

Lonergan Workshop 1976 Q&A June 14-18

June 15 (TC 886 A and 885 B).

A copy of the questions and of Lonergan's typed response can be found at www.bernardlonergan.com file 27890DTE070.

Question: A question came up this morning about membership in cosmopolis. To what extent does this membership depend upon intellectual, moral, and religious conversions?

Lonergan: Cosmopolis is conceived in chapter 7 of *Insight*, and I don't think it is mentioned again. People might find a prolongation of the idea in chapter 20 on the church, but I don't think the two are identified. In the book *Insight*, religion does not enter the picture until chapters 19 and 20. Only in chapter 18 does ethics make an appearance. Only in chapter 17 is there a question of truth raised. The content, grounds, existence, object, and objectivity of judgment occur in chapters 9 to 13, so that cosmopolis is just a matter of the first two precepts of the natural law: Be attentive, Be intelligent, and not yet Be reasonable, because that is the question of judgment, and not yet Be responsible, because that is a question that arises only in ethics. So the notion of cosmopolis is a reflection on the human community in the light of the first two transcendental precepts: Be attentive, Be intelligent, as contrasted with the oversights and obtuseness of individual, group, and general bias.

Implicitly, the moral issue is raised for overcoming individual and group bias as part of moral development, namely, the shift from the criterion of satisfactions to the criterion of the truth good, what is worthwhile. Again, the very precepts: Be attentive, Be intelligent, are the first two precepts of the natural law, conditions of the possibility of being a genuine person. Finally, the good is never an abstraction; it is always concrete. As the moralists used to say, *bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quocumque defectu*, what is good is good from every viewpoint, what is bad is bad from any defect; so the good is concrete. The heuristic structure of cosmopolis in chapter 7 has to be filled out by the rest of *Insight* and then you go on to *Method in Theology*, and from there you go on to the prolongations of theology and interdisciplinary studies, to get the whole picture. So perhaps that gives some sort of an answer to that question.

Cosmopolis is not a whole story, and the good is a whole story; it is a start based upon attention and intelligence. And the interference with attention and intelligence by bias and looking out for number 1 and letting the rest of the world take care of itself.

(Lonergan indicates he will 'leap to question 4' on the list of questions 'and then go back to 2 and 3 after saying something on 5.')

Question: A basic category among contemporary Catholic moral theologians is the 'fundamental option.' Would you please say something about this reality, about how this reality is related to moral and/or religious conversion?

Lonergan: Professor Moule, who teaches New Testament at Cambridge, England, or did teach at any rate, has argued that the New Testament does not present any specifically distinct Christian moral doctrine. With this I would be inclined to agree in view of Heiler's comparison of all the great religions, on the understanding that religion constitutes a sublation of morality. It

introduces a new principle, it goes beyond morality, it directs it to a higher and fuller end, it enriches, strengthens, perfects it. The sublation may be made more specific by considering Max Scheler's doctrine that at the root of the apprehension of values and of adherence to them is love, and at the root of the apprehension of disvalues and of rejection of them there is hatred. So religion – in general, this apprehension of values and disvalues results from falling in love, it becomes something permanent insofar as one falls in love, and there are different kinds of love: domestic love of the family, love of humanity, of human welfare, and love of God, and religion is the sublation that is love of God. It is love with a cosmic dimension. There is love and hatred with a cosmic dimension. Hatred that extends to the cosmos and to the ground and cause of the cosmos, if there is one, is antireligious. It may be illustrated by the types of existentialism that find the universe absurd, as Camus, or that with Sartre would hold that *l'enfer, c'est les autres*, that hell is the other fellow, being with him, the other person; with a nihilism that empties human life, human community, and human history, of all meaning and value: the world is absurd, meaningless, pointless. Inversely, the love of God is solidary with an appreciation of God's world, of life, of human community and human history, with faith in its meaningfulness, with hope in its redemption and salvation. On this showing or analysis the fundamental option is between cosmic love and cosmic hatred. However, the option commonly is implicit rather than explicit. It is taken not with the utter radicalness of a John of the Cross or of a nihilist but with respect to particular issues. It is taken with greater or less regularity with respect to greater issues rather than minute ones, with greater or less consistency and fidelity. We don't become perfect overnight, and such implicitness, incompleteness, wavering adherence fits in with the nature of moral and religious conversion. For at its conception conversion is conversion in principle, it is the good resolution without as yet uniform and complete achievement of good performance. One doesn't leap to perfection. It is St Peter protesting his fidelity unto death at the Last Supper and immediately afterwards denying Our Lord and, on the other hand, St Peter accepting martyrdom, accepting death out of fidelity. That idea of conversion I first developed in my doctoral dissertation on grace and freedom, *gratia operans* in St Thomas.

