Lonergan Workshop 1975 Q&A June 16-20

June 16 (TC 849 A and 849 B)

Question: Feelings orientate one massively in the world mediated by meaning. Would you care to expand on this?

Lonergan: The expansion is experimental. One way to experiment on this is to watch a football or especially a hockey match in the company of someone who is cheering for the other side. You find that your feelings come out rather vigorously, more vigorously perhaps than you would imagine. This man I know, he was a younger brother, his elder brother was from Oregon, no connection whatever with Notre Dame, but he was a terrific fan for the Notre Dame football team. And the younger brother developed a great enthusiasm for the Southern California team. You can image that a certain amount of feeling developed in that situation, in connection with that.

A psychologist friend of mine, Pius Rippel, I was talking to him once about repression, and he said that commonly what people have repressed is not sex; it is rage. And rage can come out, especially under trying circumstances. One might be surprised at the things one will say in these circumstances; one doesn't recognize oneself at all. It is a complex object; it is not like you at all to talk that way. At the beginning of Jolande Jacobi's book *Complex, Archetype, Symbol in the Psychology of C.G. Jung*, she starts off with things common to Freud and Jung, and among them is the idea that the complex is another ego, and when a complex becomes a little too strong, then you get a multiple personality. These people, the multiple personalities, are all marked personalities, and it is a matter of feelings massively orientating one in this or that world of meaning and perhaps in incompatible worlds of meaning.

There is the story of the group of young priests who were involved in preaching during Lent. And they met at the end of Lent, and one was recounting all his successes during this time. He was giving a retreat this girl's school and it was a tremendous success, and a retreat at this girls' school and it was a tremendous success, and another retreat at this girls' school and it was a tremendous success. And someone asked him, did you give any retreats to boys? And he said, Once, and they asked him, What happened? And he said, Well, I was quoting scripture, I will be your father, and you will be my son, and someone shouted, Big deal! There was no massive orientation into that world of meaning for that group! That's about all that occurs to me at the moment on that topic of feeling. The dry as dust author, you know, that leaves people quite, quite cold, it's just the absence of any feeling providing an orientation in the world mediated by meaning.

Question: Would you care to offer some further thoughts on the education of feelings, against the background of what you wrote in *Method in Theology*?

Lonergan: It's some time since I wrote that, and I don't remember it very well. However, some further thoughts on the education of feelings. I remember when I was a boy you were taught Latin and Greek and a bit of mathematics, and that was it. Cicero was looked upon as a very pompous idiot. He was always thinking about himself, a style of egoism that was just out of this world, unbelievable. But that type of education brings you into contact with people who think

entirely different from the way you and culture do. Also Homer. Achilles, the great hero, weeping in his tent shedding copious tears – that was beyond belief that a great hero would do that. So it was revealed that feelings could be something different from what you were supposed to do; you weren't supposed to cry at all.

Paul Ricoeur in his book on symbols and the symbolism of evil has the fundamental theme that symbols make you think. Jung as quoted in this book by Jacobi: the symbol has two functions. It brings about a redistribution of energy; you are going along one line, and things shift, and the symbol will do that. Its other function is to give rise to a decision, give rise to a judgment. So there is the stop, the redistribution of energy, and a call to making a decision. What are the parables about? They're about people making decisions for all the different ways in which a call for making a decision arises. Take them one by one and go through them, and you will find that it is a very common theme. And, of course, the lesson that people get from the symbol will depend ninety-nine percent on them and very little on the person who happens to be the occasion. I remember soon after I had done my theology I was doing supply in England, and I often had to give sermons in the evening. Once I was walking with a lad who lived not very far away, and he told me the great effect the sermon had on his life, but it had nothing to do with anything that was in the sermon. But when someone is talking in a sort of non-interesting way, and there is no one to talk to them, nothing to occupy their attention, well, the relevant thoughts come to their minds; they find out for themselves. That is part of the function of the symbol, I imagine.

The education of feelings: the first thing and the fundamental thing is to advert to them; don't just get sore, but know that you are sore. And wonder why, especially if getting sore on this and that occasion is recurrent. Maybe there's something screwy behind it. If you don't get on well with, and are avoiding, certain people, well, start asking questions, and that is the education of feelings. The complex: people that have complexes needn't be anything like a multiple personality, anything that strong, but there are certain things that, if said, will get a rise out of them; well, catch on; that is part of the education of feelings. Two chance remarks.

Questions: Given the role of images in moral and religious development, would you say something on the problem of discerning which images are helpful and which are not helpful?

