up-to-date terminology. Lonergan says that the book explains „(1) the range of really confused yet apparently clear and distinct ideas, (2) aberrant views on the meaning of meaning, (3) *distortions in the a priori synthetic components of our knowledge*, (4) the existence of a multiplicity of philosophies, and (5) *the series of mistaken metaphysical and anti-metaphysical positions*” (Lonergan 1992, p. 6). At the same time, he indicates that some themes in *Insight* are not explained fully: „[...] the present work is concerned with the known only in the schematic and incomplete fashion that is needed to clarify the nature, and affirm the existence, of different departments of knowing” (Lonergan 1992, p. 19). Lonergan has the intention to write about particular philosophical problems, but in a schematic fashion.

In the following paper, I will concentrate on Lonergan's „general transcendent knowledge,” especially on his argument for the existence of God. He says that the reasonable affirmation of transcendent being is somehow an „inevitable culmination of our whole account of understanding and judgment” (Lonergan 1992, p. 664). Does Lonergan's philosophical conception of knowing and his argument for the existence of God bring some light to more recent debates about God? Or should we leave the argument behind, and appreciate instead Lonergan's theology?

First, a few preliminary ideas concerning the importance of the argument in Lonergan's system and in philosophical theology in general will be discussed. Before we start with the argument, a few general characteristics

¹ Lonergan often writes in *Insight* about the appropriation of one's own intellectual and rational self-consciousness. For instance, „statements [...] can be subjected to endless revision without implying the necessity of any revision on one's own appropriation of one's own intellectual and rational consciousness. [...] [O]ur aim regards [...] not the details of the known but the structure of the knowing ...” (Lonergan 1992, p. 20).

of the argument need to be emphasized. Next, a brief reconstruction of the argument from *Insight* will follow in the first part. Several objections will be presented which require a further elaboration of some of Lonergan's statements and point to the limitations of the proof. Nevertheless, it will become apparent that personal (intellectual) authenticity calls for an explicit affirmation of a transcendent being, and this affirmation requires an authentic person.

I. Intellectual Integrity and the Evidentialist Challenge

Many scholars agree that the existence of God has to be reasonably well justified, before one accepts the creed of any religion.² Good reasons for believing in the existence of God are an important part of the personal, especially intellectual, integrity of any theologian or Christian philosopher. Furthermore, believers who specialize in philosophy or natural philosophy, would have to sacrifice their own intellectual integrity, if they did not have good rational justification (or evidence) for their belief in God. In the absence of such a proof, they might still have good reasons (social and/or historical) for believing in God but without a good purely rational argument something crucial would be missing.

When Lonergan writes about „immanently generated knowledge,” he means generation of new concepts and/or theories and reasonable judgments about their truthfulness.³ Knowledge should include the grasp of the „virtually unconditioned,” which means, that one understands the conditions of something being true and has a proof that the conditions are satisfied. From the overall content of *Insight*, we can deduce that the achievement of the immanently generated knowledge of the existence of God is possible, necessary, and can be done with Lonergan's „general (or better generalized) empirical method.” This method should ensure that his argu-

² Cardinal Schönborn says: „Faith without a rational justification would be an illusion.” *Impulz*, 2007. Similarly: W.K. Clifford, A. Kenny, A. Flew, R. Swinburne. Some of them (A. Flew) say that without a good argument we have to be atheist (assumption of atheism), and some others (B. Russell, A. Kenny) that we should be agnostic. A. Plantinga, E. Anscombe, D.Z. Philips, N. Malcolm, R. McNerny do not require any proof (or evidence) of the existence of God for being theist based on their conceptions of human belief.

³ Immanently generated knowledge exists „in symbiotic fusion with a far larger context of beliefs” conditioned socially and historically (Lonergan 1972, p. 42).

ment is acceptable to all scientifically oriented, authentic investigators and systematic thinkers.

