

Lonerger's Late Writings

Opening Lecture: Intro to Course, 'Insight Revisited'

Corresponds to PCD 06-LLW 1A and PCD 06-LLW 1B

In the first chapter of *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, I suggested that the intellectual development of Bernard Lonergan, particularly with respect to his position on the subject, could be traced through four stages. In the first stage, which reaches down through the publication of *Insight* in 1957, the focus is on the position on knowing. In the second stage, feelings, moral self-transcendence, a scale of values, judgments of value, decision, and conversion are given a prominence that in *Insight* they did not enjoy. This stage might conveniently be assumed to extend through the publication in 1972 of *Method in Theology*. A third stage emphasizes the increasing centrality of love. I call it 'third' only because it is only after *Method in Theology* that Lonergan links the emphasis on the gift of God's love, which certainly was already present in *Method*, with a fifth level of consciousness. And finally, there is the stage that I called 'Healing and Creating,' a stage that highlights movements not only from below in human consciousness but also, and more radically, movements from above.

The outline is sketchy, but it will do. No doubt further distinctions may be added. For example, the first stage, concerned with intellectual operations, might be divided into Scholastic, modern-scientific, and hermeneutical phases. These further distinctions are important in many ways. But it is with what I am here calling the third and fourth stages that we will be primarily concerned in this course: the stage in which love becomes prominent, more prominent even than understanding; and the stage in which love's movement is highlighted as inverse to that which seeks correct understanding.

None of the subsequent stages represents an about-face, a repudiation of the principal achievements of the earlier phase or phases. Advance, sometimes correction, yes; but not a dialectical reversal of the major affirmations of what preceded. If there is a *Kehre* in Lonergan's intellectual development – and I think there is – it does not entail a repudiation of what went before. It is basically the turning from the way upward to the way downward. It affects everything, but it does not overturn anything achieved in the basic positions of the earlier work. It pushes these basic positions to their radical conclusions, and raises the question of their ultimate conditions of possibility. But it does not go back on them in the least.

More recently, I have considered the period that we are going to be studying as containing three characteristics. First, Lonergan becomes a more radical thinker. Second, for the first time in his work love takes precedence over understanding. And third, there is a turning to community as both the context and the fruit of the emergence of the authentic subject.

Another way of characterizing this period is from a musical analogy. People who are familiar with the work of Beethoven have commented that in his late quartets it all comes together in a new register, with a new sophistication and subtlety and nuance. Well, the same might be said of Lonergan's thought: all of the previous emphases and discoveries now take form in a new register, and with a new sophistication, a new subtlety of rhetorical expression, new nuances glimpsed in diverse papers.

No doubt there are other ways of characterizing the writings we will be reading together. You will find your own, and they may be every bit as valid as the characterizations I am suggesting. But it is time to begin.

The writings in question are thirty in number. With the exception of one, 'Insight Revisited,' they can be found in two books, *A Third Collection* and *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980* (vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, here called *CWL 17*). 'Insight Revisited' was published in *A Second Collection* and is reproduced for you as a single item, in fact the first that we will investigate. It will give us some indication of just where Lonergan's mind was at the beginning of the period we are investigating, where he had

changed his mind, what new influences he would acknowledge, what new formulations of his position he might be entertaining.

The thirty items, arranged by the year in which the piece would seem to have been written, are the following:

1972

- '*Insight* Revisited'
- 'Philosophy of God'
- 'The Functional Specialty "Systematics"'
- 'Philosophy of God and the Functional Specialty "Systematics"'

1973

- 'A New Pastoral Theology'
- 'Variations in Fundamental Theology'
- 'Sacralization and Secularization'
- 'The Scope of Renewal'

1974

- 'Dialectic of Authority'
- 'Method: Trend and Variations'
- 'Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation'
- 'Moral Theology and the Human Sciences'
- 'Self-transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious'

1975

- 'Mission and the Spirit'
- 'Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time'
- 'Christology Today: Methodological Reflections'
- 'Healing and Creating in History'

1976

- 'Religious Experience'
- 'Religious Knowledge'
- 'The Ongoing Genesis of Methods'
- 'The Human Good'

1977

- 'Natural Right and Historical Mindedness'
- 'Theology and Praxis'
- 'Questionnaire on Philosophy'

1978

- 'Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon'

1979

- 'Horizons and Transpositions'

1980

- 'A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion'

1981

- 'Pope John's Intention'
- 'Reality, Myth, Symbol'

1982

- 'Unity and Plurality: The Coherence of Christian Truth'

Now for the sake of putting some order into this array, I suggest that we read these thirty papers chronologically. Moreover, greater order can be introduced if we realize that

- The last three of the 1972 papers are part of a set of lectures on ‘Philosophy of God, and Theology’ and so should be studied together
- The four 1973 papers are a set of lectures on ‘Revolution in Catholic Theology?’ and so, again, should be studied together
- The first three 1976 papers are a set of lectures on ‘Religious Studies and Theology’ and so, again, will be studied together.

