

The Critical Realism of Bernard Lonergan

An Introduction to
Insight: A Study of Human Understanding
By
Sherman Balogh

Topics

- A Brief History of Lonergan's Life
- The Meaning of *Insight*
- Empiricism, Critical Idealism or Critical Realism?
- Cognitive Theory and Insight
- Philosophy, Common Sense and Science
- Flights from Understanding: Roadblocks to Insight
- General Empirical Method and Self-appropriation

Part One



Lonergan receiving the Order of Canada
in 1971

A Brief History of Lonergan's Life

- 1904 – Lonergan was born in Buckingham, Quebec on December 17; His father, Gerald, was descended from Irish immigrants to Canada, and worked as a surveyor mapping Western Canada. Lonergan's mother, Josephine, was from an English family, and worked at raising Bernard and his two brothers, Gregory and Mark
- 1909-1918 – Attended an elementary school in Buckingham, run by the Brothers of Christian Instruction
- 1918 – Began high school at Loyola College, a Jesuit school in Montreal
- 1922 – Decided to become a Jesuit; he joined the Jesuit Novitiate at Guelph, Ontario
- 1926 – Attended Heythrop College, Oxfordshire for three years of scholastic study
- 1929 – Studied Latin, Greek, French and mathematics at the University of London
- 1930 -1933 – Three years of teaching duties at Loyola College
- 1933 - 1937 – then on to Rome for 4 years of theological studies for the licentiate in theology at the Gregorian in preparation for an academic career
- 1936 – Ordained to the Catholic priesthood
- 1937-1938 - A 10-month of Jesuit formation “tertianship” in Amiens, France
- 1938 – 1940 – Graduate work at the Gregorian University in Rome
- 1940 - In May of 1940, he was spirited out of Italy just two days before the scheduled defense of his doctoral dissertation.
- 1940 – 1947 - Lonergan was teaching theology at Collège de l'Immaculée Conception in Montreal
- 1945-46 - Also taught theology at the Thomas More Institute in Montreal
- 1946 – He did not formally defend his dissertation and receive his doctorate until a special board of examiners from the Immaculee Conception was convened in Montreal on December 23h
- 1953 – 1964 – He taught at the Gregorian in Rome until diagnosed with cancer of the lung in 1964
- 1964 - He made another hasty return to North America, this time to be treated for lung cancer.
- 1965? – 1975 - After surgery and recovery he taught at Regis College in Toronto, and his teaching duties were reduced to allow him to concentrate on writing and research
- 1971 – 1972 – He was the Stillman Professor at Harvard University
- 1971 – He was made a Companion of the Order of Canada
- 1975 – 1983 – He became and served as Distinguished Visiting Professor of Theology at Boston College
- 1975 – Became a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy
- 1983 - Diagnosed with colon cancer
- 1984 - While still engaged in this work, he died at the Jesuit Infirmary in Pickering, Ontario on November 26 at the age of 79.

The Nature of Metaphysics

“Metaphysics, then, is not something in a book but something in a mind. Moreover, it is produced not by a book but only by the mind in which it is. No one can understand for another or judge for another. Such acts are one’s own and only one’s own. Explicit metaphysics is a personal attainment.”

(Insight, p. 421)



Scholastic Epistemologies: No Agreement

In his lectures in Halifax in 1957, Lonergan stated:

“... there does not exist a scholastic epistemology that is some settled doctrine. We have a problem. It is not a problem of the existence of knowledge, but a problem of the existence of some detailed account of knowledge. That is where the problem lies. It was this idea that was in the back of my mind in writing *Insight*.”

(*Understanding and Being*, p. 103)



Lonergan in 1950 when he was writing *Insight*

The Central Problem

“The pursuit of knowledge is the pursuit of an unknown. It is not only a conscious pursuit but an intelligent, rational, deliberate, and methodical pursuit. The pursuit of building a house with the aid of a set of blueprints is clearly deliberate and methodical.”

Bernard Lonergan, LLD 77
from Concordia University



“But how do you proceed methodically and deliberately to the attainment of something that you do not know, something which, if known, would not have to be pursued?”
(Understanding and Being, p.13)

What is *Insight* about?

