

SAP2401 HF
CONVERSION AND EDUCATION
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the part played by conversion in enhancing the effectiveness of education in today's globalised and post-modern world. Attention will be given to education's three-fold role: to inform, to form, and to transform. Throughout the course distinctions will be made between ways of knowing and types of knowledge. Emphasis will be placed on the importance for educators to understand that the contemporary situation is as much a source of theology as is the tradition. In this context, educators will be encouraged to be aware of their own overlapping worlds and those of their students.

Basic Reference Texts:

Caritas in Veritate, Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff, Benedict XVI, to the Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Men and Women Religious, the Lay Faithful, and all People, June 29, 2009.

Gaudium et Spes, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI, December 7, 1965

Package of material available through professor

Goal of the Course

Within the context of three aspects of the educational enterprise: information, formation and transformation, to come to an understanding of conversion, as a transformation of consciousness, and of the different types of “knowing” involved in one’s pursuit of this goal.

Desired Learning Outcomes

- A basic understanding of Bernard Lonergan’s description of what constitutes knowing and his delineation of conversion -psychic, intellectual, moral, affective and religious – and its significance to education.
- Familiarity with Lonergan’s “transcendental notions” and Rahner’s theological anthropology.
- Ability to assess the respective contributions of liberationist, ecological, feminist, and human rights emphases to an education that is liberating rather than power-seeking.
- Ability to distinguish and assess the roles of different ways of knowing and types of knowledge in the imparting of information, in formation, and in transformation/conversion.
- Acquaintance with a variety of authors and their insights into the contemporary situation.
- Ability to apply insights from the readings to the unique educational situations/ministry in which you are engaged and, in turn, draw from your experience to enrich the readings selected.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. Read the weekly lectures and complete all assigned readings [In general these are marked ** and are part of the package of selected readings provided or, in rare cases, specifically mentioned]. Completing the readings is most important.
2. Complete the reflection questions on the dates specified.
3. Meet with the professor three times [at the end of each section].

COURSE EVALUATION

Seminar:	40%
Written answers to three reflection questions:	60%

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

The course is divided into three sections:

SECTION 1: Modules 1-4

SECTION 2: Modules 5-8

SECTION 3: Modules 9-12

1. Module 1: Education and Conversion – What is the Nexus?
 - 1.1 Education’s goals: to inform, form and transform
 - 1.2 Types of knowledge and ways of knowing
 - 1.3 Levels of Intentional Consciousness
 - 1.4 Lonergan’s ‘transcendental imperatives’.
 - 1.5 Comparison of Crysedale’s and Haughton’s views on formation and transformation

2. Module 2: Psychological Aspects of Conversion- the human person as moral agent and subject of conversion
 - 2.1 Human Freedom
 - 2.2 Anxiety
 - 2.3 Role of Affectivity in decision-making

3. Module 3: Human Experience as a valid medium for the encounter between the human being and the Triune God.
 - 3.1 Rahner’s theological anthropology
 - 3.2 Rahner’s understanding of the “supernatural existential”
 - 3.3 Moving from Alienation to Conversion: Mabry and Generation X

4. Module 4: Conversion in the Philosophy and Theology of Bernard Lonergan
 - 4.1 Levels of Intentional Consciousness revisited
 - 4.2 Conversion
 - 4.3 Psychic Conversion
 - 4.4 Intellectual Conversion

5. Module 5: Conversion in the Philosophy and Theology of Bernard Lonergan (continued)
 - 5.1 Moral and Affective Conversion – the transformation of desire
 - 5.2 Religious Conversion

6. Module 6: Education, Conversion and the Challenge of Postmodernity
 - 6.1 Meaning of Culture
 - 6.2 The Modern Era
 - 6.3 The Contemporary [or Postmodern] Era
 - 6.4 Challenges posed to the Christian Educator

7. Module 7: Justice, Education and Conversion - Education for Liberation not for Domination.
 - 7.1 Justice as “Right Relationships” – Education: Development of the just disposition
 - 7.2 Conscientisation – the freeing of the mind; Paolo Freire and Conversion
 - 7.3 Liberating Education - transforming effects of the Biblical understanding of Justice
 - 7.4 Conversion in the Scriptures
 - 7.5 Faith as Performative – Dulles, Gutierrez and Haight
 - 7.6 A Spirituality of Compassion – Cardman
8. Module 8: Education and Conversion in a Globalised World
 - 8.1 Insights from the Contemporary Situation – Educating for Awe and Wonder
 - 8.2 Robert Schreiter’s “global flows” – liberation, feminism, ecology, human rights
 - 8.3 “Feminist” and “Ecological” Contributions towards a Transformation of Consciousness
 - 8.4 Educators as the Voices of Hope
9. Module 9: Discipleship – A Way of Knowing which Surpasses the Logic of Common Sense
 - 9.1 Discipleship and non-violence
 - 9.2 Discipleship as on-going conversion
10. Module 10: Contemplation and the Transformation of Consciousness
 - 10.1 The way of knowing of the mystic – awe and wonder revisited
 - 10.2 Sacred space and cyber-space (according to Robert Kinast)
 - 10.3 Conversion and the Transformation of Consciousness
 - 10.4 Postmodernity’s openness to the prophetic, cosmological and mystical
 - 10.5 The problem of unbelief
11. Module 11: Conversion and Self-Realisation
 - 11.1 Conversion as the choice of the life-affirming over the life-denying
 - 11.2 Contribution of the Behavioural Sciences

