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Meaning and the Guiding of Human Authenticity

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Part II of “Authentic Human Development and Vector Forces in Education: Drawing on the Thought of Bernard Lonergan, S. J. in Addressing Some Key Issues in Educational Philosophy,” Part I appearing in *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2012):31-45.

Abstract

Our basic response as humans to a world we did not create is not a matter of “thought” but rather “intentionality” oriented by affectivity. Our understanding of the nature of this intentionality has profound implications for our educational design and practice, from the level of curriculum development through to individual teaching moments. The work of Bernard Lonergan seeks to understand the constituent elements of the primordial drive that leads to our sense of understanding, understanding that for Lonergan necessarily involves human agency. This paper, in two parts, considers Lonergan’s articulation of the operations of intentionality as we engage our world and the implications these operations have for teaching.

Introduction

“Authentic Human Development and Vector Forces in Education,” considered the process of understanding as articulated by Bernard Lonergan, S.J. We looked at the process of authentic appropriation of our own cognitive process for the purposes of understanding, of gaining insight, into our worlds. We considered the iteratively subsuming levels of experience, understanding, judging, and deciding that cohere in our engagement of a world that is beyond our present horizon. In part two, we look at the realms such an appropriation of consciousness creates – namely the realms of human meaning. We then move to a consideration of where our self-appropriation can be flawed, and finally we consider the downward move that ‘heals’ and guides the development of persons. In this article, as in the earlier, “sections called, ‘Educational Praxis,’ are offered to help understand the insights of this great Jesuit thinker, and to explore the relevance his ideas have for educational theory and practice.

Meaning

The account of the dynamic generalized empirical method described in the first paper generates a

type of “realist” account of meaning. That is to say, through authentic appropriation of this process, we gain true knowledge of a reality external to the ego, yet this knowledge is not some sterile, abstracted understanding existing outside the realm of human existence. Rather, it is intensely personal; it is a knowledge that not only is based on, but *requires*, human subjectivity in order to come to know the objective world beyond our immediate perceptions of it. The real has *meaning* because *we* are involved in the dynamic generation of what counts as the real world. For Lonergan, it is *being* that is known by understanding correctly; indeed *being* is the object of the pure desire to know.¹ This is opposed to an empiricist account, whereby the *real* can be considered as simply the ‘already-out-there-now-real,’ and where to know it is simply to look at it,² or an idealist account (which is something akin to an ‘already- in-here-now-idea’). These other views necessarily place intelligent inquiry and critical reflection (levels of the dynamic cognition discussed in the previous paper) outside the knowing of reality, in spite of how important they may indeed be in the knowing process. As Lonergan writes;

To transpose to the empiricist position [from a realist position], one

disregards the virtually unconditioned [meeting the conditions of knowledge] and identifies the real with what is exhibited in ostensive gestures. What is a dog? Well, here you are, take a look. To move from empiricism to idealism, one draws attention to the empiricist's failure to note all the structuring elements that are constitutive of human knowing yet not given to sense. However, while the idealist is correct in rejecting the empiricist's account of human knowledge, he is mistaken in accepting the empiricist notion of reality and so in concluding that the object of human knowledge is not the real but the ideal. Accordingly, to move beyond idealism to realism, one has to discover that man's intellectual and rational operations involved a transcendence of the operating subject, that the real is what we come to know through a grasp of a certain type of virtually unconditioned.³

In light of this realist position, then, *meaning* has a number of functions, all integrated with one another. As a *cognitive* act, meaning moves us beyond the world of immediacy, the world of the 'already out there now real' that is the world of an infant. Meaning mediates between persons and the world. Meaning functions *efficiently*, in that it informs, and indeed enfolds and motivates, the realm of human doing. Human action is not mindless, it builds on the given of the 'natural' world, lacing it with acts of human meaning and therefore is *constitutive* of developed and developing cultures and societal institutions. Meaning also functions *communicatively*. Individual meaning generated by the dynamic process of cognition is communicated intersubjectively through, for example, symbolic expressions, art, and linguistic constructs, and thereby becoming *common* meaning. These common meanings have histories and are transmitted forward via education in the widest sense, while at the same time being transmuted by gradual clarification and enriching, or sometimes in their impoverishment and deformation.⁴ This 'education in the widest sense' will perhaps be

appreciated more fully in an understanding of the downward vector move discussed later.

The Realms of Meaning

For Lonergan there are *four realms of meaning*, four different domains of human functioning. These realms are built out of the cognitive process described in the first paper and are the result of what he terms 'differing exigencies.' One such developing need is the systematic exigence that differentiates the realm of *common sense* from the realm of *theory*. Both of these realms consider essentially the same real objects, but in that consideration they begin from very different viewpoints, and with very different ends in mind. Intrinsic to this systematic approach is the notion of similars being understood similarly; our ability to proclaim 'this is like that.' For Lonergan, this is a law,

immanent and operative in
cognitive process, that similars are
similarly understood. Unless there is
a significant difference in the data,
there cannot be a difference in
understanding the data.⁵

However, *and crucially*, Lonergan recognizes two kinds of similarities: the similarities of things in their relation *to us*, and the similarity of things in their relations *to one another*. This distinction proves fundamental to an understanding of the cognitive process and its implications for the universe of meaning. The realm of common sense is the domain that considers persons and things as they relate to persons—to us.⁶ We come to know this realm,

not by applying some scientific method, but by a self-correcting process of learning, in which insights gradually accumulate, coalesce, qualify and correct one another, until a point is reached where we are able to meet situations as they arise, size them up by adding a few more insights to the acquired store, and so deal with them in an appropriate fashion.⁷

