

Insight & Beyond

Class 2, Part 1: September 16th 2009

**Self-Appropriation as Basic Method;
“Preface” and “Introduction” to *Insight*;
“Self-Appropriation” in *Understanding and Being*.**

Summary of Material

- Self-knowledge includes certain obvious dimensions, but also less-obvious dimensions – the immanent and operative dynamics of one’s own consciousness.
- Self-appropriation as Basic Method.
- Invitation to self-appropriation.
- Self-understanding as the basis for all understanding.
- Lonergan’s approach to the whole is *heuristic*, not systematic.
 - Being drawn beyond
 - Desire for wholeness.
 - This is the most important dimension to be self-appropriated.
 - Bringing together of disparate specializations and kinds of understanding: integral heuristics.
 - Bringing together different kinds of knowing as well as different kinds of knowns.
 - Overcoming the isolation of specializations, e.g., in universities.

- Method of self appropriation leads to a *verifiable* metaphysics derived from structure of one's knowing.
- Evidence for verification in the "data of consciousness." Self-appropriation as learning how to be *attentive* to the data of consciousness.
- Groundwork also laid for a method of ethics.
- Also provides the ground for approaching questions of transcendence and immanence.
- Relation of self-appropriation to Husserl's phenomenology and account of intentionality.
- Scrutiny of activities and objects of consciousness.
- Lonergan's expanded account of the kinds of noetic activities.
- Appropriating noetic activities as ground for a heuristic approach to the whole: being, the real, the intelligible, the beautiful, the good.
- Structured *noeses*, Structured *noemata*
- Resonance between dynamic character of human knowing, driven by inquiry, and the emergent character of the universe.
- Emergent probability as the structure of natural world.
- Self-Appropriation as Dialectical.
- Conflict as the key to dialectics.
- Self-criticism and calling one's own values and assumptions into question.
- The Fundamental Duality that causes us to doubt that understanding correctly, that correct insight, is indeed knowing.

- What are the alternative “ideals” about what knowing is – alternatives to “understanding correctly”? What is it about understanding – insight – that makes it seem as though it does not have to do with knowing?
- Student responses and questions.
- Personal and “constructive” nature of arriving at understanding keeps us from regarding it as about what is objectively real.
- Assumption that knowing is direct, unmediated contact with what is “already out there now.”
- Student question about how data of consciousness are communicated in comparison or contrast to the way that sensible facts are communicated. Suspicion that data of consciousness are closed up inside of one’s consciousness.
- Challenge the assumption that data of sense and numerical quantification guarantee objectivity.
- In fact, scientists need to *learn* how to observe sensible data; so also, we need to *learn* how to attend to data of consciousness.
- Avoiding the dilemma between Naïve Realism and Idealism.
- The Startling Strangeness of Genuine Knowing.
- The profound, existential challenge of self-appropriation.
- Naïve Realism versus Critical Realism.
- Comparison of naïve realism, idealism, and Lonergan’s critical realism.
Idealism as a halfway house to get to critical realism.
- Student questions about “Preface” and “Introduction.”

- Question about clarifying naïve realism. – Hume, for example, critiqued naïve realism for assuming personal and substantial unity behind impressions.
- Question about difference between insight and self-appropriation. – Having an insight and realizing you had an insight are different moments.
- Question about the two kinds of knowing. Descartes’ dualism. – Discussion of animal knowing (extroverted and biological) versus human knowing (correct understanding).
- What Self-appropriation Is.
- *Insight* as a set of exercises in self-appropriation. The need to supplement the exercises of *Insight* with slowed-down and expanded exercises – e.g., books by Brian Cronin & Joseph Flanagan.
- Exercises in self-appropriation as somehow related to Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.
- Witnessing the internal workings of one’s consciousness in a mode of guided stillness.
- Drive to understand always present.
- Appropriate = “make one’s own”; self-appropriation = “make oneself one’s own”
- Self-appropriation as a response to the Hegelian problem of shifting epistemic ideals.
- *Explicit* ideals of knowledge (compare Foucault’s *epistemes*) as successive and historically conditioned, always inadequate in explicitly thematizing our *implicit* drive to know.

- We are always already more than any explicit ideal because of the implicit ideal.
- Self-appropriation as a matter of making the implicit ideal fully one's own.
- Self-appropriation as:
 - (1) becoming attentive to the activities and the implicit drive;
 - (2) endeavoring to understand what one has now become attentive to;
 - (3) critically assessing and judging one's understanding of what one has become attentive to;
 - (4) deliberately committing oneself to cooperate with the implicit tendency/drive, and where it leads in acts consciousness and their contents.
- Questions about self-appropriation?
- Student question about appetites and desires versus drive to inquiry. – Drive to inquiry has a specific character unlike other desires; self-appropriation helps keep other desires in check.
- Student question about people who decline to inquire or seek knowledge, and whether all people really desire to know. – Lonergan has not made a universal claim but an invitation. (The very real problem of deliberate ignorance is a problem for empirical anthropology). – Not just university-educated people live self-appropriated lives; “wise” people – or, better, “lovers of wisdom” (*philo-sophia*) – living ordinary lives as examples of implicit self-appropriation as well. People who performatively live out the implicit tendency/drive.

Insight & Beyond:

Lecture 2, Part 1:

Self-Appropriation,
“Preface” and “Introduction”

16th September 2009

Self-knowledge includes certain obvious dimensions, but also less-obvious dimensions – the immanent and operative dynamics of one’s own consciousness.

Self-appropriation as Basic Method.

Invitation to self-appropriation.

Self-understanding as the basis for all understanding.

We saw these quotations last week, but I wanted to put them in a different context. *The first passage is to put the emphasis on this enterprise, Lonergan’s enterprise, as an invitation.*

Self-Appropriation as Basic Method

More than all else the aim of the book is to issue an invitation to a personal, decisive act — [to know oneself]”. (CWL 3, p. 13).

So it’s an invitation to self-appropriation, to a personal and decisive act to know oneself. Now, there’s a warning, or not exactly a warning, but an anticipation here. What Lonergan means by knowing oneself is not the obvious. A lot of times people have reflections about what it means to know oneself in terms of your background, learning about your prejudices, your biases. And that is part of the task of self-appropriation. But Lonergan wants to emphasize that there are things about ourselves, these immanent and operative tendencies that he talks about, that we

haven't paid attention to, and that it is terribly important to pay attention to. So it is a matter of knowing oneself, but it is a matter of knowing some things about ourselves that are very close to us and yet completely overlooked or largely overlooked.

And along with that goes a promise: that if you undertake this invitation, that some very important things flow from that. “***Thoroughly understand what it is to understand, and not only will you understand the broad lines of ALL there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon ALL further developments of understanding.*** (CWL 3, p. 22, Lonergan’s emphases). And you will notice that in today’s version of this, as opposed to last week, I’ve highlighted the word ‘all’ here.

*Last week I talked about how this may sound to a post-modern audience, where the suspicion, the heightened suspicion about totalizing is very much at the heart of contemporary philosophical reflections. So this is a very bold claim in the light of those kinds of reflections. But what I wanted to do is to emphasize that for Lonergan this is a matter of really raising **the question** about the whole. So I’ve emphasized the words ‘all’ there because *what Lonergan is doing is saying that this invitation to self-knowledge holds a promise and an approach to the **question** about the whole. What is the whole? The whole of reality, the whole of truth, the whole of goodness and value, the whole of what’s worth-while, the whole of being! So it’s an approach to the question of the whole.**

Lonergan’s approach to the whole is *heuristic*, not systematic.

Being drawn beyond

Desire for wholeness.

This is the most important dimension to be self-appropriated.

Bringing together of disparate specializations and kinds of understanding: integral heuristics.

Bringing together different kinds of knowing as well as different kinds of knowns.

Overcoming the isolation of specializations, e.g., in universities.

And exactly how is he going to approach this question of the whole? It's in terms of the word, a particular word 'heuristic'.

Heuristic

That word 'heuristic' is a word that's going to come up over and over again in Lonergan's project, and in this course. It comes from the same Greek root as 'Eureka!' It's the word that has to do with being pulled out of oneself. *In Lonergan's emphasis, it's being pulled or drawn beyond oneself towards one knows not what yet. Being drawn or pulled towards what one knows not. So 'heuristic' is the word that characterizes Lonergan's approach to the question of the whole.*

*To just say this simply and straight-forwardly, Lonergan is not going to provide a **system** of the whole. This is not going to be a systematic philosophy of the whole. It's going to be a heuristic philosophy of the whole. And the key to the heuristic philosophy of the whole is going to be knowing oneself as having a tendency, a desire for the whole, a desire for wholeness. And it's that which at bottom is the most important component in the self-knowledge that Lonergan is inviting the reader of *Insight* towards.*

Now here's a couple of passages from the "Preface" that give us some hints about what lies ahead as we work our way through the book *Insight*. "**Insight into insight, then, will UNIFY and organize the insights of mathematicians, scientists, and [people] of common sense.** (CWL 3, p. 5).

Self-Appropriation as Basic Method

The Question of the Whole

So it's a promise of unification. And on this side, it's a matter of a kind of a unification that brings together, or at least brings in contact, various kinds of understanding that are quite different. *Last week we saw the scale, or the list of different kinds of knowing that Lonergan acknowledges as genuinely kinds of knowing. And yet there is a unification of some kind that doesn't destroy the differentiatedness of those different kinds of knowing.*

Not only is there the promise of a unification, or a bringing together, or integration, of the different kinds of knowing, but also a unification of what is known. That is, as he says, that is one way at least of talking about a metaphysics.

Self-Appropriation as Basic Method

The Question of the Whole

Fifthly, one cannot UNIFY and organize KNOWING without concluding to a unification and organization of the KNOWN. But a unification and organization of what is known in mathematics, in the sciences, and by common sense is a metaphysics.

(CWL 3, p. 5, emphasis added).

Again, the key to this is the term ‘heuristic’. When we get to his discussions of metaphysics, which will not be until second semester, *we’ll see that his fundamental way of characterizing metaphysics is as heuristic. As opposed to a systematic account of being, a systematic account of all that is, what Lonergan’s is going to offer is a heuristic account of all that is.* But nevertheless, he is going to say it is an **integral** heuristic, a heuristic that brings together diverse kinds of knowing. And in principle, I think, that Father Lonergan saw his approach to philosophy as having the capacity to bring together people who are defined by their differences, by bringing them into contact with things that underlie those differences and are more primordial than those differences.

Self-Appropriation as Basic Method

The Question of the Whole

The many sciences lose their isolation from one another; the chasm between science and common sense is bridged; the structure of the universe

proportionate to [human] intellect is revealed. (CWL
3, p. 23).

And as he says, this is something that removes the isolation, the isolation of the sciences from one another, the broad chasm between science and common sense. And what he calls the structure of the universe of proportionate being, proportionate to human intellects, is revealed.

Now, it's this business of *the structure of the universe* that is the key to how he is going to understand this project of unification.

Universities, perhaps some more so than others, are known for the isolation of the departments from one another, the isolation of specialities within departments from one another, and the difficulty, if not the impossibility of specialists having any kind of conversation with one another. *This, among the things that Lonergan was concerned with, had a very high priority. To provide an approach by means of which disparate bodies of knowledge, disparate specializations, could come into conversation with one another.* And we'll see how the parts of that begin to be worked out, as we work our way through this book.

