

PART III

COMPARISONS

I began my exposition of Bernard Lonergan's philosophy with the distinction between common sense and methodical, intellectual (or philosophical) inquiry. People of common sense, according to Lonergan, tend to understand time as containing being, and theoretically oriented people being as containing time. At the same time, he says that methodical intellectual inquiry is complementary to common sense knowledge. If this is true, one would not expect that the solution to the problem of the eternity of God depends on the distinction between common sense and methodical intellectual inquiry. Rational choice should not be between the two, but a choice of both, 'of science to master the universal, and of common sense to deal with the particular.'¹

Richard Swinburne claims that the everlastingness of God is rooted in common sense language and, as a matter of principle, it should not be radically modified, because then the proof of coherence becomes impossible, and any argumentation for the existence of God becomes obscure. He applies the same principle to the concept of God as well as to the concept of time. As a consequence, Swinburne adopts the concept of a temporal God. This does not mean, however, that Swinburne pursues some particular (common sense) interest in philosophy. In his analysis, he seems to clearly move from common sense perception into a scientifically (intellectually and explanatorily) patterned context, which is obvious from his considerations on the theory of probability. Yet his explanation is in harmony with common sense understanding (as we would also expect in Lonergan after he has said that intellectual inquiry is complementary to common sense). In Swinburne's system, the question of the decision between the two distinct contexts does not arise.

¹ CWL 03 (*Insight*), p. 203.

There are two important ideas which can be helpful in solving the apparent difficulty in Lonergan's system. First, he says that common sense has no aspiration of abstract and universal laws, and therefore it falls into general bias if it starts generalizing its viewpoints: 'It easily is led to rationalize its limitations by engendering a conviction that other forms of human knowledge are useless or doubtfully valid.'² Scientists, or philosophers in general, have to face a similar difficulty: 'Every specialist runs the risk of turning his specialty into a bias by failing to recognize and appreciate the significance of other fields.'³ Thus, science and common sense can conflict, if one or both of them are determined by a bias of regarding the other domains of knowing as less valuable (or less significant), and inappropriately extending the boundaries of its own domain of knowing. According to Lonergan, the problem is more serious in common sense, because it is incapable of grasping its limitations, and it disregards larger issues and long-term resolutions.

The second useful idea is to elaborate better the notion of complementarity, and clarify how Lonergan's theory of a timeless God may complement common sense perception of God as temporal. Since common sense people are concerned with the concrete situations, they perceive God as one who helps, acts, and sustains the universe in existence. All these activities are necessarily occurring in time. Acting in time, however, does not necessarily imply that God exists in time. If a theory postulates a timeless God and explains how he can act in time, this theory is complementary to common sense. In this conception, however, one cannot say that common sense people tend to understand time as containing all being (God included). Discussion about a timeless being does not belong to the realm of common sense

² CWL 03 (*Insight*), p. 251.

concerns. Thus Lonergan should probably say that a *biased* common sense tends to understand time as containing (all) being.

Consequently, both theories affirming temporal or non-temporal God can be complementary to (a non-biased) common sense. The decisive element is explanation of how a timeless being can act toward or relate to a temporal being. Lonergan uses analogy with human understanding to achieve this goal. Swinburne says that any such conception is incoherent and meaningless. He imposes some restrictions on analogy used in philosophical theology based on his analysis of ordinary language.

Another important problem arises in comparisons of different conceptions of time, which has a deep impact on understanding of the notion of timelessness. Lonergan accepts the account of the operational concept of time implied in Einstein's relativity theory (RT). Swinburne, however, refuses some presuppositions of Einstein's RT, and claims that even though we have a strong evidence supporting RT, we also have good reasons to postulate the possibility of one cosmic time. The existence of a cosmic time does not affect Lonergan's argument for postulating the unrestricted act of understanding, but it opens new ways how the relation between God and temporal universe could be explained. Furthermore, Swinburne's elaboration of common sense (or ordinary language) perception of time, to which a cosmic time is complementary, raises new challenges for Lonergan's theory. It requires of Lonergan a more elaborate account of why the unrestricted act of understanding cannot be in *any* time (in addition to the impossibility of being in the time implied in Einstein's theory).

³ CWL 03 (*Insight*), p. 251.

After this short exposition of several difficulties regarding the concept of God and time, it becomes clear that we need to examine whether either of our two authors incorporated general bias into his system, or whether the origin of such different perspectives is somewhere else (e.g. in a misunderstanding of some philosophical or scientific principle). The crucial examination will regard Swinburne's turn from the time implied in Einstein's RT to a unique cosmic time, and Lonergan's analogical explanation of the relation between the unrestricted act of understanding and temporal being. At the same time, we have to re-examine the concept of omniscience, because it is the relation between omniscience and time, which leads Lonergan to affirm timelessness of God and Swinburne to affirm the divine temporality.

I divide the questions into three chapters. First, there are epistemic questions about the nature of scientific, explanatory, and theological explanation, and their relation to beliefs or, in other words, implementation of explanations into the context of beliefs. We will need to clarify the similarities and differences between the two different foundations of the two philosophical theologies (especially foundational principles of the arguments for the existence and timelessness or temporality of God) with particular attention paid to the meaning of 'complete' explanation. Second, I will compare and analyze the two different conceptions of the world-order. Explanation of the relation between world-order and world-process determines understanding of the nature of time. In this context, several time theories and different interpretations of Einstein's RT will be examined. Third, there are several crucial questions regarding the two different conceptions of God and their relations to different concepts of time. In the final chapter, all the previous analyses and explanation are harmonized in a unitary perspective.

CHAPTER 9

EXPLANATORY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

Before we analyze the topics directly related to the eternity of God, we need to clarify, what it means to *know* something about God. We have seen in Chapter One that Lonergan elaborates his notion of knowing as a triple activity of experiencing, understanding, and judging. He (generically) specifies how the final judgment, knowledge in the strict sense, is reached. Then he inserts knowing into the context of believing, which occurs, according to his spatial metaphor, on the next fourth level of human consciousness. Knowledge is integrated in the context of beliefs, values, and decisions. We have seen in Chapter Five that Swinburne perceives (factual) knowledge as a sort of justified belief. Thus belief is a cornerstone of his concept of knowledge. In order to provide a good basis for our comparisons and evaluations, we need to elaborate Lonergan's notion of belief. This was deliberately omitted from Chapter One, because it is, according to him, qualitatively different notion than the notion of knowing.

