

Insight and Beyond

Class 12, Part One: December 2nd 2009

“Common Sense as Object”

(Insight, Chapter 7)

&

“The Good as Developing Object”

(Topics in Education, Chapters 2 & 3)

Summary of Material

What Lonergan means by “Object” in all 3 chapter titles:

Influence of Hegel: “*Objective Spirit*” — how “Spirit” gets objectified in society.

The emergence of intelligence as a principle underlying social orders implies a new notion of “the good” over and above the primitive notion of the social good having to do with immediate intersubjectivity and the satisfaction of immediate desires.

Not only the social good but also the historical good — the good of the historical human community.

Challenge of promoting the good of history, as the key to understanding the entire project of *Insight*.

The notion of “the good under construction” from Flannery O’Connor is the key to all of Lonergan’s works.

Common Sense as Historical.

Lonergan's project of introducing history into Catholic theology.

More than merely the challenge of integrating critical historical research into biblical research and into the study of church history.

Not just understanding the history of the past, but understanding and transforming the history in the midst of which we stand.

A challenge to cooperate with the positive dynamics of history and help heal the negative ones.

Student question about the boundary between philosophy and theology.

- Philosophy deals with what finite human reason and how knowledge of the knower allows humans to know some things about the whole (finite and transcendent), without yet knowing everything about the whole. Theology has to do with what can be known from an additional dynamic: transcendent grace.
- Further discussion about historical communal enterprise grounded in religious experiences. Theology gives special attention to the traditions of those historical communities.

Lonergan thinks of Common Sense as Object in terms of 3 dynamics (but only 2 in Chapter 7).

Three Types of Historical Dynamics (analogous to Newton's Principles of Motion)

Pure progress (analogous to straight line motion)

Social decline (analogous to deviation due to external force of sun's gravity)

Recovery or redemption (further complications due to gravitational forces of other bodies)

The Principles of Progress, Decline, and Recovery are intellectual development, bias/sin, redemption, respectively.

In *Insight* these are treated in a purely philosophical context; in *Topics in Education* Lonergan addresses them in a theological context and using theological terms.

Redemption and recovery from bias.

Again, Lonergan uses both Christian theological terms and non-theological terms such as 'New Soil' to look at the recovery from bias.

Escaping the intractable biases or bitterness of a social situation.

Lonergan's use of a metaphor from calculus to characterize the dynamics of human history: "the differentials" of the human good, as developing object.

Illustration of calculus of the graph of a curve which advances, declines, and recovers.

Loneragan's concern with long historical cycles: economic and cultural cycles.

The young Lonergan was concerned with the problem of economic progress and decline; the influence of Schumpeter *et al*, who argued that economics must be a historical science.

Little imperceptible things happening which, over many decades, accumulate into progress or decline.

Loneragan was also influenced by Toynbee's studies of the rise and fall of civilizations.

Loneragan asks why humanity repeatedly tends to destroy the achievements of classic civilizations.

Loneragan thought he had gotten to the root of that problem in his account of the dynamics of history.

The cyclical nature of the human good (developing, declining, and recovering).

Explanation of Diagram of "differentials" and how the three forces interact to shape the three dynamics of human history.

"Differentials" as the little acts that people do, which then accumulate into historical movements.

Small, individual human acts of intellectual development, bias, and recovery/redemption that happen at all moments in history.

Student question about the difference between the force of recovery and the force of progress.

- Recovery serves to heal the wounds of bias and clear the way for progress. Bias can be an accumulation of hurts, giving rise to recrimination, etc. Illustration: Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.
- A new principle eliminating retaliation is needed.
- Generic meaning of bias: whatever interferes with and disrupts the spontaneous, natural, self-correcting cycle of inquiry and insight.

Student question about what motivates recovery from bias, and what distinguishes it from intellectual progress.

The source of recovery is ultimately something distinct from the unrestricted desire that generates the self-correcting cycle of inquiry and insight. Lonergan does not take this up until Chapter 20 in *Insight*.

Further discussion and examples: actors from the TV program *The Wire* good illustration of the concrete ways in which forces of progress, decline, and redemption interact. Some of the actors from that TV series now working with young gang members, and undoing the accumulated effects of bias in their lives, as examples of reversing decline.

Student question: if sin and bias are defined as flights from understanding, does Lonergan leave room for pure evil, or are we left with the Platonic notion that moral errors are only intellectual errors. Does this account do justice to the evil of the Holocaust?

- Yes, Lonergan also identifies sources of evil that are not reducible to intellectual errors, but not until later in *Insight*.
- Discussion about evil as emerging from preceding situations of accumulating bias and the ideas promulgated.

Question about whether all evil is ‘explained.’

- All evil is radically unintelligible; describing the dynamics of history is not tantamount to explaining evil.

Question about whether bias and redemption are necessary in order to take us to a higher level of good.

- Bias/sin is not necessary for a higher level of grace or of good.
- But concretely in history, one of the most important effects of grace is to undo the destructive effects of bias/sin, and thereby make possible a higher level of good.

Question as to whether theology and philosophy can be kept separate if redemption is involved.

Can one really talk philosophically about recovery without explicitly invoking Christ?

- Discussion of how Lonergan does indeed distinguish them.
- Differences among ways he treats these issues in *Insight* vs. in his theological writings.
- Uses the philosophical clarification of the dynamics of human history to then offer a better theological interpretation of what is meant by redemption in Christianity, without importing that doctrine into the philosophical investigation.

The analogy of differential as infinitesimal.

In an infinitesimal instant of time, an individual's deed can originate from either the self-correcting process, bias, or redemption.

We can feel that our small, individual actions don't make any difference.

But in fact every action, small or grand, is always already situated in a complex set of dynamics, and becomes a contribution to something larger — whether progress, decline, or redemption.

Each of our actions does matter, in the ways that they contribute to these dynamics.

Which is why self-appropriation of these dynamics of history is so important.

The place of philosophy in the Good as Developing Object — Good Under Construction.

One of the most significant sources of decline is the general bias against theoretical pursuits, such as philosophy.

The importance of Lonergan's philosophy of saving practicality from itself, from the inevitable social and historical consequences of general bias.

Need for a human science grounded in self-appropriation that can discriminate between the facts that result from intelligence and those that result from bias.

Counterexample of a human science which does not critically engage the unintelligibility of bias: Machiavelli's capitulation to practicality in *The Prince*.

Capitulation to practicality makes it impossible to discern between the intelligible and unintelligible.

Implicit philosophy: Everyone has an implicit philosophy, a personal view of what we are doing when we are knowing; what's real and not real; what's good and what's not; what's just, true, beautiful.

Explicit philosophy: systems explicitly expounded by philosophers.

Critical philosophy of self-appropriation.

Simply in virtue of the fact that each of us is an intelligent and reflective being, we are situated in history; what we do as a result of thinking well or not affects history; and we are affected by the history that others have bequeathed to us.

The philosophy of self-appropriation can help correct the unfolding of human history.

It can interact with human praxis and human sciences in ways that can enhance human cooperation with the positive dynamics in history and mitigate attraction to the negative dynamics of the biases.

Common sense as object, as historical, is a *succession* of social situations (“Goods of Order“).

Self-appropriation is of ourselves as always already participants in those institutions and social situations, and as participants in the historical transformation of succession.

Once again, Lonergan raising the Question of the Whole: the wholeness of human living, as built upon and a prolongation of the emergent probability of the natural world.

Chapter 7 is pointing towards clarifying further the question of the whole of nature, human history, human good, all that is real, all that is good.

End of Part I

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&

“The Good as Developing Object”

(Topics in Education, Chapters 2 & 3)

What Lonergan means by “Object” in all three
chapter titles.

Influence of Hegel: “*Objective Spirit*” — how “Spirit”
gets objectified in society.

The emergence of intelligence as a principle
underlying social orders implies a new notion of

“the good”

over and above the primitive notion of the social good
having to do with immediate intersubjectivity and the
satisfaction of immediate desires.

Okay. Well, welcome to our class! And today we’re going to be talking about Chapter Seven of *Insight* which is supplemented by Lonergan’s Chapters two and three of *Topics in Education* (CWL 10, Chapter Two “The Human Good as Object: It’s Invariant Structure,” pp. 26-48; and Chapter Three “The Human Good as Object: Differentials and Integration”, pp. 49-78). And the word ‘object’ occurs in both of those, “Common Sense as Object” and “The Human Good as Developing Object.”¹

¹ These are is not the precise titles of Chapters Two and Three of *Topics*, which in fact are Chapter Two: “The Human Good as Object: It’s Invariant Structure,” and Chapter Three: “The Human Good as Object: Differentials and Integration.” Pat’s formulation, however, brings out a key strand in the meaning of these chapters.

The word ‘object’ here reflects, I think, in a very profound way, Lonergan’s influence by and response to Hegel. So the idea that he’s taking from Hegel — we’re not going to have a kind of a lecture on Hegel here, which I’m not capable of giving anyway — but the basic idea here is “*Objective Spirit*.” How human intelligence, in this case human common sense, gets objectified in society and in history. So that is the fundamental theme here.

**Common Sense as Object
Social & Historical**

**“This transformation forces on man a new
notion of the good.”** (*CWL* 3, p. 238).

“The good in us is under construction.”

Flannery O’Connor, *Introduction to a Memoir of
Mary Ann*

And I thought I would begin with an interesting — what I find an interesting comment, that comes about ten pages into Chapter Seven: “**This transformation forces on humanity a new notion of the good.**” (*CWL* 3, p. 238).

What notion of the good is being forced upon humanity? What transformation is he talking about? So up until the paragraph that begins with that, “**This transformation forces on humanity a new notion of the good,**” Lonergan has been talking about civil community.

Though civil community has its obscure origins in human intersubjectivity, though it develops imperceptibly, though it decks itself out with more primitive attractions, still it is a new creation. (*CWL* 3, p. 238).

What’s the difference between primitive community and civil community, as Lonergan is conceiving of it? ... Yeah, Matt?

Matt: Creative intelligence, human intelligence, creating order within society.

Pat: That's right, that's right. So **the difference is** the humanly, intelligently grounded orders that supercede what he is referring to here as "primitive community." Now, we're going to go back and look at what he means by primitive community — what he means by this.

But I want to draw attention to this as, I think, *a really significant indication of what Lonergan is up to in this chapter, and arguably in the whole book of Insight*. This "**forces upon humanity a new notion of the good.**" (CWL 3, p. 238). And immediately following that remark, he uses a term, **the good of order**. But

But in civil community there has to be acknowledged a further component, which we propose to name *the good of order*. It consists in an intelligible pattern of relationships ... (CWL 3, p. 238, italics inserted).

I'll come back on that a little bit later. So *the good of order, a new notion: the social good, the social good grounded in human intelligence*.

**Not only the social good but also the historical good
— the good of the historical human community.**

**Challenge of promoting the good of history, as the key
to understanding the entire project of *Insight*.**

**The notion of "the good under construction" from
Flannery O'Connor is the key to all of Lonergan's works.**

But there is a broader sense in which Lonergan is talking about a new notion of the good that's implicit here, and gradually becomes a little more explicit as the Chapter moves on. It's the notion not only of the *social* good, the civil community, but the *historical* good. There's a further notion of the good, namely the good in the historical human community. So Lonergan is raising here a way of thinking about good that is going to place significant demands upon human living; or is going to reveal, so to speak, the demands that humanity faces. And his analysis, I think, arguably the whole of the book of *Insight*, is concerned with this particular problem.

I borrowed a phrase from Flannery O'Connor, which I think parallels this: "The good in us is under construction."² Flannery O'Conner wrote an "Introduction" to a memoir of a little girl called Mary Anne. Mary Anne was afflicted with a very awful disfiguring form of cancer. She was a very young girl, and she was taken care of by a community of nuns; and they wanted to write this story about her because of the grace and courage with which she underwent this awful disease, the joy and happiness that she brought to the community by her selflessness, and so on; when in fact most people would say what you would do is mourn and be sad and be depressed and bitter about the fate that has befallen you. But Mary Anne was quite the opposite. And this order of nuns wrote this story about Mary Anne, and they asked Flannery O'Connor to write an "Introduction." And in this she coins this phrase that has become somewhat famous, that *the good in us is under construction!*

Loneragan is talking about a new notion of the good that is under construction. And *that's a key, I think, to what he's doing in Insight, what he's doing in this chapter, and arguably what he's been doing — what he does in the totality of his works.* So we want to begin to get a glimpse of this. Some of what he is putting in play here in Chapter Seven is actually a continuation of what he's been doing in the prior six chapters; and some of it is not going to be played out until the end of this book, and indeed until some of his later writing. So it's a new notion of the good, the good under construction.

Common Sense as Historical.

Loneragan's project of introducing history into
Catholic theology.

More than merely the challenge of integrating critical
historical research into biblical research and into the
study of church history.

Not just understanding the history of the past, but
understanding and transforming the history in the
midst of which we stand.

² See Flannery O'Connor, *Collected Works*, ed. Sally Fitzgerald, The Library of America, New York, 1988, p. 830.

A challenge to cooperate with the positive dynamics of
history and help heal the negative ones.

Common Sense as Historical

**“All my work has been introducing history into
Catholic theology.”**

How to cooperate with the positive dynamics in
history, and to reverse the negative dynamics.

You may recall in the first class, I shared with you this remark that Lonergan made: **“All my work has been introducing history into Catholic Theology!”** And I think **that** what he means by that is revealed here in the concerns that he has, the issues that he raises, the analysis that he engages in this chapter **seven** on *“Common Sense as Object.”* He doesn’t just mean the introduction of historical methods, and historical analyses of Biblical texts. That was something that took place in the earlier generation in Protestant Studies and Protestant Theology. Catholic Theology struggled to incorporate the historical critical methods into documents from early Church History and from Scripture. But Lonergan, though he meant that, he meant to include that, **but** he actually had, I think, something wider and more comprehensive in mind. *What I think he had in mind was the challenge for Catholic Theology, and you might say Theology in general, certainly Philosophy in general, as we’ll see towards the end of the class [Pat reads from his slide display]: the challenge of discovering “how to cooperate with the positive dynamics of history, and to reverse the negative dynamics.”*

In other words, he’s not just concerned with the role of history in Philosophy and Theology as an intellectual study, although he does include that. More and beyond the study of the historical understanding of history, of the past, *Lonergan is concerned with understanding the history that we stand in the midst of as we are involved in the Construction of the Human Good, as we are involved in the Good under Construction; because we can also be involved in*

the Good under Destruction. So his work is a concern to think about what it is that Philosophy and Theology has to do with the problem of living authentically as a historical being; and learning how to, as the Jesuits say, how to learn how to read the signs of the times — because the signs of the times are, for Lonergan, the dynamics of history — learn how to read them, in order to cooperate with what is positive in history and to heal what is negative in history.

