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ON BERNARD LONERGAN:

Neither Jew nor Greek, but One Human Nature and Operation in All

FREDERICK E. CROWE, S.J.

THE differences between Hebrew and Greek thought-patterns are a common-place today in the academic world, and are rapidly becoming such in popular journalism. One sees the dynamic opposed to the static, the existential to the essentialist, the concrete view to the abstract, the active surrender of faith to the cold speculation of reason. The temporal and historical are contrasted with the timeless and unchanging and permanent, and the total view, in which knowing includes loving, to the analytic tendency which distinguishes faculties, habits, and acts, categorizing the latter according to their specifically differing objects.

It is no argument against the core of truth in these contrasts to say that they have begun to be used as mere clichés, without effort to define and be precise, without sense of limits, nuances, exceptions, without urge to investigate accurately the truth of the matter. It is not even relevant in this context to remark that the clichés are sometimes uttered in the same breath with a rather haughty condemnation of the scholastic clichés they would replace, nor is it any refutation of their fundamental truth that they can be and are made to serve personal interests as well as scientific objectives. For clearly at their origin was a moment of creative insight, which responsible scholarship has been concerned to

formulate with care, elaborate in detail, and verify by patient research. Whatever the exaggerations therefore in their further use, whatever the inauthenticity of the user, the differences between Hebrew and Greek are now part of our patrimony of learning, and only the most uninstructed of theologians would dispute the need of taking the distinctive character of Hebrew ways into account when he interprets the Bible.

This particular set of differences, more familiar of course to those who ply the trade of theologian, is nevertheless just an instance of the widespread phenomenon of differentiation that can be observed in mentalities, mores, institutions, civilizations and cultures, between successive ages of history, between peoples living in isolation from one another in a given age, and even between groups and social castes within a given tribe or people. Hebrew and Greek, opposing one another across the great divide between east and west, may already forecast the full possibilities of differentiation inherent in human ways, but their differences are after all minor compared to those that exist between the extremes of oriental and occidental cultures. —Differences so radical that missionaries sometimes feel forced to question the validity of our most basic philosophical principles, to ask whether it is not simply more of European imperialism when we try to impose them on the peoples of the far east, whether we must not learn a quite different philosophy from Chinese or Indian thought, and learn to express our Christian faith in terms that bear little or no relation to the Judeo-Hellenic terms in which the early Church formulated it. Further, this difference between far east and European-New World west is itself, perhaps, by no means the most radical phenomenon of its kind: the study of the pre-logical mentality of primitive peoples that has produced such interesting results in this century provides indications of still more fundamental differences among those we nevertheless recognize as belonging to the community of mankind.

Finally, there is the fact, with its own relevance to the present problems of theology, that, within a given culture and

among those who greet one another from day to day, there are comparable differentiations. A few years ago C. P. Snow, in the Rede Lecture at Cambridge University, gave what has become almost classic expression to the alienation of scientific and literary men from each other. Working in the daytime with scientists and spending evening hours with literary colleagues, he felt he "was moving among two groups—comparable in intelligence, identical in race, not grossly different in social origin, earning about the same incomes, who had almost ceased to communicate at all."¹ Most readers will have some acquaintance with the storm of conflict the lecture caused,² but whatever the flaws in Snow's argument and however real the victory claimed by his opponents, the situation remained problematical enough for *Daedalus* this year to devote a special issue to the theme, "Science and Culture,"³ in order "to study some of the connections that exist" between the activities represented by those two headings, and "to gauge the accuracy of popular views which emphasize the supposed isolation of humanists, scientists and artists."⁴

Such phenomena as I have been sampling have not failed to excite the interest of philosopher and theologian, and to enter largely into theories of history, development, crosscultural communication, and the like. In this field Vico (1668-1744) is credited with founding the philosophy of history with his *Principii di una scienza nuova* . . . , setting forth the development of nations in the three stages of the age of the gods,

¹ *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, 1959, p. 2. See also *The Two Cultures: and A Second Look*, Mentor Books, New York, 1964, which adds Snow's comments after four years.

² One indication: the article of F. R. Leavis and the consequent flood of letters in *The Spectator*; cf. March 9, 1962, pp. 297-303, and March 16, pp. 329-333.

³ Winter, 1965. Published as vol. 94, no. 1, of *The Proceedings of The American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, with Gerald Holton as guest editor. German interest in the question can be gauged from P. K. Kurz, "Literatur und Naturwissenschaft," *Stimmen der Zeit* 176 (1965), 1-20.

⁴ *Daedalus*, p. iii of the volume cited, from the Preface by S. R. G(raubard).

the heroic age, the human age. We know the tremendous advances achieved by this science in the centuries since Vico's time, and the relevance of those achievements to the task of the theologian, whether he be engaged in the crosscultural task of transition from biblical categories to theological, or the task, likewise crosscultural, of passing from theological terms to a kerygma that is differentiated, adapted, contemporaneous, immediate, relevant to his hearers in their present concrete situation.