According to Lonergan:

“Basically, then, this is not a book on mathematics, nor a book on science, nor a book on common sense, nor a book on metaphysics; indeed, in a sense, it is not even a book about knowledge.” (*Insight*, p. 12)

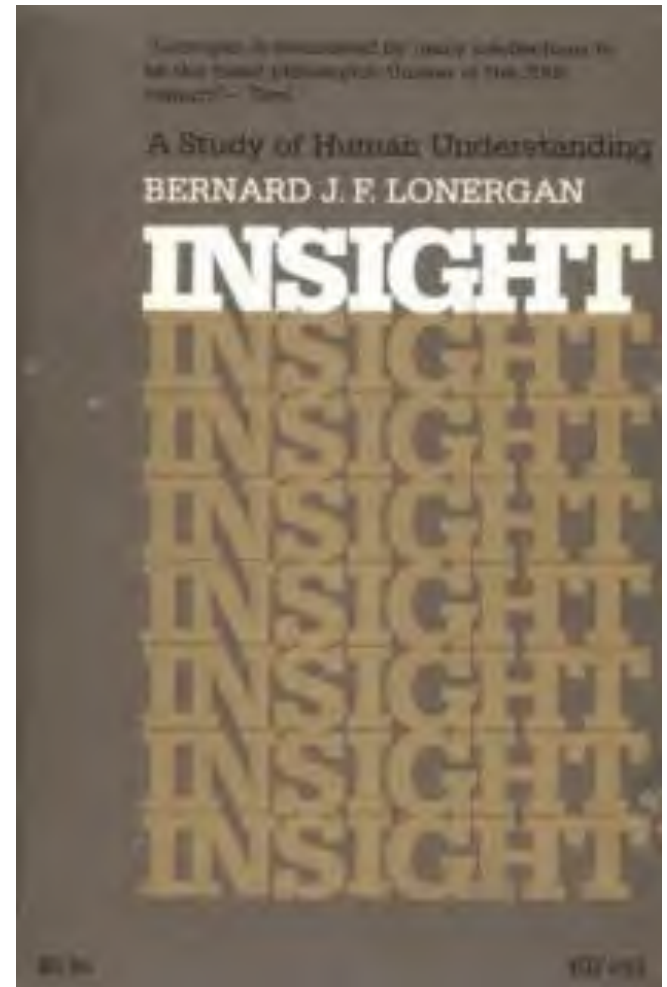
Rather, Lonergan writes:

“The crucial issue is an experimental issue, and the experiment will be performed not publicly but privately. It will consist in one’s own rational self-consciousness clearly and distinctly taking possession of itself as rational self-consciousness.”

(*Insight*, p. 13)

Therefore, as Lonergan states,

“... the point is to discover, to identify, to become familiar with, the activities of one’s own intelligence...” (*Insight*, p. 14)



Know how you Know



Loneragan in the 1970's

In an interview given in 1971, Loneragan spoke of *Insight*:

“Fundamentally it’s a way. It’s asking people to discover in themselves what they are. Because what I’m asking people is to discover themselves and be themselves. They can arrive at conclusions different from mine on the basis of what they find in themselves. And in that sense it is a way.”

(*A Second Collection*, pp. 213)

Philosophy: A Modern Approach



“In *Insight*, metaphysics is expressed in cognitional terms and established by cognitional principles. The reversal appears complete. If Aquinas had things right side up – and that is difficult to deny – then I have turned everything upside down.”

(*Collection*, 1958, pp. 152-153)

Lonergan writes in his room at the Gregorian University in Rome, circa 1960

Lonergan's Three Questions

Part One

"What am I doing when I am knowing?"

Cognition

Part Two

"Why is doing that knowing?"

Epistemology

"What do I know when I do it?"

Metaphysics

Empiricism, Critical Idealism or Critical Realism?



"I've got the results of your X-rays."



"They said you were wearing this when you dived off the roof."



"You're supposed to say 'I do,' not 'I'll try.'"

Loneragan's Concept of the Mind

“In man, there is no actual knowledge by nature. We are born ignorant. Nature gives us nothing in act. However, we have by nature the potency to know; all our cognitional faculties are from nature in the broad sense.”