According to Lonergan, an argument, in which one tries to be precise in the use of terms and logic, belongs to the context of classicism and conceptualism (Lonergan 1973, p. 9). Even if this may be an old fashioned approach and not very interesting for Lonergan, it seems to be important also for Lonergan's philosophy. He says:

The development of philosophic and scientific systems profoundly affects a culture. But if it modifies the outlook of most of the members in the culture, still it does not do so by transforming them into systematic thinkers. Systematic thinkers are relatively rare. But their achievement is diffused by the commentators, the teachers, the popularizers that illuminate, complete, transpose, simplify (Lonergan 1973, p. 8).

Nowadays, we witness the rise of several „popularizers” who take up deeply atheistic ideas. It is enough to mention a few: the New York Times bestseller Daniel Dennett (*Breaking the Spell*, 2006), Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*, 2008), and Sam Harris (*The End of Faith*, 2004). It looks as if almost every generation needs systematic thinkers who ponder philosophically the nature and existence of God.

Lonergan is right when he says that there are more decisive considerations in human acceptance or refusal of God than rational proofs: „[...] proof in any serious meaning of the term presupposes the erection of a system, in which all terms and relations have an exact meaning, and all procedures leading from some propositions to others are rigorous. But the system itself, in turn, has its presuppositions. It presupposes a horizon [...]” (Lonergan 1973, p. 12). A personal cultural horizon, to a great extent determines whether one believes, or decides to believe, in God. In regard to Lonergan's overall philosophical project, he says that „*Insight* insists a great deal on the authenticity of the subject, on his need to reverse his counter positions and develop his positions, on the importance, in brief, of intellectual conversion. But [...] the direction implies not only intellectual but also moral and religious conversion” (Lonergan 1973, p. 12). This explains why Lonergan's major occupation was the conversion/transformation of people and the explanation of how this occurs in theology and/or religion in general. This also explains why his argument in *Insight* is unfinished and little bit sketchy.

II. General Features of Lonergan's Argument

In addition to its importance for culture and the dialogue with the atheists, the question regarding the existence of God may also raise some interest among Lonergan scholars, since they do not seem to agree about the detailed framework and importance of the argument. The argument could be taken as teleological, simply because it deals with the intelligibility of reality. This follows from the broader considerations in *Insight*, which start with the question „what is being?” and not with the question „how is it that being exists?” Somebody may argue that it is a sort of *a priori* or transcendental argument, because it points to an *a priori* principle justifiable by the Kantian transcendental method of inquiry into the *a priori* conditions of human knowing.⁴ There is disagreement about the validity of such a transcendental defense.

For instance, Ruben Habito (Habito 1970, pp. 558-576) and Patricia Wilson (Wilson 1971, pp. 259-275) explain that the argument is a sort of Kantian transcendental argument. According to Ronald Hepburn, if Lonergan's argument is taken as transcendental (in the Kantian sense), it is not valid. Quentin Quesnell argues against Frederick Crowe, Hugo Meynell, and William Wainwright that the argument is neither ontological („from definitions”) nor cosmological (from experience of complete intelligibility), but a critical realist „meta-proof.” (Quesnell 1990, pp. 276-277. Quesnell's article looks like a short exposition of a much deeper analysis by Bernard Tyrrell (Tyrrell 1974). Terry Tekippe finds Lonergan's view of transcendent knowledge problematic for various reasons⁵ (Tekippe 2003).

In my understanding, Lonergan's argument is primarily a Leibnizian cosmological argument, of a sort, from the contingency of proportionate being to complete intelligibility. One can also say that it is a cumulative argument. It starts with the affirmation of the existence of a contingent being; namely, of a human knower. Such a starting point in *Insight* is „I – knower – exist” (self-affirmation), which is the most fundamental judgment about reality in the book (in the Eleventh chapter) (Lonergan 1992, pp. 16-17). This starting point cannot really be reasonably and responsibly denied, and is expected to be fully explained. The traditional teleological argument (if

⁴ It is important to be aware of the difference between Kantian transcendental method and Lonergan's transcendental method (which should probably be better called „transcendental meta-method”).

⁵ One needs to take into consideration that there are several misinterpretations of Lonergan's conceptions in this book.

sound) can be added to strengthen the cosmological interpretation. It is also noteworthy that the most radical criticism of Lonergan's argument comes from the objections against the traditional cosmological arguments.

