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The Catholic School: Holistic?

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Funding: No specific funding was received for this work.

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Abstract

The Catholic school today struggles to maintain its religious mission even though its academic record remains commendable. This reflects a dualistic framework where the school's science curriculum is preponderant. To regain a holistic perspective, it is argued that the school needs to adopt a more satisfactory perspective on learning which the philosopher, Bernard Lonergan, developed. It will be contended that Lonergan's paradigm promises to redeem the Catholic school's religious identity allowing it to be inclusive of its scientific and confessional agenda.

Introduction

The Catholic educator, Thomas Groome, in a recent book called attention once again to the challenges facing the Catholic school today (Groome 2021). He sets the discussion in the context of Charles Taylor's sense of secularization, disenchantment of the modern world (Groome 2021, 38,95). Groome notes how the Catholic school's mission has changed in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Some of the outcomes of Vatican II for the Catholic school have been outlined by, among others, James Arthur who speaks of the Catholic school through what he calls holistic, dualistic, and pluralistic models (Arthur 1995, 225-227).

The Catholic School

As Arthur implies, it is difficult to speak monolithically of the Catholic school in today's settings because it has numerous configurations worldwide (Grace & O'Keefe 2007; Mesa 2013, 184). It is for instance asserted that in 2019, the Catholic school served 62 million children at the primary and secondary school levels alone while the number of Catholic Colleges and universities numbered about 1,861. Among the variety of Catholic settings are those that are private and state-related (Groome 2021, x, 167, 190; Pring 2018,75).

Despite the changing nature of Catholic educational institutions, it should still be possible to speak meaningfully about the Catholic school (Polkinghorne 1986, 17). Attempts to characterize it include that it serves the Catholic Church's evangelistic mission, it is Christ-centred and it aims to provide a holistic education (Congregation for Catholic Education para 1923,95). Other features include the freedom to choose in accordance with conscience. the development of a critical

capacity, personal responsibility, service of others, community, the common good, and justice (*The Catholic School*, para 7,19, 26,31,56; Miller 2006).

The Question

Studies on the Catholic school leave us with a spectrum from Arthur's holistic version where the school operated as a direct instrument of conversion to Catholicism to where today it can have a twofold remit identified in terms of Arthur's dualistic and pluralistic models (Arthur 1995, 225-227). Within what has become the preponderantly dualistic model, the church's religious mission has been progressively separated from its secular practice. One for instance wonders how students who move from a Physics to a Religious Education class appreciate the different spheres of knowledge, where the study of religion is almost certainly not on par with that of science. (Barnes 2014,13; Morey & Piderit 2006, 6; Nord 1995, 296,328,378; Reiss 2023, 164). What takes place in much of the Catholic school's day often has little explicit connection with the school's religious dimension and can resemble what Andrew Wright observes when he concludes that the true value of contemporary Religious Education has been not merely marginalized but neutralized within a discourse about truthfulness (Wright 2007, 81). One could speak of parallel modes of learning—scientific and personal—which rarely meet resulting in doublethink, holding two contradictory beliefs (Noddings 2010,103; Arthur, Gearon & Sears 2010, 24).

In this article, the dualism or apparent schizophrenia (Smart 1968, 90-106; McLaughlin 1995, 250) of such type of school learning will be addressed so that a framework can be created where the learner can acquire a holistic viewpoint (Miller 2007, 14). For this, it will be argued that the work of the late Bernard Lonergan, renowned Jesuit philosopher, leaves a promising model.

Context

Bernard Lonergan, like another well-known philosopher and theologian, Karl Rahner, lived through the early years of the twentieth century in the pre-Vatican II church. Both Rahner and Lonergan were Jesuits who were educated in pre-Vatican II Jesuit institutes where the curriculum was enveloped by a form of neo-scholasticism (Gelpi 1994, 92; Byrnes 2002, 9-12). Like Rahner and others, Lonergan perceived that this neo-scholastic mode of thinking was no longer right for addressing contemporary questions. In his struggle to craft a better way to address modernity in the 1950s, he wrote a major work, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957) where he argued that knowing is not a matter of taking a good look; objectivity is not a matter of seeing just what is to be seen (Lonergan 1974, 268).