“While by nature we have knowing in potency, it is by acquisition that we move to knowing in act. Our potency to know, our capacity to know, is from nature, but any actual knowing involves some influence from the object.”

(Understanding and Being, p. 161)



“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.** *(Insight, pp. 28-29)*

Cognitive Theory

"What am I doing when I am knowing?"



"It's just until the dessert trolley goes past."

I am both aware of and implementing my understanding of how I understand.

The Experiential World



"Excuse me. The machine is making
a funny noise and the little light
is going in a straight line."

“It is that tension, that drive, that desire to understand, that constitutes the primordial ‘Why?’ It is the wonder which Aristotle claimed to be the beginning of all science and philosophy. But no one just wonders. We wonder about something.” (*Insight*, p. 34)

What people wonder about is their world of experience derived from their five senses and the images they have of their experiences.

Just Looking

“As sight, so also hearing, smelling, tasting, touching are constitutive, not of knowledge of reality, but only of knowledge of appearances.”

“Hence our statements must be modified with the qualification, “as far as appearances go.”

“Sense does not know appearances ... because sense alone does not possess the full objectivity of human knowing.”

(*Collection*, pp. 234-235)



“Did you win?”

Intuition

“But their world [the naïve realist and the critical idealist] is a picture world; the original relationship of cognitional activity to the picture is the look; ... and it is in *Anschauung* (intuition) that the critical idealist places the immediate relation of cognitional activity to objects. (*Collection*, p. 236)

“For the only *Anschauung* we enjoy is sensitive; sense does not know noumena Human cognitional activity is confined to phenomena.” (*Collection*, p. 208)



Images



"What's the matter with you? I'm looking for my checkbook!"

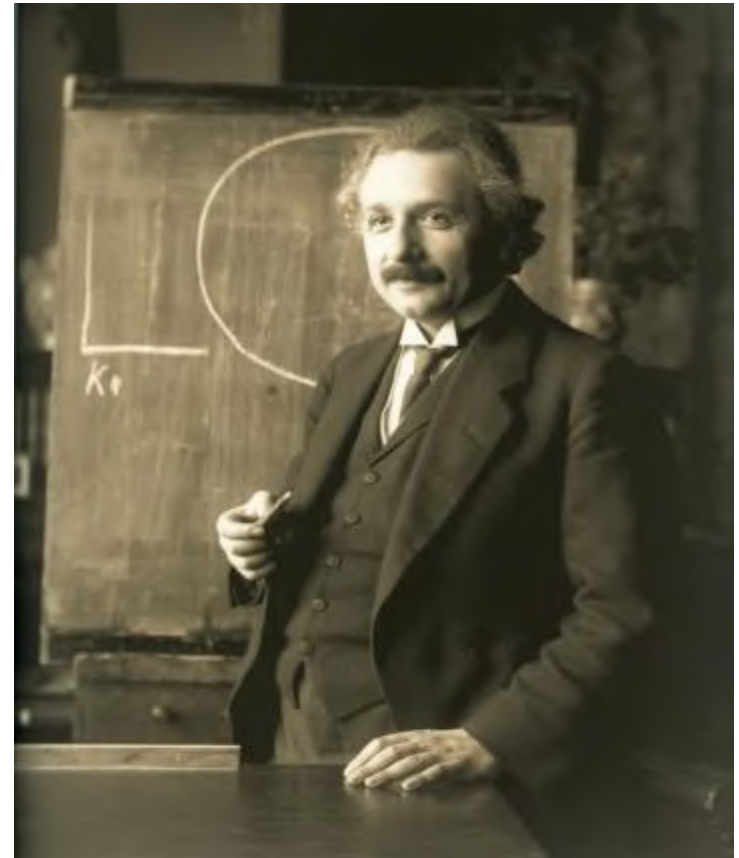
“St. Thomas says that whenever we try to understand anything, we form images, in which, as it were, we see the solution to the problem. He is talking about insight.”