Lonergan: In St Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* he has rules for the discernment of spirits and different rules for the first week and different rules for the second week. The first week is engaged in the purgative way, getting rid of all your faults and sins, and repenting them, and so on. In the second week you are starting a new life, and the difference between the rules is the significance of what upsets you. In the first week what upsets you, well, that's pretty good, because you are on the wrong foot. In the second week what upsets you, well, that's bad, and they are rules for discerning which are the good feelings and which are the bad ones, which are the ones to be followed and which are the ones that are leading you astray – in other words, what fits in with your attitude. If you are on the wrong track, what fits in with them isn't good, chances are, and if you're on the right track, what doesn't fit in isn't good, by and large. And note that it is a technique for the education of feelings, helping people not to be misled by their feelings and on the other hand to be helped and guided by their feelings. It is not a gift of understanding or wisdom or prudence, or any of these intellectual virtues. One can be very faithful to the movements of the Holy Ghost, even though one is a primitive – at least I suspect.

Question: Would you make some comments on the problems that pastoral efforts at critical value education faces within a tradition dominated by symbols that emerge within a pre-critical consciousness?

Lonergan: A big topic. If you are dealing with people with an alien culture, the fundamental task is to understand the culture. The Jesuit Relations talk about the savages in North America and these barbarians with their barbarous ways of doing things, and so on, was largely a matter of not understanding a Stone Age culture, and consequently of not being able to enter into their mentality and help them. And they are still pretty well in the Stone Age culture except that they are victims of the crises brought to them by the white man. One has to distinguish between symbols that are the expressions of a group culture and personally significant symbols. Symbols that are an expression of a group culture arise – on that it's a matter of a fundamental understanding of symbols. An extremely good book on that is Gilbert Durand's *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, and it is a fundamental introduction to the understanding of symbols that is a universal understanding of symbols. It is not Freudian symbols or Jungian symbols, which are specialized types of interpretation of symbols. These are symbols based upon dominant reflexes. A dominant reflex is one that takes over when anything contrary or untoward happens. If you are going to lose your balance, well, you stop absolutely everything else till you recover your balance. It is a dominant reflex. It is something that the child learns with great difficulty, in learning to stand up, and it remains deeply imprinted on the human mentality for the rest of life, so that 'up' means what's good and falling means what's bad. Everything that is good is associated with being on one's feet and having one's hands free and able to handle things. And everything bad is falling in the dirt and getting dirty, and so on and so forth. And you have the massive combination of all these – what are called ascensional symbols – in the pictures of St George and the Dragon. St George is on horseback with a long spear, in shining armor, and the dragon is down on the ground in smoke and fire, with scales and teeth and all the rest of it. That is one case of a dominant reflex. Another case of a dominant reflex is swallowing. If you start swallowing something, and it goes the wrong way, that takes over, recovering. And it is just the opposite set of symbols, since it gives you a reinterpretation of going down; and the symbol for this is Jonas in the whale's belly. It didn't do him any harm, and after three days he is back on the shore as good as ever. The dragon is now the whale. And there is the dominant reflex of mating. These are fundamental symbols, and you will get them recurrent in any culture.

Then there is what Eric Voegelin calls compact consciousness; often it is called mythic consciousness. It is consciousness that has an ontology, a whole view of the world, without any general terms, any philosophic terms whatever. The good is what is up, and God is what's in heaven, and heaven and God is what is up, and so on. It is expounded at length by Mircea Eliade in all sorts of ways and in different books; the fundamental presentation is perhaps in the book *The Sacred and the Profane*. How does he account for the sacred? Well, it is the being-in-the-world of religious man and all the aspects of his being in the world. And there is the periodic contrast with man that is non-religious, and you have a whole ontology there expressed spatially, temporally, and so on. An illustration of it is a book by a man named Roger Poole entitled *Towards Deep Subjectivity*, and by deep subjectivity he means what I mean by authentic subjectivity, except that he starts from pictures. In the front of the book he has a picture taken in a park in Prague, in which you have a bench, and on it three Russian soldiers staring straight

ahead. And at right angles to that bench, there are two other benches, and on one there is a young man, and on the other is a young girl, and they are looking at the three soldiers. It is an instance of what he calls ethical space. These Russians are staring straight ahead because they are in the wrong, and the Czechs are staring them down because they know it. You can get ethical ideas just in the image, and for religious men you get religious ideas. They are expressed in the concrete situation. And that compact type of consciousness can be extremely rich, can be far better orientated in life and have a far richer, far more meaningful life than a person in an up-to-date civilization who really hasn't caught on to anything and finds everything empty and meaningless and so on. So compact consciousness isn't something that is intrinsically wrong. It can be first-rate for people at that stage. They can get out of it all that another gets out of a very fine grasp of metaphysics.