Lonergan wanted to build the general form of his argument on a deeper principle and thus embrace all the traditional arguments for the existence of God. What makes Lonergan's proof distinct from the others is the starting point (the self-affirmation of the knower), the core principle (that reality must be completely intelligible), his (dialectical) method of argumentation, and his concept of God (as unrestricted act of understanding). Lonergan always maintained the validity of the argument, even though later, as we have already seen, he said that it ignores the context or horizon within which the argument can be effective.

The traditional problem of evil and Lonergan's solution will not be considered in this paper, because it would require an explanation of the attributes of God, especially his omnipotence and omniscience. We will concentrate only on the „immanently generated” affirmation of the existence of God. Basically, if there is a God, then there must be a solution to the problem of evil. Lonergan believed that there is a solution, even though it is a „divine solution” (Lonergan 1992, p. 763) and it demands „[...] the transformation of self-reliant intelligence into an *intellectus querrens fidem*” (Lonergan 1992, p. 753). For similar reasons, we will not consider the ethical and social consequences of the denial of the existence of God, even though they are so radical that one would really need a strong argument in order to exclude transcendence and God from the life of human society.⁶

III. Lonergan's Argument for the Existence of God

Lonergan starts his discourse on transcendent knowledge with the question „What is being?” In the first seven sections of the chapter on General Transcendent Knowledge in *Insight*, he defines and analyzes all the terms involved. In addition to his conception of being, he deduces the concept of an unrestricted act of understanding (God) from his analysis of human knowing and especially from the unrestricted desire to know. Then in the eighth and tenth sections, where he asks „What is causality?” he says that with this question „we shall be lead to affirm that there is such an unre-

⁶ An interesting reflection on the consequences of atheism and some recent atheists see (Haught 2008, pp. 22-29).

stricted act” (Lonergan 1992, p. 674). In other words, it is claimed that an investigation of the question „What is being?” explains the meaning and implications of the conception of an unrestricted act of understanding, as well as showing its coherence, while an investigation into the nature of causality, asking „What is causality?,” provides a good argument for the affirmation of such an act.

Lonergan proceeds with the distinction of external and internal causes:

Internal causes are central and conjugate potency, form, and act [...]. External causes are efficient, final, and exemplary. [...] Our first task, accordingly, is to investigate the transition from familiar but anthropomorphic notions of external causality to their root in a universally applicable principle (Lonergan 1992, pp. 674-675).

External causes are conceived analogously with purposive human actions, which are within the realm of proportionate being. The question is whether they hold in general for proportionate being as a whole. Lonergan explains that in order to make his argument stronger he intends to penetrate deeper to the root of these concepts. Deeper metaphysical principles are capable of bearing human knowledge from the realm of proportionate being to the realm of transcendent being.

According to Lonergan, all the arguments for the existence of God are included in the following general form of affirmation: „If the real is completely intelligible, God exists. But the real is completely intelligible. Therefore, God exists” (Lonergan 1992, p. 695). A longer formulation: „If the real is completely intelligible, then complete intelligibility exists. If complete intelligibility exists, the idea of being exists. If the idea of being exists, then God exists” (Lonergan 1992, p. 696). On my understanding, Lonergan’s argument, in the broader context of *Insight*, can be defined as follows (Rojka 2005, pp. 111-128):

- (1) We know that at least one real thing (being) exists.
- (2) The Real is (or existing things are) known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation.
- (3) Therefore, existing reality is intelligible. (From 1 and 2)
 - (3a) Everything intelligible is being (or a part of being).
 - (3b) Everything real is being (or a part of being).
- (4) Complete intelligibility of being means that being is knowable completely.
 - (4a) Being is known completely if all questions are answered correctly.