(Being and Understanding, p. 27)

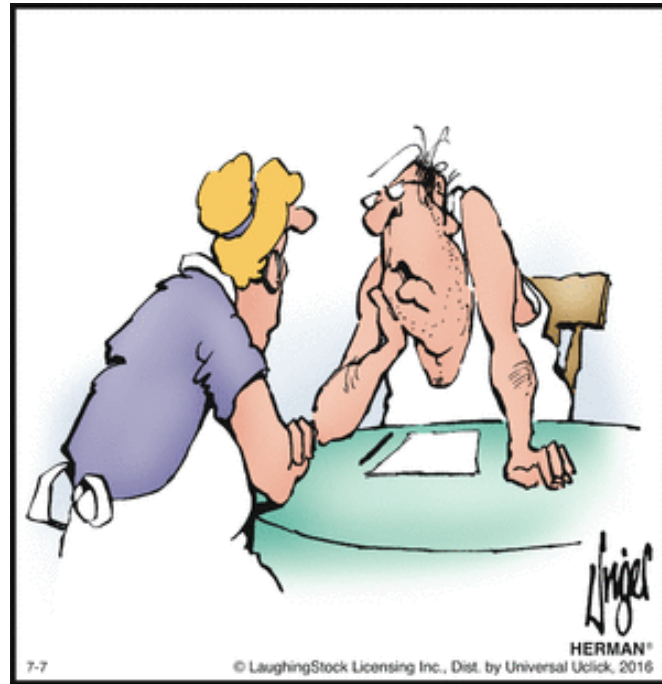
Create an Image Like a Scientist

When trying to understand the impact of an electrical current on a magnetic pole, Einstein suggested this approach:

“It would be rather difficult to describe this force in words. Even a mathematical formula would be complicated and awkward. It is best to represent all we know about the acting forces by a drawing, or rather by a spatial model, with lines of force. (Einstein, p. 128)



Ask the Right Questions: *Quid sit?*



**"Try to think of something
for me to invent."**

“What are we looking for when we ask, ‘What is it? *Quid sit?*’ Aristotle’s answer was, What means why.”

(Being and Understanding, p. 29)

Ask a Better Question!

“The nature of ...’is the name for what we either know or do not know, that is, for what we would know if we understood a given set of data. When you ask ‘What?’ you ask about the ‘nature of...’ The question, What is it? May be made more explicit: What is the nature of...’?

(Understanding and Being, p. 64)



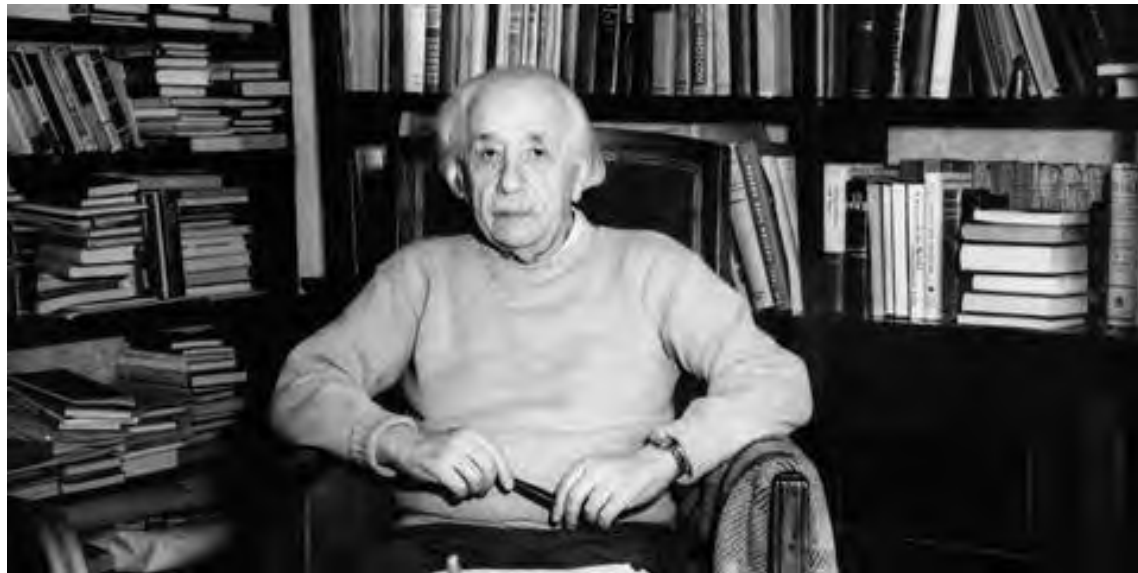
**"When they invented the first clock,
how did they know what
time to set it?"**

Quidditas: “It is what you know when you know what it is, when you understand it.” It expresses our anticipation of a future insight.