Insight resulted from Lonergan's challenge to bridge the gap between what he later called faculty psychology and intentionality analysis. This led him eventually to address Catholic theology in *Method in Theology* (1973). For him, Catholic theology had become overly theoretical, abstract, and alien. Not surprisingly, we hear a voice from the era saying:

Religion is irrelevant. This is the conviction of many today (mid-1960s). To many Catholics the church's message is not the Good News that will make sense of their lives...Rather, their faith, as they understand it, is a burden, a

collection of dead doctrine, often couched in difficult, archaic language which curbs and confines them (Lance 1964, 13).

In our concern with the Catholic school, we are drawing on Lonergan's philosophy of education as it is mined from his writings even if he wrote relatively little specifically on education. What we find on education however adds to our appreciation of Lonergan's major concern with speaking a language that effectively communicates. It emerged from a series of lectures which he delivered in the summer of 1959 and that were published years later (Lonergan 1993).

Much of the content of this seminar is outlined critically by Paddy Walsh (2018) and detailed, closer to the time, by James Sanders (1961, 88-108, 133-150). Walsh identified key aspects of what Lonergan considered to be necessary for an updated Catholic philosophy of education, namely, that it be Catholic, concrete, contemporary, existential, historical, and in conversation with modern science (Walsh 2018, 135) Sanders drew attention mainly to Lonergan's concern with what Lonergan called new knowledge and the need for a more empirical grounding of what was traditional.

Lonergan's Approach to Knowledge

In speaking of the need to review the Catholic philosophy of education which Lonergan advocated, one needs to recall that traditionally, the Catholic philosophy of education was rooted in philosophical ideas that were seen to be permanent (Redden & Ryan, 1956; Dupuis & Nordberg 1964). While Lonergan agreed that this perspective had value, he anecdotally relates why the old framework was outdated. At a meeting of the American Philosophical Association at that time, he was asked by two Catholic priests why he was addressing the issue of contemporary Catholic education. As far as they were concerned Catholic education was fixed, changeless, and based on first principles (Lonergan 1993,22).

For Lonergan, this way of thinking was not mistaken but was no longer satisfactory mainly because of what he termed 'new learning' where he had in view the transformation of knowledge that modern science generated (Noddings 2016, 38; Sanders 1961, 93). Because of this new form of knowledge, the scholastic approach was no longer capable of providing the kind of vision that today's school requires because it fails to be sufficiently empirical (Lonergan 1993, 20). Its former mode of theorizing focused on the application of a metaphysical unchanging theory to a time-framed practice.

As Lonergan put it, today's theory should not be philosophy simpliciter, a discipline complete and sufficient to itself. It needs to connect better with the contemporary setting and be 'a philosophy of...' which entails a more intrinsic relationship between theory whether that is theology or whatever with what is taking place in the field. Similarly, the school needs to prepare students for a swiftly changing reality that philosophy cannot ignore. Such philosophy is not called upon to focus on the mind-independent content of belief but on the self-aware believer (Salai 2011, 572). Lonergan's existential emphasis emerged from his study of the work of the educational psychologist, Jean Piaget, which was rooted in scientific observation (Lonergan 1974a, 78; Gelpi 1994, 107-108; Liddy 2000, 521-532).

Since Lonergan was primarily concerned with theology, he questioned how pre-Vatican II theology linked with reality. He discovered that the tradition was intelligible but embedded in a way of speaking that had been largely superseded by

science (Bellah & Tippon 2006,12; Gallagher 2010, 64,70). This included a view of objectivity that almost excluded the subject, where reason puts a premium on detachment and objectivity, suppressing the context dependence of the first-person experience in favour of a third-person perspective (Dunne & Pendlebury 2003, 195). As a result, the theologian and the scientist were operating with different perceptions of knowledge. It might be said that they followed parallel ways.