Student question about the boundary between philosophy and theology.

— **Philosophy** deals with what finite human reason and how knowledge of the knower allows humans to know some things about the whole (finite and transcendent), without yet knowing everything about the whole. **Theology** has to do with what can be known from an additional dynamic: transcendent grace.

— Further discussion about historical communal enterprise grounded in religious experiences.

Theology gives special attention to the traditions of those historical communities.

Somebody, I think: Byron?

Byron: One kind of perennial question that I've had, when I was just going through these sections was: for Lonergan, and I know he writes on this, but I still can't figure it out! What is — when do you make this step from doing Philosophy to doing Theology?

Pat (pauses): I'll try to give a brief answer here. It is something that takes us to the end of *Insight*, and then the things that he does after *Insight*.

As Lonergan understood it, *Philosophy has to do with the investigation of what can be known by finite human reason*. Now, by “finite human reason,” Lonergan means something

rather different than the Enlightenment, or even say the Greek classical notions of reason. *So he's going to have a very specific understanding of what he means by intelligence and reasonableness. But Philosophy has to do with that!* More importantly, Philosophy — as Lonergan understands it — is differentiated from what can be known by human reason in its common sense modes, in its artistic modes, in its interpersonal modes, in its scholarly modes, and in its scientific modes. So Philosophy has a very specific domain, so to speak, of what can be known by human reason. And this is the sort of thing that he sets out in a fairly explicit fashion in Chapter Fourteen [CWL 3, “The Method of Metaphysics”, pp. 410-455]; and there he is going to make a distinction between the *Metaphysics of Proportionate Being* and the *Metaphysics of Transcendent Being*. And most of the rest of the book from Chapters Fourteen to Chapter Eighteen, is going to be concerned with the *Metaphysics of Proportionate Being*; and then Chapters Nineteen and Twenty are concerned with the *Metaphysics of Transcendent Being*, although he doesn't use the term in those chapters.

Metaphysics, as Lonergan says, has to do with the whole in being, or if you like, with the whole *in* reality, but not the whole *of* reality. So Metaphysics or Philosophy is concerned, *not with the totality of all that is*, because that would be the capability of any single human being or any finite number of human beings, but rather that *there is a wholeness to being that can be known, without yet knowing everything that is to be known. And for Lonergan, the key to that is self-appropriation! Knowing the knower allows you to say some things, not everything about the whole, both the finite and the transcendent whole. So that's the role of Philosophy.*

As he understands it, the role of Theology has to do with what can be known on the basis, not *solely* of the unrestricted desire to know and the insights and the judgments and the judgements of value that flow from that, *but what also can be known from another dynamic, the dynamic of transcendent grace.* And as we'll see, he is going to talk about “**being in love in an unrestricted fashion**” [see, e.g., CWL 3, pp. 681, 711, 720-721] *as another dynamic in human consciousness. Theology has to do with what can be known on the basis of both the unrestricted desire to know and the unrestricted being in love. As he says, being in love in an unrestricted fashion gives us a kind of knowledge that's different from what we can know from inquiring into our sensible experiences and our data of consciousness. So that's the big distinction!*

Now another kind of distinction: it's what you might call *the second level of distinction*, is: what a community that's been inspired by, and held together by, those supernatural gifts of grace, what that community has to say about the realities that are revealed thereby. So it's not just a solitary going into my soul and looking there, and seeing what my religious experiences tell me! *It's a communal enterprise and a technic-historical human enterprise!* So that would be a way of saying what the distinction is. So communities that are grounded in constituting religious experiences, and what the Catholic Theology at least has called, *the habits and the acts of grace*: those communities have said some things about the realities that they come to know on that basis, and those claims are taken seriously by Theology in a way that would be beyond what Philosophy, as Lonergan and most other philosophers, how they understand it. Okay? ... So I hope we'll have an opportunity to talk about some of that in greater detail next semester. Okay?

Byron: Thank you very much!

Okay. So I just wanted to introduce you to this — What is he getting at — I want to talk about *the whole view*, to give us an overview of what he's doing in Chapter Seven (*CWL* 3, "Common Sense as Object," pp. 232-269), as well as the Chapters two and three of *Topics in Education* (*CWL* 10, Chapter Two "The Human Good as Object: It's Invariant Structure," pp. 26-48; and Chapter Three "The Human Good as Object: Differentials and Integration", pp. 49-78); and then to look more at some of the specifics.

Lonergan thinks of Common Sense as Object in terms
of 3 dynamics (but only 2 in Chapter 7).

Three Types of Historical Dynamics (analogous to
Newton's Principles of Motion)

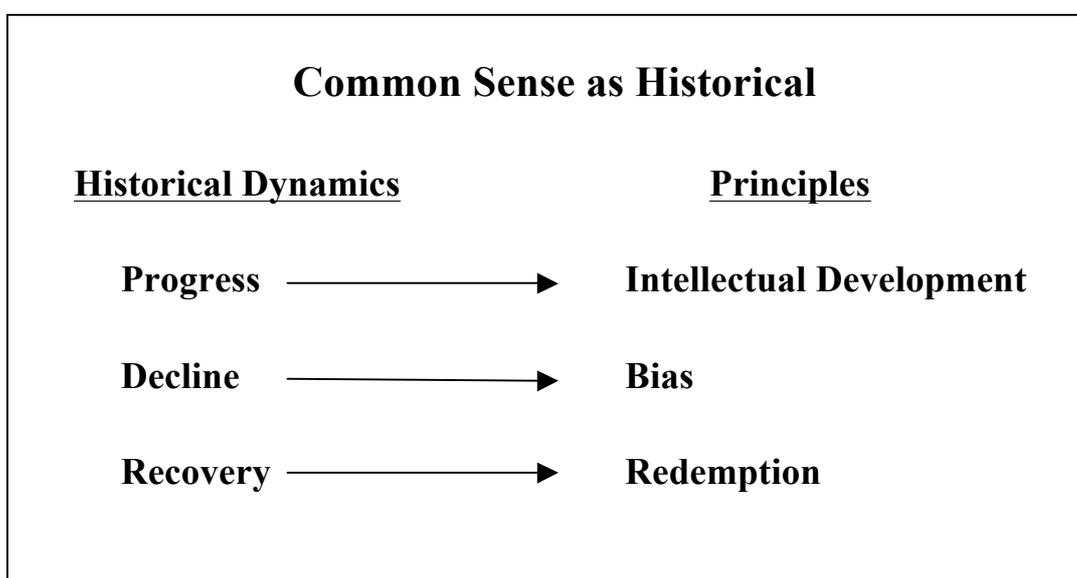
Pure progress (analogous to straight line motion)

Social decline (analogous to deviation due to external
force of sun's gravity)

Recovery or redemption (further complications due to
gravitational forces of other bodies)

The Principles of Progress, Decline and Recovery are intellectual development, bias/sin, redemption, respectively.

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And the thing about Common Sense as Object, to think about Common Sense as history, as historical: *Lonergan's approach is to think of it in terms of three dynamics.* And he uses this metaphor: he says in a couple of different places: He says, well, it's sort of like Newton. Newton's first law is the law sometimes called *the Law of Inertia: A body in motion remains in motion, a body at rest remains at rest, unless acted on by an external force.* That, of course, as I think I said earlier in our course, that was a big breakthrough! *Because up until Galileo and Newton, it was assumed that if something is moving, there has to be something moving it.* And Galileo's law of motion, which Newton takes over, is that *as long as things are moving in an inertial fashion, constant velocity in a straight line, you don't need to explain that; what you need to explain is why things deviate from constant straight-line velocity. That's what needs an explanation!* And that was the big transformation in the

way in which our science thinks about motion, [namely](#), that straight-line inertial motion doesn't need to be explained. It's deviation from [such motion that requires explanation](#).

So what Lonergan says in a first approximation then, what you've got is straight-line motion: Newton's first law. But there's a hint that there's more to come, because the tail-end of his first principle is: "unless acted on by an external force"! And then, of course, Newton introduces the external force of gravity. So in the first approximation, you have a straight line. In the second approximation, you have a deviation from the straight line, that's due to the gravitational force. But that's not the whole story either, because the Sun is not the only gravitating body in the universe. So the planet Mars not only would have gone in a straight line, but is deviated into an elliptical path by the Sun, but it's further deviated by the influence of other planets in the planetary system.

So Lonergan uses this as a kind of a metaphor for talking about the dynamics of human history.

In the first approximation, you would have **pure progress**. But there is a deviation from pure progress in that there is also **social decline**. But social decline is not the only force operating either: there is also **recovery**, or as he refers to it explicitly in *Topics in Education*, **redemption**. *So there's three dynamic to history*. Just as he says that there's three approximations in Newtonian Celestial Mechanics, there are three approximations [in his account of the dynamics of history also](#). And, a corresponding: if you ask: "Why is there progress?" you're asking after the **Principle of Progress**! If you ask: "Why is there then decline?" you're asking for the **Principle of Decline**! And if you ask: "Why is there recovery?" you're asking for the **Principle of Recovery**! Social and Historical Progress, Social and Historical Decline, Social and Historical Recovery. 'Principle' in this sense is not like the principles of Euclidean Physics, a proposition from which you deduce things; it is rather *the source*. Principle in this case means what comes first, what's at the root of it all: what's fundamental; what's the fundamental source of progress, of decline, and of recovery!

Redemption and recovery from bias.

Again, Lonergan uses both Christian theological terms and non-theological terms such as ‘New Soil’ to look at the recovery from bias.

Escaping the intractable biases or bitterness of a social situation.

And Lonergan calls, in *Topics in Education* — he says, well, *the Principal of Progress is intellectual development*. Now he makes a distinction between *intellectual development* and *reflective development*.

When *Topics in Education* was — The origin of *Topics in Education* was a series of lectures that Lonergan gave at a Summer Course at Xavier University in Cincinnati, a two weeks Summer Course. It wasn’t published until after his death! There was a typescript of it that was circulating around, but it wasn’t published until after he died. Those little headings in the book that we now have were inserted by the editors [Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe]. And you have this odd thing that there’s intellectual development and then under intellectual development there’s intellectual development and reflective development (*CWL* 10, pp. 50-58). So you need some other kind of a term. I’ll try to explain a little bit about why he has that funny little zigzag in there.

But for the moment let’s just stick with the simple version: that the principle or source of progress, social progress, historical progress, is intellectual development. The source of decline is bias! Now he uses the word ‘sin’ in *Topics in Education* (see e.g., *CWL* 10, pp. 58-65), which is to take the term ‘bias’ as it’s introduced in Chapters Six and Seven of *Insight* as a philosophical term, and to give it a theological interpretation. *It’s still the same phenomenon, but understood in a different context*. So to talk about bias is to talk about it as a deviation from [the](#) intellectual self-correcting process of transformation. In other words, to talk about it as bias is to talk about it but specifically in reference to human intelligence and its self-correcting constructive goodness. To talk about it as sin is to talk about it in the context of thinking about, in the theological terms, what one does with the gift of one’s intelligence when one acts in a biased way: one takes what is in fact a gift, and abuses it!

And so it's to situate it within the Jewish and Christian, and I think implicitly the Muslim context, of talking about sin. But to *talk about it as bias is to situate it specifically in relationship to the self-correcting process of knowing that we are in the process of trying to appropriate in this class; to talk about it as sin is to situate it in a larger theological discourse.* And then Recovery has to do with Redemption. He talks about different kinds of Redemption. The last way that he talks about Redemption in the *Topics in Education* chapter is by a specific reference to the Christian notion of Redemption in Christ (*CWL 10*, pp. 66-69).

But before he does that, he explores other ways of thinking about what's involved, what's the possibility, what are the dynamics, of recovery from bias. (*CWL 10*, pp. 65-66). So for example, he talks about "New Soil."³ "New Soil" is a symbolic term. And *what "New Soil" means is leaving a social situation for the sake of getting away from the intractableness of the biases that are constitutive of that social situation.* People move all the time. People move for all kinds of reasons. People move to go to college, people move to follow jobs, people move to follow spouses and loved ones, people move for a variety of reasons. People move because the fertility of the land has dried up, or because the waters have washed away the arable land. But people sometimes move because they just get fed up; they can't stand living with those people any more. One of my former students said about the place that she was living before she moved: "It's like a constant thorn in my shoe!" She had to go someplace else!

Lonergan used to tell this story about a man that he knew who was of Armenian ancestry. And as perhaps many of you know, there was a great genocide against the Armenians at the beginning of the twentieth century. It's estimated that over one and a half million Armenians died in the persecutions by the Turks. And this man's parents never told him that he was Armenian. He didn't find out that he was Armenian until he was about thirty years old. And when he found out, he asked them: "Why didn't you ever tell me that?" They said: "Because we didn't want you to suffer the hatred that has come — that has been passed on generation by generation!"

³ *CWL 10: Topics in Education*, p. 66. The editors add a helpful footnote as follows: "See Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. 2: *The Geneses of Civilizations*, part 2, 73-100, 395-99. Toynbee's expression is 'New Ground.'"

So those are examples of ways in which recovery is a dynamic in human history: the ways in which people endeavour to free themselves of the accumulating bitterness and intractableness and hatred, and the self-defeating, the self-reinforcing, cycles of bias. Those are just some examples.

But Lonergan is talking in three very general ways, taking as his point of departure, intellectual development. Were there no bias, human history, human society, would be in one mitigated progress of constant improvement. But in fact, there is bias! And so we have the messy situation that Lonergan calls **the social surd**.

Lonergan's use of a metaphor from calculus to characterize the dynamics of human history: "the differentials" of the human good, as developing object.