(Understanding and Being, pp. 29 and 64)

Question like a Scientist

“The formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution, which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.” (Einstein, p. 92)



You Got the Point!

Are you with me?
See what I mean?
Do you see what I'm driving at?

It came to me like a thunderbolt!
How did it get it? I just put two and
two together.
Now I understand.
I found the solution!
There is a pattern to this data.



**"Thank you, Burrows, for that descriptive
insight into the nuclear arms race."**

What is an Insight?

It is that mental (or inward) activity by which the mind grasps the intelligible connections between things that previously had appeared merely disparate. (Tekippe, 1996, p. 2)

But insights are not intuitions:
“They are not of themselves knowledge of what really is so. Of themselves they merely grasp what may be relevant to what one is imagining.”

(*A Second Collection*, p. 274)



**“You seem to have the qualifications
we’re looking for in a bookkeeper.”**

Characteristics of an Insight

1. It comes as a release to the tension of an inquiry
2. It comes suddenly and unexpectedly
3. It is a function of not of outer circumstance but of inner conditions
4. It pivots between the concrete and the abstract
5. It passes into the habitual texture of one's mind

(Insight, p. 28)



Insight and Behaviourism

“A behaviourist ... may say that intelligence, insight, has a meaning insofar as there are modes of external behaviour that show a man to be intelligent.”

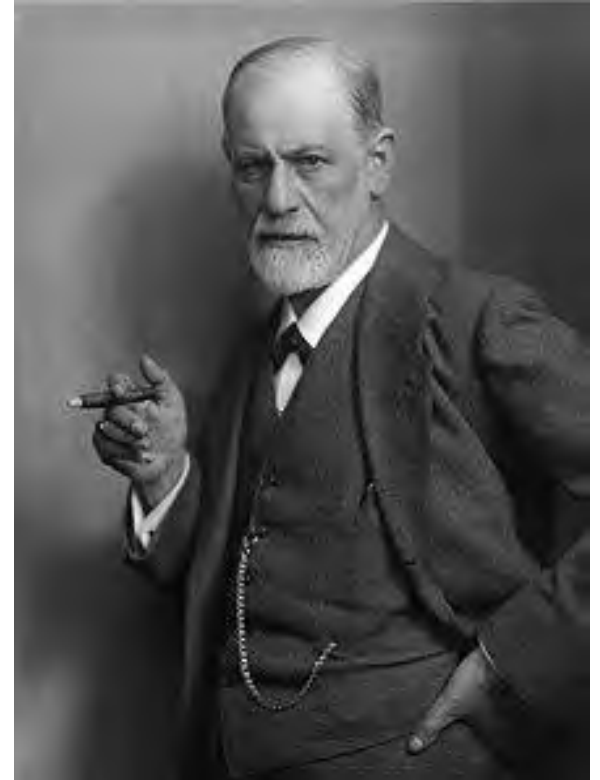
“But if, in your presence to yourself within your own consciousness, you are aware that there occur jumps, that periods of darkness are followed by periods of increasing light ... then insight is not simply a hypothetical entity but something that is verified in your experience.”

(Understanding and Being, p. 142)



Insight and the Unconscious

“Already we have noticed ... how the detached spirit of inquiry cuts off the interference of emotion and conation, how it penetrates observation with the abstruse classifications of science, how it puts the unconscious to work to have it bring forth the suggestions, the clues, the perspectives, that emerge at unexpected moments to release insight...” (*Insight*, p.213)



Sigmund Freud, c. 1921

The Significance of having an Insight into Insight

“By insight, then, is meant not any act of attention or advertence or memory but the supervening act of understanding. ... “
(*Insight*, p. 3)

