

BERNARD LONERGAN AND RAIMON PANIKKAR ON FAITH AND BELIEF

Chae Young Kim[♦]

1. Introduction

Whether we like to admit it or not, our contemporary global life cannot be understood without adverting to the widespread presence of pluralism in economics, politics, culture, and religion. Religious pluralism is especially distinctive and a concrete fact in our globalized experience of human life. Both in the East and in the West, we frequently meet religious persons who come to us from other parts of the world. In this sense, geographically, we live among many neighbours. We have many neighbours. But, do we not experience a strange distance with our neighbours, a strangeness which takes on global dimensions? So, we find that we are all in need of more solid forms of encounter and engagement in the relations which we can have with others.

In recent years, in theology, religious studies, and philosophy, various modern religious thinkers have attempted to approach these issues in a comprehensive fashion. Among them, Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) and Raimon Panikkar (1918-2010) have given new perspectives for living in harmony with our neighbours whatever be their religion.¹ Each gives a general heuristic that can help us move toward a synthetic understanding of things as today we grapple with the modern global religious situation as we now find it within our human world.

This essay will focus on their notion of faith as this applies for an in-depth grasp of human understanding. In a comparative study, I will try to speak about how they each spoke about “faith” and about how an understanding pertaining to the nature and the role of “faith” can lead to a new comprehension or a new understanding about what precisely is the

[♦]**Chae Young Kim** is Professor of Religious Studies in Sogang University, Korea. He also serves in the Korean Association of the History of Religions as Vice-President. He has written many articles and books on the field of Psychological Theory of Religion and Religious Education. He also translated William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience into Korean*. This research is supported by the Sogang University Research Grant of 2012.

¹Interestingly enough they both came from similar academic background and both were Catholic priests. Both were also trained in the natural sciences, philosophy, and theology. From an expertise that existed in these subject matters, they were both well placed for being able to make judgments about our current situation in the world.

meaning of our humanity in our current global religious situation. In this study, I will especially emphasize the dynamic dimensions of faith as faith exists within the human subject, refraining from questions that have to do with problems raised by doctrinal disputes.

Prior to effecting any comparison however, I would like to talk about the limitations which are present in the notion and rule of “epoche” and then suggest the necessity of reconsidering how the dimension of faith is to be understood if we are to have a proper study of religion as a human phenomenon and if, as a result, the modern academic study of religion is to advance within our global religious world.

2. Modern Study of Religion and Faith

The modern academic study of religion first arose within a context that had been influenced by the presence of theological studies within the West. Conflicts of one sort and another have arisen, however, between theology and religious studies. Consequently, some scholars of religion have tried to work independently of theology and apart from the existence of any kind of divinity school. Extremist discourse against theological studies has also been voiced by some scholars working within the field of religious studies.²

A second problem refers to the positivistic study of religion.³ A scientific explanation of religion is proposed and undertaken in a manner which detracts from the value of attending to the role that is played in human life by traditional religious values or through the presence of a commonly accepted traditional religious language. Values and language have been too easily subverted to suggest connotations of meaning which owe their being to the presence of an ingrained positivism that one often finds among practitioners of religious studies.

The modern academic study of religion has viewed theology and transcendence as if they should be seen as counter-positions or biases which need to be overcome. They are commonly referred to in terms which tend to speak about the dangers of theological dogmatism and the limitations of religious parochialism. Since the birth of the modern

²Walter H. Capps, *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, 263-265.

³George Alfred James, *Interpreting Religion: The Phenomenological Approaches of Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye, W. Brede Kristensen, and Gerardus van der Leeuw*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995, 276.

academic study of religion, attempts have been made to try to maintain some kind of proper distance between the study of religion and the influence of religious dogmatism. In the newly recent phenomenological studies of religion, efforts were made to maintain a point of view that emphasizes an autonomous category for religion.

