

Philosophical Proof of God:
Derived from Principles in Bernard Lonergan’s *Insight*
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Introduction

Lonergan’s proof may be stated as follows:

If all reality is completely intelligible, then God exists.
But all reality *is* completely intelligible.
Therefore, God exists.¹

We will first prove the minor premise—“all reality is completely intelligible” (Section I)—and then prove to the major premise—“if all reality is completely intelligible, then God exists” (Sections II-V).

I.
Proof of the Minor Premise
(“All reality is completely intelligible”)

Step #1—“All Reality must have at least one uncaused reality that exists through itself.”

If there were not at least one *uncaused* reality in “all reality,” then “all reality” would be constituted by only caused realities – that is, realities that require a cause to exist. This means that all reality would *collectively* require a cause in order to exist – meaning all reality would not exist – because the cause necessary for it to exist would not be real (i.e. would not be part of “all reality”). Therefore, if there is not at least one uncaused reality that exists through itself in “all reality,” there would be absolutely nothing in existence. But this is clearly contrary to fact, and so there must exist at least one uncaused reality that exists through itself in “all reality.”

It should be noted that it does not matter if one postulates an *infinite* number of caused realities in “all reality.” If there is not at least one uncaused reality (existing through itself) in “all reality,” this infinite number of realities (collectively) would still not be able to exist, because the cause necessary for them to exist would still not be real – it would not be part of “all reality.”

Step #2—“An Uncaused Reality Must Be a Final and Sufficient Correct Answer to All Coherent Questions”—Making ‘All Reality’ Completely Intelligible.

¹ See Bernard Lonergan 1992, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* 3, ed. by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) p. 695.

There is another consequence of the existence of at least one uncaused reality. An uncaused reality not only enables “all reality” to exist, but also enables “all reality” to be *completely intelligible*. This can be proven in three steps:

Step# 2.A

Using the above logic, we can also deduce that every *real* cause-effect series must also have an uncaused reality. If the series did not have an uncaused reality, it would not exist, because it would be constituted only by realities that must be caused in order to exist, and as we saw above, this means that the entire series (even an infinite series) would *collectively* need a cause to exist. But if an uncaused cause is not in the collective causes and effects in the series, then the collective cause-effect series would be nonexistent—merely hypothetical. Furthermore, this uncaused reality must ultimately *terminate* every real cause-effect series, because when the cause-effect series reaches a reality that does not need a cause to exist (because it exists through itself), there is by definition no cause prior² to it. Therefore, an uncaused reality must terminate every *real* cause-effect series, and as such, no real cause-effect series continues infinitely. Thus, all real cause-effect series are finite insofar as they are terminated by an uncaused reality.

Step #2.B

At this point, Lonergan recognizes something special about a terminating uncaused reality. It is not only an ultimate cause and *terminus a quo* (the terminus from which any cause-effect series *begins*), it is also the ultimate answer to all questions of causal explanation – “Why is it so?” What Lonergan sees clearly is that *intelligibility* follows *ontology*. By “intelligibility” Lonergan means what makes something capable of being understood – that is what makes something “questionable” and “answerable.” If any intelligent inquirer can ask a coherent question about something, and that question has a correct answer that comes from “that something,” then “that something” is intelligible – it is capable of providing a correct answer to coherent questions asked about it.

What Lonergan sees in Chapter 19 of *Insight*³ is that the *terminus a quo* (beginning) of any cause-effect series must also be the final *and sufficient* answer to the question for causal explanation – “Why is it so?” So why is an uncaused reality a final *and sufficient* answer to this question? Inasmuch as an uncaused reality terminates any cause-effect series, it also terminates the possible answers to the question “Why is it so?” asked about that series; and since an uncaused reality exists through itself, it must also explain itself through itself. It is its own answer to the question of its existence. Thus, the terminating answer to the question “Why is it so?” about any cause-effect series is also a completely self-explanatory answer. In this sense, it is both the terminating *and sufficient* answer to the question, “Why is it so?” for any cause-effect series.