Illustration of calculus of the graph of a curve which advances, declines, and recovers.

Lonergan's concern with long historical cycles: economic and cultural cycles.

The young Lonergan was concerned with the problem of economic progress and decline; the influence of Schumpeter *et al*, who argued that economics must be a historical science.

Little imperceptible things happening which, over many decades, accumulate into progress or decline.

Lonergan was also influenced by Toynbee's studies of the rise and fall of civilizations.

**"Differentials" of the Human Good
As Developing Object**

Now in *Topics in Education* he uses this metaphor. He says: “I’m going to use a metaphor from calculus, the metaphor of the differentials. So Professor Byrne took it to a ridiculous extreme!

[Affectionate laughter]

But hopefully it will make a little bit of sense for you. And so calculus as applied to the analytic geometry of curves: This is a cubic curve. The equation for it is given below [lower left of slide display]. I chose those numbers carefully, so that we would get a nice movement here. Because *remember what Lonergan is interested in is the movement in history of progress, decline and recovery*. So that’s why I chose this particular curve. The first third of the curve is the pure progress; except we’re going to see it’s not really pure progress, but it is progress. The second third of the curve is decline, and then the last third of the curve is recovery.

Now in the past when I taught this, I could always refer to some past history. We have, in our own time, as we speak and listen today, we’re in the middle of decline! We’re in the middle of decline where there is some hope that maybe we’re right here where the decline is turning from — has hit bottom and is starting to turn up, economic decline!

That was one of the things that Lonergan was quite concerned with as a young man. He spent about three years in the early nineteen-forties working on the problem of economic decline; and was attempting to understand the causes of economic decline! And he was up against two kinds of issues that are implicitly illustrated, or implicitly addressed, in Chapter Seven. *The first was the widespread practice in the field of economics that was ahistorical*. That isn’t to say that everybody was ahistorical, or that every person who was an economist or doing economic studies didn’t know anything about history. But most economists were looking at data and phenomena that were, so to speak, relatively short term. There were a couple of people who had done some research just prior to Lonergan’s interest in this field. One of them was a man by the — a French economist by the name of Clément Juglar.⁴ But

⁴ **Clément Juglar**, (1819—1905), was a French physician and economist who made detailed studies of cycles in business and trade. Juglar qualified as a doctor in 1846. His medical training gave him an interest in population and demography, but it appears to have been the economic disturbances of 1848 that attracted him to the subject of economic fluctuations and crises. In 1851 he began contributing to the *Journal des Économistes*, and in 1860 he submitted an essay, *Des Crises commerciales* (published as a book, 1862,

then, more recently, just a few years before Lonergan himself picked up this topic, was the famous Harvard economist, Joseph Schumpeter,⁵ who had come from Austria. And Schumpeter in particular argued that if you're going to be an economist you have to know the history of economics, because the important things to know take sixty years to work themselves out. Now that's three generations; that's from the time you're born to the time you start to have hair that looks like mine.

Most people don't do their economic studies and gather the data over a sixty year period. Schumpeter in fact looked at about a two hundred year period, and along with Juglar and a Russian economist by the name of Kondratieff⁶ — the three of them — well, Schumpeter was drawing upon the work of Juglar and Kondratieff, and made the argument that economies are inherently historically cyclical. That if you want to understand how an economy works, you have to understand why there are sixty-year or seventy-year or eighty-year cycles in economies.

“Business Crises”), to the Academy of Moral and Political Science; it won the Bordin Prize. Juglar was one of the first to analyze business cycles as fully as possible on the basis of available time series data. His use of statistics in predicting turning points in cycles was so accurate that a later economic cycle theorist, Joseph Schumpeter, wrote of him as being “among the greatest economists of all time.” He paid particular attention to the behaviour of bank balances, which he regarded as a barometer of commercial affairs.

⁵ Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) was an Austrian-American economist and political scientist. He briefly served as Finance Minister of Austria in 1919. In 1932 he became a professor at Harvard University where he remained until the end of his career. He was one of the most influential economists of the 20th century.

⁶ Pat in fact names Kitchen rather than Kondratieff at this point, and he kindly acknowledged the slip in an email communication on 16th March 2015. Joseph Kitchen (1861–1932) was a British businessman and statistician. Analyzing American and English interest rates and other data, Kitchen found evidence for a short business cycle of about 40 months. His publications led to other business cycle theories by later economists such as Kondratieff and Schumpeter. Nikolai Kondratieff (1892-1938) was a Russian economist. He was a proponent of the New Economic Policy, which promoted small private, free market enterprises, in the Soviet Union. He is best known for proposing the theory that Western capitalist economies have long term (50 to 60 years) cycles of boom followed by depression. These business cycles are now called “Kondratiev waves.”

So Lonergan was always concerned with the problem of progress and decline; he was writing in the early nineteen-forties, right after the great stock market crash, the Great Depression, to which our present situation has been so frequently analogized. So that's the kind of thing Lonergan was concerned with: the long cycles of destruction and history, the first and the most obvious being economic.

But he was also concerned with the larger problem that arguably has a much longer cycle, and that's what happens culturally. What happens when a culture loses its progressive orientation, and starts into decline; and that it's something that's happening, not on a sixty year cycle, but on a hundred or two hundred year cycle.

Little and perceptible things can be happening all the time, but don't seem to make much difference; but over a great many decades and scores of years, decline can be taking place, and people just sort of get used to it. And that's the kind of phenomenon he was concerned with.

And I think, as I mentioned earlier in one of the earlier classes, he read a lot of historians and philosophers of history, including the work of Arnold Toynbee,⁷ who had identified, I think, twenty-four different civilizations, twenty-two of which had gone out of existence; and one of the two remaining ones was in deep trouble. It wasn't actually western civilization that he thought was in trouble, but one could make the argument that western civilization may be in trouble. Be that as it may!

⁷ **Arnold Toynbee** (1889 – 1975) was a British historian, philosopher of history, research professor of International History at the London School of Economics and the University of London and author of numerous books. He is best known for his 12-volume *A Study of History* (1934–61), through which he examined the rise and fall of 26 civilizations in the course of human history, and he concluded that they rose by responding successfully to challenges under the leadership of creative minorities composed of elite leaders. With his endless output of papers, articles, speeches and presentations, and numerous books translated into many languages, Toynbee was perhaps the world's most read and discussed scholar in the 1940s and 1950s. Yet Toynbee's work lost favor among both the general public and scholars by the 1960s, due to the religious and spiritual outlook that permeates the largest part of his work. His work has been seldom read or cited in recent decades.

Lonergan asks why humanity repeatedly tends to destroy the achievements of classic civilizations.

Lonergan thought he had gotten to the root of that problem in his account of the dynamics of history.

The cyclical nature of the human good (developing, declining, and recovering).

Explanation of Diagram of “differentials” and how the three forces interact to shape the three dynamics of human history.

“Differentials” as the little acts that people do, which then accumulate into historical movements.

Small, individual human acts of intellectual development, bias, and recovery/redemption that happen at all moments in history.

Be that as it may, Lonergan was concerned with the problem of why has humanity been so persistently capable of destroying the great achievements of world-class civilizations. What is it about humanity that allows great syntheses, great achievements, great progress, to become destroyed by decline? And he thought that he had gotten to the root of that problem in his analysis of the dynamics of history.

So this business about *the cyclical nature of the human good: the human good as developing object is a phenomenon, it's a reality, it's a value, which develops and declines and recovers*. And Lonergan wanted to understand the phenomenon of development, decline, and recovery, and how it worked.

“Differentials” of the Human Good
As Developing Object

And Lonergan uses this metaphor of the differentials: the differential of y for that equation

$$[y = 12x - 9.4x^2 + 2x^3]$$

is given in the differential equation that's seen below it:

$$[dy = 12dx - 18.8xdx + 6x^2dx]$$

and I deliberately coloured each of those. So *think of the differential as the little bit of transformation of the social situation*; and think of it more particularly as some things that people do. So the red part, you could say, is the intellectual development part, the part that's going to contribute to progress. The blue part, think of as the part that comes from bias: that's why it's got the negative [word uncertain] sign in front of it. And think of the third part, which is a little hard to see there in green [*in fact it appears red, but think of it as green*], as the part that has to do with recovery and redemption.

Now if you look early on in the curve, the black arrow representing an infinitesimal time, a little bit of time, an instant in time. And what happens — what people do in a brief moment of time — the red arrow represents the progressive forces that are taking place through that brief moment in time. The blue are the forces of bias, that undo the progressive forces; and the green arrow represents the forces of recovery and redemption that are taking place.

So although in *this first third of the graph*, you have a civilization that's progressing, already at that time, there are operative forces of bias and decline. They just happen not to have yet gotten the upper hand. They happen to have not yet grown to the point where they are the controlling forces in the civilization. The forces of recovery are likewise not sitting around waiting for things to get bad and then to turn on that switch, but they are also

operating; which means that the negative forces, although the biased forces are making the achievement and the progress less than it could have been, the forces of recovery that are in play at that time are at least blocking to some extent the negative forces of bias.

Let's move over a little bit further, into the blue area! When a society, when an economy, when a political system, when a culture, is in decline, that doesn't mean that there is no intellectual development. Intellectual development is still at play! But, when you have a society that's in decline, the forces of bias have overwhelmed the forces of progress, overwhelmed them quite a bit. And were it not for the forces of redemption and recovery, the situation would be getting a great deal worse than it is. But as this particular model that I've chosen here illustrates, the farther you go into decline, the greater the forces are!

And if we look finally over here [[the green appearing as red to the right of the slide](#)], the forces of decline here are actually quite severe. But what's making the difference is that they are over-compensated by forces of intellectual development and forces of recovery and redemption as well.

That is the basic outline of what Lonergan came to understand as the three dynamics in human history. And most of what he's doing in Chapter Seven [[Insight \(CWL 3, "Common Sense as Object," pp. 232-269\)](#)], is giving a very much more precise and refined account of what is meant by the proportions of progress, of decline, and of recovery. Okay!

Student question about the difference between the force of recovery and the force of progress.

— Recovery serves to heal the wounds of bias and clear the way for progress. Bias can be an accumulation of hurts, giving rise to recrimination, etc.

Illustration: Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

— A new principle eliminating retaliation is needed.
— Generic meaning of bias: whatever interferes with and disrupts the spontaneous, natural, self-correcting cycle of inquiry and insight.

Okay. Let me pause there and see if peoples have questions about this. ... Greg?

Greg: I guess I'm wondering how is the force of recovery different in its relation to the force of decline **from** the force of progress? So they're both tending in the same direction, and yet they're in a different relationship. So how would you describe that?

Pat: Well, part of the answer is going to come by looking at more of the details that he discusses in the things that we read for today. *The simplest answer is that the force of recovery is not doing the work of progress. It's doing the work of undoing the harm of bias. It's business is to heal the wounds of bias; and to thereby clear the way for the forces of intellectual development to again hold sway.* It doesn't show up — Because of the example that I chose here, it doesn't show up very well. It looks like the forces of bias just always keep getting worse and worse and worse. I chose that because it's a simple graph. It's a simple way to illustrate the points that I wanted to make. In fact what happens is that when the forces of recovery begin to get the upper hand, as they do out there to the far right of the diagram; they actually also are lessening the forces of bias. *But the forces of recovery are not doing the work of intellectual development; they're undoing the harms of bias!*

And remember — although he doesn't quite make this point as emphatically as perhaps he might have — bias can be — *Just as intellectual development can be an accumulation of insights, bias can be an accumulation of hurts. So one hurt gives rise to a retaliation which generates other hurts; and those hurts give rise to retaliations that make things worse, and generate still further hatred and animosity!*

The sort of thing that you see in [Shakespeare's](#) play *Romeo and Juliet*: that's there's just an incredible amount of payback, a system of paybacks, in which the — At one point it looks very much like the retaliation is quite deserved, because so-and-so killed so-and-so, so now we're going to kill so-and-so. And then a second person comes along — And it gets to a point where you no longer remember! — Nobody's keeping the score any more! It's just an emotional reaction to the injustice repaying injustice. And Lonergan used to say it's the world of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, until there are no more eyes or teeth!!

[Some subdued laughter]

So you can actually have a system of justice which has the effect of accelerating decline; unless you have something that steps in and brings a new principle, a principle whose primary product is to eliminate retaliation, hatred, and all the things, all the actions that are motivated by that.

Greg: Is progress then uniform? Like, is its nature consistent throughout? You know like it seems to me like the biases would be particular to particular times, but do they somehow — how are the occasions that are the result — or are they related to —

Pat: We're going to talk about the biases with some specificity. And you shouldn't think that Lonergan is giving the total account of all biases. *There's the generic definition of bias: bias is whatever interferes with the self-correcting process of human inquiry and insight, that self-correcting cycle we've been talking about, that we saw first in the context of natural science, and then in the context of common sense. So bias is whatever disrupts that!* And we'll talk about some of the mechanisms that he identifies, and that he thinks are important mechanisms, and we'll try to understand why he thinks those are some of the important ones. So we'll come to that in a bit. Okay?

Student question about what motivates recovery from bias, and what distinguishes it from intellectual progress.

The source of recovery is ultimately something distinct from the unrestricted desire that generates the self-correcting cycle of inquiry and insight. Lonergan does not take this up until Chapter 20 in *Insight*.

Further discussion and examples: actors from the TV program *The Wire* good illustration of the concrete ways in which forces of progress, decline, and redemption interact. Some of the actors from that TV series now working with young gang members, and undoing the accumulated effects of bias in their lives, as examples of reversing decline.

Byron, and then Stephanie?

Byron: What is the foundation of redemption or recovery, as opposed to progress?

Pat: I think I'm repeating something in response to what somebody else had said before. Redemption as a principle and as a force, so to speak, is something that operates. *What it primarily is concerned with is undoing bias. So Lonergan is giving what he would understand to be an explanatory account of history. He's understanding things in relation to one another.* Okay? And the fundamental axis that he's going to relate everything else to is the axis of *intellectual development and progress*. So *bias* is defined as that which blunts intellectual development; *recovery or redemption* is defined as whatever undoes the harmful interfering effects of bias. ...

Now I can see by your face that that didn't answer your question; which means I didn't really understand what you were asking.

