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Bernard Lonergan's Promise for Educational Philosophy

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Abstract

Philosopher and theologian, Bernard Lonergan, S.J., regarded as one of the most influential Jesuit thinkers of the twentieth century, focused primarily on cognitional theory, epistemology and metaphysics. His system of thought known as “intentionality analysis” has been applied widely to many fields of study, including education. While Lonergan directly addressed certain issues in education and educational philosophy, his thought has greater promise for educational philosophy through broader application, specifically in ordering and expanding educational themes related to the four key differentiations of consciousness he expounds. The differentiations are explained as distinct but interrelated levels of consciousness and consist of experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. For educational philosophy, “experiencing” draws attention to the vast array of sensory input, affectivity and the experience of ideas. “Understanding” brings to light the questioning process that seeks intelligibility for human experience, direct and indirect, where the processes and achievements of intelligence become the focus. “Judging” concerns questions of the good, the right and the true, and provides an expanded context of critical thinking and reasonableness encompassing knowledge of not only the world but also of oneself. “Deciding” wrestles with the existential questions of life and promotes responsible living expressed in moral agency, social justice, service to one’s communities, and engaged citizenship. More than adding new educational theory or pedagogical innovation (though these may result with further practical application of intentionality analysis), the promise of Lonergan’s thought for education philosophy appears as a larger framework for deep thinking about education that distinguishes important themes and concerns and interrelates them to a comprehensive and open-ended horizon that champions human potentials for attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility.

Introduction

Bernard Lonergan, S.J., is considered by some to be one of the greatest Jesuit thinkers of the twentieth century. He is also thought to be in the top tier of Jesuit intellectuals since their founding in 1540. Others have compared Lonergan to Saint Thomas Aquinas and to Immanuel Kant in terms of intellectual reach and profundity. George Whelan, S.J., professor of theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome offers a concise summary of his celebrated life and work.

Bernard Lonergan was a Canadian Jesuit who lived from 1904 to 1984. He was a philosopher and theologian and he is mostly known for two seminal works: *Insight* (1957) and *Method in Theology* (1972). He was both a student and a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and also taught in Montreal, Boston and Toronto. During the

1970s he was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine and he was “considered one of the finest philosophic thinkers of the twentieth Century,” and in a recently published book, *Twentieth Century Catholic Thinkers* by Fergus Kerr, he makes the top ten list formulated by this author of the most important Catholic thinkers of the last century.¹

As a theologian, Lonergan did not adapt any particular philosophical system of thought or theoretical constructs for theological purposes—as did, for instance, Karl Rahner using Martin Heidegger or Pierre Teilhard de Chardin employing evolutionary theory and physics. Rather, he sought to develop a new mode of philosophy that would place theological inquiry on a sound, productive, collaborative, methodological footing—mirroring in certain ways empirical method and perhaps its successes. While Lonergan’s immediate focus was on theological

method, he discovered a more general method that also applies to scholarship within the humanities. To be sure, there are profound differences in scientific and humanist studies. For instance, you cannot put human justice in a petri dish and study it through repeatable experimentation, and how one “feels” about RU(44), Ruthenium, is of little concern to the scientist. Essentially, the difference pertains to *what* is studied. But are there general structures and processes of scientific empirical inquiry that relate to and inform inquiry in the humanities? To answer this question, Lonergan probed the basic nature of scientific inquiry, and then from this he developed what came to be known as a “generalized empirical method,” and subsequently “intentionality analysis.” His central focus became, not what is studied, but the nature of study itself, the nature of inquiry and human understanding.

The essay expresses my contention that Lonergan's work constructing a new mode of philosophy based on the nature and processes of human inquiry, along with its resulting general methodology, has particular relevance to the field of educational philosophy. I attempt to build the case for this application of Lonergan's method, presented as “intentionality analysis,” by situating and interrelating within this framework some great themes of educational theory and practice, past and present, and suggest that this holds particular promise for a new, comprehensive educational philosophy.²

First, however, I offer a caveat. This essay is not really for the seasoned Lonergan scholar who may be inclined to engage the intricacies of hermeneutics in deciphering precise meanings of words and phrases Lonergan uses, if and how they may have changed over his writing career, whether or not, for instance, there is a fifth level in the differentiations of consciousness, or how Lonergan's thought can inform the finer points of theology and cognate disciplines. While these are engaging, animating, and perhaps needed clarifications or developments in Lonergan's thought, many educators generally do not have the background, nor the time or the patience for this type of investigation and conversation. This essay aims to introduce educators to Lonergan's grand vision and seeks to help practitioners glimpse

simply some possibilities for their own thinking and approach in education. Educators tend to be pragmatists—there is a job to do, and an important one at that, and the “tools” one uses in the classroom, in the seminar, online or on campus, need to be readily grasped and effectively wielded. My hope is that this essay will help in that grasping and wielding, and that more practitioners in the field of educational practice and theory may benefit from his great mind.

What I endeavor to do, then, is to present a basic, hopefully clear, and relatively concise account of key ideas Lonergan espouses along with the system of thought for which he is known. These basic ideas and system of thought hold promise for reconstituting educational philosophy and for informing so much of what happens in the classroom. But in aiming at what is basic and relatively simple I do not suggest Lonergan's work is simplistic. Quite the opposite; it is profound and radical. But I maintain that realizing some effect of Lonergan's thought in how we understand and engage teaching and learning processes can be obtained rather quickly, even though “mastering the instrument” of Lonergan's full-fledged system of thought and gaining its full effect constitutes a project requiring deep-level attention and commitment over a lifetime.

Some may believe that “a little of Lonergan goes a long way,” including perhaps even a few of his fellow Jesuits. However, in very helpful ways, a little of Lonergan *can* go a long way. One needs to grasp but a few key ideas, a few principles, understand them in terms of one's own interiority, and then start to follow the leads by way of a few basic “imperatives,” as Lonergan calls them, for the effect to take hold and for his thought potentially to be life enriching and even transforming. By way of introduction, I will begin by profiling Lonergan, the philosopher and theologian, and then offer some general assessments of his work. This will lead to a brief account of some of the broad mindscape of educational philosophy. This rather lengthy introduction, lengthy because many will not have much background in educational philosophy or the thought of Lonergan, then leads to an explanation of the key elements of Lonergan's philosophy and in very general terms how these can direct and inform deep thinking about

education. The essay concludes with a general assessment of Lonergan's thought for educational philosophy and in what ways I believe this holds promise for educational philosophy.

Lonergan the Philosopher

As a scholar, Lonergan drew on a variety of thought in philosophy, science, mathematics, history and religion, as well as the Greek and medieval classics. His scholarship was well-engaged in contemporary fields of philosophy of science, historicism, and existentialism.

Throughout his work, Lonergan situated various philosophies and systems of thought within an integrated framework where key ideas from the great Western intellectual tradition contribute to an enlarging and ultimately comprehensive worldview. As a philosopher, he sought to create a radical mode of philosophical inquiry that brings together and expands insight on the nature of human experience, the nature of understanding, the structure and operations of human discernment and judgment, to an account of the existential moment of decision and of how persons seek to make their way in the world. Aspects of his reconstruction of philosophy are well-presented by philosopher, Hugo Meynell in his book, *Redirecting Philosophy: Reflections on the Nature of Knowledge from Plato to Lonergan*.³

In addition to his achievements in philosophy, Lonergan also was a noted theologian. Bringing together these two fields of study, theology and philosophy, he wrote a major treatise on human cognitional theory, epistemology and metaphysics called, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*.⁴ Completed in 1953, but first published in 1957, this work established Lonergan as a major thinker of the 20th century (although his thought still does not garner the wide attention it perhaps deserves).

The conviction becomes clear in *Insight* that the study of human inquiry and knowledge, the field of inquiry called "epistemology," shows that understanding and knowing are basic to human beings and deeply affects how we carve out our existence in the world. Lonergan has become known for this epithet, "thoroughly understand what it is to understand, and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further

developments of understanding."⁵ *Insight* explores and answers three basic questions: What does one do when one knows? Why is doing that called knowing? What does one know when that is done? Answers to these questions constitute Lonergan's cognitional theory, his epistemology and his metaphysics.

Lonergan the Theologian

In *Insight*, Lonergan focused on the processes of understanding and resulting methodology across a broad spectrum of human inquiry, then in subsequent writings he explored theological methodology in particular. *Insight* showed that the human mind—understood in terms of human consciousness—has distinct levels and operations. These levels and operations most properly work in distinct but integrated ways as persons comes to experience the world, interpret and understand that world, comes to grasp what counts as knowledge (both in terms of probabilities and correct judgments), and then decides to act (or not act) in accord with that knowledge. He came to regard human consciousness as a patterned set of operations that produce increments of personal and collective knowledge, and that insight and knowledge amass cumulatively. Lonergan showed that human consciousness, basically and optimally, tends to unfold methodologically even though we may not explicitly understand or acknowledge that method. However, the more we understand and better engage consciousness as a patterned and cumulatively progressive operation, the more "methodological" we become and, increasingly, we become more effective, productive, caring and loving, authentic human beings. It is important to note that the method Lonergan elucidates is not at all like a recipe or an assembly-line production. Rather, it is a matter of understanding and of drawing on the power and potentialities—the intentionalities—of our own consciousness.

