

LONERGAN WORKSHOP

Boston College

June 12 - 16, 1978

Dialogue for Discussion

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1. In Insight you speak of a "memory of startling strangeness" (Insight, xviii). Could you relate this to Bergson's notion of "re-lived memory" and to the hermeneutics of suspicion and recovery?
2. Could you spell out your views on the importance of art for human living, and on what you mean by the priority of poetry? Could you relate this to the work of Proffoff?
3. Fields of inquiry like literary criticism require dialectics and foundations: but these are theological tasks. Could you comment on the difficulties implicit here: the challenge to the critic of enlargement of horizon; the challenge to the theologian of literary modernity.
4. Could you comment on the difficulty of the theologian's task of reflecting on the significance of religion in a culture matrix, when that matrix is faced through with the blossoms and briars of modern science and scholarship?
5. You speak of the unrevisable revisor in Insight. In what sense can we speak of unrevisability in relation to the fundamental distinctions and circuits of your economic analysis?
6. Phil McShane states on p. 1, from the foundations of the four conversions, that "present schemes of education, commerce and power are predominantly an epiphany of 'the murderous grotesque of our time.'" The religiously and morally converted political activist would agree. But to communicate to this activist--not the fanatic, but the religiously and morally converted activist--the need for intellectual and psychic conversion, and the complementarity of our concerns with those of such an activist is a very difficult task. Do you have any suggestions as to how we can establish the legitimacy of our long-range work in the eyes of the religiously and morally converted activist (e.g., the Catholic Worker movement) and the complementarity of our concerns with theirs?
7. Could you speak of aesthetic and psychic conversion as undertow to the transformation of mind and culture?
8. Would you comment on the search for universal in language in the study of Chomsky and indicate the strategy of critically integrating the work of Ricoeur and Levi-Strauss into your own methodological perspective.
9. Would you spell out the differences between and the relations of hermeneutics and communications?

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1. "Memory of startling strangeness"

It is the memory of the transition, of initiation into the transition, from the world of the "already out there now real" into the world mediated by meaning and motivated by values.

It is the memory of a basic shift of criteria, from simply what is given to sense and consciousness, to what is given, understood, affirmed, evaluated.

It is the memory of the moment when the problems of accepting a critical realism vanish:

problems that emerge concretely in questions concerning real distinctions (essence and existence), (subject and subjectivity), meaning, relevance, significance, presence vs truth, vs propositional truth,

It is the memory of knowing the subjective basis of empiricism, idealism, and mistaken philosophies generally

It becomes a memory that is re-lived, though perhaps not in Bergson's sense, when one succeeds in communicating a repetition of the memory to a student whose face lights up when he catches on and on his own can work out all its implications in due course.

The hermeneutics of suspicion and recovery have to do with the suspicion that something is wrong, has gone wrong, and the recovery of the right road, its straight and narrow path,

It is a twofold hermeneutics:
the suspicion may fall not on what has gone wrong but on what is right
the recovery may be the return from the right that is suspected to be the wrong that is its opposite.

2. The importance of art for human living:

"Actions speak louder than words."

Words communicate a life style, but a life style is concrete; it is not just a set of copy-book maxims; it is doing things, doing them gracefully, attractively, winningly. It completes words with modulations of voice, variations of facial expression, changes of attitude and posture, and gesticulation.

The priority of poetry is an expression of Giambattista Vico. He was arguing against Cartesian rationalism, deductivism, abstruseness. He asserted the ~~xx~~ priority of the fully human, of the integrated vs the specialization.

His case is illustrated by Bruno Snell's *The Greek Discovery of the Mind*.

The possibility of logic, mathematics, science, philosophy, was prepared by the whole history of Greek literature: by the Homeric similes that expressed differences of human character (A lion never retreats; Hector was a lion), by the lyricist's ~~x~~ expression of human emotion and sentiment, by the tragedians exhibition of the momentousness of human decisions, by the ability of the Eleatics to convince men that there was more to human knowing than sense (they demonstrated what manifestly was false to sense: there is but one being, that Achilles cannot catch up with the tortoise, etc.)

To speak of the priority of poetry is to insist that premature specialization without a solid grounding the humanities results in a one-sided man. Arthur North Whitehead ranks with the great mathematicians of the XXth century but ~~he~~ until he was 17 years of age he studied just Latin and Greek.