Byron: What is, what is, so I understand "in progress" At least I think that the foundation is, kind of, the fruitful flowing of inquiry in insights. I understand "in decline." You know, the foundation is kind of a refusal to ask the next further pertinent questions, cutting that off.

Pat: It's not only that. As we'll see, bias can intercept the self-correcting cycle in several ways. But that would be one of the ways; a refusal to ask the further questions is one of the effects of bias. That's right!

Byron: And what I'm trying to understand is the dynamism — Is there a difference in the dynamism of progress as opposed to decline? Are they the same, the same operating forces, the same foundations?

Pat: Well, the difference? One's progress, the other's decline!

Byron: Right!

Pat: I'm not quite sure what you're saying.

Byron: I guess what I'm saying is — Well, I'm just trying to figure out what motivates recovery. Is it just kind of untying the knot that bias tied up?

Pat: Ah, you could use that metaphor, sure, sure! Lonergan, as a Catholic priest and a theologian, has a specific understanding of what is *the most fundamental and the most effective force* that brings about recovery: *redemptive love*. *But it's also interesting that he doesn't limit it to that*. He doesn't really give an argument for why that is so powerful *here*. He does **deal with it** in some of his other writings after *Insight*. Actually towards the end of *Insight*, he does as well. But at this point, it's just: *there are in fact phenomena that untie the binds of — the bounds of bias*. *And he gives a couple of instances, like the New Soil, that type of form of recovery*.

**“Differentials” of the Human Good
As Developing Object**

Jonathan: So, just to be clear: the unrestricted desire to know is operative both in progress and in the phenomenon of recovery?

Pat (pause): I — It's operative because we've got red arrows in all three places.

Jonathan: Okay. But — Okay. So, I'm just trying to get sort of — because I share **Byron's** question; as to what's the motor behind —

Pat: — *Okay, the motor behind recovery ultimately is not the unrestricted desire to know. It's something else! And at the end of Chapter Eighteen (CWL3, “The Possibility of Ethics,” pp. 618-656), Lonergan is going to give an argument as to why it has to be something else; a something else which he doesn't define there*. But that's getting a bit ahead!

Jonathan: Sure!

Pat: So that's part of the reason I coloured them differently. It isn't just: “Okay, now people start behaving intelligently again!” The fact of the matter is that *people have been behaving intelligently all along, but the intelligent actors have not been in the ascendancy*. And they only get to be in the ascendancy when something happens to undo the smothering effects of bias. So — And that something has to be something different. At the moment it's just an X. What is it? What are the examples of it? And I think, you know, I think it's very interesting for a theologian to not immediately jump and say: “This is the one

and only!” It’s defined as an X. It’s whatever happens to be that way, and it’s a very empirical thing. Look around and see: Who is it that’s undoing the patterns of bias?!

This gives sort of a simple example. A couple of the actors who were in the HBO series, “The Wire” — “The Wire” is set in the city of Baltimore; it gives a picture of Baltimore which I have no way of knowing if it’s accurate or not; but if I grew up in Baltimore, I might resent the picture that’s given of Baltimore: I’ve no way of knowing. But let’s say it’s not Baltimore, but ‘Uneyria’ or something. It’s some city with a — But clearly this is a city that is in a very complicated decline. There’s economic decline! There’s a part where he — The shipyard, which is one of the big industries is failing; business for the port is drying up; and you’ve got this fella who is the President of the local Dock Workers Union, who is desperately trying to keep his people employed. So there is economic decline, there’s rampant drug-dealing, you’ve rampant violence, there’s corruption throughout the police department, there’s corruption throughout the political offices. The schools are — There are people who are heroic: there are people who are doing redemptive things. And yet they’re surrounded by lots of people who either are deliberately corrupt, or who have basically given up because their creative ideas are not being put into play. The only institution that comes off, in the five seasons of “The Wire,” that as an institution seems to be more on the red than it is on the blue [referring to the colour scheme in the slide] is the newspaper! And then it turns out that this guy who gets the Pulitzer Prize has been fabricating his stories!

[Some amusement]

And when one of the editors tries to bring this to the attention of the publisher, the publisher says: “Yeah, but it’s selling newspapers, and so!” So you can see how — If you want to see how the forces of progress and decline and redemption happen, it’s a terrific series, well acted!

Well, several of the actors from that [series](#) have now started these programmes where they are actually showing episodes of “The Wire” to juveniles in cities. They’ve been doing it in Baltimore for a couple of years, and they’ve just started one in Boston; and they go and they sit with the juveniles who are involved in drug-trafficking, and doing the same kinds of things that are graphically and shudderingly portrayed in the series. And they show them these, and then they talk about it. And they talk about: “Where are you going?” *They’re doing in a sense what Lonergan says we ought to be doing when we’re thinking about history. They’re situating these people’s actions in the dynamic of history.* But they’re

making it very personal: they're not asking them to think of say, sixty years, or a two hundred year cycle. No! They're saying: "Where are you going to be next week?" And this is where — And "Which characters do you identify with?" *And it's had a remarkable effect: an undoing of the biased patterns of behaviour that these juveniles have gotten into.*

That would be an example of redemption! Is any of them motivated by Christian charity? Well, it depends what you mean! It depends on what you mean! But is anyone of going in there and quoting the Bible to them? No! They're showing them "The Wire"! And it is clearly having some degree of redemptive effect! Okay? Does that help a bit? I don't know if that helped?

Jonathan: Thank you.

Student question: if sin and bias are defined as flights from understanding, does Lonergan leave room for pure evil, or are we left with the Platonic notion that moral errors are only intellectual errors. Does this account do justice to the evil of the Holocaust?

— Yes, Lonergan also identifies sources of evil that are not reducible to intellectual errors, but not until later in *Insight*.

— Discussion about evil as emerging from preceding situations of accumulating bias and the ideas promulgated.

Did somebody else have a question there? Stephanie?

Stephanie: Michael?

Pat: I'm sorry! Michael, go ahead!

Michael: Yeah. My question is related to this; because if 'sin' and 'bias' are two terms to describe the self-same phenomenon, and 'bias' is also further defined as the flight from understanding, it seems that sin is in some way a flight from understanding. And so my question is: has Lonergan left any room in his analysis for pure evil, or are we left

with the sort of Platonic notion that moral ignorance or moral errors are intellectual errors, every time?

Pat: Ah, has he left any room for *pure evil*! Well, that depends on what you mean by pure evil. Pure evil is pure nothingness and there's no — You don't have to really leave room for pure nothingness! *So evil, as any of us encounters it, is not pure; it always comes mixed with something else.* And oddly enough, that what makes it so bad! Because if it were just nothing, we would have no experience of it. *It's a nothingness that's corrupting a somethingness!* So has he left room for evil? I'd say: Yes! And has he left room for specifically moral evil that has to do not with not just ignorance, but choice, and the answer to that is: Yes! But we're not there yet!

Remember how the first section of Chapter Six begins: “Common Sense as Intellectual” (CWL 3, pp. 196-204). But *common sense isn't only intellectual! In fact, one of the reasons why he does not introduce the category of “Recovery and Redemption” in Chapter Seven is because it's extra-intellectual. It has to do with issues that are — that rest upon intellectual issues, but supervene upon intellectual issues, just as intellectual issues supervene upon experiential issues.*

When he — There's a way in which *Topics in Education* is written backwards compared to *Insight*. *Insight* is building up towards a holistic account of which I'm giving you a sort of a picture, a holistic account. But *Insight* isn't there yet. But since I find the chapters in *Topics in Education* so helpful in illuminating what he is doing in Chapter Seven (CWL 3, “Common Sense as Object,” pp. 232-269), I asked you to read that (CWL 10, *Topics in Education*, pp. 26-78). So you get more of the story of where Lonergan is going to end up by those two chapters of *Topics in Education* than you get in Chapter Seven of *Insight*.

Chapter Seven is laying down the first of the three approximations, and then the second of three approximations; and leaving, till much later in the work, the discussion of some of the implications of bias for, not just understanding, but **also for** decision and wilful wrong decision, and then the problems that that poses that recovery has to deal with. Okay? *So it's to come!*

Michael: Okay.

Pat: And I'm not sure if Plato was Platonic in that sense, but what people usually understand by — that people don't knowingly do anything wrong. If you push that quite a bit, it's a pretty interesting proposition, but people don't usually push it very far.

Michael: Right!

Pat: But nevertheless, there's a radical difference between where Lonergan is, and even Plato pushed quite far along that line!

Michael: Yeah. I'm just thinking a lot of people might look at that, that differential, and suggest that the historical unfolding is characterized by the activities of many evil people. I'm just thinking of the Holocaust, for example: like a lot of people would call it that that was evil! But I was like, there's a tendency in Lonergan to — you're sort of paved into a corner where you to at some point reduce it to sort of a flight from understanding! And I don't know: I've always struggled with this particular Chapter in that sort of relation between doing that kind of horrendous evil and then sort of saying, on the other hand, well, it must have to do with some sort of intellectual error.

Pat: Okay. Well, let me jump ahead to something that hopefully we'll get to soon.

The account that Lonergan is giving is not just what you think in your head, but what ideas get implemented. And the ideas that get implemented constitute a situation to which people respond!

So Lonergan would be saying something like: the Nazi Holocaust did come from some place. It came out of preceding situations. Those preceding situations were situations of accumulating bias.

Michael: Okay.

Pat: And the preceding situations included among other things, the devastating economic situation following the end of the First World War, but it goes back many years to the Anti-Semitism that was so widespread for really centuries in Europe, and a number of other things as well.

Question about whether all evil is ‘explained.’

— All evil is radically unintelligible; describing the dynamics of history is not tantamount to explaining evil.

Michael: So there is nothing that is not explained?

Pat: I’m sorry?

Michael: So there’s nothing that’s unexplained. There’s no evil in the world that’s not explained, that goes unexplained?

Pat: Well, this is jumping ahead. *All evil is radically unexplained! Okay? All evil is radically unintelligible! So it’s not explained! He’s looking at the dynamics, but he’s not saying this is an explanation!*

Michael: Okay.

Question about whether bias and redemption are necessary in order to take us to a higher level of good.

— Bias/sin is not necessary for a higher level of grace or of good.

— But concretely in history, one of the most important effects of grace is to undo the destructive effects of bias/sin, and thereby make possible a higher level of good.

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Pat: Ah, Stephanie?

Stephanie: Looking at this graph, and the way **in which** redemption springs or counteracts bias, it almost looks like the good that comes out of redemption is somehow transcendently more — it just exceeds the original good that we started out with: so I'm wondering if it's necessary to have bias and necessary to have redemption in order to reach a higher level of good?

Pat: Ah, no, it's not! And part of it is just the peculiarities of the model that I chose to give the illustration; because I wanted to be able to show how, at one point, intellectual development is greater than bias, at another point bias is greater than intellectual development, another point where recovery and redemption is outweighing bias! So it gives impressions that really don't fit probably any real human historical situation very well.

But there's a part of your question: *is sin necessary so that there can be grace? The answer to that is no!* One of the things that grace does — I'm now — now we're talking Theology, we're not talking Philosophy — *One of the things that grace does is to go beyond what human beings are capable of, based on their own intellectual abilities, whether or not there is also evil to be undone! So it's not necessary for there to be evil for there to be grace!* But Lonergan is just saying, these are the dynamics of human history. Okay?

Question as to whether theology and philosophy can
be kept separate if redemption is involved.

Can one really talk philosophically about recovery
without explicitly invoking Christ?

— Discussion of how Lonergan does indeed
distinguish them.

— Differences among ways he treats these issues in
Insight vs. in his theological writings.

— Uses the philosophical clarification of the dynamics of human history to then offer a better theological interpretation of what is meant by redemption in Christianity, without importing that doctrine into the philosophical investigation.

Pat: I think there was one more question. ... Byron?

Byron: Well, see, [with a big smile] and this again comes from my initial question about Theology and Philosophy. It seems like they have to be kind of fused together, because it seems, for Lonergan, and I think this is what I was kind of trying to prod at, is that, you know, you have to look theologically at Christ, and how Christ sublates everything else, in order to really get a concept — an understanding of redemption.

And can you do that in — I mean you have to, so I think philosophy and theology kind of — I mean —

Pat: — Well, let me just say, for Lonergan, that's not true! ... Really!

[Some student laughter]

What Lonergan does in *Insight* is to say: here is the human condition! And what we're getting here is the dynamics of the human condition! And it's a little bit — You know, there's something analogous in the fact that he was very very taken by Plato's account of the Philosopher-King. Society needs something; and for Plato, it would have to be a Philosopher-King.

And Lonergan is doing — He is very mindful of that project: that *there would have to be something that meets the unknown future of the human condition, that addresses its dynamics as they are! There would have to be something!* Now as a Christian believer, he's going to say that the something is rooted in the Mystery of the Incarnation. But *as a philosopher, he's just setting up what you could know, as a philosopher, about the human condition, and say: what's needed! That's what he's doing!*

Now, you might ultimately be right, that you can't separate them, but he's trying to do that; and then, *using what he's done philosophically to give what he thought was a much needed better articulation of the Christian understanding of redemption.*

But he's not importing the Christian understanding of redemption into *Insight*. He clearly does it in *Topics in Education*. He is [there](#) talking to a Catholic religious-educated audience; and so he's just using what he and the audience presuppose. But in *Insight*, he is not doing that! *He's concerned with the self-appropriation that is going to be the foundation of a philosophy of history that makes clear what the nature of the problem is, and what kinds of things would be necessary to meet the nature of the problem. ...* So you might be right and he might be wrong, but that's what he thinks!

Byron: That's very helpful.

The analogy of differential as infinitesimal.

In an infinitesimal instant of time, an individual's deed can originate from either the self-correcting process, bias, or redemption.

We can feel that our small, individual actions don't make any difference.

But in fact every action, small or grand, is always already situated in a complex set of dynamics, and becomes a contribution to something larger — whether progress, decline, or redemption.

Each of our actions does matter, in the ways that they contribute to these dynamics.

Which is why self-appropriation of these dynamics of history is so important.

Common Sense as Historical

The importance of each of our actions, seemingly infinitesimal, as important because situated in the self-correcting that makes great goods out of small.