Though people specialize in all kinds of things — some people specialize in academic subjects. In universities, people specialize in finance, they specialize in health care, within health care they specialize in neurology, and they specialize in paediatric neurology, and they specialize in the paediatric neurology of spinal chord injuries! *What does it take for people to be able to talk with one another across those differences and specializations?*

There is a specialization that is crucial and it's the specialization of self-appropriation. Now this is not going to be something that will happen automatically. It's not going to be the sort of thing that a computer can do. *For Lonergan the kind of self-knowledge that he is inviting people to is the ground for the possibility of this heuristic integral bringing together, this integral heuristic way of approaching the question of the whole, the whole and the parts.* Where does what I do and what I know fit within the grander scheme of things?

Method of self appropriation leads to a *verifiable* metaphysics
derived from structure of one's knowing.

Evidence for verification in the "data of consciousness."

Self-appropriation as learning how to be *attentive* to the
data of consciousness.

Groundwork also laid for a method of ethics.

Also provides the ground for approaching questions of
transcendence and immanence.

Self-Appropriation as Basic Method

He then goes on to make another important claim. Something that certainly sounds different from anything that I had ever heard about metaphysics and philosophy. *Lonergan's claim is that his method of self-appropriation leads to a verifiable philosophy and metaphysics derived from the structure of one's knowing. That this approach to philosophy, that this approach to metaphysics, by means of self-appropriation, is going to give a verifiable philosophy and a verifiable metaphysics.*

Sixthly, the philosophy and metaphysics that result from insight into insight will be VERIFIABLE. In other words, just as every statement in theoretical science can be shown to imply statements regarding sensible fact, so every statement in PHILOSOPHY and METAPHYSICS can be shown to imply statements regarding cognitional fact. (CWL 3, p. 5, emphasis added).

And so his analogy here is in terms of the natural sciences. In the natural sciences, if someone makes a proposal about a law or a theory or a concept, what an empirical scientist wants to know is where is the empirical evidence in support of that claim. *Now the difficulty, of course, since the rise of the modern empirical sciences, is the tendency for the modern empirical sciences to operate with what he is going to call the extra-scientific opinion that modern empirical science is the account of the*

whole. That the only meaningfulness is the meaningfulness that's testable by sensible verification, verification drawing upon sense data.

Lonergan's claim, however, is that you can approach philosophy by another kind of experience, by another kind of data, the data of consciousness. So self-appropriation is a matter of becoming attentive to your own experiences of these operations that we talked about last week, that we'll continue to talk about, becoming familiar with them, becoming attentive, growing in your understanding of them; and that that's going to be the ground for testing metaphysical claims. And not only metaphysical claims, but also ethical claims.

Further, as a METAPHYSICS is derived from the known structure of one's knowing, so an ETHICS results from knowledge of the compound structure of one's knowing and doing; and as the metaphysics, so too the ethics prolongs the initial self-criticism into an explanation of the origin of all ethical positions and into a criterion for passing judgment on each of them. (CWL 3, p. 23, emphasis added).

Now, just as a kind of an anticipation: he doesn't pick up the *explicit* issues having to do with ethics until chapter eighteen in *Insight*. There are *implicit* ways in which he is dealing with ethical issues already in chapters six and seven of *Insight*, but not in what he is going to call a methodical way. So his analogy here is: *just as metaphysics is derived from the self-appropriated knowledge of the structure of one's own knowing, so also an ethics results from the self-appropriation of what he calls "the compound structure of one's knowing and doing"* (CWL 3, p. 23). And we can expand knowing and doing to knowing, making value judgments, judgments of value, deciding, and doing.

So an expanded structure would give the ground for an approach to ethical questions. *And, as he puts it, ethics prolongs the initial self-criticism into an explanation of the origin of ethical positions and a criterion for passing judgments*

about them. So self-criticism is self-knowledge, or self-knowledge is the result of self-criticism. And *his claim is that this approach is not just for metaphysics, but also for ethics.* And if you follow through on where this passage ends at *CWL 3, p. 23*, he will say that *it also give us a way of approaching questions about immanence and transcendence, the questions about whether all that is, the whole, is confined to the immanent universe, or whether there is also transcendent being or transcendent goodness.* And so it's a heuristic approach to the whole in all those things. So that's his claim!

Relation of self-appropriation to Husserl's phenomenology and account of intentionality.

Scrutiny of activities and objects of consciousness.

Lonergan's expanded account of the kinds of noetic activities.

Appropriating noetic activities as ground for a heuristic approach to the whole: being, the real, the intelligible, the beautiful, the good.

Now I just wanted to give you a little bit of a foretaste of where this is going to go. It's not going to be worked out in a complete fashion until we get to chapters fourteen and fifteen, which again would be in the second semester.

Self-Appropriation and Intentionality Analysis

But Lonergan's idea about self-appropriation is in a sense closely related to the phenomenology — the phenomenological tradition that stemmed from Edmund Husserl.

And Husserl used the Greek terms *Noesis* and *Noema* to characterize the structure of intentionality. **Intentionality** *is the relationship between activities of consciousness and the contents of those activities, or as you might put it, the activities of consciousness and the objects intended by those activities.*

Now, there is a little problem with that language, from Lonergan's point of view. *The little problem has to do with the implicit way in which there's an extroverted orientation embedded in the language of intentionality. It is something he*

is going to call into question! He is going to lay the grounds for calling it into question, first in chapter five when he gives his account of space and time, and then more profoundly in chapter eight, when he talks about the fundamental distinction between the objects of biologically-oriented consciousness and the objects of a totally human incarnate oriented consciousness.

{ **Objects of biologically-oriented consciousness**
} **Objects of human incarnate oriented consciousness**

So this is just sort of a precursor. There's going to be a series of ways in which we are going to come back to *this fundamental problem, one of the fundamental problems in modern and contemporary philosophy, the problem of reference, the problem of objectivity, the problem of the objects of intentionality.*

But Lonergan is very much in the camp of Husserl in saying that the way in which we come into the clear about the contents of activities of consciousness is by scrutiny and appropriation of the activities that do the intending of the objects of consciousness. So among these, the activity of seeing, and for example, the sight of a sailboat on water, the activity of hearing and the sound of a dog barking, the activity of touching and the texture of wet grass when you walk through wet grass with your bare feet during the summer, the activity of smelling and the smell of freshly baked bread.

And then the activity of understanding and that supervening content of intelligibility that is not reducible to smells or textures or sounds or sights. It's a sui generis — it's its own distinct kind of content that is not equatable or reducible to any of those, even though when we understand, we understand images, particularly images that come from sight and visual imagination. And we actually use the phrase, "Oh, I see!!" But in fact what is added is not an additional visual image. What's added is an intelligible content to the visual image.

We had an example of that last week, for those of you who were here. *Nothing on the board changed, but there was something about the contents of your consciousness that did change when you got the insight into what was the defining*

feature of the letters above the line and below the line. What changed was not what you saw, but the intelligibility which then structured the way you were seeing.

Another kind of noetic activity that Lonergan is going to focus on is the specific activity of *factual judging*, and its content is *actuality*. And another act that he is going to focus on is *choosing*, and **he will suggest** that in choosing what we do is we realize *value*. The content is *realized value*.

So this is an approach to intentionality analysis. *What are we doing in the self-knowledge business? We're paying attention to the activities of consciousness, the noetic activities; appropriating those as the ground for a heuristic approach to the whole of the contents of the intelligible, the real, the beautiful, the good, and so on.*

Structured *noeses*, Structured *noemata*

Resonance between dynamic character of human knowing, driven by inquiry, and the emergent character of the universe.

Emergent probability as the structure of natural world.

Now, what Lonergan adds over and above that is: *first and foremost we have to appropriate the different activities. And as we saw by way of introduction last week, Lonergan is going to claim that our activities are structured, and they are structured by the relations of inquiry; that our activities are related to one another by inquiry.*

Structured *noeses*,

Structured *noemata*

He claims that some of our activities are presupposed by our inquiries, and other activities are what satisfy and answer to those inquiries. And so you get a structured relationship as a result of inquiring!

Lonergan is going to argue that not only is *knowing the contents, or appropriating the contents, the objects, the noema*, of an activity to be known by *appropriating the activity*; he is also going to make the argument that *the structure of those contents* is going to be structured by *the structure of our activities*.

So when he talks about having a metaphysics, and an ethics, and an approach to the whole, this is what he means: that we appropriate not only the activities, but the activities as structured, and that the structure of those activities has implications for the structure of the whole. Or to put it very succinctly, he is going to make the argument that we live in an emergent universe.

Structured noeses,

Structured noemata

In other words, he will claim that human knowing intends a natural world that is fundamentally an emergent natural world. And part of the argument for that is the fact that human knowing is an ongoing emergent phenomenon. It isn't a simple deduction that because my understanding grows therefore the world grows as my understanding grows. That would be a little silly! One hears such things but it would be a little silly! Ah, it didn't exist until I understood it, so because I am now understanding it, it now exists. That's **not** what he is going to argue here! [With a smile:] His argument is a little more complicated than that!

[Some amusement]

But he is going to argue that there is some fundamental resonance between the dynamic emergent character of human knowing that's fuelled and driven by our inquiry, and the emergent character of being. Similarly, he is going to argue that in terms of that — what he called — extended structure of human knowing, the valuing and the deciding, that that's going to be the basis for giving us an integral heuristic way of thinking about the human social world and human history.

And what he calls the structure of the natural world is *emergent probability*, and the complication that comes in with the addition of human consciousness, human intentionality, human meaning, human freedom, is what he is going to call *the generalized dialectical emergent probability*. Why he needs and uses all those adjectives is something — Hang on! — we'll see as we go along! Okay?

Self-Appropriation as Dialectical.

Conflict as the key to dialectics.

Self-criticism and calling one's own values and assumptions into question.

Now, *one of the things that is going to be characteristic of Lonergan's approach to this business about the question of the whole, the whole of the good, the whole of reality, the whole of being, the whole of truth, is that it isn't just a straightforward phenomenon. It is also a dialectical phenomenon!* That's what has to do with this business of self-criticism. And as he says in the section [where he speaks of the "Existential Element"](#) in *Understanding and Being* — so this is page eighteen in *Understanding and Being*, [where he is focussing on issues that arise in connection with self-appropriation:](#)

In other words, this business of self-appropriation is not a simple matter of moving in and finding the functionally operative tendencies that ground ideals. It is also a matter of pulling out the inadequate ideals that may be already existent and operative in us. There is a conflict, there is an existential element, there is a question of the subject, and it is a personal question that will not be the same for everyone. Everyone will have his or her own difficulties. (*CWL* 5, p. 18).

