

## LONERGAN – CONSULTATION

Topic: Thinking Catholic Interreligiously  
 Convener: Brian Bajzek, Molloy University  
 Moderator: Fiona Li, Regis College, University of Toronto  
 Presenters: Andrew Vink, Mount St. Mary's University  
 Joseph Ogbonnaya, Marquette University  
 John Dadosky, Regis College, University of Toronto  
 Christian Krokus, University of Scranton

In his paper, “Integrated Evil: *El mal común*, Prophetic Responsibility, and the Integral Scale of Values,” Andrew Vink proposes a holistic view for countering the evils in social injustice. He applies the theoretical discussion of Lonergan and Doran on an integral scale of value in crises brought about by the maldistribution of vital goods. In view of the reality of religious pluralism and bearing in mind that instances of suffering are unique in each context, his paper draws from both Christian and Muslim liberationist perspectives. Ignacio Ellacuría’s concept of *el mal común* provides a concrete articulation of systemic evils with language from the natural law tradition. Liberationist Islamic thought emphasizes the prophetic duty of standing in solidarity with the oppressed. In bringing together these three lines of thought, Vink’s paper offers an integrated vision in countering the common evils in instances of dehumanization.

In his paper, “Bernard Lonergan in World Christianity,” Joseph Ogbonnaya reflects upon the contextuality of theologies in Christianity as a world religion. He resources Lonergan’s distinction between the different ways of doing theology under two scenarios: (i) the classicist notion of culture in which one culture, usually the predominantly Western culture, is viewed as both universal and permanent, and (ii) the empirical notion of culture which recognizes the multiplicity of cultures. Seeking insight into Lonergan’s empirical notion of culture and recognition of the importance of history for culture, Ogbonnaya argues that mutual appreciation of the contextuality of theologies could deepen the communion of theologies in world Christianity during intercultural encounters. Turning to the inculturation of the Gospel in Africa, his paper articulates the interrelationship of world Christian theologies in reflecting the communion of churches.

The paper, “What Are Comparative Theologians Doing When They Are Doing Comparative Theology?: A Lonerganian Perspective with Examples from the Engagement with Islam,” reflects upon method within comparative theology in a fourth stage of meaning. Co-authored by John Dadosky, a Lonergan scholar who has carried out comparative theology, and Christian Krokus, a comparative theologian who has studied Lonergan, this paper draws upon Lonergan’s eightfold method of functional specialties, in particular the relationship between the functional specialties of dialectic and foundations. Their paper offers an analysis of what comparative theologians are doing when they are doing comparative theology. In addressing how to proceed beyond the impasse in comparative theological method, the authors reference the pioneering and creative methods of Louis Massignon (1883–1962) and Paolo Dall’Oglio, S.J. (1951–), both of whom have deeply engaged Islam. Friendship, this paper suggests, is

a viable attitude and approach to cultivate deep sympathy and respect of other religious traditions and their claims of truth, while at the same time remaining committed to one's own tradition.

The conversation that followed addressed a variety of themes shared by all three papers, including the contextuality of theologies as well as the multiplicity of cultures and religious traditions. Attention is placed on the contributions of Lonergan in his discussion of theology as mediating between a cultural matrix and the role of a religion in that matrix, his articulation of the classicist and empirical notions of culture, the scale of values, and the eightfold method of functional specialties.

Audience members connected many of the themes in the presentations to our task of doing theology in the contemporary religiously pluralistic context with attentiveness to those who are oppressed due to cultural and religious divergences as well as economic injustice. The attendees also highlighted the interrelationality of Lonergan's functional specialties of dialectic and foundations. By attending to the root of divergence, one brings to light the different perspectives and presuppositions that underlie Christianity and other religious traditions. With reference to Lonergan's articulation of faith as the knowledge born of religious love, the discussion highlighted the vertical and horizontal dimensions of love, as love of God and love of others as well as the importance of understanding the religious other. The conversation also focused on the challenging task of expressing and communicating Christian doctrines in a culturally diverse context. The discussion then turned to the notion of friendship and the language associated with our commitment in friendship in interfaith encounters. Echoing the theme of "Thinking Catholic Interreligiously," the session concluded with brief reference to Lonergan's remarks of dialectic becoming dialogue.

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