One could speak of theology analogously with science but if one were to ally it too closely with the scientific method, one would, as it were, study a person as one would study a rock (Giddy 2011, 528; Buckley 1998,117; McGrath 2011, 86; Wulff 1991, 32). Within this mode of thinking, how could one verify the existence of God? (Lonergan 1974b, 120-121; Gallagher 2008, 437; Moore 2011,217). While Lonergan was aware of this danger of uncritically adopting the scientific method, he was faced with how theology could acquire a more satisfactory academic status. This led him to ask: Is knowing valid only when it is scientific in the sense in which natural science is scientific?

Evidently, scientific propositions constitute an important type of human knowing. Yet, despite science's high profile and imperialistic drive, for Lonergan, it is not the whole of knowledge. How might theological and humanistic knowing then be included not as quasi-mythical but as a form of true knowledge? Aware of the importance of having an empirical basis like that of science but keeping in view that the social sciences are concerned with meaning and value while natural science is not, Lonergan expanded his conception of what empirical might entail. He then argued that a form of knowledge, like science, is based on the data supplied by the senses but what of the data not immediately related to the senses--the data of consciousness? To include both streams of knowledge as the route to holistic knowing, he spoke of knowledge that does not fly in the face of science and rationality (Lonergan 1973, 4; Noddings 2008, 384; Pierce 2007).

New Horizons

Lonergan's challenge in *Insight* was, as noted, to bridge the gap between what he later called faculty psychology, linked to scholastic metaphysics, and intentionality analysis. He spoke of this metaphysics in the context of what he named classical culture which for centuries had provided normative criteria for evaluating knowledge (Lonergan 1974c; Gelpi 1997, 53). This classical view of culture, built on unchanging metaphysics, was, in Lonergan's eyes, out of joint with the empirical nature of modern science. The crucial issue was how the subject could be part of objectivity—it called into question the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity.

The problem was not new. To bring these different metaphysical and empirical perspectives on knowledge into harmony, the Catholic philosopher, Joseph Marechal, had adopted the philosophy of Immanuel Kant to the older metaphysics, derived from Thomas Aquinas. Lonergan, like Karl Rahner and others, at first found this approach to be promising (Gelpi 1994, 91). Progressively, however, Lonergan came to realize that Marechal's hypothesis, though creative, was mistaken (Gelpi 1997, 94). It did not properly interpret the old metaphysics and ended with a cognitive theory that was incorrect.

Lonergan however concurred with Marechal's desire to enter dialogue with modern philosophers like Hegel, Kant, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Buber but to do so effectively he acknowledged that a more satisfactory cognitive theory was needed. In *Insight*, among other things, he argued that objectivity needs to include the subject; it needed, in his words, to

be the fruit of authentic subjectivity (Lonergan 1973, 292).

Lonergan's turn to the subject, generated through his reading of Piaget, was developed by his study of Edmund Husserl who focused upon the data of consciousness which were constitutive of meaning and value but are not the concern of natural science (Lonergan 1973, 219). Focus on the data of consciousness is contextualized when Lonergan speaks of stages of meaning which include those of common sense, theory, and interiority (Lonergan 1973,81-99). With the emergence of interiority as the highest degree of being a subject, we are not concerned with theory. While it resembles theory and science, it is distinct.

Lonergan speaks of interiority, resembling what Carl Rogers does in the area of feeling as he encourages his clients to advert to, distinguish, name, identify and recognize those that are latent (Lonergan 1974, 269, 274). In this area of interiority, we are dealing with cognitive operations which need an exceptional amount of exertion and reflection in order to be fruitful (Lonergan 1974a, 70). The reader has to familiarize him/herself with the terminology and evoke the relevant operations in his/her own consciousness. He/she will thus discover the dynamic relationships leading from one intentional operation to the next (Lonergan 1973,7).