- (4b) There is no meaningful question about being, which has no answer or explanation.
- (4c) There are no unexplainable brute facts.
- (5) Therefore, being is (or existing things are) completely intelligible. (From 1, 4a, 4b, 4c)
- (6) Complete intelligibility exists. (From 5)
- (7) The idea of being (content of understanding) exists. (From 6)⁷
- (8) An unrestricted act of understanding (God) exists. (From 6 and 7)

IV. The Self-Affirmation

Lonergan delineates the two most important affirmations of his argument, when he asks where God's existence makes its implicit entry into the process of knowing:

[...] a distinction has to be drawn between (1) affirming a link between other existence and God's and (2) affirming the other existence that is linked to God's existence. The second element lies in the affirmation of some reality: it took place in the chapter on self-affirmation [...]. The first element is the process that identifies the real with being, then identifies being with complete intelligibility, and finally identifies complete intelligibility with the unrestricted act of understanding that possesses the properties of God and accounts for everything else (Lonergan 1992, p. 698).

The „second element” is the first statement in the argument, and it refers to the person who investigates the intelligibility of reality. Nobody can reasonably and responsibly deny his own existence and capability of knowing. Regarding human knowing, we have no other way to know reality than by intelligent grasp (understanding) and reasonable affirmation. The fact that we know something means that reality is knowable and intelligible. Thus the first conclusion that existing reality is intelligible (statement 3) is reasonably well justified.

The following two crucial statements need further explanation: (1) Is it true that reality is completely intelligible? (Statement 5) (2) If reality is completely intelligible, does it necessarily follow that the unrestricted act of understanding exists? (Statement 8)

⁷ The notion of good is not included in the argument, because it concerns more who God is than that he is. I included the idea of being, even though T. Tekippe argues that it is not necessary for the argument. See Tekippe 2003, pp. 354-355.

V. The Affirmation of the Complete Intelligibility of Reality

Lonerган's first reason for affirming the existence of complete intelligibility is that „Being [...] is intelligible, since it is what is to be known by correct understanding; and it is completely intelligible since being is known completely only when all intelligent questions are answered correctly.”⁸ (Lonerган 1992, p. 695).

It is important to note that Lonergan's four „heuristic structures” designate four different sorts of drives and goals of empirical investigation and four different ways of raising and answering questions in empirical investigations. If applied to empirical (proportionate) reality, they do not lead to one intelligibility of reality but to multiplicities of classical, statistical, generic, and dialectical intelligibilities. One does not uncover the unifying concrete intelligibility of Lonergan's „nonsystematic” processes.⁹ The reason is that empirical search presupposes abstractive intelligence, and classical and/or statistical methods.¹⁰

Questions asked by „common sense” people cannot be intelligently unified either, because, as Lonergan explains, there is an enormous number of possible, correct, unrelated answers. In addition, common-sense questions are motivated by practical interests, and they are bound to spatio-temporal viewpoints. Questions of common sense imply variety and an enormous multiplicity of intelligibilities.

When Lonergan says that being is known completely when all questions are answered correctly, he must mean first of all the metaphysical questions about a complete and ultimate explanation of being as a whole (its existence and intelligibility).¹¹ Such transcendental questions „go beyond” sensible experience, beyond relation to us, beyond common sense and present science. Transcendental questions uncover the realm of transcendent being, which is conceived not relatively as going beyond man, but absolutely „as the ultimate in the whole process of going beyond” (Lonerган 1992,

⁸ „What is known by the exercise of intelligence is completely intelligible, for every obscurantism is reprobated. While there are illegitimate, mistaken, inopportune questions, still no question can be brushed aside without some reason being assigned; and questions do not stop: they keep coming, and libraries continue to fill up” (Lonerган 2004, p. 8).

⁹ Nonsystematic processes „are multiplicities on the level of intelligibility, but they possess some unity from the spatio-temporal unity of the process” (Lonerган 1992, p. 73).

¹⁰ More about the multiplicity of concrete intelligibilities in Rojka 2005, p. 106-109.

¹¹ B. Tyrrell lists some of them: „Why does anything exist?” „Why does anything occur?” „What is the explanation of the contingency, of the virtually unconditioned whose conditions happen to be fulfilled, of what simply happens to be the case?” (Tyrrell 1974, p. 125).

p. 658). If all our questions have adequate answers, then there must be a complete intelligibility which grounds the intelligibility of all our questions and answers.