Module 12: The Role of Discernment

Reflection Papers

Choose **three** only. Due dates to be provided at the first class.

Length of each paper: 2500-3000 words

Acknowledgments where necessary should be made as follows: (Sheldrake, 19). This will be helpful when you come to do your synthesis paper. You will know where you obtained your information. In addition, it saves you from any unintentional plagiarism. The paper should contain an introduction, setting out your ‘thesis’ or argument and how you intend to defend it, and a final paragraph where you sum up and state your conclusions. In between is the body of the essay. Your methodology should be apparent.

A bibliography should be included. The way I have listed the references is a guide to how you do the bibliography. Do not hesitate to ask if you are not clear.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. [Module 1] From the articles given for Module 1, analyse Cynthia Crysdale’s understanding of conversion and that of Rosemary Haughton. Which do you prefer? Why?
2. [Module 3] Choose **one** of the following:
 - How does Rahner's theological anthropology determine his understanding of the role of human experience in bringing one to an encounter with “Mystery”?
 - How could you enable those you serve to recognise the Holy Mystery in the deeper experiences [dealing with death, suffering, the apparent futility of accidents, loneliness, etc, etc.]? Do you see this as enhancing human formation and transformation? If so, how?
 - What comparisons do you see between Rahner’s understanding of the experience of God today and Mabry’s description of the X-Generation and of conversion as Home-coming?
 - In what sense is Conversion a “turning to” the God mediated by depth experiences?
3. [Module 4] Psychic conversion is a turning to a new horizon, where one moves from repression of the past to a willing reception of its pain and richness. Without the freedom to do this, authentic insights into one’s experience are not possible. In your role as educator and with the increased incidence of students [or teachers] who are victims of abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) give some practical examples where you [or colleagues] have encountered the need for this transformation of consciousness or psychic conversion .
4. [Module 5] Choose one of the following:
 - Is moral conversion possible without affective conversion?
 - Reflect on your experience of conversion. In dealing with the tendency to deny or censor unpleasant experiences [small or great] what triggers you to face them? Is it, as Lonergan, Doran, Crowe and Rahner would claim, the love of God felt directly or mediated by human love? Does religious conversion anticipate the other types of conversion distinguished by Lonergan? Does the transformation come from above downwards or from below upwards? Instead of writing on your own personal experience you may choose to write on that of another. For example, you could choose

St. Peter's experiences after his denial of Jesus? Or you could reflect on what you have observed or learned of another person's conversion. Feel free to broaden your choice.

5. [Module 6] Through their dynamic spirit, oriented to mystery, that is to reaching beyond the immediate, human persons can find an alternative to both a sense of meaninglessness and a retreat into fundamentalism. Conversion, defined as a radical change of horizon, an entrance into a new world of concerns, requires an openness to differences, a willingness to discard personal biases and engage in dialogue with those who offer different or even opposing viewpoints.

Similarly, genuine education demands openness on the part of teacher and student. A wide range of alternative values and ways of experiencing life are offered by the contemporary mass culture, especially through the communications media and advertising. Moreover, students and educators come from a variety of cultural, economic, social and educational backgrounds. Many have had a range of experiences, both positive and negative within the Church.

How, if at all, do the statements above and the readings below, challenge you as a Christian educator to meet the overlapping worlds of your students?

6. [Module 7] How do at least 3 of the references in this module throw light on the biblical notion of conversion OR on Lonergan's understanding of intellectual, affective and moral conversion?
 7. [Module 9] The paradoxical statements contained in Jesus' call to discipleship call for a way of knowing that goes beyond the logic of common sense. How do you see this type of knowing as relevant to your educational task?
 8. [Module 10] Does the widespread use of technological means of communication hinder or assist you in your educational endeavours (education of self and others)? How do you deal with the problem of unbelief?
 9. [Module 11] Conversion, from a psychological view point, has been described as the turning away from a life-denying stance to one which is life-affirming. Give examples of how, in your own education and /or your education of others, you have experienced the transformation of a difficult student, parishioner, family member. How has this experience been liberating for you and for the person concerned?
 10. [Module 12] Can you see instruction on discernment as an integral part of the educational process [not confined to religious education]?