Class 8

October 26, 2009

Question 1: What is the aim or function of Dialectic?

235: Dialectic deals with conflicts. They may be overt or latent. They may lie in religious sources, in the religious tradition, in the pronouncements of authorities, or in the writings of theologians. They may regard contrary orientations of research, contrary interpretations, contrary histories, contrary styles of evaluation, contrary horizons, contrary doctrines, contrary systems, contrary policies.

Differences in theology are multiform. Not all are dialectical. Some differences can be eliminated by uncovering fresh data. Some are traced to different perspectives, and are due to the complexity of historical reality or of individual development and questions. But some are **fundamental**, and for Lonergan these stem from an explicit or implicit cognitional theory, ethical stance, and religious outlook. These will profoundly modify one's mentality, and are to be overcome only through an intellectual, moral, religious conversion. The **function of dialectic** is to bring such conflicts to light and to provide a technique that objectifies subjective differences and promotes conversion.

A distinct set of methods is required to confront these, a set of methods that witnesses to and promotes conversion in these areas of living. Only changes in horizon, and such changes as constitute conversion, can overcome such conflicts. Dialectic as a functional specialty would uncover such conflicts, eliminate more superficial ones, and promote the articulation of basic stances.

To posit dialectic as a distinct set of theological operations calling for a distinct method is one of Lonergan's unique contributions: a method for meeting head-on issues that arise, are crucial, and cannot be dealt with by the methods of interpretation, history, doctrines, or systematics.

There arise, then, issues in the doing of theology that are existential, intensely personal, and of crucial significance for work in the functional specialties that we have seen as well as in those we are yet to see. Lonergan's method takes explicit concern for these issues and introduces a distinct set of methods for confronting them. In fact these methods, of dialectic and of foundations, are the hinge point of the overall method that Lonergan proposes. 254: 'The basic idea of the method we are trying to develop takes its stand on discovering what human authenticity is and showing how to appeal to it. It is not an infallible method, for [we] are easily unauthentic, but it is a powerful method, for [our] deepest need and most prized achievement is authenticity.'

This aim is conceived in a positive, not a polemical fashion. Engaging in dialectic aims at (129) 'a comprehensive viewpoint,' 'some single base or some single set of related bases' that enable us to understand how the many viewpoints exhibited in Christian history and in the Christian present are to be understood.

Question 2: What is a horizon?

A horizon is the limit of what one can see or ask about from a particular standpoint. 237 (not a definition, but a statement): 'Horizons … are the structured resultant of past achievement and, as well, both the condition and the limitation of further development.' In this sense horizons may be regarded as the ultimate context of all our other contexts, the boundaries that limit our capacities for assimilating more than we already have attained.

Question 3: Explain the following statement on p. 236: 'Differences in horizon may be complementary, or genetic, or dialectical.'

Lonergan finds three types of relations and of differences among horizons.

First, there are complementary relations and differences. E.g., to some extent I live in a different world from a computer scientist, but I recognize the need for him/her and his/her world. **Singly our horizons are not self-sufficient, but together they constitute a shared world.** If that is the case, horizons are related in a complementary fashion. 'Workers, foremen, supervisors, technicians, engineers, managers, doctors, lawyers, professors have different interests. They live in a sense in different worlds. Each is quite familiar with his own world. But each also knows about the others, and each recognizes the need for the others. So their many horizons in some measure include one another and, for the rest, they complement one another. Singly they are not self-sufficient, and together they represent the motivations and the knowledge needed for the functioning of a communal world.' Recall the development of skills, in the discussion of the human good.

Second, there are genetic relations and differences. Horizons are related as successive stages in a process of development. Each later stage presupposes earlier stages, partly to include them, and partly to transform them. They are parts, not of a single communal world, but of a single biography or history. E.g., if I were to learn computer science, then my earlier and my later horizon would be related genetically.

