

In the study of the history of Western thought, the received wisdom is that René Descartes set thought on a new trajectory and, together with Bacon and Hobbes, inaugurated the so-called modern age. With the Cartesian turn, certain basic tenets were enshrined as axiomatic principles for all future thought: that the real is properly divided into *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, and that the human being is most properly conceived as a purely intellectual subject. I contend that these tenets have continued to exert a remarkable influence on Western thought; I contend, also, that Bernard Lonergan and Martin Heidegger are among those who have most fully broken out of the characteristically modern mold, and most successfully called into question its basic presuppositions. Both, for one, are deeply concerned with the question of man's pre-conceptual mode of access to what might be labelled, in more conventional terminology, "extra-mental reality." Both, moreover, seek to undermine the modern conceit that the subject can be understood wholly apart from its world, that this subject can be understood as a pure intellect, and that this world can be understood as a collection of mutually indifferent objects. It is my contention that both Lonergan and Heidegger are engaged in a critical response to the problematic set by modern, post-Cartesian philosophy, and this can be illustrated by attending to the difference between their respective conceptions of being. For Heidegger, being is at the beginning, as the imperfectly disclosed, that which is always revealed and concealed; for Lonergan, it is the terminus, the goal of knowing, that intended by all-inclusive notion. It is, finally, this directional difference in how being is to be conceived that accounts for the distinction between Heidegger and Lonergan, in regards to Heidegger's emphasis on *aletheic* truth, and Lonergan's greater emphasis on the truth of judgment which for Heidegger is always derivative and secondary.

First, let us say a word about the ways in which both Lonergan and Heidegger seek to undermine characteristically modern presuppositions. For both the first “home” of human consciousness is a field of significance and meaning; for both, knowing is a *particular* way of having access to “extramental” reality; for both the prototypically modern formulation of a hard subject/object distinction is inadequate to the fundamental questions; and in the thought of both, there is an attempt to give an account of the human person’s basic mode of access to reality, which cannot be conceived as an intellectual beholding. Now, of course, Heidegger’s approach is phenomenological; and while Lonergan is certainly indebted to phenomenology, he is also not shy about indicating just what he takes its weaknesses to be—for phenomenology is incapable of moving beyond the relation of things to us, and prescind from the question of things in their relations to one another. And while Heidegger as a young man took an interest in cognitional theory,¹ none of his mature works demonstrate much concern with anything like gnoseology or epistemology, nor with a theory of objectivity. His concern is rather with pre-conceptual revealing, with *aletheic* truth—and for this reason, a Lonerganian might accuse him of mistaking knowing for “taking a look.”²

But let us shift to a brief discussion of the characteristic philosophic positions of each thinker. First, Heidegger. For Heidegger, man’s basic mode of comportment toward reality is Being-in-the-world. The human individual does not encounter an indifferent collection of abstract and unrelated qualities, as in the modern conception, but rather a world of significant things, of meaningful reference points with pre-given significances; the interpretation of the world is always already in place, formulated in its average everydayness by the “they,” *das Man*, the anonymous

¹ David Farrell Krell, “General Introduction: The Question of Being,” in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 9-10.

² Cf., Lonergan, *Insight*, 396.

everybody and nobody that determines, proximally and for the most part, our basic understanding of how to navigate the world.³ The human individual, Dasein, the one who is there where being reveals itself, belongs concernfully to a world that is pre-invested with a significance that the individual has neither chosen nor made.

