

646Q0DTE070 – Questions following lecture on Dialectic

Question session, day 7, Tuesday, August 10, 1971

**Question:** Does your position admit of partial conversion, that is, of an inadequately appropriated change of view? Because if it does not, then it seems not to do justice to some of the human ambiguities with which one is familiar, for example, in relation to human love; and if it does, then it seems to me that it is misleading to use the ‘horizon’ metaphor, a spatial metaphor, of the changes involved in conversion.

**Lonergan:** St Thomas, in his earlier writings, considered that the first grace was sanctifying grace. As a matter of fact, in his earliest writings he only knew about sanctifying grace. Later, in the *pars prima*, he distinguishes between a grace that is transient but prior to justification, the grace of justification, and the third, final conversion, when you obtain the beatific vision.

Now religious conversion I take to be the gift of charity, the gift of sanctifying grace, manifesting itself in acts of love. And I think that grace is given to all men, but its proper unfolding is within Christianity, where God also is objectively expressing his love to us. There is mutual love expressed. Consequently, insofar as other religion can have the core of Christian religion without having divine communication, you will have partial conversions there, from a Christian viewpoint. Similarly, with regard to moral conversion, one’s motivation can be fundamentally in terms of values yet an awful lot of one’s living is in terms of satisfactions and not values. So, [my position admits of partial conversion.]

With regard to intellectual conversion the transition is perhaps more clear cut: one gets over problems connected with objectivity.

‘Horizon’ is not a metaphor; the word is used in a transferred sense but that transferred sense is determinate. There are horizons in as far as the scope of one’s knowledge and interests is limited; there are things one does not know anything about and one is not concerned with. That’s is the aspect of limitation to horizon. There is another aspect to it insofar as a horizon is organized: later knowledge grows out of earlier knowledge. My account of conversion is in terms of shifting from one type of horizon to a different type, in general. I do not know what is misleading about it.

**Question:** You mentioned this morning that religious and moral conversion are likely to chronologically precede intellectual conversion. Do religious and moral conversion play a role in bringing intellectual conversion about? If so, would you please briefly explain their role.

**Lonergan:** They do, within a Christian context, insofar as the Christian confession of faith leads to a stress on propositional truth, especially if you are in a culture that has an intellectualist development. It is the process up to Nicea, described by Fr Sala in question four (below-Ed).

**Question:** It is not clear to me how it is possible to be authentically religiously converted and yet not to be also morally converted. It seems to me that moral conversion *eo ipso* and of necessity must be present in one in whom the state of being in love and its consequent acts are present. And a closely related question: why do you consider it so crucial to maintain a very clear distinction between the two conversions?

**Lonergan:** With regard to the first, that moral conversion *eo ipso* and of necessity must be present in one in whom the state of being in love and its consequent acts are present, I would say: yes, if *all* its consequent acts are present. That is why religious conversion leads on to moral conversion. But moral conversion can be a

process, in which one gradually is motivated less and less by satisfactions and more and more by values. And moral conversion is the transition to the state in which the dominant motive always is value.

Secondly, why do I want a clear distinction between the two conversions? Because I am talking about two different things. In one case I am talking about a transition from motivation by satisfactions to motivation by values. And in the other thing I am talking about is God's gift of his love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

**Question:** (Fr Sala's question) You said that dialectic deals with value judgments. Now, values are the objects of human operations at the fourth level of consciousness. I do not see clearly why you relate dialectic to the moral level. I take as a clear instance of dialectic your exposition of the movement from the New Testament to Nicea (*De Deo Trino* Part 1). Then dialectic is a matter of spotting the insufficiencies of the various doctrines about Christ, finding the origins of these insufficiencies in the incorrect thematization of our cognitional structure, relating these insufficient doctrines, counterpositions, inasmuch as each one tried to overcome the insufficiencies of the previous one, till a satisfactory solution was found at Nicea, in which an intellectual conversion is implied. I see that your whole account presupposes that you have taken a clear stance about the fundamental notions of knowledge and reality. In other words, only a man who is intellectually converted can truthfully account for the whole movement, since he has correctly thematized the cognitional structure which was operative in the movement itself from the New Testament to Nicea.