*Now the key to dialectic as Lonergan understands it is the term 'conflict'. So dialectic has to do with conflict. He is not unique in this. You find it in Hegel; you find it in Marx. Not everybody who uses the word 'dialectic' thinks of it in terms of conflict. But Lonergan sees that at the heart of dialectic. And Lonergan is concerned with **the** most fundamental kinds of conflicts there are, or with **the sources** that are most fundamental to the kinds of conflicts that there are.*

So self-appropriation is not just a matter of discovering and paying attention to your own conscious activities. *It's also a matter that, at some point, this is going to*

be a little bit of the shoe getting a little tight; of beginning to be a little bit close to home; of a calling into question some of the most fundamental things that you hold dear! And so there is a fundamental — There are in every human being fundamental tensions. And for Lonergan, one of the most fundamental tensions is the tension between the implicit and the explicit ideal of knowing. And Lonergan holds that we get very attached, and very deeply and personally attached to our explicit ideals of knowing. I'll come back to that in a minute.

Self-Appropriation as Dialectical

But the initial self-criticism has also do to with discovering the source between — the source that is the source of making *well grounded and self-appropriated claims about the whole of reality, of the good, and making unsupported and vulnerable claims about the whole, about what's real, what counts as real, and what counts as good!*

Initial self-criticism provides a method for explaining how METAPHYSICAL and ANTIMETAPHYSICAL affirmations arise, for selecting those that are correct, and for eliminating those that patently spring from a lack of accurate self-knowledge. (CWL 3, p. 22).

And as the metaphysics, so too the ETHICS prolongs the initial self-criticism into an explanation of the origin of all ethical positions and into a criterion for passing judgment on each of them. (CWL 3, p. 22).

And ethics as he says, or at least *his approach to ethics, prolongs that self-criticism, so not only questions about the whole of the true, the whole of the real **must be raised**, but also questions **must be raised** about the whole of the good. And the assumptions that we bring, embedded in our very personality, our very personhood, **also need to come under criticism**; that **they also** need to be called into question, and they are not easy to call into question. They are very, as he says, existential. They are*

very existential. And to come to terms with them may require a very, very deep and profound change in the way in which we approach them.

And he gives a little hint of this in the “[Introduction](#)”; that *the appropriation of rational self-consciousness is a beginning*. It’s not like arriving at a set of deductive premises from which everything is going to be deduced. It’s the beginning of a journey, *the beginning of a journey of thinking differently and living differently*.

The Fundamental Duality that causes us to doubt that understanding correctly, that correct insight, is indeed knowing.

What are the alternative “ideals” about what knowing is – alternatives to “understanding correctly”? What is it about understanding – insight – that makes it seem as though it does not have to do with knowing?

Student responses and questions.

Personal and “constructive” nature of arriving at understanding keeps us from regarding it as about what is objectively real. Assumption that knowing is direct, unmediated contact with what is “already out there now.”

Student question about how data of consciousness are communicated in comparison or contrast to the way that sensible facts are communicated. Suspicion that data of consciousness are closed up inside of one’s consciousness.

Challenge the assumption that data of sense and numerical quantification guarantee objectivity.

In fact, scientists need to *learn* how to observe sensible data; so also, we need to *learn* how to attend to data of consciousness.

<p>Methodical Philosophy as Dialectical: Startling Strangeness</p>

For the appropriation of one's own rational self-consciousness ... is not an end in itself but rather a beginning. It is a necessary beginning, for unless one breaks the DUALITY in one's knowing, one doubts THAT UNDERSTANDING CORRECTLY IS KNOWING. (*CWL* 3, p. 22, emphases added).

But it is, as he says, a necessary beginning, because we have to break a conflicting duality. There are, he is going to argue, within us, two very, very fundamentally impeding tendencies and drives. Certainly, you could argue that there are more than that: you could argue that there are three or eight or ten! But, from his point of view, this is a very fundamental duality that is responsible for many, many conflicts. And it's a duality that makes you doubt that understanding correctly is knowing.

Now I want to pause there for a moment, because I know you folks read this passage. *What's the alternative to understanding correctly as knowing? ... When you saw that, what did you think might be the alternative to understanding correctly? ... Why would anybody doubt that understanding correctly is knowing? ... Matthew?*

Matthew: Perhaps if you know why something is incorrect, and you understand that, that would be the basis for more knowing than just understanding that Albany is the capital of New York, or something like that, I don't know!

Pat: Right. So, if you — [A little puzzled:] Could you just say that one more time, please?

Matthew: You have to be incorrect, but you have to understand why you are incorrect! So I guess, kind of getting some answer back, and meanwhile, you have to say to yourself, this is incorrect, because you would probably have a better grasp of whatever it is you are trying to understand than if you just knew the answer without understanding why the answer is such!

Pat: Okay. Okay, good! *What is it about understanding that makes it seem like it doesn't have to do with knowing? Why is Lonergan making such a big deal about understanding being the thing that people have to appropriate as intrinsic to knowing? ... Michael?*

Michael: Because he thinks we cannot do without the *eureka* moment. He gives the example! And he is almost saying that every time you actually know something it's a turning point rather than just building knowledge upon itself. So you can learn a lot of facts. But when you appropriate something and you really know it, it's a turning point in your life! It's a little different when you just know something.

Pat: Okay. Well, let's stay with the end of what Michael just said. *When you understand in that way, you look at the world differently. Is that knowing, looking at the world differently? ... Matt?*

Matt: I was thinking, perhaps, when you have — There's a certain prevailing idea that — like a personal opinion, or that there is a certain disconnect between my experience of things as they appear to me and maybe as things in themselves, and if I sort of accept that dualism, then I can never really be certain that I really know something. And that sort of separates me from someone else who may see it differently.

Pat: Okay. Good. So that really is part of what Lonergan is getting at here. *That if you understand something, you certainly see it differently than you did a moment ago, the word 'see' being a big problem here. The world has changed for you. And now you've got your world, and Michael's got his world, and Matthew's got his world. So understanding has an awful lot to do with the construction of our worlds! But why would we call that knowing? That's just self-construction! And that's at the heart of what he is getting at here. That there is deep down something that makes us doubt that having insights is anything other than constructing our own personal worlds. That having revelations just means that it is my revelation, and maybe you don't have it, and maybe you do! But it isn't really knowing, because knowing has to do with the really real.*

Knowing has to do with — and this is what Lonergan is going to say is at the heart of the tension — *we tend to think that knowing is about what is already out there now. And that if we have immediate direct contact with what's already out there now, then we know what it really is! We know the thing in itself! But if understanding intervenes in between, that's not immediate contact with what's already out there now. That's just our understanding, or our impression, or how it appears to us, or our opinion, or our belief about it!*

So this fundamental — *There is something fundamental in every one of us that is going to make us a little bit unsure that understanding correctly deserves to really be called knowing.* ... Jonathan?

Jonathan: That raises a further suspicion now! Because — So in terms of understanding facts correctly, we have a methodology for communicating those understandings, where we take what is qualitative sense perception and we make it quantitative through measurement, and that then we can exchange that data. It's difficult to imagine what it would mean to have a similar means of communication for the data of consciousness. So that understanding understanding correctly seems — It's hard to imagine how you would develop a way of communicating about that, given already the suspicion about understanding as being solipsistic, or closed up inside my consciousness. So in terms of tackling the larger project of understanding understanding, or having insight into insight, it seems even more daunting!

Pat: You're right. It does make it even more daunting! That question that you raise is a really good one, and it's one that I want to take some time [to address](#) — and particularly when we get to chapter three where some of this gets articulated.

So just to kind of anticipate that discussion: *Among the things that are assumed in our contemporary culture* — which was behind what you were articulating — *is that to put things quantitatively is to make them truly objective, truly intersubjective*, as you said, 'communicable'. Once we put them in numbers, then they are communicable. When they are qualitative, they are harder to communicate in an intersubjectively objective way.

That turns out to be a vast oversimplification of what does in fact go on in scientific knowing. Among the vast oversimplifications are, first of all, that *any scientist has to be trained into how to observe*. Ordinary observation does not cut it as scientific observation. *So there is a highly practised, highly trained observing, even before you get to putting the numbers on it. And then secondly, scientists have to learn how to put the numbers on them:* as Lonergan would put it, scientists have to learn how to select the scientific laws and concepts that they are going to apply, and what parts of data they'll apply [to](#), and what extra pieces need to be brought in. *So there is an awful lot that, as we really attend to what we are doing if we are*

practicing scientists, there is an awful lot of activity that is going on there! Thus it begins to look an awful lot like you have to do the same kind of learning to do observation in natural science, as you will have to do to learn how to pay attention to your own consciousness and communicate that to other people.

When I was in graduate school, Professor Richard Zaner was my teacher for “Husserl and Phenomenology”; and he once said in class, he said:

Pat [with a smile]: “When you go to the biology lab, and the biology teacher tells you to dissect the ganglia in the frog, you don’t go up and dissect the teacher’s frog, you dissect your own darned frog!”

Now why is it that we think there’s objectivity even though each of us dissects a different frog, but there’s not objectivity when it comes to the question of interrogating our consciousness? If I can share the results of my dissection of my frog with Stephanie as she dissects her frog, why can’t I share my understandings in intersubjective communication about what is and is not the case in human inquiry and human understanding, and so on?

So you are absolutely right: it makes the problem more difficult! But I just try to make it even more difficult [smile] by taking away the escape hatch of the scientific quantifiable as the easy alternative. It’s not an easy alternative: It’s just as messy! All right? I hope that made some sense. It was just kind of — We’re going to come back on all this later on!

Avoiding the dilemma between Naïve Realism and Idealism.

The Startling Strangeness of Genuine Knowing.

The profound, existential challenge of self-appropriation.

Okay. So what Lonergan is getting at here is then that *that which makes us suspect that when we have insights we are projecting our subjective impressions on to the data. That we are imposing our understandings or our interpretation onto the data.* So that I have my interpretation and you have your interpretation, but what this has to do with reality is certainly very much up — very much under suspicion! *Why are we suspicious of that?*

Lonergan is going to claim that there is a tension in us, and it will tend to make us sink into a bog, either into what he is

going to call naïve realism, that really knowing is just this immediate contact, or else a sophisticated view which recognizes the mediations, the additions of our own conscious activity over and above the immediate impressions, and then to say: “Well, those must be just idealism, or solipsism, or relativism, or something [like that!](#)”

Under the pressure of that doubt, either one will sink into the bog of a knowing that is without understanding [naïve realism], or else one will cling to understanding but sacrifice knowing on the altar of an immanentism, an idealism, a relativism. (CWL 3, p. 22).

That, he says, is a *dilemma, a dialectic, a conflict, a tension!*

<p style="text-align: center;">Methodical Philosophy as Dialectical: Startling Strangeness</p>

From the horns of that dilemma one escapes only through the discovery — and one has not made it yet if one has no clear memory of its startling strangeness — that there are two quite different realisms, that there is an incoherent realism, half animal and half human, that poses as a halfway house between materialism and idealism, and on the other hand that there is an intelligent and reasonable realism between which and materialism the halfway house is idealism. (CWL 3, p. 22).

[So we are in](#) a dilemma, a dialectic, a conflict, a tension, from which we escape only through the discovery, only through the self-appropriation — and then he throws in this little comment here: and if you have no clear memory — *You have not*

*yet made this discovery if you have no clear
memory of its “startling strangeness”!*

I think I mentioned last week that perhaps the earliest and most important influence on Lonergan was Plato. And this is — *Lonergan is referring here to the experience of being drawn out of the realm of the cave into the realm of sunlight, and how bewildering and disorienting and dazzling it is, and how difficult it is then to go back to the realm of the cave and communicate what you have seen.* This is reflected in his comment at the end of that section which is called “The existential element” in *Understanding and Being*, from which I was just reading a moment ago. So this is on page nineteen of *Understanding and Being*:

The existential problem is a fundamental issue that arises in Insight, and those who have read the book will probably know about it. I certainly know about it; I certainly have experienced it in myself, or I would not have written the book. (CWL 5, p. 19, emphases added).