Because Dasein exists in a world of pre-formulated significations, meanings, and associations, its access to beings is pre-determined by the specific character of the world into which it is thrown; and this relation to the world is characterized by three modes of “fallenness:” idle chatter, curiosity, and ambiguity. In *idle chatter*, we talk about beings without having any authentic access to them, and allow this “average intelligibility” to determine our understanding of matters; *curiosity* refers to man’s proclivity to be fascinated now by this, now by that, new attraction, without taking the time to linger with the thing and understand it; and *ambiguity* refers to our state of uncertainty with regard to whether we actually have genuine understanding.⁴ Thrown into a world that is already interpreted for us, and interpreted for the most part in terms of idle chatter, curiosity, and ambiguity we find ourselves at a distance from beings *as they reveal themselves*, and instead deal only with beings as pre-interpreted by anonymous social forces.⁵ All this is certainly a far cry from Descartes’ conception of the human being as an intellectual substance amidst a multiplicity of extended things.

But if in Heidegger we detect an almost revolutionary rejection of even the terminological baggage of modern thought, in Lonergan we detect a somewhat more subtle destabilization of the

³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 52-60, 66-72, 188-191.

⁴ This treatment is necessarily cursory; for a fuller treatment, see my “Death and the Untimeliness of Philosophy: The Place of the Philosopher in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*,” *Existentialia* 23, no. 3-4 (2013), 327-32.

⁵ Cf., Martin Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?,” trans. David Farrell Krell, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 93-6: Science, in contrast to everyday fallenness, is characterized by an attending to beings themselves, breaking beings open so that they reveal themselves as they are, and in so doing, bringing them to themselves.

basic modern presuppositions. Lonergan, unlike Heidegger, does not begin with a re-consideration of the “world” in which we find ourselves, but with a dramatic instance of insight, the sudden flash of understanding: Archimedes, in the baths at Syracuse, suddenly discovers how he can determine whether Hiero’s crown is really made wholly of gold.⁶ What has happened, in this dramatic instance? Archimedes has had an insight, that flash of understanding, that “distinct activity of organizing intelligence that places the full set of clues in a unique explanatory perspective.”⁷ Understanding, as illustrated by this example, is patently *not* a matter of taking a look, of an intellectual substance’s confrontation with a world of extended objects. On the contrary, all the clues were present to Archimedes, but it took that “distinct activity of organizing intelligence” to grasp the intelligibility immanent in the data. It is from this rather simple dramatic instance that Lonergan begins to build his cognitional theory, on which foundation he is able to develop a philosophy of common sense and of science and of being that escapes from and undermines the prototypically modern interpretations of man and his world.

The key to everything Lonergan achieves in *Insight* is the recurrent structure of intellectual operations aimed at explaining how human beings come to have knowledge of the world around them. This recurrent structure is threefold;⁸ first, there are the sensory or imaginary presentations, the data to be understood; second, there is the insight, the flash of understanding, that grasps the intelligibility immanent in this data; third, there is reflection or judgment, the “yes” or “no” in response to the question posed regarding the intelligibility put forth by insight: “Is it so?” These three levels can be succinctly referred to as presentation, intelligence, and reflection.⁹ Knowledge

⁶ Lonergan, *Insight*, 27-8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸ Lonergan adds a fourth level—reflective self-consciousness—to account for the ethical dimension of human life, but this dimension need not concern us here, and so we prescind from it entirely.

⁹ Lonergan, *Insight*, 346-9..

proper is only attained through the reflective judgment that something is the case—for insight, though essential to knowledge, can be correct or incorrect, and it is only judgment that completes the process of coming to know. Judgment, in turn, follows upon a grasp of the virtually unconditioned: proposition x is true if conditions a , b , and c are met; but a , b , and c are met; therefore proposition x is true; x has conditions, but they are fulfilled. Insight grasps a potential solution to the problem set by the data; judgment is the “yes” or “no” in response to the question “Is x so?” based upon a grasp of whether the conditions for x being so are met.