I will divide this chapter into two sections. The first section will treat Lonergan's understanding of the process of coming to believe, and the difference and relationship between belief and knowledge. I will clarify the similarities and differences between Lonergan's account and Swinburne's concept of 'warranted

belief.' Second, I will evaluate the two authors' accounts of different kinds of knowledge, especially scientific and theological knowledge. Significant difficulties with the concept of complete explanation, which is crucial for the arguments for the existence and timelessness or temporality of God, will arise in the section on theological explanation.

9.1. Knowledge and Belief

In Lonergan's system, if we want to understand the relation between knowledge and belief, we need to start with a more general explanation of the structure of human subject. In the last section of the Chapter One, I concluded with a spatial metaphor of the three levels of human consciousness: empirical, intelligent, and rational. All three levels are interdependent, and they are related functionally in reaching for knowledge. Since Lonergan does not think that knowledge is a sort of belief, I need to explain the relation between knowledge and belief introducing a new fourth level of consciousness. Lonergan says,

The fourth level, which presupposes, complements, and sublates the other three, is the level of freedom and responsibility, of moral self-transcendence and in that sense of existence, of self-direction and self-control.⁴

He extends his view when commenting on Pascal's description of religious faith in terms of the heart that has reasons:

By reason I would understand the compound of the activities on the first three levels of cognitional activity... By heart's reasons I would understand feelings that are intentional responses to values... Finally, by the heart I

⁴ Lonergan, B., *Method in Theology*, p. 121.

understand the subject on the fourth, existential level of intentional consciousness and the dynamic state of being in love.⁵

The fourth level provides existential context, in which knowledge is incorporated into the context of feelings, beliefs, values, decisions, and love.

In regard to human knowledge (truth- and value- judgments), we need to emphasize that knowledge in Lonergan's understanding does not depend only on individually developed patterns of intelligence, but also on socially and historically conditioned context of beliefs. Lonergan says,

The judgments, by which he [any civilized man or woman] assents to truths of fact and of value, only rarely depend exclusively on his immanently generated knowledge, for such knowledge stands not by itself in some separate compartment but in symbiotic fusion with a far larger context of beliefs.⁶

Judgments of facts, which are concrete instances of knowledge, occur in a context of personal beliefs, which are conditioned socially and historically. These beliefs have their origin in common sense, common knowledge, common science, values, and climate of opinion generated through communication.

The general context of knowing is the collaboration of humankind in the dissemination and advance of knowledge. People receive from and contribute to a common fund of knowledge. Lonergan says, 'while they contribute in virtue of their own experience, understanding, and judgment, they receive not an immanently generated but a reliably communicated knowledge.'⁷ Because of a highly developed collaboration, the mentality of any individual becomes a composite product in which

⁵ Lonergan, B., *Method in Theology*, p. 115.

⁶ Lonergan, B., *Method in Theology*, p. 42.

⁷ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 725.

it is extremely difficult to separate immanently generated knowledge and common beliefs. In his analysis of judgment, Lonergan shows that

there stands in the habitual background of our minds a host of previous judgments and assents that serve to clarify and define, to explain and defend, to qualify and limit, the prospective judgment that one is about to make.⁸

In his analysis of belief in *Insight*, Lonergan outlined a ‘theorem’ about knowledge, and a typical process of coming to believe something to be true. The theorem has two parts. The general part of the theorem says that ‘there arises a rational necessity that leads us to affirm or deny the proposition as certainly or probably true.’⁹ The absolute or probable necessity emerges from the grasp of the conditioned, its conditions, and the link between the two. The immanent act of assent or dissent in rational consciousness rests on the unconditioned, which is independent of particular places and times, and also of the particular mind. Consequently, if truth or rational assent is essentially detached from the peculiar uniqueness of an individual person and independent of place and time, it can be communicated and collected in a common fund of human achievements.

The concrete part of the theorem says that ‘there can and to some extent there does exist a collaboration of men in the advancement and the dissemination of knowledge.’¹⁰ Each one can contribute to a common fund of knowledge in as much as he or she truly grasps and expresses the virtually unconditioned. Each one can also make his or her own appropriations of the common fund inasmuch as intelligently and critically believes the truths which others have grasped and communicated.

⁸ CWL 03 (*Insight*), pp. 727-728.

⁹ CWL 03 (*Insight*), p. 729.

¹⁰ CWL 03 (*Insight*), p. 729.

The distinction between immanently generated rational assent and belief is apparent in the sciences. According to Lonergan, scientists depend in great deal on common sense beliefs and on the beliefs developed through study and experiments in their own fields. They tend, however, to exclude these beliefs when they make their own contribution to science:

Belief plays as large role in science as in most other areas of human activity. A scientist's original contributions to his subject are not belief but knowledge. Again, when he repeats another's observations and experiments, when he works out for himself the theorem needed to formulate the hypothesis, its presuppositions, and its implications, when he grasps the evidence for excluding alternative views, then he does not believe but knows.¹¹

In regard to belief, Lonergan distinguishes five stages in the typical process of coming to a true belief:

(1) preliminary judgments on the value of belief in general, on the reliability of the source for this belief, and the accuracy of the communication from the source, (2) a reflective act of understanding that, in virtue of the preliminary judgments, grasps as virtually unconditioned the value of deciding to believe some particular proposition, (3) the consequent judgment of value, (4) the consequent decision of the will, and (5) the assent that is the act of believing.¹²

In the preliminary judgments of the first stage, there are involved such concrete elements as the reliability of a given source and the accuracy of a given communication. Intelligent inquiry and critical reflection have to deploy all their resources both to exclude the numerous possibilities of error and inaccuracy in communication, and to discover varied indications and confirmations of truth. The

¹¹ Lonergan, B., *Method in Theology*, p. 42.

key act occurs in the second stage, because it constitutes the validity, rationality, and value of the belief in reliability of communication. The third, fourth, and fifth acts form a sequence: 'The judgment is on the value of deciding to believe. The act of will is a decision to believe because of the value. The assent or dissent of belief is the value that one affirms and decides to accept.'¹³ All three acts are anticipated by the reflective act of understanding in the second stage, 'for in that reflective act the conditioned that is grasped as virtually unconditioned is the value of deciding to believe a given proposition.'¹⁴ If the reflective act occurs, there will follow with rational necessity the judgment of value, with free responsibility the decision to believe, and with natural necessity the act of believing. However, if the reflective act is to occur, there must be a conditioned, a link between the conditioned and its conditions, and the fulfillment of the conditions. The conditioned in question is the value of the belief that source is reporting a true judgment.