Thus I suggest the following breakdown of the papers:

January 5: *Insight Revisited*

January 12: ‘Philosophy of God,’ ‘The Functional Specialty “Systematics,”’ ‘Philosophy of God and the Functional Specialty “Systematics”’ (CWL 17: 159-218)

January 19: ‘A New Pastoral Theology,’ ‘Variations in Fundamental Theology,’ ‘Sacralization and Secularization,’ ‘The Scope of Renewal’ (CWL 17: 221-98)

January 26: ‘Dialectic of Authority,’ ‘Method: Trend and Variations,’ ‘Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation’ (*A Third Collection* 5-22, 35-53)

February 2: ‘Moral Theology and the Human Sciences,’ ‘Self-transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious’ (CWL 17: 301-31), ‘Mission and the Spirit’ (*A Third Collection* 23-34)

February 9: ‘Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time,’ ‘Christology Today: Methodological Reflections,’ ‘Healing and Creating in History’ (*A Third Collection* 55-109)

February 16: ‘Religious Experience,’ ‘Religious Knowledge,’ ‘The Ongoing Genesis of Methods’ (*A Third Collection* 113-65)

March 2: ‘The Human Good’ (CWL 17 332-51), ‘Natural Right and Historical Mindedness’ (*A Third Collection* 169-83)

March 9: ‘Theology and Praxis’ (*A Third Collection* 184-201), ‘Questionnaire on Philosophy’ (CWL 17: 352-83)

March 16: ‘Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon’ (CWL 17: 391-408)

March 23: ‘Horizons and Transpositions’ (CWL 17: 409-32), ‘A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion’ (*A Third Collection*) 202-23

March 30: ‘Pope John’s Intention’ (*A Third Collection*) 224-38, ‘Reality, Myth, Symbol’ (CWL 17: 385-90), ‘Unity and Plurality: The Coherence of Christian Truth’ (*A Third Collection* 239-50)

April 6: Final wrap-up

‘*Insight Revisited*’

In this paper Lonergan provides us with a brief overview of what I am calling the first stage in his intellectual development, the cognitional stage, and with an indication of a movement from the first to the second. Thus it gives us a good background for the further stages that we will be studying for the remainder of the course. The copyright on the autograph of the paper is 1972, but the paper was actually delivered at the Jesuit Philosophical Association on April 3, 1973.

The paper begins with a background account of factors that influenced the writing of *Insight*. In his philosophical studies at Heythrop from 1926 to 1929, Lonergan was presented with a philosophy that was what he would later characterize as conceptualist and essentialist rather than intellectualist and existentialist. And he reacted quite strongly against such a philosophy, preferring to consider himself a nominalist rather than according to universal concepts the role they played in this philosophy. By ‘nominalism’ he means a philosophical doctrine according to which all universal or abstract terms are mere necessities of thought or conveniences of language and therefore exist as names only and have no general realities corresponding to them. In papers that he wrote during these years – very difficult papers indeed – we can see him already struggling to articulate what later would become insight into image. But he is not quite there, and this is what was lacking from his philosophical training at this time. So much of the development of the great philosophers is influenced by their realization of what is lacking in the philosophy they are being taught. For Lonergan this was insight, understanding; and for years it would govern his own thought as the central operation that ties everything else together. His great discovery during these years was Newman, especially *Grammar of Assent*. As Lonergan says on p. 263, Newman’s ‘illative sense became my reflective act of understanding.’ But there is still missing a notion of the direct understanding that mediates between sensory and imaginative experience and concepts.