These studies tried to work with a notion which speaks about “*epoche*” if one is to understand any religion. Scholars of religion are encouraged to “*bracket*” their own religious or theological perspectives or, on the other hand, their secular, reductionist perspectives if they are to engage in an adventure that wants to understand any given religion. As a consequence of this phenomenological approach, “*faith*” has been neglected as a fundamental dimension which normally belongs to the living of our human lives. However, for the sake of moving toward a possible fuller or greater understanding of things in matters having to do with religion, this dimension needs to be seriously reconsidered if authentic developments are to occur in religious studies. Is it really possible to encounter other human beings in an authentic way without really attending to the “*faith*” dimension which exists in one’s own life? In the context of our current global pluralistic religious encounters, is it really possible for us to simply abide by the “*epoche*” rule in the study of religion for the sake of a species of objectivity that could be lacking in meaning and significance, an objectivity which, in a way, could be lacking in completeness? Bluntly put, I do not think that this is really possible.

Instead, I think that the proper study of religion should openly emphasize the importance of the “*faith*” dimension that exists within human life and the value of its academic study. The “*faith*” dimension should be seen as a fundamental category if one is to understand religion and, ultimately, our own personal humanity. Active concern for the dimension of “*faith*” should provide a new perspective for overcoming a fragmented approach to the study of religion.

3. Faith as Constitutive of Humanity

Both Lonergan and Panikkar tried to understand in a fundamental way how we can become fully human within the life and practice of religion. They sought to speak about faith as a fundamental dimension which normally exists within authentic human living. For them, faith should not be seen as a secondary variable as it relates to the building and formation of our human life; it exists as a primary qualification in our human lives.

Faith operates as a generic principle within human life if one's human life is to grow in an in-depth way in its proper authenticity.

Lonergan developed his notion of faith in the years prior to and after the publication of both *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. In the later chapters of *Insight* we find Lonergan clearly speaking about how our unrestricted desire to know can participate in a higher level of human consciousness which is shaped by ultimate concerns and which cannot be transcended. He did not separate a level of consciousness which lives by faith and what is known through acts of faith from other levels of consciousness which constitute the life of any given human subject.

According to Lonergan, a consciousness that lives by the demands of faith exists at the highest levels of a person's subjectivity. Like the other levels of the human subject's consciousness, it exists within the life of a human subject not by way of some kind of imposition that enters into the life of a human subject as if it were some kind of external, foreign element that is thrust upon one. In several places in *Insight*, Lonergan clearly speaks about the emergence of faith as a manifestation of religious consciousness within the life of a human subject.

... [M]an's entry into the new and higher collaboration and his participation of its fruits will be some species of faith.

By faith is meant the requisite conjugate form that the solution brings to man's intellect. By some species of faith is meant any of the conjugate forms that perfect intellect in any of the series of possible solutions within the reach of divine omnipotence.

Moreover, it can be shown that this faith will be a transcendent belief... But belief and only belief is universally accessible within a harmonious continuation of the existing order. Moreover, the relevant belief will be transcendent; for it makes a man a participation in the new and higher collaboration in which God is the initiator and the principle agent.⁴

Lonergan spoke about faith and the importance of faith in relation to Wilfred Cantwell Smith's discussions about faith as it relates to the comparative study of religion, in his paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Newton in 1969.⁵ In his lecture,

⁴Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992, 741.

⁵Similarities exist also between Smith and Panikkar on how one is to understand faith in the context of religious diversity. Raymon Panikkar, "The Dialogical Dialogue" in *The World Religious Traditions: Current Perspectives in*

Lonergan had emphasized how a deeply rooted dynamic self-transcending process can be found in every human subject. The dynamic self-transcending process is always moving a subject toward higher levels of being and meaning. According to Lonergan, faith is found whenever a person as a human subject moves toward further degrees and realizations of personal self-transcendence. The ultimate self-transcending subject’s consciousness is to be understood as in terms of dynamically falling in love which fulfils the prior states or conditions of consciousness which have belonged to a given religious subject.⁶

In this new changed context, it was Lonergan’s belief that the human subject’s previous questions and concerns undergo a radical shift. The anxiety and restlessness which had been part of the human subject’s life cease to have the influence which they once had. The human subject’s life begins to have a direction that had been missing from it and, in this experience of direction, a greater calm invigorates one’s consciousness to elicit new challenges and to present new objectives. One begins to turn toward a new, mysterious horizon of being and meaning, leading and guiding a religiously converted human subject. One’s world is seen not so much as a given but as a gift that has been freely given to one from sources or a point of origin that is always freely extending and giving itself to us.⁷

In *Method in Theology* (1972), Lonergan synthesizes his notion of faith, speaking much more fully about it. Faith exists as a basic constituent if a human subject is to live a fully integral life in any number of concrete living situations. In the lives of human beings, faith functions as an operator when its possession begins to direct human subjects toward new experiences of meaning that exist at a higher level.