But I do not see what this intellectual stance has to do with moral decision. One could want or decide to live up to the exigencies immanent in the cognitional

structure; nevertheless one may not yet have reached the intellectual conversion, as I fear is the case for many of us.

**Lonergan:** The example from *De Deo Trino* Part 1 is a case in which the dialectic I was talking about this morning is worked out in detail on a particular point. It is a matter of assembling the evidence on the areas of conflict, comparing them, going to the roots, picking out which are positions and which are counterpositions, and so on. In other words, what I am talking about in that sort of analysis is not simply interpretation or history; it is a distinct functional specialty, and the fundamental judgments are judgments of value: Who is intellectually converted? Which are positions and which are counterpositions? Also there is confrontation with persons too. In other words, while there it is Dialectic applied, what I am describing in the functional specialty is every aspect of the thing.

**Question:** In *Foundations of Theology* pp. 218-19, David Tracy suggests that it is necessary to justify critically the moral and religious prior to the explicit argumentation about God, but that you fail to do this in *Insight* and hence operate abstractly. Fr Tracy further states: ‘If moral and religious conversion do require prior explicitation to the question of God, how could the discussion of evil logically follow rather than precede the solution to the problem of God?’ Please comment.

**Lonergan:** ‘It is necessary to justify critically the moral and religious ...’ I don’t know that the idea of a critical justification can be transposed from the problem of knowledge to questions of morality and religion. Secondly, the critical justification of knowledge is not prior to knowing; it is consequent to knowing. You have to be knowing when you are doing it.

Does the discussion of evil logically follow or precede? Well, I do not think things are in some one linear order. In Aristotle, things can be in either of two

orders; you are dealing with the *causa cognoscendi* or the *causa essendi*. For example, you know the moon is a sphere because of the phases, and you know why the moon has phases when you know it is a sphere. You can use either as your middle term, and you can line things up in either way. And you treat questions in whatever order happens to be best suited to the audience in hand. The order in which you treat them is what Thomas calls *ordo doctrinae*: you explain first what does not presuppose any of the other explanations you are going to give.

On the question of critical justification, there is no critical justification of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's account of the supremacy of charity. You read it and accept it or reject it. Similarly, if a person has such charity, he does not have to critically justify it; it justifies itself.

**Question:** In *Insight* you spoke of a universal viewpoint as proximate achievement, the upper blade of an actual method of hermeneutics, but in dialectic you speak of a comprehensive viewpoint in terms of aspiration toward a 'high and distant goal.' Does this signify a softening of a perhaps overly ambitious claim to a universal viewpoint, or is there some other reason for the discrepancy?

**Lonergan:** There is no discrepancy. The universal viewpoint in *Insight* is potential insofar as I am talking about it. It's not having everything lined up here and now. Its actuation, even in *Insight*, is a high and distant goal.

**Question:** We are familiar with the work of researchers, interpreters, and historians. Can you point to any concrete examples of the type of work you envision in dialectic?

**Lonergan:** Ernst Cassirer's *Problem of Knowledge, Das Erkenntnisproblem*, the first three volumes, a magnificent piece of work, in which he takes one writer after another and the second corrects the first and the third corrects the second and the fourth corrects the third and, by the time you are through the whole circle, you

have arrived at Cassirer's position. And then you start again; and it is the interaction of scientists and philosophers in the whole period from Galileo on.

Again, in a less full form you have the lists of adversaries or lists of opinions in traditional theology. In each thesis different opinions are lined up and their relation to the present position is stated and the relations between them, and they are compared. In controversial theology you have, in a polemical form, what we want to do in an irenic form in dialectic.