Third, there are dialectical relations and differences among horizons. 236-37: 'What in one is found intelligible, in another is unintelligible. What for one is true, for another is false. What for one is good, for another is evil. Each may have some awareness of the other and so each in a manner may include the other. But such inclusion is also negation and rejection. For the other's horizon, at least in part, is attributed to wishful thinking, to an acceptance of myth, to ignorance or fallacy, to blindness or illusion, to backwardness or immaturity, to infidelity, to bad will, to a refusal of God's grace. Such a rejection of the other may be passionate, and the suggestion that openness is desirable will make one furious. But again rejection may have the firmness of ice without any trace of passion or even any show of feeling, except perhaps a wan smile.'

Question 4: What is the difference between a horizontal and a vertical exercise of freedom? How is this related to the issue of conversion and breakdown?

237: 'A horizontal exercise is a decision or choice that occurs within an established horizon. A vertical exercise is the set of judgments and decisions by which we move from one horizon to another.'

How is the distinction related to conversion and breakdown? '237-38: 'Now there may be a sequence of such vertical exercises of freedom, and in each case the new horizon, though notably deeper and broader and richer, none the less is consonant with the old and a development out of its potentialities. (Learning computer science) But it is also possible that the movement into a new horizon involves an about-face; it comes out of the old by repudiating characteristic features; it begins a new sequence that can keep revealing ever greater depth and breadth and wealth. Such an about-face and new beginning is what is meant by a conversion. (Conversely, a breakdown: using my knowledge of computer science to hack into others' computers!)

Question 5: What is intellectual conversion? Is there a way of getting to the heart of what Lonergan means by this term?

The key is the acceptance of the criteria of the world mediated by meaning as the criteria for the real and the true. The world mediated by meaning is (238) 'a world known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of the community. Knowing, accordingly, is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing. The criteria of objectivity are not just the criteria of ocular vision; they are the compounded criteria of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, and of believing. The reality known is not just looked at; it is given in experience, organized and extrapolated by understanding posited by judgment and belief.'

Question 6: How do naive realism, empiricism, and idealism miss the criteria of intellectual conversion, each in its own way?

238-29: 'The naïve realist knows the world mediated by meaning but thinks he knows it by looking. The empiricist restricts objective knowledge to sense experience; for him, understanding and conceiving, judging and believing are merely subjective activities. The idealist insists that human knowing always includes understanding as well as sense, but he retains the empiricist's notion of reality, and so he thinks of the world mediated by meaning as not real but ideal. Only the critical realist can acknowledge the facts of human knowing and pronounce the world mediated by meaning to be the real world; and he can do so only inasmuch as he shows that the process of experiencing, understanding, and judging is a process of self-transcendence.' Illustrations are given on 239. The basic problem at least in Western thought has been that 'some form of naïve realism seems to appear utterly unquestionable to very many … the assumption that all knowing must be something like looking. To be liberated from that blunder, to discover the self-transcendence proper to the human process of coming to know, is to break often long-ingrained habits of thought and speech. It is to acquire the mastery in one's own house that is to be had only when one knows precisely what one is doing when one is knowing.

It is a conversion, a new beginning, a fresh start. It opens the way to ever further clarifications and developments.'

Again, among the three elements of conversion, Lonergan has made perhaps his greatest contribution in the clarification of intellectual conversion. Intellectual conversion is the explicit discovery:

(a) over against naive realism and empiricism that the real world in which we live is a world mediated and constituted by meaning, and so that the criteria of truth and objectivity are quite distinct from those that obtain in the world of immediacy: the real is not already out there now to be known by taking a look; rather, it is what is affirmed on the basis of a grasp of the fulfilment of necessary conditions. Again, full human knowing (238) 'is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing. The criteria of objectivity are not just the criteria of ocular vision; they are the compounded criteria of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, and of believing. The reality known is not just looked at; it is given in experience, organized and extrapolated in understanding, posited by judgment and belief.'

(b) over against idealism, that the world mediated by meaning is not just a mental construction, but the real world that can be known as real – the addition of judgment to the idealist's correct insistence on understanding, and so the overcoming of relativism and cognitive nihilism.