In this way, common sense is the fruit of a vast collaboration, tested and refined by practical

results. However, is it important to recognize that common sense is not simply a collection of general or particular truths (folk or otherwise) created and selected based on practical consideration and pragmatic value. In fact, in an insightful twist to the claims of pragmatism, it is instead that, because of the affirmation made by the cognitional process, ideas work only if they are true; it is not that insights are true because they work.⁸ For through our spontaneous inquiry into the world as presented to our consciousness, our spontaneous accumulation of related insights (because our questions do not ever arise in isolation), and our spontaneous collaboration of communication that enables common sense judgments (in that the results as obtained by the individual cognitive development are checked by the many), there is established the notion of common sense as an intellectual or cognitional development. What is *common* to all is the spirit of inquiry and the cognitional process that guides, shapes and indeed *is* human action. As a result, it speaks to persons about the particular and the concrete, the realm of human living. Its products are common, but not in the sense of being general, for the insights of common sense are always incomplete until they meet in the particular situation at hand at least one further insight to enable action. For example, it is through common sense developments that we know how to plaster a wall in a house. However, the broad insights of common sense will not allow the plastering of *this particular* wall until there is a further insight that enables the relating of the common sense to the particular exigencies of this moment. After such a particular moment, that final insight disappears, and the insights that make up common sense change back to a state of ready incompleteness.⁹ They are historically contingent ‘rules of thumb’ that guide an approach to a particular situation, yet require a unique further insight in order to meet the requirements of the moment.

However, we must be careful to avoid the notion that common sense is simply an individually generated coping mechanism for the practical exigencies of life, an excuse for a relativism of the highest order. Whilst we are born with a native drive to inquire and understand, and that desire grants us the ability in the realm of common sense

to affirm the virtually unconditioned in a particular moment, we must also acknowledge that we are born into a community that possesses a common

Educational Praxis

This ‘final insight’ rarely is given the attention it deserves in educational practice. We spend so much of our time on inculcating our students in the ‘common sense’ of our particular discipline. We are well practiced at developing the bank of common knowledge that is required for appropriate disciplinary action, yet we spend little time on developing, nurturing, and guiding the learner in the process of making the *final* insight inherent in relating the ‘common sense’ to *this particular* exigency. It is all too easy to assume that because they have demonstrated the ability to know the bank appropriate to the task, that the final insight will be a *fait accompli*.

How, in your everyday class activity, are you explicitly helping those you work with and for in the development of that which is necessary for the ‘final insight’?

fund of tested answers. The common sense ‘fund’ must be acquired, it has to be learned “through instances and examples, fables and lessons, paradigms and proverbs” and as such it “will function in future judgments not as premises for deductions but as possibly relevant rules of procedure.”¹⁰ Here we can see something of our guiding rubric functioning on a smaller scale. Our movement from below upwards, experiencing practical exigence and forming insights that enable appropriate response requires something from outside, a movement from above downward in the form of communal tradition that shapes the values through which decision is made, and provides a greater store of insights from which this particular response can build.

We can see in this notion of common sense an important response to the underlying influence of Dewey and constructionist approaches on modern educational thinking, particularly as regards the influential concept of ‘authentic learning’ and the ‘authentic learning task.’ Authenticity in learning is not to be judged by its approximation to a working reality, whereby its authenticity is a product of its sheer applicability. Instead, an authentic learning task is one in which the outcome is assessed by its demonstration of the self-appropriation of one’s own cognitional process; one’s authentic and unrestricted desire to know as evidenced in an attention to one’s experience, understanding, judging and decisions.¹¹

However, if the spirit of inquiry is pursued without restraint, questions will eventually arise that the realm of commonsense meaning cannot answer—questions that demand a context for answers that common sense cannot give. It is out of such that the ‘systematic exigence’ arises, establishing the realm of *theory*, a realm more commonly described as ‘science.’ This desire is to know things as they are in and of themselves, as intelligible in terms of their *systematic relations to one another*, and not as they relate to us.¹² Such questions may start from common sense, but their answers cannot be known in common sense terms. As well, common sense can be asked of correct *theory*, but its requirements do not change the intrinsic relations of things to one another. This realm considers data as known in terms of some correlation or function that states *universally* the relations of things to one another. To put it another way, the realm of theory speaks of causes, but instead of understanding this in the classic terms of end, agent, matter, form, it refers to aspects of mutual relationality, of interdependence.¹³ The language of theory is therefore specialized, focused not on action and its enfolding developed meaning, but on a *description* of such interdependence.

The famous lecture by Arthur Eddington in which he talks of the two tables on which he wrote is pertinent here. One table has extension, comparative permanence, colour and substance. In other words, the table is probably around one meter high with four legs, has sat there for a few years, is brown, and is solid to the touch. This is a description of the table in its relation to our senses, to us. The other table is his scientific table. It does not belong, in Eddington’s words, “to the world previously mentioned, that world which spontaneously appears around men when I open my eyes.”¹⁴ This table is mostly emptiness, scattered with mathematically postulated and experimentally recognised quarks, leptons, and bosons, whose actuality is described in statistical terms such that it is only probable, although admittedly extremely probable, that when the table is leaned on, Eddington does not go straight through it. It is a table whose reality is explained in terms of relationships between the data as expressed. Both these tables are real, their existence is affirmed by the authentically self-appropriated cognitional process, but as is easily seen, they are considered from different standpoints, and the

knowledge ascertained in the understanding and reflecting is able to serve different purposes.

Both the realms of common sense and theory give us knowledge of reality. In common sense, it is reality as it is experienced and practical, as it relates to us. In the theoretical realm, it is knowledge of reality as it exists independently of human knowing and doing. However, there then arises a third realm - a realm that responds to a *critical* exigence. For the realm of theory recognizes the ignorance of common sense with regard to the external world and attempts to excise it from claims to what is really real. On the other hand, common sense recognizes the withdrawal from human living of theory as an ill-fated attempt at surety, and therefore seeks to co-opt it, reducing theory to a pragmatic attempt to control nature. And between the two realms, the answer to the question as to whether human knowing is even possible cannot be adequately answered. So we regress into the problem of duality that has so plagued Western philosophy.