Thus, we will always reach a *sufficient* end to our questioning for causal explanation (“Why is it so?”), because we will ultimately arrive at an uncaused reality existing through itself

² This pertains to both ontological and temporal priority. Thus, there is no ontologically prior or temporally prior cause to an uncaused reality – by definition.

³ See Lonergan 1992 pp 674-680.

– without which all reality would be nothing. Therefore, an uncaused reality must be the final *and sufficient* answer to every question of causation (“Why is it so?”).

This has a further consequence for Lonergan, because the final answer to the question “Why is it so?” must also be the final answer to all other questions – as we shall see in Step 2.C.

Step #2.C.

If there must be a final *and sufficient* answer to the question “Why is it so?”, there must also be a final *and sufficient* answer to every *other* question (e.g. “What?”, “Where?”, “When?”, “How does it operate?” etc.), because the latter is grounded in (dependent on) the former. Without an ultimate cause of existence, there would be literally *nothing* to be intelligible. There cannot be questions for *intelligibility* (e.g. “What is it?”) that go beyond the final (ultimate) cause of *existence*. If there were such questions, their answers would have to be “nothing.” Therefore, a final (ultimate) answer to the question “Why is it so?” must ground the final (ultimate) answer to every other question. The answers to all possible questions must terminate in the final answer to the question “Why is it so?” Since there must exist a final *and sufficient* answer to the question “Why is it so?” (an uncaused reality existing through itself), there must also be a final *and sufficient* answer to every other question about reality. The complete set of correct answers to the complete set of questions really must exist – and reality, as Lonergan asserts, must therefore be completely intelligible.⁴

II.

Proof of the Major Premise (“If all reality is completely intelligible, God exists⁵”)

Why does Lonergan believe that if all reality is completely intelligible, then God (i.e. a unique unrestricted reality which is an unrestricted act of thinking) exists? As we saw in the proof of the Minor Premise, all reality *must include* an “uncaused reality that exists through itself.” Without at least one uncaused reality, there would be *nothing* in all reality. This uncaused reality brings finality to the answers to every question that can be asked about all reality – and so makes all reality *completely* intelligible. Lonergan recognizes that such an uncaused reality must also be *unrestricted* in its intelligibility, and this requires that it be unique (one and only one) as well as an unrestricted act of thinking, and the Creator of the rest of reality. The proof of these contentions is summarized below in this section and in Sections III, IV, and V.

We now turn to the proof of the first of these contentions – namely, that an “uncaused reality existing through itself” must be unrestricted in its intelligibility. This may be shown in two steps:

Step #1

An uncaused reality must be unrestricted in its explicability (its capacity to explain *itself* from within itself). If it were restricted in its capacity to explain itself, then its existence would

⁴ See the extended treatment in Lonergan 1992, pp. 674-680.

⁵ This proof may be found in Lonergan 1992, pp. 692-698.

be at least partially unexplained, which contradicts the nature of a reality that exists through itself (an uncaused reality). Put the other way around, a reality that exists through itself (an uncaused reality) cannot be *restricted* in its capacity to explain its existence (because that would be a contradiction); therefore, it must be *unrestricted* in its capacity to explain its existence and so also *unrestricted* in its explicability.

Step #2

If an uncaused reality is unrestricted in its explicability, then it will be unrestricted in its intelligibility⁶ -- let's begin with a logical examination of this contention. This can be analyzed by looking at the necessary logical implication of this proposition -- namely, that if an uncaused reality is *not* unrestricted (i.e. is restricted) in its intelligibility, then it *cannot* be unrestricted (i.e. it must be restricted) in its explicability (*modus tollens*). In brief, if a reality is restricted in its intelligibility, then it will also be restricted in its explicability. As we saw in Step #1 above, an uncaused reality *must* be unrestricted in its explicability, otherwise it would be a contradictory state of affairs -- "A reality existing through itself that cannot fully explain its existence." It now remains to show why a restriction in intelligibility implies a restriction of explicability.