So in other words, what he is saying here is:

“I myself had the startling strangeness of discovering what it means to truly know, and what a weird world you wake up in when you make that discovery!”

So there’s a kind of test of it: *if you have found yourself with that experience that he describes here of the startling strangeness about what true knowing and true reality and true goodness are, what the whole of it is, if you have some experience of that, then you might be in the ball park!* And if you haven’t, maybe you haven’t quite gotten it yet!

Now the good news is this: *It is going to proceed in a series of steps, of appropriating your activities, and then of appropriating your activities as structured, and then reflecting on the implications that that has for what is known, and for what is good.* And it’s not going to be strange at first, but there should be a moment in which you say: “Holy Cow!”

[Intrigued laughter]

Naïve Realism versus Critical Realism.
Comparison of naïve realism, idealism, and
Lonergan’s critical realism. Idealism as a
halfway house to get to critical realism.

**Methodical Philosophy as Dialectical:
Startling Strangeness**

**From the horns of that dilemma one escapes only
through the discovery —
and one has not made it yet if one has no clear
memory of its startling strangeness —
that there are two quite different realisms.**

(CWL 3, P.22)

Now the last half [of this passage from page 22](#) just needs a little bit of an explanation.

**— there are two quite different realisms, that there
is an incoherent realism, half animal and half
human, that poses as a halfway house between
materialism and idealism, and on the other hand
that there is an intelligent and reasonable realism
between which and materialism the halfway house is
idealism. (CWL 3, P.22)**

*So the startling strangeness is of two quite different realisms: what he elsewhere, and
others, have called “naïve realism”, here called “incoherent realism,” and what he
occasionally calls “critical realism”.*

{ Incoherent realism
{ Critical realism

Critical realism is his position. It's the realism — it's the implications about what the real is, what the whole of the real is, if knowing is understanding correctly. So if knowing is understanding correctly, then the implication is that there is a different kind of realism. And as he says here: There is “an incoherent realism, half animal and half human”, naïve realism, “that poses as a halfway house between materialism and idealism.” (CWL 3, p.22).

On the other hand ... there is an intelligent and reasonable realism between which and materialism the halfway house is idealism. (CWL 3, p. 22).

Materialism Realism₁ Idealism

Realism₂

So you can say ‘**materialism**’ means lots of different things for various thinkers, various individuals, but *one way of thinking about it is:*

Materialism: *all that there is is just the material, atomic, atoms, elementary particles bouncing around; that's all there is; there is nothing else!*

Idealism, in one way of thinking of it, is the view that *human knowing involves an addition over and above the purely physically caused processes of our bodies, of our sensation, that human beings add something that's not reducible to that, but of course, it doesn't have anything to do with reality, because reality is material.*

Naïve realism wants to say, for example, *there really are universals, universal concepts are real, but they are real because they are out there, and I am in immediate contact to them that is derived from my experiences. Idealism* recognizes that *there is a constructive element to human knowing, and thinks that that means therefore that there*

isn't any immediate verifiable contact behind them.

[Joking tone:] Lonergan's position is that the other kind of realism is left-wing idealism. The other case is right-wing realism!

[Quiet laughter]

What he means by that is *that you have to go beyond the idealism, that you have to go through the half-way house of idealism to get to the sophisticated and critical realism. And you can only do that by this process of self-appropriation.*

Student questions about "Preface" and "Introduction."

Question about clarifying naïve realism. – Hume, for example, critiqued naïve realism for assuming personal and substantial unity behind impressions.

Question about difference between insight and self-appropriation. – Having an insight and realizing you had an insight are different moments.

Questions about "Preface" and "Introduction"?
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Okay. So let's pause there for a moment. Are there any questions that you may have raised while reading the "Preface" and the "Introduction" to *Insight*? ... Class preparedness is coming with questions!!

Elizabeth: I still don't understand naïve realism. I'm just trying to understand what that really is, and the difference between that and critical realism!

Pat: Okay. Well, let's say, for example, *David Hume's criticisms are in many ways criticisms of positions that would be called naïve realist positions.* So you may think I'm a person. You may think that what you're seeing is a person. From a Humean perspective, you might be vulnerable to the criticism of being a naïve realist! Because *all you really have are impressions and ideas, as he calls them.* So let's just stick with the impressions. What you have is the impressions of my hair, of my face, of my hands, but they haven't been the same even in the last thirty seconds

that I've been speaking. You've got a lot of different impressions! *You have the tendency to project your habitual notion that there's a unity to all those impressions, but in fact they're just different impressions!* When I do this [Pat raises his arms in separation from each other], it's not the same as when I do this [Pat joins his hands at waist level]. You think that they are both about me, but that's just you in the constructivism of your mind putting those together. *And so, because there is no ground for you to make the claim that there is any unity to those impressions, you're just a naïve realist!* [With a smile:] Sorry! You get the point! I don't know if you are or not! But does that help a little bit?

So naïve realism is: I know there's a person there because I open my eyes and I see a person talking and walking, and I know there's a person there! Hume says that there is no such thing as, not only personal unity but substantial unity. That's a bit of an over-generalization about Hume — He is more subtle than that, but certainly people have taken that part of Hume, and said that all there is is just a bundle of impressions! *Now, there's no real unity to those impressions; they're just a bunch of impressions! And in particular, they come as kind of points — point flashes in time, and you put them together!*

Elizabeth: Okay.

Pat: And you could say that Hume does the same thing with causality! *There's no real causes! It's just that we habitually associate A coming after B, and so we think that B is the cause of A. Okay? But there's no impression of a cause of A; there's no impression of B being a cause of A. There's just the impression of B and the impression of A. It's naïve realist to go around making these claims for stuff I can't see!* Okay?

Elizabeth: It's not grounded in anything!

Pat: That's — That would be — A Humean criticism would say that, yes! And what Lonergan would say — *Lonergan's response to Hume is that Hume hasn't paid enough attention to what he is actually doing when he's formulating those positions. That were he to do that, he would have to call that conclusion into question!* Okay!

But not to persuade him to go back to being a naïve realist, but to persuade him rather that the realist problem is more complicated, and that you have to go

through something like the Humean criticism to come into the full self-appropriated realism. Okay. Byron?

Byron: One of our assignments in the class is to write about an insight you have. Could we equally write about self-appropriation? Does it work like that?

Pat: If you write the paper that I've asked you to write about an insight that you have, it will be an exercise in self-appropriation.

Byron: Okay!

Pat: And I think I mentioned this last week: It's not unusual for me to get a paper that spends the first paragraph or two saying, in effect, I hated this assignment. I knew I never had an insight in my life. So I dreaded having to write this paper! And then, somewhere around page three, the person says, "*And then I realized I had an insight!*" *There's two insights in that sentence! There's the insight that the person had that they've appropriated, and there's the realization that that was an insight!* So when Lonergan talks about understanding understanding, it sounds like gibberish. But it's not gibberish! It's a very real phenomenon and it does happen to people! *Realizing that that experience that I had was in fact an insight is a part of self-appropriation!* ... So I'd prefer you didn't *write about* self-appropriation, but I would prefer that *you did it!*

Byron: Right! But, what do you mean by "it's a part"? I mean —

Pat: Let me come back to that. I got — In the section on self-appropriation, I got some things there, and I'll explain what I mean by it then.

**Question about the two kinds of knowing.
Descartes' dualism. – Discussion of animal
knowing (extroverted and biological) versus
human knowing (correct understanding).**

Okay. **Any** other questions on the "Preface" and "Introduction"? ... There's a lot of material there. I've probably given you the high points, to give you a sense of where this book is going!

Question: Just to be clear! I'm not sure if this one section was a part of what you were just talking about. But Lonergan says in the "Introduction" that there are two kinds of knowledge:

There exist in man two diverse kinds of knowing, that they exist without differentiation and in an ambivalent confusion until they are distinguished explicitly and the implications of the distinction are drawn explicitly. (CWL 3, p. 17).

The two kinds of knowledge, and that they are separated by rationalism and empiricism, those camps. Is he making a distinction about empiricism as in like sense experience, and rationalism as a sort of conceptualization that my intellect makes? Like — Or is it what we've just been talking about?

Pat: Do you have the exact page?

Q. Page seventeen.

Pat: Where on that page?

Q. Ah, I'm sorry! I made a mistake! It's on page eleven and twelve, where he talks about **"They are juxtaposed in Cartesian dualism with its rational *Cogito, ergo sum* and with its unquestioning extroversion to substantial extension."**

I ask, accordingly, about the nature rather than about the existence of knowledge because in each of us there exist two different kinds of knowledge. They are juxtaposed in Cartesian dualism with its rational *Cogito, ergo sum* and with its unquestioning extroversion to substantial extension. They are separated and alienated in the subsequent rationalist and empiricist philosophies. They are brought together again to cancel each other in Kantian criticism. If these statements approximate the facts, then the question of human knowledge is not whether it exists but what precisely are its two diverse forms and what are the relations between

them. If that is the relevant question, then any departure from it is, in the same measure, the misfortune of missing the point. But whether or not that is the relevant question can be settled only by undertaking an arduous exploratory journey through the many fields in which men succeed in knowing or attempt the task but fail. (*CWL* 3, pp. 11-12).

Pat: Okay, okay! Thanks. Thanks! Okay. So the two kinds of knowing for Lonergan go back to this remark here [that we considered earlier](#):

**Methodical Philosophy as Dialectical:
Startling Strangeness**

From the horns of that dilemma one escapes only through the discovery — and one has not made it yet if one has no clear memory of its startling strangeness — that there are two quite different realisms, that there is an incoherent realism, half animal and half human, that poses as a halfway house between materialism and idealism, and on the other hand that there is an intelligent and reasonable realism between which and materialism the halfway house is idealism. (*CWL* 3, p. 22).

So the two kinds of knowing go back to this remark here [that we considered earlier](#), animal and human! Now, it's a little premature to get into the fine details of this, but *the word 'extroversion' is the key word that characterizes for Lonergan what animal knowing is all about. It's not sensation! It's extroversion!* Now why those are different is something we'll have to leave aside for the moment.

The dualism in Descartes, as Lonergan is characterizing it here, is the difference between *the thinking substance* and *the extended substance*. The thinking substance can only be known by understanding correctly. The extended substance is

what Descartes understands by matter. And it is what is the object of animal extroversion; that animal sensation is a boon to the creatures that are animals, because they have senses that allow them to do things that plants can't do, which is to find things to eat, things to hide from or ways to hide and protect themselves, and things to mate with! All of which involve contact!

It's this unification of seeing and touch that gives the fundamental animal sense of reality. Why? Because if you can't touch it, it isn't biologically useful to you. You can't eat it, you can't use it for protection, you can't mate with it!