But the purpose of this article is not to talk about differentiations of culture, — it presupposes them, — but to ask about the community that is prior to the differentiations, to sketch one view of its structure and list some of its manifestations, and to suggest lines for investigating its relevance to the diversity of Jew and Greek. Is there a community that lies behind their differences and makes communication between the cultures possible, allows transition from one to another as well as integration of their goods and achievements in the realm of spirit? A rather consistent and, in my opinion, inevitable concern of students of culture, has been to find something like a universal base from which to attempt a general critique of the various cultures. It is that underlying unity which is the theme here rather than the more obvious diversity. Though positivists despair of finding such a unity and resist what they would regard as philosophical imperialism in this field, the philosopher and theologian should be open to its discovery. For, if it is found, it should greatly promote the solution of the crosscultural problems that beset us today in the sacred sciences. No doubt the problem of communication generally admits an *ad hoc* solution; as Robert Oppenheimer said of the tensions that develop in modern society between men in diverse academic pursuits, there is a remedy open to us in this, that "we can have each other to dinner."⁵ —An ambiguous suggestion, perhaps, should we happen to be dealing with a cannibalistic culture, but even then means of communicating could surely be worked out at some elemental human level of understanding and sympathy.

⁵ Quoted by G. Holton, *ibid.*, p. xii.

But our concern is for a basic theory that might systematize the various *ad hoc* proposals and be fertile in the creation of better ones.

1. To speak of differentiations is already to suppose an original unity from which the differences developed. Moreover, that usage is justified in some fundamental sense by the fact that our problem concerns members of one human race, for there is surely some obscurely glimpsed reason for the unanimity with which we set the creature we call *man* apart from other beings in the visible world. Even those who are most vocal in their rejection of a philosophical *a priori*, in their denial of anything like an "essence" in man, take this stand for the paradoxical reason that men are such as to be clearly distinguished from the world of animals, plants, minerals, etc. Very well, that "suchness" which is the basis of their discrimination, I will refer to as "nature," for, even though that nature is simply "possibility," it is a possibility that animals do not share; and then we can say that the community of human nature that lies behind differentiation, supplies also the underlying possibility of communication and integration. One might add a further *a priori* unity from the religious side, in the will of God that all men be saved, in the universal application of redemption and the gospel, but in this article I limit discussion to more secular factors. Hence my title. Though it will seem deliberately provocative to the enemy of the secular in religious questions, it indicates quite accurately the scope of my article.

Let us begin, not with the basic community itself, but with a rather simple clue to the way we might profitably investigate our question. The clue consists in the stability of the descriptive categories used in the natural sciences, as contrasted with the extreme variety and change of the categories that pertain to the cultural side of human life.⁶ Thus, colors, sounds, the feel of things, hot and cold, hard and soft, light and heavy, all these categories remain relatively constant for men across time and space. We observe other men re-

⁶ See Bernard Lonergan, *De Deo Trino*, Rome, 1964, vol. II, pp. 42-47, for this idea and its elaboration; also vol. I, 1964, pp. 88-91.

acting in the same way as we do to external stimuli and, though we have no access to their internal experience, we presume reasonably enough that they see the same colors in the spectrum and hear the same range of musical notes; if a person is obviously color-blind or tone-deaf, we put it down to a defect in his organic or nervous system. Similarly, we are accustomed within limits to common modes of operation, seeing men everywhere using their legs for locomotion, their hands for guiding tools in doing and making, their vocal apparatus for speaking. On the other hand, whatever pertains to the cultural exists in the widest variety, beginning with the very words we use to describe our common experiences: *hot*, *chaud*, etc. The music and dance of India are so different from those of Europe as barely to be included within the same category; one does not readily pass from knives and forks to chopsticks; a hockey fan can be extremely bored at a cricket game; and so forth.

What accounts for this contrast? Clearly, the sensing and performing structures of the human body are the constant factor that make the same colors distinguishable by all men, that make *hot* and *cold* categories that apply everywhere, that make all men walk about in an upright posture. But the structures are merely formal as regards the materials to be "processed," and with regard to these materials and their combinations the greatest variety is possible. All men use their eyes to see, but they see different things, they look for different things to see, and — most important of all — they can use their free imaginations to construct different objects for observation or contemplation. Similarly, all men use their legs to move about, but they go different places. All men use their hands for performing delicate operations on materials, — *organum organorum*, Aristotle and medieval thinkers called the hands, — but they make different artefacts. Thus, human ingenuity plus the variety of materials result in the differences of *hot* and *chaud*, of Indian dance and European, of hockey and cricket, and so likewise of boomerang and rifle, of guild and labor union, of cave-dwelling and sky-scraper, of *Arabian Nights' Entertainment* and *Hamlet* or *King Lear*.

I have called the foregoing merely a clue, for our concern is not with hockey and cricket, obviously, but with more basic activities. The very fact that one man uses his eyes on his wheat-field and finds his interest there, while another is completely absorbed in looking at a set of black inkmarks on paper, suggests that there is an "internal" activity which is more properly human than merely seeing or hearing, using hands or feet, one that determines the choice of objects at which to look and the use of the body's members. But there is a clue in these more "external" activities, in that we can discern there something like a formal structure which remains relatively constant, and distinguish from it the materials that continually change, enter into different combinations, issue in extremely diversified products. And the question now is whether there is, in this more properly human activity, some counterpart of that distinction, and some analogous structure which remains as a permanent way of operating in all the changes of the *operata*. We may even ask in anticipation whether that internal structure will not be so much the more stable as it belongs to "spirit" rather than to "body" and so is removed from even the chance variations that have their possibility in the material substrate and occasionally issue in malformed human beings.