Now, of course, to determine that some condition is met requires a further judgment; and, in the sciences, this judgment will itself require a return to the sensory or imaginative presentations for the purposes of verification. It might seem that, accordingly, judgment would be impossible—for the set of conditions will spread out into a vast web, and it will be impossible to pass judgment on each condition, for each such judgment will have its own set of conditions. Lonergan circumvents this objection by an appeal to the canon of relevance,¹⁰ as well as to the progressive character of human knowing; on the one hand, any concrete judgment must focus on the immediately relevant and prescind from the multitude of tangentially relevant or irrelevant considerations, and on the other, it is to be acknowledged that human knowing is susceptible to revision, to more adequate and accurate formulation, to ever greater approximation to things as they are in themselves.¹¹ At the same time, even in passing such a judgment, I can concede that the formulation arrived at is susceptible to revision. And yet, what is revision? It is the discovery that some formulation could better fit the facts; but to revise is to investigate the presentations, to have a more adequate insight, and to affirm this insight as correct. The revisability of our

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 366-71.

¹¹ Cf., by way of contrast, Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 12-13, 20-22.

formulations, of our bodies of knowledge, is itself an indication of the recurrent pattern of intellectual operations to which Lonergan has drawn attention. As Robert Wood has frequently put it, “Everything is revisable except for the conditions for the possibility of revision.”

But if the turn to judgment is a reflective turn back to the givens of experience, then does not Lonergan fall into the Cartesian trap, of how to know that one’s experiences are, in fact, trustworthy and truly representative of things “out there?” Rather, let us ask, might there not be some place, here, for Heidegger’s concern with the way in which beings reveal themselves and step forth into the light of day prior to all conceptualization, formulation, and judgment? On this note, let us consider Lonergan’s “patterns of experience.” As Lonergan points out, it is a very abstract thing to speak of a mere “sensation.” We do not sense stimuli in an indifferent manner, but rather our attention is always pre-consciously focused on certain sectors of our experience—or, in other terms, we are not indifferently placed within a collection of extended objects, but meaningfully situated in a sense-making context of significant things. Lonergan discerns four patterns of experience in *Insight*: the biological, geared toward biological flourishing, in which what appears does so under the aspect of biological advantage or disadvantage—predator or prey, offspring or mate, and the like; the aesthetic, in which an experience is enjoyed for its own sake; the intellectual, in which attention is automatically focused upon the relevant in data to the exclusion of the irrelevant, in which every faculty is attuned to the furthering of the inquiry; and finally the dramatic, the pattern in which events and occurrences appear as moments in the overarching narrative of human living.¹² For Lonergan, beings do not merely *show up* in our field of awareness; rather, their mode of appearing—or, indeed, of not appearing, if they are deemed irrelevant¹³—is determined at least in part by the pre-reflective focusing of our attention in these

¹² Lonergan, *Insight*, 210-20.

¹³ In a manner compared by Lonergan to Freud’s “censor.”

various patterns of experience. If Heidegger's focus is upon the way in which beings show themselves forth and step forth from out of concealment, then Lonergan's would seem to be upon the way in which the conative orientation of the subject determines the aspect under which beings will appear.

Next, we must consider Lonergan's distinction between a body and a thing, for it is here that Lonergan makes the distinction between a more rudimentary knowing and what he calls "fully human knowing."¹⁴ A body, says Lonergan, is an "already out there now real"—or, to explicate, something that shows up in the biological pattern of animal extroversion, is present, and is "real" in the sense of satisfying biological needs.¹⁵ A thing, on the other hand, is a unity-identity-whole grasped in data by intelligence, "conceived as extended in space, permanent in time, and yet subject to change." A thing is understood to persist across time, despite "some difference between the aggregate of data at one instant and the aggregate of data on the same unity at another instant."¹⁶ A "thing," in other words, is an intelligible unity grasped in data at the level of intelligence, and affirmed at the level of reflection; our very comportment toward the world is shot-through with intelligence. It is for precisely this reason that the confusion of "things" and "bodies" can arise. When Descartes takes extension to be one with the substantiality of substances, he is guilty of precisely this confusion. It is not, that is, their being-extended that makes things to be things; rather, a thing is a thing by virtue of its being an intelligible unity-identity-whole in data.

