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1981 LW Q&A June 16 (second Q&A)

Question: Is there a distinction between psychology and spirituality, and if so, what?

Lonergan: [Recording does not include the beginning. Lonergan's notes have the following: 'There is a distinction. Spirituality broadly is being religious specifically, it is deliberately striving to be genuinely religious. E.g.. Kierkegaard's question, Am I a Christian? Some would answer, Of course! I am a Dane, a member of the church of Denmark by law established. Kierkegaard wanted to know whether one was a genuine Christian, an authentic Christian, one who is everything a Christian should be.'] Recording picks up: Psychology primarily is the study of the internal component in conscious acts, so of sensitive acts, intellectual acts, rational acts, responsible acts, religious acts, no matter what the religion or its quality. Contemporarily, the occult is an object included in some studies of religion; certainly it is a topic for psychologists. Beyond that view of psychology, there is the addition made by clinical or depth psychology, which appeals to the non-conscious, the unconscious, to account for specifically conscious acts. Anything more on that?

Question: What would be the connection between psychology and spirituality?

Lonergan: Well, spirituality uses psychology. Fr Doran introduced psychic conversion because he was a psychologist.

Question: What is the role of suffering in the formation of community?

Lonergan: Well, if you read the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians, you find that charity is not easy to put into practice. It asks an awful lot. It's the law and the prophets all in one. Living in community can give one a great deal of practice, even if all have good resolutions about being loving. As Sartre, the French existentialist, brutally put it, 'L'enfer, c'est les autres,' 'Hell is your neighbor,' which is the opposite of Christianity, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' So, moving from Sartre to 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' the second commandment which, along with the first, contains all the law and the prophets, imposes a certain amount of suffering each time (mumbling).

Question: Could you please elaborate on your understanding of sin? What would you say is the difference between sin and bias, sin and limitation? Would you agree that there is a moral/pre-moral, distinction in the understanding of evil?

Lonergan: Well, to elaborate on my understanding of sin, take the question, Why did Adam and Eve sin? Why did the angels sin? If there had been a reason – not just an excuse, but a reason – it wouldn't have been a sin. Sin is an object of the inverse insight, understanding that there's a lack of intelligibility there. And it is the chief object of such insight. How does sin differ from bias? Sins are mortal, venial, or imperfections, and the moral books give you all sorts of genera and species. Biases are dramatic, egoistic, group, and general. If one is aware of them and makes no effort to correct them, one's conduct becomes sinful. In general, they are sins against the social order.

Dramatic bias is one's style of living in relating to others. One is a bore. A bore is a dull person who thinks his conversation is so interesting and his manner so charming that he wants to monopolize the conversation. And it never occurs to him that he's not very interesting. And so on. It's the dramatic bias. It's the drama of living. 'Style is the man.' Dramatic bias is the sort of thing that the depth psychologists work out.

Egoism is just selfishness in a grand style. Group egoism is ... for us. Who are you for? What about the other people, living on the other side of the tracks?

General bias is the long cycle of decline, common sense being ultimate wisdom.

Is there a moral/pre-moral distinction in the understanding of evil? Well, there's a distinction between understanding what's intelligible and not trying to make intelligible something that isn't. You can make what isn't intelligible from a limited viewpoint intelligible. The Greeks were stopped by the incommensurables, things you couldn't measure. And they proved that they are incommensurable. What is the square root of 2? You'll say it's a surd. Well, what's absurd about it? It's an infinitesimal that isn't repeating. There's no law governing that infinitesimal except the way of taking the square root and keeping on at it indefinitely. The proof of it was the very simple theorem that if you have an improper fraction m/n – the square root of 2 is bigger than 1 and less than 2, so let the square root of 2 equal m/n , where m and n are integers and have no common factors. You can't divide both by the same number and get integers again. You can't reduce that fraction. Then square both sides; then 2 is equal to m^2/n^2 and so $2n^2$ is equal to ..., and therefore m is an even number, and instead of m you can write $2p$ and put in $4p^2$ and you get $2n^2$ and you can cancel out the 2, and then $2p^2$ is equal to n^2 , and so we have a common factor, what by supposition we've excluded. And so there's no number that's equal to ... if you consider an infinite decimal a number, all you have is ... and what does it mean? Well, there's a certain point in the line that you can't specify except by ...

Newton's first law is the object of an inverse insight. A body continues with the same velocity in a straight line indefinitely, unless some opposed, opposite cause intervenes. Well, what causes it to move? The answer is, We don't need causes for velocity. Either it's zero or some constant velocity. What we need causes for is acceleration, increasing the speed positively or negatively ... Einstein is a generalization of that, and so on. It's a solution to a lot of difficulties. There's no explanation for it except ...