What does it mean for a reality to be restricted in intelligibility? It means that the information within a particular reality is not sufficient to completely and correctly answer coherent questions about it -- e.g. "What is it?"⁷ "How does it operate?" "Where can it or will it occur?" "When can it or will it occur?" "How frequently can it or will it occur?" etc. How do we know if a reality is restricted in this way? If any coherent question about a reality cannot be completely and correctly answered without making reference to realities beyond itself, then that reality does not contain within itself the information necessary to answer that question -- it is *restricted* in its intelligibility. For example, I cannot completely answer *what* an electron is without reference to the electromagnetic field through which it operates (which is beyond any given electron). Similarly, I cannot answer questions about *where* and *when* an electron will occur without making reference to the space-time field, the specific electromagnetic field, and other electromagnetic constituents in the region (which are all *beyond* a particular electron). I cannot even understand *how* an electron operates without making reference to electromagnetic fields and other electromagnetic constituents (which are *beyond* a particular electron). In view of the fact that many coherent questions about electrons cannot be completely and correctly answered without making reference to realities beyond it, it must be restricted in its intelligibility.

Notice that if the information in a particular reality cannot completely and correctly answer coherent questions (such as what it is, how it operates, where it will occur, when it will occur, and how frequently it will occur, etc) without making reference to realities beyond it, then the information in that reality will also be *unable* to answer the question "Why does it exist?" without making reference to those same realities beyond it. Let's go back to our electron. If the question "What is an electron?" cannot be completely and correctly answered without making

⁶ See Lonergan 1992, pp. 674-679.

⁷ The question "What is it?" is not asking for a simple identification -- such as, "What is it?" -- "It is an electron." Rather, it is asking for the nature of an electron -- that is, the specific powers and activities which distinguish this reality from the range of other realities.

reference to electromagnetic fields (beyond it), then the answer to the question “Why does that electron exist?” will also not be able to be completely answered without making reference to those electromagnetic fields (beyond it). Similarly, if the questions “Where will it occur?” and “When will it occur?” cannot be completely and correctly answered without making reference to electromagnetic fields and other electromagnetic constituents in the region, then the question “Why does it exist?” will not be able to be completely and correctly answered without making reference to those same electromagnetic fields and constituents (beyond it). This correlation exists between *all* questions of intelligibility (“What?”, “How?”, “Where?” “When?”, “How frequently?”) and the basic question of explicability (“Why does it exist?”). If the complete and correct answers to questions of intelligibility must make reference to realities beyond it, then the complete and correct answer to the question of explicability must also make reference to those same realities.

What are the ontological implications of the conclusion given immediately above? If the intelligibility of any reality depends on realities beyond it, then the explicability of that reality also depends on these same realities beyond it. In view of the fact that a reality is restricted in intelligibility if its intelligibility depends on realities beyond it, and a reality is restricted in explicability if its explicability is dependent on realities beyond it, then it follows that if a reality is restricted in intelligibility, then it will also be restricted in its explicability.

Now let us return to the proposition under consideration in this section. It follows from the above conclusion by *modus tollens* – if a reality is unrestricted in its explicability (i.e. it does not depend on any realities beyond itself for its explicability), then it must be unrestricted in its intelligibility (does not depend on *anything* beyond itself for its intelligibility). Therefore it must *completely* and correctly answer every coherent question of intelligibility and explicability that can be asked of it. Now what are the possible coherent questions for intelligibility and explicability that can be asked of an uncaused reality that exists through itself?

At this juncture, the proof of the minor premise (Section I above) becomes important. Recall that it was proved there that an uncaused reality existing through itself can be the final and sufficient answer to every question about “all reality” as well as every cause-effect series in “all reality.” Now let us return to the conclusion we just drew about the unrestricted intelligibility of an uncaused reality existing through itself. We said it would have to completely and correctly answer from within itself (without making recourse to anything beyond it) all coherent questions of what, how, where, when, and why, etc, that could be asked of it. In light of the minor premise, we now see that this would entail *every possible* correct answer to every possible question about “all reality” – since it is the final and sufficient answer to all such questions. This means that an uncaused reality existing through itself must be able to completely and correctly answer every possible question that can be asked of all reality – which is *unrestricted* in its scope. There is *no* answer to any possible coherent question about “all reality” that is not included in it.