Whatever the concrete procedure of acquiring a belief, the only general rule is to be alertly intelligent and critically reflective; and 'however intelligent and critical one may be, the result is to be named not knowledge but belief, for one ends with an assent to a proposition that one could not oneself grasp to be unconditioned.'¹⁵ In addition, scrutiny of the reasons for almost any belief will reveal that it rests on other beliefs.

Hence, there is a radical difference between knowing and believing, according to Lonergan. Immanently generated knowledge is somehow forced upon us with absolute necessity (even though knowledge as such may only be about probabilities).

¹² *CWL 03 (Insight)*, pp. 729-730.

¹³ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 731.

¹⁴ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 731.

It depends on the grasp of the conditions of a possible judgment (of facts), the link between the conditions and judgment, and fulfillment of the conditions. Belief, in contrast, implies that one cannot grasp the conditions and/or their fulfillment, thus he or she takes over such analysis from a person who may grasp it better. In such a case, one has to evaluate trustworthiness of the source and conclusions. In addition to the judgment about the value of such knowledge and its origin, one has to decide to believe (and/or act), and give assent to the received knowledge. Therefore, on the one hand, there are extraordinarily few items of immanently generated knowledge that are totally independent of beliefs. On the other hand, there is no belief which is independent of some items of immanently generated knowledge. Immanently generated knowledge and beliefs form a symbiosis.

Swinburne's conception of the relation between belief and knowledge is different. According to him, knowledge is warranted strong true belief. A belief is warranted, if it is a diachronically justified belief, and its acquisition is not a matter of luck (knowledge cannot be acquired *via* false propositions). Diachronic justification consists of investigation over time of the evidence for a belief, or basic beliefs (which give significant probability to the belief in question), and investigation of the criteria for judging the degree of prior and overall probability of a belief being true, and their correct application.

Even if diachronically justified belief is warranted, sometimes it may not be true, and thus such a belief does not constitute knowledge. Clearly, here Swinburne has in mind factual knowledge or synthetic propositions and not analytic propositions.

¹⁵ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 733.

Analytic propositions are necessarily true, because their negation is contradictory. Negation of a factual proposition is not (obviously) contradictory. The fact that the warrant cannot always guarantee that a belief is true, seems to be the reason why the question of knowledge is for Swinburne primarily a question of strong beliefs and their justification.

A similar difficulty with the truth of factual propositions also arises in Lonergan's epistemology. In order to make the difficulty more apparent, let us divide Swinburne's basic epistemic terms into three categories and compare them with Lonergan. There are (socially accepted) basic beliefs with their prior probabilities, knowledge (warranted strong true belief), and diachronic justification of knowledge. This triple division is parallel to Lonergan's distinction between the conditions (arising from related insights), the conditioned judgment (knowledge), and the link between the two. According to Lonergan, in order for a judgment to account for knowledge, one needs to grasp correctly all relevant conditions, the link between the conditions and judgment (of facts), and whether the conditions are fulfilled.

In ordinary life, we are rarely certain that we have grasped all the relevant conditions and their fulfillment, or that we have grasped fully and correctly the link between the judgment and its conditions. Grasp of all conditions and their fulfillment implies that there is no relevant question which has not been considered and correctly answered. Ordinarily it is quite rare that one grasps all relevant questions which may arise. There is a further difficulty in ordinary knowledge, namely that the conditions usually involve beliefs which were accepted from common fund of knowledge. If some of the conditions arise from beliefs, then also the conditioned judgment will only be an expression of beliefs (in Lonergan's sense). It is almost impossible for an

ordinary person to fully grasp the further conditions of all beliefs regarding the source and values of communicated knowledge, and therefore it is also very difficult to give a complete philosophical account of concrete instances how knowledge in ordinary life is generated. Lonergan proposes his transcendental precepts for achieving genuine knowledge and authentic beliefs: Be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, and be responsible. Lonergan's account is simpler and more comprehensive, because it is a generic account, whereas Swinburne intends to give a more specific account of all instances of ordinary and scientific knowledge, which would be acceptable in analytic tradition of philosophy.

In order to make the similarities between the two systems even more explicit, it is good to emphasize that both of them claim that knowledge has to be reasonably justified, and justified knowledge can have character of certainty or probability. Swinburne's distinction between synchronic and diachronic (over-time) justification has a parallel in Lonergan's philosophy. When Lonergan explains the complexity involved in the relations between experiencing, understanding, and judging, he realizes that the actual judgments also depend on the past judgments, and at the same time they provide context for new judgments. Thus the contextual aspects of knowledge (judgments) appear in three manners. First,

There is the relation of the present to the past.... They [past judgments] govern the direction of attention, evaluate insights, guide formulations, and influence the acceptance or rejection of new judgments... Hence, when a new judgment is made, there is within us a habitual context of insights and other judgments, and it stands ready to elucidate the judgments just made, to complement it, to balance it, to draw distinctions, to add qualifications, to provide defense, to offer evidence or proof, to attempt persuasion.¹⁶

¹⁶ CWL 03 (*Insight*), p. 302.

Second, there are relations within the present; 'Existing judgments may be found to conflict, and so they release the dialectical process. Again, though they do not conflict, they may not be completely independent of each other, and so they stimulate the logical effort for organized coherence.'¹⁷ Third, there are the relations of the present to the future, which means that each judgment is a contribution towards the whole of knowledge. Thus for both philosophers, in order to acquire new knowledge, one has to reach a proposition or judgment in the context of other propositions, beliefs and judgments considered to be true in the present, and then evaluate it in the context of other theories, beliefs, and evidence accumulated over time in common fund of knowledge. The 'logical effort' and 'dialectical process' belong to synchronic justification, which has to be extended to the past judgments. This is how one reaches a diachronic justification of knowledge.