So there is the basic option. It is between cosmic love and cosmic hatred, where if you acknowledge the existence of God it is the love of God; and the radical apprehension of that basic option is not everybody's cup of tea. People live it out in more concrete fashion, and they live it out with greater or less perfection, and so on, and that fits in with the idea of conversion, because conversion at the start is conversion in principle, and it has to extend through the whole of one's living.

Question: Some writers, e.g., Tracy, Curran, speak about a fourth Christian conversion within your context. Is there a Christian conversion, and if so is there a special realm of transcendence in Christian conversion? Is there a new horizon? Would you specify some references in your writings on this question?

Lonergan: Well, the difficulty fundamentally is terminological. If one speaks of Christian conversion, then one has to say that the anonymous Christian is unconverted, *quod est inconveniens*. The precept of loving God above all was given not first in Mark but first in Deuteronomy. It is repeated by our Lord in Mark 12.29, but it occurs first in Deuteronomy 4.4-6. Were the Hebrews that accepted and did their best to fulfill that precept converted or unconverted? I would say that they were converted in the sense that the universal salvific will

gives sufficient grace to everyone. I would also say that that conversion did not have the completeness that results from the coming of Christ. The old law gave the horizon. The new law puts Christ within that horizon, Christ as the revelation of God's love in human flesh and blood, of his redemption in Christ's death and resurrection. To give the precept to the love and the grace to love gives you the horizon, the orientation to God, an acceptance of this world, an exclusion of nihilism. But it is with the coming of Christ that God's love is expressed to us; just as a man and a woman may be in love without avowing their love to one another. That situation is not being in love. It becomes transmuted when each knows that the other really is in love, and similarly God's revelation of his love in Christ, in the coming of Christ, puts something in the horizon that intensifies and reinforces the gift of grace in the soul, that completes the conversion and perfects it and all the rest. But it is not so much a new horizon as a new element within the horizon, and in that way you understand the continuity between the Old Law and the New.

Do I talk about this? Well, in *Method*, pp. 112-24, the chapter on religion, on the word, faith, religious beliefs, and all that, is relevant to this, and what I've said just now about Christ and so on you will find there. But in general I don't emphasize that in the book on method because I'm writing not theology but method in theology.

Question: Now to what extent does loss of religious conversion lead to the loss of moral conversion?

Lonergan: Loss of religious conversion is loss of the cosmic horizon of love. It is Nietzsche's lament of the death of God, of man's having assassinated God, and it was in Nietzsche's experience of course, just emptying out the whole meaning of European history and all its art and all its architecture and so on and so forth. It all became meaningless.

It is Marx's confinement of the human good to this world and his distinction between communism, a horrible actuality, and a true communism that turns out to be utopian. How is alienation escaped while the economy remains industrial? Well, everyone is a jack of all trades. You have a bit of it in Maoism, where the doctor cleans the street and works on the farms and so on. But these are the radical conclusions, namely, a Marxist conclusion or a Nietzschean conclusion: the loss of religion needn't come to the logical conclusion all at once. As the French say, ... moves in that direction by easy stages, but the fundamental meaning has gone. He may have all kinds of supports from previous developments, moral development, and so on, and that won't automatically disappear. But insofar as he is confronted with radical questions, he will find his world slipping from him; and if he doesn't, then his children or their children will.

That denial of God: its result in Marx is that what people who seek virtue would call self-transcendence for Marx is alienation, and alienation is what he wants to put an end to. For Marx the critique of religion is the foundation of all critique.

Question: To what extent does moral conversion depend upon prior religious conversion?