In light of such, and in responding to the critical exigency expressed by the eros of the mind, we are confronted with three basic questions: ‘What am I doing when I am knowing?’ ‘Why is doing *that* knowing?’ and ‘What do I know when I do it?’ These questions take us from the outer worlds of common sense and theoretical meaning into a third realm, the realm of *interiority*. To answer these questions, one must appropriate one’s own interiority, subjectivity, and operations. In focussing on these questions, we are attending not to objects, but rather to the subject and the constitutive acts of the subject. We look to ourselves, and our acting, improvising, and imagining. We seek the meaning of our own doing *through* our doing. There is a heightening of the intentional consciousness of one’s interiority, which in and of itself constitutes the evidence for one’s account of knowledge. In attending to interiority, we experience, understand and affirm our experiencing, understanding and judging, and in doing so we proclaim the reality of our interiority. So, interiority itself can be seen to contain meaning that functions cognitively, efficiently, constitutively, and communicatively. For out of the internal turn that grasps the meaning of interiority, the meaning of the transcendental method, there arises a move back to

the realms of common sense and theory that “provides one with the tools not only for an analysis of common sense procedures but also for the differentiation of the science and the construction of their methods.”¹⁵ From the realm of interiority, the real can be seen as *being*, and “that being is whatever is to be grasped intelligently and affirmed reasonably.”¹⁶

Lonergan engages with this problem in another way in the later stages of *Insight*, his key philosophical text. With regard to the question of how it is that we can possibly know ourselves, Lonergan first establishes the notion of the material and the spiritual. The material is the intelligibility that is not itself intelligent. This includes most clearly the inanimate world around us, but also aspects of the living world. For instance, the biological level of experience is not intelligent as we have thus far defined it. This level of experience, because it does not progress into the higher levels of cognitional activity, does not *know*, it simply *responds*. A plant, therefore, in its phototropic responses, exhibits materiality as does a dog in its response to the cry ‘fetch.’¹⁷ The spiritual, however, is intelligibility that is intelligent. Inasmuch as persons are material, Lonergan writes, “we are constituted by otherwise coincidental manifolds of conjugate acts that unconsciously and spontaneously are reduced to system by higher conjugate forms.”¹⁸ This is simply the technical and extraordinarily carefully derived description by which Lonergan aims to demonstrate that if we are considered in material terms, we are an occurrence that is reduced to system by theory. As individuals, we are verifications of that theory, yet as individuals we can only be understood as merely instances *of* that theory. The world of the particular is experienced and allocated to universal categories to be used in demonstrations of correlations of cause and effect, functions of derived contiguity. Theory, as explanation of things as they relate to one another cannot consider individual things insofar as they are individual and particular, but only as that individual is like other individuals. Each, and all, is simply a defined example of a subsuming generality, a particular stipulated by its universal. We are subject as object. However, inasmuch as we are spiritual, subject as subject, we are “orientated towards the universe of being,” the experienced, understood and affirmed reality of the known. As such, we come to “know ourselves as

parts within that universe, and guide our living by that knowledge.¹⁹ We come to know that there is an *I*, and that *I* acts, and that acting *I* is acting intersubjectively, and when that intersubjective *I* acts authentically the *real* is affirmed and created, and not as a solipsistic or extreme idealist expression of the material biological processes. In our recognition of our interiority as a realm of meaning, we are ‘emancipated’ from a materialist understanding of our being. The text under the heading ‘what does it mean to be human?’ in a popular grade 12 biology text book in Australia – a text which answered the heading by describing a series of characteristics, all physiological in nature, and all focused around our particular ability to survive (e.g. forward facing eyes, opposable thumbs, upright gait, etc.) – can be seen to be only describing one aspect of our being, that of our biological materiality. Yet without the spiritual apprehension of the dynamic consciousness that extends beyond the realm of quarks and bosons, an understanding of human cognitional activity as real, and perhaps even more importantly that towards which it *intends* as being the affirmed real, will be missed.

The final realm of meaning for Lonergan is that of the transcendent. Arising out of our conscious intentionality, “out of the *a priori* structured drive that promotes us from experiencing to the effort to understand, from understanding to the effort to judge truly, from judging to the effort to choose rightly”,²⁰ is the question of God. Does a necessary being exist? Just as we move towards the virtually unconditioned, can we apprehend a formally unconditioned, a transcendent that is the intelligent ground of the universe? Or is it that we ourselves are the principle occurrence of moral consciousness? Such are the questions leading to the realm of the transcendent, for despite its imposing name, *transcendence is the elementary matter of raising further questions, it is the going beyond*.²¹ It is not that the knower tries to get beyond himself to a known, with that known being the transcendent. Rather, the going beyond is the further question, with the possibility that through experience, inquiry, and reflection there arises the knowledge of being that is other to the knower.

We have been speaking of the transcendental method as that which is authentically self-appropriated whereby the only possibility of

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The two major differentiators discussed thus far – that between common sense and theory, and the material and the spiritual – are important distinctions to remember in the practice of teaching. Particularly in popular culture, description and explanation are often conflated, usually undergirded by a flawed understanding of the difference between persons as material, and persons as embodied beings intelligibly intelligent.