Instead of speaking solely in terms of reason and intellect, one often finds that Lonergan speaks about faith as faith relates to the heart and experiences of love. The measure of one’s understanding does not lie solely within one’s understanding but, more fully or more radically, it lies in the love which should exist within us in our hearts and in the good which this love should express. Our understanding exists for the sake of our loving and where love is lacking, all other things are lost.

Religious Studies: Essays in Honor of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, ed. Frank Whaling, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark Ltd., 1984, 201-221.

⁶Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, vol. 17, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004, 38-41.

⁷Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol 17, 39.

Lonergan refers to the theology of Blaise Pascal and the understanding which he had to the effect that the heart has reasons which the mind knows nothing of.⁸ For Lonergan faith should be regarded as “knowledge born of religious love.”⁹ Faith is not separated from the life of our minds despite what limitations might exist if persons work from a truncated understanding about the nature of human cognition. The human mind plays a positive role since faith is made known through an ongoing interaction which exists between minds and hearts and another species of interaction which exists between what exists within minds and hearts and what exists externally of the life of minds and hearts.

Like Lonergan’s notion of faith as a constituent of our humanity, Raimon Panikkar also spoke about faith while dealing with what exists as the very core of any religion. In his works, Panikkar emphasized the fact that the human subject should be seen existing as a holistic living being, who exists as a unique, distinct person.¹⁰ Every human subject is always dynamically facing new situations in encounters which serve to lead a person along in a particular direction. In a real sense, in every human subject, an endless desire exists which grounds an ongoing asking of questions. In Panikkar, one finds an understanding of desire which recalls Lonergan’s teaching about the existence of a pure desire to know. In Panikkar’s words:

Man is an inquiring being who *desires, seeks, questions*.

... Desire not only drives us to satisfy it, but also to *seek* and pursue the search endlessly, even when its immediate object has been attained. In Man there is not only the romantic desire to listen to the beating of a heart filled with longing; Man is an active being who hunts the object of his desire, tracks it, smells it out, directs himself to what completes him, throws himself toward the terrestrial, and even the temporal frontiers, seeking perhaps not any particular object but simply what he does not have, what he is not.¹¹

⁸Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 17, 42.

⁹Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 115. Lonergan distinguishes faith from belief and they are distinguished from movements within the human soul which lead to acts of faith and belief.

¹⁰Raimon Panikkar, “Philosophy as Life-Style,” *Philosophers on Their Own Work*, eds. A. Mercier and M. Svilar, vol. 4, Bern: Lang, 1978, 199.

¹¹Raimon Panikkar, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics*, New York: Paulist Press, 1979, 210-211.

It was Panikkar’s belief that the presence of an authentic form of human questing desire was something that can be identified with the presence of a kind of faith which urges one to keep asking questions even as one realizes that one’s questing desire exists as an ongoing, ceaseless kind of quest. Each human subject is addressed by this desire and each is asked to open his or her self to a questing that is always moving beyond itself. Through newly emerging questions, a human subject becomes more open to him or herself in a way which causes one to realize that one has yet to know an answer which will truly bring one’s inquiry to any kind of final rest and fulfilment. As Panikkar goes on to say:

Faith relates to Man’s inquisitive structure. He asks because he does not know *yet*, but – and this makes him truly an inquiring being – he also asks because he knows that he does not know yet and because he knows that he does not know only the answer but that on which the answer is based.¹²

The essence of faith seems to me to lie in the question rather than in the answer, in the inquisitive stance, in the desire rather than in the concrete response one gives. Faith is more the existential ‘container’ than the intellectual content of ‘that thing’ we try to describe.¹³

Panikkar’s life testifies to the positive relation which exists between his inquisitiveness and the living out of his faith. He was not happy to spend his time within any given academic discipline and he could also not live as a monk within his religious community without proceeding to ask further questions. He refrained from remaining too long at any one place since he tried to argue that faith should not be seen as something that is tied to a specific place. He wrote: “I could not bring myself to study sciences alone, or climb the heights of philosophical speculation while neglecting praxis, or for that matter, to take refuge in Theology as if the hidden place of the hidden God were not in everything that is.”¹⁴

For Panikkar, faith was not also limited to how it exists in his own religious tradition; it can be found in any specific human group, at any specific time, or in any specific human tradition. In speaking about faith, one speaks about something which exists as a universal condition which

¹²Panikkar, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics*, 211.