Symbols, then, in this sense as interpretations of the world – take in with this Antoine Vergote's book *The Interpretation of Religious Language*. Vergote is a good Freudian, except he brings the knife right down when Freud starts talking nonsense. He considers Freud tops on handling the perversions, and perhaps he insists a little too much on images and symbols in that, but at least he is very successful in what he does say about it.

Besides symbols that are the expression of a culture, there are symbols that are personal, that are part of one's personal psychic economy, and they come into consciousness when things are not jibing, when the mind and the heart and the psyche are not getting along too well. The psyche expresses itself in symbols, and these symbols keep changing, and if you adjust, things get a little better, and so on. It is that type of symbol that stops you, and it gives rise to the redistribution of energy, and provides the occasion for a decision. People make their own decisions and effect their own education by profiting from these things.

Question: What happens to satisfactions when, in moral conversion, the criterion shifts from satisfaction to values?

Lonergan: Well, years ago there was a popular novel entitled *Death with a Superb Blond*. The blond in question was, I suppose, what today is meant by a gold-digger. Anyway, she was traveling in Europe where she got unwell, and was taken to a celebrated physician in Vienna whose name was Sigmund Freud. He asked her about repressions, and she asked what he meant. So he went into concrete instances and asked her, Did you ever want to do this? and she said, Yes, and, Did you do it? and she said, Yes, and then he asked, Did you ever what to do this, and she said, Yes, and, Did you do it? and she said, Yes, and finally he said, Well, did you ever want to kill anyone? and she said, Well, once, and he said, and Did you do it? and she said, Oh Yes. So Freud gave up. So if values started to interfere with her desire for satisfaction, then she either would not seek the satisfaction or else, if she did, there would be a certain amount of the uneasy conscience about it. So when values supervene, they usually do fairly early, but in the measure that they do, satisfactions become less satisfactory. Of course, there are all kinds of complexities there connected with this, but to begin to discover the value of the satisfaction; and that kind of discussion is helpful insofar as one is examining one's conscience.

Question: In what ways does the discussion in *Method in Theology* and other recent writings, of the development of feelings, the education of value apprehension, theological method, interiority, etc., add to the *Insight* discussion of emergent probability? For instance, is the clue

that you give in 'Philosophy and Theology,' that a genuine development of doctrine occurs when there is a new differentiation of consciousness, another way of talking about emergent probability?

Lonergan: In general, emergent probability is a general theorem. What are things like in a universe in which there obtain not only classical laws but also statistical laws, not merely classical laws and not merely statistical laws but both. Emergent probability is a structure that provides an answer to that question. To a certain extent man handles his own emergent probability. You introduce bussing to change the emergent probability, and in general the social engineers are encouraged and concerned to change the probabilities or to obtain the noble ends aimed at by other engineers. Man insofar as he understands his situation and meets it intelligently, and so on, either is exploiting the emergent probability – he has read the signs of the times and he is operating along with the emergent probabilities of the times; or he has read them again, and he doesn't like them, and he is operating against the signs of the times, he can choose either way. Insofar as you don't choose and you don't understand and all the rest, then emergent probability runs everything, and in general it has the last say. I remember talking with Professor Cochrane, the author of *Christianity and Classical Culture*, and he said that history performs its own experiments. You don't have to perform the experiments on man, history has its own process of experimentation, and that history performing its own experiments is giving you the results of emergent probability, and no one foresees all the implications, the whole concrete situation. Emergent probability, in general, wins out. St Thomas spoke of providence and fate, and fate is more or less the effect of providence without thinking about God, and similarly so is emergent probability a more modern account of what then was called fate. That is about all that occurs to me on the topic.

(Questions from the floor)

Question: … as in the realm of knowledge there is the myth that knowing is like looking, so in the realm of choice there is the myth that the correct value is like winning or victory and defeat, as was suggested this morning. If this is correct, would you elaborate on it?

Lonergan: That paper this morning went beyond things that I've thought of, very useful from that point of view, going beyond what has already been put in the book, and did that very well. A large number of ethical considerations can be developed in that connection. In the Christian tradition, the notion of victory is one of the interpretations of the redemption. *Christus Victor*, an interpretation developed historically by a Swedish bishop, I believe his name was Aulen. The victory of Christ over death and St Paul's 'Death, where is thy sting?' in terms of the resurrection. That's not so much moral as religious. Victory over self has to do with the ascetical ideal. On the other hand, it can be an expression of self-transcendence.