How, in your teaching practice and given your particular content focus, can you encourage a richer sense of the meaning humanity develops at the common sense, theoretical, and cognitively aware level?

genuine objectivity is through it being the fruit of authentic subjectivity. Nevertheless, authentic self-appropriation must always be “stretching forth towards the intelligible, the unconditioned, the good of value.”²² This ‘stretching forth’ must be unrestricted in its intention, and if so, there will exist within our horizon a “region for the divine, a shrine for ultimate holiness.”²³ For Lonergan, this region cannot be ignored:

The atheist may pronounce it empty.
The agnostic may urge that he finds
his investigation has been
inconclusive, the contemporary
humanist will refuse to allow the
question to arise. But their negations
presuppose the spark in our clod, our
native orientation to the divine.²⁴

This paper is not focused towards the apologetic, and so the details of the knowledge of the realm of the transcendent as elucidated by Lonergan will not be considered here. However, there is an aspect of his discussion on religion in *Method in Theology* that is pertinent to the move from above downward that we shall consider shortly. The transcendental method as described is only a capacity, a potency. It does not become an actuality, according to Lonergan, until one falls in love. Then one’s being becomes being-in-love.²⁵ This may sound a little odd until it is realized that ‘being-in-love’ is the drive and wonder that is the ‘eros of the mind.’ This *being-in-love* is the first principle of the self-appropriated transcendental method, and from it flows the desire, fears, sorrows, joys, discernment of values, and the decision and deeds that constitute our knowing and doing. As the

motivating force for the cognitional process, love is prior to all experiencing, understanding, judgment, and decision. It therefore cannot be a product of our own being. Love cannot be reasoned into; love is a gift.²⁶ But this love is more than just the drive that compels us towards the transcendent. It is a “conscious dynamic state of love, joy, peace, that manifests itself in acts of kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.”²⁷ This dynamic state is the consciousness that works on the level of value judgments, where the subject decides and acts responsibly and freely, as a self-emptying lover. Lonergan sees this gift of prior love as originating with God, as he writes, “the gift of God’s love occupies the ground and root of the fourth and highest level of man’s intentional consciousness. It takes over the peak of the soul, the *apex animae*.”²⁸

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Have you ever spent time reflecting on the gift of the smell of a good cup of coffee in the morning? How surprising and delightful the sound of birds singing to one another is? The deep satisfaction of the derivation of an *elegant* mathematical solution? The importance of a well hung picture? Or the delight in realizing the possibilities of a universe in which over 95% is ‘dark’ and unknown?

The ‘healing,’ downward vector of development comes from the communication of values – the deep expression of passion. Look at, and listen to, your world in wonder – and the passion from which you teach will transmute into those with whom you wander. You only ever teach who you are – are you ‘wonder-full’ and ‘delight-full’?

We are thus brought to an aspect of Lonergan’s notion of conversion. For all persons are able to decide on the fourth level of the ‘generalized empirical method,’ but it is only in response to, and guided by, an affectivity that is gift that *truly good responsible judgment* is possible. To open oneself to the complete possibility afforded by self-appropriation requires an intellectual, a moral, and religious conversion.

Conversion

The Good

If one is to embrace the notion of conversion, there must be a notion of what one is moving towards, and moving away from. For Lonergan, there is a *telos* to human development, which by proxy becomes the *telos* of education. This *telos* is

described rather generically, and indeed abstractly, as *the good*. There is much detail and nuance to Lonergan's understanding of the good. However, we shall only focus on a brief description of its characteristics as they pertain to our present purposes.

Lonergan understands the good first in relation to the limit of transcendence (the 'going beyond') following the remark of Jesus that only God is good.²⁹ Apart from his Christian religious convictions, Lonergan emphasizes that an understanding of the good is not the result of a rational endeavour; it is not, and cannot, be human derived. He moves on, however, and suggests that the good is still *human* insofar as it is realized through human apprehension and choice, opening the way for an engagement with his cognitional structure.³⁰ As such, for Lonergan, the good is the authentic approach (self-appropriation) that is driven by the affectivity engendered by the gift of self-emptying love. In its humanness, Lonergan describes an invariance to the structure of the good that can be found in any human society.³¹ This invariant structure of the good has three levels: the good of the particular, the good of order, and the good of values. The particular good regards the satisfaction of particular human appetites. It is what we most commonly associate with the notion of 'the good,' and can be a thing, such as a new computer, or an event, or a satisfaction, or an operation.³² The good of order regards the regular recurrence of particular goods. If, for example, it is good to educate an individual, then the good of order generates a recurrence of that particular good into a "flow of educations" for many people. There is also the good of values. "Not only are there setups [orders], but people ask, 'Is the setup good?'" as Lonergan writes. He goes on to distinguish three kinds of value: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. The aesthetic is that which realises the intelligible in the sensible. The good of order becomes transparent, able to be recognized by the members of society as well as in the products of a society, the action of its members—the work of people's hands. Lonergan writes,

It is aesthetic value, then, that enables people to apprehend the human good on its profoundest level or, on the contrary, to sense something

wrong, in a very immediate fashion an immediate apprehension that we may later be able to analyze a bit; for the moment it is enough to recognise its existence.³³

Ethical value considers the good that is the subject, the person. Through it, there is a conscious emergence of the person as subject, as an autonomous, responsible, and free actor—one prepared to sacrifice himself or herself for the truth, the right and the good.³⁴ It is at this point of the good of values that the secularist philosophy of education halts. For the next value is the religious, whereby "the autonomous subject stands before God, with his neighbour, in the world of history, when he realizes within himself the internal order ... that inner hierarchy in which reason is subordinate to God, and sense to reason."³⁵

Even with this truncated description of the good, it can be seen that there exists what Lonergan describes as an "isomorphism" of these levels of the good with the structure of cognitional activity. The good of the particular is mainly a matter of *experience*, whereas to know the good of order requires *understanding*. When that good of order, in its different possible systems, is reflected upon, there arises the notion of value that is a *judgment*.³⁶ This three-part division of the good is similar to that elucidated by Kierkegaard in his three types of existential subjectivity: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. In Lonergan, the good is not a thing to be known; rather it is an approach—and as such it begs the question of *character*. By locating the good as authentic self-appropriation, he negates the fact/value distinction that plagues a subjectivist/objectivist framing. No longer is 'fact' the domain of 'science' and value of the 'private individual.' The good is now found in character-driven endeavour.