The purpose here is to go beyond generalities. Everyone who talks about "men" must concede, grudgingly perhaps, some basic community that makes us one and offers the possibility of communication. Almost any Thomist would go further and assign the basis of differentiation in a subjective element of potentiality corresponding to an objective. Objectively, there is the infinite potentiality of matter that admits of such a bewildering variety of forms in the physical, chemical, biological, zoological realms, matter that is open to development, not merely through chance variation and emergent probability, but also through the intervention of the artificer, that may be molded into tools, buildings, artefacts and institutions of boundless variety. Corresponding subjectively, there is the infinite resourcefulness of intelligence, *potens omnia facere*, capable in its wide-ranging fertility of conceiving mentally and directing the creation in reality

of all the forms that the material universe offers in potency. Now I certainly do not condemn such generalities as these; in the long run they are more significant than the notion of structure to be exposed in this article. But they are even less likely to interest specialists and, as I shall explain, it is the specialists who must eventually take up the challenge if we are to see more of a community between Hebrew and Greek than we have done in the recent past. We have to be more specific therefore, and so we speak of common structures.

2. The notion of structure received a 748-page introduction in Bernard Lonergan's *Insight*, the aim of which was "to assist the reader in effecting a personal appropriation of the concrete, dynamic structure immanent and recurrently operative in his own cognitional activities."⁷ His exposition, which I follow here, may be briefly outlined as follows. In the beginning is experience: I hear and taste and feel and smell and, most of all, I see. So of course, does my dog; but there is the difference between me and my dog that I get ideas about my experience; more basically, there is in me a wonder, a capacity to inquire and seek the intelligibility of experience; it is this wonder that gives rise to ideas. Sooner or later, however, in the self-correcting process of learning, I discover that my ideas are not always right, that error abounds when I accept my ideas uncritically, that ideas in general are just *possible* explanations of the data and, if I am to be rational, I must institute a further inquiry, I must reflect on the correctness of my ideas; it is this reflection that gives rise to rational truth and knowledge of the real. So there are three levels: experience (data, presentations of sense, representations of imagination), understanding (ideas, thoughts, suppositions which are possible explanations), reflection (grasp of evidence grounding judgment and knowledge). And the dynamism which operates the transition from level to level is manifested in a twofold question: the

⁷ *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, London & New York, 1957, p. xvii. See also "The Concept of *Verbum* in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 7 (1946), 349-92; 8 (1947), 35-79; 404-444; 10 (1949), 3-40; 359-93.

question for understanding which turns experience into something to be understood, the question for reflection which turns the idea into something to be investigated for its truth. Furthermore, within each of the two higher levels there is the extremely important element of formulation, the Thomist twofold *verbum*: on the level of understanding, ideas are formulated in concepts (transition from engagement with the particular to release from the particular in universalisation); on the level of reflection, grasp of evidence is formulated in judgments (transition from subjective grounds for affirmation to objective judgment and the "public" character of knowledge, the possibility of communication).

The foregoing account was limited to the three levels of cognitional activity. If we add now the very essential further element of the affective and voluntary, we have four levels of human consciousness and activity: the empirical (experience), the intellectual (understanding), the rational (reflection), the moral (voluntary). To quote a summary account that Father Lonergan himself gives in a recent article:

If one wakes, one becomes present to oneself, not as moved but as moving, not as felt but as feeling, not as seen but as seeing. If one is puzzled and wonders and inquires, the empirical subject becomes an intellectual subject as well. If one reflects and considers the evidence, the empirical and intellectual subject becomes a rational subject, an incarnate reasonableness. If one deliberates and chooses, one has moved to the level of the rationally conscious, free, responsible subject that by his choices makes himself what he is to be and his world what it is to be.

. . . Does this many-leveled subject exist? Each man has to answer that question for himself. But I do not think that the answers are in doubt. Not even behaviorists claim that they are unaware whether or not they see or hear, taste or touch. Not even positivists preface their lectures and their books with the frank avowal that never in their lives did they have the experience of understanding anything whatever. Not even relativists claim that never in their lives did they have the experience of making a rational judgment. Not even determinists claim that never in their lives did they have the experience of making a responsible choice. There exist subjects that are empirically, intellectually, rationally, morally conscious.⁸

⁸ From p. 234 of Father Lonergan's concluding word ("Cognitional

3. The question now is of the verification of this structure in different activities of different cultural groups, for the universality of the structure remains just an idea until rational reflection on the evidence grounds its assertion. That is, just as the intrinsic dynamism of the structure, if it exist objectively, calls for verification of every idea conceived in the mind of man, so it calls for verification of our ideas about the structure itself. We have to adduce some evidence that scientist, artist, philosopher, theologian, believer, types at first sight so alien to one another, nevertheless operate in patterns that are similar in form, isomorphic. So I propose to indicate that isomorphism here in two paradigm comparisons: that of Thomist procedures with those of empirical science, that of the latter with everyday intersubjective procedures. Then, in the following section I shall go on to suggest that biblical procedures themselves follow a similar pattern. For simplicity's sake I will limit my brief considerations to cognitional structures, there being less doubt, I should think, about the fact of a moral conscience operating in all men in some manner that is relevant to their particular activities.

The first point, the isomorphism of Thomism and science in their cognitional structures, has been the object of a special study by Father Lonergan himself,⁹ and I simply summarize his findings here. Briefly, the relation of hypothesis to verification in science is similar to the relation of definition to judgment in Thomism, the empirical character of science rendering verification necessary just as the freedom of divine providence determines the need of Thomist judgment in addition to definition. Further, with regard to origins, "just as the scientific problem leads to a scrutiny of

Structure," pp. 230-42) in the symposium: *Spirit as Inquiry. Studies in Honor of Bernard Lonergan*, Chicago, 1964 (the volume appeared originally as n. 3, vol. 2, of the quarterly, *Continuum*, 1964, pp. 301-552). Notice that the special interest in our quotation is the human subject as subject, as conscious and present to himself; however, the four levels of consciousness are the same as the four levels of operation.