Plants don't have a sensation that gives them an access to the distant realities that they could touch but they're not touching now. *So using your seeing for the sake of being able to touch is what he means by 'extroversion'. The fundamental meaning of 'materiality' for Descartes is what you can put your hands around — the extended substance. But, if you take something like causality or personhood or friendship, you can't put your hands around them! And so they seem like they don't have that kind of reality! What kind of reality do they have?* So that's the duality — It's the same duality! And what he is doing is he is reading Descartes through the lens of this distinction between:

the animal kind of knowing, the knowing that has to do with biological success that comes from extroversion, and

human knowing that has to do with correct understanding, which has *nothing* to do with extroversion and extension.

Okay? Is that helpful?

Q. Yeah, it is!

Pat: This is something — *This is really at the heart of the startling strangeness!* And it is something we have to keep going around, over and over again. But that's a very good question. Thank you!

So one more question and then I'm going to kind of move on to the next section, to make sure that I deal with that.

Bert Thank you. Where was that passage [on startling strangeness?](#)

Pat: Oh, it's on page twenty-two. The parenthetical numbers up there [on the overhead projector display] usually, if I did them correctly, are the pages in *Insight*. And if it's not a page in *Insight*, I am referring to *Understanding and Being*. So yeah. It's on page twenty-two. Okay?

Okay. So I know people have other questions, and perhaps we can pursue them further outside of class, when we can get into conversation.

What Self-appropriation Is.

Insight as a set of exercises in self-appropriation. The need to supplement the exercises of *Insight* with slowed-down and expanded exercises – e.g., books by Brian Cronin & Joseph Flanagan.

Exercises in self-appropriation as somehow related to Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

Witnessing the internal workings of one's consciousness in a mode of guided stillness.

Drive to understand always present.

Appropriate = “make one's own”; self-appropriation = “make oneself one's own”

But let's move along to self-appropriation. What is self-appropriation? Lonergan says:

What is self-appropriation?

What is self-appropriation? [The book] *Insight* may be described as a set of exercises in which, it is hoped, one attains self-appropriation. (CWL 5, p. 3).

The book Insight may be viewed, as he says, as a set of exercises in aid of self-appropriation. Now, part of the reason for doing this course, and part of the reason for even doing a video for a course capture of this course, is because not everybody

who has read the book *Insight* in the order in which it is written has found this to be a set of exercises that has helped them in self-appropriation.

[Some amused laughter]

And I think I did some of this last week, and I am going to say a few things about it later on today.

I think Lonergan wrote the book on many levels. *He certainly intended for it and wanted for it to be a set of exercises in self-appropriation.* But it is, quite frankly, like going up a roller-coaster and suddenly going down the steep hill, and finding yourself going ninety miles an hour and you are only on page twenty! And it is really necessary — *It was necessary for me, and I think it was necessary for most people I know, to take things slower than Lonergan does.*

This is not the course in which we are taking things slower. We're — We've slowed it down a bit! As I said, he once taught *Insight* and *Method in Theology* in thirteen weeks! We're not doing that! But nevertheless, because this is a class devoted to working our way through a lot of very complicated material in all twenty chapters of *Insight*, we're going to follow his lead! We did an exercise last week. We'll be doing other exercises as we go along. There's going to be some more exercises later on today! *But to say that that book functions as a set of exercises in self-appropriation is stretching the point!*

What I think it is, and is successfully, is revealing the startlingly strange implications of self-appropriation. And that is an important part of self-appropriation. And you haven't got it if it's not strange! So much of what he is doing here is drawing out the strange implications, and not as much on the exercises.

But there are some pretty good things available for — that actually provide some exercises. One is in

Brian Cronin's book,

*Foundations of Philosophy: Lonergan's Cognitive Theory
and Epistemology.*¹

¹ Brian Cronin, *Foundations of Philosophy: Lonergan's Cognitive Theory and Epistemology* (Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy Press), 2005.

And he actually does slow things down! And at the end of the chapters, there are some exercises of the kind that we did last week, where he actually asks you to have the insights and to pay attention to what you are doing. The one example that I gave last week is not going to do the trick!

And all the things that we are talking about are things that certainly I had to spend a lot of time *asking*: Is that an insight? Is that a judgment? Is that the virtually unconditioned? Can I exactly identify exactly what he is talking about? I remember one time watching trees waving, as they are outside our window right now, and saying, “You know, is that something that I know by experiencing, is it something that I know by having an insight, or is it something I know by having a judgment? You just have to do that! And kind of — it’s a little bit like sort of being in the rapids without a paddle! You’re sort of ploughing around in circles. But Brian Cronin’s book gives you some exercises, and slows things down. It’s very good! Also

Father Flanagan’s book,
Quest for Self-Knowledge.²

I also recommend. It slows things down for you. *Insight* doesn’t do that! He says it’s “**a set of exercises in which, it is hoped, one attains self-appropriation**” (CWL 5, p. 3), but there’s a lot else going on, and there is a need to kind of slow it down. So I do recommend that you look at those works. Brian Cronin’s book is available on line, and the web-link for that is in the [Course Syllabus](#). It’s also available over at the Lonergan Center for sale, as is Father Flanagan’s book. So I recommend these books. Periodically, I will be referring to Father Flanagan’s book certainly, and occasionally perhaps to Brian Cronin’s book as well. So it’s really in Brian Cronin’s book that you actually get these exercises in paying attention. We’ll be doing some of this as we go along, but it really does need to be supplemented, and I do recommend that book to you.

Now the word ‘exercises’ is kind of a key word. Lonergan was a Jesuit, and at the heart of Jesuit life and Jesuit formation are Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*. And I don’t think it’s an accident that Lonergan is using that word there, [at the start of *Understanding and Being*](#).

² Joseph Flanagan, *Quest for Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Lonergan’s Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

And this is a remark that comes very soon in the beginning of chapter one of *Insight*:

What is Self-Appropriation?

Deep within us all, emergent when the noise of other appetites is STILLED, there is a drive to know, to understand, to see why, to discover the reason, to find the cause, to explain. Just what is wanted has many names. (CWL 3, p.28, emphases added).

Looking ahead to some things that Lonergan says in the chapter on self-appropriation [Pat is referring to Lecture 1, “Self-appropriation and Insight”, in *CWL 5: Understanding and Being*], there is a distinction then between what we make explicit through the vehicle of language, and what is implicit that the language struggles to come to terms with. And it’s this deep drive to know that he is talking about.

I drew attention to the word ‘stilled’ here. There’s something about self-appropriation that is most important to appropriate this deep drive, the drive to know or, later on, he is just going to say, *the drive to know, to value, to choose, to love!* There’s something about that drive that is not forceful! And part of the exercises are — require some stillness — requires a meditative posture, which is what the Ignatian Exercises are also about. The Ignatian Exercises are for the sake of letting — are structured so as to let certain things fade into the background, so that other things can come to the foreground! And self-appropriation, first and foremost, is that! It’s a matter of achieving a certain kind of stillness, so as to pay attention to what’s going on in consciousness.

Remember last week, I said, as you were trying to get the answer to this puzzle, “Pay attention to what you are doing!” And initially what will happen is you will pay attention to what you are most familiar with of the interior workings of your consciousness. But you need to also learn how to be familiar with other things that you are not as familiar with. And in particular, that *your drive to understand is always there; it never goes away; it is something that requires a certain amount of stillness to appropriate.*

*Just as the Ignatian Exercises are structured: they are structured by language — Ignatius wrote these things down, he actually revised them many times until he got the language that he thought was most helpful and most accurate — so self-appropriation is a guided stillness! It's a guided attentiveness! And that's what Lonergan means by saying that the book *Insight* — or later on, he will go so far as to say “some such book as *Insight*” — is needed to achieve the kind of putting certain things to the background so that other things can come to the foreground.*

Another way of coming at self-appropriation is to look at the word ‘appropriation’, or ‘appropriate’. And the word ‘appropriate’, according to the dictionary, comes from the Latin root, *appropriatus*, meaning, to make one's own.

What is Self-Appropriation?

Appropriation: LL *appropriatus* made one's own

Self-Appropriation: Making oneself one's own.

And so *self-appropriation* means to make oneself one's own. Now, that's a very odd thing to say, isn't it? When you do the etymology on this, it seems redundant. If you're not your own, who's are you? ... And the answer to that has to do with this business of stillness.

*The minute we pick up the book *Insight*, we are already at a very complex formation as a human being, and there is a lot that is operating in us! And not everything that is operating in us is of our own! A lot of it is of our culture! A lot of it is expectations that others of all kinds have of us. A lot of it is things that we have done. A lot of it is decisions that we have made that have been betrayals of ourselves. And so we come back to that existential element, that there are things that have to be pulled out of us, or that we have to pull ourselves out of, in order to be our own.*

Self-appropriation as a response to the Hegelian
problem of shifting epistemic ideals.

Explicit ideals of knowledge (compare Foucault's
epistemes) as successive and historically conditioned,
always inadequate in explicitly thematizing our
implicit drive to know.

We are always already more than any explicit ideal
because of the implicit ideal.

Self-appropriation as a matter of making the implicit
ideal fully one's own.

Self-appropriation as:

- (1) becoming attentive to the activities and the
implicit drive;
- (2) endeavoring to understand what one has now
become attentive to;
- (3) critically assessing and judging one's
understanding of what one has become
attentive to;
- (4) deliberately committing oneself to cooperate
with the implicit tendency/drive, and
where it leads in acts consciousness and
their contents.

So when Lonergan undertook to write this particular chapter on self-appropriation [Lecture 1, "Self-appropriation and Insight", in *CWL 5: Understanding and Being*] he did it in a funny way! He didn't do it the way Brian Cronin or Joseph Flanagan do it. He did it in terms of a problem.

What is Self-Appropriation?

“Self-appropriation is being introduced in terms of a problem.” (CWL 5, p. 14).

So this is on page fourteen of *Understanding and Being*, in the lecture on self-appropriation.

What is the Hegelian problem?

So as he introduces the problem of self-appropriation, he introduces self-appropriation as a response to a problem. This is a little different from the way he introduces self-appropriation in the “Preface” and “Introduction” to *Insight*, but it’s complementary.

He writes:

It is possible to GET TO these fundamental tendencies of which any conceived ideal is an expression, and if we can TURN IN UPON these fundamental tendencies, then we are on the way to GETTING HOLD OF matters of fact that are independent of the Hegelian objection. (CWL 5, p. 14).

So what is the problem that is the problem to which he is going to claim that self-appropriation is a response? ... Stephanie?

Stephanie: [Inaudible]

Pat: Okay. Yes, that’s part of the issue. Right! So the pursuit of knowledge is the pursuit of an unknown, so how can — So it’s the problem of the *Meno* — Lonergan actually poses it in terms of Hegel rather than the *Meno* here, but the *Meno* dilemma is also part and parcel of this. How can we pursue the unknown if we don’t know what it is? That’s — We can put that piece over here [Pat gestures to an imaginary point to his left]. Okay? Now what’s the Hegelian way of situating the problem — because he does situate it explicitly with regard to Hegel?

[Silence]

All right. Well, let's take a look at where he does the Hegelian reflection. And let's look at it on page fourteen. On the previous two pages he is talking about Hegel's account of the explicit, the ideal, the implicit, the abstract, the concrete, [and so on](#). Here he is putting it in another form:

The solution offered in *Insight* to this problem is self-appropriation. The ideal we seek in seeking the unknown, in trying to know, is conceptually implicit.
(*CWL* 5, p. 14).