Biases, or Evil

In order to understand the good, and the need for conversion, there needs to be a consideration of what can go wrong. Thus arises the question of biases inherent in human nature and the evil which they produce. Lonergan recognizes that much of our striving for the good is in fact a matter of fighting against evil. In *Insight*, Lonergan describes a number of biases that afflict us, and the root of

these biases involves a flight from insight. This flight can express itself in many ways and on many levels, for example, on the individual level whereby the subject retreats to an egoism that tries to exclude outside authority. As Lonergan writes, “egoistic emancipation rests on a rejection of merely proverbial wisdom yet fails to attain the development of personal intelligence that would re-establish the old sayings.”³⁷ When this is considered on a social scale, the individual bias can express itself in a group bias, such that the blind spots that result from the flight from insight are systemically embraced. This can lead to all sorts of ends, the dominance of certain groups under the paradigm of power being one clear example. Additionally, there exists the general bias, such that, whilst there may not be a conscious prescinding from the internal drive to self-appropriation, few seek to make the spirit of inquiry and reflection the effective centre of their lives, “and of that few, still fewer make sufficient progress to be able to withstand other attraction and persevere in their high purpose.”³⁸ These biases can be ordered in counterpoint to the invariant structure of the good we discussed earlier, in that we can describe them in terms of three levels of evil: 1) particular evil, that can become 2) chronic in order, as well as, 3) a negation of values. Particular evils (often but not always because of the flight from insight) can be expressed as privation, or suffering, harm, or destruction. These evils can become chronic and therefore embedded in the structures and systems that are created. The negation of values includes an opaqueness to the ordering of society because it is too complex or intricate. Systems become too large to attempt to understand, and good can be lazily applied, or evil cannot be located in the amorphous immensity of the system. Regarding the ethical component of value, there can be a loss of order *within* the person. As Lonergan suggest, “one is just a drifter; he makes no choices; he does not want to be a center of intelligent, rational, free, responsible choice.” He is Heidegger’s inauthentic man.³⁹ These biases take on communal significance in the refusal (conscious or unconscious) to acknowledge the intersubjectivity of our cognitional endeavour. This is manifest in our inability to understand that we are more than simply individual thinkers or believers rather than actors expressing in community. Our inadequacy, our ‘evil,’ is not simply understood as the negation of the known

(as murder may be the negation of an abstracted law describing the sin of a particular act). Evil is not found in the rejection of the *product* of our knowing process. Such ‘knowledge,’ for Lonergan, does not exist. Rather, murder, for example, is seen as evil because it is the refusal to start with the primacy of our intersubjectivity—we are not individuals who act—we are relational beings, and autonomous decisions (such as the taking of a life for the purposes of our own making) are a flight from authentic appropriation of our dynamic cognitional endeavour. Inadequacy/bias/evil is found in the *process* of our understanding (which necessarily contains enacted decisions). These problems are found in our *character*. Ethical understanding as the domain of the ‘known good’ is not the issue; *character* is.

Finally, for Lonergan, if God is denied, then the good of the world is all there is. We can be seduced by the illusion of a progress brought about by the inevitability of human flourishing, or the illusion of utopia, or even the illusion of the individual, of which Nietzsche’s *übermensch* is the supreme example.

What is needed, proclaims Lonergan, is a dramatic shift. In order to break away from the egoist flight from insight that leads to much evil, a leap is required,

not a leap beyond reason, as irrationalist philosophers would urge, but a leap from unreason...to reason.⁴⁰ That leap is not simply a matter of repeating, pronouncing affirming, agreeing with the propositions that are true, while misapprehending their meaning and significance. That is just what lies behind the decadence of philosophic schools. The leap is rather really assenting to, really apprehending.... What is wanted is something existential—real apprehension and real assent to the truth.⁴¹

This leap involves what Lonergan describes as *conversion*. A move involving three separate yet interlocked aspects: an intellectual conversion, a moral conversion, and a religious conversion.

Conversion

The notion of conversion will prelude our consideration of the downward move of human development, and indeed suggest some of its underlying justifications. The first of the conversions, *intellectual conversion*, begins with embracing the notion that knowing is not simply looking, but rather is experiencing, understanding and judging (or believing, as Lonergan sometimes writes in *Method* ⁴²). Only this can overcome the difficulties presented by empiricist, idealist and even naïve realist frameworks. As Lonergan indicates,

Only the critical realist can acknowledge the facts of human knowing and pronounce the world mediated by meaning to be the real world; and he can do so only inasmuch as he shows that the process of experiencing, understanding, and judging is a process of self-transcendence.⁴³

There is not the need to consider this area of conversion in detail, as it is simply an elucidation of the upward move. In order to effect intellectual conversion, self-appropriation must occur.