How, then, does this relate to theology? Can the actual structure and operations of human consciousness, as Lonergan maps them out, direct one's mode of theological inquiry? To this he answered, "Yes," in his most widely influential book, *Method in Theology*, published in 1972.⁶ Following some preliminary chapters on method, the human good, history, and related topics, he developed a new way to "do" theology. His theological method unfolds in eight "functional

specialties” that pertain to broad disciplines in theology—four conducted primarily by the academic (who may or may not be a person of faith) and four by the theologian committed to a particular religious tradition. These are: research, interpretation, history, and dialectics—the first four, and then foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications—the last four. Not only does his methodology endeavor to order and direct theological inquiry in a methodological manner, that is, as a “normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results,” but also it provides a framework for more intentional interplay of academic inquiry and of theological collaboration.

General Assessment of Lonergan's Thought

In my estimation, Lonergan's vision was as grand as de Chardin's in terms of understanding the cosmos, and as existential as Rahner's in coming to terms with “being” in its human dimensions. It seems to me, however, that Lonergan was far more rigorous than de Chardin or Rahner, or many others for that matter, in addressing a larger scope of related fundamental questions and, in the process, he achieved more profound results. One issue of *Newsweek* in the 1970s explained, “Jesuit Philosopher Bernard Lonergan has set out to do for the twentieth century what even Aquinas could not do for the thirteenth... *Insight* has become a philosophic classic comparable in scope to Hume's *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.”⁷

John Macquarrie, a widely influential theologian of the last half of the 20th century, offers his assessment as well. “[Lonergan's] massive work, *Insight*, reminds one of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* or Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* because it works through the various levels of mental operation from the simplest to the most complex and leaves one with an extraordinarily impressive picture of the power and energy of the human intellect.”⁸ Clearly, Lonergan was, and remains, an important thinker as evident today by the many Lonergan institutes and centers around the world.⁹

I believe Lonergan, like many great intellectuals, has something significant to contribute to conversation on education. If we take a little time to begin to come to terms with some of Lonergan's key assertions, it could be worth the

effort by having expanded and deepened our understanding of what we do in education and, more importantly, as Parker Palmer suggests, to grasp more deeply who we are as human-beings-as-educators.¹⁰

Lonergan's Thought for Educational Philosophy

Lonergan was no stranger to the field of educational philosophy. Although this field of study was not his main focus by any means, like many great thinkers—Michael Oakeshott, Northrop Frye, and even Friedrich Nietzsche and Immanuel Kant, as examples—he was asked from time to time to address issues related to education and educational philosophy. The most noted occasion for Lonergan was a series of lectures he delivered at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1959. *Insight* was already into a second edition, and Lonergan was making his mark nationally and internationally. On this occasion he addressed educators over several days on matters related to Dewey's and Piaget's work on education, but also presented his own thought on ethics, art and history, among other topics. The lectures were tape recorded, transcribed, and then published in 1988 as Volume 10, *Topics in Education, of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*.¹¹

As the title suggests, the book consists of a set of topics addressed by Lonergan, and while philosophical in nature, he did not intend to present a “philosophy of education” where deep level, systematic and comprehensive accounts of education unfold. He ended his first of ten lectures with this proviso and invitation:

I am not a specialist in education, but I have suffered under educators for very many years, and I have been teaching for an equally long time [Y]ou can listen to me as I speak about philosophy and its relation to theology and to concrete living. But most of the concrete applications, the ironing out of the things, will have to be done by you who are in the fields of education and philosophy of education.¹²

The application of Lonergan's thought, then, in this essay consists of an effort in the “ironing out of things” that intends to inform a philosophy of

education. What I am after here is not a full blown account of the breadth and richness of Lonergan's thought as it relates to the broad spectrum of education and educational philosophy. To do this, one would need to encounter the full scope of his thought throughout the projected 25 volumes of his *Collected Works*. Rather, I present a basic understanding of his key assertions, what they generally could mean and how they hold promise for education.

"Educational philosophy" may be a mode of thinking not often engaged by many educators, including educators in higher education, since many college and university professors have never taken a course or read much in "educational studies" or in educational philosophy. So let us consider briefly some key elements of an educational philosophy. In simple terms, educational philosophy addresses the more profound, deep-level matters related to teaching and learning that cover a wide range of topics from epistemology, ethics, and citizenship to personal formation and development, social concerns, and "new thinking" as this comes to bear on the theory and practice of education. Recent examples of new thinking explores various kinds of "intelligences," "knowledge ascriptions," and "human capabilities."¹³ Educational philosophy helps educators think deeply, critically, and creatively about the big issues related to human emotional and intellectual development, as well as to existential and social life, and helps educators—and ultimately the persons being educated (one hopes)—relate these issues and resulting assertions and affirmations to one's basic values and commitments. While practitioners and administrators in the field of education wrestle with real problems in the classroom, in the seminar, the conference auditorium and the office, educational philosophy can help educators raise the eyes from the road immediately afoot to consider the longer view, the greater good, a better way, and the ultimate consequences. It is my contention that Lonergan can help one engage these types of reflections and help move one along the exciting journey of educational philosophy.

For Lonergan, philosophical thinking and the construction of a credible philosophy depend

fundamentally on an account of human consciousness. Without a clear and accurate grasp of what is going on in our own patterns and operations of consciousness, he claims, we simply are left to muddle through as best we can, living essentially in a world of extroversion (or what Lonergan calls "naïve realism"), struggling with confusing or wrong-headed ideas about culture and society, about human life and what it means to be human, or avoiding these types of questions altogether, and ultimately ending up with problematic ideas about what counts as "the good," the "true" and "reality" itself. Ascribing to some version of naïve realism with its common expressions in various forms of "pragmatism," we can get by in education, sure enough, but it is very difficult to make substantive, fully satisfying progress in sorting through the complex and profound issues that face us today. In the end, the naïve realist may very likely end up being inadequate to meet deep challenges facing our society and culture, or, as philosopher José Ortega y Gasset suggests, unable to "mount to the level of one's time."¹⁴ Rather, we may tend to rise to the "level of our incompetence." At best, understanding life's big issues and relating them to the grand enterprise of education would be "hit and miss," or more likely to be a matter largely avoided.

Merely Muddling Through

Compared to an engagement with philosophy and the "big" questions, education today often seems to be a matter of "muddling through," of chasing after this or that trend in popular culture and technology, of merely responding to immediate problems rather than taking the lead and articulating matters of deep concern and of enduring importance in society and education. For instance, in 2013 and 2014, public discourse on educational issues focused much on a "core curriculum" and whether or not in American communities, regions or states should adopt this standard. While achieving basic literacies is important, where is the concern for educating for democracy, for citizenship, for contributing to the common good, or for living an authentic life? One wonders if educators and administrators tend to be led by issues defined by others, politicians in particular, issues such as "discipline," "standards," "back-to-basics," "no child left behind," "values clarification," "ethics," "computer literacy,"

“social media,” as examples of topics that have commanded attention over the past several years. Clearly, these concerns have some importance, but with the educational agenda set largely by politics and the public purse, educators today tend not to be in the vanguard but rather left lagging behind and responding to politicians, media personalities or various community groups. Response, of course, is important, but others tend to set the agenda. Driven by politics, by budget constraints, by the winds of immediate community concern, administrators and leading educators seem less able to draw on well-developed, overarching, systematic modes of thought to fully understand, assess, and decide on these issues in an integrative, comprehensive and fully satisfying way. When educators are compelled to respond to myriad issues that detract from ultimate concerns in education, at most we can hope simply to “muddle through,” aiming merely to see students graduate with acceptable grades, hoping they make the best of things in the real world. This characterization may be overly pessimistic and rather limited, and no doubt there are many individual examples that represent hope for positive change in educational theory and practice. My point simply is to draw attention to some of the problems facing education today, including the paucity of deep-level thinking on these problems, and suggest that we can obtain that deep-level thinking by aid of Lonergan and that we find promise in Lonergan by rethinking educational philosophy in certain ways. Taking the time and effort to consider the larger, deeper questions in education can help educators attain a clearer vision of the enterprise of education, and that in Lonergan there is promise to transcend the “muddling through” approaches to achieve that higher viewpoint that can profoundly affect education in good ways—both for the teacher and the student.

The noted Canadian historian, philosopher, and intellectual, George Grant, offered his insight on the state of education in the West during the last half of the 20th century.

Mass technological education took place in North America increasingly in large and powerful institutions, which produced rudderless people who have never been taught to think deeply about the philosophical and

theological traditions of the West. ... However, it will be necessary to replace the training for attention with education so that life did not become a ‘frittering away in listless and increasingly perverted pleasures.’ Mass leisure without mass education can obviously only lead to disaster. Even mass leisure with flaccid mass education will lead to disaster.¹⁵

Working within the realm of secular higher education, Grant offered something of a surprising solution.