In the early 1930s, while he was teaching at Loyola College, Montreal, there were several important discoveries. Christopher Dawson’s *The Age of the Gods*, he says, ‘introduced me to the anthropological notion of culture and so began the correction of my hitherto normative or classicist notion.’ And J.A. Stewart’s *Plato’s Doctrine of Ideas* ‘contained much that later I was to work out for myself in a somewhat different context, but at that time it was a great release’ (264). Why? He discovered that his nominalism had been an opposition, not to intelligence or understanding, but to the central role ascribed to universal concepts. The distinction of understanding and concept is made, and it will be essential to his development. ‘From Stewart I learnt that Plato was a methodologist, that his ideas were what the scientist seeks to discover, that the scientific or philosophic process towards discovery was one of question and answer’ (264). He began reading Plato’s early dialogues and then Augustine’s early dialogues. ‘Augustine was so concerned with understanding, so unmindful of universal concepts, that I began a long period of trying to write an intelligible account of my convictions’ (265). (It is not impossible that some fragments in the archives are from that account.)

So we have something emerging: understanding mediating between presentations and concepts, and something like Newman's illative sense leading to assent. The elements of assent or judgment became much clearer to him when he was studying theology in Rome. 265: 'It was through [Stefanos] Stefanu [who had studied under Joseph Maréchal in Louvain] by some process of osmosis ... that I learnt to speak of human knowledge as not intuitive but discursive with the decisive component in judgment. This view was confirmed by my familiarity with Augustine's key notion, *veritas*, and the whole was rounded out by Bernard Leeming's course on the Incarnate Word, which convinced me that there could not be a hypostatic union without a real distinction between essence and existence.' The very first item in the Lonergan archives states this conclusion that Lonergan came to: 'Exsistentia non est perfectio quod sed quo – unde Christus sine exsistentia humana est verus homo – est verus homo ratione essentiae humanae – existit exsistentia Verbi.' Lonergan concludes in '*Insight Revisited*,' 'This, of course, was all the more acceptable, since Aquinas's *esse* corresponded to Augustine's *veritas* and both harmonized with Maréchal's view of judgment.' And, we might add, all of it is compatible with Newman on illative sense and assent. In a germinal form, then, by 1937 or 1938, we have the bare outlines of what would soon become 'experience – understanding – judgment.'

There follows the biennium in theology at the Gregorian University, with the doctoral dissertation on operative grace in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. After publishing a revised version of this in *Theological Studies* in 1941 and 1942, Lonergan turned in 1943 to 'collecting materials for an account of Aquinas' views on understanding and the inner word,' that is the articles on *verbum*. 'Their basic point was that Aquinas attributed the key role in cognitional theory not to inner words, concepts, but to acts of understanding ... what Aristotle and Aquinas held was that intellect abstracted from phantasm a preconceptual form or species of *quod quid erat esse* [formal cause, intelligibility], whence both terms and nexus were inwardly spoken.' The preconceptual form or species corresponds to what in more contemporary language is the idea, the content of an act of understanding. From it the conceptual formulation is inwardly spoken.

Lonergan began working on *Insight* after finishing the *verbum* articles. The article now begins to talk about the book itself, rather than its background in his own intellectual development. 268-69: 'The problem tackled in the book was complex indeed. At its root was a question of psychological fact. Human intellect does not intuit essences. It grasps in simplifying images intelligible possibilities that may prove relevant to an understanding of the data. However, naïve realists cannot remain naïve realists and at the same time acknowledge the psychological facts. For them knowing is a matter of taking a good look; objectivity is a matter of seeing just what is there to be seen. For them my account of human understanding would appear to present intelligence as merely subjective and so imply an empiricism and, if they managed to get beyond empiricism, they would find themselves mere idealists. Accordingly, besides convincing people of the precise manner in which human understanding operates and develops, I also had to persuade them to drop intuitionist assumptions and come to understand the discursive character of human knowledge. Besides the world of immediacy alone known to the infant, there is also the world mediated by meaning into which the infant gradually

moves. The former is Kant's world in which our only intuitions are sensitive. The latter is the world of a critical realism in which the objects are intended when we ask questions and are known when the questions are answered correctly.'

So what he had to do was to 'help people experience themselves understanding, advert to the experience, distinguish it from other experiences, name and identify it, and recognize it when it recurs' (269). This aim 'is parallel to Carl Rogers' aim of inducing his clients to advert to the feelings that they experience but do not advert to, distinguish, name, identify, recognize' (269).