Finally, we must say a word on the Lonerganian notion of being. For Lonergan, being is the objective correlate of the pure, unrestricted desire to know—that drive in the human person that seeks complete knowledge, which remains unsatisfied with partial answers and resists

¹⁴ Lonergan, *Insight*, 277.

¹⁵ Lonergan, *Insight*, 271.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

obscurantism. Being is whatever is to be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation.¹⁷ What is to be known through judgment is being, and being is whatever is the case. And precisely because being is to be known not *only* by intelligent grasp, but *also* by reasonable affirmation—that is to say, by true judgment—it must be realized that knowledge of being cannot simply be “given” at the level of sensory presentations, but is rather attained in the reflective judgment. But Lonergan does not, therefore, take the human being to be a purely intellectual substance; rather, the human being is a biological-aesthetic-dramatic-intellectual compound-in-tension, given over to concrete situations and concrete questions upon which its always-situated intelligence can go to work.

Truth and Comportment

If being is the correlate of knowing, and knowledge is what is achieved in the reflective judgment, then to know being is to affirm, by means of judgment, that some insight is in fact the case, or that some “thing,” understood as a unity-identity-whole in data, does in fact exist. This judgment is the reasonable affirmation of being. In short, being is what is to be known through the threefold cognitional structure worked out by Lonergan, and so all knowables can be known, through heuristic anticipation, to have a structure at least partly proportionate to human knowing.

With the foregoing in mind, we must explore the notion of truth. For if it seems that, for Lonergan, being is bound up with the truth of judgments—such that being could be said to correspond to the totality of true judgments—then it is certainly the case that, for Heidegger, truth is regarded as pre-conceptual, and *a fortiori* as prior to judgment. How can these two views be reconciled? How, to put the matter more starkly, can they even be brought into dialogue? Now, for Lonergan, “knowing is true by its relation to being, and truth is a relation of knowing to

¹⁷ Ibid., 416.

being.”¹⁸ A judgment is true insofar as it constitutes a relation of knowing to being, insofar as the understanding reached by the organizing intelligence that grasps the intelligibility immanent in data corresponds to what is the case.¹⁹ Truth, then, requires at least two elements: an understanding of some data, and the judgment that such an understanding in fact corresponds to the data. Accordingly, to know something is a matter of a pattern of intellectual operations quite distinct from simply *taking a look* or intellectual beholding. One does not know being by looking, and looking, therefore, does not reveal truth—even if the presentations are required for the formulation of the insight and its subsequent verification.

For Heidegger, on the other hand, the correctness of propositions, and therefore of judgments, is but secondary, and is derivative of a more primordial showing or revealing—truth conceived as ἀλήθεια, as un-concealment. He writes: “What is to be demonstrated is not an agreement of knowing with its object, still less of the psychical with the physical; but neither is it an agreement between ‘contents of consciousness’ among themselves. What is to be demonstrated is solely the Being-uncovered of the entity itself—that entity in the ‘how’ of its uncoveredness.”²⁰ Anything like a propositional truth can only have its validity on the basis of a more originary manifesting by the being in question. But it is this primordial self-showing, this stepping forth from concealment into the light of day, that is the essence of truth. A “presentative statement,” one which aims to make known how some things *are* in their very being, arises out of a fundamental comportment that “adheres to something opened up;” the comportment which makes possible the presentative statement “stands open to beings,” to the unconcealment that Heidegger names

¹⁸ Lonergan, *Insight*, 575.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 526.

²⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 218-19.

“truth.”²¹ The comportment is always prior to the statement, but both are subject in their own ways to the threat of falling.