¹³Panikkar, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics*, 212.

¹⁴Raimon Panikkar, “‘*Collegite Fragmenta: For an Integration of Reality*’” in *From Alienation to At-Oneness: Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova*, eds., F. A. Eigo, S. E. Fittipaid, Villanova: University of Villanova Press, 1977, 22.

must be in place if anyone is to grow in their humanity.¹⁵ This is true even if a given person identifies him or herself as non-religious. Faith possesses a quality in the life of persons which cuts across all religious traditions. In this sense, faith does not exist as some kind of option or “add on” to the living of a true human life since it exists as a constitutive dimension in human life. It exists in a way that resembles what is meant when we speak about the existence of a universal human nature.¹⁶

However, to understand what faith is, one must distinguish it from any kind of orientation that is derived from some kind of animal instinct or mere intellectual quest. Faith emerges when instinct and intellect are not able to meet the requirements of a restless heart. In Panikkar’s words, it exists as “the consciousness that there is a ‘more’ dimension than that which meets the eye and falls within the range of the intellect.”¹⁷ It cannot exist and it does not fully exist as a consequence that somehow derives only from the presence of some kind of intellectual activity. Though intellectual process is not capable of producing acts of faith, to complete the intellectual dimension in one’s life faith is needed.

In this sense, like Lonergan, for Panikkar, faith exists as a gift that lies beyond what our human intellects are able to acquire in any quest that seeks for experiences of understanding. Faith is more related to a kind of knowing which is perhaps best described as “infused.” It is something that is given to us from sources that lie outside our conscious control. When received, it authentically moves and guides us beyond narrow intellectual dimensions towards a “more” level that we have yet to know and experience.¹⁸

Unlike Lonergan, Panikkar, however, did not specifically say about how falling in love relates to faith. Unlike Lonergan, Panikkar did not rely on how Pascal speaks about the religious knowing which exists when references are made to the heart having reasons that the mind knows nothing of, though, in his Gifford Lectures, he twice referred to the religious works of Pascal.¹⁹

¹⁵Panikkar, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics*, 190.

¹⁶Panikkar, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics*, 194.

¹⁷Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, New York: Orbis Books, 2010, 305.

¹⁸Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, 306.

¹⁹Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, 72, 275.

4. Faith and Belief

As we have noted, in the thought of both Lonergan and Panikkar, faith does not exist as some kind of special, optional category since its presence is constitutive of our humanity. We cannot properly think about our humanity without attending to the dimension of faith as this exists in our lives. Faith is the key to our humanity.

In the academic study of religion, faith has been often confused with belief. Faith and belief have been regarded as convertible terms and at times, faith has been viewed as if it were some kind of belief system or a set of doctrines. Unfortunately, this misunderstanding has been expanding beyond academic circles, moving into the world of popular religious observance and common discourse within the society at large. Many ordinary persons tend to see the world of faith as simply constituted by an external adherence that is given to an externally communicated set of doctrines and little attention is given to the inner self-transcending orientation of the religious subject.

From the viewpoint of a truncated perspective, in this context, the world of faith is seen as if it were an impersonal type of object. It is assumed that we can fully understand what it is to be a human being if we only focus on the external aspects of our lives. But, this type of approach suggests the sufficiency of a behaviourist or naïve realist point of view and the presence of a reified culture of faith which has turned faith into some kind of “it” or some kind of “thing.” Hence, if a truly adequate remedy is to be found, a reified understanding of faith needs to be distinguished from the legitimacy of holding or adhering to a system of beliefs or doctrines in the practice of one’s religion. A proper comprehension of the faith dimension as this is rooted in the life of the religious subject is urgently needed.