Education, and especially adult education, ought to lead, in the words ... attributed to St. Augustine, out of the shadows and imaginings into truth: after all, the man we call supremely free was sufficiently maladjusted to his community to die on the cross, and there is no reason to believe we are so much better than the people who put him to death. Education is to take men to the unlimited, where there is no security, no rest and no peace—except perhaps ... the peace that passes all understanding.¹⁶

Perhaps Grant's analyses are rather dated in the education environment of today, but there may be a timeless aspect to them in calling for recognition of a certain enduring aim of education—to take persons “to the unlimited.” For Lonergan, the unlimited emerges in the unfettered transcendental operations of human consciousness and, in my view, this is central to education.

It is such an approach to education—really a philosophy of education—that transcends the mundane and can transform one's life in the most profound ways. On balance, though, the “muddling through” approach can sometimes have its successes. Educators may get some of the big issues right, may latch onto brilliance and make a positive difference. But is there a way to improve the balance sheet? Is there a way better to ensure more hits and fewer misses?

I assert that Lonergan's philosophy and general methodology holds promise for a better way. While Jesuit-based institutions of higher learning have done little to mine the riches of Lonergan's thought for its educational programs, and certainly there has been virtually nothing along this line within secular education, there could be significant

benefits should the mining begin. Lonergan can help achieve more fully the mission of Jesuit higher education not only in striving more intentionally toward an integration and a wholeness in our knowing, doing, being, caring/loving, but, more importantly, in bringing to light and “appropriating” in better ways the operations of knowing and the dynamism of human consciousness. To be sure, there are various Jesuit “tools” to accomplish this, such as what is presented in the publication, *Teaching to the Mission: A Compendium of the Ignatian Mentoring Program*. This good, practical and insightful document constitutes a step in the right direction. But it still is not a philosophy of education *per se* in that it does not probe the philosophical level very deeply. What underlies this fine work, rather, is the Jesuit “mission,” which has philosophical connections, of course, but does not consist of a full-fledged philosophy that comes to terms with the various dimensions of education at the radical levels needed.¹⁷

Applications of Lonergan's thought promises a philosophy of education that encounters the big issues, corrects attempts at “muddling through,” and excavates the mission-driven approach to deeper levels. Lonergan offers a thoroughgoing and, in my view, convincing¹⁸ account of human consciousness in its various parts and operations that direct one's knowing, doing, being and caring/loving. In general terms, this type of illumined consciousness largely constitutes our identity as persons. As Charles Taylor argues, such elements of “inwardness” serve to create our “sense of self.”¹⁹ A Lonerganian approach to education, I believe, can help educators realize greater potential as knowers by more intentionally building on the worlds of experience, but then going beyond personal experience to map out how, in general terms, we become shapers of our world in all the good, better and best ways possible. This I perceive the promise of Lonergan's grand philosophical vision for education.

Elements of a Lonerganian Philosophy of Education

What are the elements of this philosophical vision and how do these elements operate in education? Briefly, they consist of an account of human knowing and an interpolation of this account as a

general methodology that informs and guides stages and processes of teaching and learning. While Lonergan's approach rises from the rich Jesuit tradition of education, I emphasize that applications of this epistemology and methodology are not so restricted. Lonergan's insights and assertions can be (and are) applied to a wide scope of human inquiry and learning where reason and openness are key values and aspirations.

A Lonergan-inspired vision of education focuses on the individual, but it does not espouse a pure subjectivism or an entrenched individualism. Its higher aim is the enhancement and development of communities, of societies, and of civilization itself. The purpose of a Lonerganian educational philosophy, I maintain, is not self-enclosure, but self-transcendence. Its aim is to grasp true knowledge wherever it is found, and builds upon a *desire* for what Lonergan calls a “finality” of human existence arising from a constant striving toward the “higher viewpoint,” to grasp in ever greater degrees deeper dimensions of reality. Lonergan provides a way for education to achieve what Grant calls taking persons “into the unlimited.”

How does one tap into this vision? How does one begin to draw on its potential and promise? Essentially, through self-understanding and self-knowledge the pathway Lonergan charts opens and expands further in exploring one's own “interiority.” In the process, one comes to know oneself, a human subject, in a new way. The way Lonergan suggests involves four basic “interior” operations of the human subject that unfold on four distinct but related “levels” of consciousness. Three pertain to the question of knowing, and the fourth pertains to the question of action, the existential question, “What am I going to do about what I know?”

The four basic operations yield knowledge and embrace decisions that meet the existential demand that all human beings be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, and be caring and loving. Simply put, the four basic operations are experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. Developing this in more detail, a brief account of these operations is presented and a few reflections on education are

offered that indicate what promise these differentiated but interrelated levels and operations hold in framing big issues in education and in unfolding as a philosophy of education.

One important clarification needs to be made, however. While Lonergan presents his discoveries and analyses of how human consciousness operates, an aim of Lonergan for those who encounter his thought is to discover such operations of *their own* consciousness. The most important thing is not what Lonergan says about this or that aspect of human consciousness or what other thinkers assert about the world of human “interiority.” Rather, the crucially important questions concern *you*, the individual, you the educator, you the learner. Lonergan’s work thus unfolds as an invitation to self-discovery and to self-knowledge.

This crucially important point was stressed by Lonergan’s chief promoter and colleague, Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., in a *Festschrift* presented to Lonergan and published by *Continuum* in 1964. Crowe states in his introductory article, “The Exigent Mind,”

Lonergan’s position is that the way to understand him is to carry out for ourselves the performance of appropriating conscious activity. He has said as much in *Insight*, he has repeated it for years in his lectures, and his claim is ignored, sometimes as much by disciples as by opponents, both of whom turn more readily to the objective products of his thought than to their own operations. Those products command respect and deserve discussion (otherwise this collection of studies [in the *Festschrift*] would lose much of its purpose) but they just are not the main issue.²⁰

By my observation, this point tends to be missed often in the expanding field of “Lonergan Studies,” the point being that all of this is not so much about Lonergan as it is about you, the knowing, loving human subject, and about you, the educator. Again, in developing an educational philosophy that draws on Lonergan, then, the main issue becomes self-discovery and self-knowledge. Moreover, the beginning point does not consist of throwing out everything that one has gained thus far in terms of self-knowledge, but

unfolds as a rethinking, a reconsideration and perhaps even a transformation of self-knowledge that can take you, as an educator, you as a thinker about educational philosophy, to greater heights and to deeper depths in personal and professional achievement.

Differentiations of Consciousness and Elements of Educational Philosophy

Simply put, Lonergan discovered that human consciousness—the interior self that constitutes one’s “spirituality”—consists of four basic operations: experiencing, understanding, judging (also called discerning),²¹ and deciding. It is relatively easy to identify occasions where one has experienced, understood, judged, or decided. Take a few moments to reflect on how you have engaged these activities over the past day, within the past hour, or even within the past few moments. As you reflect on these events, you may be able to identify different focuses in your consciousness as being mainly about one of these four activities. In Lonergan’s analysis, these operations of consciousness are also called “intentionality” – what predominantly is occurring in your consciousness in terms of what you are “really after” in any particular occasion—an experience, an understanding, a discernment or judgment, or a decision.

However, things can quickly become complicated as we reflect more deeply. When we try to understand something, for example, we realize it does not occur in isolation. Experience relates to the effort to understand, as do previous discernments and judgments, and past actions. In fact, as you reflect on the various acts of your own consciousness, you may realize they tend to occur as single unified event that have many or all of the other elements of consciousness operating simultaneously to greater or lesser degrees. Thus, the ability to make these differentiations within an event may be a little more difficult—perhaps quite challenging, in fact. What aspects of an event are regarded as “experiencing”?; what elements pertain to “understanding”?; what considerations of an event can be attributed to efforts at “discerning” and “judging”?; and what precisely constitutes our “deciding”? While the four operations are easy to grasp intellectually, it’s more daunting actually to make these differentiations in

the moments and events that constitute our living in the real world.

Lonergan calls us to make these differentiations in our own lives that then lead to the question of applying these types of differentiations regarding human "intentionality" to educational philosophy. In what follows, each of these differentiations is considered and suggestions made as to how various philosophical concerns in education may accordingly be differentiated. I consider first, experiencing, second, understanding, followed by discerning/judging, and then deciding. Again, this does not lead to a full-fledged educational philosophy, but rather indicates that promise Lonergan's thought holds for developing a thoroughgoing philosophy of education.