Moral conversion involves a change in the criterion for deciding such as occurs on the fourth level of the cognitional process. The guiding of one's choices and decisions must move from being based on satisfactions, which exist primarily as an expression of the biological, *material*, level of our existence, to being based on values reflecting our *spiritual* nature as described earlier. Moral conversion is an existential process, initiated when it is discovered that our choosing affects not just the objects of our choice, but it affects us as well, that in our choices we are deciding whom it is we are to be. *Religious conversion* involves being grasped by ultimate concern. It is an "other-worldly falling in love" that involves total surrender of the self that is not simply an act of the will, but rather is a dynamic state that is the principle for all subsequent acts.⁴⁴ It is simply a surrendering to the self-emptying drive of wonder.⁴⁵

Intellectual conversion is therefore to a truth attained by cognitional self-transcendence, moral conversion is to values that are apprehended,

affirmed, and realised by a real self-transcendence, and religious conversion is to a total being-in-love that undergirds the notion and act of self-appropriation. Each level of conversion, as with the cognitional process, sublates the previous one, although the order described is not causal. Rather than beginning with intellectual conversion and moving through to other conversions, the *healing* of the cognitional process is effected from above. God's gift of love is first. This love then "reveals values in their splendour" while the strength of that love enables the realization of those values. This is moral conversion. One of the values apprehended and actively embraced is the value of truth that enables a virtually unconditioned apprehension of reality, another of God's gifts.⁴⁶

And so we come to the downward move, the healing move. This section will be a shorter section, for many of the details of the levels have already been considered. What we are engaged in here is a vector shift, an 180° direction change that begins this time not from the smallest of individual magnitudes, but rather from the largest possible.

The Downward Move, Healing

We have spoken of the upward move in terms of four unfolding levels being the dynamic and normative structure of our cognitional operations. On the first level, experience accumulates and data is apprehended. Understanding of that experience is sought on the second level where an insight into the apprehended data is grasped and the formulation of concepts and the elucidation of correlation unfold. Those ideas are then reflected on in the third level in judgment issued in response to the question, 'Is it so?' At this point the hypotheses of the level of understanding are either accepted or rejected. On the final level values are embraced and expressed and a decision for some action is made based optimally on authentic appropriation of the first three levels. Such a decision acknowledges values and determines the methods or means that lead to the realization of those values.

However, on this account alone, an approach to education will be severely limited. An understanding of this inbuilt structure of human consciousness will elucidate new ways to consider the creative appropriation of the developing

intellect, yet there will be difficulties. For it should seem clear that this is not the only way humans engage with their individual and communal encompassing worlds. Rarely do we build from ‘raw’ experiences towards a decision based on the values that drive the very process. Rather, we exist already in a world of meaning, one in which beliefs and values cohere in various measures of consistency at the same time as being appropriated to greater and lesser degrees by the members that carry the traditions, stories and common sense of the society that the developing individual inhabits.⁴⁷

So to begin a brief consideration of the move from above, downward, let us first recall some of the quotation that formed the basis of this paper’s approach to the philosophy of education.

...development...works from above downwards: it begins in the affectivity of the infant,

the child, the son, the pupil, the follower. On the apprehension of values rests belief.⁴⁸ On belief follows the growth in understanding of one who has found a genuine teacher and has been initiated into the study of the masters of the past. Then to confirm one’s growth in understanding comes experience made mature and perceptive by one’s developed understanding. With experiential confirmation the inverse process may set in.⁴⁹

The move from above, downward, begins at the final level. As the way of gift and of tradition (scholarly and otherwise), values are handed down and on the level of decision, they are apprehended. There is then a reflection, but this time it is not on the ideas generated from experience, but rather on the values and beliefs received. Understanding is then sought of those values, with those values then influencing the level of experience by making it “mature and perceptive.”⁵⁰

In this way, it can be seen that there can be development beginning with the communication of values and beliefs. Nevertheless, this move requires

Educational Praxis

All this talk of conversion may sound a little ‘religious’ for most of us, particularly those not engaged in the teaching of ethics or theology. Nevertheless, I want to make a bold claim – participation in conversion is the task of education. As we educate, we seek to unveil the places of internal bias in ourselves and in the lives of our students. We seek to open them to the continually driving question, encouraging them to not stop without pursuing the next question, for it is here that we are found to be human. However, this next question is not simply our own—it is a question that considers a world beyond our own interiority, our own autonomy—where our decisions are necessarily ‘ethical.’

How does each of your prepared lessons encourage the flight from bias?

Are there ways you can encourage the pursuit of a ‘detached, disinterested, unrestricted, desire to know’, that is at the same time deeply attached to, and interested in, the communal realm of intersubjectivity?

an atmosphere of love, of trust. This love is once again the response of being-in-love, yet instead of providing the momentum for the upward drive, this time it places one in repose, in the state of resting in, of having proper confidence in, the purposes and intentions of the community of which one is a part. These apprehended values then guide the move to understanding. This move is most clear in the development of a child, and hence of import for our discussion here, since in a child experience has yet to provide the amount of material necessary for the development of values. Trust and love once again function as the basis for the development of knowing, but this time its fundamental intersubjectivity takes a different form.⁵¹ In this case, it forms not the motivator and intention for knowing, but rather the context and apprehension.

As this notion is applied to education, it can be seen that the love that undergirds and initiates such a move must be found in the love of the educator for the learner and the corresponding love and trust in the educator. If the relationship is one of utility, or of manipulation for selfish ends (a retreat to the egotistic bias), true and good development will not occur. In this case development will be structured around a biased and narrowed vision that ultimately rests on notions of power and self-satisfaction.

At the move from values to judgments, Lonergan provides the example of British colonial rule in the nineteenth century. He writes,

...when the people at the colonial office in London heard news of some sort of trouble or uprising at some spot in India, they would know immediately just how the man on the spot would react, because they knew the moral training given to the public-school boys.... The people in London knew the mentality of the colonial administrators.... What the example shows is that there is an ethos, something very concrete, that is communicated indirectly, and that it is enormously efficacious.⁵²

Irrespective of the issues involved in British colonialism, we can see in the example that values are instilled in directing judgments, and those values come from outside the individual. Judgments are based on a “vision of greatness”⁵³ that stands outside the individual, and is infused from above.