⁹ "Isomorphism of Thomist and Scientific Thought," *Sapientia Aquinatis* (Communicationes IV Congressus Thomistici Internationalis, Rome, 1955), pp. 119-27.

sensible data that ultimately results in an hypothesis, so the Thomist question leads to a scrutiny of sensible data that ultimately results in a definition."¹⁰ Again, Thomist abstraction corresponds to scientific invariance, both claiming independence "of the spatio-temporal conditions of their origins on the level of sense."¹¹ And, as scientific scrutiny leads only to approximate laws, so too Thomist effort to define is marked by a parallel modesty that recognizes very few essential definitions and struggles towards its goal by a reasoning process rather than by a leap of intuition. Then, scientific anticipations form a heuristic structure similar to the metaphysics that results from Thomist operations: "it is remarkable that the scientist conceives as his ideal goal knowledge of theories verified in any number of different instances and that the Thomist will add that by verification the scientist knows contingent existence, by theories he knows essences and forms, and by appealing to instances he acknowledges matter as well as form and existence . . . Because every revision is simply a repetition of the same general process of experience, of hypothesis, and of verification, the structure of scientific knowledge is a constant and that methodical constant squares with the Thomist metaphysical constant of potency, form, and act."¹² Finally, besides the moving object of understanding (quiddity or form emergent in sensible or imagined objects), there is the end or goal that is being in its full sweep, and this, besides being explicit in Thomism, continually challenges the scientist to proceed beyond the narrow limits of his specialty, and so "contemporary science finds itself compelled to relinquish its traditional naive realism and to come to grips with philosophic issues."¹³

It should be repeated that the structural isomorphism allows full scope to differences arising from different materials, different "formal objects" of the various sciences, different sources of truth.¹⁴ The significant point here is that

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 126.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119: "Isomorphism, then, supposes different sets of

the scientist deals with data, hypotheses, and verification, where the Thomist cognitional structure deals with *sensibilia*, *intelligibilia*, and *vera*, relating them to the corresponding elements of the ontological counterpart, potency, form, and act.¹⁵ If the materials are so different, that very fact makes the similarity of pattern in the operations all the more remarkable, suggesting already a more universal occurrence of the pattern.

That suggestion receives strong and perhaps unexpected confirmation in the entirely different situation of everyday life and its cognitional activity. For there is little trouble in showing that cognitional activities occur here in the very same general relationship and pattern as they do in science.¹⁶ Both the scientist and "everyman" begin with experience. The scientist observes data: the paths of the planets, the lid of the tea-kettle puffing up and down, the more controlled experiments of the laboratory. The plain man observes data: the rattle in his car, the look of anger from his employer, the strange silence in the house when he goes home. Both the scientist and "everyman" are concerned to understand. "Why" is as familiar a word to one as to the other; each in his own way ponders, turns over the data in his imagination, puzzles, worries, finally gets an idea. Both the scientist and "everyman" are concerned with truth. The plain man does not rest content with his idea, at least when something he values is at stake; if, for example, there is question of investing money, the mere possibility that things may be as represented by the salesman does not move him, he wants

terms; it neither affirms nor denies similarity between the terms of one set and those of other sets; but it does assert that the network of relations in one set of terms is similar to the networks of relations in other sets."

¹⁵ The reader will ask for documentation of this point (the relation of cognitional and ontological structures in Thomism), but here I can only refer to my article, "St. Thomas and the Isomorphism of Human Knowing and Its Proper Object," *Sciences ecclésiastiques* (Montréal, Canada) 13 (1961), 167-90.

¹⁶ For the relation of our cognitional theory and structures to "common sense" and "mythic consciousness," see *Insight* (Index, under those words).

to check and make sure, to get at the truth of the matter. Further, he can be quite adept in conversation at exposing the defects in his neighbor's view, pointing triumphantly to contradictions there, marshalling evidence for his own position. He might be repelled by such words as verification, crucial experiment, and the like, but the procedures they name are not totally unknown to him. It has even to be said that "everyman," like the scientist, is concerned in due measure to formulate his understanding, to find words to communicate it. Undoubtedly, this exigence is less demanding in everyday life where understanding so often remains in the preconceptual state, where the death of a child brings father and mother together in wordless sorrow. But even then they feel the need to talk, to put their sorrow into words; and the other children, too young for speeches, find a solace in hearing their parents give voice to the common grief of all.

Again, of course, the differences are great. The lacunae in the procedures of "everyman" are more obvious than the structural elements that are present. He does not pursue understanding as a career; he easily gives up the attempt to formulate his thoughts; except in certain restricted areas, his efforts at verification are half-hearted; he does not consciously set the universe of being as his goal but recognizes mind's exigence mostly in the field of the practical and so, when his family's needs are provided for, is quite content to sit with pipe and slippers without caring to dominate the universe by knowledge. But the fact that he *sometimes* follows the same pattern as the scientist and philosopher, that he *can* inquire into the meaning of data, formulate an idea, and investigate its truth, makes it legitimate to ask whether the more noticeable lacunae, instead of indicating a quite different procedural structure, are not rather signs of a failure to respond to the native exigence of human spirit, a failure that is perfectly understandable in the context of practical life and the pressing need of earning a living for his dependents.