“... insight is not only a mental activity but also a constituent factor in human knowledge. It follows that insight into insight is in some sense a knowledge of knowledge “ (*Insight*, p. 4)

“Insight into insight, then, will unify and organize the insights of mathematicians, scientists, and men of common sense. It seems to follow that insight into insight will yield a philosophy.” (*Insight*, p. 4)

“Hence, in the measure that insight into insight unifies and organizes all our knowing, it will imply a metaphysics.” (*Insight*, p. 4)



Attaining Abstraction

“Concepts do not occur at random; they emerge in thinking, supposing, considering, defining, formulating; and that many-named activity occurs, not at random, but in conjunction with an act of insight.” (*Insight*, p. 33)

The genesis of a concept:

1. Presentations derived from the sensate world
 2. Image(s)
 3. Questions: What? Why? How? When?
Nature of... etc.
 4. Clue(s)
 5. Grasping an Insight (or the intelligibility of something)
 6. Expressing an abstract generality (concept):
term, formula, definition, law, hypothesis
 7. A language is used to express an insight into
a concept
- (*Insight*, pp. 31-34)

“The pivot between images and concepts is the insight.”
(*Insight*, p. 35)

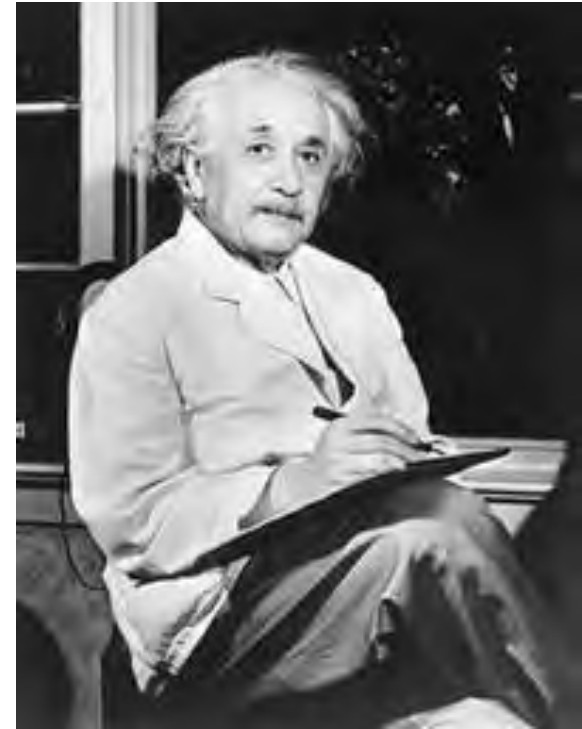


**“I’m trying to sleep. What have you got
up here — a performing
elephant?”**

Proceed like a Scientist

“To obtain even a partial solution the scientist must collect the unordered facts available and make them coherent and understandable by creative thought.” (Einstein, p. 5)

“Tests which are capable of pronouncing a verdict of life or death on a theory occur frequently in the history of physics, and are called crucial experiments. The crucial value of an experiment is revealed only by the way the question is formulated....” (Einstein, pp. 41-42)



Insights and Concepts



"I'm sure he couldn't have
done it intentionally!"

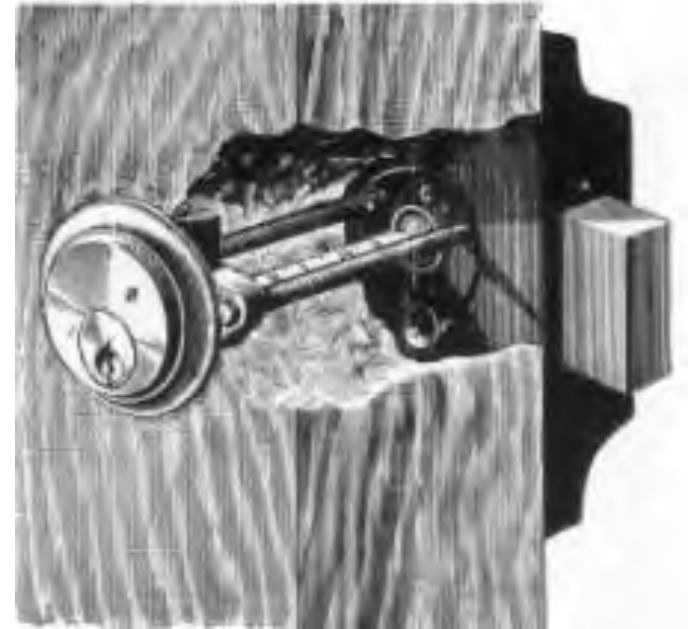
“Kant, Aristotle and St. Thomas all knew about insight. In Aristotle and St. Thomas ... the insight and the concept are distinguished, and the phantasm, the image, causes the insight. In Kant there is no talk of the insight, but only of the concept, (i.e. category), the image, and the concept governing the image. Kant’s synthetic a priori presupposes that the insight already exists and the concepts are already formed.”