Coming to know one's subjectivity demands a focus on the inner workings of the mind. It means becoming aware of one's intentional operations that lead to knowledge and self-transcendence (Lonergan 1973, 75). Such operations form a patterned process of experience, understanding, judging, and deciding. Moreover, this patterned process is familiar to everyone (Lonergan 1973, 7, 9, 11-12). The challenge is both to identify and objectify such operations (Lonergan 1974a, 76,79)

When speaking of engagement with this new mode of knowing, Lonergan identifies some errors, a major and pervasive one of which is where some of the great philosophers including Kant and Hume postulated that objective knowledge is acquired through looking (sensation and understanding), omitting the crucial component of judgement (Lonergan 1974, 265; Mc Shane 2001, 275). This misconception fails to penetrate the real and so delivers what Wright has called comprehensive liberalism where initial observation is not challenged by critical reflection (Wright 2007, 3,9, 177). For Lonergan, such subjectivism results from failure to be faithful to the underlying self-transcending dynamic drive to know (Gelpi 1994, 107-117; Mc Guckian 2009, 536-537).

Intellectual Conversion

Aware of the need for knowledge that is not purely subjective, Lonergan does not ask the reader to accept his word without evidence. Drawing on the hypothesis of the universality of how we come to know, he invites each person to verify what is being said personally. This leads to what he describes as the rock on which all knowing rests with a relatively sure though never certain conception of reality.

For this, he bids the reader to say whether or not he/she is a knower. A negative answer to this question is self-contradictory. If I am not a knower, I can only make that judgment by knowing. This is pivotal for Lonergan and constitutes what he called intellectual conversion, which is an instance of self-transcendence:

...a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge. The myth is that knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what is there to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is what is out there now to be looked at (Lonergan 1973,328).

Lonergan goes on to speak of this in terms of worlds of immediacy and of meaning (Lonergan 1973, 328). He concludes that the criteria of objectivity are not the criteria of ocular vision; they are the compounded criteria of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, of believing (Lonergan 1973, 238).

The capacity to truly know including to know one's knowing emerges from what is called self-affirmation of the knower in *Insight* and is termed intellectual conversion in *Method in Theology*. It provides a self-knowledge that is normative.

The experience of intellectual conversion follows from a growth in awareness of knowledge as rooted both in one's senses and one's consciousness. This leads to an internal confrontation or dialectic where knowledge based on the senses leads to what has been described as a very stubborn myth concerning objectivity. This so-called myth identifies knowing with sense experience which fails to adequately recognize the distinction between the world of immediacy which is rooted in our senses and the world of meaning, resulting primarily from understanding and judgement (Lonergan 1973: 238).

Because of the radical nature of the difference between the two perspectives on knowing and the pervasive tendency to confuse them, Lonergan named the resolution of such difference of perspective "conversion." In doing this, he wished to emphasize that true knowledge entailed a fundamental redirection of one's approach to reality which does not reject but contextualizes the world of scientific knowledge.

Conversion, a much-used religious term, was adopted by Lonergan to intimate a profound personal change—it entails a decision to create a new framework. As noted, he employed it to indicate a movement away from the dualism of viewing knowing from an external perspective 'having a look' to where it is the product of the transcendental cognitive process. Knowing knowing is thus not having a look inside oneself. It entails a reduplication of the structure of knowing:

(1) Experiencing one's experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding, (2) understanding the unity and relations of one's experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding, (3) affirming the reality of one's experienced and understood experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding and (4) deciding to operate in accord with the norms immanent in the spontaneous relatedness of one's experienced, understood, affirmed experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding (Lonergan 1973,14).

Objectifying one's knowledge in this way and by extension progressively arriving at true self-knowledge rests on verification by the subject. It is a verification which is rooted in the structure of human knowing (Lonergan 1973,10).

Such dependence on the structure of human knowing, not on first principles, becomes the bedrock of objectivity; a foundation that is highly sought after, but largely unachievable, in philosophy (Noddings 2016, 77; Wright 2007, 8,12-13,

177).