Lonergan: Moral conversion, up to a point, will result from the natural dynamism of the human spirit expressed in the precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible, Be in love, and don't think you are Adam. A lot of people considered these questions before you, and it is worthwhile hearing what they think about it. But eventually there emerges the ultimate question of one's attitude to the universe. Is one going to pronounce it too evil for a good God to

exist, and if so, will one's moral achievement survive? Why should I be good if the universe isn't? Why should I be a tragic hero? To be good is useless and hopeless. Is one going to acknowledge beyond the evil evident in humanity an ultimate principle of benevolence and beneficence? If so, one accepts religious conversion. In other words, there is a connection between them, because religion is a sublation of morality and an ultimate foundation of morality, and it puts morality in a new order, namely, the order of love. It is the person in love that does apprehend the values. The mother sees the values in her child that no one else sees. The eyes of love see the potentiality that no one else sees there. 'What do you see there?'

Question: To what extent can one accurately say that your understanding of bias is a philosophical explanation of the doctrine of original sin?

Lonergan: Well, traditional theology distinguishes between *peccatum originale originans* and *peccatum originale originatum*, originating and originated original sin. What I have to say about bias in *Insight*, chapter 7, would be an expression of originated original sin, i.e., darkening of intellect and weakening of will, compounded with all sorts of inclinations to evil. Its theological source is my dissertation on grace and freedom, *gratia operans*, and moral impotence. Is it a philosophical explanation? Well, really, I would drop the word 'philosophy' from my vocabulary. What the theologian needs is method based on an understanding, a formulation, and an acceptance of what goes on in his 'black box.' And that is method, explicit method. To speak of philosophy in the traditional sense is to accept the Aristotelian conception of the hierarchy of the sciences, and you may not know you are doing so, but it has a crippling effect, because you will always be presupposing that hierarchy without knowing you are doing so, and coming up with all sorts of puzzles that you can't solve. It is something like a Freudian trauma that blocks you. You have to think things out thoroughly, and dropping philosophy is my cure, talking of method.

My fundamental expression of it is the paper I did at the American Catholic Philosophical Association in 1970 on philosophy and theology. What the theologian needs is method, but to understand theologians generally and the history of doctrines generally, he has to know a good deal about different philosophers. If you want to understand Tertullian, you have to understand something about the Stoics. If you want to understand Augustine and the Augustinians, you have to know something about Plotinus and the Platonists. If you want to understand Aquinas and the Thomists, you have to understand something about Aristotle. If you want to understand modern theologians, you have to understand the modern philosophers. But that is a matter of technical equipment that occurs here, there, and everywhere insofar as theology is historical and interpretative. Also, that fits in with my lectures on 'Philosophy of God and the Functional Specialty, Systematics.'

Question: A question arising out of Fr Flanagan's paper: in your view what factors contribute to the formation of a national character? Is it the way the nation originally came into being? Is it the artists, lawyers, thinkers? Is it the nation's part in world history?

Lonergan: Well, it is an endless question. There was an Englishman who after applying psychoanalytic methods to the study of cultures and various tribes, primitive tribes in various parts of the world, made a study of the United States using the same techniques. He divided the

country up into different sections, and California and Texas, well, they were quite apart from everything else. There were different cultures there altogether. And there was the northeast, and so on, the south and the plains, and so on, and he had different cultures. Then the influence of the immigrant father was the big thing. The immigrant father – he was always put down because he was not able to speak the language, he wasn't able to compete in the market place, and so on. On the other hand, the mother was the home. The father always appeared at a disadvantage, but the mother was always the source of bliss, taking care of everything in the home, and he contributed a great deal of American Momism to this situation of the immigrant father at a disadvantage and the happy mother in the home, and so on. National character is something you can go on about in all sorts of ways. However, briefly, Chesterton in one of his notebooks somewhere stated that the effective way to communicate a profound truth is to tell a story. The stories that a people tells about itself, that inform its way of life, that illustrate what it thinks good and what it thinks evil is a main ingredient in its national character. It is the concrete, down to earth expression of their morality, the morality that is lived. What stories they will tell will come out of their experience, out of their artists, lawyers, thinkers, leaders, myth-makers – myth-makers are the people that tell these fundamental stories – and of their own acceptance of the stories, their repetition of them, their adherence to them, because that means that the stories ring a bell, it is something that is meaningful for them. A people, a nation, does not possess a philosophy; it is not something that runs on differentiated consciousness or system or anything like that. Its communication is concrete, as are the gospels, the parables, and so on. That is a brief, simplified answer to an enormous question, but it's all I can do.