A noticeable difference between the two is that where Lonergan uses terms 'insight' or 'grasp of intelligibility' or 'grasp of the link between the conditions and conditioned,' Swinburne uses terms 'basic beliefs,' 'belief' that a proposition is true, or 'belief' that a proposition is justified. It should be emphasized that Lonergan writes about knowledge in the sense of an ideal scientific knowledge, where the role of beliefs (communicated knowledge) is temporarily deferred. Thus he uses quite a narrow concept of knowledge. In fact, it is apparent from the expositions of this chapter, that he sometimes uses the term 'knowledge' as also embracing communicated knowledge, which he calls 'belief.' Based on his generic account of knowledge and belief, it seems that his concept of knowledge could be extended into a more general common sense concept in which beliefs take a part. Such a new

¹⁷ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 302.

concept would be very similar, if not identical with Swinburne's account of ordinary and scientific knowledge. One can say that there is nothing in Lonergan's treatment of judgment (and its conditions) that would contradict to Swinburne's account, and that there is no indication in Lonergan's philosophy why such an extension of the meaning of knowledge would be in principle impossible. One would only use the term 'knowledge' for both immanently generated knowledge and received knowledge (beliefs), and the meaning would be close to the meanings of knowledge in both common sense and in Swinburne's philosophy.

The Value of a (Diachronic) Justification of the Eternity of God

Lonergan's explanation of the nature of explanatory knowledge has important consequences for our topic. In his inquiries, Lonergan moves from the ordinary problems of common sense to the theoretical interests of a philosopher, from descriptive theory to an explanatory analysis, and from empirical (heuristic) methods to a generalized empirical method. The questions related to the problem of the eternity of God are also investigated in an explanatory context. Hence they are interesting or valuable for a theoretically minded person who knows or believes that there is a God. One must have theoretical aspirations about deeper knowledge of the nature of God in order to contemplate questions about eternity. A person of common sense is usually interested in God's acting in particular situations of human life, and not so much in different theoretical conceptions of the nature of God. Different conceptions of the eternity of God do not make a significant difference in the practical aspects of Christian faith.

However, the difference between practical and theoretical interests does not mean that people of common sense never come across the questions about the concept or nature of God. They often wonder how it is that the world functions so well. Moreover, who is this God upon whom we depend so much? The answers to such questions are elaborated systematically by theoreticians. For common sense people, it is a matter of belief whether they accept an explanation from appropriate authority in the field. It is vocation of a philosopher or theologian to grasp the conditions of a judgment, the link between the two, and the fulfillment of the conditions, and thus provide a reliable explanation for human society. In Lonergan's understanding, a philosopher who investigates the concept of God and achieves knowledge of important attributes of God, makes a valuable contribution to advancement and dissemination of human knowledge.

Swinburne explains that any subjective or objective internalist justification is a good (valuable) thing to have, whether or not the belief is true. If a belief is true, internalist justification makes it intrinsically more valuable. Warranted knowledge is better than just justified true belief, because justification may proceed *via* false beliefs, and having false beliefs is not good thing to have. Even a diachronic subjective and/or objective justification as such is valuable, because any investigation, which evaluates evidence for a belief and/or for basic (socially accepted) beliefs, and recognizes and correctly applies the correct criteria of prior and overall probability, is worthwhile and praiseworthy for its own sake. Consequently, in Swinburne's philosophy, a systematic investigation of the existence and concept of God (investigation of his eternity included) is also a valuable and praiseworthy enterprise.

9.2. The Nature of Theological Explanation

In this section, I will summarize how both philosophers explain (and basically agree on) some particular basic assumptions of scientific explanation. The differences begin to arise in extending this account into theological explanation, and they culminate in the final judgment about the meaning and nature of the complete explanation and its application in philosophical theology.

One of the primary concerns of both Swinburne and Lonergan is to understand the epistemic principles of scientific inquiry and explain how they relate to the investigations of common sense and philosophical theology. Both of them use many illustrations to show that the basic principles manifest and explicitly recognized in sciences are also at work in every day lives of ordinary people (and in ordinary language).¹⁸

Before I clarify the difference in their understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry, it is interesting to note that Swinburne in his account of (common sense) description encounters the same difficulties as Lonergan. The difference between a description which involves a particular viewpoint (how things appear) as distinct from a description which does not involve a particular viewpoint (what things are), is apparent in Swinburne's explanation of religious experience. He distinguishes two senses of description or two senses of verbs like 'seems,' 'appears,' 'looks': 'The

¹⁸ Swinburne excludes analysis of practical concerns of common sense when he states that his concern in philosophy is in 'knowledge-that' and not 'knowledge-how.' (It should probably be said 'knowledge-how to do something' as opposed to, for instance, 'knowledge-how the universe works or functions.')

epistemic sense... describes how we are inclined to believe that things are.’¹⁹ For instance, a round coin from an angle ‘looks round.’ ‘The comparative sense describes the way things seem by comparing them with the way things normally seem.’²⁰ For instance, a round coin from an angle ‘looks elliptical,’ since it looks the way elliptical things normally look. Comparative theory involves a particular viewpoint. Swinburne wants to show that even an apparent experience (in the epistemic sense), is a real experience, if it is caused by that of which it purports to be an experience. It is reported, for example, that millions of people have somehow become aware of God during their lives. They may be mistaken about the ways that they become aware of the presence of God, but that is the way it has seemed to them.²¹ Based on the principle of credulity one ought to believe that things are as they seem to be, unless we have evidence that the things are different.

Hence Swinburne and Lonergan agree that the theories using experiential or explanatory conjugates or both, can be true. No one of them discards descriptive qualities as not real.

There is a difference between the two conceptions of ‘scientific.’ I have already explained in Chapter One that in Lonergan, there are several difficulties with his definitions of common sense and scientific knowing. The crucial characteristic of scientific and explanatory knowing is movement from experiential to explanatory conjugates:

Empirical inquiry has been conceived as a process from description to explanation... Initial classifications are based upon sensible similarities. But as correlations, laws, theories, systems are developed, initial classifications

¹⁹ Swinburne, R., *Is There a God?*, p. 131.

²⁰ Swinburne, R., *Is There a God?*, p. 131.