Differentiation of Consciousness

In his new approach to knowledge, Lonergan developed a key to encountering reality and to evaluating the truth or falsity of one's perception of it. It focuses on oneself as a knower. This allows the knower to assimilate and to differentiate within his/her consciousness his/her modes of being (Roy 1991, 156). If the dynamic of self-transcendence is followed consistently leading to intellectual conversion, the subject will be enabled to become explicitly aware of his/her intentional operations. This provides a base for the differentiation of consciousness, resembling where for instance the biologist acknowledges his/her special methods but at the same time he/she sees the wider horizon where interdisciplinary problems can be resolved. In the measure that special methods acknowledge their common core in transcendental method and that norms common to all sciences can be acknowledged, a secure basis will be attained for attacking interdisciplinary problems (Lonergan 1973, 222-223; Winch 2004, 467-484; Bellah & Tippon 2006, 15).

Such differentiation of consciousness similarly yields a framework where each tradition's exclusive truth claims can be recognized and respected as proper norms in a framework of common norms and so avoids viewing reality through a single discipline or tradition. Whatever unity between disciplines exists, it is located in the person as he/she adopts the transcendental method (Lonergan 1973, 11). As a person identifies his/her inner self, he/she is enabled, as it were, to stand back, break from the linear environment, and build an assimilative capacity to view special perspectives objectively, which, as writers contend, might be seen to be enhanced through liberal education (Liddy 2000, 521-532; Williams 2013).

Conversion: Religious, Moral, and Affective

For Lonergan, intellectual conversion is one of three or four experiences of conversion—the others occur in the area of religion, morality, and affectivity (Lonergan 1973, 238; Gelpi 1997, 63-69; Henchin & Hearlson 2020, 258). They are each instance of self-transcendence. Like intellectual conversion, each entails assuming responsible decisions about the various distinctive yet interconnected dimensions of the oneself (Lonergan 1973, 238; Gelpi 1997, 56-58). They can occur at different times and in a different sequence but ideally a person will ultimately be converted on all the areas mentioned.

By focusing on intellectual conversion as the foundation of knowledge, Lonergan moved away from faculty psychology and its associated objectivity which, as indicated earlier, is largely detached and impersonal. Conversion rather provides an objectivity that includes the subject (Lonergan 1973, 338) Ideally, such self-transcendence leads to when the existential subject finds out for him/herself what one is to make of him/herself in a setting where cultural space is mapped out (Lonergan 1988, 223; 1967, 225; *The Catholic School*, para 7,19, 26,31,56; Lonergan 1967, 234; Balin & Siegel 2003, 188). The person might be said to be in the realm of freedom from practical desire and gain the capacity to live life as one has reason to value (Sen 1999, 14-15, 36, 292-297).

Conversion and the School

Educators largely agree that such freedom should constitute the aim of education (Reiss & White 2013, 6,14; Pring 2018, 87,114; McCowan & Unterhalter 2015, 207). It is education for self-knowledge as the person becomes open-eyed, and deliberate intelligently and rationally. Attainment of the capacity to encounter traditions, religious or other, in a way that is critically self-aware combined with the ability to choose one's worldview freely seems to be a commendable educational objective.

The present concern has centred on how the dualistic nature of the Catholic school today can accommodate its secular and religious dimensions more holistically. We have employed Lonergan's theory of knowledge which enabled him to resolve the issue more generally because he perceived that this dualistic situation resulted from a viewpoint on knowledge which was not empirically grounded; it needed to resemble but be distinct from modern science. It reaffirms that science is important but there is a world beyond what we know through the senses (O'Sullivan 1999, 263; Nord 1995, 256).

While scientific and humanistic knowledge are distinct, that distinction is often bypassed with the result that their different forms of knowledge tend to be confused, leading to scientific reduction of humanistic learning. Educationally, it is thus crucial that the student become aware of these two distinct sources of knowledge so that he/she develops the capacity to be both proficient academically and be prepared to live his/her life responsibly. This, we contend entails a process of self-reflection leading to various types of conversion.

In the school as students move from Physics to Religious Education, they need to develop the means to appreciate that scientific knowledge is valid but it needs to be complemented with self-knowledge (Giroux 2011, 153; Noddings 2006, 250). Otherwise, we risk graduating learned, but schizophrenic, engineers building gas chambers and physicians who poison children without reserve (Pring 2019, 47; Gallagher 2003, 58-59).