Progoff is concerned to help the one-sided, to fill out their experience with imagery and sentiment~~x~~. Note that his group sessions, in which some one recounts an intense experience, in which images stop and something like transcendental meditation occurs, results~~x~~ not in the same process in other members of the group but in the same terminus, the transcendental silence.

3 3Dialectics and foundations are needed in theology, but they have their extensions into a literary criticism.

Inversely, literary criticism can serve as the ~~xxxx~~ entry into theological dialectics and foundations.

Prof. Harrelson of Vangerbilt narrated to a group of us at Notre dame that when he went to Nashville to x teach theology, his presence x was very much resented by the professors of Englishx. They felt that they werex the one's best fitted to commicate religious thought and feeling. and teh professional teachers of religion x were at best otiose and probably inept.

I should say that the specialties are implicit within more general education, that they have their start there, but that that start comes to full fruition when it develops into a specialty. So the challenge to the critic is to move on to the specialties.

Inversely the challenge to the specislist x is to x learn to communicate effectively.

4 The solution to the difficulty is Ricoeur's dialectic of suspicion and recovery.

The difference between the blossoms and the briars is the x opposition between rational and irrational numbers.

If $5^2 = a^b$, the "a" equals 5 and "b" equals 2.

In the hermenetic of suspicion one is busy spotting the irrational element

In the hermeneutic of recovery one is busy eliminating the irrational element and giving the rational element its proper complement.

5. The two are not quite parallel.

The unrevisable revisor is a man or woman, who ~~xxx~~ keeps on experiencing, trying to understnad, arrive at the truth, distinguish right and wrong.

One does so spontaneously. Inasmuch as one does not understand, further ~~x~~ questions keep popping up, and as long as they keep coming one has not yet really understood the matter and one is aware of the fact.

If one has~~x~~ failed to reach sufficent evidence for judgment, contrary instances ~~xxx~~ keep recurring, to block certain judgment~~x~~.

In so far as one has made a bad moral judgment, one suffers from an uneasy conscience; one trites to dispose of it by rationalizations, but they prove to be subterfuges and ~~x~~ the proff consists in the further doubts and questions that keep recurring.

Now my economic analysis rests ~~x~~ not on the inevitable procedures of the subject but upon objective argument.

The basic clue comes out of elementary calculus.

If the acceleration is "a", then the velocity is "at," and the distance traversed is s equals the initial ~~xs~~ distance from the origin, say c, ~~xx~~ the distance traversed in virtue of the initial velocity, ut, and the integrated of the acceleration, $at^2/2$.

From this model to the economic circuits, c, the constant of integration is representented by merely redistributinal activity, velocity is represented by the current standard of living of the community, and accepleration is represented by the rate of replacement and growth~~x~~.

Now the precise values of these quantities may be anything from zero to any finite number, but the functional relation of these quantities are the relations of constant of integration, velocity, and acceleration.

On this basis one can attain a vast variety of possibiloities, many of which break down, some succeed, and so we have a structure on the basis of which we can say that certain procedures are to be recommended and others are self-defeating.

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6. The short answer is that nothing succeeds like success. Capitalism sold itself to the democratic countries by doing things that all could see and like

One can sell the remedies to the defects in capitalism by coming to know what precisely the defects are, devising means for discovering remedies, and putting the remedies to the test.~~xx~~

If we can show that our proposals work, the rest will be plain sailing. As Christopher Dawson once wrote. You can give men everything they desire and they will remain discontent. But give them a cause, they will suffer hardship and pain, hunger and thirst, brutality and death, and do it gladly.

8. My knowledge of Chomsky and Levi-Strauss is sketchy and second hand.

Chomsky seems to be quite correct in his claim that a child comes to construct endless new sentences out of the few elements he picks up. But ~~xxxx~~ he does not seem to realize that this comes about through the spontaneities of the unconscious, of sensibility, of intelligence, etc.

Levi-Strauss seems anxious to realize the materialist dream, to account for the emergence of culture and art through the workings of the pre-conscious and the non intelligent and the non-rational.

7. Aesthetic and psychic conversion can be described as an undertow to the transformation of mind and culture.

9. Hermeneutics and communications are distinct only as functional specialties. I think Gadamer and the exegetes would be apt to say that one really understands a text when one can communicate that understanding and all it involves to others.