Lonergan and Panikkar were both aware of this confusion between faith and belief as this exists in the modern academic research of religion and both have spoken on the need for a new critical approach that could reconceive how faith and belief were to be related to each other. An in-depth understanding of faith requires a focus on the life of the human subject who is to be seen as a kind of first principle or operator when thought is given to how any given person is supposed to respond to encounters with new experiences of religious meaning. And so, in order to move toward an authentic understanding of one’s own religion and the religion of other persons, one needs to distinguish faith from belief or faith from belief in the truth of certain doctrines. In the writings of both men, one can find this kind of distinction.

Lonergan articulated his understanding of belief in several places. He thought that belief functions not only in the world of religion but also in other spheres like science, society, culture, and politics. For him, belief is a necessary prerequisite for the existence of a human world. If scientific collaboration is to truly exist among persons and if it is to exist in an orderly way, persons working within a specific field must be able to share in common beliefs that bind many persons together into a community.²⁰ Persons need to believe one another if any real progress is to be made by the entire scientific community. The same can be said about persons who long to build religious communities as a source of personal support for individual members and community.

Belief functions as a necessary variable in human life since, without it, it would not be possible to build a common fund of understanding and judgment from which many persons could draw as a basis for any possible later developments and to advance from old positions to new positions. Belief functions as a means for the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another.²¹ In human life, various worlds of meaning are constructed by our intelligence and imagination and these are mediated to others through words and deeds in a process of transmission that cannot be sustained if belief does not exist as a mediated form of human knowing.²²

As Lonergan admits, belief, however, cannot refer to a form of knowing that refers to one's own acts of understanding and judgment. In believing, there is no personal affirmation but, rather, simply "accepting what we are told by others or whom we reasonable rely."²³ Of course, when anyone initially enters a specific community, the process of belief is necessary not only for sustaining a community but also for disseminating the knowledge of the community to others.

In converting a belief into a personally affirmed rational judgment of fact or value, however, a potential believer needs to engage in personal acts of direct and reflective understanding on the truth of a particular belief and live and act on the basis of what one believes.²⁴ In such a situation, a person's belief needs to be grounded in a manner which points to a process of self-appropriation. If one's belief cannot be harmonized with the order

²⁰Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 728.

²¹Lonergan, *Insight*, 725.

²²Lonergan gave a lecture, titled "Self-Transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious," on this issue in William Smith College (10 October 1974).

²³Lonergan, *Insight*, 452.

²⁴Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers*, 146-147.

of the universe as it is known to us, if one’s belief cannot serve as a point of departure for newer, richer experiences of meaning, then, from a lack of understanding, from a lessening which occurs in one’s experiences of meaning, a situation gradually arises where a belief cannot be easily or properly adhered to. It cannot be passed on to later generations.

Lonergan discussed this point when dealing with the problem of evil in human history. It was his judgment that, if we only focus on how we can perpetuate the kind of order which currently exists in human history, we will not find adequate solutions for the many evils which exist in our world and which are constantly presenting themselves to us. The newly emerging questions about belief in our world are causing many to doubt any claims that would say that we can adequately cope with evils which exist in our world if we only refer to the horizon that has been constituted by our currently existing state of things. However, if we want solutions which can transcend all difficulties, we will need to turn to the presence of a higher order of meaning and law which can transcend our currently existing horizontal order of things.

Lonergan keenly focused on this point. An awareness of this higher order of meaning and reality is the starting point of a journey of faith. And, in this journey, belief can serve to bring a person into a higher order of meaning and reality which is transcendent. One moves from one’s present order of meaning as one now begins to participate in this new higher order through acts of faith that are now operative in a human subject and which can begin to order all the other acts of our human consciousness.²⁵ Through faith, the way of belief is encouraged and enlivened in every given religious tradition. Through faith, religious beliefs undergo a constant process of renewal. And so, if faith is absent in the communication and transmission of any religious belief, religious belief will decline in its stature, role, and power. It will turn into some kind of social doctrine or perhaps, for some elements or parts of it, it will be turned into a number of philosophical propositions.

Faith is not only operative in the transmission of one’s religious beliefs but also it is operative in the other aspects of religious tradition: rituals, organization, music, hymns, doctrine, and others. Faith can work to eliminate the older aspects of a religious tradition and to originate new aspects. Although every given religious tradition and accompanying set of beliefs would seem to set conditions for the emergence of faith in the lives

²⁵Lonergan, *Insight*, 741-742.

of religious adherents, faith is something which ultimately precedes the growth of every religious tradition as, at the same time, it also completes the life of every religious tradition.