And the biases that cut short the long term implications of small good deeds.

And the acts that heal the evils of bias.

Pat: Now, if you recall, the analogy was of *differentials*; and you really didn't have differentials there, because you can actually see the little black arrow; that means it's not a differential, it's a sort of a "fat differential." *Differentials are infinitesimal*. I think one of the reasons that Lonergan wanted to use the notion of differential there is: *a differential is an infinitesimal*. So in an infinitesimal instant of time, a person does something! And in an infinitesimal instant of time a deed can either be a deed that is implementing the self-correcting process of understanding, it can be a deed motivated by bias, or it can be a deed of recovery and redemption. But they're infinitesimal!

And every now and then, *I* — maybe you don't — but every now and then *I* stop, and think, and say: "What I'm doing doesn't make a bit of difference! I'm just one person doing one small thing, and you know what: It doesn't matter! It just doesn't matter!"

But what Lonergan is doing here is to draw attention to the fact that *each and every one of our decisions and actions is an infinitesimal that is not an isolated monad! Every single thing we do, small and grand, is always already in a dynamic, in a complicated set of dynamics. And whatever small intelligent thing we do can be picked up by the self-correcting process of knowing, both our own and that of others, and magnified into something bigger!* And whatever biased thing we do can be picked up by subsequent biased actions, that magnify it into consequences that go well beyond what we felt we intended. And every act of

kindness, and forgiveness, and turning the other cheek, and taking on responsibilities that we have no obligation to take on, any of those things too can be magnified, in the way in which they inspire other people to do likewise!

So one way of thinking of this *analysis of the dynamic* is to think of *yourself situated in there*. Now I asked you for an exercise, and the reflection questions that I passed on: *to think of some task*. And I've got that in the slides later on; hopefully we'll get to that; and I want to spend some time just reflecting on that. But it was in part asking you to do that: *to think of small things, to think of ordinary things, and to think about what comes of them*.

Because that's *what Lonergan is concerned with here: to make us aware of the fact that we are agents in the social construction of a society and historical construction of human destiny. And that everything we do matters!* We might want it to be a big mattering. We might want to be Madonna, or Bon Jovi — I kind of dated myself by both those examples!

[Class laughter]

I don't know what would be the equivalents now. We might want ourselves to be President of the United States, or something on that grand level of notoriety and fame.

But the fact of the matter is: *we are actors!* And each and everything we do matters! Each and everything we do gets taken up in the dynamics of progress and decline and redemption! And so we don't get to — *We can tell ourselves that what we do doesn't matter, but we can't make it be true that it doesn't matter!* What we do gives rise to things that are going to be taken up in these dynamics. And that's why Lonergan thinks that it is so terribly important to understand these dynamics, and particularly to understand the dynamics that we can appropriate and live out in ways that can bring about this good under construction.

The place of philosophy in the Good as Developing
Object — Good Under Construction.

One of the most significant sources of decline is the
general bias against theoretical pursuits, such as
philosophy.

The importance of Lonergan's philosophy of saving practicality from itself, from the inevitable social and historical consequences of general bias.

Need for a human science grounded in self-appropriation that can discriminate between the facts that result from intelligence and those that result from bias.

Counterexample of a human science which does not critically engage the unintelligibility of bias: Machiavelli's capitulation to practicality in *The Prince*.

Capitulation to practicality makes it impossible to discern between the intelligible and unintelligible.

Common Sense as Historical
The place of Philosophy in
the Good Under Construction

Now I want to say something else — this is jumping ahead, and I just wanted to mention it here: about *the place of Philosophy in the Good under Construction*. *Because it does have a place for Lonergan!*

One of the important sources of decline are going to be the four biases, dramatic, individual, group, and general bias. And Lonergan has this rather remarkable comment: that *the person who is concerned with the destiny of humanity does not worry about the group biases*. That sounds like a strange thing to say; but he says they don't — *they're not concerned about what practical people are concerned with, such as the group biases, because they want to save practicality from itself; that there is a much deeper and much*

more worrisome problem of general bias that they have to address themselves to. And so he says this on page 262:

Clearly, by becoming practical, culture renounces its one essential function. (CWL 3, p. 262).

And in ‘culture’ he includes philosophy; he doesn’t mean ‘culture’ as other than philosophy; but in the area, or the category, or the level that he is going to call the ‘cultural’, he includes philosophy.

By becoming practical, culture renounces its *one essential function*, and by that renunciation condemns practicality to ruin. The general bias of common sense has to be counterbalanced by *a representative of detached intelligence that both appreciates and criticizes, that identifies the good neither with the new nor with the old, that, above all else, neither will be forced into an ivory tower of ineffectualness by the social surd nor, on the other hand, will capitulate to its absurdity.* (CWL 3, p. 262, emphases added).

So he’s going to say that *there is an importance to thinking about issues that practicality doesn’t see the practical import of thinking about.* And *he’s going to talk about a human science, which is capable of being critical and dialectical!* And what he means by that is: *a human science that can discriminate between what is a product of intelligence and what’s a product of bias.* And that a philosophy in fact, *a philosophy of self-appropriation, is what is needed to underpin a normative, critical, dialectical, human science.*

Now, as counterexamples to human science, we could begin with Machiavelli.⁸ In *The Prince*, Machiavelli says that many have thought of ideal republics that can never be. He clearly is referring to Plato and probably also to Aristotle there, republics founded on intelligence and virtue. Intelligence and virtue is what you get if there were no bias and only progress. There is nothing specifically theological in the Platonic or Aristotelian accounts of virtue, intellectual or moral. They are the habits that develop, that cooperate with human reasoning. *In Lonergan's context, they are the habits of feeling and acting that cooperate with the unfolding of the unrestricted desire to know and the self-correcting process of understanding.*

Machiavelli says that those won't work! And he's just spent fourteen chapters telling you why they won't work: because he gives a survey of all the known world at that time, and the disastrous political situations that have come about. And so he says, so therefore people have to learn kind of to not be good, because those who are good in every way will come to ruin, along with a great many who are not good. Now, I won't say that Machiavelli is the first person to do that. And of course, he is very interested in Livy; and at least he's learned a great deal from the study of Livy. *But he's the modern person who puts into play the notion of a human science that has capitulated to practicality! There's no point in talking about virtue because it's not practical! It won't work in a world in which there are so many who are not good.*

So what you have to do is to learn how to calculate the forces of bias, and figure out how to use them against one another: the balance of powers, "*real politic.*" So beginning with Machiavelli, and then learning, especially through Hobbes, we have the modern way of thinking about political science; which is founded on the assumption that bias is natural to human beings, and that virtue really *isn't natural to human beings*. And there's so much more evidence of bias being natural to human beings than there is of reasonableness and virtue as being natural to human beings.

⁸ **Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli** (1469 – 1527) was an Italian historian, politician, diplomat, philosopher, humanist, and writer based in Florence during the Renaissance. He was for many years an official in the Florentine Republic, with responsibilities in diplomatic and military affairs. He was Secretary to the Second Chancery of the Republic of Florence from 1498 to 1512, when the Medici were out of power. He wrote his masterpiece, *The Prince*, after the Medici had recovered power and he no longer held a position of responsibility in Florence. His views on the importance of a strong ruler who was not afraid to be harsh with his subjects and enemies were perhaps influenced by the Italian city-states, which due to a lack of unification were very vulnerable to other unified nation-states, such as France.

So Lonergan is saying **that** when you have one of the most important sources for promoting progress capitulating to practicality, it doesn't have the ability to discriminate between the intelligible and the unintelligible. And discriminating between the intelligible and the unintelligible is a lot of hard work! *What you have to have is a human science that's grounded in a self-appropriation, which understands what the unintelligible is and rejects that as part of human nature, and which rejects the unintelligible as a foundation for a human science. And it does so because it has learned what intelligibility is, by self-appropriation.*

Implicit philosophy: Everyone has an implicit philosophy, a personal view of what we are doing when we are knowing; what's real and not real; what's good and what's not; what's just, true, beautiful.

Explicit philosophy: systems explicitly expounded by philosophers.

Critical philosophy of self-appropriation.

Simply in virtue of the fact that each of us is an intelligent and reflective being, we are situated in history; what we do as a result of thinking well or not affects history; and we are affected by the history that others have bequeathed to us.

The philosophy of self-appropriation can help correct the unfolding of human history.

It can interact with human praxis and human sciences in ways that can enhance human cooperation with the positive dynamics in history and mitigate attraction to the negative dynamics of the biases.

Common sense as object, as historical, is a *succession* of social situations (“Goods of Order“).

Self-appropriation is of ourselves as always already participants in those institutions and social situations, and as participants in the historical transformation of succession.

Once again, Lonergan is raising the Question of the Whole: the wholeness of human living, as built upon and a prolongation of the emergent probability of the natural world.

Chapter 7 is pointing towards clarifying further the question of the whole of nature, human history, human good, all that is real, all that is good.

Common Sense as Historical

**The place of Philosophy in
the Good Under Construction**

Implicit Philosophy

So, in the Good under Construction, in the historical development, you could say that there is Implicit Philosophy. Lonergan later on is going to talk about “Latent Metaphysics.” But everybody has got a philosophy!

The first day I went to Graduate School in the State University of New York at Stony Brook, I picked up a couple of hitch-hikers; and they were undergraduate students there. In those days Stony Brook was kind of the whole [Pat entertains the class by mimicking with affection, and with a large smile, the attitudes, style and language of the undergraduate hitch-hikers, making use of a slightly dazed and blurred mumbling] University, and:

“Oh, wow man ...”

[Students laugh]

“Where are you going?”

“I said: ‘I’m going to look for a place to stay. I’m coming here in the Fall for Graduate School!’”

[Pat resumes his mimicry] “Oh, wow, what are you going to study?”

I said: “Philosophy!”

“Oh wow!” [Pat, still with his large smile, continues his mimicry] “What’s your philosophy, man?”

[Huge class laughter]

Everybody’s got a philosophy! Whether, you know, they articulate it or not! Everybody has at least an implicit answer to: What are we doing when we’re knowing? And more significantly perhaps, everybody’s got an answer to: What’s real? And: What couldn’t possibly be a real thing? What are the real things? What are the things that really motivate people? People have got answers to that, whether they give any articulation to that — They may have picked it up from reading philosophers or psychologists, or whoever. But everyone’s got a kind of an implicit philosophy, whether they have really thought it out, or not. Everybody’s got an answer to: What’s good? And: What’s not good? What’s real? What’s just? What’s beautiful? What’s true? So everyone’s got a philosophy! And they’re using that to underpin what ideas they’re going to regard as realistic, and worthwhile!

Common Sense as Historical

**The place of Philosophy in
the Good Under Construction**

Implicit Philosophy

Explicit Philosophy

Everybody's got a philosophy, whether they articulate it or not! But then, of course, people articulate philosophies, of various kinds: dualistic philosophies, empiricist philosophies, and naturalistic philosophies, and idealistic philosophies; and they are done by really, really, smart people who have thought long and hard about these issues, and wrestled with them, and tried to sort them out.

And Lonergan is going to have some things to say about some of those explicit philosophies, as well as the implicit philosophies.

Common Sense as Historical

**The place of Philosophy in
the Good Under Construction**

Implicit Philosophy

Explicit Philosophy

Critical Philosophy of Self-Appropriation

But his argument is that this is a philosophy that has a payoff that can correct the aberrations that we get into not only with common sense, but also into human sciences. [His argument is](#) that a philosophy of self-appropriation has the benefits of interacting with human

practice and human science in ways that can make the cooperation as a positive dynamics and the reversal of the negative dynamics of history more effective.

Common Sense as Historical

**The Historicity of
the Good Under Construction**

**Is the *succession* of
Common Sense as Social,
As Social Constructions
("Goods of Order")**

So think of the Common Sense as Historical, this Good Under Construction, as *a succession of social situations*; that what it means to be involved in this construction, this new Notion of the Good, that history as the good that we're in, is to think of it as being involved in the construction of social relations, which themselves are undergoing transformations! So we're in a social set of relations, and the social set of relations are in historical dynamic.

In a nutshell, that's what he's doing in Chapter Seven of *Insight* (CWL 3, "Common Sense as Object," pp. 232-269); he is helping us to understand the dynamics of social construction and historical transformation of the social constructions.

Question of the Whole

Whole of the natural universe

Whole of human history

The whole of the human good

The whole of all that is real

The whole of all that is good

And in this way, he's doing something along the lines of what I suggested at the beginning of the class: *he's raising the question of the whole!* What he's done up until Chapter Six (CWL 3, "**Common Sense and its Subject**", pp. 196-231) is *the question of what can we know about the wholeness of the natural world. And now we're talking about the wholeness of human living as built upon and a prolongation of the dynamics of the natural world; because, remember, human intellectual development is a prolongation of emergent probability. Things that human beings put into play are overwhelmingly schemes of human cooperation, schemes of human recurrence, grounded in mutual understanding. That's apart from bias and redemption! And it's pointing in the direction of the question of all that is real and all that is good.*

That's not answered in chapter seven; there's a sense in which it's not answered any place in the book! Or in the finite duration of human history! But moving in the direction of making clear this question about what is the whole is what's going on here in his account of the human good as developing object, or common sense as social and historical.

Okay! Let's take a break there!

Insight & Beyond: Lecture 12, Part Two:

Insight chapter 7: Common Sense as Object

Topics in Education chs. 2 & 3: The Good as Developing Object

Common Sense as social and historical.

Class discussion of regularly performed tasks, jobs, skills and how they are situated in the dynamics of the history of common sense as object.

Such activities are the stuff of the construction of human history.

So much of what happens in the human social world is recurrent.

“Human schemes of recurrence” as helping to construct social reality.

What is special about schemes of recurrence as human:

- They depend upon acquisition of insights and intelligent, self-correcting adaptation to new situations by adding “at least one further insight.”
- Human schemes also depend upon the understandings of other people as well.

– Involve relations to other people: *operating* is *co-operating*.

Example of the recent economic collapse as a compounding of biases (general, group, individual).

The contrast between *human* schemes of recurrence and *natural* schemes of recurrence.

Insights required for human schemes.

But for this very reason, likewise it is only in human schemes of recurrence that *biases* can operate.

