

DO 273

"The Subject". A Question.

The following seems like an appropriate question. The essay is very complex, and it is probably best to approach it with the idea of XB "basics first" in mind:

"Lonergan in this essay is introducing us to someone new, the subject. In an effort to get to know him better (and this is no easy task--the subject is a newcomer not only to us but to philosophy in general) it may be helpful to answer the following questions in a 1 to 2^{1/2} page essay: Who is the subject? How does he get to be a subject? How does he come to find out that he is a subject, or, better, how ~~does~~ does he come to understand what it means to be a subject? (Cf. p. 79, "The transition from the neglected and truncated subject to self-appropriation is not a simple matter. It is not just a matter of finding out and assenting to a number of true propositions..." Then what is it?)

"Please note that although the essay is longer than usual, and also more complex, you will be doing yourself a favor if you try to keep your paper within the usual suggested length. This will have the effect of helping you to state only what is most basic to the article, its underlying themes, without getting lost in what for beginning students might seem a mass of confusing detail. Be concise! Be precise!"

This question tries to emphasize that the subject is someone and not an abstract something. The subject is most ~~concrete~~ concrete, it is never appropriate to ask what it is, but only who he or she is. The subject is not a concept but a particular individual, a he or a she. He gets to be a subject not by virtue of his existence and ~~suby~~ subsequent classification as this sort of thing, the subject, but in virtue of his CR consciousness and its operations. He gets to be a subject by making himself one through the performance of these ~~CR~~ conscious operations, as they appear on four successive levels of intentionality. The definitive statement of this is on pp. 80f., but the point is echoed throughout the essay. Finally, we get to know what it means to be a subject not by assenting to propositions about some "subject" in abstracto but by adverting to our own selves as conscious, inquiring about the operations that constitute our own consciousness. We come to "explicit awareness" of them (76) ~~x~~ as they ~~CR~~ represent the normative exigences of consciousness, of intelligence and reasonableness, and hence of objectivity. ~~The data of consciousness is the data of consciousness.~~ We pay "close attention to the data of consciousness" (74), ~~judging~~ realizing that concepts have no independent life of their own but are the expressions of an understanding which is directed to a concrete situation in response to a concrete question. We come to know our own inquiring selves as the foundation for all concepts, and this does away with the truncated subject and his inadequate conceptualism. Lonergan notes, "The study of the subject is...the study of oneself inasmuch as one is conscious. It prescind[s] from the soul, its essence, its potencies, its habits, for none of these is given in consciousness. It attends to operations and to their centre and source which is the self. ..." (73).

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It is by such study that the neglected subject is retrieved, and that we ~~fx~~ finally come to understand what it means to be a subject, or, better, who the subject is. From an existential point of view, the first question (above) cannot be answered until the last one is answered--hopefully the most acute students will pick this up, for this is the key to the whole issue, perhaps. The retrieval of the neglected subject is the slow retrieval of our own selves.

Thus, in view of the above which seems to me to be a reasonable answer to the ~~XXXXXX~~ questions, that a) they do reflect the basic issues or themes which are raised and thus can be answered from a reading of this article alone, and b) can be answered within the space of the normal suggestion for the length of this assignment. This latter point should be stressed, I think, both for our sakes, and for the sake of those who certainly will get bogged down if they try to include everything in an ~~XXXXX~~ assignment which represents the first stab at understanding a subtle issue.