III.

A Reality which is Unrestricted in Intelligibility must be Absolutely Unique

The general argument is as follows: If there were more than one unrestrictedly intelligible reality, there would have to be a difference between the one and the other, and if there were such

a difference, then one of the supposedly “unrestricted intelligibles” would have to be restricted in its intelligibility—and obvious contradiction. This proof can be set out in two steps:

Step #1

Suppose there are two unrestrictedly intelligible realities – UI_1 and UI_2 . There would have to be some difference between UI_1 and UI_2 . If there were not some difference in intelligibility (difference as to activities, space-time point, qualities, etc.) between the one and the other, then the two would be the self-same, which means there would only be one of them (*a priori*). Therefore if there are two or more unrestrictedly intelligible realities, there would have to be a difference between them.

Step #2

If there is a difference between UI_1 and UI_2 , then one of them would have to be somewhere, be something, or have something that the other one did *not*. This “*not* having or being something or somewhere” implies that one of them would not be unrestricted in intelligibility – because one of them would *not* be intelligible in some way that the other one is. The one that is *not* intelligible in a way the other one is would have to be *restricted* in its intelligibility. This means that every *second or third* (etc.) hypothetical unrestrictedly intelligible reality would have to be restricted in its intelligibility – an obvious contradiction. Since every second or third (etc.) hypothetical unrestrictedly intelligible reality is intrinsically contradictory, it must be impossible. Therefore, there can be *only one* reality that is unrestricted in its intelligibility.

Prior to this point, we only showed that there must be *at least one* uncaused reality existing through itself. But in view of the fact that an uncaused reality (existing through itself) must be unrestricted in both its explicability and intelligibility, and the fact that there can be only one reality that is unrestricted in its intelligibility, we must now acknowledge that an uncaused reality must be “the one and only uncaused reality” – it must be absolutely unique.

Let’s review where we have come so far in the proof. We began by showing that there must be at least one uncaused reality existing through itself in “all reality” – otherwise nothing would exist (proved in the Minor Premise). We then proved that an uncaused reality would have to be unrestricted in its explicability – otherwise we would argue an intrinsic contradiction – “a reality that exists through itself that cannot fully explain its existence” (proved in Section II, Step 1). We then showed that a reality unrestricted in its explicability would also have to be unrestricted in its intelligibility – because the answer to the question “Why is it so?” must ground the answers to all other questions – “What is it?” “Where is it?” or “How does it operate?” etc. (proved in Section II, Step 2). We then showed that there can be only one reality unrestricted in its intelligibility because every second, third (etc.) hypothetical unrestricted reality would have to be an intrinsic contradiction – “a unrestrictedly intelligible reality that has restrictions to its intelligibility” (proven in Section III). We are now in a position to assess two other attributes of the absolutely unique uncaused reality which is unrestricted in its intelligibility – it is a Creator and an unrestricted act of thinking.

IV.

The One Uncaused Reality is the Ultimate Cause of Everything Else in Reality

This proof comes from a simple combination of two conclusions given above:

1. Every caused reality and every cause-effect series must ultimately be caused by an uncaused reality – otherwise they would not exist (proved in the Minor Premise – Section I).
2. There can only be one uncaused reality (proved in Section III). Therefore, the one uncaused reality must be the ultimate cause of the existence of *all* caused realities (and cause-effect series).

We can now add one other deduction from the Minor Premise (Section I) to complete our conclusion. It comes from a simple disjunctive syllogism – in “all reality there must be either caused realities **or** uncaused realities.” This means that if there can only be *one* uncaused reality, the rest of reality must be caused realities. We may now complete our conclusion. If the one uncaused reality must be the ultimate cause of the existence of *all* caused realities, and all reality – except for the one uncaused reality – is constituted by *caused* realities, then the one uncaused reality must be the ultimate cause of the existence of *everything else* in reality – it is the ultimate cause of everything else that exists.

Since intelligibility follows existence (see Section II, Step 2), the one uncaused reality must be the ultimate cause not only of the *existence* of everything else, but also the *intelligibility* of everything else. It must be the ultimate, sufficient, correct answer to all questions about everything that exists.