Occurrence of insight in social construction is itself one of the recurrences.

The self-correcting cycle as the self-correcting transformation of history.

The objective social situation is transformed as a multiplicity of people have experiences derived from it, which give rise to questions, insights, and then actions which modify it.

Concrete description of the intelligent, recurrent activities that constitute “objective social situation” that is a university.

The self-correcting cycle not only pertains to material and technological progress, but also the development of the insights informing our modes of cooperation and institutional arrangements.

Learning to do things in cooperation that we could never do alone.

Illustration from laundry at a summer camp.

Transformation and progress of social situation not only of the material products, but more importantly of the intelligible modes of cooperation.

The set of insights making up an objective social situation, common sense, is parcelled out among many people, constituting a good of order.

The characteristics of the “Good of Order”: it is the reciprocal pattern in which we receive fulfilment of our needs, desires and fears, by cooperating to provide fulfilment and protection for others, and this cooperation all underpinned by insights.

It is merely a normative ‘ideal’ but constitutive of all social reality — as people cooperate intelligently in recurrent patterns.

Some concrete examples of “the good of order” implicit in traditional US cities, drawn from the thinker about urban social reality, Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of American Cities*.

Jacobs as an example of a cosmopolis person — withdrawing from practicality in order to save it.

Cities as “marvellous orders,” analogous to ballets, that maintain the safety and life of cities.

The good of order is a social construction arising out of insights into informal patterns of cooperation; in contrast to bureaucracy.

Levels in Social Situation: Technological, Economic, Political, & Cultural.

Briefly, how Lonergan understands these levels.

Intersubjectivity and Dialectic.

In one sense, “common sense as intellectual” is about intersubjectivity — about *understanding* one another.

But when Lonergan uses the term ‘intersubjectivity’ he means the felt, affective form of intersubjectivity where “the experience of each resonates to the experience of others.”

Intersubjectivity in this sense is the ground of primitive community — the belonging together — that is more basic than the good of order.

Sympathy, compassion, sorrow, elation, are all examples of this more basic form of intersubjectivity.

Positive aspects of this kind of intersubjectivity:

Indispensable foundation of human living.

Basis of tribalism, family, gender identification, racial and national identification.

Basis of life's emotional richness; humans as *social* animals.

But there are also tensions involved in living according to this kind of intersubjectivity:

Not the same as living according to one's own questioning and understanding.

Not necessarily a tension between intersubjective and intelligent living, but there is a potential for conflict.

Group bias arises when a person may choose their own group over their own intelligent, self-correcting process:

Group bias as analogous to individual bias: one's self preservation instinct interferes with questioning about those outside one's self or group.

The objective social surd: not self-correcting but increasingly distorting.

Dramatic bias is a filtering of the images we would normally question and have insights into.

Actions then are robbed of the intelligence that bias-free actions would have.

The specifically social biases (individual, group, general) act consciously to block pursuit of questions or to block actions that would implement good insights.

Intersubjectivity is a good thing, but it is limited; one can have intersubjective compassion for people one knows, but not for 'humanity'.

How unrestricted inquiry can inquire into the good for all humanity, beyond the limits of intersubjectivity.

Intellectual responsibility arises when questioning transcends intersubjective identifications.

General bias: being only concerned with immediate consequences, it sets aside questions not dealing with concrete particulars.

The concern for the immediate and practical is a good thing about common sense; it facilitates normal everyday life.

Yet it sets aside theoretical explorations about what is not immediate — long-term consequences.

In general bias, ideas and inventions are put into play before their long-term effects are known, leading to material and social consequences.

Example of gases (CFC's) damaging the ozone layer, as a long-range possible effect, before it was actually observed.

Global warming as a second example.

Business practices that led to economic crises as a third example.

The most serious source of social decline is the general bias.

Common sense as adequate for taking care of individual and group biases, given time.

Yet it has no means to deal with the corruption and decline of general bias's neglect of theoretical ideas.

Student question about Lonergan's thought as compared to Lewis, author of *The Abolition of Man*.

Closing remarks on next week's topic: Chapter 8 of *Insight*, and the difficulty of the section on "Species as Explanatory."

End of Part II.

Insight & Beyond: Lecture 12, Part 2:

Insight chapter 7: Common Sense as Object

Topics in Education chs. 2 & 3: The Good as Developing Object

Common Sense as social and historical.

Class discussion of regularly performed tasks, jobs, skills and how they are situated in the dynamics of the history of common sense as object.

Such activities are the stuff of the construction of human history.

Common Sense as Social and Historical

Think of an example of something someone does regularly

**— an activity or task or skill —
in a job or profession.**

How that activity or task or skill is situated?

I had intended for us to spend a little time taking a very specific example of a task, something somebody does on a regular basis, and exploring that in its context, but we're rather far into the time period. So I would ask you just to share a couple of the things that you thought of in response to that reflection question, not so much to explore them, but to have them in mind as concrete examples as we move a little bit more through what Lonergan is doing in these discussions of common sense as object.

So examples that people have, things that people commonly do in a job or profession, so we can think about how that is situated within this good under construction. ... Donato?

Donato: Clean stables!

Pat: Clean stables? Okay. Good! Anything else? ... When I was posing the question, one of the first things that came to my mind was a job my wife had when she was helping me get through Graduate School; she was a bank teller, a horrible job that I wouldn't wish on anybody!

[Class laughter]

In those days, I think that the take-home pay was eighty-three dollars! A week! And she was handling — among them were people who had a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in their accounts. And she might have to be there for an hour or more on a Friday evening balancing! There wasn't quite all the computer technology! Bank tellers still have to balance their drawers at the end of the day. *So that's a task she had to do every week.* I would sit outside the car and wait for her [some unclear words]. She's now a nurse; so one of the things that she has to do is, not only change people's dressings, but after she's made a visit, she has to update her records.

What other examples could you think of that's something that people do on a regular basis? ... Stephanie?

Stephanie: Well, play with Excel Spreadsheets.

Pat: Well, Excel Spreadsheets! But can you — That's more generic! Can you situate it in a — I play with Excel Spreadsheets, and I'm Chairman of the Department, so

—

[Student laughter]

Stephanie: Ah, okay! I use Spreadsheet to analyse the statistics of exchange students coming to Boston College.

Pat: Okay. Very good! Sure! ... One more? ... Natalie?

Natalie: A mail delivery man?

Pat: A letter carrier?

Natalie: Yeah.

Pat: A letter carrier, delivering mail. Okay, good!

So much of what happens in the human social world is recurrent.

“Human schemes of recurrence” as helping to construct social reality.

What is special about schemes of recurrence as human:

- They depend upon acquisition of insights and intelligent, self-correcting adaptation to new situations by adding “at least one further insight.”
- Human schemes also depend upon the understandings of other people as well.
- Involve relations to other people: *operating is co-operating.*

Example of the recent economic collapse as a compounding of biases (general, group, individual).

The contrast between *human* schemes of recurrence and *natural* schemes of recurrence.

Insights required for human schemes.

But for this very reason, likewise it is only in human schemes of recurrence that *biases* can operate.

All right! I just wanted to put those before you, because *this really is the stuff of the construction of social reality. It's the stuff of the good under construction.* Most of what any of us does is fairly repetitious. We do it over and over again.

And that's why it's part of what Lonergan was driving at in his account of *Emergent Probability!* *So much of the human social world is recurrent. It's schemes of recurrence! But what's key in the human schemes of recurrence is that people have to learn how to do these things! They have to have acquired the insights that underpin these skills, so that they can perform these activities.*

There's the further thing that people have to be *intelligent enough to know how to adapt the skills to slightly different situations*. When the situation changes, your experiential encounter with a different situation is different; that will give rise to questions that give you the one or two further insights that you need to apply the skill, the task, the insights that you've acquired up until now, to the concrete situation. But *to a large extent, it's a task that you do in a scheme where other people's understanding is also involved*. Almost every operation that we do, every activity that we do, every task that we perform, every skill that we actualize — almost every one of those is actually the right end of a relationship on which there is somebody on the other end. *When we operate, when we act, we are cooperating!*

So when my wife was balancing her accounts at the end of the week, on Friday evenings, it was in a context where there were a lot of people who had expectations of her. They couldn't do what they wanted to do if she didn't do what she did. *And we saw a lot of that happening over the last eighteen months in our economy! People who had intelligent expectations about what had been promised them, and when those expectations were not fulfilled, schemes of recurrence came to a screeching halt!*

Now the complicated thing of course is that there was a great deal of bias that was operating in the economic collapse.

And it operated on — And people all said, you know, we're all selfish, we're all greedy. What they were saying is, in Lonergan's categories, is that the economic collapse was due to *individual bias*. *There was individual bias, but it wasn't the whole story*. And Lonergan helps us to see that you can't have the kind of collapse, the kind of disaster, the kind of decline, that we have just been going through, *only because of individual bias*. *There has to be a compounding of individual, and group, and especially general bias*.

When Mr Green? ... whose name I can't now remember — the former chair

Students: Greenspan!

Pat: Alan Greenspan; that's why I couldn't remember that long name —

[Student laughter]

When Mr Greenspan said: “You know, we thought we understood, but I guess we didn't understand so much,” he was talking at the level of social science. “We thought we had a social science that gave us intelligent expectations about the social situation we were in!” But he himself wasn't saying: “I'm not so sure we have the right science!” I'm not so

sure that this is going to be sufficient stimulus for people to rethink the science of economics. It may, and it may not! I don't know what to think about the likelihood of that!

But the failure on the level of science, the failure on the level of what Lonergan would call group bias, the failure on the level of individual bias combined in very complicated ways to make cycles stop. Credit froze! The possibility of people's retirement funds, and their employment, continuing to recur, depended upon banks lending banks money! And banks stopped lending banks money because they no longer had intelligible expectation that they were going to get repaid if they did that! How did something that massive come about?

So what Lonergan is doing is talking about situating our individual actions, our efforts — Every one of you is in training of one kind or another, because you're in the academic programmes that you're in right now — You're acquiring skills, your acquiring in this classroom mainly intellectual skills, I hope; and you're acquiring other kinds of skills so that you can become a part of a very complicated pattern of schemes of recurrence.

And the difference between *human* schemes of recurrence and *natural* schemes of recurrence is that electrons, and benzene molecules and triphosphate molecules, and black witch moths, don't have to have insights to be engaged in their schemes of recurrence! *Human beings have to have insights to be engaged in the social schemes of recurrence!*

So Lonergan is going to focus on the intellectual component of the social construction; and to thereby situate what we do within schemes of recurrence that are either:

- Developing in the way that emergent probability does, that more wants, more differentiated higher schemes of recurrence, come about because of the earlier schemes of recurrence that were put into place, that's *the continuation of emergent probability in the human sphere!*
- *Biases, however, disrupt that.* But biases can operate in human beings in ways that cannot operate in anything other than human beings, because human beings acquire their skills and their capacities to be involved in and can construct new social schemes by having insights! And only a person that can have insights can put into play actions where they have blocked insights; that's what biases do [\[last word uncertain\]](#).

Occurrence of insight in social construction is itself
one of the recurrences.

The self-correcting cycle as the self-correcting
transformation of history.

The objective social situation is transformed as a
multiplicity of people have experiences derived from
it, which give rise to questions, insights, and then
actions which modify it.

Concrete description of the intelligent, recurrent
activities that constitute “objective social situation”
that is a university.

The self-correcting cycle not only pertains to material
and technological progress, but also the development
of the insights informing our modes of cooperation
and institutional arrangements.

Learning to do things in cooperation that we could
never do alone.

Illustration from laundry at a summer camp.

Transformation and progress of social situation not
only of the material products, but more importantly of
the intelligible modes of cooperation.

And so, this is a passage from *Insight* where Lonergan talks about the play of insight
as itself a recurrent phenomenon in human affairs.

Common Sense as Social Construction

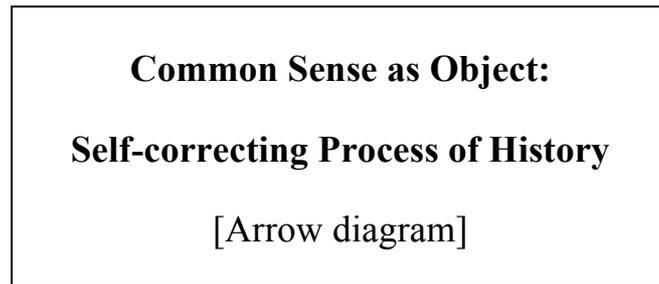
“Moreover, such an intervention of intelligence is itself recurrent As inventions accumulate, they set problems calling for more inventions. The new inventions complement the old only to suggest further improvements, to reveal fresh possibilities, and eventually to call forth in turn the succession of mechanical and technological higher viewpoints that mark epochs in man’s material progress.” (CWL 3, p. 233).

[Pat reads the passage directly from the slide]:

“[The] intervention of intelligence is itself recurrent As inventions accumulate, they set problems calling for more inventions. The new inventions complement the old only to suggest further improvements, to reveal fresh possibilities, and eventually to call forth in turn the succession of mechanical and technological higher viewpoints that mark epochs in [human] material progress.” (CWL 3, p. 233).

So material progress is one element in the transformation of the human good of order, the human social good. It’s not the only one, as we’ll see in a moment! But what I want to draw attention here to, is the fact that you’ve got the same pattern of the self-

correcting cycle that we've seen, first in the context of natural sciences, then in the context of human interpersonal living; now it's in social transformation.



I was talking to a couple of the students before — during the break. This is a diagram similar to what we've seen before, but let me just explain some of the differences. The obvious difference is that there are a lot more arrows!

[Murmur of recognition]

So think of the multiplicity of arrows as referring to the multiplicity of human beings, each of whom is having a multiplicity of experiences, inquiries, insights, and actions that follow upon their insights. The other thing that is different is: remember in our previous — in the previous diagrams that I've put up here, what's been sitting on the bottom rung here was 'Experiences,' and that's not on the bottom line now. *What's on the bottom now is the Objective Social Situation, Common Sense as Object, the Human Good as Developing Object, the Social World, the Real Social World.* That's what's on the bottom rung here.