There is a connected area that seems to me extremely important for this question; I add a word on it here by way

of appendix to this section. We find, in modern literature, almost an obsession with the problem of meaning in interpersonal relationships. A novelist is not content, for example, to have his characters join in love as brute animals do; the relationship must be suffused with meaning, and invested in a ceremonial, and lifted to the level of the artistic. Just as eating and drinking are an artistic performance in man and their execution in a merely animal way revolting, so also the marital relationships of man and woman. This is so much the case that it provides a clear and generally applicable distinction between pornography and art, the one merely unreeling a succession of images to arouse animal passions, while the other is concerned to give meaning and dignity to those same passions and their consequents by raising the biological to the artistic.¹⁷

Now that concern seems relevant to our exposition of cognitional structure and even to scientific procedures. True enough, since Dilthey a whole school of thought has diligently distinguished "understanding" in the human area from "explanation" in the natural sciences: I *understand* my friend's need, but I *explain* the eclipse of the moon. However, it seems to me that both examples are concerned with the exigence for understanding in some more fundamental sense, with the need, let us call it, for *intelligibility* in the world, be it the world of man or the world of nature. To be accurate here, we should notice that the artist also *creates* meaning and intelligibility, endowing otherwise brute materials and actions with form and dignity and meaning, and so the analogy is not so much with pure science as with technology. If this evokes a still keener protest from the artist, who certainly does not want the characters of his novel compared to mouse-traps and detergents, I can only reply again that this is to attend to the differences of materials, which may be enormous, but is to overlook the common structure that is my only concern in this article.

One can press the isomorphism further still and insist that even the exigence for formulation and abstract concep-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

tual expression appears in the field of art. Not necessarily in the artist himself, who will sometimes decline to formulate the meaning of his work, but in the work of critics. What are the critics doing if not attempting to detach the meaning of the artistic creation from the particular image or form in which it is embodied or incarnate and universalize it, make it public intellectual property through words and concepts? However much the artist may condemn the critics as parasites on his creativity, it seems clear that the human race is not going to dispense with them; they answer to a basic need of the human cognitional structure. Finally, the exigence for truth is implicit in the moral judgment of the artist, when he asks, not whether his work has value as art, but what the morality is of his executing the work and presenting it to the public, *this* public in a particular state of development, education, etc. I think that, despite all their rebellion against the less intelligent elements in law and censorship, responsible artists do experience and submit to this exigence.

4. We come now to the chief interest of this article: the isomorphism of Hebrew and Greek cognitional structures, to put the theme in the most unprepossessing terms. In entering this important field of debate and proposing to say something on this vexed question, I would respect the norm that always guides the responsible writer but presses on him here with a special urgency, of not pronouncing on matters that lie beyond his competence and of informing his readers as well as possible what he is trying to do. First, then, my purpose here is merely to suggest possible lines of approach. We very much need a *thorough* study of the type that is only hinted at here, even if it should come to conclusions opposed to those I anticipate — especially so, in that case. But it would have to be done by a specialist in biblical thought. As a theologian, I cannot very well undertake the detailed investigation, though I believe that a theologian has to conceive the question, set the terms of the inquiry, and propose the general procedures consonant with the question that is being investigated — I shall return to that point presently. Secondly, the biblical data which I will study in a tentative

way are: the question for understanding, the question for reflection, the objective of truth. But the study will not consist in writing dictionary articles on the biblical words for question, understanding, reflection, truth; it will consist in studying the activities denoted by those words. The search is not for these ideas *in actu signato*, as themes, but *in actu exercito*, as lived and practised. Thirdly, I make no concession to the view that creates a mystique of the Hebrew mind. I assume that the word, "why?", manifests similar mental operations whether it occurs in the Mother of Jesus or in Aristotle. If my assumption is wrong, my error can be demonstrated, but the demonstrator will be asked to give me his views on the general community and differences of cultures, the relationship of nature and grace, the potentiality of intellect with regard to natural science and divine mysteries, and other matters that pertain to the presuppositions of such a demonstration.

My first question regards the biblical interest in questions for understanding. As stated, we will not pursue a linguistic study of the word, question,¹⁸ or write a commentary on the "useless questions" which are a theme in the pastoral epistles,¹⁹ necessary as those lines of investigation may be in the thorough study that is desired. Our few and hasty soundings have to do with the *performance* of questioning; they cannot be independent of words which are, after all, the immediate object of study on the *sacra pagina*, but they will regard words that denote the activity in its occurrence, and not as thematized. The relevant words are "what?", "why?", "how?", and the like, rather than *question*, *inquiry*, *heuristic*, etc. Here innumerable instances leap to mind. The occurrence of "what?" on finding food in the desert: "When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?'—for they did not know it was" (Exodus 16:15); or in the wonder created by the Lord's first miracle as recorded by Mark: "They were dumbfounded and began to ask one another, 'What is this?'" (Mark 1:27). The occurrence of

¹⁸ See H. Greeven's article on *erôtaô* and its cognates in Kittel's *Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament*.

¹⁹ 1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 2:23; Tit 3:9.

"why?" in Mary's: "Why have you treated us like this?" (Luke 2:48), or in the Lord's: "If I spoke well, why strike me?" (John 18:23). The occurrence of such words as "how?" in Mary's: "How (pôs) can this be . . . when I have no husband?" (Luke 1:34), or Nathanael's: "How (pothen) do you come to know me?" (John 1:48).