As we have seen, Lonergan is also fond of Pascal’s famous line, the “heart has reasons which reason does not know,” that he uses to illustrate the notion of a knowledge born of love. Lonergan understands the reason of Pascal in terms of the first three levels of cognitional activity, the heart’s reasons as feelings that are intentional responses to values, and the heart as the subject on the fourth level of intentional consciousness, in a dynamic state of being in love.⁵⁴ In the downward role at the level of understanding, the understanding of the human subject ‘being educated’ is assisted and nurtured by the understanding that has been developed in another, passed on in the context of love, an understanding that can range from the grasp of a mathematical proof to the beliefs inherent in cultural and religious affirmations. Finally, it is at the level of experience that education has its clearest role in the downward, healing move. For in the context of affectivity, the learning experiences that are presented to the learner are selected, be they explicit in the form of books, tasks, or environmental engagements, or implicit in the tone and words used, or in

physicality of the learning space. The values as they have been caught by the preceding downward move can work further to mature the very act of experiencing, in turn influencing any subsequent move from below, upward.

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It is important to remember that *nothing* is neutral, even the most basic of data. Because even the data of the most basic level of experience is the product of persons. Whether externally presented by a ‘educator’, or presented internally by memory, all information is *selected*, and hence is an expression of value. All too often, that remains understood only at the subconscious level. As educators, it is incumbent upon us to make such awareness conscious and explicit for those with whom we engage. Furthermore, our values – guiding and ‘healing’ the upward move of the learner – are being expressed in our presentation. The question we must ask of ourselves is whether *our* values are demonstrating authentic self-appropriation.

A Brief Tying Together and Moving Forward

It is at this point that the unity of the two vector moves can be apprehended; in reality, one cannot be separated from the other. We are beings who both feel and think, and our feeling affects our thinking inasmuch as our thinking affects our feelings. In other words, our affectivity enfolds our reasoning, just as our reasoning can illumine our affectivity. We think ‘upward’, creating and understanding, and our feelings and values feed ‘downward,’ encompassing the very process of our cognitional activity. Furthermore, just as the creative move starts from the influence of tradition, healing and nurturing the process of cognitional activity, the tradition itself is critiqued and developed by the progressive move of a self-appropriated consciousness. In this light, a more complete role for the educator can be seen. Education itself must be seen as the encouraging of the creative move, the move from below upward. It is about nurturing self-appropriation, and this nurturing occurs through the modelling of the healing move, the move from above downward. As humans, we are designers, shapers. We bring things into being that were not through both our reproductive and productive imagination. Education, as broadly conceived, facilitates the development of our abilities as designers. At the same time, the approach of the educator, and the system that sustains the education process, must exemplify self-appropriation, while allowing the values and beliefs existent in an external tradition

to take shape. Human stories of origin and narratives that tell us who we are provide the metaphors from which we imagine the possible. From such articulations come our metaphors for *good, true, and beautiful* design. And so, to avoid impositions of individual satisfactions that plague modern western society in particular, education must be fundamentally based and reliant on a notion of reality that shapes us even as we seek to grasp it. That is to say, to use a phrase noted earlier, education is directed toward a reality ‘caught and taught.’ Insight is employed to encourage insight, an exemplification to encourage and nurture self-appropriation. To reiterate thoughts from the first paper, the role of the educator is to provide the optimal conditions for the nurturing of the knower to authentically ‘catch’ the upward dynamic, to assist in providing an environment that can effect the conversion of the intellectual, moral and affective/religious aspects of the learner’s consciousness. But remember, the ‘catching’ of the upward dynamic necessarily asks for the critique of the downward move, the constant questioning that asks ‘is it so?’ and ‘should we engage in it?’ In addition, the educator is tasked with the communication of a developed tradition of values and judgments (which result in beliefs) in an atmosphere of love. But in suggesting that some of the most appropriate metaphors for the notion of education are those of discipleship and imitation, the educator, and the system of which she or he is a part, must embody the unity of the upward and downward movements.

Loneragan’s understanding of understanding is not the answer to what educational philosophy is, or should be. He is not positing the absolute or the normative in the object, or even in his words. He is interested in *method*, not *conclusion*. What is absolute is the *process* that is followed in seeking to arrive at true and good knowledge. As such, he is fundamentally interested in the knower, rather than the known. This knower engaged in knowing becomes the basis from which truth is developed, truth that is both appropriated and created. So it is in the authentic appropriation of both vector moves that a proper understanding of the various realms of meaning unfolds and is seen to be ever more essential in a society that restricts meaning to anaemic forms of common sense and theory such that an impoverished subjectivism has become a

guiding paradigm for many modern educational practices.

In terms of Jesuit higher education, the issues that Lonergan delves into deserve attention for several reasons. Not only was Lonergan himself a Jesuit—seeking to understand the profundity of the questing at the heart of Ignatian practice—but also these perspectives elucidated continually promote a life-seeking and incrementally achieving authenticity. His approach encourages everyone to a self-transcendence that considers the other as fundamental to the individual, as well as an appreciation of Transcendence (however it is that such a notion is cast in the broad scope of religious tradition). Furthermore, Lonergan helps to promote the unique qualities and promise of Jesuit higher education *through* and *beyond* the good and exemplary activities in social justice and advocacy of the marginalized and oppressed, to a celebration of all forms of human endeavour *on behalf of* all, for the purposes of reconciliation – the communal experience and cultivation of delight. [HJE](#)

Notes

¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*. 5th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 523.

² This short phrase is a loaded one for Lonergan. Here is his lengthy definition: “‘Already’ refers to the orientation and dynamic anticipation of biological consciousness; such consciousness does not create but find its environment; it finds it as already constituted, already offering opportunities, already issuing challenges. ‘Out’ refers to the extroversion of a consciousness that is aware, not of its own ground, but of objects distinct from itself. ‘There’ and ‘now’ indicate the spatial and temporal determinations of extroverted consciousness. ‘Real,’ finally is a subdivision within the field of the ‘already out there now’: part of that is mere appearance; but part is real; and its reality consists in its relevance to biological success or failure, pleasure or pain.” (*Insight*, 277).

