

Topic: Bernard Lonergan's Notion of "Emergent Probability"
in Light of the Ecofeminist Critique of the "Great Chain of Being"
and Matter/Spirit Dualisms

Moderator: Cynthia Crysdale, The Catholic University of America

Presenters; Kenneth Melchin, St. Paul University, Ottawa

Heather Eaton, St. Paul University, Ottawa

Anne Marie Dalton, Saint Mary's University, Halifax

This session was a round table conversation rather than a series of presentations. The issues, as introduced by Cynthia Crysdale, involve a classicist world-view in which Being is understood hierarchically and matter and spirit (as well as male and female) are treated in a dualistic fashion. Ecofeminists have drawn out the connection between the oppression of women and the denigration of nature. Bernard Lonergan's theory of emergent probability retains the idea that the world has emerged and continues to emerge through the appearance of "higher integrations" of "lower manifolds" according to schedules of probability. The question is whether and how such a framework can avoid charges of domination and anthropocentrism.

The early conversation raised the question of whether these issues are still salient for ecofeminists. Heather Eaton acknowledged that these had been initial issues for ecofeminists, but recounted how, currently, ecofeminists are working in globally diverse circumstances, with ranges of strategies and issues. Eaton pointed out that any interchange between Lonergan's theoretic framework and ecofeminist praxis must be complex. There are different kinds of discourse involved, with ecofeminists—though not oblivious of theory—choosing the "epistemic privilege" of beginning with concrete issues in particular situations.

Thus ensued a discussion over the relative roles of second order reflective thinking and strategic, change-oriented practices. All acknowledged the importance of both, and the conversation moved to concerns over how one can take action to shift biased consciousness. One can seek to educate in a reflective mode, but one may need to bring issues graphically to the fore (workers striking in protest of IMF policies toward Indonesia) prior to any such reflective conversation.

Ken Melchin then applied the notion of "schemes of recurrence" and "probabilities of emergence" to human interaction. Conversations themselves are patterned in recurrent ways that make the emergence of new meanings possible. Ecofeminists (and others) are trying to shift certain habits of meaning (schemes of recurrence) so that new meanings and relationships can unfold. The group discussed various examples of this and the implications of trying to change habits of meaning and socioeconomic practices at the same time.

Anne Marie Dalton made the important distinction between dialectical relationships that are complementary and those that are oppositional. Matter and spirit, male and female, are in a complementary tension with one another and

should not be mistaken for an oppositional dialectic in which one pole must overcome the other. There *are* such oppositional dialectics, such as that between good and evil, for which mutuality and reconciliation are false goals.

Cynthia Crysdale pointed out that whatever action is taken to shift habits of meaning and, therefore, concrete practices of denigrating the nonhuman, such action cannot solve the problem of ecological demise in one fell swoop. All that can be accomplished is to shift the conditions of probability that make a new set of (ecologically friendly) schemes of recurrence more likely to emerge.

The upshot of the discussion was to recognize (1) the complexity of the theory (Loneragan) and praxis (ecofeminist) interchange; (2) the complicated nature of trying to shift habits of meaning and concrete ecological practices; and (3) the usefulness of understanding emergent probability as it applies to human interaction and processes of transformation.

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Topic: Anthropology as Basic to Sacramentology

Convener: William Loewe, The Catholic University of America

Presenters: Robert J. Daly, S.J., Boston College

Tiffany Israel Shiner, Boston College

Respondent: Lizette Larson-Miller, University of Notre Dame

Daly first laid out the problem and challenge of this session: that when one starts from traditional Catholic sacramental theology, it is difficult to do justice to the reality and efficacy of God's universal salvific will, and that when one starts from the latter, it is difficult to do justice to the former. In an exploratory mode which might eventually lead to a more universally "catholic" theology, it was proposed that sacramental theology should (also) begin from the basic insight that every authentically human act is a graced, salvific act which is more like than unlike the seven major sacraments. This is because all authentic acts of self-giving love are in fact—and however differently this might be understood and thematized in other religions—empowered by the same Spirit that empowered Christ's theandric acts. After an excursus outlining the disparity between the "ontological" conception of Eucharist favored by the magisterium: Christ-priest-Eucharist-Church, and that favored by most theologians: Christ-Church-Eucharist, Daly applied the basic anthropological insight of this presentation to the "central sacrament," following Kilmartin's thesis that if the "Eucharistic Prayer ... is indeed the doing of theology, then the voice of the Church should be heard when