A more reflective attitude, though still occurring without thematization of the questioning nature of man, is found in statements indicating the inner tension of inquiry, the dynamism of the search for understanding. Luke tells us that "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered over them" (Luke 2:19), where the word, pondered, is the same one he uses for the "discussion" of the Jewish rulers on how to handle Peter and John (Acts 4:15), and for the "debate" in which the Athenian philosophers engaged Paul (Acts 17:18). Linked with this is the occurrence of wonder in its milder forms. Generally *thaumazô* refers to the amazement of those witnessing signs and prodigies, but it can also refer to sentiments of simpler curiosity more akin to our English *wonder*, as when outside the sanctuary "the people were waiting for Zacharias, surprised (ethaumazon) that he was staying so long inside" (Luke 1:21). And, in general, there seems to be a wealth of relevant data in the references to the teaching process, the lack of understanding charged as a failure,²⁰ the request for explanation indicating an existential need,²¹ the apparent satisfaction that explanation gave.²²

There is a second type of question: the reflection that requires evidence enough to justify a judgment on the matter. This question regards truth, it asks which side of a contradiction is right or, in the absence of contradiction, whether my idea is the right one. Again, we do not demand a thematization of the terms: reflection, grasp of sufficient evidence, verification, and so on, in the biblical record; we simply look for the performances that correspond, at least in a rudimentary way, to the elaborate procedures which we

²⁰ Cf. Mark 6:52; Luke 2:50; Acts 7:25.

²¹ Cf. Matthew 13:36.

²² Cf. Matthew 13:51; 16:12; 17:13; Luke 24:45.

now denote by those terms. A paradigm will be helpful here, and a famous one exists historically in Abelard's *Sic et non*. The reader will remember that that book, so characteristic of the middle ages, so influential in promoting the dialectical spirit of those times, drew up with regard to some 158 propositions, the reasons for and against acceptance. It is a classic formula for the dialectical way to truth.

Now the Bible seems to give many instances, in its own way, of that sort of thing. A story of the legendary wisdom of Solomon supplies one perfect instance, when the two prostitutes stood before the king and argued: "The child of this woman died in the night . . . Then she arose . . . and took my child . . . 'No; but the living child is mine and the dead child is your child,' the other said" (1 Kings 3:19 ff.); an open contradiction, if ever there was one, no more to be admitted by the Hebrew mind than by the Greek, as Solomon's judgment brought out in dramatic fashion. Or one could take an instance of a pattern that is recurrent in John: "There was much whispering about him in the crowds. 'He is a good man', said some. 'No,' said others, 'he is leading the people astray'" (John 7:12). Later, we have the significant statement: "Thus he caused a split (*schisma*) among the people" (John 7:43).

In the light of this practically explicit admission of the principle of non-contradiction, one might examine more closely other episodes in the Bible. There is the test to which the Pharisees put Jesus on the marriage law: "'Why then,' they objected, 'did Moses lay it down that a man might divorce his wife by note of dismissal?'" (Matthew 19:7). The objection, it seems to me, has as implicit presupposition the principle of non-contradiction: You are saying one thing, Moses said the opposite, how do you get out of that? Likewise, there is the question of the Lord's own disciples later in the chapter: "'Then who can be saved?' they asked" (Matthew 19:25). God was certainly savior, and their Bible seemed to make prosperity a sign of his favor; but against that is a statement that seems to make salvation impossible to the wealthy — explain the contradiction. Clearer still

is the Lord's own cross-questioning of the Pharisees on the Messiah: "'Whose son is he?' 'The son of David,' they replied. . . . 'If David calls him 'Lord', how can he be David's son?'" (Matthew 22:42-45).²³

Questions for reflection lead naturally to their complement of truth, the judgment that answers yes or no and gives us knowledge. For the third time I insist on my procedure here: my appeal will not be to the biblical use of the word, truth,²⁴ but to the performance of asserting the truth. In that context, a very significant word is the simple copula, "is." When John wrote that the signs in his book "have been recorded in order that you may hold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God . . ." (John 20:31), he is a witness for my case that the biblical writers are concerned with truth in the scholastic sense of the word. Of course, the special interest of those writers appears in the very next line: "and that through this faith you may possess eternal life by his name." But no amount of insistence on this aspect ought to dilute the force of that "is." Such instances are legion, as when the centurion in Mark said, "Truly this man

²³ The questions which, following *Insight* (cf. Index), I divide into types, may be introduced by the same interrogative and show the same grammatical form; so it is the *intention* of the questioner that determines the type of question: Does he intend to put an objection as one contradicting, as one concerned with the truth? or does he intend to ask for explanation as one puzzled and desiring understanding? I would assign Mary's question in Luke 1:34 to the latter type, the Lord's in Matthew 22:45 to the former, but this is a point for exegesis to decide.

Generally, I should think, questions put in sarcasm (John 1:46) or hostility (John 6:42, 52) intend to contradict and regard the level of truth, whereas a more neutral attitude such as that shown by the Jerusalem delegation to the Baptist (John 1:25) could pertain to either level. In fact, the average man freely mingles both levels in confusion, and there is no reason for insisting that a given question must be a pure case of one or the other type.

Add one final note: many questions are implicitly statements, and then they pertain to our next paragraph.