Question: I'm on the trail of whether perhaps in Eric Voegelin's *The Ecumenic Age* his exodus conquest may suggest some kind of different symbolization. But I was also listening very hard to what you were saying about as one goes along the symbols that are appropriate do change, and so at the moment I'm finding the resurrection in terms of winning not helpful in terms of

cultivation in me of values. I'm thinking back to the time when you made it clear to me that understanding is no victory.

Lonergan: Exodus and conquest, of course, is in the *Ecumenic Age*, and the ecumenic age is the age of a group of civilizations extending from Persia to the Pillars of Hercules and dominated by a single power: first of all, the Persian Empire and then Alexander and finally the Roman Empire. It didn't have one civilization but a number of civilizations in a melting pot. And so he calls it the ecumenic age in a somewhat sardonic note. It this power umbrella over different civilizations is something quite antithetical to the Exodus, which is a development of the Hebrew religion and culture. Is that the point?

Question: Well, I was thinking that Exodus without emphasizing the spoils taken from the Egyptians is a way of purifying the symbolism.

Lonergan: I don't think symbols in themselves express values. I think they provide you with an occasion to make a judgment of value. Either a stick or a carrot. That remark of Jacobi's on Jung's view, the function of the symbol is to provide the occasion for a decision: the effect of the symbol is that it stops you, it makes you think. *La symbole donne à penser*.

Question: I think there is a point here that we got from the question this morning, the negative side, that seeing is a myth. Is winning a comparable myth?

Lonergan: It can be. The myth of the terms of winning is not something that infects the whole series of philosophies. That would be the difference perhaps. Does it affect a whole series of ethical viewpoints, or is it anti-ethical?

Question: I think it affects a whole set of apprehensions and values.

Lonergan: That would be a good topic for a book.

Question: What intrigued me about the myth of knowing … **Turnover to 849 B.**

Lonergan: Of course, the Old Testament people …

Question: There was a question this morning about whether or in what way moral conversion depends on critical consciousness in that the values have to be critically perceived. Could you comment on that?

Lonergan: There is a terrific interdependence in all these things, and they reinforce one another. Like pure moral conversion, you have the Stoics whom you can speak of as morally converted, they had high moral values, perhaps a bit wooden-headed, but on the other hand they were materialists. They did not have intellectual conversion, just the opposite. Tertullian said, 'Everything real is a body.' It may be invisible to my eyes and your eyes, but the angels and God can see it, which is taking a look at the basis of reality, a criterion of reality. Did this have any

effect on their ethics? Can you attribute the weakness of Stoic morality and its exaggerations to this?

Question: There is a question about how well we are perceiving the values, about the cognitive aspect of values. It would seem to imply that there seems to be an interdependence between intellectual and moral conversion, though not absolute; but it would seem to be that you could have a moral conversion without an intellectual conversion, that it would be imperfect.

Lonergan: It would be imperfect, that's true all right.

Question: And there would be an implicit value in having them together.

Lonergan: Oh, yes, and there is a value in knowing too.

Question: Something Cathleen said about the fact of the images in terms of which we orient ourselves for actions to be done; the images of the past dominate us. What immediately came to my mind was a remark you made last night that I only half caught, about Moltmann's idea of the resurrection and something about future facts.

Lonergan: There is the criterion that things in the past didn't happen any differently from the way they do at the present time. That is an axiom of historical writing, especially positivistic historical writing, on which Collingwood remarked that it is nonetheless a fact that the Greeks and Romans controlled their populations by exposing on mountainsides newborn babies, even though this lies outside the current experience of the authors of the Cambridge Ancient History. They have no experience of it, and yet it did happen. Moltmann is giving you another way of going about that axiom. The Resurrection means that in history what is historically significant can be something that belongs to God's future, the things that God will be doing in the future, providing your criterion of what is or is not historical. People talk a lot about salvation history, and it is different from factual history, and so on. Well, this salvation history can be very much something up in the air, you know; it is our side, and we're right, and so on; but what does it mean, and how do you ground it? Well, Moltmann gives you something that ties in with it. The thing about Moltmann – this book by Douglas Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*. Moltmann uses a lot of very strong expressions that don't correspond to what he means, and this book enables you to deflate these expressions and see some very good sense.