Conversion & The Catholic School

Conversion, the ideal aim of education in light of this discussion should not be confined to the Catholic school. For any school, conversion is a commendable aim where the student becomes both competent academically but is also empowered to decide freely, intelligently, and rationally what he/she is to make of him/herself. The Catholic school ideally includes the various modes of conversion that have been outlined and endows them with a distinctively Catholic character as reason enters dialogue with a specific form of faith (Congregation for Catholic Education, 77) How is this faith horizon identified? (Phan 1998, 174; Curran 1997,107; Morey & Piderit 2006, 320)?

The Catholic school, like others, needs to articulate and communicate a vision and way of life that includes Lonergan's religious conversion (Nord 1995, 244). It should however be both Christian and Catholic. The Catholic lens on Jesus needs includes a distinctively Catholic reading of scripture and a development of its doctrines through the ages, among which the major ones are the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Original sin, the sacraments, grace, devotion to Mary the mother of God and the saints, (*The Catholic School*, para 7,12-13,19, 26,29,31,56; Groome 2014, 115-118; 122: Groome 2021, 137-141,

218).

In today's context of pluralism, the Catholic schools' presentation of the Catholic tradition would not be simply dogmatic. Rather, it ought to be catholic, ecumenical and inter-faith (Carmody 2017, 164-168; Gelpi 1997, 67; Bradley 2016, 68; Groome 2006,770). It is said that after Vatican II, the charter for Catholic schools in the U.S. and possibly more widely shifted from protecting the faithful from a hostile Protestant majority to pursuing peace and social justice within an ecumenical and multicultural world (Bryk, Lee, Holland 1993, 301). This pluralistic dimension of the Catholic school calls for dialogue that needs to include its own identity (Congregation for Catholic Education, 30,87; *The Catholic School*, 15,57,67; Groome 1998, 350). The question becomes: how does the Catholic tradition relate to other Christian, faith and non-faith traditions?

Consideration of this is crucial if the school is to address the person in his/her totality particularly if she/he does not belong to the Catholic Church (Chambers 2012, 186-199; Williams 2010,33). In this context, Lonergan locates religious experience in the person's drive to self-transcendence and sense of mystery (Lonergan 1973, 101-103, 119). Religious experience or sense of mystery at the heart of being is intrinsic to our humanity and so provides a basis for interreligious and intercultural dialogue. It does not mean that all religious traditions are equally valid (Trigg 2007, 48,184). How religious experience is particularized by denominations and other religious groups will greatly vary so that any true religious dialogue needs to see a person's religious expression in the light of his/her particular background because raw religious experience includes culture (Bellah 2011, 12).

In the Catholic school, religious education both formal and informal, needs to avoid colonization and various forms of indoctrination (*The Catholic School* para 17-23; Pring 2018, 14-142; Smart 1968, 96; Copley 2008; Whittle 2022). Indoctrination can be avoided by approaching religious expression from the standpoint of intellectual conversion. It is probably true that, though the ideal of free choice in matters of religious affiliation has always been proclaimed by the Catholic Church, students often did not have the tools required for this to happen. Options were limited and frequently poorly presented, even underwritten by misleading theology as, for instance, we find in Whittle (2015). For Smart, indoctrination depends upon a number of criteria, such as to do with the degree to which a teacher fails to mention alternative beliefs, the tone of voice used, the lack of sympathy for the criticisms levelled (Smart 1968, 98).

What we have outlined in regard to intellectual conversion demands that alternatives be rigorously examined for their truth value, entailing what Lonergan called dialectic (Lonergan 1973, 235-266). It may be argued that the Catholic school, like other faith schools, has a privileged position in so far as what happens within it is underpinned by a specifically Catholic confessional narrative (*The Catholic School* para 16; Congregation for Catholic Education, 69; Pring 2018, 82; Manning 2018, 41-42). Though this is true, all narratives should be subjected to critical assessment ensuring that any habitus-like subconscious bias would be identified and critically addressed, keeping in view their truth value (Copley 2008, 29).