²⁴ The stock specialist account has been that the Hebrew meant by truth, not the "Greek" *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*, but something like fidelity. But that great de-bunker, James Barr, an Old

was a son of God" (Mark 15:39), or when the high priest challenged Jesus: "By the living God I charge you to tell us: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" (Matthew 26:63).²⁵

What I have been trying to point out is an isomorphism of structure, a similarity in relation between cognitional acts, a formal likeness of biblical performance in this field to Greek and modern. If the reader wishes to judge the truth of my idea, he should attend rather exactly to the data I have presented, and not to some other data illustrating the more familiar differences between Hebrew and Greek. It is quite easy to be misled here by the vast difference in materials, or by the subtler difference between performance and thematization of the performance. Certainly the Hebrew, "What is it?" is exercised on different materials than Aristotle's, "Let us state what . . . substance should be said to be,"²⁶ and is much farther from thematization of performance; but is the performance itself similar in the two cases? does each question manifest the same need of understanding, the same dynamism of intellect seeking explanation? Certainly the Hebrew, "No; but the living child is mine and the dead child is your child" is very different from the Aristotelian, "They do not all agree as to the number and the nature of these principles [of things]. Thales . . . says the principle is water . . . Anaximenes and Diogenes make air

Testament specialist himself, has recently produced a mass of evidence to show a common usage of the word in Greek and Hebrew writers; see his *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, Oxford University Press, 1961, especially pp. 187-200. Our procedure avoids this controversy.

²⁵ It is remarkable that little two-letter words should have such a profound philosophical and theological significance. "Is" is a prime example, but "Yes" is equally pregnant; and so is "No" corresponding to "Is not." Not only that, but a language may dispense with the copula, as Hebrew sometimes does, and then the same effect is gained without words, by the juxtaposition of subject and predicate or by other means. The answer of Jesus to the high priest was clearly an assertion, but may have been in an Aramaic form that would hardly be recognized as an assertion by a westerner; so Mark translates very simply, "I am" (Mark 14:62).

²⁶ *Metaphysics*, VII, 17.

prior to water Anaxagoras . . . says the principles are infinite in number",²⁷ but is there a similarity in the dialectical form in which the argument is carried out and the truth pursued? Certainly the Hebrew, "If David calls him 'Lord', how can he be David's son?" is a long way from the explicit and thematic formulation, "The most certain principle of all is . . . that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect . . .";²⁸ but would the Lord's point be valid without his implicit recognition of the principle Aristotle formulated, or would his case be cogent against the Pharisees unless they too recognized implicitly the principle involved? I believe that, if one gets hold of my point and achieves personal openness to the possibility of isomorphic structure in cognitive activity, he will have little trouble in discovering what seems so obvious to me, a basic community of mentality that underlies all the more superficial differences between Jew and Greek.

5. I have said that the thorough investigation of the topic I have merely introduced would have to be undertaken by a biblical specialist, but that the determination of the topic and of the general procedures consonant with its nature, the procedures that should be followed if *that* question is to be investigated and not some other, belongs to the more systematic tasks of the theologian. After all, one who reads the modern exegete will really not expect him to undertake an enthusiastic study of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*! Yet we can hardly have an expert knowledge of what a question in general is, if we ignore that kind of book; and not to have an expert knowledge of what a question is, would be a very bad beginning for the investigation of the questioning nature of the Hebrew and the structure of his cognitive activity. It seems then that there must be place for more philosophical and theological considerations at the very outset of the study, and I should like to enlarge on that point before concluding.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 3.

It is a striking fact that almost every page of the New Testament is crowded with questions, and yet the *theme* of the question hardly occurs at all in the biblical dictionaries, commentaries, and manuals. But perhaps the oddity of that will disappear if we look at a few parallel cases in the history of theology. It is also a fact that the first treatise we know to have been called *De Trinitate* was written by Novatian around 250 A.D., but afterwards treatises under this title slowly became the fashion. And similarly other treatises begin at a point in time, to become later a regular occurrence: *De incarnatione* in the early 4th century, *De Spiritu Sancto* in the late 4th century, and so on. Not as if no one had worshipped the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit before 250 A.D., but the holy Three as such were not a theme; they *could* not be a theme, for, by all evidence, no one had even *counted* them before the last decades of the 2nd century. The point is that thematization supposes a moment of creative insight; one must have the idea at least obscurely in mind first and then one attends more diligently to the data, either for conceptual formulation or for judgment on the fact. The Messiahship was a theme in the early Church and the Christian community ransacked the Old Testament for prophecies and elaborated on their fulfilment in the New. The destiny of the Jewish people became a theme for Paul in the epistle to the Romans and he wrestles with the data to discover and explain to himself God's mysterious dealings with his chosen people.

Now the idea of human spirit as marked by its questioning character, as almost constituted by inquiry, though it has a kind of charter in Greek philosophy, became an explicit theme of philosophy only in relatively recent times—the human mind is so ponderously slow. The idea therefore could not possibly be a theme of investigation in New Testament studies before our times. This not to claim that the idea must first occur to philosophers before it can enter biblical studies; as Gilson has long and eloquently insisted, many fundamental ideas of “Christian” philosophy were conceived under the influence of the word of God. My point is that the idea must occur somewhere and be at least obscure-

ly formulated in someone's mind before it becomes a theme; it is most likely to occur to those who make a career of ideas; but even if it occur in study of the New Testament itself, thematization will involve a return to the New Testament data for a thorough and proper investigation.