Question: Fr Flanagan made reference to the issue of values within the university this morning. Would you please respond to this question: Can a university commit itself to values and still retain its openness to free intellectual enterprise?

Lonergan: I would refer the questioner to Aristotle on *philia*, friendship, which he discusses at length. Among the questions he raises he asks, Can one, should one, be a friend to oneself? Can one, should one, love oneself? He answers that it depends on what you mean by the good. If by the good one means satisfactions, then being a friend to oneself is just another name for egoism, selfishness. If one means by the good what is best, wisdom and virtue, *aretē*, excellence, then unless one is a friend to oneself and seeks what is best for oneself, namely, wisdom and excellence, one cannot be a friend to oneself or to anyone else. The epigrammatic expression of that, not to be a friend to anyone else, comes from the *bon mot* that it would have been terrible to have Voltaire for an enemy but it would have been worse to have had Rousseau for a friend. He abandoned his wife and five children, and went on endlessly about excellence!

Question: Fr Crowe's paper speaks of different schools of spirituality with differing values and doctrines all following Christ. Can there be something analogous in Christian denominations, all valid forms of the Christian Church, even though they have different doctrines?

Lonergan: Stress the word 'analogous.' 'All valid forms of the Christian Church': in what sense 'valid?' Valid in the sense of a de facto Christian community, which, whatever its origins, whether in good or bad faith, now at least is holding its views in good faith. The people who had the bad faith, if there were such people, belong to the history, to the past. These people, at the

present time, have as good a reason for saying that they have God's grace and lead Christian lives as you can say about other Christian communities. Well, acknowledging validity in that sense is what ecumenism is about. They are Christian communions, and Vatican II calls them Christian communions and favors ecumenism. But ecumenism does not imply or encourage religious indifference. Ecumenism is not a matter of joining Pilate. What is truth? asked Pilate, and he did not wait for an answer. The question of truth: people can feel, of course, that settling questions of what is true and what is false is something beyond their competence, and why bother me with that? Well, that's OK. But to say that whether it is true or false makes no difference is a different story. The fact that you can't settle the matter is not sufficient ground for saying it is unimportant.

With regard to question 8, I did not get to the application. We spoke about *philia*, but we did not get to the application: Can a university commit itself to values and still retain its openness to free intellectual enterprise? Well, if it commits itself to wisdom and excellence, it will devote itself to free intellectual enterprise, and if it doesn't, it will oppose free intellectual enterprise. It is not the people who are devoted to wisdom and excellence, to values, who are opposed to freedom or to intellect.

Questions from the Floor

Question: I find it hard to take seriously your suggestion that we drop the word 'philosophy' from our vocabularies. I'm not sure how seriously you meant that. I would like you to comment on that. It seems to me that there is something to be referred to, and we will have to use another word if we drop this one.

Lonergan: Well I'd use 'method,' 'methodology.'

Question (continued): What do we refer to as the type of thing that, say, Heidegger or Sartre is doing? Would you call that simply method?

Lonergan: Well, they pertain to an earlier stage in the history of the question. Certainly, Aristotle thought he was a philosopher, and Plato. Thomas didn't. For Thomas the philosophers were the pagans. Philosophers were pagans.

Question: So we could use it historically.

Lonergan: Oh, yes. The thing is that our modern philosophy has been doing an awful lot. Like Hegel, the absolute idealists, represent the effort to re-establish speculative reason, speculative intellect. Kant had pulled the mat from underneath, and they attempted to restore it. They didn't succeed. Subsequent philosophy: Schopenhauer, the world as will and imagination, representation; Kierkegaard puts his trust in faith; Newman drinks first to conscience; Blondel, a philosophy of action; Dilthey, *Lebensphilosophie*; Ricoeur, a philosophy of the will, and somewhere in between a great deal of pragmatism, phenomenology, existentialism. Speculative reason has disappeared, the age of innocence is over, the fundamental issue is conversion.