It is important to emphasize that even though the meaning of complete intelligibility is derived from the subject's unrestricted desire to know/understand, the affirmation of its existence is conditioned neither by its actual fulfillment nor by the real possibility of its fulfillment. Human knowing is limited, conceptual and abstractive, and therefore, its fulfillment cannot be identified with a unique complete intelligibility. The unique unrestricted act does not consist in the conceptual thinking which is required for explaining. Hence, properly speaking, it should not be called „self-explanatory.”

The second reason for the affirmation of the complete intelligibility of reality is that there are no unexplained (or better unexplainable, inexplicable) facts. An affirmation of inexplicable facts would be meaningless, because „to talk about mere matters of fact that admit no explanation is to talk about nothing. If existence is mere matter of fact, it is nothing. If occurrence is mere matter of fact, it is nothing” (Lonergan 1992, p. 675). This „rude and harsh” statement follows from Lonergan's identification of being with reasonably affirmed intelligibility. Therefore, necessarily, what is not intelligible is nothing, and it cannot be affirmed and admitted as a part of any explanation. Naturally, all matters of fact invite further questioning and thus a search for intelligibility. Even an ultimate explanation should not conclude with matters of fact. An authentic investigator must not be satisfied with any obscurantism or matter-of-fact explanation.

VI. From the Complete Intelligibility of Reality to God

If all the questions about the multiple (secondary) intelligibilities investigated by the empirical sciences are to be answered and adequately explained, then they have to be unified in a unique (primary) intelligibility, in an act of understanding. Since there can only be one such complete intelligibility, there is only one „idea” (content of understanding) of all being. This idea, if fully intelligible, has to be grasped by an act of understanding, because the idea in its ultimate meaning must be identical with an intelligent understanding which understands everything. It understands itself (more profound, primary or transcendent, intelligibility), and thus it grounds „the explanation of everything about everything else” (Lonergan 1992, p. 678).

Hence, there is one, non-material, non-spatial, unconditioned, absolutely perfect act of understanding, which Lonergan identifies with God.¹²

The primary act of understanding must have not only perfection of understanding but also an absolute perfection, because if there were any sort of imperfection in it, the unrestricted understanding would know it, and thus the understanding would be restricted. Consequently, the primary intelligible (by analogy) „is identical not only with an unrestricted act of understanding but also with a completely perfect act of affirming the primary truth and a completely perfect act of loving the primary good” (Lonergan 1992, p. 681). One can also say that the primary act is the first efficient and final cause, and the creator of the universe.

VII. Overall Considerations

After a short exploration of Lonergan’s key statements, let us recall several aspects regarding the overall structure of the argument, which should not be omitted in its assessment.

First, it is important that the first stage (self-affirmation) is not omitted. Even though one would get an interesting *a priori* argument starting from an analysis of human knowing, this is not what Lonergan wanted to do:

Unless we know some reality, there is no possibility of deducing the existence of God. It follows that first we must establish that as a matter of fact we know and that as a matter of fact there is some reality proportionate to our knowing. For only after the facts are known can we entertain any hope of reaching [...] the real as it really is. (Lonergan 1992, p. 701)

Hence this self-affirmation is important not only because of the epistemological issues involved (in explaining how self-knowledge is generated), but also because of the claim to explain the intelligibility of *reality*.

¹² Interestingly, Stephen Hawking concludes *A Brief History of Time* with the same conception, but in a more ordinary language: „If we do discover a complete theory, it should in time be understandable in broad principle by everyone, not just by a few scientists. Then we shall all, philosophers, scientists and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of the question of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason – for then we should know the mind of God” (Hawking 1996, p. 191). In other words, a complete theory would unite philosophers, scientists, and ordinary people (multiplicity of intelligibilities, with which they are dealing), and it would explain why the universe exists (which is the basic question of all cosmological arguments). The theory would be the content (idea) of the divine mind.