Lonergan emphasized the importance of the faith dimension as it is embodied in belief if there is to be any authentic religious encounter not only within one's own religion but also among persons belonging to different religious traditions. It was Lonergan's belief that, while belief differentiates different human communities from each other, faith integrates and unites them. For example, if we look at beliefs among the different traditions within Christianity, we find that beliefs serve as major stumbling blocks in any attempt to work toward a more comprehensive integration of these different traditions. From the perspective of belief, even within any given tradition, there can be many differences. However, from the higher point of view or higher order which refers to faith and the presence of faith, a conversation can occur among Christians about the differences of belief that happen to exist.²⁶

Lonergan, in his work, further expanded his notion of faith in order to speak about possible encounters which can occur among persons belonging to different religions. Differing religions are constituted, to some extent, by different beliefs and the oppositions which can exist among different beliefs. But, in the realm of faith, all authentic religions, despite differences, have something that is "possibly common."²⁷ As Lonergan notes in *Method in Theology*, "beliefs do differ, but behind this difference, there is a deeper unity."²⁸

Now, in order to understand what Lonergan means when he speaks about this unity, one must first realize that he was not interested in trying to encourage any form of unity in religion that relies on some form of external unification. If unity is to grow among persons who have experienced some kind of religious conversion, the focus needs to be on an invisible depth that exists when persons encounter and meet each other. No real faith can exist if it is without a possible grounding in acts of critical reflection and judgment which can serve to encourage authentic forms of religious encounter between different persons. In his own way, in the context of his philosophy, Lonergan adverts to an inner connection which exists between faith and reason. In emphasizing the value of critical reflection and judgment in the life of one's own faith and in that of others,

²⁶Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 119.

²⁷Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers*, 46.

²⁸Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 119.

he transcends the phenomenological approach that refers to the rule of “epoche.” He indirectly refers to this point when speaking about the limitations of a purely phenomenological approach.²⁹

Lonergan’s point is crucial for real religious encounters today. It fundamentally indicates the degree of Lonergan’s concern for the depth dimension that needs to be acknowledged in our current contemporary religious situation as this is seen from the perspective of faith. Lonergan, of course, did not concretely articulate this point as it possibly relates to non-Christian religions. However, for the development of future religious studies, his methodological observations serve as a point of departure within the context of a larger schema which refers to every kind of religion which exists or which can exist.³⁰ Admittedly, its validity and possible application has yet to be fully attended to within current Lonergan studies although, as I would like to suggest, it needs to be more developed and enlarged upon if, in our day today, we are to meet the current global diverse religious situation as it currently exists.

Like Lonergan, Panikkar also attended to questions which could be asked about the difference between faith and belief. However, a different personal background distinguishes how Lonergan and Panikkar think about how faith is to be distinguished from belief. Both explicitly experienced this difference as this exists within the same religious tradition which they both shared in. But, with respect to multi-religious situations, Lonergan did not work from personal experiences that were shaped by

²⁹ Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, ed., Philip McShane, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001, 276-277.

³⁰ Lonergan, of course, did not say much about interreligious/the intra-religious dialogue as this can exist among religious persons and traditions. But, through his method or because of his method, in his philosophy, he did not ignore how depth encounters could be fostered and encouraged among religious persons and different religious traditions. He could not deal more concretely or more fully with these issues because his first priority lay with how one can construct a general transcultural method that is able to integrate all the differing human sciences with each other and with how one can develop a new science of economics. However, in Lonergan’s work, a spirit that points to a universal method is present and that will allow for depth encounters within the practice and study of religion. He focused on the dialogue of religion, mainly Christian tradition and the dominant influence of modern way of life, science and economics and he devoted himself to spell out the transcultural normative method of life and also applied it as concrete possibility to all human fields including religion and philosophy.

contact with other religious traditions. Yet, Lonergan argued that the difference between faith and belief could be delineated in the context of other religious traditions.