In conclusion, the existence and intelligibility of every reality must be ultimately caused by the one – and only one – “uncaused reality existing through itself” which is unrestricted in its explicability and intelligibility. Inasmuch as “Creator” refers to the ultimate cause of reality and intelligibility, the one unrestrictedly intelligible uncaused reality is the Creator of everything else that exists.

V.

The One Unrestrictedly Intelligible Uncaused Reality is an “Unrestricted Act of Thinking”

We will now explain Lonergan’s contention that unrestricted intelligibility can only occur through an unrestricted *idea*, which in turn can only occur through an unrestricted act of thinking.

As noted above, the one uncaused reality that exists through itself is unrestricted in its intelligibility. This means that it can answer from within itself not only the question “Why is it so?” but also all other questions grounded in this question for explanation. For Lonergan, this kind of intelligibility cannot be material (conditioned by space and time) or individuated (restricted to an instance and therefore unable to unify or relate distinct or opposed objects). It must therefore be trans-material and trans-individual – having the qualities of an *idea*. In order to explain what Lonergan means by “idea,” it will be helpful to distinguish between two kinds of thinking – “picture thinking” and “conceptual thinking.” Picture thinking results in what is called “*perceptual ideas*” – ideas which correspond to an *individual* image (such as my dog Fido), and “*conceptual thinking*” corresponds to *conceptual* ideas, which require more explanation.

Look at the words in the previous two paragraphs. How many of them correspond to an individual image (like my dog Fido)? As you can see, the vast majority of them do not correspond to any individual image. Instead they correspond to *concepts* which designate *groups* of objects and even groups of groups. Thus they can be conjunctions, prepositions, logical terms, mathematical terms, verbs, adjectives, abstract nouns, etc. How are these abstract “group” concepts formed? By placing perceptual and conceptual ideas into *relationships* with each other. Though some animals are capable of forming perceptual ideas, humans alone are capable of forming conceptual (“relationship based”) ideas.⁸ So how do we form conceptual ideas that can stand for groups of objects and groups of groups? How do we form relationship-based ideas that do not directly refer to perceptual objects? How do we form ideas that can be used as predicates, objects, and grammatical, logical, and mathematical constructs? In a word, “*heuristic notions*.”

Notions are general inclusive concepts, and *heuristic* notions are among the highest of these inclusive concepts. They are capable of unifying (bringing together) all other less general concepts under their broad and inclusive intelligibility. These high-level unifying concepts enable humans to create superstructures through which to *interrelate* perceptual ideas among one another, perceptual ideas with conceptual ideas, and conceptual ideas among one another. These superstructures are like context for organization of particular ideas – like a map is a context for organizing specific places or a clock or calendar for organizing specific times, or a table of genus and species for organizing similarities and differences among realities, etc. Each superstructure has particular heuristic notions (high-level ideas) intrinsic to it that determine the way in which ideas are to be organized and interrelated.

For example, the notions of “similarity and difference” are essential for interrelating answers to the question, “What is it?” The notions of “here and there” are essential for interrelating answers to the question “Where?” The notions of “earlier-now-later” are essential for interrelating answers to the question “When?” And the notions of “causation-possibility-necessity-contingency-actuality” are essential to organizing answers to the question “Why?” Without heuristic notions to give intelligibility to organizational superstructures, we would have no way of relating ideas among one another, and if we could not do this, we would have no conceptual ideas. We would be reduced to about 4% of the words we use – limited only to those having direct pictorial referents.

Heuristic notions cannot be learned from the empirical world because we would have to *use them* in order to learn them. Recall that notions are necessary for transforming our perceptual ideas from the empirical world into conceptual ideas, and that notions are the highest-level *conceptual* ideas. Thus we are confronted with a paradox. We would have to use the very notions that we have not yet learned from the empirical world to translate our perceptions from the empirical world into notions – we would have to use them before we learn them so that we could learn them – an obvious impossibility. They must therefore be innate. Lonergan believes that all such heuristic notions are derived from the *supreme* heuristic notion – the notion of completely intelligible reality (what he terms “the notion of being”).⁹

⁸ This is explained in Spitzer 2015 *The Soul's Upward Yearning: Clues to Our Transcendent Nature from Experience and Reason* (Chapter 3, Section VI).