I have been talking of the priority of certain ideas in investigating the isomorphism of Hebrew and Greek mentalities, the need of a prior *Begrifflichkeit*, and I illustrated the need with the example of the question. This kind of program is not at all alien to the spirit of modern biblical research or of scientific investigation in general. It is another commonplace today that the interpreter brings his suppositions in every case to his task, that the ideal of presuppositionless inquiry, which prevailed when history was an emerging science, is really nonsense. The favorite example here is Bultmann, who has very definitely formulated presuppositions, uses them openly in his exegesis of the New Testament and, so far from repenting of his misdeeds, states that all other interpreters do what he does, only without acknowledging the fact. There can hardly be any doubt that Bultmann's program contains a valid point, for the only one who lives without presuppositions is the new-born babe: the infant is not much of a scholar, and neither would the adult be a competent interpreter if he tried to leave all ideas behind as he came to his task.

Nevertheless, we have to be accurate here to avoid relativism. An obvious objection might run: as your presuppositions, so your interpretation; modern science has taught us to be obedient to the facts, but the approach through presuppositions seems to determine beforehand what the facts are going to be allowed to be. The objector will supply instances of the corrupting influence of presuppositions on judgment: the decadent scholastic insists on finding his notions of eternal procession, logical truth, substantial form, etc., in biblical terms that have a verbal resemblance, and similarly the uninstructed exegete cannot bear to find anything in the biblical record that savors of scholastic procedures of defining terms, stating and proving a thesis, etc.

The answer to the objection consists in subjecting the cliché about presuppositions (for it too is a cliché) to precise analysis. What it seems to mean is that one's presuppositions yield a range of *possible* interpretations, they limit interpretation to a field, but within that field they do not determine which interpretation we must accept. It now becomes clear that the way to escape relativism is to adopt the universal viewpoint, to be open to all explanations and interpretations, excluding none a priori, admitting none a posteriori till rational evidence is forthcoming. The analogy here is the creative mind of God. It is filled with ideas of possible worlds and, the greater the number and variety of his ideas, the greater his freedom in creating; the less the necessity imposed on his actual choice of a world. That is, his ideas are an a priori on the level of possibility that eliminates any imposed a priori on the level of actuality. Similarly, the wider the viewpoint of the interpreter, the greater the number of possible interpretations open to him, and the greater his freedom in discovering the correct one.

But the universal viewpoint is not enough either, if we do not take possession of the operational structures which are ours. The world of objective being and the openness of subjective spirit can be completely universal, and our conversion to the universality of object and subject can be as genuine as you please; but, if we have no grasp of the structure we necessarily use in guiding spirit to being, we can hardly avoid the most serious blunders. We need then a critical awareness, an appropriation and evaluation of our own powers of intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation of the universe of being; we need also an awareness and appropriation of our power for harmonious accord with the universe, but the emphasis of this article has been on the cognitional side rather than on the affective. It was this taking possession of our operational structures that was treated in the second and third sections above.

Finally, there is knowledge of the particular differentiations that result when the structure is used on different materials and with different interests and with different deg-

rees of correspondence to the dynamism that man is. Here the role of the specialist is to the fore. Every differentiated culture requires its own specialist, the Hebrew culture likewise requires its own, and my superficial efforts in the fourth section of this article should not be taken as a specimen of what a specialist might be able to do with the same material. But it seemed important to attempt a sketch myself, for otherwise the point of the preceding paragraphs was less likely to come through, or they might seem to be mere a priori reasoning without application to the biblical documents. There is indeed an a priori element in them, not an a priori that requires us to find, for example, the principle of non-contradiction in biblical writers, but the kind that enables us to see it if it is there. I think that the implicit admission of the principle is there, and that the apparent neglect of it on some occasions is explained here as it would be if found elsewhere, even among logicians — by the contradiction not being brought sharply to their attention, by the matter lying outside their present field of interest, etc. If then I were told by an exegete that Hebrew man cares nothing for my principle, I should listen, I hope, with respect, I should not label the exegete incompetent in his own specialty. But I should want to examine his presuppositions, I should regard it as within my competence to judge those presuppositions, and, if I found them faulty, I should continue to look for a specialist who is open to the universe of being, who has a view of man that does not a priori exclude Hebrew openness to the universe of being, and then I should put my question to him: do you find an isomorphism in the cognitional structures of Hebrew and Greek?²⁹

²⁹ The same general attitude should be taken towards specialists in every culture, for, despite all the protests of the specialists and due regard being paid to the real dangers of imperialism on the part of general science, it can hardly be denied any longer that certain very general presuppositions guide every investigator who is worth his salt, and it is the business of general science to examine them.

This remark is made in relation to a short note of É. Bréhier, "Originalité de Lévy-Bruhl," *Revue philosophique de la France* . . . 139 (1949) 385-88. Bréhier's thesis is, that whereas study of primitive mentalities had formerly been dominated by the idea of

genesis (sci., early myths are but an imperfect form of the true explanation science will discover), Lévy-Bruhl on the contrary discovered in the primitive mind irreducible structures not to be supplanted by "better" ideas; we are dealing with thinking of another nature, quite content with its achievements.

But everything here depends on how deeply one penetrates. The example given in the article is that of "causality", primitive myths are not to be reduced to a primitive idea of causality. Our notion of structure goes deeper than such comparisons, just as our notion of intelligibility goes deeper than causality, and so there is room for putting the question again: is there an isomorphism between the primitive mentality and ours?