²¹ See Swinburne, R., *Is There a God?*, p. 131.

undergo a revision. Sensible similarity has ceased to be significant, and definitions consist of technical terms that have been invented as a consequence of scientific advance.²²

Since Lonergan identifies 'scientific' with 'explanatory,' the theory of emergence (chaos theory or complexity theory) becomes a science, even though there are no causal relations between the two levels of a complex system. Swinburne restricts the concept of 'scientific' to some sort of causal relations. For him, science is concerned with a particular kind of causality.²³

It is important that, even though both of them have almost the same understanding of the nature of descriptive (common sense) theories, and very similar understanding of basic principles of strictly scientific explanations, they radically differ in their conclusions about the nature of the theory, which explains what strictly scientific theories cannot explain. They say that investigation which goes beyond the strictly scientific will be analogical (partly anthropological), but they differ in some crucial features of such a more complete explanation.

Explanations of Philosophical Theology

In Chapter Five, we have seen that Swinburne starts his exposition of philosophical theology with his analysis of ordinary language. Ordinarily, if a sentence is to express a meaning, it must be an indicative sentence grammatically well formed, and every individual word has to have a meaning. To have meaning, words must be either words which we use in ordinary standard cases, or words whose

²² CWL 03 (*Insight*), p. 188.

²³ Where it is important to distinguish the two meanings of 'scientific,' I use 'strictly scientific' for Swinburne's restricted definition.

meaning is introduced by new syntactic and/or semantic rules. Furthermore, the meanings of the words must be empirically grounded, which means that they have to be somehow related to our ordinary experiences. Swinburne illustrates that new meanings are defined in this way in ordinary life as well as in the empirical sciences. In addition to being meaningful, a claim about a state of affairs must make a coherent or logically possible statement. If no direct (deductive) argument to support the claim that p is coherent is available, then an inductive (indirect) argument can provide evidence that p is coherent. An indirect proof of coherence has to show that a new statement is entailed by other statements which are generally accepted as coherent. Next, one has to present further evidence that the claim is not only coherent, but also true. Again, if no direct proof is available, an indirect proof can support the claim. According to Swinburne, the statements of theology are factual or synthetic statements. They are not logically necessary (or analytic). Therefore, only indirect proofs can be worked out, and the final claims will only be a matter of well justified beliefs.

Lonergan's understanding of ordinary language is implied in his more complex explanation of different facets of meaning. He considers the importance of the meanings not only in our language, but generally in human life. Lonergan understands meaning as 'a constitutive element in the conscious flow that is the normally controlling side of human action.'²⁴ In addition to the distinction of intersubjective, symbolic, incarnate, artistic, and linguistic meanings,²⁵ he recognizes partial, formal, and full acts of meanings. He says,

²⁴ Lonergan, B., *Method in Theology*, p. 178.

²⁵ See Lonergan, 'Time and Meaning,' *CWL 06 (Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964)*, pp. 94-121.

The full term of meaning is what is affirmed or denied. The formal term of meaning is what could be affirmed or denied but in fact is merely supposed or considered. The partial term of meaning is what is meant by a word or by a phrase. Rules of meaning govern the coalescence of words and phrases into the complete sense that may be supposed or considered, affirmed or denied.²⁶

There is a basic distinction between what is meant when one affirms or denies (full meaning), and what is meant when one merely considers, supposes, or defines (formal meaning). Swinburne's initial concern is to explain partial meaning and the rules of meaning, which govern the unity of the kind of meaning expressed in propositions. Then in his considerations of the meaningfulness and coherence of theism, he deals with the formal acts of meaning; and finally in his affirmation of the existence and timelessness of God, he reaches the full act of meaning (even though it is supported only by indirect arguments). In this context, Swinburne's analysis of ordinary language appears as a particular and more specific instant of Lonergan's generic account of the rules of formal and full meanings.

In Lonergan's system, a full meaning is reached in judgment. We can affirm or deny absolutely when we have a clear evidence in favor of affirmation or denial. If we do not have this evidence, we can only acknowledge our ignorance. Between these two extremes there is a series of intermediate positions with probable judgments. Lonergan says, 'the probable judgment answers a question for reflection, and though it anticipates a divergence between the judgment and actual fact, still the ground of this anticipation lies, not in a non-systematic element in the facts, but in the incompleteness of our knowledge.'²⁷ In such a case, knowledge is incomplete, even though it results from rational procedures. There has to be, however, some

²⁶ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 330.

²⁷ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 324.

approximation towards the completeness where no further pertinent questions do arise. Swinburne's inductive arguments for the existence of God are claimed to belong to this category, because even though his arguments may become stronger – for example, if one develops new and deeper aspects of the simplicity of God, or order and beauty of the universe – he believes in absence of counterevidence, his explanations should be adopted as the most probably true. In other words, according to him, there is no pertinent question for the time being, which would not be considered and answered in his system. However, since there may arise some new evidence and thus new questions in future, his inductive arguments are (in addition to their probabilistic character) somehow incomplete.

Lonergan distinguishes two particular cases when the need of induction arises:

If the problem of induction arose because the rest of the particular cases were not inspected, then the problem would be insoluble because the rest of the particular cases never are inspected; were they, there would be no generalization. In fact, the problem of induction arises because the particular case may not be properly understood; and it is solved by seeking that correct understanding.²⁸

In both cases, we have to keep in mind that for Lonergan the problem of induction arises in a fully explanatory context. Hence the inductive judgments, about which he writes are universal. Swinburne's arguments for the existence of God are not universal arguments. There is something missing in the grasp of the conditions. Even though his argument may provide a complete and ultimate explanation (and partial and non-standard at the same time), the conditions and their fulfillment are only grasped through the probability theory. The reason is that the inductive strength of his arguments depends on the conception of the world-order and conception of God,

where our knowledge of both of them is somehow incomplete. Furthermore, factual knowledge (which is the most probably true belief) in Swinburne is a comparative notion, and, therefore, the truth-value is always relative.