It is this notion of comportment as relatedness to being that will serve as the focal point of our comparison of Lonergan and Heidegger, and which will open the way to our argument for their complementarity. How is man related to being? Heidegger writes:

Comportment stands open to beings. Every open relatedness is a comportment. Man’s open stance varies depending on the kind of beings and the way of comportment. All working and achieving, all action and calculation, keep within an open region within which beings, with regard to what they are and how they are, can properly take their stand and become capable of being said.²²

Prior to every “presentative statement” and at the foundation of its possible correctness or incorrectness is man’s openness or relatedness to being, his existence as the luminous place within being where being is opened up to itself.²³ But this “comportment” is not uniform, but polymorphous; there are different modes of openness to being, different ways in which beings are allowed to show themselves. Now, Lonergan writes that “all insight arises from sensitive or imaginative presentations, and ... the relevant presentations are simply the various elements in the experience that is organized by the pattern.”²⁴ For Lonergan, as we already saw, it is a pattern of experience that determines the way in which beings show up. These patterns of experience can be understood, in more Heideggerian terms, as related to the various modes of man’s openness toward

²¹ Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” trans. John Sallis, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 121-2.

²² Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” 122.

²³ Karl Rahner, bringing Heideggerian thought to bear upon Catholic theology, refers to this “place within being where being shows up” as the “luminosity of being.” This is significant in that Lonergan and Rahner, though quite distinct in their approaches to philosophy, are both fairly important figures in Catholic thought’s confrontation with modern philosophy, and are—to my mind—paradigmatic of different but valuable approaches to the Catholic appropriation of modern philosophy (and here Rahner is especially helpful) and modern science (which is where Lonergan shines). Cf. Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Continuum, 1994), 23-34.

²⁴ Lonergan, *Insight*, 205.

being. All such questions of modalities of access to the real go unraised in Descartes' thought, and experience or intuition remains an unclarified sort of "having" of extramental objects.

In all these particulars, Lonergan and Heidegger seek to undermine a number of archetypically modern philosophical positions. But we can also see something of this critique through a consideration of Lonergan and Heidegger's philosophical differences: Why, for instance, is Lonergan's focus on patterns of experience, on insight and judgment, and Heidegger's on fallenness, on the forgetfulness of being, and on authenticity? Let us look to Lonergan's words from the Boston College lectures on phenomenology for a clue: "[I]n Husserl and still more pronouncedly in Heidegger ... the concentration of attention is on the *pre-predicative*, the preconceptual. They are concerned with the man who is the source of the concept, the man who is the source of the judgment. They are concerned with foundations, with the ground, with the origin, with the source."²⁵ But, one might object, was it not indicated earlier that insight, too, is a preconceptual occurrence, that the insight is the momentary flash of understanding that only later issues in concepts and formulations and propositions? To be sure. But Lonergan is not *aiming* at the preconceptual—for his project is to explain the structures of cognitive process that *allow for* concept formation. So while insight, the central act of cognitive process, is preconceptual, certainly the whole aim of *Insight* as a work is at an explanation of fully human knowing, and fully human knowing involves concepts. Lonergan's interest is knowledge as a goal. For Heidegger, on the other hand, the emphasis—as Lonergan has noted—is on the ground, the origin, from which anything like knowledge can spring. And so Heidegger's focus can be said to be preconceptual in a way quite distinct from Lonergan: while Lonergan is interested in the preconceptual act that is the turning point from experience to knowledge, his movement is always *toward* knowledge—

²⁵ Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 225.

whereas Heidegger is interested in digging deeper and deeper into the preconceptual itself, into that primordial openness which first gives us access to beings.

This is a difference in directional emphasis between the two thinkers. Lonergan, drawing attention to insight as the preconceptual act that pivots between experience and knowledge, moves beyond and away from the preconceptual, in the direction of the fully human knowing that occurs only in judgment. Heidegger, on the other hand, does not aim to leave the preconceptual behind, but to elucidate in full detail the structures of our preconceptual access to reality, whereby being is allowed to reveal itself.²⁶ For even Lonergan acknowledges that insight and judgment are dependent upon presentations; and if these presentations are organized into patterns by a pre-reflecting conative directing, then Heidegger's project—elucidating and unearthing the structures whereby Dasein is granted and prevented access to beings—might well be a valid one, albeit one of a different order than what Lonergan accomplishes in *Insight*.