He begins *Insight* with mathematics, he says here (several reasons are given in *Insight* itself), because 'it is in mathematics that the content and context of an insight are more clearly and precisely defined.' But also – and this formulation is different from any that he gives in *Insight* when listing his reasons for so beginning – 'it is in mathematics that one has the clearest proof of the existence of preconceptual operations on the intellectual level' (269). This is the significance of his frequently repeated comment to the effect that 'Euclidean proofs frequently rest on valid but unacknowledged insights. Contemporary mathematicians employ highly formalized methods to avoid the use of insights that are not explicitly formulated, for what is not explicitly formulated is not subject to control' (269). '... while mathematical formulations rest on insights, and while the insights rest on diagrams and other symbols, still this process can remain implicit, with explicit attention concentrated on rigorously logical formulation and proof' (270). (This is why Eric O'Connor was having difficulty teaching mathematics – see 268 – and why Lonergan's suggestion work, 'that he concentrate on communicating to his students the relevant insights and that on this basis the students would be able to figure out the formalizations for themselves' (268).

Insight in the natural sciences are in a context of ongoing process, and so in chapters 2 to 5 he discusses such things as ongoing structures of discovery, canons of empirical method, the complementarity of classical and statistical heuristic structures, and the meaning of special relativity.

Commonsense insight occurs in the realm of the particular and the concrete. It is in this realm that bias distorts intelligence, and in this article Lonergan points first to two works that confirm the surmises he expressed in *Insight* on the bias of the dynamic unconscious, namely, Herbert Fingarette's *The Self in Transformation* and Eugene Gendlin's 'A Theory of Personality Change.' Chapters 6 and 7 are also put into the context of Lonergan's notion of the dialectic of history. History is presented in terms of three approximations: (1) if humans always did what was intelligent and reasonable, the implications would be an ever increasing progress; (2) but human beings can be biased, and so unintelligent and unreasonable in their choices and decisions; (c) there is a redemptive process resulting from God's gift of grace to individuals and God's manifestation of love in Christ Jesus. Thus sundry forms of bias are presented in chapters 6 and 7.

The first seven chapters deal with intelligence insofar as it unifies data by setting up intelligible correlations – what in the metaphysics will come to be known as conjugate forms. But there is also central form, and it is introduced in a pre-metaphysical manner in chapter 8 by discussing the insight in which one grasps a concrete unity-identity-whole in data, a ‘thing.’

From insight the book moves on to judgment, in chapters 9, 10, and 11. 273: ‘Chapter nine endeavors to say what we mean by judgment. Chapter ten investigates the immediate ground of judgment and finds it in a grasp of the virtually unconditioned, a view that was preceded in my thinking by some acquaintance with Newman’s illative sense ... Chapter eleven asks whether any true judgments occur and it attempt to meet the issue by asking whether I am a knower. The “I” is the unity-identity-whole given in consciousness; a “knower” is one who performs the operations investigated in the previous ten chapters; the reader is asked to find out for himself and in himself whether it is virtually unconditioned that he is a knower ... Not only are the “I” and its cognitional operations to be affirmed, but also the pattern in which they occur is acknowledged as invariant, not of course in the sense that further methodical developments are impossible, nor in the sense that fuller and more adequate knowledge of the pattern is unattainable, but in the sense that any attempt to revise the patterns as now known would involve the very operations that the pattern prescribes’ (273).

From self-affirmation he moves to the notion of being. Knowledge of being occurs in true judgments. Concepts of being are objectifications of the notion of being. The idea of being is the content of an unrestricted act of understanding. The notion of being is our ability and drive to ask questions for intelligence and for reflection, an ability and drive that ‘is prior to all acts of understanding and also to all concepts and judgments. As there is no limit to the questions we can ask, the notion of being is unrestricted. Accordingly, it is not categorial but transcendental’ (274).

In *Insight* the only distinction in being itself that seems to be acknowledged is the distinction of proportionate and transcendent being. In either case being is the real. But after *Insight* there is discussion of spheres of being. As he puts it in ‘*Insight Revisited*’ (274), ‘Real being is known when the fulfilling conditions are data of sense or of consciousness. Restricted spheres of being are known when the fulfilling conditions are not data but some lesser requirement: the merely logical is what satisfies criteria of clarity, coherence, and rigor; the mathematical is a freely chosen set of suitable postulates with their conclusions rigorously drawn; the hypothetical is an instance of the logical that has some likelihood of being relevant to an understanding of the data of sense or of consciousness. Finally, there is transcendent being, and to this topic we return in chapter nineteen.’

