

LONERGAN WORKSHOP

Boston College
June 18-22, 1979

Dialogue for Discussion

1. In chapter 11 of Insight, the reader is presented with the opportunity to make the strategic factual affirmation that he/she is a knower. The data for such a judgment are given in consciousness. My question concerns whether we may legitimately pivot from chapter 11's factual affirmation of the self as a knower to its use as a criteria for getting into the real, i.e., to some it may appear as if your position does not escape idealism. Could you help us by commenting on this point.
2. Would you address yourself to the difficulty put forth by Bishop Butler in his review of Method in Theology (Clergy Review, 8/72, pp. 586-587) regarding moral and religious conversion?

I find this distinction between moral and religious conversion difficult to accept on the terms in which Lonergan presents it. Is not moral concern itself, if authentic, "total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations"? I would think that, if there were any reservations, there would not be a real self-transcendence. And on the other hand, that to which we can rightly surrender is a real self-transcendence on the level of ultimate responsibility can surely only be the Reality with which the convert to religion "falls in love". The ultimacy of this Reality that summons us to moral conversion is expressed in the absoluteness of the demand made upon us by the moral imperative. Nor will it do to say that the difference between moral and religious conversion is that, in the latter, God takes the initiative. For God very certainly takes the initiative in moral conversion, which is, if I understand Christianity aright, impossible without operative grace.
3. In Insight, metaphysics, the implementation of the heuristic structure of of proportionate being, has its first step a dialectic which distinguishes positions and counter-positic. In Method in Theology, the last four function specialities follow upon "Dialectic" which distinguishes between positions and counterpositions (i.e., present and absence of conversion). This superficial similarity suggests a more profound set of relationships between metaphysics as formulated in Insight and the functional specialities. Could you comment on some of these relationships?
4. In Insight (646, 647) you speak of the intelligible in two ways: an intelligible which is a secondary component devoting what is or can be understood; and an intelligible which is a primary component identical with the act of understanding. For human understanding you use as an example of the primary component the generative principle which grounds the infinite series of integers. Would you give some non-mathematical examples? Is it failure to advert to the primary component of the intelligible that results so easily in a naive realism?
5. You understand the terms and relations of cognitional theory as "isomorphic with the terms and relations denoting the ontological structure of any reality proportionate to human cognitional process." (M.T., 21) However, if

5. cont., cognitional theory includes also such terms and relations as deliberation and the notion of value, what would you understand as the further terms and relations of the ontological structure of that particular domain of human reality proportionate to human cognitional process, not only as empirical, intelligent, and rational, but also as existential?
6. Leo Strauss in his essay "What is Liberal Education?" says
Just as the soil needs cultivators of the soil, the mind needs teachers. But teachers are not as easy to come by as farmers."
Would you speak to us of your teachers?
7. What are the virtues of retrieving the past in education, as in the example of the great books tradition (Leo Strauss, Allan Bloom, etc.)? What do you think are the limitations and inadequacies of this tradition in meeting the exigencies of the present?
8. There seems to be an implicit elitism in the classical sense of liberal education. In a modern society tending toward egalitarianism, and given the inevitable shortage of excellent teachers, can there be a mass liberal education?
9. Is there a correspondance in the first moment in the Longer Cycle of Decline to the first moment in a persons radical falling away from God? If so, what are the moments and what is their correspondance? Historically then how was the first moment in the Longer Cycle manifest?
10. Please relate the notions of bureaucracy and cosmopolis.
11. In view of the innumerable texts on economics, why have you chosen Robert Gordon's book Macroeconomics?
12. To what extent did your Jesuit 'formation,' and in particular, your experience of the Spiritual Exercises, influence your later thinking. For example, are not 'self-appropriation' or 'self-transcendence,' 'conversion' and discernment in reflection aims of the Exercises?
13. The titles of the chapters in Bradley's Appearance and Reality correspond to many of those in Insight; is there a link? Dewey, in his Logic of Inquiry, makes a clear cut distinction between common sense and scientific inquiry-understanding. Did you read Dewey before working out your own position?

Workshop 1979 questions June 21st.

1a The legitimacy of the transition from chapter 11 to 14 (Insight)
Apart from sensitive tendencies to goals that are not yet
responses to sensed objects (eg hunger)

acts that are conscious are also intentional

and all acts that intentional also are to some degree conscious
(ie they need not include the focused consciousness brought about
by naming, discriminating, etc., the consciousness of the intention)

Hence one and the same set of acts both ground the knowledge
that I am a knower and the metaphysics that is concluded from one's
cognitional acts.

1b The naive realist understands realism as knowing what
is already out there now: eg the professor epistemology that
considered the critical problem ~~the~~ answered by an explanation
of how one sees a wall in front of one.

Similarly he conceives idealism as not knowing what is
already out there now but claiming some sort of knowledge of
what is already in here now.

My position does not escape the naive ~~idealistic~~ realist's
equally naive idea of idealism.

2 Perhaps Bishop Butler's difficulty may be solved by distin-
guishing

a the attainment of moral perfection and serious beginning
towards such an attainment (conversion) and

b the attainment of religious perfection and the serious
beginning towards such an attainment

Further, there are several steps along the way towards
attaining moral and/or religious perfection.

Each serious advance to a further step exemplifies
what Aquinas meant by an operative grace: becoming willing to
to the good that previously one was unwilling to do

Eg I have heard a mystic ~~ex~~ explain that he had had five
conversions, and he did not mean that he was already perfect

Finally, there is Newman's distinction between notional
and real apprehension, notional and real assent. A real
apprehension of moral or religious perfection would have the
implications supposed by the Bishop's argument. But I do not
think that the beginning of the assent involves in all cases
such real apprehensions.