Question: Moving back to Thomas on the same question, would not Thomas recognize within the total project, worldview, a moment in which one operates from what we might call a philosophical viewpoint?

Lonergan: So would I, if you want to call that philosophy. But a moment is not what is meant by philosophy in the ordinary sense. It is a subject, a domain. It has a method of its own, and so on. And I'd say the correlate is methodology. The issues rest in methodology. What am I doing when I am knowing? Why is doing that knowing? What do I know when I do it? That is not something that is confined to the natural order. It is just as relevant to the supernatural as to the natural. This business of saying it is just philosophy is just one way of getting rid of serious theology. When you start asking serious questions in theology, people who want to take a powder will say, 'That's just philosophy.' As a learned man recently remarked to me, the trouble with the Catholic Church is that since the Council of Trent it has loaded the church with philosophy, something he had no respect for. He had no very serious opinions on that!

Question: Inaudible.

Response: Your position follows very rigorously from the Aristotelian conception of science as the attainment of truth, the permanent system: a very sound Aristotelian position. It's a logical consequence. You are speaking of truth. If you recognize that what anyone attains is something towards the attainment of truth as in the modern sciences – none of the modern sciences claims to know the truth. It claims to be on the way towards attaining the truth. The principles and laws of any modern science are open to revision from the very conception of the science.

Question, continued: While science cannot answer, cannot ontologize, nonetheless sciences have arrived at cogent, coherent knowledge, valid, legitimate.

Lonergan: In the sense that it cannot be revised?

Question: Take the science of chemistry and analyze the components of water, H₂O.

Lonergan: Yes, but the question of revision, eh? In 1900 the physicists felt that all physics had to do was to get the constants accurate to a few more decimal places. Within five years, the whole basis of modern physics had been transformed, and still more so within a quarter of a century. Quantum theory came out in 1926. And the meaning of chemistry was transformed with quantum theory.

Question: So there is no distinction between method, truth, meaning, and reality.

Lonergan: Yes, there are distinctions.

Question: But that distinction that philosophy goes round to aim at truth, meaning, and reality, which differ culturally, nationally, conventionally, that is why I'm not sure about method.

Lonergan: Yes, but into that, there are different elements, there are value judgments coming into that, and so on. And that's where certainties have their main basis. But also, all this methodical investigation that is modern science – modern science is methodical investigation, and modern theology is methodical investigation, that is what it is de facto, and theological opinions are probable opinions. It isn't the theological opinion that is certain. The note for any theological opinion at best is probable. If there are more than one, then the best you can say of it is that it is most probable.

Question: So then, you've really in a sense performed the radical critique on Marx. His idea was that philosophy had to be sublated, negated, in changing the material world. And you see philosophy as actually sublated in method.

Lonergan: Well, Hegel has that too. Hegel realized that motion had to be put into logic, motion had to come in somewhere, and he tried to put it in the logic. Really what method does is include logic as a part of itself. But it's about the motion, it's the motion from one coherent position to the next, and the point to the logic is to discover the defects, the lack of clarity, the lack of coherence, the lack of rigor in the present position that claims to be coherent, and so on. When logic reveals these flaws, well, the way is open for moving on to the next: the structure of scientific revolutions. If you want to identify philosophy with method, OK. But when people say, Is this a philosophical explanation, what they really mean is, Is this the half of you, you know, that's natural, as distinct from the other half of you that by God's grace is supernatural? And then you get the split, and you get a root of laicism and the division between Sundays and weekdays and all the rest of it.

Question: There is a real sublation, though. It is not just another form of philosophy.

Lonergan: Yes. But that has been going on all along.

Question: Following up on what you were just saying about the natural and the supernatural, at one point in your earlier work you referred to the natural as an intellectual line of reference against which the gratuity of grace is measured. Would you still feel comfortable with that position, or would you modify that?

Lonergan: Oh, no (would not modify it). What they mean by nature, eh? There is no implication of *natura pura* as a real possibility in the writings of Aquinas, who never spoke of *natura pura*. Logic can have all kinds of beautiful implications, but they needn't be creative of anything at all. That is the fight between intuitionism and the general run of mathematics at the present time. And the general mathematicians say, well, if the intuitionists could cover all we've got, fine, but they don't.