

LONERGAN – CONSULTATION

Topic: Another World is Possible: Violence, Resistance and Transformation
Convener: Kevin Vander Schel, Gonzaga University
Moderator: Clayton Shoppa, St. Francis College
Presenters: Timothy Hanchin, Villanova University
Nicholas Olkovich, St. Mark's College
Mara Brecht, University of St. Michael's College

In his paper, “Friendship as Wonder Therapy: The Option for the Poor and Intellectual Development at a Catholic University,” Timothy Hanchin introduces Ignacio Ellacuría’s vision of the Christian university’s commitment to two interrelated elements: academic excellence and social transformation. Developing a dialogue between Ellacuría’s work and Lonergan’s hermeneutics of authenticity, Hanchin aims to integrate the impartial search for truth with liberation theology’s emphasis on the preferential option for the poor. Hanchin argues that Lonergan’s account of the healing and elevating effects of love—what Lonergan describes as “development from above”—complements Gustavo Gutiérrez’s emphasis on friendship with the poor. According to Hanchin, the combination of these two elements can provide a critical horizon for rethinking intellectual development in Catholic universities. Hanchin concludes his paper by drawing out some of the practical implications that stem from his proposal, including the importance of community-based learning and immersion experiences.

The paper, “Complicating the Reception of Lonergan on ‘Sacralization and Secularization,’” by Nicholas Olkovich engages John Dadosky and Robert Doran’s interpretations of Lonergan’s fourfold distinction between: (a) a sacralization to be dropped; (b) a sacralization to be fostered; (c) a secularization to be welcomed; and (d) a secularization to be resisted. Focusing on Dadosky’s work on the fourth stage of meaning and Doran’s appropriation of René Girard’s mimetic account of human desire, Olkovich aims to complicate what he regards as their insightful albeit relatively heuristic treatments of Lonergan’s 1973 lecture. Olkovich develops an alternative—conversant with the work of both authors—that integrates elements of Lonergan’s work with insights from contemporary debates in political philosophy and theology. His paper concludes with an account of democracy and human rights that clarifies and confirms Dadosky’s emphasis on the “turn to alterity” as well as Doran’s notion of social grace.

In her paper, “Another World is Possible: Resources for Antiracist Education,” Mara Brecht explores the connection between Catholic Social Teaching’s (CST) methodology of “see-judge-act” and antiracist pedagogy’s efforts to interrupt inequality in the classroom. Adapting’s CST’s methodology, Brecht distinguishes between three main stages in antiracist theological education: (a) encountering inequality, (b) social analysis and theological reflection, and (c) responsible action. Drawing on Bryan Massingale’s appropriation of Lonergan’s work, Brecht challenges the “common sense” conception of racism that neglects the structural or social dimensions of sin that contribute to poverty and inequality. Brecht argues that Lonergan’s accounts of bias and self-transcendence can help shed light on and provide

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resources for responding to what Robin DiAngelo terms white fragility and defensiveness. Brecht's work highlights the productive tension between CST's call to action and antiracist pedagogy's call to dwell with the unease that emerges from reflection on racism. She concludes her paper by highlighting the importance of diversity and dialogue in the classroom as a modest way to address inequality.

The conversation that followed addressed a variety of themes. Audience members highlighted connections between Hanchin and Brecht's papers as well as with Dadosky's fourth stage of meaning. Hanchin argued that Lonergan's emphasis on development from above might deepen CST's methodology and offered an extended account of several practical proposals for the transformation of education and administration at Catholic universities. Others highlighted the challenges that Catholic universities face in implementing such initiatives and seconded Brecht's efforts to avoid both inaction and rushed efforts to try and 'solve' the problem of racism.

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