And what is the real social world? This room is the real social world. People are playing bowls. People are behaving in certain ways that make it possible for this class to take place. When you leave here, some of you will go to have dinner at one of the dining halls; and there's a multiplicity of people there doing a variety of things. That's part of the objective social situation. People wait in line, only a few butt in line. People pay for their meals. The money goes into an account which pays the vendors, the retailers, the drivers, the producers of the food.

So there's a multiplicity of experiences of the social situation. Some of you will go to the library; and some of you will go back to your apartments. *As you do that, just pay attention to how many people you see, and the various things that they're doing! For the most part, what you encounter is people doing things that are completely intelligible to you.*

So here we are: that's what people do throughout Boston; that's how they behave; that's how they commute; that's how they go to the library; that's how they dine.

For the most part it's an intelligible social situation, because the experiences that the multiplicity of people have had of the people doing things that they have seen, and they've asked about, and they've had insights into, and they've taken actions on it, and their actions transform that social situation in a way that at least keeps it as intelligible as it has been, or, more often, makes it more intelligible. People make improvements, in the way that Lonergan describes.

Common Sense as Social Construct

The concrete realization of the succession of new practical ideas does not take place without human cooperation. It demands a division of labour, and at the same time it defines the lines along which labour is divisible. It invites men to specialize in the skilful use of particular tools and the expeditious performance of particular tasks.” (CWL 3, pp. 233-234).

But the key to this is: it isn't just — the self-correcting cycle isn't just with regard to material, capital, technological, progress! So when people make inventions, they improve inventions until the point where people are making so many changes in software you can't keep up with it; and every time you think you've mastered the software, you get a new issue and it takes you three weeks to learn how to do what you were doing very nicely, thank you, with your old software!

[Student laughter]

You see my bias there!

But the technological improvement we're now talking about — *how to technologically improve our sources of energy and our sources of agriculture and things like that*. But it isn't just the transformation of the technological instruments that we use to underpin our standard of living; it's also *the insights that constitute how we cooperate and accomplish things! People have to have insights in order to be organized!*

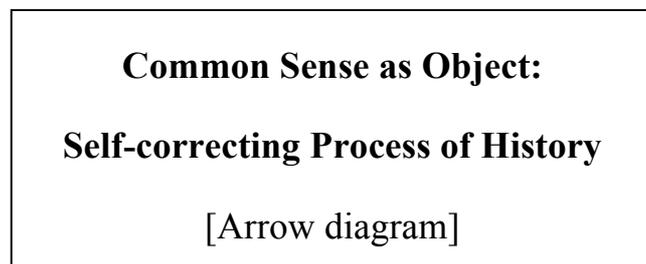
A number of years ago one of the Insight Papers that I got back from students was a young woman who had been working as a Camp Counsellor at the Summer Camp. And she wasn't really a Counsellor, what she was, was the Laundress; and it was her job to do the young campers laundries. And she thought this was great! All I have to do is to just put the stuff in the washing machine, and then I can go and read, and put it in the dryer and then I can go and read. No problems! She could do that the first time. And she suddenly had the problem: she didn't know which items went back with which! You know!

[Some class amusement]

So she spent all her time trying to sort them out, and finding the time for it! And she finally discovered that what she could do is to ask each of them to put their clothes in a mesh bag, and she put the mesh bags in, and then she gave the mesh bags back, and then they had to fold their own clothes.

[Students murmur their relief for her]

Well, *that was an insight into how to perform a cooperative function! She did some things, but she didn't have to do everything, in the doing of the laundry for the campers. But she needed an insight into how to free up her time, because it was driving her crazy!*



If you think of all the different ways in which people intelligently — as opposed to the way in which people unintelligently — *figure out how to organize a work task, that too is an example of how the social situation is being transformed. It isn't just the material infrastructure, the inventions, the implements, the buildings, the transportation vehicles and*

the apparatuses; that's not all that is being transformed by the self-correcting cycle. In a much more important way, it's how people cooperate, how they learn to do the sorts of things in combination that no one could do by him- or herself.

So this is what Lonergan means by progress! That the human social scene, both material and interpersonal is underpinned by massive numbers of insights, and improved by the further pertinent questions, and the further insights, and the actions that implement those insights, and thereby transform the objective social situation.

The set of insights making up an objective social situation, common sense, is parcelled out among many people, constituting a good of order.

The characteristics of the “Good of Order”: it is the reciprocal pattern in which we receive fulfilment of our needs, desires and fears, by cooperating to provide fulfilment and protection for others, and this cooperation all underpinned by insights.

It is merely a normative ‘ideal’ but constitutive of all social reality — as people cooperate intelligently in recurrent patterns.

I'll just refer to this [the “Common Sense as Social Construction” slide]. This is one of Lonergan's comments about *where the understandings are*. I mentioned this, I think, about two weeks ago, when we were talking about common sense as intellectual.

Common Sense as Social Construction

“It is parcelled out among many, to provide each with an understanding of his role and task, to make every cobbler an expert at his last, and no one an expert in another’s field.

So it is that to understand the working of even a static social structure, one must inquire from many men in many walks of life, and as best one can, discover the functional unity that organically binds together the endlessly varied pieces of an enormous jigsaw puzzle” (CWL 3, p. 237).

The set of insights that make up that objective social situation, no one person has the plan, and has got monitors and little l.e.d. lights on everybody to see if they’re doing the function they’re performing. There probably are some people who would like to be able to do that!! But in fact concretely what happens is that people are — the common sense of a social situation is, as Lonergan says, parcelled out among a lot of different people. And if it keeps functioning intelligibly and cooperatively, [this is](#) because people keep using further insights to adjust to new unexpected situations as they arise!

And to give you an example — don’t think of the intelligibility of a social situation, what Lonergan calls “**the good of order**” (CWL 3, p. 238) — And Lonergan says: A new idea of the good is forced upon us when we go beyond primitive community — the new idea he gives the name the “good of order.” And [writing](#) about the good of order, he says:

The fact is that human society has shifted away from its initial basis in intersubjectivity and has attempted a more grandiose undertaking. The discoveries of practical intelligence, which once were an incidental addition to the spontaneous fabric of human living, now penetrate and overwhelm its every aspect. For just as technology and capital formation interpose their schemes of recurrence between man and the rhythms of nature, so economics and politics are vast structures of interdependence invented by practical intelligence for the mastery not of nature but on man.

This transformation forces on man a new notion of the good. In primitive society it is possible to identify the good simply with the object of desire; but in civil community there has to be acknowledged a further component, which we propose to name the good of order. It consists in an intelligible pattern of relationships that condition the fulfilment of each man's desires by his contributions to the fulfilment of the desires of others, and similarly protects each from the object of his fears in the measure he contributes to warding off the objects feared by others. This good of order is not some entity dwelling apart from human actions and attainments. Nor is it any unrealized ideal that ought to be but is not. (CWL 3, p. 238).

So the good of order

“consists in an intelligible pattern of relationships that condition the fulfilment of each person's desires by his or her contributions to the fulfilment of the desires of others, and similarly protects each from the object of his or her fears in the measure that they contribute to warding off the objects feared by others. This good of

order is not some entity dwelling apart from human actions and attainments. Nor is it any unrealized ideal that ought to be but is not. (CWL 3, p. 238).

So in other words, what he is referring to there is the fact that the good of order isn't an ideal that he's saying "ought to take place." The good of order is, Lonergan is saying: *this is constitutive of all social reality!* That people have an understanding of how their needs and wants and fears can be met by engaging in complex cooperative patterns underpinned by the accumulation of insights.

Some concrete examples of "the good of order" implicit in traditional US cities, drawn from the thinker about urban social reality, Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of American Cities*.

Jacobs as an example of a cosmopolis person — withdrawing from practicality in order to save it.

Cities as "marvellous orders," analogous to ballets, that maintain the safety and life of cities.

The good of order is a social construction arising out of insights into informal patterns of cooperation; in contrast to bureaucracy.

Common Sense as Social Construction

"Beneath the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvellous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city." (Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, p. 50).

My — One of our favourite authors here at Boston College is Jane Jacobs, who wrote a number of books, the first, a very famous one, is entitled: *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961)⁹. It's just a brilliant analysis, and then she went on to write several other books about economics and — Lonergan, when he encountered her work, said: (Pat mimics Lonergan's unique style of speech) "If you want to know what an insight is, read Jane Jacobs! Dozens of 'em on every page! I think I'm going to call her Mrs Insight!"

[Huge class laughter]

So he was very — He had great admiration for her, as do I, as do quite a number of us here at Boston College. And the only place that she would go to give Workshops and Lectures was Boston College; she went once, I think, to Cleveland, but she didn't like to travel because it didn't — it took away from the time that she wanted to devote to doing her thinking! She's an example of what Lonergan would call a "*cosmopolis person*," a person who wants to withdraw from the practicality of things in order to save practicality from its own short-sightedness. She was herself also an activist, when the time called for it; but she really was very jealous of her time to do this thinking!

And here is just a brief description of a "good of order" (from *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*). She didn't have that terminology. She hadn't read Lonergan at that time; she read little bits of him later on. But this is in no way influenced by Lonergan, explicitly! *But here's two minds that are thinking: she's thinking very concretely with very rich detailed descriptions; Lonergan is thinking more generally, and structurally.*

Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a *marvellous order* for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city. *It is a complex order.* (*Death and Life*, p. 50, emphases added).

Notice she uses that word 'order', underpinned by a multiplicity; thousands of insights of the people who inhabit and participate in this good of order.

Its essence is intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes. This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we

⁹ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1961.

may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance — not to a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off *en masse*, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which *miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole*. The ballet of the good city side-walk never repeats itself from place to place, and in one place is always replete with new improvisations. (*Death and Life*, p. 50, italics and emphases added).

But notice it's still got an order to it! There is still an intelligibility to it!

The stretch of Hudson Street where I live —

She was still living in New York City when she wrote this

— is each day the scene of an intricate side-walk ballet. I make my own first entrance into it a little after eight when I put out the garbage can, surely a prosaic occupation, but I enjoy my part, my little clang, as the droves of junior high school students walk by the centre of the stage dropping candy-wrappers. (How do they eat so much candy so early in the morning?)

While I sweep up the wrappers I watch the other rituals of morning. Mr. Halpert unlocking the laundry's handcart from its mooring to a cellar door, Joe Cornacchia's son-in-law stacking out the empty crates from the delicatessen, the barber bringing out his side-walk folding chair, ... (*Death and Life*, pp. 50-51).

And she goes on and on, and she traces this through the courses of the day: *the various people that come and go through her neighbourhood, having very different kinds of destinations and purposes and interests, and yet maintain the safety and civility that makes it possible for them to do that*, just by taking what she calls a modicum of responsibility.

So the good of order, as Lonergan is talking about it, is a *social construction by the implementation of insights which has a lot to do with how people form patterns of cooperation, most informal! Most of our patterns of cooperation are informal!* We formalize patterns of cooperation only for certain kinds of things, where the intricacy of spontaneity can't be counted on! So those are innovations that come about. When you get an ideal that everything ought to be like the "unison kicking and twirling," you have not an intelligible transformation of the social order that involves a certain amount of needed formalization; but you have instead bureaucracy! Bureaucracy is when everybody has to follow the same rules, not use their intelligence in an adaptive and creative fashion!

Levels in Social Situation: Technological, Economic, Political, & Cultural.

Briefly, how Lonergan understands these levels.

Levels in Social Situation

Cultural

Innovations into critical methods for establishing and institutionalizing and cultivating value priorities

Political

Insights into innovations about effective group agreement

Economic

Insights into innovations in distributing good & services

Technological

Insights into innovations in artefacts (goods & services); especially innovations in means of producing artefacts

I'm just going to refer to this, in the interests of time. *Lonergan does say that there are a number of different levels in the social situation: Technological* we talked about, *insights into innovations in artefacts (goods & services); especially innovations in means of producing artefacts; Economic* how to distribute the goods and services produced by an economy, *insights into innovations in distributing good & services; Political* in the broadest and classical sense of how people cooperate; we tend to use the word now, 'social' where the ancients tended to use the word 'political', but political in the sense of manners of cooperation, *insights into innovations about effective group agreement; Cultural* has to do with the institutions and the patterns by which we can effectively criticize our social arrangements. It is one thing to have social arrangements; It's another one to effect the critical evaluation of that; you need different kinds of institutions for those; *innovations into critical methods for establishing and institutionalizing and cultivating value priorities.*

Intersubjectivity and Dialectic.

In one sense, “common sense as intellectual” is about intersubjectivity — about *understanding* one another.

But when Lonergan uses the term ‘intersubjectivity’ he means the felt, affective form of intersubjectivity where “the experience of each resonates to the experience of others.”

Intersubjectivity in this sense is the ground of primitive community — the belonging together — that is more basic than the good of order.

Sympathy, compassion, sorrow, elation, are all examples of this more basic form of intersubjectivity.

Positive aspects of this kind of intersubjectivity:

Indispensable foundation of human living.

Basis of tribalism, family, gender identification, racial
and national identification.

Basis of life's emotional richness; humans as *social*
animals.

Intersubjectivity and Dialectic

“Primitive community is intersubjective.”
(*CWL 3*, p. 237).

**“the bonds of intersubjectivity make the
experience of each resonate to the experience
of others;”** (*CWL 3*, p 240).

But, **“besides this elementary communion,
there are operative in all a drive to understand
and an insistence on behaving intelligently that
generate and implement common ways,
common manners, common undertakings,
common commitments”** (*CWL 3*, p 240).