Experiencing

As conscious, sentient human beings we have experiences and, as such, experiences of all kinds come flooding into consciousness. It's not just sensory experience (hearing, seeing, and so forth) but experiences of mental images, feelings and thoughts—higher level experiences that tend to be more significant—experiences that Dewey called "educationally valuable." In fact, for Lonergan, the role of mental images and "imagination" are seen to play an enormously important role in what constitutes human experience. Another way to think about experiences is to regard them as "data." Lonergan regards all experiences as data—data of sense and data of consciousness—that include not only things presented to us via sensory perceptions but also our thoughts and feelings about these sense data. On a purely experiential level, consciousness remains somewhat undeveloped, constantly receiving and creating all sorts of data, good or bad, significant or trivial, from the world external to ourselves and from the inner world of feelings and thoughts. But even on this level of "pure" experience, patterns begin to emerge and sorting processes begin. Some data capture our attention and other data escape our notice, or are noticed but immediately disregarded or suppressed for some reason. Experiences run the scale from the superficial and inconsequential to those deemed rich and meaningful. But what is the difference in these various types of experiences and how does one account for the wide range of experiences on the basic level of conscious awareness?

Besides positive experiences that enrich our lives, we all have negative experiences that can hold us back in certain ways, cause us to withdraw from further experiences or may be seen to otherwise impoverish our lives in some small way, or perhaps in very significant ways. This is jumping ahead, though, since determining the negative or positive experiences unfold on different level of operation of consciousness. The point here, however, is that we have all kinds of experiences over which, initially, we have little control. As "experiencers," and in order to become better experiencers, it is important to notice our experiences—to be attentive to them. Lonergan relates one's noticing to what he calls a key imperative, an initial, basic "transcendental imperative," namely, "be attentive."

Lonergan's account of experience, as noted, centers on a recognition of experiences as a basic level in the operations of human consciousness that includes not only sensory experiences with which we are all familiar, but also *experiences* of intelligence and understanding, of discernment and judgment, and *experiences* of deliberating and deciding. These "data of consciousness," in addition to sensory data, often become present to us in terms of how we "feel" about our thoughts and ideas, our judging and our deciding. These data of consciousness become more fully present as we notice when and how they occur, what are our personal circumstances that led to them, and what conditions lead to similar experiences. Lonergan sums up what is meant by "experience" as a dimension or level in human consciousness this way:

By consciousness is meant an awareness immanent in cognitional acts. But such acts differ in kind, and so the awareness differs in kind with the acts. There is empirical consciousness characteristic of sensing, perceiving, imagining. As the content of these acts is merely presented or represented, so the awareness immanent in the acts is the mere givenness of the acts.²²

To explain further what is meant by "data of consciousness," an important aspect of experiencing is what Lonergan calls "desire." A basic manifestation of desire appears as a drive

that propels our consciousness forward in its development. On the experiential level there is a "desire to know" that anticipates the next level, understanding, and even the level following that, judging. But desire itself qualifies as an important instance of experience. Lonergan states,

...[F]or the guiding orientation of the scientist [as a paradigmatic knower] is the orientation of inquiring intelligence, the orientation that of its nature is a pure, detached, disinterested desire simply to know. For there is an intellectual desire, an Eros of the mind....²³

Experience is not simply for the sake of experience, but there is a higher intentionality involved, namely, to *experience* the unfolding of intelligence about what we experience. It is an "Eros of the mind," and not simply "Eros." While this "Eros of the mind," is an experience, per se, its intentionality anticipates understanding and knowledge and as such, the desire to know propels experience forward in one's consciousness as one seeks for and struggles with intelligibility of our experiences. As such, experience and the desire to know constitute so much of what teaching and learning are about.

This desire to know is key to Lonergan's cognitional theory but there are many other drives that unfold as one becomes a knower, a doer, a lover. These also have great importance to education, but since the desire to know is so fundamental to consciousness and to learning processes, it is important to give special attention to this important aspect of our experiential lives.

"Experiencing" Related to Education

Education traditionally has been about primarily learning various subjects. Certainly, in the Western tradition, subject focus dominated education as far back as medieval educational systems centered on the Trivium consisting of grammar, logic and rhetoric, and the Quadrivium covering arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. How a subject related to your experiences as a learner had little consequence, although using the five senses was important in the learning process. But what remained most important was a student's ability to grasp intellectually what was needed to know about a subject and to pass some examination or

achieve some recognized competency. As educators came to critique this mode of education they realized that students learn better, learn more, and have a more enjoyable and rewarding learning experience when a subject taught has deeper relevance to their lives, when students can experience in some way, directly or indirectly, various dimensions of history, of biology, or of whatever was being taught and studied. Education began to incorporate more experiential and experimental approaches to learning. Thus a new direction in teaching and learning emerged known as "progressive education."

John Dewey, an early architect of experientially-based education, explained the importance of having "quality experiences" that are "educationally worthwhile," of valuing an "experiential continuum" based on habits that give rise to the formation of basic sensibilities and "emotional and intellectual attitudes," that lead to "physical, intellectual and moral growth."²⁴ Dewey brilliantly brought to the fore the foundation of education grounded in the experience of students. However, as a pragmatist and secularist (being opposed to "organized religion"), Dewey's philosophical commitments were not well developed in terms of the "spiritual" realm, though he expressed a belief in the wholeness or oneness of knowledge as a sense of the harmony and mystery of the universe and our place in it.²⁵ As such, Dewey recognized a religious or spiritual aspect of human existence but his writings do not explain in a salient or fuller way the "transcendental drive" operative in human consciousness, a drive that aims at a universal viewpoint, and that energizes and upwardly directs the world of human experience toward greater meaning, broader realizations of existence, toward things greater than oneself, and toward transcendent being. For Dewey, religious questions tended to be eclipsed by scientific method and inquiry, and matters of the transcendental and transcendence do not factor much into the learning processes.

A philosophy of education that takes account more fully of the Eros of mind and the drive toward the transcendental, a philosophy that addresses a broader horizon of human experience encompassing the "unlimited," conceives of human experience in richer, more dramatic ways.

Lonergan's account of the structure and operations of "experiencing" offers philosophy of education new ways to address what counts as experience—data of sense and data of consciousness—and to redirect education to its foundations beyond solely scientific methodology to encompass *transcendental methodology*. This draws attention not only to the subject matter being studied, but to the nature of inquiry and studying themselves, to the interior life, as it were, of the questioning teacher and learner. Applying Lonergan's intentionality analysis to education, educators and learners are called to be attentive to their world of experience and to the process of experiencing. Much more could be studied, researched and written concerning Lonergan's account of experience and the relationship this has to other dimensions of human consciousness. My point simply is to acknowledge the basic, fundamental importance of experience in Lonergan's thought²⁶ and to suggest for educational philosophy there is promise of a deeper, richer field of inquiry this opens onto, one more than simply sense experience.²⁷

Understanding

Human experiences occur and they readily fall into patterns and those patterns of experience tend to repeat. For instance, if you purchase a new car, likely immediately you begin to notice every other vehicle of that year, make and color you pass on the road. Patterns of this experience may broaden to where you notice other colors of that model, other models of that maker, and models with features that yours has, or now you wish your car had. These patterns can lead to further patterns of experiences that include feelings of regret perhaps, or of satisfaction knowing you made the right choice, and so forth. Why does this happen? Lonergan explains that in the practical world of daily living, and in the world of scientific inquiry and of scholarship, our patterns of experience naturally begin to repeat, our scope of noticing expands considerably, and questions related to our experiences move us to probe possible meanings we attach to these experiences. We begin to move from the level of experience to a different, but certainly related, level of consciousness, that of understanding.

As consciousness develops, we begin to wonder about our experiences and start to ask questions.

Have you ever thought about what a marvelous experience it is to ask a question? In fact, asking questions can be a truly exciting dimension of being human. We are knowers, we are persons who care, and we are lovers in various ways, because we are question-askers. In effect, question-asking affirms our existence uniquely as a distinct mode of conscious beings-in-the-world. When you ask a really good question, it can make you *feel* really good, perhaps even more so than providing a really good answer. In asking a good question, one often experiences a particular exhilaration. One reason for this may be that when we begin to ask questions, a fuller dynamism of our consciousness starts to unfold. Our consciousness is developing and expanding. As we become better question askers, those good questions pertain more directly and fully to our experiences and bring about the possibility of better answers and more satisfying insights.

Referring again to George Grant, a close associate of his at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Eugene Combs recalls,

George breaks most of the rules about teaching: he rarely completes a sentence, often turning an answer to a question into another question.... [P]erhaps, above all, his propensity to ask questions to answer a question, a condition he was born with, makes him the teacher he is. George's questions become part of your thinking. They tend to direct you, what to read and which other teachers you listen or talk to. His questions focus your attention where you've not quite focused before. George's questions change you.²⁸

Combs's report captures well the role of the question in education as it moves one from some experience to expanding that experience, to a broadening of one's attention that anticipates insight and understanding. Moving beyond our experiences of various kinds, questions can lead to understanding, and ultimately to transformation.

Early on in the process of coming to know, a main goal in question-asking is to gain understanding. Gaining understanding has been a topic that has captured the attention of great philosophers over the centuries. As noted in this essay's introduction, one recalls Hume's *An Inquiry*

Concerning Human Understanding and Kant's three great critiques (of "Pure Reason," "Practical Reason" and of "Judgment"). Much of Lonergan's work, but especially his chief philosophical work, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, pertains to this field of inquiry.