⁹ For a thorough explanation of this, see Spitzer 2015—*The Soul's Upward Yearning*—Chapter 3 (Section V).

Bearing this in mind, we may now examine the function of heuristic notions. We use them to create organizing superstructures to relate perceptual ideas among one another, relate perceptual ideas with conceptual ideas, and relate conceptual ideas among one another. Let's return to the heuristic notions of "here," "there," and "where." Notice that these notions provide a superstructure (like a map) for *relating* one location to another location. Without this superstructure, we would not be able to understand location—because location requires *interrelating* the data of experience. Thus, perceptual ideas alone cannot make location intelligible. Similarly, the notions of "similarity," "difference," and "What?" enable us to create an organizational superstructure to *relate* one *kind* of object with other kinds of objects. Again, without these notions (and the superstructure they organize), we would not be able to understand various *kinds* of objects because perceptual ideas alone (unrelated to each other) do not reveal similarities and differences among objects.

The human mind with its innate heuristic notions is not limited to relationships among *perceptual* ideas; it can also organize relationships among *conceptual* ideas. This gives rise to second level abstractions (such as particular conjunctions – "and," "or," etc.) and particular prepositions (such as "here," "around," "below," etc.), and third level abstractions (such as the concept of "conjunction" and "preposition"). The mind can generate higher and higher levels of abstract ideas in language, logic, mathematics, and metaphysics. Some of the higher levels of logic are manifest in the complex operators of contemporary modal logic; higher level mathematical concepts may be found in tensor geometry and the mathematics of higher dimensional space; and higher level metaphysical concepts are manifest in the ideas of space, time, reality, intelligibility, causation, and unrestricted intelligibility.

Notice that no conceptual ideas can exist in the physical world, because physical realities are limited by individuation and space-time particularity. Conceptual ideas transcend individuality and space-time particularity, and require the power of mentation (mind)—with its capacity to relate perceptual and conceptual ideas—to achieve this status.

Let us review – humans move from the domain of individual things and individual images (perceptual ideas) to the domain of conceptual (relational) ideas through the use of heuristic notions (high-level ideas that act as superstructures to organize relationships among perceptual and conceptual ideas). These conceptual ideas go far beyond the domain of individual material objects and perceptual ideas, because they contain *relational* contents that underlie the whole of language, logic, mathematics, metaphysics, and every science and discipline that uses them. Conceptual ideas, then, are vehicles to convey not only meaning, but the intelligibility of reality. Such ideas cannot come from the world of material things; they must come from the domain of mind (thinking) in which heuristic notions organize relationships among individual perceptual ideas and the conceptual ideas derived from them.

We may now proceed to the main point of this section – that the unique unrestrictedly intelligible uncaused reality is an unrestricted act of thinking. Recall from Sections I – IV that an uncaused cause existing through itself (necessary for everything else to exist) must be unique and *unrestrictedly intelligible*. What kind of being has unrestricted intelligibility? As can be seen from the above analysis, it cannot be something physical or material which is limited by

individuality and space-time particularity. Furthermore, it cannot be something which is merely abstract (such as a conceptual idea) because an abstraction is restricted by the ideas from which it is derived. Moreover, it cannot be a restricted act of thinking (which can still inquire) because a restricted act of thinking by definition is not unrestrictedly intelligible. Well then, what is a reality with unrestricted intelligibility? It must be an *unrestricted* act of thinking (mentation) which grasps everything about everything – every relationship among things and relations – the complete set of correct answers to the complete set of questions. Lonergan puts it this way (using “act of understanding” in the same way I have been using “act of thinking”):