Lonergan's explanation of the concept of an unrestricted understanding is also somehow incomplete (partial), since we cannot really grasp fully what the unrestricted understanding understands. His argument for the existence of God, however, is claimed to provide certain and not only probable judgment. It is not an inductive argument. It is an analogical fully explanatory argument. He claims that he answered all pertinent questions, even though the concept of the unrestricted understanding is only grasped through analogy (and not fully) through extrinsic denomination. Thus in his perspective, even though the concept of God is grasped not perfectly (only through analogy), the argument for the existence of God is certain, because no further pertinent question could arise. Such a strong claim follows from the fact that Lonergan's argument does not start from particular features of the world-order, but from his explanation of human understanding and from a cognitive principle that reality (perceived by human mind) cannot be a matter of brute facts. Thus a complete explanation of being cannot stop with an affirmation of unexplained facts. Furthermore, in the first step of his argument, Lonergan affirm the existence of one being; namely, the existence of the person investigating the intelligibility of reality. To be more specific, Lonergan affirms in a virtually unconditioned way cognitional facts regarding the data of human consciousness.

Before we continue with theological explanations, let us recall a few of Lonergan's remarks on the nature of empirical explanations which can also be applied

²⁸ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 326.

to Swinburne's probabilistic model used in his philosophical theology. Empirical generalizations are no more than probable because the application of single laws always raises further questions. The further questions can be raised by unknown facts, or by known facts whose capacity to raise such questions is not grasped.²⁹ At the same time, 'If it [strictly empirical explanation] does not attain definitive truth, still it converges upon truth.'³⁰ Besides its probabilistic convergence upon truth, empirical explanation also operates within what Lonergan calls 'an upper limit.' Since the invariants of human cognitional structure imply invariants in the structure of empirical reality (i.e. proportionate being), 'there will follow an upper limit to the variation of theoretical constructions...'³¹ Each stage of scientific development heads for the invariants of proportionate being, and each successive theoretical system grasps the facts with greater nuance and accuracy. Thus there always will be a possibility of better systems, which grasp the same data better, but all such systems are compatible with the general, emergent structure of the natural world.

The limited and probabilistic character of strictly empirical investigation seems to be the main reason why Lonergan develops his considerations about God on deeper, mainly cognitive principles. If the goal of the arguments for the existence of God is to effect beliefs (in Swinburne's sense) of ordinary people, as Swinburne suggests, then his probabilistic model has the advantage that this way of thinking is generally accepted and used in common sense, empirical sciences, and criminal and historical investigations. Even though he needs to deal with the incomplete and probabilistic character of his theory, he avoids a difficulty of Lonergan's system.

²⁹ See *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 327.

³⁰ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 328.

³¹ *CWL 03 (Insight)*, p. 329.

Lonergan's argument starts with a cognitive principle, and thus the argument is accepted only if his cognitive theory is accepted. Therefore, even though Lonergan's cognitive theory provides a basis for a sound development of the argument, the very same theory may (and often does) bring into considerations more difficulties than the theory of probability.

Swinburne would refuse Lonergan's argument (even though it may be valid), because it is an argument only for philosophers, which does not implement ordinary way of knowing. The assessment that reality is completely intelligible is not a common sense statement (because of its universality). Common sense is concerned with the particular and only a biased common sense person would claim that he or she knows the truth value of such a universal statement. Thus for a common sense person the existence of God would be a matter of belief (in Lonergan's sense), which may only increase with the increase of trust in the authority, which communicates this argument. It does not follow, however, that Lonergan's argument is philosophical and Swinburne's is a common sense or journalist-like argument. It is true that Lonergan's argument is purely philosophical, but Swinburne's argument seems to be common sense and also philosophical, because of its rigor and justification of its principles (many of which are generally accepted among philosophers in analytic tradition of ordinary language philosophy).

In Lonergan, we have to distinguish what is often called 'revealed' theology from philosophical theology.³² Whereas in the former the central notion is faith in the latter it is understanding and belief. Let us very briefly summarize his conception of

³² Both of them are expected to be unified in systematic theology.

theology, which will give us better appreciation of the nature of philosophical theology and of the relation between theology and philosophy in Lonergan.

When Lonergan writes about theology, he means disciplines like dogmatic, moral, ascetical, scriptural, pastoral theology, etc. The center of such disciplines are ‘doctrines,’ which consist of specific judgments of facts and values. The meaning of doctrines can only be apprehended in a certain (foundational) horizon. The cornerstone of such a horizon is religious experience of God’s love, which constitutes faith (and which floods our hearts through the Holy Spirit; Rom, 5.5). Beliefs result from judgment of value, and the judgments of value relevant for religious belief come from faith: ‘...besides the factual knowledge reached by experiencing, understanding, and verifying, there is another kind of knowledge reached through the discernment of value and the judgments of value of a person in love.’³³ Doctrinal expression may be ‘descriptive and based ultimately on the meaning of words rather than on an understanding of realities. It may, if pressed, quickly become vague and indefinite. It may seem, when examined, to be involved in inconsistency or fallacy.’³⁴ This is why we need what he calls ‘systematics,’ which ‘is concerned to work out appropriate systems of conceptualization, to remove apparent inconsistencies, to move toward some grasp of spiritual matters both from their own inner coherence and from the analogies offered by more familiar human experience.’³⁵ The use of analogy becomes crucial, if one wants to remove apparent inconsistencies from the ‘spiritual matters.’

The analogies used in theology presuppose ‘foundations,’ the task of which is to formulate conscious operations in general categories (as opposed to special

³³ *Method in Theology*, p. 115.

³⁴ *Method in Theology*, p. 132.

³⁵ *Method in Theology*, p. 132.

theological categories). First, there is the task of formulating a ‘basic nest of terms and relations’³⁶ – that is, formulating the results of self-appropriation when the subject recognizes itself as an operating subject. The operations are, and result from, attending, inquiring, reflecting, deliberating. These basic tasks are then followed by formulating sets of ‘interlocking terms and relations’ or models. ‘Models, then stand to the human sciences, to philosophies, to theologies, much as mathematics stands to the natural sciences... Such sets, in fact, turn out to be useful in guiding investigations, in framing hypotheses, and in writing descriptions.’³⁷ These models are built up from basic terms and relations that refer to their roots in living human subject. In Chapter One, there is a brief elaboration of such a foundational model adjusted for our purposes. In Lonergan’s philosophy, it is elaborated in his cognitive theory.