Lonergan explains that understanding is achieved as we seek to make sense of experience, first hand (personal) experience and even second hand (historical) experience of a family, a community, a society. Understanding occurs as we piece things together and create order out of the confusion and disorder that our "pure" unmediated experiences tend to be. Understanding begins to unfold when the possible significance and meanings of things are grasped. Meaning is what happens when the patterns of experience are grasped or conceptualized in some way, when ideas about how the elements of our experience can be put together and interrelated. Deeper meaning occurs when greater levels and more complexities of interrelations are discovered. Understanding is the occurrence of insight, the grasping of meaning, when we catch on intellectually to the way things are or could be in relation to other things. We have such acts of insight (acts of understanding) all the time. Some of them are very mundane, some largely unnoticed, or some may prove to be dramatic, profound and life changing.

The key realization here, however, is not that we have insights and understandings, but that there is a structure and a process to them all. Lonergan draws attention not so much to the content of the question or of the answer, but to the types and processes of questioning and answering. This realization consists of "insight into insight," of grasping the dynamism at play in question-asking and answer-finding processes. As is sometimes said about Jesuit education, it is more about the questions than the answers. For Lonergan this tends to be the case, but his approach also provides an account of a deep-level grasp of the dynamism of the relation between the question and the answer.

For Lonergan, the phenomenon of question-asking and answer-grasping, what is called understanding, occurs as an intellectual "coming to life," as it were. It can occur in a moment, in a flash of brilliance, when one "sees the light,"

when one "catches on." Understanding can also occur in a painstaking process of study and intellectual struggle over weeks, months and even years, leading to when an insight finally surfaces and is fully grasped in one's consciousness. However it occurs, in solving a crossword puzzle, in developing a unified field theory, or whatever, an emotional experience can result—a sense of satisfaction, an overwhelming exhilaration, or a negative feeling if the insight is dreaded. In such instances we see clearly how the levels of experience and understanding interrelate and promote the other. But then further questions can surface, "Is this understanding really true?", "Can I be mistaken?", and so forth, but these subsequent questions pertain to the next level of consciousness yearning to unfold.

Much could be said about Lonergan's exposition of this operation, this level of consciousness called human understanding; he offers hundreds of pages on this in his book, *Insight*. However, let us consider Lonergan's account of understanding, presented here simply and much abbreviated, as it related to educational philosophy.

"Understanding" Related to Education

An education that gives pride of place to insight and understanding – and all good education at some stage, in one way or another, does this – concerns itself largely with the intellectual development of the learner and achieving some familiarity with a field of knowledge and perhaps the acquisition of a skill set. Today, this may be referred to as "literacy," "competency," "proficiency," and so forth. Such education was championed in the last half of the 19th century and into the 20th as "liberal" or "general" education, and in the middle part of the 20th century as "traditional education" (in part as a reaction against "progressive education" that seemed intellectually weak). The "Great Books" programs, as an example of traditional education, focuses primarily on understanding the canon of Western thought. Education dominated by a concern for understanding a field of study manifests in schools designed for "training" purposes, or on educating "professionals" of one type or another. Recent popular movements in education focusing on this second level of intentionality are Constructivism and Constructionism, the latter based largely on the

thought and analysis of Jean Piaget. They assert that we construct our own meanings and understanding, and we construct the “products” to be understood. (It should be noted that while these movements focus on intellectual pursuits, they also have relevance to the third and fourth levels, judging and deciding, in that learning involves finding solutions and justifying actions.²⁹)

Whatever value understanding holds in education, and though it does not encompass the whole story since the drama of human consciousness, it naturally obtains a central focus. “Insights are a dime a dozen,” Lonergan says,³⁰ and they occur all the time. Some insights are great and profound world-shaping illuminations. Others are mundane, used merely to get your clothes on in the morning or help put food on the table. Some insights seem so true and compelling while others may be odd or outlandish. In any case, additional questions about insights, our alleged understandings, arise (or should arise). Lonergan explains further the nature of understanding.

By consciousness is meant an awareness immanent in cognitional acts. But such acts differ in kind, and so the awareness differs in kind with the act.... But there is an intelligent consciousness characteristic of inquiry, insight, and formulation. On this level cognitional process not merely strives for and reaches the intelligible, but in doing so it exhibits its intelligence; it operates intelligently. The awareness is present but it is the awareness of intelligence, of what strives to understand, of what is satisfied by understanding, of what formulates the understood, not as a schoolboy repeating by rote a definition, but as one that defines because he grasps why that definition hits things off.³¹

While the content of what is understood is important, note that Lonergan's particular focus centers on the intelligence about that understanding. Accordingly, what is aimed at in understanding covers not only what is achieved in grasping intelligibility about something, but one achieves a clear sense of why the intelligible is intelligible. It allows, for instance, a person to offer a definition or an expression of one's understanding in their own words.

As we allow—actually propel—our understanding to develop and flourish, we are meeting the second key “transcendental imperative,” “be intelligent” in tandem with the first transcendental imperative, “be attentive.”

Once we grasp an understanding of something, further questions emerge about our understanding a new mode of consciousness takes shape, a new operation unfolds. The activities of one's consciousness, as it were, engage a different gear, and the drive forward moves the quest of knowledge to a different level, but this is for the next section.

The focus in education and educational philosophy on understanding and intelligence is well-known, but Lonergan's philosophy calls forth a further dimension, namely a fuller understanding of the nature of human inquiry and intelligence. It requires an understanding of understanding, one that shifts the focus from merely teaching and learning an accepted canon of knowledge to grasping the nature of intelligence itself undergirding that canon.³² It allows the teacher and the learner to expand upon that knowledge base and to extend it and revise its new directions.

Bringing Lonergan's philosophy to the table of current discussion in educational philosophy, certain connections can be made. For instance, what contribution and critique could Lonergan offer concerning Kieran Egan's exposition of mythic, romantic, philosophic and ironic modes of understanding and their implications for education?³³ How could Lonergan's exposition of human understanding and consciousness be used to interpret or critique Howard Gardner's account of multiple intelligences? How could both Egan's and Howard's positions so influential in education today be modified in helpful ways?³⁴ In my estimation, Lonergan probes more deeply, more philosophically these questions of human intelligence than do Egan or Gardner and discerns a more generalized account of human understanding. As such, Lonergan's analysis applies to a broader scope of educational concern by encompassing not only the narrow educational questions related to intelligence but to wider educational concerns related to social theology, the notion of human development, and ultimately the questions of the meaning of life. And with

these concerns, another level of human consciousness comes to the fore.

Judging

As human consciousness develops in healthy, developmental ways, we begin to wonder if our insights or the insights of others are reasonably accurate, solidly correct and can be counted as "true," or completely wrong-headed, or perhaps something else along this continuum from wrong to right, from bad to good. As we wonder about insights and understandings, new questions arise in the inquiring mind that propels one's consciousness to a whole new level. On this further level, reflections, discernments, assessments of the evidence, surface that then lead to the making of judgments. And when a judgment occurs, Lonergan states, depending on the quality of that judgment, understanding may be posited as "knowledge."

Human beings, however, are not perfect creatures and thus not perfect knowers. In fact, we are prone to blind spots, to barking up the wrong tree, so to speak, to seeing only what we want to see and ignoring all sorts of factors that may turn out to be important. We can adjust or correct some of these shortcomings relatively easily and quickly but others we cannot correct without a great deal of honesty, effort and commitment, and perhaps personal transformation in some measure.

Questions arise as to how we can make a needed assessment, achieve desired discernment and overcome the personal, group, or cultural issues that may stand in our way. For Lonergan, addressing these new and deeper questions involves making good and better judgments. In simplest terms, a good and true judgment about something rests upon knowing how well some particular understanding accounts for all the relevant data in any given situation. These data, again, are data of sense and data of consciousness that include thoughts, feelings, ideas, perceptions, and so forth, and we account for these conceptually by grasping possible meanings and obtaining understanding. Understanding, of course, may be correct or incorrect, or some gradation thereof, so surfaces the need and intention of "judging," an affirmation or a denial of an understanding.