It is this self-affirmation along with the affirmation of the existence of other proportionate beings, which makes Lonergan's argument cosmological. He explicitly states:

The most fundamental of all questions, then, asks about existence, yet neither empirical science nor methodically restricted philosophy can have an adequate answer. [...] In particular cases, the scientist can deduce one existent from others, but not even in particular cases can he account for the existence of the others [...]. (Lonergan 1992, pp. 676-677)

Even though Lonergan's cosmological argument starts with contingent existence, it is not Thomistic:

Among Thomists, however, there is a dispute whether *ipsum intelligere* or *ipsum esse subsistens* is logically first among divine attributes. As has been seen in the section on the notion of God, all other divine attributes follow from the notion of an unrestricted act of understanding. Moreover, since we defined being by its relation to intelligence, necessarily our ultimate is not being but intelligence. (Lonergan 1992, p. 700)

Thus the argument accounts for the existence of contingences and concludes with the unrestricted act of understanding. The closest well known argument is Leibniz's cosmological argument of sufficient reason. According to Leibniz, the search for a sufficient reason of things and truths cannot be satisfied with efficient or final causes. Only when a ground of intelligibility („self-explained” being) is given, is the sufficient reason of things also given.¹³

Second, in the transcendental process of „getting beyond” all restricted theories, the method of investigation is Lonergan's dialectical method: „there is the dialectical unfolding of positions inviting development and counterpositions inciting reversal” (Lonergan 1992, p. 427). Dialectical method in metaphysics becomes critical method, as „a pure form of the critical attitude.” In this systematic context, we deal neither with conflict-

¹³ W. Craig comments on Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason: „In order to fully explain something, to give its sufficient reason, it is not enough to give its efficient causes; nor is explanation truly complete by giving final as well as efficient causes. Only when a ground of intelligibility is given can a thing be said to have been thoroughly explained.” (Craig 2001, p. 262-263) A similar interpretation of Leibniz's principle we find in the Copleston's debate with Russell: „Cause is a kind of sufficient reason. [...] By sufficient reason in the full sense I mean an explanation adequate for the existence of some particular being.” (Seckel 1986 p. 129). More importantly, „An adequate explanation must ultimately be a total explanation to which nothing further can be added.” (Seckel 1986, p. 129)

ing historical movements, nor with personal horizons. The main criterion of truthfulness is that true theories will call for further explanations, and the untrue theories will involve contradictions and will call for reversal. This general way of avoiding obscurantism and contradictions¹⁴ is claimed to lead to the affirmation of the unrestricted act:

It is method with respect to the ultimate [...]. [I]t takes its stand on the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to understand correctly. [...] Critical method does not repudiate the notion of God but formulates it as the unrestricted act of understanding and works out its general attributes. (Lonergan 1992, p. 708)

The critical/dialectical method is driven by the desire to know, which is important in unfolding and examining the consequences of different theories. Furthermore, since many theories will call for reversal, the desire to know must be strong enough to sustain the intellectual conversions (change of position), if there are good reasons for doing so.

VIII. The Validity of the Argument

After we have briefly summarized the basic terminology, the structure and principles involved, we can proceed with a short consideration of the validity of the argument. We have seen that the critical method is crucial in Lonergan's immanently generated transcendent knowledge that God exists. Clearly, the attributes of God should be developed this way from the unrestricted act of understanding. The question is whether the critical method, which is an open-ended procedure, leads to a definite conclusion about the existence of God. Some texts in Lonergan indicate that even though we do not really know who God is, we can know that he exists, and thus his argument is valid.

Dorothy Emmet (1973) brings Kantian terminology into the debate:

if being is intelligible, then 'an unrestricted act of understanding exists,' and this he takes to be not only what Kant would have called a regulative ideal towards which our always limited thinking aspires, but something already existing in its own right which can be called God. The drive towards this is a principle constitutive for our thinking [...] (Emmet 1973, p. 13).

¹⁴ The critical method of avoiding any form of obscurantism does not exclude probabilistic reasoning.