Foundations in theology also require a systematic elaboration of religious experience, which provides the basis for special theological categories. The theologian describes religious experiences, and then further differentiates their stages, progress, decline, and authenticity. In this fashion, Lonergan says, ‘there is set up a scissors movement with an upper blade in the categories and a lower blade in the data. Just as the principles and laws of physics are neither mathematics nor data but the fruit of an interaction between mathematics and data, so too a theology can be neither purely a priori nor purely a posteriori but only the fruit of an ongoing process that has one foot in a transcultural base and the other on increasingly organized data.’³⁸

³⁶ *Method in Theology*, pp. 285-286.

³⁷ *Method in Theology*, pp. 284-285.

³⁸ *Method in Theology*, p. 293.

One can realize that elaboration of both aspects of foundations is a task of philosophy. Lonergan states the same idea more specifically and from a different perspective in his paper 'Philosophy and Theology.' He says that contemporary theologian, in building up and unifying his view, needs full and precise answers to three basic philosophical questions:

There is the question of cognitional theory: What precisely is one doing when one is knowing? There is the question of epistemology: Why is doing that knowing? There is the question of metaphysics: What does one know when one does it?³⁹

Cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics are foundations of any theological system. Philosophical elaboration of religious experience (experience of God's love) has to be integrated within the foundations.

Swinburne approaches the question of theological explanation (and also of the concept of time) from his analysis of ordinary language. Philosophy of language plays a crucial role in his theory. Almost all the words used in Swinburne's theology have ordinary and non-ambiguous meanings. As explained in Chapter Six, some words peculiar to theology are given analogical meaning by ordinary verbal definition and amendment of syntactic and/or syntactic rules. In addition, some characteristics of the words in theology may have unusual degrees, or they may be combined in unusual combinations, or applied in non-ordinary circumstances. Such a conception of analogy guarantees that one can verify whether a theological theory is meaningful, coherent, and possibly true.

Once we know that a theory is coherent, we have to show that there are good reasons to believe that it is also true. Swinburne claims that there are good inductive

arguments supporting the belief that there is a God. Since the strength of a belief is always measured in comparison to other beliefs, the strength of a belief increases with a higher probability of being true in comparison with the probabilities of the other beliefs. Based on the principle of simplicity and explanatory power, Swinburne says that even though the probability of the existence of God is not very high, it is considerably higher than probability that there is no God.

Therefore, the pillars or foundations of Swinburne's philosophical theology are philosophy of ordinary language and the probability theory. His introduction of the probability theory follows from his cognitive theory, where he assumes that knowledge is a sort of belief, and that we believe a theory to be true, if it is the most probable theory in comparison with other 'rival' theories.

Complete Explanation

For Lonergan complete explanation, which goes beyond strictly scientific explanations, culminates with the ultimate self-explanatory being. For Swinburne, any overall theory of the universe cannot be scientific. Scientific theories reach their limits in affirming a multiplicity of ultimate brute facts. These facts can be further explained by a personal explanation. Swinburne's overall personal explanation is claimed to have great explanatory power, and since it affirms only one brute (unexplained) fact, it is simpler than any atheistic theory (affirming multiplicity of brute facts), and therefore more probably true. One can naturally ask, if Swinburne's theory is more probably true because it affirms less brute facts than other theories, should we not say

³⁹ Lonergan, B., 'Philosophy and Theology,' *A Second Collection* (Toronto, University of

that Lonergan's theory is more probably true than Swinburne's, because it affirms no brute fact, and hence it is simpler? In order to answer this question, we need to explain what is meant by complete explanation.

The crucial reason why both philosophers are not satisfied with empirical explanations of sciences is that they search for a complete explanation of all phenomena. The term 'complete,' however, has a different meaning in each theory. The canon of complete explanation in Lonergan states that the goal of empirical inquiry is a complete explanation of all phenomena or data. No data should be ignored. Scientifically complete and relevant theory must be fully explanatory. One has to proceed from experiential to pure explanatory conjugates. A similar principle affects Lonergan's argument for the existence of God, where the investigator is not satisfied with any matters-of-fact explanation, and he or she also wants to explain the intelligibility of all data and all explanatory conjugates.

One can easily realize the ambiguity of the term 'complete.' 'Complete' explanation of space and time is different than 'complete' explanation of all being. Complete explanation of space and time is a matter of strictly scientific theories. But we have already seen that Lonergan acknowledges that such theories, even though fully explanatory, are limited. The canon of complete explanation explored in *Insight* is recognized in the context of strictly empirical method of scientific inquiry, when Lonergan analyses classical and statistical procedures. Once the principle is recognized, Lonergan elevates it into a general cognitive principle. Thus the canon of complete explanation, in addition to its role in strictly empirical sciences as a moving principle from common sense description to explanation, is also a moving principle

Toronto Press, 1974), p. 203.

from empirical to generalized empirical method, which culminates in metaphysical conclusions and affirmation of a self-explanatory being. Clearly, the meaning of 'complete' beyond strictly empirical context requires a further elaboration, where Swinburne's theory may be helpful.

For Swinburne, the need for a complete (non-scientific) explanation arises from the fact that some phenomena are somehow 'too big' for any well-established scientific system. Science explains why some event or state of affairs occurs in terms of a prior state of affairs and some natural law. It cannot explain, however, 'why there are any states of affairs at all; it can explain only why, given that there are such states, this state is followed by that state. Nor could it explain... why the most general natural laws of all hold.'⁴⁰ The questions of why there are some states of affairs and why the most general laws of nature hold cannot be answered by (strictly) empirical sciences. Thus they are either brute facts, or there is an explanation of a different kind.

In addition to the phenomena that are too big, there are phenomena that are 'too odd' to be fitted into the established pattern of scientific explanations. This happens when 'there is good evidence for a scientific system *h* covering a certain range of phenomena, but... it is not a consequence of *h* that certain phenomena (within the general range of *h*) occur.'⁴¹ Any attempt to amend *h* for the latter phenomena would make *h* so complex that it would be very improbable that *h* is true. Among such phenomena are events which theists claim to be miracles (violations of the laws of nature), and such odd phenomena as, for instance, the first state of the universe.

The need for a more complete explanation leads Swinburne to several important distinctions. He defines a *full* explanation as follows:

⁴⁰ Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, p. 72.