Panikkar's personal situation for distinguishing faith from belief explains why he could delineate this difference more explicitly within the context of multiple religious situations as he knew this in the context of his own life. He especially emphasized this point when he attended to his own personal depth experiences as these developed and grew in tandem with his conscious contact with religions other than Christianity. This sense of reality was central to Panikkar's reflections and writings about religion.³¹ Without multiple experiences of diverse religious situations, it was his belief that he would not have been able to interpret his life journey as a movement into a deeper experience and sense of religion. He would not have been able to avoid falling into a trap characterized by religious relativism and ideology. He spoke in an interview with Henri Tincq:³²

I was brought up in the Catholic religion by my Spanish mother, but I never stopped trying to be united with the tolerant and generous religion of my father and of my Hindu ancestors. This does not make me a cultural or religious "half-cast," however. Christ was not half man and half God, but fully man and fully God. In the same way, I consider myself 100 percent Hindu and Indian, and 100 percent Catholic and Spanish. How is that possible? By living religion as an experience rather than as an ideology.³³

Panikkar articulated his life journey of religious experiences explicitly in his book, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*. One of his statements in it eventually began to function as a kind of trademark for him, summarizing his understanding of religion but also serving as a guideline for how religious life should be viewed within a multi-religious situation: "And although my human pilgrimage was not yet finished, I used to give a straightforward—obviously incomplete—answer: I 'left' as a Christian, I

³¹Peter Gorday, "Raimundo Panikkar: Pluralism without Relativism," *The Christian Century*, 6 December 1989, 1147.

³²Henri Tincq is the religion editor of the Parisian daily newspaper *Le Monde*. This interview has been translated into English by Joseph Cunnen, the founding editor of *Cross Currents*.

³³Raimon Panikkar, "Eruption of Truth: An Interview with Raimon Panikkar," *The Christian Century*, 16-23 August 2000, 834-836.

‘found’ myself a Hindu and I ‘return’ a Buddhist, without ceasing to be a Christian.”³⁴

Panikkar did not regard his life journey with multiple experiences of different religions from a viewpoint that was informed by some kind of intellectual dilettantism. He believed that his journey existed on an existential plane and that its existentialism should be regarded more seriously than if it had existed as some kind of intellectual quest. What matters is the questing or seeking that involves the entire human person. A questing or seeking that is purely intellectual is too narrow and limited. Faith exists as a far more comprehensive and fundamental category as, in the course of one’s life, one tries to assimilate one’s religious life journey into the whole context of one’s life. If we think about faith, we find that we are working with a variable that overcomes what limitations are present when we speak about belief and the intellectual dimension which attends believing any given set of beliefs. As Panikkar noted:

The distinction between faith and belief, along with the thesis that faith is a constitutive human dimension, represents more than just an intellectual venture. It is equally an existential adventure: a human pilgrimage within religious traditions divided by multiseular walls of history, philosophies, theologies and prejudices.³⁵

However, Panikkar did not ignore the legitimate role of belief in the existence of religious traditions. Like Lonergan, Panikkar recognized that the transmission of belief is necessary if any given religious tradition is to exist in any kind of way among human beings. Admittedly, no successful transmission of belief can occur on its own since, in any transmission and communication, a degree of personal involvement is absolutely necessary on the part of any would-be religious believer. In passing belief from one person to another or from one generation to another, in attending to the value of this process, it is more important that we attend to questions which ask about the personal involvement of religious subjects than to ask any other kind of question as other questions relate to the transmission of belief through time and across differing human cultures.

Panikkar identified faith with the presence of a self-transcending form of dynamic involvement which exists with, through, within, and beyond any given belief. If this self-transcendence is not present in how a person relates to his or her belief, what is present is but an expression of belief and not the

³⁴Raimon Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, New York: Paulist Press, 1978, 2.

³⁵Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, 2.

presence of any faith. In addition, if a kind of faith exists which does not allow for any forms of self-transcendence which refer to dimensions of meaning that are not already given in one's articles of belief, then such a faith can easily turn into a form of ideology (a religious ideology) and, with this ideology, a kindred form of fanaticism can be encouraged in how persons behave, act, and treat each other. As Panikkar notes:

Yet our distinction presents special features. Faith cannot be equated with belief, but faith always needs a belief to be faith. Belief is not faith, but it must convey faith. A disembodied faith is not faith. A belief that does not always point to a beyond that outsoars and in a sense annihilates it is not belief but fanaticism. Faith finds expression in belief, and through it Men normally arrive at faith. Where Men live in a homogeneous cultural world, most never notice the tension between faith and belief. They look on dogma, which are simply authoritative formulation of belief, almost as if they were faith itself, half-forgetting that they are dogmas *of* faith.³⁶