3. The dialectical oppositions in metaphysics deal with the transition from what is known tacitly and what is known explicitly.

The dialectical oppositions in theological method have their source in all the self-deceptions of the human race ~~xxxxxxx~~ (traditional or personally initiated) that give some sort of security to ~~xxx~~ one's existence-in-untruth.

4. If by a non-mathematical example, you mean an example drawn from common sense knowledge, I should say that no such example can be given. For common sense is an unformulated accumulation of insights which fit together but do not follow from some ~~pre~~ prior and comprehensive understanding.

If you wish a scientific example, try the periodic table of chemical elements which if perfectly understood would be at the same time the understanding of, I am told, more than three hundred ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ thousand compounds.

I should say that the source of naive realism is a lag between learning to talk and learning the difference between what you know and the way you know (1) prior to learning to talk and (2) after learning to talk. Cf the astonishment and delight of Keeler when she discovered that certain lines drawn on the palm of her hand meant water.

5. The further terms and relations presuppose time and add the possibility of change and especially change for the better.

6. My early education ~~xxx~~ up to about the age of 21 was in the classicist tradition: everything always has been and ever will be substantially the same.

At that age I was shipped from Canada to England where even the Jesuits regarded the ratio studiorum as quite outdated and that shift started me on a process of thinking for myself.

Among my memorable teachers in freshman college was an Irishman from Limerick who initiated me in the wonders of sheets and kelly

in first year philosophy two were outstanding: the professor of logic and epistemology whose efforts were devoted generously to making sure we did not think there were any pat answers; and the professor of metaphysics, who had other and more important duties, and gave us only three classes in the whole year. He relieved me of the labor of learning what I would have had to unlearn later on if I was to get anywhere.

there also was a tutor in mathematics for those preparing university degrees. Before entering the Society he had obtained an MA from Liverpool university (then MA was the top english degree; the dollar shortage did not then exist). When he entered his tutor followed him down to Roehampton ~~xx~~ and said look here, I have spent so many years teaching you mathematics, I have nothing against the Catholic church or the Jesuits, but unless you get down to creative work right away, you will not do anything really original.

He made an election and decided to remain in the noviate^t

Later for teaching he went to Stonyhurst and taught sixth form mathematics. His students were headed for three different places, Cambridge, Oxford, and Trinity in Dublin. The entrance exams at the three places differed notably, and he began by working out an eclectic program that would take them through any of the three.

He also developed a whole technique of teaching math's: he could write an elaborate equation on the blackboard and remark, Now ~~fx~~ if you have an ~~xxxx~~ x-ray mind, you will see that this is a quadratic. He could expatiate on the great discovery of zero, the superiority of Leibniz ds/dt over Newton's y with a dot over it, and other somewhat more recondite discoveries.

I did my theology in Rome where we had a different professor for most of the treatises, had an opportunity of seeing all the different ways theology could be approached, could come to grasp that we ~~were~~ being given the parts but if we ~~wanted~~ more than a heap we ~~xx~~ would have to write a book on the subject of method, etc.

7 First we have a specimen of the great books tradition in the person of Pheme Perkins on our theology staff. When she finished the course at St John's Annapolis she had to ~~xxxx~~ decide whether to become a quantum physicist~~x~~ or a NT scholar. She was offered a scholarship by Harvard divinity and so chose NT.

A limitation of the Great Books is that they are read not in the original but in translation. What that privation means can be estimated from a reading of George Steiner's After Babel: Reflections on Language and Translation (Oxford Paperback 1975 \$4.75

Aspects

More modestly, you cannot read Aristotle intelligently unless you are reading the Greek: a translator has to use the same English word for different Greek words, and different English words for the same Greek word; such substitutions mean that

you miss more than half the clues to what Aristotle meant.

The importance of retrieving the past~~x~~ is that the less of the past you retrieve, the less is the difference between you and the antropoids that by discovering and developing language ~~xxxxxx~~ developed the size of their crania~~x~~ and ~~the~~ multiplied the convolutions in their brains.

What is the use of knowing Greek? Well if you have read Demosthenes Philippics and Olynthiacs, you cannot think of Russia without recalling Philip of Macedon; and you will remember the Athenian disaster in its siege of Syracuse when people praise successful talkers and popular votes.

8~~x~~ If egalitarianism is just a shibboleth to encourage vast public expenditure on popular education whether the populace have any taste for it or not, a certain amount of elitism in the masses and in their entertainment might help save us from the common fate of democracies. They prepare the situation for the Emperors and dictators.

8 In Ontario the excellent Catholic in charge of Catholic elementary education once quoted to me the percentages of those beginning elementary school and finishing it, entering prep school or high school and finishing it, entering college and finishing it, and by multiplying these fractions concluded that the tail would be wagging the dog if the earlier stages were directed to preparing people for the later stages.

~~xx~~

I think a lot depends on what you mean by a tail and by a dog.

9 Voegelin's fourth volume in Order and History, The Eucumenic Age, breaks with his previous assumption of a linear historical process, and advances or retreats to the view that creative impulses start at random and anywhere.

10 They are related pretty much as opposites. Bureaucracy is the subordination of instruments to people with power. Cosmopolis is directed to the ideal of wisdom and virtue for as many as can take it.

11 E Why Gordon. It is an intermediate text. It does not make macro dependent on microeconomics. It can do differential equations by lining up successive graphs with successively different variables treated as constants. It provides a lot

of information on topics relevant to my own quite different purposes.

12 I had best leave that question to the day when I decide to write an autobiography.

13 Newman speaks of a liberal education of picking up a great deal of knowledge by the simple process by which a grand piano gathers dust on its top.

I read about Bradley and Dewey

A friend of mine, an expert on Dewey (Ph D, Columbia) has remarked that Dewey is the best cognitional theorist produced by the United States.