Okay. By 'conceptually implicit', he means, that from the viewpoint of having *concepts* about the ideal, we don't have them! We don't have explicit concepts in seeking the ideal as we're seeking knowledge.

There does not exist naturally, spontaneously, through the whole of history, a set of propositions, conceptions, and definitions [so conceptual then] that define the ideal of knowledge. (*CWL* 5, p. 14).

So there's no place in the history of humankind that there is an already existing set of concepts, definitions, principles, about what it is we're receiving when we're receiving knowledge. That's a strong claim!

But to say that conceptually it is implicit, that it is implicit with regard to statements, that these statements differ in different places and at different times — they are historically conditioned — is not to say that it is nonexistent. (*CWL* 5, p. 14).

The 'it' there means the implicit ideal. Okay? So he has framed the problem by saying: Historically people have explicitated what the ideal of knowledge is — what it is that you have to have if you can say that you have knowledge. And he gives a little — there's a little — basically *some sentences and some paragraphs that suggest some of the transitions about the ideal of what it means to know*.

Historical Succession of *Explicit* Ideals of Knowledge

Historical Succession of *Explicit* Ideals of Knowledge

Pythagorean: Numbers

Aristotelian things and causes

Thomist analysis and synthesis

Deductivist ideal

Empirically verified mathematical laws

Newtonian System

Einsteinian invariants

States and probabilities

Hegelian alienation

He sketches that the Pythagoreans thought that to know was to know the number of something; the Aristotelians [conceived of knowing](#) in terms of causes and things, and so on. So you've read through that [[presumably CWL 5, pp. 3-21](#)]. The point that he is making [in those pages](#) is not to do a thorough and critical history of philosophy, but to just point out that *there are critical transitions in what has been the explicit ideal of knowledge*.

Some of you are familiar with the work of Michel Foucault. [Lonergan](#) does something very similar. That there are these *epistemes*. *Epistemes*, as Foucault talks about them, are ideals that at certain points in western civilization people held to be what would count as knowledge. And Foucault's great strength is to show how widespread they are in different fields. And then all of a sudden there's a transition for Foucault, the transmission just means [that](#) something happens!

What Lonergan is arguing here is that there is something implicit which is always making human beings dissatisfied with the explicitated ideals of knowledge, because behind the drive that gives rise to certain formulations of what it is we think we're doing when we're knowing, there is an implicit, spontaneous — as he says, a

tendency. It is the same thing that he is talking about when he uses those terms about the — that *deep down within us there's a drive*. And remember he said, back in the beginning of the first chapter of *Insight*, Deep within us there is a drive, and people call it by different names; and they say its looking for different things.

Deep within us all, emergent when the noise of other appetites is stilled, there is a drive to know, to understand, to see why, to discover the reason, to find the cause, to explain. Just what is wanted has many names. (CWL 3, p.28).

But no matter what you say that drive is, that drive is going to push beyond any of those **formulations**. So he uses the Hegelian analysis and says, that *the minute we try to give an explicitation of our ideal as to what counts as knowing, there's an alienation of ourselves from ourselves because we are already more than that ideal. And because we are already more than that ideal, that implicit ideal is going to find dissatisfaction with the explicit ideal and seek a new explicit ideal, which is going to be found wanting, and so on.*

So the dilemma then becomes, *aren't all claims about what knowing is simply historically conditioned, merely relative?* And you think *that* is what knowing is, and Jones thinks *that's* what knowing is ... And well, you just have *different opinions* about what knowing is!

Lonergan's argument here is that self-appropriation is the activity, the exercises, in which you make your own this implicit that is always operating, the fundamental tendencies, as he calls them on page fourteen. Okay!

He writes, as we saw earlier:

It is possible to GET TO these fundamental tendencies of which any conceived ideal is an expression, and if we can TURN IN UPON these fundamental tendencies, then we are on the way to GETTING HOLD OF matters of fact that are independent of the Hegelian objection. (CWL 5, p. 14).

Now, somebody asked me a little bit earlier — I forget who asked me this one, maybe Byron — “*Beyond realizing that I have an insight, what more is there to self-appropriation?*”

And in the section on self-appropriation that you have [[presumably Lecture one of *Understanding and Being*](#)], *what Lonergan is really doing is focussing on becoming attentive to yourself, and being attentive to yourself as operating in terms of this tendency, this deep desire, this wonder, this inquisitive spirit. Learning to pay attention to that. And learning to pay attention to the activities that it leads you into, those structured activities that we talked about last week.*

*So self-appropriation, first and foremost, is exercises in learning to **pay attention** to that deep tendency, and to all the activities that are structured, and brought about, and generated, by that deep tendency. So first of all, just learning to notice that they are there — what they are, and how they differ from one another. But it doesn't rest there, because having paid attention to those, it's also essential to **understand** what it is you've encountered, by paying attention to what hopefully, in some cases, are going to be things about yourself that you never knew were going on. You'll discover that you were doing them all the time, but you didn't notice them. You'll discover that, for example, you've been using your insights to structure space and time since probably the time you were about two months old. And you didn't even know you were doing it! That's going to be a strange discovery for you. Okay! Attending to the fact that we are doing that, but also understanding that it was insights that you were having that made your space and your time be what they are. And **judging** that you have correctly understood yourself as having those tendencies — have correctly understood those tendencies, those operations, those experiences of your consciousness. But really finally, *self-appropriation — making yourself your own — means **valuing and choosing** what you've discovered about yourself as something to commit yourself to.**

What is Self-Appropriation?

So **self-appropriation**, we may say, is a matter of **Attention** to oneself as agent of one's "functionally operative tendencies."

Understanding what has come to one's attention

Judging whether one has correctly understood those experiences

Valuing and Choosing one's correct self-understanding

So it's one thing to have an implicit tendency, an implicit ideal about knowing; it's another thing to decide to cooperate with that implicit tendency. And that's a decision that a person has to keep on making, day after day, year after year, throughout a whole lifetime. Because you'll always discover the terms of these fundamental tensions that Lonergan talks about. You're always going to discover the things that interfere with you living according to that deep desire.

Questions about self-appropriation?

Student question about appetites and desires versus drive to inquiry. – Drive to inquiry has a specific character unlike other desires; self-appropriation helps keep other desires in check.

Student question about people who decline to inquire or seek knowledge, and whether all people really desire to know. – Lonergan has not made a universal claim but an invitation. (The very real problem of deliberate ignorance is a problem for empirical anthropology). – Not just university-educated people live self-appropriated lives; "wise" people – or, better, "lovers of wisdom" (*philosophia*) – living ordinary lives as examples of implicit self-appropriation as well. People who performatively live out the implicit tendency/drive.

Questions about “Self-Appropriation”?

Okay. So **are there any** questions about self-appropriation? ... Mary?

Mary: In response to what you just said, that you're always going to encounter those opposing fears, or whatever that is that's trying to get you to not follow your new self-appropriated self, would that also be the same thing as the appetites that are in existence when you're trying to accept that life?

Pat: Ah, that's one way of talking about it. Lonergan occasionally uses the word 'appetites', **but he** more often uses the word 'desire'. *When we get to chapter twelve, he's going to say that the desire, this fundamental tendency, is not analogous to other desires.* What he means by that is **that** it's got — *you can't know it by saying it's like hunger, it's like thirst, it's like the sex drive, it's like the will to power, it's like the desire for safety and security. It's not like any of those desires. It's got a very, very distinctive character to it.* So in that way, he's talking about what your word, 'appetites', which is another standard word for it — he *is* saying that those other kinds of desires, those other kinds of appetites, compete with the desire to know. And frequently, that without self-appropriation, they tend to get the upper hand. So yes, that's right! Okay? Okay. ... Tim?

Tim: Yeah. I was just wondering about Lonergan's kind of operative anthropology here? It's wonderful, and it's very positive, in its kind of groundedness idea of wonder as this driving, animating, principle in the human subject. And particularly his reference to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: “All men naturally desire to know.” *And I'm just wondering if we can just take that kind of statement for granted. Particularly, I'm wondering if there's a burden on Lonergan to try to kind of show the empirical evidence for that claim?* So I'm thinking about listening to an NPR interview with Nicholas Christoff, a kind of reporter for the *New York Times* who does columns oftentimes following the beat of the underside in history. So he's at Darfur, kind of writing about the Janjaweed, or he's in Iraq talking about the civilian casualties by US bombings. And he was talking about how he really has this kind of unique role, and that he's lucky that he works for the *New York Times*, and there's a place for him. But for most kind of journalisms, there is not really the economic

support for that. Because what sells is *People Magazine*, what sells is Kylie's [some unclear references], right? What sells is stories about Britney Spears, you know, and her kids. And so *I'm just wondering about those instances when it seems like we shut down the questions, and we really don't want to know! That we kind of close off that wondering spirit. You know that in Plato's story that he warns us that when you get outside of the cave, there's kind of this ethical obligation to go back down inside, but you're not going to be greeted as a liberator, right?* So there also seems to be this natural tendency within us, which he kind of notes when *he talks about part of his project here is to campaign against the flight from understanding. So he recognises there is this tendency. So yeah, I'm just wondering, you know, how do we kind of account for that?* Yes, we wonder! But I have to say sometimes when I read Lonergan I light up, *but I also get suspicious because it feels kind of self-congratulatory! That it's kind of beatifying the life of a scholar!* I mean, that's kind of our life is to raise questions, but *is there also a natural tendency within us to kind of shut those questions down?* Because we don't want to know *what is it?* and *is it so?* We'd rather not!

Pat: Ah, that — That's a lot of questions!

[laughter]

But, you know, let me begin by taking a couple of them, and see if I can answer some of your concerns.

The question about the claim, that Lonergan does share, that this is a desire that characterizes all human beings: you're quite right! That is something that needs a certain kind — that's a claim that is — that requires a certain kind of investigation, an empirical investigation. So in that sense, yes, he does have an anthropology. He ends up pretty convinced that every human being has this unrestricted desire, this deep-seated tendency that knows no limits and rests with nothing short of the whole. That is true! He makes that claim.

But what I'd suggest is what is important is: Is it true about you? That's really what he says the book is an invitation to. It is an invitation to you, to find out about that in yourself! And although he makes that claim, and it's a claim that it's fair to say that he himself does not give the evidence for; so it's a claim beyond what

*he is able to provide the evidence for, it's really only secondary to what he is doing! What he is primarily doing is asking **you** to engage in this self-appropriation process.*

With regard to other things you said, about: Are there cultural and social forces that make it next to impossible for people to live that way? Sure!

But I do want to make at least one qualification. It isn't just journalists or scholars who, I'm quite convinced, live self-appropriated lives. I'm quite convinced I've met people who were neither journalists nor scholars, who in fact do that. They are people that you would call wise. What characterises a wise person is not a person who knows everything! And this, of course, is really at the heart of Plato's Apology. Plato presents Socrates as feeling he has a religious obligation to prove the god, the oracle, wrong in saying that no one was wiser than he! But notice the oracle never said that Socrates was wise, just that no one was wiser than he! Socrates — and I think the tradition that stems from Socrates — own the term philo-sophia. Not sophist, not wise person, but lover of wisdom.