Recognizing the special location of the Catholic Story within the Catholic institution, it should be presented as one, though privileged, option among a range, drawing on the Catholic tradition's sense of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. (*The Catholic School* para 15,57,67; Pring 2018, 45-46; Stor Freire, 1987:11-31). This could entail tension between confessional faith formation and the academic study of religion (Carmody & Carmody 1983, 6). For the non-Catholic, the Catholic

tradition should be acceptable academically but may seem to feature as a Cinderella subject and merit his/her exemption from formal confessional presentations in class or out of it (Donlevy 2007, 293-320; Groome 2014, 190). While opting out has been seen to be acceptable in various situations as students and staff are free to absent themselves, can one then wonder about the Catholic school's evangelistic role? Surely, the non-Catholics ought to feel at home in the Catholic school but they also need to recognize that they are in a Catholic school. The inclusion of non-Catholics might be accepted if all denominations and faiths are in a sense enveloped within its 'anonymous Christian' theology (Whittle 2016). More akin to our confessional concern might be that it could be seen to have witness value in terms of having students and staff exposed to Catholic teachers and programs in a designedly Catholic atmosphere (Congregation for Catholic Education, 28, 45; *The Catholic School* para 43,78,91; Curran 1997:106-107).

However, it need not and probably ought not to remain at this kind of non-confessional deistic level as propounded by Kirwan & Whittle (2021). Instead, in keeping with the school's specifically Catholic evangelistic purpose, it could mean encountering the Catholic tradition and 'learning from' it (Grimmitt 1987, 225-226). This could resemble how one might learn from experiencing a Shakespearean play or poem. This might mean seeing the tradition briefly from the inside, becoming as it were a Catholic for an hour (Williams 2013, 253; Williams 2006, 1033; Reiss 2023, 160). With this approach, the student may not need to study many different religions but ought to gain a sense of the basic structure of religion or the big questions enabling him/her to appreciate a variety of ways of making sense of the world (Apple 2001, 23; Palmer 1998/1999; Reiss 2023, 161). The Catholic school could then nurture children in values of their own faith yet at the same time encourage respect and dialogue with other faiths and non-religious worldviews, providing a more adequate religious literacy for all (Feinberg 2013, 433). It would mean that the Catholic school does not demand adherence to the faith but can open the way to it (Congregation for Catholic Education, 28).

To move from 'learning about' to 'learning from,' so that learning might transcend the informative, students need to move beyond the appearances of things and use the eyes of their souls to perceive their real meaning (Dupuis & Gordon 2010, 43). Such 'learning from' needs to address the traditions deeply which should allow the person to view them from the inside without getting trapped within. Correct understanding should precede judgement on what is being understood (Smart 1968 103).

By subjecting various religious and non-religious viewpoints to critical scrutiny, it needs to be kept in view that we are concerned with more than what is rational as, for instance, we find in Kant's conception of reason. Reason of the heart is also needed (Bellah & Tippon 2006, 8-13; McGrath 2011, 59, 71,86; Noddings 2016, 173-188; Gearon 2014, 5). This calls forth the need for affective conversion and an accompanying liberating offline assimilative capacity (Lonergan 1973, 30-41; Gelpi 1997, 60-62; Doran 1977; Connor 2006,128-129; Sanders 1961, 140-144). Harmonizing different strands of reason responsibly and intelligently brings us to the realm of discernment (Gallagher 2010,15-16; Nouwen 2013; Sheldrake 2011).

As part of this affective conversion, the Catholic school today ought to speak of justice at different levels—personal and social (*The Catholic School* para 24,58; McKinney 2019, 393-403; McKinney 2023). For this, the person will be challenged to review his/her social position in terms of such things as the common good. It will need to focus on how the individual responds to value and how community assumes different meanings especially as it includes impersonal structures

(Lonergan 1973, 27-55; Groome 2014, 115-117; Gelpi 1997, 64-66; Beirne 1985; Burbules & Torres 2000, 7; Sanders 1961, 100). Catholic moral conversion that includes social justice needs to be located not in some doing good ideology as we find in Kirwan & Whittle (2021) but should emerge from the Catholic Story (Gerics 1991, 250-264). The Catholic school's sense of community and justice need to be critically evaluated in light of the Catholic ideal (Congregation for Catholic Education, 16; Williams 2010, 29; Bryk 1993, 275, 289-290).