Transcendent knowledge is not only the goal of the desire to know, but it is affirmed in a determinate way as really existing. Ruben Habito (1970) also thought that Lonergan made a valid argument:

Lonergan implies that the activity aimed at satisfying man's desire to know, [...] presupposes that the desire which is unrestricted can be ultimately fulfilled, or else the individual act of knowing, the individual insight gained, have no real foundation. He therefore equates the acceptance of the minor premise with the acceptance of man's own intelligence and reasonableness as valid guides for the unrestricted desire to know: the unrestricted desire calls for an unrestricted fulfillment, otherwise it would be an absurd, aimless and untrustworthy desire. To deny that such a fulfillment can be had would seem to imply the denial of one's own intelligence and reasonableness, and since this implies a self-contradiction, the affirmation of the minor premise can follow. (Habito 1970, p. 563-564)

The difficulty with the first part of this statement is that Lonergan does not seem to say that such fulfillment is really possible. The possibility of real fulfillment is not a part of the argument. An examination of the *logical* possibility of this fulfillment, however, is required in order to show that this conception is meaningful and coherent, and Lonergan does it in the first sections on general transcendent knowledge. The second part of Habito's argument that the denial „would seem to imply the denial of one's own intelligence and reasonableness” point to the possibility of using a Kantian transcendental argument in Lonergan.

Patricia Wilson (1971) does not say that fulfillment is possible:

Although man is always seeking absolute knowledge of being, he can never affirm that he possesses it. The only possible explanation for such striving is that there is an absolute being which is the ground and the foundation of all this striving. (If there is no such being, then there is really not an explanation, since the intellectual dynamism of man is doomed to frustration, and reality is unintelligible). (Wilson 1971, p. 263)

Wilson does not say that the denial of complete intelligibility seems to imply a self-contradiction, but only that human striving for knowledge would be *unexplained* and it would lead to frustration, because it would have no foundation.

It is interesting that all of them hesitate to affirm that Lonergan's argument is a good Kantian transcendental argument, in which the denial of complete intelligibility would imply a contradiction with the performance of knowing. Ronald Hepburn (1973) explicitly denies such a possibility. He agrees that the argument provides a valuable regulative ideal, but if taken

as transcendental, it is not valid: „The notion of complete intelligibility in explanation, once again, can be seen as a valuable ideal, a regulative notion that extends or extrapolates from our experience of *limited* intelligibility; it cannot claim, however, to be a *condition* for the possibility of any explanation” (Hepburn 1973, p. 50). More precisely,

[...] the notion of the complete intelligibility of the world is an extension of, or extrapolation from, our successful attempts to understand aspects of the world. It is not a condition of our having any knowledge at all, nor a condition of our having the knowledge we do have. Only if it were a condition could a valid transcendental argument be mounted. (Hepburn 1973, p. 49)

There is a more appropriate interpretation of the argument, which emphasizes the „notion of being” and dialectical method. The subject has a notion of being at the beginning, and then he explicates this notion into a fully developed concept of the complete intelligibility of being and reality of God. Quesnell, for instance, says that Lonergan’s argument moves from „‘I, who am seriously trying to understand the world, cannot doubt that the world is understandable’ to the realization: ‘I already hold that God exists’” (Quesnell 1990, p. 274). In order to recognize these statements as true, objective, and certain, according to him, one has to assimilate Chapters 11, 12, and 13 of *Insight* (chapters on self-affirmation, notion of being and objectivity). He continues, „Lonergan writes in the conviction that all human beings already have knowledge of God, just as all have implicit knowledge of being and of self. His proof offers the tools to make their knowledge of God explicit” (Quesnell 1990, p. 276). This is why he says that „Lonergan’s proof is critical realist” (Quesnell 1990, p. 277). Bernard Tyrrell makes it even more explicit:

it is only if one intelligently, critically and wholeheartedly commits oneself to the positions [...] that it will ultimately be possible critically to validate for oneself the legitimacy of Lonergan’s formal proof for the existence of God. Indeed, [...] nothing less is required of the individual than an ‘unrestricted commitment to complete intelligibility. (Tyrrell 1974, p. 121)

Tyrrell’s statement makes his interpretation seem circular: one is first committed to complete intelligibility, and then one affirms it as really existing. One would naturally expect a good reason to believe that reality is completely intelligible, and then, if one were provided, one could make a commitment. It is also quite unusual to make the personal commitment of the reader a part of an argument. This may sound like an argument *ad*

hominen. Hugo Meynell convincingly defends the existence of complete intelligibility arguing that the intelligibility of reality requires a further explanation, which leads to the affirmation of a will, which is similar to human free will.¹⁵ (Macintosh, Meynell 1994, pp. 43-60).

