

CONVERGENT WORKSHOP

Boston College

June 12 - 16, 1978

Dialogue for Discussion

June 13, 1978

1. Could you state again the relationship, mentioned in Monday's question period, between the traditional categories 'essence' and 'existence' and Insight? Specifically, how are they correlated with 'potency', 'form', and 'acc'? How is the approach to the philosophy of God in Insight, moving from the complete intelligibility of the real, related to the older approach which begins from the distinction within finite being of 'essence' and 'existence'?

2. Sebastian Moore's paper, in its concentration on Jesus, would appear to be connected with what are called in Method "inner word" and "outer word"--that is, with God's love as personal gift and as entering history. In Method, what takes theology beyond philosophy of God is revelation. Although that is a specifically theological, not methodological, issue, can you suggest how Christian theologians might begin to define "revelation" or, the connection of "inner" and "outer word" or, "the importance of Jesus"?

3. Wittgenstein once observed

"The malaise of an epoch is cured by a change in people's mode of life, and the malaise of philosophical problems could be cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life, not by a therapy invented by any individual."

Please comment in regard to the contrast between your views and "liberation theology."

4. Would you explain the relationship between moral and intellectual conversion? Do you think that one genuinely occurs without the other? On your view, is there a dynamism in human nature towards the occurrence of the three conversions? Please explain.

Are there affective components in the process of intellectual, moral and religious conversion, or do you see merit to speaking in terms of an affective conversion? How would you distinguish conversion in a strict sense from differentiations of consciousness? Do you envision a limited number of conversions?

5. Does intellectual conversion imply correct explicit articulation of what it means to know? Certainly there have been people in the past who were "on position" (e.g. Augustine, who realized that the spiritual is real). But your usage (unlike for moral and religious conversion) sometimes suggests that intellectual conversion means accepting the epistemological position you have articulated in Insight.

Further, is there a nuance of difference between a "converted" subject and an "authentic" subject ("authentic" meaning one who knows correctly, "converted" meaning one who furthermore has an adequate theory of knowledge)?

6. In Insight (Ch. 20), you spoke of love as "willing the good of a person". Would you now in any way elaborate or modify that definition?

7. Would you comment on the observation that Insight actually articulates a kind of ontological argument for the existence of God? The observation noted that from a phenomenological perspective human beings automatically intend a world, that to be human is to reside in a world, and that there cannot be a human world without meaningfulness and intelligibility. Intelligibility, in other words, is given as an essential ingredient in the structure and constitution of the human world. This implies that God is always co-present to the human world as its necessary ground if in fact there cannot be a world apart from intelligibility. Please comment.

June 13, 1978

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1. The required relationship is between
  - a) the priority of metaphysics, being, the object, and on the other hand
  - b) the priority of cognitional theory over epistemology and the priority of both cognitional theory and epistemology over metaphysics.

The necessity of this shift emerged in the Augustinian-Aristotelian controversy that emerged towards the end of the XIIIth century in such charming works as

Correctorium fratris Thomae

Correctorium corruptorii fratris Thomae

etc etc in which the theological odium theologicum replaced the older and more ~~maxx~~ malignant odium haeticorum.

Its fruit immediate was the scepticism and the decadence of the XIVth and XVth centuries, followed by the birth of rationalism in Descartes Leibnitz Spinoza and that of empiricism in Hobbes Locke and Hume

There followed Kant's three critiques, the absolute idealisms of Fichte Schelling and Hegel, and the ~~xx~~ return to the concrete subject with Schleiermacher Schopenhauer the Historical School Kierkegaard Newman ~~xxx~~ Nietzsche Blondel

the return to the fons et origo malorum with XIXth century catholic theology's renaissance of medieval thought

Medieval essence and existence are the objective answers intended by the distinct questions, quid sit, namely essence, and an sit, namely existence.