Thus, the Catholic school should embody and offer a distinctive story which all students are invited to evaluate and perhaps embrace.

Pedagogical Implications

If the central focus of Lonergan's notion of conversion in education is accepted, how does one teach conversion at different levels— affective, intellectual, moral, religious? In a sense, one cannot. In line with people like John Dewey, Paulo Freire and Carl Rogers, the discovery related to conversion as Lonergan emphasized is personal. It forms a tradition where objectivity is not primarily external and so contrasts with much contemporary, perhaps largely soulless, education (Miller 2009, 581-588). In this respect, the pupil does not learn from the teacher. Rather the teacher stimulates the student to bring to life the truth that already exists in the mind (Dupuis & Gordon 2010, 66; Davis & Williams 2003, 267-268). The approach thus strives to be sensitive to where students are and what they want but it avoids being overly subjective (Bonnett & Cuypers 2003: 326-340; Trigg 2023, 118-135). Interaction with tradition will strive to be objective along the lines of Grimmer's 'learning from' underpinned by intellectual conversion (Carmody 2021:7-8).

One might object that having the learner move towards intellectual conversion is unrealistic, particularly for Religious Education students at the junior or even senior levels. It may be more appropriate for higher-level students (Perry 1970; Fowler 1981; Loder & Fowler 1982). This seems to be true. However, undergoing conversion is not an all-or-nothing task in what could be seen as a pilgrimage towards one's true self (Palmer 2010,36). As Giddy points out, knowing what knowing is, remains a matter of fuller appropriation of a capacity we already have but do not exercise to the full extent (Giddy, 2011:531).

While Giddy views the starting point to be easily accessible, gaining the horizon of intellectual conversion is, as we have intimated, a long-term achievement (Sanders 1961, 103-108). In line with Giddy, the starting point may not be in the area of intellect but in moral, affective, or religious domains. While we have argued that intellectual conversion is central to studying religion objectively, it is not necessarily prior to the other conversions so that for instance moral, affective, or religious conversion may precede it.

The learner can become engaged in diverse ways which call upon what Noddings speaks about as the teacher's renaissance dimension where he/she can fruitfully draw from diverse resources helping to close the gap between the Catholic tradition of learning and the classroom (Noddings 1998, 86-89; McKinney & Sullivan 2013). At the same time, the teacher him/herself needs to develop the assimilative capacity which intellectual conversion and other conversions offer. Otherwise, he/she will be ill-equipped to discuss various religious and other viewpoints impartially where for instance a

Muslim could objectively teach Catholicism or visa-versa. The teacher needs to present in a way that those who hold the viewpoint would recognize themselves in what is delivered (Copley 2008,29). The teacher thus needs the capacity to engender dialogue so as to be enabled and to enable viewing religious traditions from the standpoint of the other (Buber 1947,97; Puolimatka 2005, 192; Mc Laren 1988, 213-234).

While the self-reflective approach outlined here could feature as an add-on course in school perhaps as philosophy or methodology, yet, given increasingly overloaded curricula, it may be more feasible to stretch the subjects from within, combing self-reflectivity with academic delivery (Noddings 2013, 62; Morey & Piderit 2006, 314; Pring 2018, 86; Reiss 2023, 164).

Conclusion

We noted that the Catholic school today no longer forms a uniform system but is a network highly diversified in secularized contexts though it strives to sustain a common core. Increasingly this means that its religious mission is subjected to academic success. Consequently, students move from a physics laboratory to a religion class confronted with what seem to be incompatible domains of knowledge—one highly treasured and the other almost despised. Through Lonergan's theory of knowledge, it has been argued that this clash of perspectives needs to be satisfactorily addressed by a consideration of different forms of objectivity so that the school, Catholic and other, is enabled to provide a holistic worldview.

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