³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 76. This, then, allows for an understanding of various spheres as ‘real.’ For example, the ‘imaginary’ $\sqrt{-1}$ exists just as much as the tree outside my window. They do not, of course, exist in the same way, for the tree is not known as the conclusion of a series of deductions, and the square root of negative one cannot be ‘sensed’ as the tree can. But they do exist as real inasmuch as they are affirmations of the virtually unconditioned, a conditioned whose conditions are fulfilled.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 76-79.

⁵ *Insight*, 313.

⁶ This is the realm of contingent meaning, and so could be otherwise. Given the current climate of fundamentalist atheism, perhaps a pertinent example of where the notion of similarities is inappropriately conflated can be found in Richard Dawkins' notion of the selfish gene. His description of 'the gene' is primarily a scientific one, seeking relationship *within* the data. This is the realm of *theory* that will be considered shortly. I would suggest Dawkins errs when he attributes the explanation of 'selfish' to his scientific description. Selfish is a contingent, *common sense*, meaning. As a metaphor (see George Lackoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), for a consideration of the metaphorical nature of all human language), selfish is an attempt to seek a similarity in the data *as it relates to us*. As contingent, however, *it could be otherwise*. For Dawkins to suggest that 'selfish' is a scientific concept explaining an inherent meaning in the data of gene function is to confuse description with explanation. On another note, I would suggest that the current 'Intelligent Design' movement is committing the same error, attributing the contingent, *human* notions of 'intelligence' and 'design' to supposed similarities in the data *as it relates to itself*. To suggest that intelligence and design are *inherent* in the scientific, theoretical description is once again to confuse description with explanation.

⁷ *Method*, 81.

⁸ Remember that truth as affirmed at the end of the process of insight must include the ethical and active component. And as we shall soon see, persons can engage in the Generalized Empirical Method with greater or lesser degrees of authenticity. If lesser, then the biases that intrude lead to inauthentic affirmation of the truth. As such, whilst we may seek to claim that our 'ideas' work and must therefore be the expression of 'truth', we are in reality affirming an incomplete version of the virtually unconditioned – our 'working' ideas are an *inauthentic* and hence *inaccurate* affirmation of truth.

⁹ *Insight*, 198-199.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 322.

¹¹ For a more considered view of authenticity in learning, although to my thinking still too embedded in a constructivist as opposed to a critical realist mentality, see J. Petraglia, *Reality by Design: the Rhetoric and Technology of Authenticity in Learning* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998).

¹² Unfortunately, this is not the forum to delve into Lonergan's understanding of 'system' as an outcome of his carefully elucidated empirical method. This 'system' considers classical method in interdependence with statistical method as intrinsic to an understanding of the virtually unconditioned as described by theory, such that classical laws tell what would happen if conditions were fulfilled, and statistical laws explain how often conditions are fulfilled. Combined with the corollary that understands reality in terms of schemes of recurrence, as well as notions of abstraction and his fruitful canons of empirical method, modern science is described as giving us increasingly probable, rather than certain knowledge (Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education: the Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 in the Philosophy of Education*, eds. Robert M. Doran and

Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 146. Additionally, Lonergan is able to explain the notion of emergent probability, its intrinsic relatedness to a proper understanding of cognitional theory and an understanding of classical and statistical method. Emergent probability has relevance regarding 'world process' (the structure and history of the universe), revealing amongst other things an immanent intelligibility, stability without necessity, assurance without determinism, and development without pure 'blind' chance (*Insight*, 148-151).

¹³ *Method*, 315.

¹⁴ Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (New York: The University Press, 1929), xii.

¹⁵ *Method*, 83.

¹⁶ *Insight*, 540.

¹⁷ Walker Percy, in his series of essays published as *Message in a Bottle*, refers often to the phenomenal difference between sign and symbol. At one point, he writes, "The dog responds to the word by looking for the thing; you conceive the ball through the word *ball*." Walker Percy, *Message in the Bottle* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989), 153. In other words, the dog and its action can be described in material terms, but the human is doing something more.

¹⁸ *Insight*, 539.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 539.

²⁰ *Method*, 103.

²¹ *Insight*, 658.

²² *Method*, 103.

²³ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 107. It is the gift of Love *to* us, and *through* us.

²⁹ Mark 10:18; Matthew 19:17; Luke 18:19.

³⁰ *Topics*, 32.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³² *Ibid.*, 34.

³³ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁷ *Insight*, 246.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 251.

³⁹ *Topics*, 46.

⁴⁰ Remember, for Lonergan, 'reason' is not an act of the will, but the entire cognitional process expressed in authentic self-appropriation.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴² *Method*, 238.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁴⁵ What an easy sentence to write! In this sentence, however, exists a fundamental paradigm for the educational process. As we asked in the previous paper, what if our classes/lessons began here? In delight, with the nurturing of the wonder that drives our being?

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 241-242.

⁴⁷ Intersubjectivity is not simply based on who is present in the moment – there is a profound and inherent aspect of temporal intersubjectivity that undergirds and embeds all our activity.

⁴⁸ Or 'judgment' as we have been describing it.

⁴⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, eds. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 180-181.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 181. See also *Method*, 136, for a similar elucidation, albeit with a different end in mind to the one we have.

⁵¹ In reality, this move in the developing subject initially precedes the move from below. But of itself, the downward move cannot describe and explain the cognitional levels as they exist and function. Hence the necessity of beginning with the move from below, upward.

⁵² *Topics*, 103.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁵⁴ *Method*, 115.

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