...[I]ntelligibility either is material or spiritual [immaterial] or abstract: it is material in the objects of physics, chemistry, biology, and sensitive psychology; it is spiritual [immaterial] when it is identical with understanding; and it is abstract in concepts of unities, laws.... But abstract intelligibility necessarily is incomplete, for it arises only in the self-expression of spiritual intelligibility. Again, spiritual intelligibility is incomplete as long as it can inquire. Finally, material intelligibility necessarily is incomplete, for it is contingent in its existence and in its occurrences, in its genera and species... moreover, it includes a merely empirical residue of individuality, noncountable infinities, particular places and times.... It follows that the only possibility of complete intelligibility lies in a spiritual intelligibility that cannot inquire because it understands everything about everything.¹⁰

So what is an unrestricted act of thinking like? Let's begin with what it is *not*. An unrestricted act of thinking cannot occur through a *material brain* because a material brain cannot accommodate unrestricted intelligibility since it is restricted in both its intelligibility and its material functioning. The same can be said for artificial intelligence, which also is restricted in its intelligibility and material (electromagnetic, electrochemical, or even biochemical) functioning. Indeed, we will have to eliminate any apparatus, power, or activity which is in any way material or restricted in its power to ground intelligibility.

This means that an unrestricted act of thinking must be a *power* which is capable of bringing together, in a single act, the interrelationship among unrestricted intelligibility and all restricted intelligibility. What kind of power could this be? It must be a power that can be in relationship to itself and anything extrinsic to itself – a power which is not restricted by a spatial or temporal manifold; a power which has no intrinsic limitations or extrinsic restrictions that would prevent it from being unrestricted in its intelligibility; a power that can act as a unifying agent of every restricted reality and idea as well as for itself; a power which can be completely self-reflective, self-appropriating, self-conscious, and self-transparent because it has no intrinsic restriction preventing it from being present to itself and everything distinct from itself (the whole domain of restricted reality and intelligibility).

This pure mentative power cannot be imagined (i.e., picture thinking), because that would subject it to individuation as well as space and time (which it completely transcends). We can

¹⁰ Lonergan 1992, pp. 696-697.

only approach it through an appreciation of its unrestricted and self-transparent unitive and unifying power. Any attempt to further refine this notion will only serve to restrict and particularize it – which would render our conception false.

For Lonergan, then, the only possible source of complete intelligibility is an unrestricted act of understanding – what we have called an unrestricted act of thinking – an unrestricted power capable of comprehensive unification of itself (unrestricted intelligibility) with the whole of restricted intelligibility in a completely self-transparent self-reflective act. This unrestricted mentative power is the ultimate cause of everything else in existence – including restricted powers of mentation (like ours). For this reason, Lonergan refers to it as “God.”

VI. Conclusion

We began this proof with showing the necessity for at least one uncaused reality that exists through itself – without which nothing would exist. We then proceeded to show that such a reality would have to be unrestricted in its explicability and intelligibility. We then showed that an unrestrictedly intelligible reality could only be one – absolutely unique – and then showed that this one unrestrictedly intelligible uncaused reality would have to be the ultimate cause (Creator) of everything else in reality. We then asked what an unrestrictedly intelligible reality would be like, to which we responded that it could *not* be a physical reality, an abstract idea, or a restricted power of mentation. This left only one remaining option – an *unrestricted* power of mentation which is described above. These proven attributes – unique, unrestrictedly intelligible, uncaused reality existing through itself, which is the Creator of everything else in reality and an unrestricted mentative power—may refer to “God.” Inasmuch as a denial of the above proof entails either a contradiction of fact (i.e. that nothing exists) or an intrinsic contradiction (e.g. an unrestrictedly intelligible reality which is restricted in its intelligibility), we may conclude that “God” as defined, exists.

Notice that this “God” is a metaphysical God – which emphasizes “*what* God is” – the attributes of God – but does not emphasize “*who* God is” – “the heart of God.” If we are to answer the latter question, we will have to go beyond the domain of reason, logic, and experience – and delve into the domain of revelation. Readers who are interested in the question of “*who* God is” – the heart of God – will want to examine the article called “[Who is God?](#)” This article can also be found on the second landing page (Happiness and Suffering) and the fourth landing page (Reality of Jesus) on our website, Magiscenter.com.