

B. Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History"

(Summary by P. McS.)

Under discussion is healing and creating in the broadest domain of human affairs. A context for the determination of what is meant by 'creating' and 'healing' is provided by the contrasting views of Russell and Popper on the roots of contemporary ills. While Russell would locate the prime source of these ills in our being clever and wicked, Popper considers the real mixture to be one of goodness and stupidity. These are diagnoses: the direction of cure demands that one speak of healing and creating.

Diagnosis and need are illustrated by considering the contemporary economic situation. A recent study (Barnet & Müller, Global Reach) spells out the disastrous effect of the aim and the continued achievement, in the third world and in the developed countries, of the multi-national corporations. "The new system needed for our collective survival does not exist" (ibid): The underlying need is a need for the long hard climb of creativity. That climb is a project remote from some addition of heuristic concepts which ground only ideal gestures, remote also from refined specific concepts: such concepts are abstract, while the good is concrete. The climb is through the slow addition of insight to insight by which one moves to mastery of all the eventualities and complications of a situation. The climb leads to system on the move. But the adequacy of the climb and mobility of the system are ever threatened by neurotic, individual and group bias, and by the illusory omniscience of common sense.

But as well as this precarious recurrent development from experience upwards through understanding, judgment and fruitful courses of action, there is a second kind of human development, from above downwards. It is the healing transformation of falling in love. That love, whether domestic or cosmic, reveals values, where hate only sees evil. Foreign to it is any admixture of love and hate, whether it be in religious zeal that meshes with persecution, or, when religion has become a marginal affair, in a philosophy of tolerance or progress that meshes with liquidation. ← Foreign to it is any truck with manipulation, the blossom of materialism.

But without a concomitant creativity, healing is a soul without a body. The single development of human affairs requires two complementary developments, one from below upwards, creating, the other from above downwards, healing. In the instance of economic ills, the first regards economic theorists, the second regards moral theorists. From the former is required a new analysis revealing the entwining of moral precepts and economic process; from the latter is required specifically economic precepts arising out of, and normative in, the economic process itself. The proposal is not utopian: it asks for inter-disciplinary creativity.