An explanation of *E* by *F* is a full one if *F* includes both a cause, *C*, and a reason, *R*, which together necessitated the occurrence of *E*... An explanation of *E* is only a partial one if the explanation includes factors which brought about the occurrence of *E*, but these factors did not necessitate the occurrence of *E*.⁴²

A full explanation explains why something happens, but it does so independently of whether or not there is an explanation of how any states (of a cause) come to be, or why any reasons which it cites operate. Otherwise, one would commit 'the completist fallacy,' which says 'that *F* could not explain *E*, unless there is an explanation of *F*.'⁴³ For instance, Hume objects that postulating a God whose plan to create the universe explains its order, would itself need explaining. Therefore, it cannot provide a full explanation. Swinburne says that 'it is no objection to explaining *E* by *F* that we cannot explain *F*,' because otherwise nothing in the universe could be explained (unless the origin of all galaxies is explained). An example of a full explanation is when the motion of a stone is brought about by the motion of a stick in somebody's hand. No facet of the motion as such is unexplained, yet further explanations can be done (some higher level reason may explain the motion of the hand).

In addition to the concept of a full explanation, Swinburne defines a *complete* explanation: 'A complete explanation of the occurrence of *E* is a full explanation of its occurrence in which all the factors cited are such that there is no explanation (either full or partial) of their existence or operation in terms of factors operative at the same time of their existence or operation.'⁴⁴ For example, there is a complete (we should probably also say atheistic) explanation of the high tide in terms of Einstein's

⁴¹ Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, p. 71.

⁴² Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, p. 73.

⁴³ Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, p. 73.

⁴⁴ Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, pp. 74-75.

laws (and presuppositions) of the general relativity, and the sun, moon, earth, water etc. being where they are. If the same phenomenon is explained with Newton's laws, then we only have a full explanation.

There is a special kind of a complete explanation, which Swinburne calls 'ultimate explanation':

I define an ultimate explanation of E as a complete explanation of E , in which the factors C [cause] and R [reason] cited are such that their existence and operation have no explanation either full or partial in terms of any other factors. Those factors are ultimate brute facts.⁴⁵

If we want to explain E , which is brought about by Y , where Y is brought about by X , in accord with deterministic laws L , then $(X$ and $L)$ and $(Y$ and $L)$ are each complete explanations of E , and $(X$ and $L)$ is its ultimate explanation. The ultimate explanation does not state merely which factors operate at the time when they bring about an event, but also the factors which brought about those factors, and so on until we reach factors for the existence and operation of which there is no explanation.

Swinburne's concept of ultimate explanation seems to be identical with Lonergan's complete explanation in strictly empirical context. Intelligibility of such expressions, or better intelligibility of explanatory conjugates, is an ultimate brute fact of such theory. Swinburne's two concepts seem to differ in the level of abstraction and generality. For example, a full explanation of space and time would be bound to a concrete reference frame, and an example of a complete explanation would be Reimannian equation embracing all possible geometries. (For more details about space and time definitions see Chapter Four.)

⁴⁵ Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, p. 75.

Swinburne also defines a special kind of ultimate explanation: ‘An absolute explanation of *E* is an ultimate explanation of *E* in which the existence and operation of each of the factors cited is either self-explanatory or logically necessary.’⁴⁶ There is no brute fact in an absolute explanation. The problem with such an explanation is, according to Swinburne, that a logically necessary being cannot provide any explanation of anything logically contingent, because any phenomenon which is going to be (fully) explained would have to be deducible from this being. Nothing logically contingent can be deduced from anything logically necessary. Considering a logically contingent self-explanatory being, Swinburne says, ‘*P*’s existence at t_2 may be explained in part by *P*’s existence at t_1 . But *P*’s existence at t_1 could not explain *P*’s existence at t_1 . *P*’s existence at t_1 might be the ultimate brute fact about the universe, but it would not explain itself.’⁴⁷ Thus he concludes, ‘I do not believe that there can be any absolute explanations of logically contingent phenomena. For surely never does anything explain itself.’⁴⁸

The concept of absolute explanation seem identical with Lonergan’s concept of complete explanation in metaphysical context. Swinburne refuses such an explanation, because any being existing in time is at least partly determined by its past, and therefore it cannot be fully self-explanatory. Swinburne presupposes that a self-explanatory being could only exist in time. I will analyze the limitations of his argument later in Chapter Eleven.

Swinburne’s arguments for the existence of God are arguments for a complete explanation of phenomena, and since he understands God as necessarily eternal (in

⁴⁶ Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, p. 76.

⁴⁷ Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, p. 76.

⁴⁸ Swinburne, R., *The Existence of God*, p. 76.

temporal sense), his arguments also provide an ultimate (but not an absolute) explanation. In an explanation in terms of God's existence and his intentions, there is no explanation for his intentions (this is why our explanation is only partial), and there is no explanation of his existence in terms of anything earlier or contemporaneous (this is why his existence is a brute fact).⁴⁹ Even though the arguments for the existence of God postulate some brute facts, they have, Swinburne claims, a great explanatory power, because they render the existence of the universe, which would otherwise be very improbable, probable. Such an explanation has a high prior probability since it is simple and it fits well with our general knowledge of the world and human being. It is simple, because it postulates fewer entities and reasons of a simple kind than any atheistic theory.

To conclude, Swinburne and Lonergan use different definitions of the term 'knowledge.' Lonergan's meaning is restricted to immanently generated knowledge, and it excludes belief in communicated knowledge. After the origin of communicated knowledge is known and evaluated, an assent of belief follows. A more detailed analysis reveals that the meaning of justification of such a belief would be very close to Swinburne's account of diachronic justification of a belief. Where Lonergan defines knowledge generically as a grasp of the link between the conditions and the conditioned, Swinburne elaborates more specifically linguistic, logical, and epistemic presuppositions of justification of knowledge in analytic tradition. Lonergan and Swinburne agree about the value and necessity of a systematic inquiry and a

⁴⁹ Swinburne does not consider a timeless God (outside of time), because it is hard to see for him how such a God could be acting. In addition, he considers this view incoherent.

reasonable justification of our knowledge (Swinburne also says that such an inquiry is praiseworthy if inquired personally).

Both authors have in common the four following assumptions, which will guide us in the considerations about time and God. First, an explanatory theory of philosophical theology should be complementary to unbiased common sense perception. Second, a theory has to be reasonably well (diachronically) justified either as certain or probable. Third, strictly scientific explanations do not provide an ultimate explanation of reality. Fourth, an ultimate explanation should have as few brute facts as possible, and to be as simple as possible.