Because faith exists as a self-transcending reality (because it is supposed to exist, in fact, as a form or means of self-transcendence for different persons and groups), it cannot be easily defined and conceptualized as a carrier of belief or as a carrier of the doctrine of one's professed religion. Panikkar debunked any kind of notion which thinks of faith in terms an assent that is given to a set of abstract propositions. He also doubted the worth of trying to talk about the contents of one's faith in a way which tries to work from a perspective that thinks in terms of some kind of invisible ultimate reality which is normative in the life of most religious traditions. He seemed to think that, although such efforts try to emphasize the importance of a self-transcendent aspect that is somehow being made present in the articles of one's professed religion, this type of approach tends to reduce faith to a materialistic formulation which is found whenever theological propositions are received and employed in a manner that is devoid of any real theological understanding. Hence, in a radical form of statement which he once gave in his Gifford Lectures, it is said that faith refers to a condition or state that without any object: "Faith is pure awareness, a conscious openness before it closes itself on an object by dint of sensual, rational, or spiritual knowledge... To assume that faith can define what God is amounts to idolatry."³⁷ "Faith is not an epistemic category; it has an ontological nature, or rather, an ontologic-pneumatic

³⁶Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, 18-19.

³⁷Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, 241.

character. Faith has no object and cannot have one. It would be an idolatry.”³⁸

In addition, however, Panikkar did not limit faith to a religious way of life as if it can only be found within religious traditions. Faith can exist also within a non-religious way of life and tradition.³⁹ Faith is not exclusively possessed by any one particular race, tradition, age, or class; it exists as a quality or attitude which all human beings can have and share in. Faith does not exist exclusively in a religious subject. One can find it in non-religious subjects especially as different persons seek experiences of meaning in their lives. Among Marxists, for example, one finds this kind of orientation and thinking.

In this sense then, according to Panikkar, religious encounters should not remain at a level that is only interested in exchanging information about other belief systems or in only attending to the external aspects of any given religion. It is better instead to look toward the possibility of mutual encounters among persons who belong to different religious traditions. Moreover, these mutual encounters should not remain at a level that exists with other religious persons since we can move toward a more critical encounter with ourselves as we ask ourselves about who or what we are as human beings and who or what we would like to be as human persons.

Therefore, ultimately, religious encounters should be directed toward one’s ongoing personal growth and transformation through a process that derives from authentic mutual encounters as these exist among religious persons.⁴⁰ For this reason, Panikkar did not put too strong an emphasis on the importance of inter-religious dialogue as this is given and as it exists in its own right. Inter-religious dialogue is a value but of greater importance is a form of dialogue with the faith of other persons in the hope that one’s own faith will grow and develop.

In this sense then, Panikkar would not agree with the rule of “*epoche*” which encourages us to bracket our own faiths if we are to understand the religious life of other persons in the context of a phenomenological study of religion.⁴¹ In no absolute way can we effect such a bracketing or distancing. A better approach suggests the value of openly engaging with the faith of other persons through our own personal

³⁸Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, 305.

³⁹Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, 8.

⁴⁰Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, 71-72.

⁴¹Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, 41.

faith if there is to be any kind of mutual critical growth. In Panikkar's understanding of this methodological approach, one finds a point of connection with how Lonergan criticizes the rule of "epoche" in the arguments which he gives for the necessity of self-appropriation if, from the viewpoint of one's religious knowing, one is to work and live in a multi-religious context that is open to encounters with others which can be mutually beneficial.

5. Conclusion

For both Lonergan and Panikkar, faith does not exist as some kind of "add on" which is joined to our human being and living when human beings decide that this and not that is what they should do and be in their lives. Faith does not exist as an intellectual object or content as does belief which can be understood or which could be possibly apprehended as the term of a human act of understanding. In contrast, faith refers to something that exists prior to understanding. It exists as a kind of self-transcending question, inclination or desire which is rooted in how we exist as human beings. It cannot fully be spoken about through any means of expression. Yet, the most important thing about it is that it is ceaselessly present in our humanity. It distinguishes what it means to be human apart from every other kind of being and it refers to a self-transcending capacity which is basic with respect to what it means fully to be a human subject.