If one accepts that the argument is somehow valid, one has two ways to understand it: (1) the argument starts with self-affirmation, but then it becomes too complex, because it involves Lonergan's quite original theory of being and objectivity, or (2) it starts with the presupposition of Lonergan's critical realism. In both cases, the argument will be acceptable to philosophers who accept Lonergan's doctrine of being and objectivity, and thus become „critical realists.” The problem is that one of the *a priori* criteria of a theory being true is that the more complex the theory is, the less likely is it to be true. And Lonergan's argument is much more complex than other traditional arguments, which might undermine the trust of the reader.

In order to make Lonergan's argument affective, a simpler justification of the complete intelligibility of reality is needed. We have already mentioned two attempts at simpler defenses: „the best explanation” argument (P. Wilson) and the Kantian transcendental argument (R. Habito).

In addition to these attempts, there is yet another one built up on the affirmation that all questions about reality have an answer (from which the affirmation of complete intelligibility would follow). This is a reasoning similar to Leibniz's justification of the principle of sufficient reason, according to which every event, and true statement, has a „reason” (explanation) for why it is so. Leibniz in his cosmological argument accepts that the world temporally considered is caused by its prior states, but he demands a final cause for the world, and the rational basis of its intelligibility. Since efficient and final causes can go to infinity without ever providing a sufficient reason for the world, there must be a necessary, self-explained being, which is the ultimate reason for all things. There must also be an intelligible ground for all true propositions.

Leibniz regarded the principle of sufficient reason as an innate truth capable of demonstration *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Craig comments on Leibniz's *a priori* demonstrations that „the principle is required by the nature of things; it is an essential principle of reason, the denial of which leads to an indefensible position and the overthrow of the most important part of philosophy; it is justified *a priori*, by bare reason; to deny it is comparable to denying the law of contradiction and reduces one to absurdity” (Craig

¹⁵ Meynell answers the objections raised by Burns, Hepburn, and Stope-Roe.

2001, p 263). The denial of this principle would lead to absurdity because the denial itself presupposes the principle. Leibniz argued that the principle can also be demonstrated *a posteriori*, because everyone employs the principle. It has the strongest *a posteriori* proof available, it has the strongest empirical justification possible. Leibniz notes that an exception to the principle has never been found, it has never been falsified. Its neglect leads to fantasies and delusions. The principle is pragmatically and repeatedly verified, since it is necessary to life and learning. Thus „all our inductive reasoning presupposes the validity of this principle” (Craig 2001, p. 268). The affirmation of the principle that everything has a reason which is parallel to Lonergan’s principle that all questions have answers (explanation) lead to the affirmation of the complete intelligibility of reality.

IX. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was not to prove that Lonergan’s argument is conclusive. The intention was to briefly present the argument, emphasize its importance for the authentic human knower, and the necessity of a further elaboration. Lonergan gives a general heuristic structure for doing so, but his argument, even though it may be valid, is not effective because of its complexity.

There are several things which call for a further critical examination: The detailed movement from self-affirmation to the complete intelligibility of reality, and the nature of „self-explanatory” being. The argument seems to hold even if one drops the latter.

Authenticity and especially openness to new spontaneous questions regarding all reality have repeatedly been emphasized by many commentators. One should not dismiss the metaphysical questions as meaningless without an acceptable reason. Lonergan seems to be convinced that once the questions are taken seriously, and the answers are critically examined, the affirmation of the complete intelligibility of reality and its identification with God are unavoidable.

Nowadays, however, we witness that metaphysical questions are raised, „theories of everything” are elaborated, but they often conclude without an affirmation of God. A stronger and more effective argument is required. Yet Lonergan seems to be right that, on the one hand, intellectual integrity or authenticity requires a solid argument and, on the other hand, the argument depends on the authenticity and integrity of the human knower in his pursuit

of the pure desire to know. No inexplicable matter of fact is satisfactory for an authentic human investigation.

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