Question: Being in love in an unrestricted manner is described as religious conversion that grounds both moral and intellectual conversion. How is psychic conversion related to these other conversions?

Lonergan: Well, intellectual conversion is both a conversion and an appropriation of one's own intellectual being. It's self-appropriation as well as conversion. But psychic conversion is what makes moral and religious conversion self-appropriation. It's by developing, the development that depth psychology can aid, that you make your moral conversion and your religious conversion run smoothly. You have a psyche that's at the disposal of those conversions. And it makes those conversions your very self, part and parcel of your being, not just something upstairs that interrupts your ... So psychic conversion is a matter of grasping the psychic mechanisms or complexes that make me click or else make me clumsy or baffled or out of touch, and so on.

Question: In what sense can a mystic's withdrawal from objectification and return to immediacy be a culmination of human intentionality?

Lonergan: Well, I read the paper that was given this morning. God is the one who has the idea of me. He's the first cause of whatever is good about me. He's the loving Father of each of us. St Thomas asked whether God was vainglorious in seeking his own glory. And he said, Not at all, because his glory is us! The glory of the Father is the Son, and we're the adopted children of God. And that's charity, a way to charity, seeking his own glory ... So since God is the object of our deepest desires, the mystic's withdrawal is withdrawal to God. The first part of the rhythm of withdrawal and return. One contemplates to be able to show the fruits of contemplation.

Question: In *Method in Theology* the eight functional specialties are derived by multiplying the four levels of consciousness by the two phases of theology. Yesterday you spoke of five levels of consciousness, and does that now give us ten functional specialties? If not, why not?

Lonergan: Well, it adds another specialty onto the theological specialties, namely, spirituality. There was a thesis written, I think at Marquette, on religion as spirituality. Vernon Gregson. So the fifth level puts religion into the other four: into what we attend to, imagine, feel, into what we understand, learn, our Lord frequently saying in the gospels, When will you understand? O ye of little faith. And so on. That's so ... Into our reasonableness, into our responsibility. It's the supernaturalizing of the other four. And why the other four? Because theology is religion as related to a culture. Change the culture, and you get a different theology. There's the theology of the apostolic writers, and the theology of the apostolic Fathers, and the theology of the apologists, and the theology of the later Greek Fathers, and the theology of the Latin Fathers, and Byzantine Scholasticism, Western Scholasticism, Renaissance theology, modern theology, and finally there's the last specialty, Communications, taking into account all the differences within the culture.

Question: In yesterday's question period you touched upon Aquinas's distinction of sanctifying grace as radicated, as having its root in, as having its *radix*, in the soul, not in a potency but in the soul itself. Does sanctifying grace transform the central potency, central form, central act of the person, and if so, how?

Lonergan: St Thomas puts sanctifying grace radicated in the essence of the soul to modify man's nature, and he wanted a modification of man's nature, which Scotus didn't bother about – he identified sanctifying grace with the gift of charity, and that was in a potency – St Thomas wanted it in the essence, in the form, because he wanted the supernatural virtues to be virtues. Unless you have a shift in the nature, you can't have a shift in what the virtues are. The central form makes a lion a lion and not a tiger. It makes a man a man and not a lion. And sanctifying grace radicated in the form of a man makes that man a Christian, a good citizen in the city of God. St Augustine's *On the City of God, De Civitate Dei*, makes the distinction between the *civitas terrena*, the earthly city, and the *civitas caelestis*, the heavenly city. Both are here on this earth, but the Christians belong to one and the others to the rest.

Question from floor: Is that shift in the nature of man, is that the condition of the fifth level of consciousness?

Loneragan: Yes, um-hum.

Question: Fred Crowe in his book *The Lonergan Enterprise* referred to your work as Organon, in the tradition of Aristotle and Bacon. Would you please comment on this aspect of your work?

Loneragan: Well, *Organon* was the title of the collection of six of Aristotle's treatises that were considered instrumental to science but not science itself. They were not in the form of the deduction that was the Aristotelian *epistēmē*. Bacon entitled his book ... an Organon, an instrument. It was before the days of specialization. He had a great deal of influence. He gave science a place in the world of cultivated gentlemen. You have to get into a culture before you can change a culture. My *Method in Theology* deals with the contemporary question. Is theology a science in the modern sense? It certainly is not a science in Aristotle's sense. In what sense is it a science? I believe the modern sense is to the effect that a field of learning and teaching, a discipline, is a science if it follows a method. And a method is a normative set of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results. The advantage of making theology a science in the modern sense is that it puts within theology, not something outside theology, research, interpretation/exegesis, history, and theological control of these in dialectic, and uses that result to go on and lay the foundations of theology, doctrines in theology, the understanding of the doctrines, and the adaptation of the doctrines to all ... So my book aims at showing that theology is a science in the modern sense if it satisfies a definition, namely, a science is a way of doing things, and that ... and would like to see people put it into practice.