And I think I know people who are philosophers in that sense, lovers of wisdom. And they show up as people who when you come and say “Did you hear what Jones did?” They're the kind of person that kind of steps back and says: “Are you sure, about that?” Because the rumour mill is fuelled by the appetites that Mary was talking about before, [appetites](#) of all kinds! The wise person is living out the fact that they are not going to act or decide on the basis of anything that they don't know to be the case. And if they don't know something to be the case, they're going to wait until they've got the evidence for it. It shows up for example in Thomas More. Thomas More — the various political factions in More's time are trying to get him to sign on to this document or sign on to that document! More says:

“Show me the document! As a lawyer and as a legal scholar, I know what I can sign and what I can't sign in conformity with my conscience.”

Where people are going off into all kinds of passionate reactions to things!

So, is it difficult to be a wise person — in this or any other human culture that's ever existed? Yes, absolutely! It is very difficult! That's an existential element that Lonergan says: You have to pull away from the things that prompt you to act and think in ways that are not in conformity with that deep unrestricted desire.

So whether or not there are also people who by nature really desire to know nothing, or know very little, or certainly not everything about everything — It is — you're quite right — *It's a question for empirical anthropology*. But I do want to say that I think that's really not his fundamental claim here. Because he is not making a claim. He is making an invitation.

Okay. Let's take a break at this point!

Insight & Beyond: Lecture 2, Part 2:

Overview of Chapter 1 “Elements”; “Dramatic Instance” & “Definition”

- Chapter 1: Elements. Table of Contents.
- ‘Elements’ as laying the groundwork for Lonergan’s integral heuristics.
- Overview of the Elements.
- Definitions & Concepts: philosophy traditionally privileged concepts while neglecting insights.
- Inverse Insights: a reversal in the direction of inquiry.
- Higher Viewpoints:
 - A response to the impasse of inverse insights.
 - Allow for qualitative distinctions in being and value.
- Empirical residue:
 - Consists in those parts of experience left over once it has been understood.
 - Can be seen as the noetic dimension of prime matter and prime potency.
 - Is open to any intelligible possibility.
- §2. “Definitions and Concepts.”
- Lonergan’s critique of traditional epistemology as overly preoccupied with universals.

- Two views of the understanding's role in our acquisition of concepts:
 - As becoming conscious of a concept that subconsciously entered the mind; i.e. induction of universal concepts from particulars.
 - As expressing concepts that arise through insight.
- Lonergan sees concepts as creatively generated by our understanding.
- How Lonergan's account of understanding solves the old puzzle of primitive terms.
- A definition:
 - Is a nexus of terms and relations.
 - Emerges from a context of insight, imagining, and activity.
- The 3 kinds of definitions and concepts:
 - Nominal definitions: Knowing how to use it in context.
 - Descriptive definitions: Describing things in terms of resemblances.
 - Explanatory Definitions. *[continued next lecture]*.
- The creative dimension that underpins use of concepts and language formation is generally overlooked.

Insight & Beyond:

Lecture 2, Part 2:

Overview of Chapter 1 “Elements”;
“Dramatic Instance” and “Definition”

16th September 2009

Chapter 1: Elements. Table of Contents.

‘Elements’ as laying the groundwork for Lonergan’s
integral heuristics.

Overview of the Elements.

Definitions & Concepts: philosophy traditionally
privileged concepts while neglecting insights.

I’d like to look at the “Table of Contents” for the [first](#) chapter very briefly, and we’re going to probably in the time we have left focus mainly on [Definition and Concepts](#). This [outline from the chapter](#) is supposed to be the “Elements”, the elementary part of self-appropriation, but I think it’s fair to say it’s not! It’s really hard! There’s some stuff in there that’s hard, and that the examples that he uses in some cases are probably unfamiliar to you, and what he is using them to illustrate is even more complex and abstruse.

Contents of Chapter One

So I think there are other things going on in this chapter. And I think it’s ‘elements’ in a different sense. *It’s ‘elements’ in the sense of Lonergan putting on the table key things that he is going to need later on as he develops this structure, this integral heuristic [structure](#) about the whole.* So every part of this chapter is going to prove to be terribly important for thinking about being as a whole without leaving

anything out, for thinking about the good as a whole without leaving anything out. And for whatever reasons, he decided to just put them here in the first part.

Now, the “Dramatic Instance” we’ve already talked about a little bit. In the example that we did in class last week — You’re going to have to come up with your own dramatic instances or perhaps, your own pedestrian instances of insights. Either is fine! In some senses, if you are able to identify a pedestrian insight that you had, its almost better! Because insights aren’t like that student that I describe standing in the door of the airplane, getting ready to sky dive. Those aren’t the only kinds of insights! They aren’t all the big “Oh, wow!” history changing ideas.

Most insights are very simple and mundane, but they’re no less important for that! There’s an ordinary creativity, as Lonergan says, in just living and learning! And the creativity that goes into getting insight in the first instance is not any less when you teach it to somebody else. And so we talked about that, the “Dramatic Instance”, a little bit already.

The next four parts of this chapter — **part two** has to do with “**definitions**” and concepts, **part three deals with** what he calls “**higher viewpoints**”, part four examines “**Inverse insight**”, and part five, the final section, is about “**The Empirical Residue**”.

*I’m going to spend most of **this** session today talking about definition and concepts. **This is important**, because for Lonergan, this is the thing that he really has in mind when he says that the history of philosophy has not paid attention sufficiently to insights. But what the history of philosophy has paid attention to, to the detriment of all sorts of things, is concepts, universals! And so what Lonergan is going to do is to situate concepts and universals in relationship to insight and inquiry. And that’s primarily what he is doing here.*

Why is using math examples? Because that’s the place where you can slow down, in a certain kind of stillness, the phenomenon of concept formation.

Inverse Insights: a reversal in the direction of inquiry.

Higher Viewpoints:

A response to the impasse of inverse insights.

Allow for qualitative distinctions in being and value.

Empirical residue:

Consists in those parts of experience left over once
it has been understood.

Can be seen as the noematic dimension of prime
matter and prime potency.

Is open to any intelligible possibility.

Now “**higher viewpoints**” and “**inverse insights**”, I have come to think, are in the wrong order in the chapter. Somebody asked me last week: “Does every question have an answer?” And the answer to that is a qualified one. And it has to do with the fact that not only are there what he calls *direct insights*, but there are also what he calls *inverse insights*. And *we’re going to look at one particular example*, and then if you have other questions about some of the other things that he has to say about inverse insights, we can explore those, his examples.

But inverse insight is a reversal in the direction of, not just — *It isn’t a reversal in the direction in which you are doing your deducing, it’s a reversal in the direction in which you are doing your inquiring*. And that’s a very crucial reversal. So inverse insights bring about reorientations, and particularly reorientations of expectations of heuristic structurings of anticipations.

Higher viewpoints, I’ve come to think, always come in response to the impasses that are reached by inverse insights. Inverse insights tell you you’ve reached a dead-end; higher viewpoints are ways of translating that dead-end!

What he calls the empirical residue — First of all, the emphasis is on empirical: it has to do with our experience. The word ‘residue’ has to do with the fact that there are some parts of our experience that are always left over after we have understood! And the empirical residue is, so to speak, an X. It’s what if there

are some parts of our experience that will always be left over after any finite sets of understandings, what he calls the immanent intelligibility.

So that's kind of — Now, the importance of this for where he's going, putting definition into a larger context of the dynamic of knowing, is going to be important for the way he looks at the history of philosophy, and the way in which all kinds of philosophical issues, particularly being, have been approached.

So, for much of the history of philosophy, in many philosophers you will find discussion of “the concept of being”. And a couple of the crucial turning points in the book *Insight* — one of them comes with Lonergan's chapter on being, **which is chapter twelve**. And he does not entitle it “The Concept of Being”! *He entitles it “The Notion of Being”.* *And that's an absolutely fundamental break with certain traditions in philosophy on Lonergan's part! It's what makes it possible for him to suggest that there's a way of approaching the problem of the whole that is not in terms of an explicit ideal, but in terms of the implicit ideal. So it's terribly important for where he is going to have a certain kind of criticism of the tradition of conceptualism. And by having a criticism — And, you see, he's going to make the criticism of the tradition of conceptualism by appropriating what happens when people formulate concepts.*

Higher viewpoints and inverse insights are going to be important because, *in Lonergan's account, there are going to be qualitative distinctions within being, and qualitative distinctions within value!* And that the ground of these, that the ground of asking whether or not there is such a thing as a higher form of being, or whether there are higher forms of being, and whether there are higher forms of value, is going to come down to the question of higher viewpoints. *And that's why it's there!* Now, there's no way you could know this reading that chapter, because **the section on higher viewpoints** is all about the expansion from the integers to the real numbers. But he's setting the grounds for discussion of a critical evaluation of claims about distinctive qualitative differentiations of beings from one another, and of values from one another.

An empirical residue has to do with the — Remember we had that distinction a few moments ago about the *noesis* and the *noema*. *The empirical residue would be the noema to which corresponds what in traditional metaphysics is called prime*

matter, or prime potency.³ So it's the noematic dimension of prime matter and prime potency. Remember Lonergan says: For every metaphysical claim, there ought to be some corresponding assertion about the facts of human consciousness. This is the one that's going to be the basis for talking about prime matter or prime potency.

Why is that important? Because *there is something about our experience that is open to just about any possibility. So the empirical residue is that in our experience which is open to any intelligent possibility.* And today he is going to argue there is in the universe a fundamental metaphysical grounding that's open to virtually limitless possibility.

Now, why has he put this in the first chapter? I don't know! It is not particularly in aid of helping you to get some insights into your experiences, your inquiries, your insights, your judgments. It is where it is! So we're just going to follow the book! Okay?

§1 “A Dramatic Instance”

Inquiry Image Insight

“understanding, then, understands the forms [εἶδη] in images!

Τὰ μὲν οὖν εἶδη τὸ νοητικὸν ἐν τοῖς φαντάσμασι νοεῖ

Aristotle, *De Anima* III, 7

So I've already mentioned [the Dramatic Instance section](#) — we talked about this last week. We're actually going to do something a little bit along similar lines in a couple of minutes. But it's that the — In the dramatic instance in the chapter, the dramatic instance of Archimedes making this great discovery about the principles of

³ Pat actually said 'noesis' in this sentence, and 'noetic' in the next sentence. In a correcting email to me on 23 January 2011, he indicated that he “was incorrect in the way I made my point in Lecture 2 part 2. The empirical residue is indeed a noematic and not a noetic dimension. What I should have said, is that the empirical residue is Lonergan's transposition of the metaphysical category of prime potency into the context of intentionality analysis. While prime potency is defined in relation to the metaphysic category of form, the empirical residue is defined in relation to the noetic acts of experiencing and understanding. So you are exactly right, I was in error in the way I stated that in class.”

hydrostatics so that he can answer the King's question about the golden crown. So we mainly talked about that last week. I'm not going to dwell on it any further this week.

§2. "Definitions and Concepts."

Lonergan's critique of traditional epistemology as overly preoccupied with universals.