More specifically, on the level of judgment we raise the question of how well the concepts and suggested meanings we grasp have answered all the questions that could be asked concerning some particular experience, that is, about some set of data. In the process of discerning and judging, we return to some possible explanation that we have settled upon, but then raise further questions about how well the explanation accounts for the data. In the process of judging, ideally all the possible *relevant* questions about the data and possible understandings are answered satisfactorily. Increasingly the relevant questions become fewer and fewer as satisfying answers are attained. As questions diminish, an understanding or explanation under scrutiny becomes more "secure," and we approach a moment when we can make a sound judgment, "yes" or "no," "maybe," or perhaps find that a judgment is still not ready to be made (which is a judgment in its own right). The probability that a judgment is true can move closer and closer to confidence or certainty if one is truly open to unrestricted questioning. For Lonergan, this is key to the judging process since there are myriad ways free and open questioning can be blocked. He calls these blockages "biases," and they can take on various forms.³⁵ As this type of questioning proceeds, Lonergan explains, at some point we can reach what he calls grasping the "virtually unconditioned." That is to say, our answers and our assertions no longer have unanswered questions. All the relevant questions that can be posed have been posed and they have been answered in a satisfying way. We are at a place where a reasonable judgment can be made, and in a certain sense, we are compelled to make the judgment in that not doing so may appear to be unreasonable. When this occurs, not only do we "understand" but we also "know." If, however, all relevant questions are not asked and answered in a satisfying way, then we have something less than true knowledge. Our knowing is "in part" as St. Paul suggests, and our judgment may be rendered in some degree of probability.

The result of making a sound judgment, Lonergan argues, is achieving true "objectivity." This type of objectivity is not a matter merely of looking "out there" to see what's "real" to oneself, but rather it is a matter of making a sound, invulnerable judgment about our insights into the

world or experience—the world of sense data and the world of data of consciousness. As we have seen, this can occur only when the full and, as much as is possible, unimpeded operations of our own consciousness unfold. So, objectivity for Lonergan is not a matter of negating our subjectivity that may, as some believe, taint or skew “objectivity.” Rather, as Lonergan states, “objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.”³⁶

Lonergan takes this a step further by suggesting that when we truly know something, what we know is the “real world.” Authentic knowledge is not some illusion, not merely some set of interesting ideas, not some “reality” that we have created simply for ourselves, but it is discovering in verifiable and reasonable ways what actually exists. And we know this to be true because all the *relevant* questions, in an unrestricted way, have been answered so as to fully account for all the relevant data. When questioning has reached this level, we are compelled to affirm what is actually so, what is “real.” Lonergan calls this method of questioning and wrestling with the answers, and then finally settling on what actually is the case, “critical realism.” In Lonergan’s words,

By consciousness is meant an awareness immanent in cognitional acts. But such acts differ in kind, and so the awareness differs in kind with the acts.... Finally, on the third level of reflection, grasp of the unconditioned, and judgment, there is rational consciousness. It is the emergence and the effective operation of a single law of utmost generality, the law of sufficient reason, where the sufficient reason is the unconditioned. It emerges as a demand for the unconditioned and a refusal to assent unreservedly on any lesser ground.³⁷

It is on this level where the third “transcendental imperative” is played out—“be reasonable.”

“Judging” in Educational Philosophy

“Judgment” has been a longstanding issue in education. It surfaces especially in educational traditions where the chief goal is “wisdom.”³⁸ Wisdom remains an important focus in educational theory and tends to span Lonergan’s levels of judging and deciding.³⁹ More recently, questions of judgment appear in newer models of education focused explicitly on what is commonly

called “critical thinking.” While educators today have the mandate to teach critical thinking, one might be hard-pressed to find a well-developed philosophy of judgment associated with it. There are guides and manuals that are used in the classroom to promote critical thinking, but these focus on problem solving, on ways to look at situations, and help persons think more reflectively and effectively.⁴⁰ While focus seems to be more on exercises and techniques than on a larger view of how consciousness operates and what it means to be a reasonable and wise human being, Lonergan’s thought, however, offers exactly this for educational philosophy.⁴¹

To be sure, there is much to recommend in this now well-established field of curriculum development and pedagogy centered on critical thinking. John Chaffee’s “Preface” to his third edition of *Thinking Critically* (1990) explains the larger intention of the text as “based on the assumption ... that learning to think more effectively is a synthesizing process, knitting critical thinking abilities together with academic content and the fabric of student’s experiences. Thinking learned this way becomes a constitutive part of who students are.”⁴² The larger vision of critical thinking for Chaffee includes the crucially important grasp of humanness, of values, a world view, and the making of choices that forms one’s world. He states further, “teaching people to become critical thinkers does not mean simply equipping them with certain intellectual tools; it involves their personal transformation and its commensurate impact on the quality of their lives and those around them. This is truly education at its most inspiring.”⁴³ Indeed. The practical aim of Chaffee’s book, however, is to provide guidance for teachers to nurture and promote critical thinking for students. Not being a text on educational philosophy, these larger issues, this grand vision and laudable assumptions are not explicitly developed.

Some of these assumptions and philosophical underpinnings of critical thinking, at least in part, can be found in a much earlier text by W. H. Werkmeister, *An Introduction to Critical Thinking*.⁴⁴ While Chaffee envisions a larger relevance of critical thinking to life in general, Werkmeister explores the classic philosophical categories of critical thinking, and in this regard, the

connections of Lonergan's notion of judgement to critical thinking appear rather convincingly. Werkmeister explains critical thinking in terms of the "rational ideal," this being, "the application of critical habits of thought to all practical problems of human existence, and the employment of rational criteria in the evaluation of all opinion and prospective beliefs."⁴⁵ Such thought processes for Werkmeister are "proper subject matter for the branch of inquiry known as *Logic*."⁴⁶ His rather substantive text explores the dimensions and functions of reason and rationality in relation to logic traditionally understood, symbolic logic, statistical method and affirmations of truth. In Lonergan's intentionality analysis, these are questions of judgment.

In short, Werkmeister provides a thoroughgoing account of critical thinking as the rational, reason-driven dimensions of human thought and Chaffee offers practical strategies to incorporate these in curriculum, but it is Lonergan who reveals a larger framework that differentiates more fully the distinctive rational operations of thought and how these are integrated with other aspects of human consciousness.

Critical thinking as it appears now in many curricula in various ways ought to be championed, but it seems to be lacking an explicitly developed and fuller vision of what education ultimately should entail—self-understanding, self-knowledge and personal authenticity, each of which in Lonergan's thought stems from good judging. A philosophy of education, in my view, could be expanded in helpful ways by drawing on Lonergan's account of this third level of intentionality, by providing more satisfying opportunities and strategies for teachers and learners to become good, better, more sound, and trustworthy discerners and judges—not only in critically thinking about some field of academic inquiry, but in other areas of one's life. Both Chaffee and Werkmeister suggest this, but in discerning and judging, as Lonergan maps them out, teachers and learners are propelled forward through a deepening self-knowledge and the promotion of effective caring for others and for the world. This we see emerging more fully in the next level of conscious intentionality, deciding.

Deciding

In Lonergan's system of thought, once we become good knowers (that is to say, "good judges"—since knowledge culminates in an act of sound judgment), we also begin to catch on to what knowing really is. Knowing is not merely having a good look at something, or, as Lonergan says, not a matter of merely grasping the "already out there now real."⁴⁷ Understanding what really counts as knowledge, and then knowing what knowing is, for Lonergan truly makes all the difference in the world for it commits one, and for educational philosophy it commits the teacher and the learner, to a life-time of being better experiencers, deeper understanders, more careful and considered judges, and ultimately wise and responsible deciders. This unfolds in education as we begin to apply more intentionally and in better ways those operations of consciousness to all aspects of life. We begin to make our way in the world by knowing what is truly good and deciding to make good choices based on enriched experiences, greater intelligence and sounder judgments. It is what Aristotle calls "phronesis" (practical wisdom) and what Alasdair MacIntyre and others champion as "virtue ethics."⁴⁸

Basically, our consciousness takes on yet another mode of operating when we are confronted with the question of what to do about what we know. The answer could be to do nothing, but that is an answer nonetheless, or perhaps one actually decides that some course of action is the "right" or the "best" one to follow. The answer also could be to wait, to hold off on acting, for any number of reasons. As we operate on the level of deciding and make our way in the world, we become participants more fully in the life of the family, a group, a society, a culture. On this level, the moral and ethical dimensions of human life come into play in the real world—questions of how to treat others, how better to conduct oneself in the world and how best to live one's life in accord with the good. One finds in their own history the values that promote that which is true and good. On the level of deciding, optimally, one not only thinks about "the good" and that which is "right," but actually seeks to do "good," do the right thing, and advance the "common good."

Lonergan explains human development in terms of this level of consciousness.

In fact, the emergence of the fourth level of deliberation, evaluation, choice is a slow process that occurs between the ages of three and six. Then the child's earlier affective symbiosis with the mother is complemented by relations with the father who recognizes in the child a potential person, tells him or her what he or she may and may not do, sets before him or her a model of human conduct, and promises to good behavior the later rewards of the self-determining adult. So the child gradually enters the world mediated by meaning and regulated by values and, by the age of seven, is thought to have attained the use of reason. Still this is only the beginning of human authenticity. One has to have passed well beyond the turmoil of puberty before becoming fully responsible in the eyes of the law. One has to have found out for oneself that one has to decide for oneself what one is to make of oneself; one has to have proved oneself equal to that moment of existential decision; and one has to have kept on proving it in all subsequent decisions, if one is to be an authentic human person.⁴⁹

On this level of deciding the fourth "transcendental imperative" is played out—"be responsible."⁵⁰

It is on this level that existential philosophy takes its cue but tends, perhaps, to privilege the mere act of deciding above all else. Notably, existentialists Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean Paul Sartre praised the heroic act of deciding in face of the ultimate meaninglessness of life and the abyss towards which all human existence is drawn. Lonergan, however, as a different sort of existentialist, stresses the importance of meaning and reasonableness that lead to an existence deemed "authentic," one where the desire to know and the marshalling of the full measure of human consciousness expresses the transcendental drive toward "transcendence."