**Question:** It seems clear enough that your eight functional specialties can be employed by any religious or ideologically oriented group which possesses traditions, is in existence now, and oriented toward the future. It does not seem clear, however, that a human science such as history or psychology can employ your eight functional specialties except in an indirect and partial fashion. Are these two observations correct or not?

**Lonergan:** I think so. I think that Gibson Winter has something like this. It is not as fully worked out, but if you put in policies instead of doctrines and plans instead of systematics you get an approximation to this, if you are working in applied sociology or in applied social psychology.

**Question:** Is your distinction between science and scholarship a reemergence, within your method, of the Aristotelian notion that history, as of the particular and contingent, could not be the object of properly scientific knowledge? Is theology not then scholarship rather than science? Would you say your transcendental method is not scientific?

**Lonergan:** It depends on the sense in which you want to use the words 'science' and 'scientific.' Current usage is that 'science' is natural science, but if you want to include the human sciences, fine; I am willing to go along with that.

Sciences aim at general results. My difference from Aristotle is that the sciences deal with the particular and contingent too. A modern science is not *de necessariis et universalibus*. A modern science aims at being as concrete as possible, and it develops the type of theory that can be moved right in on a concrete issue. Statistics is intrinsic to the application of classical laws, as you can find from the early chapters of *Insight*.

I do not want history to be called ‘science’ because when that name is used the dogmatic effort is made that there will be no history whatever; there will only be sociology, determining laws, and history as it has existed will be eliminated. There are people trying to do that in university circles, and that is why I use the word ‘scholarship.’

With regard to transcendental method, I would say it is philosophic: it is the ground of all methods.

**Question:** You seem to be grounding the historicity of man within the world of common sense. On that showing, the world of theory and the world of interiority would be a- or meta-historical to the extent that they moved away from common sense. Yet no matter how far the operations in the worlds of theory and of interiority extend beyond commonsense horizons they still are operations within history. Would it not be more accurate to ground the historicity of man within the world of interiority which grounds, not only all operations in the worlds of common sense and theory, but also grounds its own self-mediation in the ongoing discovery of mind in history?

**Lonergan:** That is all correct, but there is history in two senses: there is the history that is written about and the history that is written. The history that is written about is the history that gives man his historicity; the history that is written is the history I am talking about.

I am not saying that history is grounded in common sense; I am saying it is the same type of intellectual development as is the development of common sense. I'm not saying that history is just common sense. I'm saying it's the same type of development. What is the structure of the procedures of the historian? They are like the structure of the procedures of the man of common sense. They are that type of development, not the type of development you get in the natural sciences or in mathematics, or in the human sciences.

**Question:** In the section of *Insight on Method in Metaphysics* you said that self-knowledge leads to and demands a reorientation in science and in common sense. If the same is true in human studies, would you say that the many authors you rely on have sufficiently achieved this orientation, or might some of them need a radical reorientation?

**Lonergan:** One is selective in what one takes from other people. I take from people what fits into my own scheme of things. The fundamental question is not whether these other people are sufficiently reorientated; it is whether I am.

**Question:** Fr Tracy asks in his book, 'What are the conditions for the possibility of religious and explicitly theological meanings?' and claims that this is the most important foundational question for a critical theology. What is your position on this question now?

**Lonergan:** I will tell you tomorrow.

**Question:** Rahner argues that the teaching of philosophy before theology instead of together with theology is an error based on a mistaken understanding of the grace-nature distinction. Do you agree with this contention of Rahner and, if so, would you indicate briefly why you think Rahner is correct?



**Lonergan:** There have been errors on the distinction between grace and nature. To what extent they influenced this separation of philosophy from theology, and to what extent that separation was a matter simply of following Descartes's lead is not too easy to decide perhaps.

**Question:** Rahner indicates, as you do, that natural theology should be taught as a moment within systematic theology. Could you indicate why it is in systematics rather than foundations that the God question should be considered?