We are not talking here about mere technical disputes in philosophy. 239: 'Empiricism, idealism, and realism name three totally different horizons with no common identical objects. An idealist never means what an empiricist means, and a realist never means what either of them means.' The very acts and sources and terms of meaning are transformed. One means a world totally different from the worlds meant in other horizons.

Question 7: What would be some examples of forms of intellectual conversion in the history of theology?

Augustine: the real does not mean the same thing as 'body,' but is rather correlated with 'the true.

Athanasius: 'consubstantial' does not mean 'of the same stuff,' but 'Whatever is said of the Father is said of the Son, except that the Father is the Father and the Son is the Son.'

Question 8: What is moral conversion? How does it differ from moral perfection?

The central paragraph on 240 takes care of this. In brief, as intellectual conversion entails a shift in the criteria of the true and the real, so moral conversion entails a shift in the criteria of the good. There are existential moments 'when we discover for ourselves that our choosing affects ourselves no less than the chosen or rejected objects,' and that it is up to each of us to decide for himself or herself what one is going to make of oneself. Then is the time for the exercise of vertical freedom, and then moral conversion consists in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict. Again, a process has begun: there remains the need to uncover and

root out one's biases, develop one's knowledge of human reality, learn to discriminate progress and decline, etc., always ready to learn from others.

Question 9: What is religious conversion? How does it differ from moral and intellectual conversion?

Religious conversion is falling in love with God, and being in love with God, as a dynamic state of being in love without conditions, qualifications, and reservations. It was covered in detail in our discussion of chapter 4. It is interpreted differently in different traditions. For Christians it is God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. It is the gift of grace, the replacement of the heart of stone by a heart of flesh, quite beyond the horizon of the heart of stone.

Try to unpack 240-41, 'Religious conversion …' and relate to sanctifying grace and charity. And see 242, 'It is not to be thought …' What they have in common is that each is a modality of self-transcendence (241).

Question 10: Contrast the normal causal relation of the three conversions with the order of their sublation in a single consciousness.

All three are attainments of self-transcendence: to truth (cognitional self-transcendence), values (real self-transcendence), total being-in-love as the efficacious source of all other self-transcendence.

Causation: 243: In general 'first there is God's gift of ... love. Next, the eye of this love [faith] reveals values in their splendor, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion. Finally, among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion. For the word, spoken and heard, proceeds from and penetrates to all four levels of intentional consciousness. Its content is not just a content of experience but a content of experience and understanding and judging and deciding.'

Sublation: 241-42: Moral conversion 'sublates the value of truth into a concern for values generally. It promotes the subject from cognitional to moral self-transcendence. It sets him on a new, existential level of consciousness and establishes him as an originating value. But this in no way interferes with or weakens his devotion to truth. He still needs truth, for he must apprehend reality and real potentiality before he can deliberately respond to value. The truth he needs is still the truth attained in accord with the exigencies of rational consciousness. But now his pursuit of it is all the more secure because he has been armed against bias, and it is all the more meaningful and significant because it occurs within, and plays an essential role in, the far richer context of the pursuit of all values.' (The contrasts here enable us to appreciate Lonergan's and Rahner's sense of sublation, as contrasted with the Hegelian *Aufhebung*.)

242: Religious conversion sublates all pursuit of the true and the good into a cosmic context and purpose, and gives one the empowerment to undo the effects of decline even

when this entails suffering. Nonetheless, religious conversion has its own realm of meaning, not just the pursuit of intellectual and moral ends. The capacity for self-transcendence 'meets fulfillment, that desire turns to joy, when religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love. Then there is a new basis for all valuing and all doing good. In no way are fruits of intellectual or moral conversion negated or diminished. On the contrary, all human pursuit of the true and good is included within and furthered by a cosmic context and purpose and, as well, there now accrues to man the power of love to enable him to accept the suffering involved in undoing the effects of decline.'