Deciding in Educational Philosophy

More than valuing equally *all* decision-making and championing "courage" in making decisions in the face of human destruction, as may be a position for some existentialist philosophers, Lonergan's philosophy, and a philosophy of education that

would draw on it, prizes reasonable and responsible decision-making that expresses, or seeks to express, in the real world that which is truly "good," "right," and "true." In practical terms, it is a philosophy of education that regards moral development, a concern for peace and justice, service to the community and citizenship as integral to teaching and learning and to personal development. Lonergan, being a Jesuit philosopher,⁵¹ stressed the importance of the decisional operations of human consciousness as a set of distinct operations that unfold in terms of highly differentiated but integrated sets of cognitional acts that establish what counts as knowledge generally, and what counts as knowledge of "the good." Persons are called upon to "make the good world better"⁵² by making decisions based on what counts as the good and the right and the true, and seeing those decisions actually lead to action.

Of course we find in educational theory and philosophy expressions of this decisional level of human consciousness. More often than not the concern and focus in education centers on meaning, understanding and interpretation, and developing reasoning and critical skills. However, one of the more popular recent movements in educational theory, Constructionism, based largely on the thought and analysis of Jean Piaget, brings to the fore decision-making related to social construction of the "physical" environment.⁵³ To be sure, the movements of constructionism and its companion theory in education, "Constructivism," are complex and multi-dimensional and build on the notion that individuals create for themselves their world of understanding and being. But with the aid of Lonergan's thought this concern has been more deeply understood and critiqued,⁵⁴ and in particular, which is my contention, understood better as arising from distinct intentionalities but interrelated operations of conscious.

Perhaps the area of educational thought that more clearly addresses the concrete world of human affairs stems from political philosophy, and in particular, the rather large topic of citizenship. UNESCO defines citizenship education as "educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society. 'Society' is here understood in the special sense of

a nation with a circumscribed territory which is recognized as a state.”⁵⁵ Educational philosophy has for decades, and longer, addressed citizenship as a key aim whose purpose is to support democracy and democratic institutions. The underlying belief is that an uneducated population threatens good collective decision-making.

One of the chief architects of social philosophy today, John Rawls, was challenged in an influential book by educational philosopher from Stanford University, Eamonn Callan,⁵⁶ in which he argues against Rawls' limited notion of justice and a comprehensive liberalism in favor of a political liberalism that values diversity, and within that, autonomy and moral virtue rooted in reasonableness and the ability to discern “unreason.” Callan states, “... only to the extent that we have thought seriously together about the good life and the good society that we can expect to find a common standpoint of justification that deserves our allegiance.”⁵⁷ As citizens are charged, then, not only to affirm what the good life and the good society entails, citizens are then called by Lonergan to decide and to act, to “be responsible,” and to actually bring about the good.

Critique and Summary

It is a mistake to suggest that the various levels and operations Lonergan elucidated are new to educational philosophy. The opposite, in fact, is the case. Many important themes and concerns in educational philosophy relate to one of, or combinations of, the four levels he has identified. What's new in Lonergan, I maintain, is his thoroughgoing account of the differentiations of the key elements of consciousness, and thus to promise the ability to differentiate key elements of education and educational philosophy. His grand system of thought, as explained throughout his writings, not only makes these differentiations but also explains and advances the interrelations and the integration of these differentiations. Thus is promised also a way to grasp the interrelations and integrations of various elements and expressions of educational philosophy. Lonergan believed that the four basic patterns of operations, of experiencing, understanding, discerning and deciding, are fundamental to everything human beings know and do—whether or not we acknowledge, understand or affirm them. When

we don't acknowledge them, we operate in “undifferentiated consciousness” and when we do acknowledge and understand them, we operate in “differentiated consciousness.” Undifferentiated consciousness, to be sure, does have its successes, but, Lonergan maintains, the conscious and intentional human subject, for my purposes the educator and the learner, operating in a mode of differentiated consciousness can more fully and authentically achieve one's potentialities.

These operations of consciousness unfold in response to various sets of questions related to each of these four levels. In fact, it is the role and function of “the question” to bring to light these differentiations and to promote the operations of consciousness to higher levels of integration. Together, the operations of consciousness propel us to new heights of discovery and learning, to a more deeply grounded authenticity, where we in ever greater degrees acknowledge who we are as conscious, knowing and caring human beings, and then operate explicitly in terms of that acknowledgment. We become more authentic knowers and doers as we unrestrictedly ask questions concerning the four transcendental imperatives of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible. Moreover, Lonergan has identified the broad lines of what human beings achieve when individually and collectively these levels and operations increasingly become realized—as persons, as communities, as societies. A new mode of existence comes into view when we fully and profoundly become committed to being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving. Although it is beyond the scope of this essay to delve into the particularities of this promise, still it could be an exciting exercise to reflect on what the results could be for one's own life and the life of a community.

For the field of education, it is my contention that these differentiated and integrated operations can place education on a new, intriguing pathway. First, there is the promise to place education on a solid methodological, philosophical footing that helps teachers and students achieve the most in their formal studies and in life-long learning, and helps educators realize greater integration of the far too often isolated and imperialistic sets of disciplines that appear in institutions of learning. Second, Lonergan's promise envisions an ability to

understand a wide range of educational philosophies that often are seen to be at odds, but can be seen to be complementary within the larger framework of consciousness differentiations and their interrelations. Third, with Lonergan there is the promise to critique these philosophies by showing in what ways they may be only partial perspectives and limited solutions in an education that demands a more comprehensive approach and engagement. And fourth, a Lonerganian approach to education can help bring persons and communities to greater realizations of the common good and to greater expressions of authentic existence, and to benefit by new dimensions of self-knowledge and a deeper knowledge of the world in which we live. Ultimately, there is the promise to enable educators to wrestle with the questions of ultimate meaning and reality in more confident and compelling ways.

In recommending the promise Lonergan holds for education and educational philosophy, I offer some pause for thought. These take the form of a few questions that for me remain still unaddressed. Does Lonergan rely too heavily on the scientific paradigm for understanding completely what counts as knowing (as would be the complaint of George Grant referred to earlier), and if so, precisely in what ways is Lonergan's account of the structure and operations of human consciousness limited? What then might be the correctives? Are there other types of knowing beyond Lonergan's cognitional theory that are legitimate but which reveal variant structures and processes of consciousness? I am reminded of the work of Temple Grandin on the autistic brain and that thinking and "knowing" consist primarily of pictures rather than words and concepts, and occur as single instances of knowledge rather than a cumulative process of experiencing, understanding and judging endemic to empirical method.⁵⁸ Is Lonergan's account general enough to accommodate elements of human knowing outside of the empirical paradigm? Does educational research demonstrate the effectiveness and value of mapping a broad approach to education based on the structure and operations of human consciousness? Does it follow that, simply because our consciousness operates in an invariant pattern, education should (or optimally) follow this pattern? Could the argument be made

that education occurs not as an operation of a single consciousness but rather as an interplay of various "consciousnesses," as contended by Gardner and Egan. Moreover, where intersubjectivity occurs— as it does dramatically in education with students and teachers in myriad ways—does intersubjectivity also engage the same general structure and operations as personal subjectivity, or are there different, equally fundamental, elements of human consciousness that come into play in person-to-person and group dynamics?

As Lonergan suggests of the nature of human consciousness, further questions arise, and these are some of mine. Answers to any of these questions may perhaps not prove to be detrimental or devastating to Lonergan's promise to education mapped out in this essay; they may in fact prove to be additional support for this particular approach. But these, and probably a host of other questions, still need to be asked, probed and answered satisfactorily. At the end of the day, however, it is probably safe to say that in whatever ways education can be enhanced by a deepened, enriched and enlivened experiencing, understanding, discerning and judging, and by bringing greater clarity and wisdom to one's deciding, then that expression of education is on a right track. This is to say that education would do well, practically and philosophically, to appropriate in more intentional ways these differentiated yet interrelated operations and thus begin to realize Lonergan's promise to education.

There also is a final cautionary note I mention specifically related to the promise suggested here of Lonergan—that this is a rather preliminary, sketchy, and by no means a broadly-based account of the myriad applications Lonergan's thought can have for education, and many further dimensions could, and at some point should, be explored, such as his notion of the "self-correcting process of learning," his notion of development, and his notion of a new social order, "cosmopolis." These are for another time. The aim of this essay has been admittedly modest, simply seeking to introduce educators to an important mind of the 20th century, and to indicate what I believe applications of his thought have for education today and tomorrow. HJE

Notes

¹ Gerard Whelan, S.J., "The Continuing Significance of Bernard Lonergan," *Thinking Faith* http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20080923_1.htm (*Thinking Faith* is the online journal of the British Jesuits.)