**Lonergan:** It is a systematic type of thinking. There is the question: Is this certain? And you answer that sort of question, St Thomas would say, by going to the authorities, in religion your sources in revelation. But when you are trying to understand something, you have a different procedure: you go to the most intelligent author you can run across and see what you can get from him.

**Question:** Where does moral theology fit into subject specialization?

**Lonergan:** Doctrines.

**Question:** In *Insight*, p. 745, you state that 'empirical human science can become practical only through theology.' In what way have you attempted to show this in your *Method in Theology*?

**Lonergan:** The place given religion in those initial chapters: religion as the fulfillment of human aspiration for self-transcendence, the fulfillment of the self-transcendence that is constitutive of the authentic human person.

**Question:** If a science like psychology can be conceived of as involving micro sub-sciences and a macro science, whose correlative objects are the relevant set of conjugate forms and the concrete thing respectively (so that, for example, psychophysiology, neuropsychology, psychologies of perception and emotion, psychologies of intelligence and will, would be the scientific noetic correlates of

conjugate forms at the abstractive, micro level, and psychology of personality would be the scientific noetic correlative of central form at the concrete macro level), could one begin applying to the range of sciences which constitute psychology your functional specialties, at least in the first phase and at the first three levels? Is there a close relation between your second and third levels and your treatment of conjugate forms and thing in *Insight*?

**Lonergan:** Well, the third level is the question of existence, and existence is the act of central form, so there is that relation between the two.

Any science is at the first three levels, the first three functional specialties, except that they are not distinguished as functional specialties, there is just one subject that operates on three levels. They can become functional specialties in certain cases; for example, the experimental physicists and the theoretical physicists get the first two separated.

There is a light there, connecting the concrete science with the central form and the total science with the micro parts with the conjugate forms. But I do not know just where I would push on.

**Question:** Reflecting on method in theology and Chinese culture with its (a) refined moral consciousness, (b) concrete way of thinking nourished by the script which is basically an image script, and (c) stress on praxis, still enforced by Communism, two questions come to my mind: (1) How could I go about leading Chinese people to an intellectual conversion? (2) What place, if any, does praxis have in method in theology?

**Lonergan:** The second question is easier. The fourth level, the level of deliberation, evaluation, decision, sublates the other three. That is where the foundations are, that is where the dialectic is ironed out, and that is praxis. A method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations with cumulative

and progressive results. Method is about operations, and operations are concerned with the fourth level.

Now leading the Chinese people to an intellectual conversion: The Western mentality is entering the East through the sciences. I remember speaking to an Indian when I was a theology student and I said, 'Should not this be put into Indian terms?' and he said, 'Well, when they do physics, they learn Western physics and do not bother about the fact that it is not a particularly Indian way of thought.' My impression is that Chinese is a highly intersubjective type of language and culture, in which these differentiations are not influencing the culture to any significant extent. Consequently, the question of intellectual conversion perhaps is not a real question, an urgent question, as it can be in the West with its highly rationalized type of science and philosophy.

A person to whom I can recommend you to apply for an answer to that question is a man working in Japan, Perez-Valera, a Jesuit. He has been doing a doctorate in Munich, and I think he has returned to Japan now. He is totally devoted to transcultural problems, and he has been very successful in talking to Japanese nuns, for example, who are not highly educated, as to simple people in Germany, where he was doing his doctorate. He's very much concerned with these transcultural things, and I suggest that you apply to him for advice about China, which may be a somewhat analogous situation, at least far closer than anything I could think of, knowing practically nothing about these people.