The same point is put in terms of full terms of meaning in *Method in Theology*. ‘In full acts of meaning [judgments] there occurs the probable or certain determination of the status of the term; one settles whether or not *A* is, or whether or not *A* is *B*.’ Now in this context Lonergan writes: ‘With regard to full terms of meaning one has to distinguish different spheres of being. We say that the moon exists. We also say that there exists the

logarithm of the square root of minus one. In both cases we use the same verb, exist. But we do not mean that the moon is just a conclusion that can be deduced from suitable mathematical postulates, and we do not mean that the logarithm in question can be inspected sailing around the sky. A distinction, accordingly, has to be drawn between a sphere of real being and other restricted spheres such as the mathematical, the hypothetical, the logical, and so on. While these spheres differ enormously from one another, they are not simply disparate. The contents of each sphere are rationally affirmed. The affirmation is rational because it proceeds from an act of reflective understanding in which is grasped the virtually unconditioned, that is, a conditioned whose conditions are fulfilled. But the spheres differ so vastly because the conditions to be fulfilled differ. The fulfilling conditions for affirming real being are appropriate data of sense or consciousness, but the fulfilling condition for proposing an hypothesis is a possible relevance to a correct understanding of data, while the fulfilling conditions for correct mathematical statement do not explicitly include even a possible relevance to data. Finally, beyond restricted spheres and the real sphere there is the transcendent sphere of being; transcendent being is the being that, while known by us through grasping the virtually unconditioned, is itself without any conditions whatever; it is formally unconditioned, absolute.'

From being, the book *Insight* moves to objectivity. 274: '... A and B are objects if it is true that (1) A is, (2) B is, and (3) A is not B. Further, if it is true that A is the subject and B is not the subject, then there occurs an instance of the subject-object relation.' This set of judgments yields the principal notion of objectivity. But there are three partial notions: the experiential, the normative, and the absolute. 275: 'Absolute objectivity is reached with the grasp of a virtually unconditioned. Experiential objectivity is provided by the data as given. Normative objectivity arises when the exigences of one's intelligence and of one's reasonableness are met.' Such clarifications are necessary 'because insights are not intuitions. They are not of themselves knowledge of what really is so. Of themselves they merely grasp what may be relevant to what one is imagining and, if one's imagining is sufficiently accurate, to an understanding of what is so. Now if the intuitionist view of insight is mistaken, some other meaning has to be found for object, objective, objectivity' (274).

The first three chapters on metaphysics (14, 15, and 16) remain valid for Lonergan, but some changes are introduced regarding material presented in chapter 17. He finds unsatisfactory now what there was the notion of 'myth,' which, he says, is 'out of line with current usage.' More fully, 'My contrast of mystery and myth was between symbolic expressions of positions and of counterpositions. It was perhaps justifiable in the context of *Insight*, but it is not going to be understood outside of it, so another mode of expression is desirable. Further, the account of mystery has to be filled out with what chapter four of *Method in Theology* says about religious experience' (275).

Again, he finds less concrete than he would desire the material offered in same chapter regarding the truth of interpretation. Chapter 17 of *Insight* offered 'a systematic account of problems of interpretation.' Chapters 7 through 11 of *Method in Theology* (Interpretation through Foundations) offer a more concrete expression and 'an orderly set

of directions on what is to be done towards moving to the attainment of [the] universal viewpoint.' (275-76).

What is responsible for this difference? On pp. 276-77 he sums up in his own words where he was in 1953, which we can read and comment on. But a new challenge came to him in Rome 'from the *Geisteswissenschaften*, from the problems of hermeneutics and critical history, from the need of integrating nineteenth-century achievement in this field with the teachings of Catholic religion and Catholic theology. It was a long struggle that can be documented from my Latin and English writing during this period and from the doctoral courses I conducted *De intellectu et methodo*, *De systemate et historia*, and eventually *De methodo theologiae*. The eventual outcome has been the book, *Method in Theology*' (277). The period is best studied by Ivo Coelho, *Hermeneutics and Method: The Universal Viewpoint in Bernard Lonergan*.

Changes are indicated as well regarding the notion of the good and the treatment of God's existence and nature. See p. 277. The latter comments lead directly into the material for next week, the lectures 'Philosophy of God, and Theology.'