Now quid sit as a question presupposes the data about which one asks what is it

It seeks the intelligibility to be known by answering that question, cf. Met Z 17, Christ's emendation of the text, dia ti ti estiv, why is it something

Finally, an sit, is not answered by taking a good look at the data, as empiricism takes for granted, but by finding in the data all the implications of the intelligibility proposed by the answer to quid sit, i e, the verification of the hypothesis proffered by the act of understanding.

In brief potency form and act are the basic objective components of any reality to be known by experiencing, understanding, and judging

Aristotle and Aquinas knew of the questions, modern science made it impossible to be ~~9x~~ ignorant of the nature of the answers

2. I take my answer from Voegelin's brilliant paper on "Christianity and Culture" published by the Pittsburgh theological seminary along with the other papers read at the celebration of their 175th anniversary.

~~IN~~ Voegelin draws a distinction between "information" and "revelation" ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ and his argument is from scripture

Repeatedly in the gospels one reads of Jesus saying, "Tell no man that I am the Christ". One asks, Why not? The answer is that telling people is merely information, but knowing that Jesus is the Christ calls for revelation.

CTSA 1977 pp 8 f.

3. At the meeting of the editors of Concilium in its various editions in various languages and, on the other hand, members of the CTSA I had the good fortune to belong to the discussion group that included Gustavo Gutierrez, the Gutierrez from Peru

During one of our sessions he informed us that the weakness of liberation theology in South America was that its proponents did not know any economics.

This is a serious defect, if true. There is no use calling for justice unless one can go beyond defining justice in terms of 'unicuique suum'. The modern problem of justice in economic affairs is the non-existence of an intelligent, reasonable, and responsible account of economics. The economics of the West is part and parcel of the decadence of the West.

Until Catholics have the diligence needed to understand economics, until they have the reasonableness to defend a correct understanding of economics, until they have ~~the~~ shouldered the responsibility of presenting to other Catholics and to the whole world a correct account of economics, their talk on the subject is just sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

This of course is only part of the malaise of our epoch but it is the part that is relevant to liberation theology. It calls for a profound transformation of the mental habits of our contemporaries, catholic and non-catholic. So on this point at least I agree entirely with Wittgenstein.

4. Intellectual conversion is a conversion that rectifies mistaken ideas on the nature of the first three ~~x~~ levels of consciousness. It is a conversion that transposes one out of the world of the "already-out-there-now" and into the world ~~of~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ mediated by experience-understanding, and judgment, mediated by meaning. It is the transformation discussed yesterday and, as was contended in INSIGHT, it has not occurred in one if one has no memory of its startling strangeness.

Moral conversion is a conversion that takes one beyond the baby's attitude of likes and dislikes and into the grown-up attitude of right and wrong, not merely what is ~~x~~ right and what is wrong in the actions of others, but centrally what is right and wrong in one's own actions, one's own thoughts words deeds and omissions.

Both intellectual and moral conversion are the natural fruits of ~~xxxx~~ human dynamism. As long as one is mistaken, there keep recurring questions that point up one's mistake. As long as ~~as~~ one is doing what is wrong, one suffers from an uneasy conscience, forever seeking a rationalization of one's conduct, because none of the rationalizations that for a while seem satisfactory ~~d~~ eventually ~~x~~ are found wanting.

Religious conversion is natural in the sense that we naturally desire it. As Augustine and Bultmann put it, *Recisti nos ad te, Domine, et irrequietum est cor ~~xx~~ nostrum donec requiescat in te.* Lord our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.

But while the desire for that rest is natural, actuality of that rest is God's gift. It is purely and simply gift: we experience it as purely and simply gift ~~x~~ because it is the fruit of being loved by God ~~x~~, and we all ~~xx~~ experience ~~x~~ as pure gift ~~x~~ our being loved not merely by God but also by any human being. To be loved is for another to make you the gift of himself or herself. And the greatest of such gifts is God's love for us, revealed to us in Christ's being lifted up, in his being scourged, crucified, dying for our sakes.

Finally, while logically intellectual precedes moral and moral precedes religious conversion, actually for the most part religious conversion is first, moral is its ~~xx~~ consequent, and intellectual requires the long way to Nicea.