It was said that during the war the Japanese were defeated because their naval commanders could not give unambiguous commands, and that possibility of unambiguous commands is had in the West because of a terrifically long tradition of logic. This is especially true of the French language, a language that is formed by the medieval university, by the *Grande Siècle*, by the Academie Française and by the *bachot*, which is a terrifically literary exam which all educated people have

to pass before they can get into university. That is what makes French an ideal vehicle for didactic prose. I once wrote an article (it is in *Collection*) on the Catholic University, for *Relations*, a monthly in Montreal, on the occasion when the Pax Romana was meeting in Montreal. I wrote my thing in English, and a student of mine, whom I taught for three years, and a literateur on the staff of *Relations* worked on it for three weeks, and I had to reformulate every sentence before it could go into French. You cannot be allusive in French, you cannot put one sentence after another; the connection has to be clear, and so on. You simply have to think in a different way to write good French. Now that is the sort of difference I am acquainted with, but the transition to Chinese or Japanese is just beyond the question.

**Question:** David Tracy writes: ‘The modern scientist has largely abandoned the classical search for essences to face squarely the modern context of pluralism and perspectivism. Perspectivism recognizes that the significance of events may change as their history unfolds. As that significance of events changes so does the "reality" once thought captured forever in the essential definitions of the classicists ... In Catholic theology the conflict of the majority and minority reports on the birth control issue is ample evidence of the inability of the classicist to realize the shift at issue here.’

It seems to me that your method in theology looks beyond to a church which accepts positively a genuine Catholic pluralism. Yet the furor over *Humanae Vitae* and the scant attention theologians have paid to such a revolutionary encyclical as ‘On the Development of Peoples’ seem to indicate that the teaching Church will never admit a theological pluralism for fear it be not concomitant with your triple conversion. The risk is too great, and the Roman Catholic Church has too much to lose. The alternative will be to recede further into Rahner’s diaspora, to hold on

tight; the storm will abate and the controversies which presently rock the ship of Peter will ultimately pass; men will fall to their knees seeking God's mercy and forgiveness for their waywardness and theological and philosophical aberrations. This phenomenon has not yet come to pass because relativism within the domain of Catholic truth is not yet a major issue, but to my mind your thinking is going to bring it into sharp focus before long. Would you like to comment, please?

**Lonergan:** I am a member of the theological commission requested by the Synod of Bishops. The first topic we discussed and decided to work at was unity of faith and cultural pluralism. I was asked to do a paper for that sub-committee last year and what I sent in I also delivered as the Père Marquette Lecture, at Marquette University in Milwaukee. The title of the thing is 'Doctrinal Pluralism,' and it is published by Marquette University Press. Pluralism is not the same as relativism.

I was given the Aquinas Medal over a year ago by the Catholic Philosophical Society of America, and my talk on that occasion was 'Theology and Philosophy,' and the fundamental issue was the transition from eternal truths to developing doctrines. You can find that in the Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Society for 1970.

This theological commission is not under the 'Congregatio de doctrina fidei.' If they have any objections to what we are saying we will be glad to listen to them, and tell them our reasons. The commission operates independently, at least under the present setup. So there is at a fairly high level, not a governing level – we are not a governing body at all – an awareness of this problem of pluralism and an ability to distinguish between pluralism and relativism.

There is a problem of a splintering of theology, and of excesses of all sorts going on, but that is a different question, and the purpose of method in theology, the desire for method in theology, is precisely to canalize efforts and to enable theology to do its own police work. Any academic discipline has control and sees

to it that work is done in a scientific fashion. If theology has an accepted method it will be able to achieve that same self-control and exercise a certain autonomy and do good work without the constant intervention of the magisterium. But there has to be built up an apprehension of what it is to do theology in the context of modern science, modern scholarship, and modern philosophy. That is the purpose of method, because the problem of doing theology today is quite different from what it was 150 years ago; and this whole century there has been a gradual change in the notion of what it is to do theology. All you have to do is compare the earlier and the later articles in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*. The earlier ones are non-historical, you might almost say, and the later ones are almost entirely historical.

**Question:** A term that occurs frequently in *Insight* is ‘the real.’ As this usage is not common in English, could you give some synonyms? Would ‘anything that is real,’ ‘everything that is real,’ ‘the whole of reality’ do?