Question: Could you give us an update on your studies in economics and some indication as to where they are leading? What is your appraisal of ? shifts in economic thinking in the Reagan administration? In light of inflation, are insights still worth a dime a dozen?

Loneragan: The point of that remark is that you need an awful lot of them to have anything ... like grains of sand. Well, political economy became economics to satisfy the requirements of secularist science. It was not hostile to Machiavelli, it wanted results, and it wanted the results to depend upon what ... would say science is for, mathematicians (much mumbling). Keynes contended that economics is a moral science. My aim is an economic analysis; on economic analysis you have over 1200 pages in a book by Joseph Schumpeter, *The History of Economic Analysis*. What is economic analysis? It's clarifying basic concepts and relations between concepts. Schumpeter gives a history of that clarification of relations. He uses Joan Robinson's descriptive analysis as a toolkit of nuts and bolts. So my aim is an economic analysis that is the premise of moral precepts. I got hold of that when it was plain that the family wage was not going to change anything in the economy. It was based on the needs of the family and ... family isn't going to change economics. You have to get a new idea of economics if morality is going to fit into it. And you can get that just with an analysis ... If you understand the way a car works, you don't step on the brake and the accelerator at the same time. And you know that by knowing what an accelerator is and what a brake is. And that sort of profound thinking is possible even in economics. The analysis aims at what causes recessions, how they can be avoided, and what kind of education is needed to put that good counsel into practice. The rest is not easy. There are two centers to the contemporary economy on the production side: there is the standard of living, and there is the maintenance of the machines and the production of the machines that are used in

supplying the standard of living. The farmers have to have ploughs. And so on all along the line. This [the latter] I call surplus. The original meaning of surplus was in the physiocrats. The surplus is that, if at the end of the year the agriculturalists have enough seed to have another crop ... for the next year and to have the means of subsistence for all the workers you'll need to get that crop, and the means of subsistence to take care of the artisans and so on, the surplus is what has been produced in the previous year and remains for repeating the process in the next year. My surplus is the modern equivalent of surplus. The machines don't do anything directly for standard of living but give it a terrific boost. ... who was at MIT and moved to the University of Texas has a series of books on the takeoff. The later books qualify what he has in the earlier ones. But the simplest ones repeat the earliest. England had its takeoff in 1790, France and Germany in 1840, the States in 1850, Canada in 1895, and so on. He has about 20. What is the takeoff? When the amount of new investment in surplus is equal to 15 or 20% of the gross national product. That's a successor to the old view ... ordinary expenses and extraordinary expenses, when you need a new kitchen stove or repairs on the roof and so on.

Now, both the production of surplus and the question of the standard of living ... wages, and the wages are spent on the standard of living, roughly. But surplus is not a constant flow. It's the accelerator in the standard of living, and while you can have an accelerator working for a long time, it won't run forever. When it is going down, when it's cooling, the production (mumble), and prices on this sector begin to drop because the wages being spent are decreasing. The more they decrease, the bigger the pressure on the prices here (pointing). And the pressure on the prices is pressure on the profits. And pressure on profits is a recession. The point to get hold of is that you can have a smooth economy in which that occurs if you're able to manage a stationary state for a while after the surplus, or move gradually into a stationary state in which the surplus is becoming zero. You avoid the recession if you don't panic because the profits are going down.

That doesn't make sense, does it? That's the need for the stiff upper lip. There are a lot of things to be added to that. But when that component is going up, of purchasing power and the standard of living, the recession is there, has begun. And if there are sheltered industries, their profits will remain just as big as ever. How can that be? It's because the weaker firms are getting losses and going out of business. That is depression. And when the weaker firms, their stocks and bonds, have less and less value, insofar as they've been used as collateral for bankroll?, the banks are in difficulty. And when a lot of banks go, you have the big slump, like they had in 1933. It took all of the interval up until the Second World War and the War before the economy was again in running order. After a slump, no one knows where you can get things. All the people you were getting things from before are, there's a hole here and a hole there, and so on. A lot of things aren't running. The economy becomes disorganized in a slump.