

QUESTION-COMMENTS ON REALITY, MYTH, SYMBOL

by Matthew L. Lamb

*Review -*

*This will be my comment tonight on the panel discussion after your lecture. - Matt*

I should like to explore further just what the meaning of "psychic conversion" is and how it relates to intellectual, moral, and religious conversions. Lonergan follows Doran in defining psychic conversion as occurring "when we uncover within ourselves the working of our own psyche's, the elan vital" which workings are manifested in dynatypes and cognotypes.

My question is twofold: (1) can "conversion" be applied to the psychic dimensions of human living in a similar way as it is to human intellectual, moral, or/and religious living? and (2) If so, is psychic conversion specifically different from intellectual, moral, and religious conversions - or any combination of them - or is psychic conversion the effect any or all of those conversions have on the human psyche?

Allow me to comment: Several years ago Lonergan expressed the view that besides the operators within conscious intentionality (questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, questions for responsibility) there are also quasi-operators. They are "quasi" insofar as they precede conscious intentionality (the lower quasi-operator of the human psyche) and supercede conscious intentionality (the upper quasi-operator of Christ-in-Glory). In such an understanding of psyche--conscious intentionality--Christ-in-Glory it would seem that the human psyche itself does not raise any questions. Rather it would be the polyvalent imaginal soil within which conscious intentionality is rooted and from which conscious intentionality draws sustenance as it unfolds the unrestricted desire for meaning, truth, value. In this sense "psychic conversion" would be a "converting" or "turning" of conscious intentionality toward the psyche; an attentive, intelligent, rational and responsible discernment of "the workings of our own psyche's". In this framework also, "psychic conversion" would be a conversion of the psyche insofar as the authentic development of conscious intentionality in terms of intellectual, moral, religious conversions effect a refinement of feelings, moods, dreams and all other psychic schemes of recurrence in terms of their potentiality towards self-transcendence. Of themselves the psychic schemes of recurrence (feelings, moods, dreams, etc.) have polyvalent orientations; their refinement through the multiple forms of art, dramatic living, therapy is a refinement in collaboration with conscious intentionality. Moreover, such refinement does not do away with the generic polyvalence of the human psyche, so that the immanent teleology of the human psyche towards the unrestricted questioning of conscious intentionality is a teleology the psyche itself cannot actualize.

If these comments are not off mark, isn't there a danger in speaking of a "psychic conversion" as specifically different from any one or combination of intellectual, moral, or/and religious conversion. The danger would be twofold: (1) of "conceptualizing" intellectual, moral, religious conversions by overlooking how any or all of them can occur only in a sublation of psychic schemes of recurrence; and (2) of trying to overly "domesticate" or "house-break" the human psyche by treating it as an operator rather than a lower quasi-operator. As such it has a polyvalent spontaneity which will only be fully actualized when our psychosomatic conscious intentionality is at-one-with the upper quasi-operator of Christ in the Trinitarian Life. This understanding of the human psyche would throw light on why depth psychologies find so many religious symbols and myths expressive of psychic schemes of recurrence.

*The danger of not developing the psychic dimensions of the self-transcending dimensions of conscious intentionality, as Prof. Doran has, would be to neglect an integral aspect of intellectual, moral, religious conversions.*