**Lonergan:** Yes.

**Question:** Is it possible to ground critically that life is worthwhile and that the universe is a value? If so, how does one proceed to do this?

**Lonergan:** Again, I know about critical history and I know about critical philosophy, but what is meant by critical ethics is less clear to me.

**Question:** Is it necessary first to demonstrate that the universe is valuable in order to show that being is intelligible and indeed completely intelligible, or is the obverse the case?

**Lonergan:** I would be inclined to the obverse, but these questions of priority presuppose a linear type of mentality, that you can just think in one way and you

cannot think in half a dozen different ways. You can. *Insight* is a book that could be written in 300 different ways.

**Question:** Do you think that a systematic moral theology is possible?

**Lonergan:** I would be inclined to emphasize feelings. I was asked something about moral theology this morning and I suggested that one investigate to what extent the Aristotelian *areté* and the Thomist *virtus* was an expression, not simply of this abstract *habitus operativus bonus*, this abstract definition, but was something that had a meaning because there are felt responses to values involved.

**Question:** I am not sure of the distinction between relativism and pluralism. Is it possible in the context of *Humanae Vitae* to give me an example?

**Lonergan:** Our Lord bade the Apostles to go forth and teach all nations. Now, to teach all nations you have to talk the language of each of the nations; you have to express the Christian message within their culture, use the resources of their culture to express it. Otherwise, you are not teaching them, you are imposing your own culture upon them. There is, therefore, a fact of cultural pluralism, and a fact of pluralist teaching of the gospel.

Further, people differ in their differentiation of consciousness. There are people of undifferentiated consciousness, and you can distinguish about 32 different possibilities. Now, you are not going to prevent anyone from acquiring a differentiation of consciousness and you are not going to oblige anyone to achieve a differentiation of consciousness. But you have to talk to each one in a way that he will understand; otherwise, the religion is going to be meaningless for them. So, you have another aspect of the pluralism necessary for religious teaching.

What we are moving away from are the assumptions of classicism, that is, that there is just one culture, that anyone who works hard enough can acquire it, and the rest are the people, the lower classes, the natives, the barbarians. And

consequently, the gospel can be sufficiently preached to all men, if it is preached in classicist terms, with a few examples thrown in here and there. It was not facing the fact of cultural pluralism, and when you acknowledge the fact of cultural pluralism you will have pluralism in your teaching.

The problem of this pluralism is to ensure that it does not become an occasion for people who are not intellectually, morally, and religiously converted to debase Catholic doctrine, to empty it out. And that is very important, particularly among those who govern the church and teach in the church. That is the point where one has to make a stand, that is where contradictory doctrines come from.

With regard to *Humanae Vitae*, what we have is a cultural lag.

**Question:** You spoke of applications to the cultures of Japan and China. Do you know if there is anybody working in the same line, about application to the African situation?

**Lonergan:** There is the Rector of the Louvain college in the Congo, who is also a member of our theological commission. And you will find somewhere in *IDOC* (documentation on anything Christian at the present time, which a Dutch society started publishing during the Second Vatican Council) a description of a group in Africa who were obviously guided by the Christian message and enjoyed God's grace. This group had been persecuted by the colonial authorities, and they had their martyrs, because they had their own way of expressing and doing everything. The persecution has now come to an end. So you have this primitive people living a life of grace in connection with Christ, but not accepting the European trappings of Christianity – that sort of thing.

If you want an historical example, read Daniélou on Judaic Christianity. There was a development of Christianity simply on Palestinian soil, that thought in



terms of Apocalypse and had its own methods of exegesis and its own set of symbols. Daniélou has about three books on this. When you first run into this you cannot believe that they are Christians, because they have quite different thought forms.

The fundamental problem is this: just as Christianity developed in the West, along western lines, so, if it is going to develop in other cultures, you have to let it develop along the lines of those cultures. There's a fundamental problem, eh?