This difference in directional emphasis shows itself, also, in how Lonergan and Heidegger speak of being. For Lonergan, as mentioned, being is the objective correlate of the unrestricted desire to know. As such, being is always that toward which knowledge is moving. For Heidegger, on the other hand, being is that which is always both concealed and revealed in Dasein's encounter with beings; it is what is encountered in the realization of the disturbing and mysterious fact that there is something rather than nothing; it is that from which we fall away in our everyday inauthenticity.²⁷ For both—and though for each, it may mean something quite different—being is totalizing and all-encompassing and absolutely unrestricted.

²⁶ While I am not of the persuasion that Heidegger ought to be treated more as a psychologist than a philosopher, it would be a worthy philosophical pursuit to see to just what extent *Being and Time* might be treated as the fullest possible expansion of Lonergan's discussion of the psychological factors that prevent insight in chapters six and seven of *Insight*.

²⁷ Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?", 106-110; *Being and Time*, 8-12.

By way of a conclusion, I would like to indicate one further area in which I think the dialogue between Lonergan and Heidegger can be particularly fruitful, namely, a philosophical anthropology that moves beyond the anthropological presuppositions of modern thought. Both Lonergan and Heidegger, in their own ways, have emphasized the necessity of questioning the human being or Dasein who stands at the center of every investigation—Heidegger by indicating that the being who questions is implicated in the question of being, Lonergan by showing that an understanding of understanding is the ground of a “generalized empirical method”²⁸ that will foster the rational development of the various disciplines. In other words, while neither Heidegger nor Lonergan claims to be doing a philosophical anthropology, each has in his own way laid the foundations for such an anthropology, which can serve as the basis for a philosophy of science, an ethics, a metaphysics, a theology. And why, it might be asked, should philosophical anthropology be the basis of these various disciplines? Do not the disciplines have their own autonomy, their own completeness? I contend that both Heidegger and Lonergan would answer, *Yes and no*. On the one hand, each discipline, each science, has its own “method” and its own “rigor,” its own field of investigation and thus an autonomy of its own.²⁹ On the other, the various disciplines all intend subdivisions of being, and to be understood fully and in their grounds, must be understood as having a place within the whole of human knowing.³⁰ The unifying center of all investigations, scientific, metaphysical, ethical, theological, is the *questioning human person*, characterized on the one hand by the pure, unrestricted desire to know and on the other by fallenness and the forgetfulness of being. Both Lonergan and Heidegger, despite their vast differences of emphasis and approach, have very, very much to contribute to any adequate understanding of what it means

²⁸ Lonergan, *Insight*, 95-6.

²⁹ Cf., Lonergan, *Insight*, 295, 509-11, 660; Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?”, 93-5.

³⁰ Cf., Lonergan, *Insight*, 464-7, 508; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 8-11.

to be human. By putting the two of them into dialogue, we can begin to work out the rough outlines of what a philosophical anthropology might look like, which, on the one hand, takes seriously the intellectual aspect of man, his desire to understand and his capacity for intellectual growth and development, and which, on the other, gives due weight to the existential aspect of man, with his anxiety, his sense of homelessness, and his historicity all intact. Man is, as Lonergan puts it, a “compound-in-tension,” and the pull between the intellectual and the existential poles of human life is inevitable—for man, to use a Voegelinian term, is caught in the *metaxy*.³¹ But by putting Lonergan and Heidegger into dialogue, this tension can be brought to the fore, instead of being minimized in one direction or the other, by denying either man’s directedness toward complete knowledge or his strandedness in a world in which he can never feel fully at home.

³¹ Lonergan, *Insight*, 266; Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Volume IV: The Ecumenic Age* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 408.