² I express special thanks to my co-leaders and to the many faculty members who participated in the Ignatian Scholars Program at Regis University over the past seven years for offering penetrating questions and insightful perspectives on Lonergan as I presented and developed his views related to education. Their input has shaped much of this essay. In particular I note the work of Dr. Marcel Dumestre, Dr. Marie Friedemann, and Dr. Suzie Perry for conceiving of and leading this innovative faculty development program in its formative years.

³ Hugo Meynell, *Redirecting Philosophy: Reflections on the Nature of Knowledge from Plato to Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

⁴ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Herder and Herder, 1972).

⁷ While it is not especially scholarly to refer to book cover blurbs, this one appears on the cover of the 1978 edition of *Insight* as a reference to the *Newsweek* article where this quote first appeared.

⁸ John Macquarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1988), 379-80.

⁹ For an excellent, authoritative overview of Lonergan's work, see Tad Dunne's entry in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/lonergan/#H5>. For links to Lonergan centers and institutes around the world, see: <http://bclonergan.org/lonergan-links/>.

¹⁰ Parker Palmer is widely known for his epithet concerning teachers, "We teach who we are."

¹¹ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Topics in Education*. Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

¹² *Topics in Education*, 24.

¹³ See: Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Kieran Egan, *The Educated Mind: How Cognitive Tools Shape Our Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Jessica Brown

and Mikkel Gerken, eds., *Knowledge Ascriptions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ This reference to Gasset is found in the excellent introduction to Lonergan's work, Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., *Lonergan* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 58.

¹⁵ William Christian, *George Grant: A Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 207

¹⁶ Christian, *George Grant*, 170.

¹⁷ Center for Mission and Identity, Xavier University, *Teaching to the Mission: A Compendium of the Ignatian Mentoring Program* (Cincinnati, OH: Xavier University, 2010). The book offers insight and methods in integrating ideals of the Jesuit mission across the departments and disciplines of Xavier University.

¹⁸ I find Lonergan's thought convincing because I affirm his explications of the differentiations and interrelations of operations of consciousness in my own interiority, in my own consciousness—which is a key point for Lonergan.

¹⁹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). Taylor regards a sense of "inwardness," the realm of ideas and self-understanding as a key dimension of identity. Lonergan calls this realm, "interiority."

²⁰ Frederick E. Crowe, "The Exigent Mind: Bernard Lonergan's Intellectualism," in *Spirit as Inquiry: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lonergan, S.J.*, Frederick E. Crowe, ed. (Chicago: Saint Xavier College/Continuum, 1964), 27.

²¹ I tend to prefer the term "discerning" since "judging" tends to carry negative connotations, such as being "judgmental" or "levying criticism" about things. Discerning seems to be more neutral. However, the term "judgment" occurs as a commonly used category in philosophical discourse.

²² Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 322.

²³ Lonergan, *Insight* (1978), 74.

²⁴ John Dewey, "Criteria of Experience," in *Experience and Education* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 33-38.

²⁵ Bradley Baurain, "Common Ground with A Common Faith: Dewey's Idea of the 'Religious,'" *Education and Culture* 27, no. 2 (2011): 74-91.

²⁶ For additional explanation and application of Lonergan's account of experience related to human interiority, see Tad Dunne, "The Praxis of Noticing" in *Spiritual Mentoring* <http://users.wowway.com/~tdunne5273/SpMent.pdf>, 65-77, and Kurt M. Denk, S.J., "Making Connections, Finding Meaning, Engaging the World: Theory and Techniques for Ignatian Reflection on Service for and with Others," http://www.loyola.edu/Justice/ignatian%20spirituality%20resources_LIVE_.html.

²⁷ For additional information on the importance or critique of experientially-based education, see John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Collier Books, 1963) First published in 1938, it remains a classic that helped spark the progressive movement in education and “experienced-based” learning; Marget Buchmann and John Schwille, “Education: the Overcoming of Experience,” *American Journal of Education* 92, no. 1 (November 1983): 30-51. The authors argue against the importance of “first-hand experience” in education. Note: This citation provides a contrary view that expands the conversation on the issue of experience in education; and Lee Andersen, David Boud and Ruth Cohen, “Experienced-based Learning,” in *Understanding Adult Education and Training*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 225-239. The authors strongly advocate the important role experience plays education and learning, and also allude to some philosophically-based concerns.

²⁸ Christian, *George Grant*, 332.

²⁹ See an account of constructivism: <http://www.teach-nology.com/currenttrends/constructivism/>.

³⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 13.

³¹ Lonergan, *Insight* (1978), 322.

³² For an in-depth exposition of Lonergan's notion of understanding and cognition, see Joseph Fitzpatrick, S.J., “Lonergan's Structure of Cognition”: <http://lonergan.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Structure-of-Cognition1.pdf>, particularly parts (1) through (5). And for a study of Lonergan's account of understanding and cognition related to aspects of educational philosophy see Andrew Dwight, “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,” *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 1, no. 1 (2012): 31-45. <http://jesuithighereducation.org/index.php/jhe/article/view/8>.

³³ Kieran Egan, *The Educated Mind: How Cognitive Tools Shape Our Understanding* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997). This text is also available online via open access.

³⁴ Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

³⁵ In various passages throughout *Insight*, Lonergan explains how three categories of bias impede our judgments and ultimately stymie our development as individuals and as groups of individuals. These biases are “individual,” “group,” and “general.” *Insight* (1992), 242-267.

³⁶ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 292

³⁷ Lonergan, *Insight* (1978), 322.

³⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: Free Press, 1967), and Malcolm D. Evans,

Whitehead and Philosophy of Education: The Seamless Coat of Learning (Atlanta, GA: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1998).

³⁹ See: <http://www.projectwisdom.com/>.

⁴⁰ Key texts on critical thinking include: John Chaffee, *Thinking Critically*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991); Patricia King and Karen Kitchener, *Developing Reflective Judgment: Understanding and Promoting Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking in Adolescents and Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994); Bruce R. Reichenbach, *Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Boston: McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2001).

⁴¹ For a discussion on judgment, critical thinking, and bias in Lonergan, see Tad Dunne, “Critical Thinking and Bias: <http://users.wowway.com/~tdunne5273/Critical%20Thinking.pdf>.

⁴² John Chaffee, *Thinking Critically*, xiii.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ W. H. Werkmeister, *An Introduction to Critical Thinking: A Beginner's Text in Logic* (Lincoln, NB: Johnsen Publishing Company, 1948.)

⁴⁵ Ibid., xvi.

⁴⁶ Ibid., xvii.

⁴⁷ Lonergan, *Insight* (1992), 413-414.

⁴⁸ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2007).

⁴⁹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 121.

⁵⁰ For additional explanation of Lonergan's account of “deciding,” see Terry J. Tekippe and Louis Roy, “Lonergan and the Fourth Level of Intentionality” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 70 (1996): 225-42. Note sections III “The Fourth Level,” VI “The Decision,” and VII “Conclusion.” <http://lonergan.concordia.ca/dialectics/tt.htm>.

⁵¹ Jesuits are known for their practice of the “spiritual exercises” set forth by the order's founder, Ignatius of Loyola. Central to these reflections and meditations are the processes of decision-making. There are many translations and interpretations of the Exercises, such as George E. Ganss, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. A Translation and Commentary* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992).

⁵² “Make the good world better” was a phrase Fr. Michael Sheeran, President of Regis University, 1993 – 2012, commonly used in his charge to graduating students each commencement.

⁵³ Kenneth R. Howe and Jason Berv, “Constructing Constructivism, Epistemology and Pedagogy,” and Eric

Bredo, "Reconsidering Social Constructivism: The Relevance of George Herbert Mead's Interactionism," in *Constructivism in Education: Opinions and Second Opinions on Controversial Issues*, D. C. Phillips, ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 19-40 and 127-157. On the distinction between constructivism and constructionism, see <http://changingminds.org/explanations/research/philosophies/constructionism.htm>.

⁵⁴ Lance Grigg uses Lonergan's notion of insight to argue that constructivism and constructionism are foundational to educational theory and other dimensions of the teaching-learning process and shows how these educational theories can benefit by Lonergan's philosophy. Lance M. Grigg, "Reconstructing Foundations: An Insight-Based Approach to Constructivism and Constructionism in Educational Theory and Practice," *Method: A Journal of Lonergan Studies, New Series* 1, no. 2 (2010): 125-138.

⁵⁵ See: http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_b/intellect/mod07task03/appendix.htm.

⁵⁶ Eamonn Callan, *Creating Citizens. Political Education and Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁵⁷ Callan, *Creating Citizens*, 218.

⁵⁸ Temple Grandin and Richard Panek, *The Autistic Brain: Thinking Across the Spectrum* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).