Now this is all having jumped ahead. As Lonergan spells this out in *Insight*, he talks first about *primitive intersubjective community*. **“Primitive community is intersubjective.”** (*CWL 3*, p. 237). And the key is what he means by ‘intersubjectivity’! There’s a sense in which we’ve been talking about intersubjectivity for this whole class; because *intersubjectivity, among other things, means understanding what other people are up to, understanding what you can expect of other people, understanding what do people mean, understanding other people’s behaviours. That all intersubjectivity of a certain kind, and it’s intersubjectivity that’s underpinned by intelligence, and it’s inquisitive and creatively coming up with new understanding.*

But Lonergan means by intersubjectivity something very, very, specific: and it is an affective intersubjectivity, an intersubjectivity of feeling, which he illustrates here by this phrase: **“the bonds of intersubjectivity make the experience of each resonate to [Pat uses the preposition ‘with’ here, rather than Lonergan’s ‘to’] the experience of others;”** (CWL 3, p 240). Now that’s more fundamental in some very, very, profound ways; it’s more basic, it’s more primordial, than *the understandings* that we acquire. So sympathy and compassion and sorrow are all examples of this intersubjective feeling that Lonergan is talking about. When you know your friend has experienced the loss of a loved one, your feelings resonate with their feelings of loss. That’s why it’s called ‘com-passion.’ You passion along with the one who is undergoing the passion. So intersubjectivity in that sense! There’s also of course the other kinds of — the elation: when you hear something wonderful has happened to your friend, how you’re in joy because they are in joy. *So intersubjectivity in this particular sense is the human phenomenon of humans resonating with the feelings of others. When you see them react, or you know about them reacting to something, and you feel along with them.* You identify with them at an affective level before you stop and think and ask any questions about any of that! That’s what he means by the **“primitive community of intersubjectivity”** (see CWL 3, p. 237), the belonging together that comes out of that.

Now out of that, of course, comes all the fellow feeling of tribalism, of family, of gender identification; “Boys are from Mars and girls are from Venus”, that type of thing, of racial identification. *So there’s something very, very, positive in intersubjectivity, that’s a foundation of human living. Human living, if it were just a matter of insight would be rather*

cold and heartless! So there's something very good about intersubjectivity; there's something very essential and indispensable about intersubjectivity. When people lose the capacity to have feelings for other people, there's something very seriously disrupted in their living! That is why Aristotle will say that human beings are by nature social animals, because one aspect of human living is the spontaneity with which we resonate with other people. And that's a very good thing!

But there are also tensions involved in living according to this kind of intersubjectivity:

Not the same as living according to one's own questioning and understanding.

Not necessarily a tension between intersubjective and intelligent living, but there is a potential for conflict.

Group bias arises when a person may choose their own group over their own intelligent, self-correcting process.

So one aspect of human living is the spontaneity with which we resonate with other people. And that's a very good thing! But, as he says, notice that there a subtle tension here; that on the one hand, there is this elementary basic, very good, identification with others that are like us: others, the jokes that Yankees and Red Socks fans make about each other, the jokes that Boston College and Notre Dame students make about one another — There's a really good identification. You have to be some place — we were talking about space — you have to be some place, and being some place always means being with others in that place and developing the feelings of identification; those are all very good things.

But there's this tension, that living according to your ethnic, and gender, and racial, and religious, identifications is a good thing, but it's not the same as living out of your questioning and your understanding. They just are different! They don't necessarily have to be in tension, but they're not the same. And so the potential for a tension is there!

Biases

Dramatic

Blocking of images & experiences in order to
block insights

Individual

Individual fear & desires
incomplete development of insights &
actions

Group

Group intersubjectivity
Incomplete development of insights & actions

General

Commonsense preference for immediate
outcomes
Incomplete development of insights & actions

And the potential for tension becomes realized when there's a disruption of the pattern of self-correcting intelligence by intersubjective preference. Group Bias, primarily and fundamentally is a matter of preferring one's own over others, even when the demands of your further questions take you beyond that. Now Lonergan has a remark about individual bias that applies both to individual bias, and to general bias.

Group bias as analogous to individual bias: one's self preservation instinct interferes with questioning about those outside one's self or group.

Individual Bias

With remarkable acumen one solves one's own problems. With startling modesty one does not venture to raise the relevant further questions. Can one's solution be generalized? Is it compatible with the social order that exists? Is it compatible with any social order that proximately or even remotely is possible? (CWL 3, p. 245).

Pat reads the passage from the slide:

With remarkable acumen one solves one's own problems. With startling modesty one does not venture to raise the relevant further questions. Can one's solution be generalized? Is it compatible with the social order that exists? Is it compatible with any social order that proximately or even remotely is possible? (CWL 3, p. 245).

So that the first — when he characterizes individual bias, it isn't just that you have regard for yourself. *If you have no self-preservation instinct, there is something that has gone wrong in your emotional composition. But if your self-preservation instinct interrupts and interferes with the development of your intelligence, that's when a natural self-love starts to interfere with a love of understanding and a love of what's true and right and reasonable. And that's the dynamic of individual bias.*

Common Sense as Object:

Social Biases and the Distortion of History

[Arrow diagram with blue markings across arrows towards 'Experiences', arrows towards 'Inquiries', and for both sets of arrows relating to 'Insights']

Group bias does the same thing. It's when your love of your fellows interferes with asking questions: "Well, what do I owe to those who are outside my identification group? Group bias arises when people choose their own group over their own intelligent, self-correcting process.

The objective social surd: not self-correcting but increasingly distorting.

Dramatic bias is a filtering of the images we would normally question and have insights into.

Actions then are robbed of the intelligence that bias-free actions would have.

The specifically social biases (individual, group, general) act consciously to block pursuit of questions or to block actions that would implement good insights.

Intersubjectivity is a good thing, but it is limited; one can have intersubjective compassion for people one knows, but not for 'humanity'.

How unrestricted inquiry can inquire into the good for all humanity, beyond the limits of intersubjectivity.

Intellectual responsibility arises when questioning transcends intersubjective identifications.

When you're following, when you're applying [previous four words unclear] your ethnicity, your gender, whatever it is, starts to interfere with the self-correcting cycle, then you get the transformation, not of the objective social situation that is not self-correcting, but the objective social situation that is increasingly distorted.

That blue line through arrows to 'Experiences' on the overhead display is meant to represent *an interference of one's experiences of the objective social situation: that's what dramatic bias does, in Lonergan's account. Dramatic bias is a filtering of the images that we have to question and to have insights into.* And if — when that happens, the actions that ensue are going to be robbed of the self-correcting intelligence that they would have were that bias not operating.

But the specifically *social biases* [blue line is drawn through arrows leading to 'Inquiry' on the overhead display], the specifically social biases are the ones that *either* shut off questions: "Don't bother with that; that's not an important question! Don't think about such things!" — Or [blue line is drawn through arrows leading to 'Insights' on the overhead display] the questions that having been raised, are not pursued through getting insights, or as in the case of group bias [blue line is drawn through arrows leading from 'Insights' to 'Actions' on the overhead display], the insights that occur are not put into play, out of preference for doing for one's own what one's not willing to think about doing for others.

Now the thing about intersubjectivity is, it is a wonderful thing and it's a good thing, and it's an indispensable thing in human living, but it's also very limited. You can love your family, you can love your class-mates, you can love your fellow country persons; you can't love humanity. There's no intersubjective feeling for humanity. But your unrestricted inquiry can ask about the well-being of people with whom you have no direct contact, and for whom, because of that lack of direct contact, you cannot have intersubjective feelings.

So there's a tension between the relatively restrictedness of something that's actually quite wonderful, intersubjective identification, and the unrestrictedness of intelligence. Because intelligence can ask about *everybody*: and what ought we do to change the world

economy? You know, is globalization a good thing? We don't ask that because we have an intersubjective feeling for people in countries that we've never visited, and people that we've never seen there. But we can nevertheless have an intellectual responsibility for those people, because our questions transcend our intersubjective identifications. That therefore is the source of the tension that can lead to group bias.

Group bias is the isms. The prejudices against, because they're other than what I identify with. *And yet intelligence knows no such limits. And so in order to quiet the incessant demands of the inquiring intelligence, accommodations have to be made, and an entrenchments of bias. And you give yourself all kinds of rationalizations for why you're preferring people, when in fact the only reason you're preferring them is because they are like you, you like them, and so on.*

Okay! Any questions about that? ...

[No question is raised]

General bias: being only concerned with immediate consequences, it sets aside questions not dealing with concrete particulars.

The concern for the immediate and practical is a good thing about common sense; it facilitates normal everyday life.

Yet it sets aside theoretical explorations about what is not immediate — long-term consequences.

In general bias, ideas and inventions are put into play before their long-term effects are known, leading to material and social consequences.

Example of gases (CFC's) damaging the ozone layer, as a long-range possible effect, before it was actually observed.

Global warming as a second example.

Business practices that led to economic crises as a
third example.

The most serious source of social decline is the general
bias.

General Bias

“The longer cycle is characterized by the neglect of ideas to which all groups are rendered indifferent by the general bias of common sense.” (CWL 3, p. 252)

Let me just say a couple of last things about *general bias*. The chief characteristic of general bias, as Lonergan says, is

“the neglect of ideas to which all groups are rendered indifferent by the general bias of common sense.”
(CWL 3, p. 252).

So what’s characteristic of common sense, you will remember, is that it specializes in the concrete and the particular. If you didn’t have the capacity to master concrete situations, you would always be running into walls, or making social faux pas, and not being able to live a rich mutual life with others. *So common sense in its specialization on accumulating the insights of the people, and the time, and the place, and the profession, and then adapting them intelligently to meet whatever needs and interests and concerns you have: that’s what common sense does. It deals with the particular and the concrete in that fashion. But for that reason it has to set aside questions that don’t deal with the particular and the concrete.* If you say: “What will happen in twenty years, or fifty years, or a hundred years, or *what difference, what immediate difference will that make to me?*” *That’s not what common sense is concerned with.*

And yet what Lonergan is saying here is that ideas that people put into place, insofar as they are informed by scientific understanding, do affect the social situation. And ideas that people put into effect that are not fully thought through, by lacking an understanding of the general and the long-term, they too affect the social situation.

So let's take a couple of very specific examples. A number of years ago there was a warning that if we used chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as accelerants in spray cans, that it would jeopardize the ozone layer covering the earth. And people kind of debated this, and so on. But it came from scientists as a prediction of a consequence that could be taking place; and then, lo and behold, satellite photos showed that there was a break in the ozone layer over the Arctic, which they were able to trace there. But that's a scientific, long-sighted thing. "If you use these kinds of chemicals long enough, this is how it's going to affect the ozone layer. The ozone layer didn't do anything for me yesterday or today, well I don't care!" It's a long-term effect.

And the concerns that we now have with *global warming*, that's a long-term effect! Common sense has been putting green-house gases into the atmosphere for the last two hundred and fifty years. "But if it doesn't make any difference today, it doesn't make any difference tomorrow; common sense has no particular reason to think about it." *Global warming is something that scientists started to think about before there was much in the way of evidence for it. That would be an example of the kind of thinking that has a long term effect. And we do see the reactions that people have to those kinds of ideas: presently the resistance that people have to the idea that global warming is a serious problem, and that we ought to be doing some things about it. There's genuine scientific debate about it; but there's also group bias against taking that seriously, and there's common sense bias against taking that seriously.*

And a third one is one that I mentioned a little bit earlier ([see pp. 62-63 above](#)), that to think about what the economy, what people were doing in nineteen ninety in the economy as setting the stage for a collapse nineteen years later in the economy, that's the sort of thing that common sense is not adapted to! "Why invest in some of these things? They were good last quarter, they were good next quarter, they were good for the last three quarters! That's good enough for me!" *That's what common sense does! Whereas thinking about things in the long term is the sort of idea that common sense is indifferent to, if not hostile to.*

Common sense as adequate for taking care of
individual and group biases, given time.

Yet it has no means to deal with the corruption and
decline of general bias's neglect of theoretical ideas.

So Lonergan is saying that the real problem with the human social situation, the development of a distorted and declining human social situation is really the general bias. That individual bias would be taken care of by common sense. Group bias would be taken care of by common sense: sooner or later, the people who have usurped too much power would be thrown out of office by a reform movement, or a revolution will take place! There are common sense means of dealing with both individual and with group bias, and the kinds of decline that they bring about.

The real serious one is general bias, because common sense doesn't have the means for dealing with the kind of corruption and the kind of decline that comes about from the neglect of long term theoretical ideas. And that's why a human science, grounded on the self-appropriated philosophy is so essential for the prospects of the human good under construction.

Student question about Lonergan's thought as
compared to C. S. Lewis, author of *The Abolition of
Man*.

Closing remarks on next week's topic: Chapter 8 of
Insight, and the difficulty of the section on "Species as
Explanatory."

Okay! Questions? ... Mary?

Mary: To me this resonates along with *The Abolition of Man*, and Lewis doesn't really talk about it as being so simple, more just like: there isn't going to be that common sense factor, people being able to realize that they're corrupting society. I mean, what would Lonergan say to — because I feel like common sense is kind of what Lewis puts it, like the way someone ought to do. But I don't see that there's like a general, I don't know, like a general theory behind that.

Pat: I have to admit that *The Abolition of Man* is not one of the works of Lewis that I've read. I've read — I think I have a feel for what he is probably saying there. If I had to guess, not having read that work, but having read many of his other works, I would say [that](#) *Lewis was very suspicious of modern science, but he was suspicious, I would say, of what Lonergan calls extra-scientific opinion. So among the extra scientific opinions, as we saw, was that science is the salvation of human kind. And Lewis was quite clear that that was not the salvation of human kind! And what science, as tied to that extra-scientific opinion, was concerned with was the practicality of science, not the long-term view of science. And Lewis himself was concerned with the ultimate destiny of human being. So that would be the place, I think, where Lewis and Lonergan would be thinking along similar lines.*

But what Lonergan has is an account of human reason and the role that human intelligence plays in the construction of the social order, that would be somewhat different, or at least —

Mary: — Lewis kind of just says that the abolition of man comes from man corrupting man in the sense that they don't let them have the intellect and the intelligence — You know, it's kind of the abolition of insight in general.

Pat: Okay. Sure. That would be very much along the lines that Lonergan was talking about.

Mary: Yeah.

Pat: Yeah ... yeah. Okay. So next week, we'll be doing Chapter Eight (*CWL* 3, "Things," pp. 270-295) in *Insight*.

I'll give you a little sort of warning: The section on "Species as Explanatory" (*CWL* 3, pp. 287-292) is probably *the most dense and complicated section in the whole book*. So if you're struggling with that, do the best you can! I'll try to give some indications just to what's going on there!

The species problem has been a very persistent problem in the field of biology. And the attempt to give a definition of species that does justice to a genuine scientific approach to biological phenomena, that's what Lonergan is concerned with in that [section](#). His account is very, very, intricate.

Recording Ends