Two views of the understanding's role in our acquisition of concepts:

As becoming conscious of a concept that subconsciously entered the mind; i.e. induction of universal concepts from particulars.

As expressing concepts that arise through insight.

Lonergan sees concepts as creatively generated by our understanding.

§2 "Definition" and Concept

So what I do want to do is to talk about his treatment of definition, which is also his treatment of concepts. And as he says, *there has been, to his mind, an oversight of insight! That's because epistemology has been largely concerned with the problem of universals: whether there are universals, how we know the universals, and whether they're real or merely ideal, and what form of knowledge we have of them.* Lonergan thinks [that](#) this has been an excessive preoccupation and a misinterpretation of how human beings have knowledge of concepts.

§2 “Definition” and Concept

Oversight of Insight

Understanding as Source of Concepts, Creative generation of,
not “getting” or “receiving” concepts

So the tendency has been to regard understanding — Or, excuse me! — *Lonergan’s approach is to regard understanding or insight as the source of concepts, as generative of, as creative of concepts, not as the faculty that is receptive of concepts, of receiving concepts.* I’ve run into people at times who will say “I got the concept!” Lonergan would say you didn’t *get* the concept. What you did was to formulate the concept.

Now this is a fundamental lesson that he learned from Aquinas in *one of those studies that I mentioned last week, about Aquinas’s investigations into — or Aquinas’s treatment of the Trinitarian processions.* *His finding was that up until Lonergan did his investigations, the tendency was to treat the Latin term in Aquinas — the Latin term is intelligere — to treat that as the reception or the recognition of concepts.*

Now, there’s a long series of discussions and treatments and theories about this, one of which runs something like this: that at the end of Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*, where he talks about induction, he gives a metaphor, and the metaphor runs something like: that after you have had enough instances of say, white swans, you form the universal abstract concept of ‘white swan’; that if you see enough of them, then you go from the particular, empirical experience, impression, of this white swan and that white swan, to the concept that all swans are white. *And the tendency was to say that induction is an unconscious process in which that concept pops into our mind. What then is understanding? Understanding is the making conscious of the concept that has unconsciously popped into our mind.* That’s a tradition — that’s an epistemological position or tradition that Lonergan was educated into, and it has lots of implications which we’re not going to explore in this course. *But Lonergan in his*

studies of Aquinas discovered that Aquinas thought quite the opposite! He discovered that understanding comes first, and understanding expresses itself in concepts.

So most of this chapter is intended to make that point, but to make it in terms of contemporary discussions in mathematics, in definitions. As Lonergan says, that his approach to definition is meant to solve “**the old puzzle of primitive terms**” (CWL 3, p. 36). And what’s “the old puzzle of primitive terms”, in the context of definitions? ... Jeff?

Jeff: It’s like when you give a definition it’s based on other terms that have been defined themselves, so that eventually it comes down to something that’s indefinable.

Pat: Right! Very good! So the old puzzle about primitive terms is: If you go to a dictionary, you will discover any term is defined — any words are defined in terms of other words. And so then you go on and look up the other words, and they are defined in terms of other words, and it seems to go on endlessly! And to some — this sort of — Certainly the work of Jacques Derrida and the structuralists — they explored this particular problem in their own way.

Lonergan says that identifying understanding as the source, or as the solution to this puzzle is a key breakthrough! Because, as he says, “**for every basic insight there is a circle of terms and relations, such that the terms fix the relations, the relations fix the terms, and the insight fixes both.**” (CWL 3, p. 36).

And as he goes on to say, *so there may be other terms that you use to define the basic idea, but that doesn’t mean that there is an indefinite regress of insights. So the basic idea here is that definitions are a nexus of terms and relations, and it’s the nexus, it’s the set of terms and relations, that express the insight. Which is a way of saying that concepts are always defined in relation to other concepts. There is always a network of concepts; you never have an isolated concept; the concepts always are expressive, are parts of the expression of an intelligibility grasped by an insight. So that’s his basic point here.*

§2 “Definition” and Concept

“Definitions do not occur in a private vacuum of their own. They emerge in solidarity with experiences, images, questions, and insights. It is true enough that every definition involves several terms, but it is also true that no insight can be expressed by a single term, and it is not true that every insight presupposes previous insights.” (CWL 3, p. 36).

But more fundamentally, *he wants to situate concepts in relationship to the flow of activities. They don't occur in a private vacuum. They emerge in contexts of experiences, and images, and questions, and insights.* And if every definition involves several terms, it doesn't mean that no insight can be expressed — it's also true that no insight can be expressed by a single term. Nor is it the case that every insight presupposes other insights. *There are no primitive terms. It's always that there are nests or networks of terms, but that doesn't mean that there are no fundamental insights.*

The 3 kinds of definitions and concepts:

Nominal definitions: Knowing how to use it in context.

Descriptive definitions: Describing things in terms of resemblances.

Explanatory Definitions. *[continued next lecture].*

Nominal, Descriptive, Explanatory Definitions & Concepts

Now there are three different kinds of definitions. For reasons that I've never quite figured out, he only deals with two of them in this context, and it would have been helpful if he had dealt with the other kind in this context as well. What he really wants to do is to bring us into awareness of what's going on in explanatory

definitions and concepts, because those are the ones where this interconnectedness of concepts is revealed, in what he calls explanatory definitions and implicit definitions.

But nominal definitions are the sort of thing that is explored in great detail by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Before Wittgenstein wrote the *Philosophical Investigations*, he says of himself that he had a theory of meaning, a theory of the meaning of language, which did not conform to the way in which people actually use language. His theory of language was what he called *a picture theory of language*, and it was a fairly complex version of that. But a less complex version of it is — Heah, Byron, would you hold up your book there for a minute. [Byron does this.] Okay. So that’s a book! So the concept book is being applied to that visual image. There’s a rational concept, there’s a visual sensible impression, and *we put together the rational concept and the sense impression. And the sense impression falls under the concept.* And Wittgenstein had something like that, that ultimately the meaningfulness of terms was going to be referred to visual impressions; that an individual name names *that* as Byron’s book, very distinctive by the fact that it has a brown paper cover wrapped round it,

[Laughter]

as opposed to the white ones that are populating the rest of this room. So we have a specific term, Byron’s copy of *Insight*, and it applies to that visual image, and then we generalize all other copies of *Insight*: they fall under the general concept of ‘book’. So the meaning of a term ultimately is going to be referred to the sensible correspondence.

What Wittgenstein discovered after he had written his *Tractatus*, was that *he was all wrong about that theory of meaning, that correspondence, picture theory of meaning. That in fact the meaning of terms came from knowing how to use them in the context in which you find yourself.* And although he doesn’t put it quite this way, the people who came after him talked about the social context. So *the meaningfulness of a term is knowing how to use it in the context.*

I’ll give you a funny example. My children often don’t listen to my voice mails. [Amusement in class]. It’s kind of a waste of my time to leave a voice mail! They call me back and say: “Did you call?” “Yeah, I left you a voice mail.” “I don’t

want to listen to a voice mail!” Every time I leave a voice mail, they call me back!
“What am I to do if I want to leave you a message?”

[Lots of amusement]

“You have to text me!” “But it takes me too long to text so I — ”

[Laughter]

So I was telling some of my friends: “My children won’t answer my voice mails. They’ll only answer if I **tm** them!” And the person I was talking to was a bit younger than me, a lot younger than me one could say, said: “*Don’t ever say that to your kids!*”

[Huge laughter]

“Don’t say you **tm** them!”

I used **tm**, text message! I was being cool!!

[Huge laughter continues]

It’s texting! You see, that’s an example of what you might call *a nominal definition*. Knowing how to use the right term in the right social situation. **tm**ing is a no, no!!

So now I have some small degree of knowledge of how to communicate with my kids. At least I don’t say I was **tm**ing them. I actually sent to one of them a text a couple of weeks ago. And got this message: “Wow, Dad, you texted me!!” Okay, so texting!

Descriptive definitions are when we define things in terms of their resemblance. And this means ultimately — and this is close to what Wittgenstein thought was the meaningfulness of language — when we describe things in terms of ‘like’, whenever you use the word ‘like,’ or ‘as’. Sour as a lemon; sharp as a razor; or sharp as a tack; hissed like a snake. Whenever we’re using terms, and if we’re asked what does that term mean, we say: “Well, like, you know ...” Whenever you use the word like, what we’re ultimately doing is saying: “The object that I’m talking about has a sensible likeness, it appears to me, to my visual senses, or to my auditory senses, or to my taste, or to my touch, the way this other thing does.” And so if I have to define something, I do it by way of likeness.

Now there was a game show on television once, and the people on the show were asked to say — and they got a bunch of figures, this was one of them:



and they were asked: “Which of these is a trapezoid?” And **at first** nobody knew! They hadn’t been to Boston College and hadn’t taken “Perspectives Four”, and so they didn’t know what was a trapezoid. Well, **eventually** one person got it right! And so the game-show host asked: “Well, how did you know that’s a trapezoid?”

And he said, “Well, it looked like a trapeze, so I figured it must be a trapezoid.” *Looked like a trapeze: that’s what a trapezoid is. That’s a descriptive definition.*

The creative dimension that underpins use of concepts and language formation is generally overlooked.

Now most of our concepts in ordinary language, we tend to construe in that way, rightly or wrongly. *If we had to give an account of how do we know what does our common sense term mean, we’re going to tend to say what it means is something in terms of what it looks like, or what it feels like, or what it tastes like. And that would be a descriptive definition.*

And from Lonergan’s point of view, what happens is that *we overlook, we miss the creative intellectual dimension that goes on in the use of language, and in the formation of concepts. The intellectual dimension, the inquiry, the use of imagination, the arriving at insight, that underpins definition, shows up in mathematical definitions. And that is why, I think, Lonergan uses those examples.*

We are, however, at the end of our time for today’s period. So what we are going to do next week is to pick up with this. I ask you to read over again the parts of chapter one that we haven’t done, as well as chapter two for next week.

Now, what I will do is post for you some reflection questions, some guided questions to pinpoint, to highlight, certain key ideas, or certain key parts of the remainder of chapter one and of chapter two for you to look at as you’re going through them.

And we're going to actually start with an exercise for self-appropriation, or maybe a couple of them, in defining. So we're actually going to do that next week. And again *what we're going to ask you to do is to pay attention to what you are doing in the process of defining!*

In the meantime, during the course of the week, pay attention to the way in which you use terms by knowing what is the right thing to say in the situation, nominal definitions. And see if you can capture the intellectual dimension, the number of insights. *Remember Lonergan says the difference between an explanatory and a nominal **definition** is not that insights don't occur in nominal **definitions**.*

What constitutes the difference? It is not that explanatory definitions suppose an insight while nominal definitions do not. For a language is an enormously complicated tool with an almost endless variety of parts that admit a far greater number of significant combinations. If insight is needed to see how other tools are to be used properly and effectively, insight is similarly needed to use a language properly and effectively. (CWL 3, p. 35).

You have to be a very intelligent person to know how to use texting instead of **thinking!** And likewise, there is an intellectual component in using descriptive definitions. It's just that both of those kinds of definitions tend to obscure the operative crucial role played by insights in them.

Okay. So, see you next week! Have a good week! And thank you!