(Being and Understanding, p. 31)

The Nineteenth Century: The Urge to Invent

“Until late in the eighteenth century, inventive activity, so far as it found record in the British Patent archives, was no more than a trickle. Toward the mid-nineteenth century it gained its hold over the broad masses, and perhaps nowhere more strongly than in the America of the ‘sixties.”

Linus Yale's Lock: patented in 1865



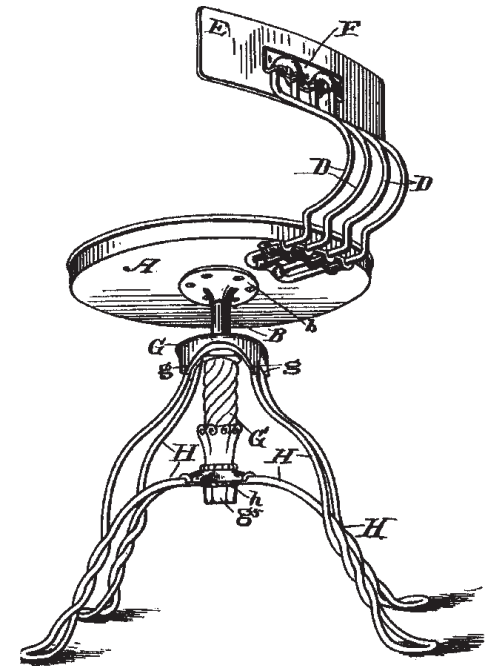
“Everyone invented, whoever owned an enterprise sought ways and means by which to make his goods more speedily, more perfectly, and often of improved beauty.”
(Giedion, p. 40)

The Industrial Revolution: New Material Realities and New Problems

Posture, mobility, convertibility and utility

“In the four decades from 1850 to 1890 no activity of everyday life was taken for granted. An unbridled inventive urge shaped everything anew. Furniture, like other things, underwent transformation.”

(Giedion, p. 391)



The Typewriter's Chair, 1896: a late comer appeared two decades after the typewriter reached its standard form and four decades after the office desk-chair was invented.

(Giedion, p. 405 and 406)

The Absence of Insight



**"I keep the door locked. I can't
understand how they all
got in there!"**

He just doesn't get it!
The student just drew a blank.
Really? [arched eyebrow]
She never gets a joke.
How did you come to that conclusion?
You can't be serious!

Flights from Understanding: Oversights



"He won't eat!"



"No sense buying a good set 'til
I know if I can play."

“Just as wanting an insight penetrates below the surface to bring forth schematic images that give rise to the insight, so not wanting an insight has the opposite effect of repressing from consciousness a scheme that would suggest the insight.” (*Insight*, p. 215)

Insight and Civilization

“Inquiry and insight are facts that underlie mathematics, empirical science, and common sense. The refusal of insight is a fact that accounts for individual and group egoism, for the psychoneuroses, and for the ruin of nations and civilizations.

(Insight, p. 259)



Lonergan in Amiens, France, 1938

Inverse Insight



The inverse insight grasps that there is nothing to be understood in a particular situation or question. It often occurs when the wrong questions are being asked or if questions are posed about something that does not exist.

Empirical Residue

“Properly, to abstract is to grasp the essential and to disregard the incidental, to see what is significant and set aside the irrelevant, to recognize the important as important and the negligible as negligible.” (*Insight*, p. 55)



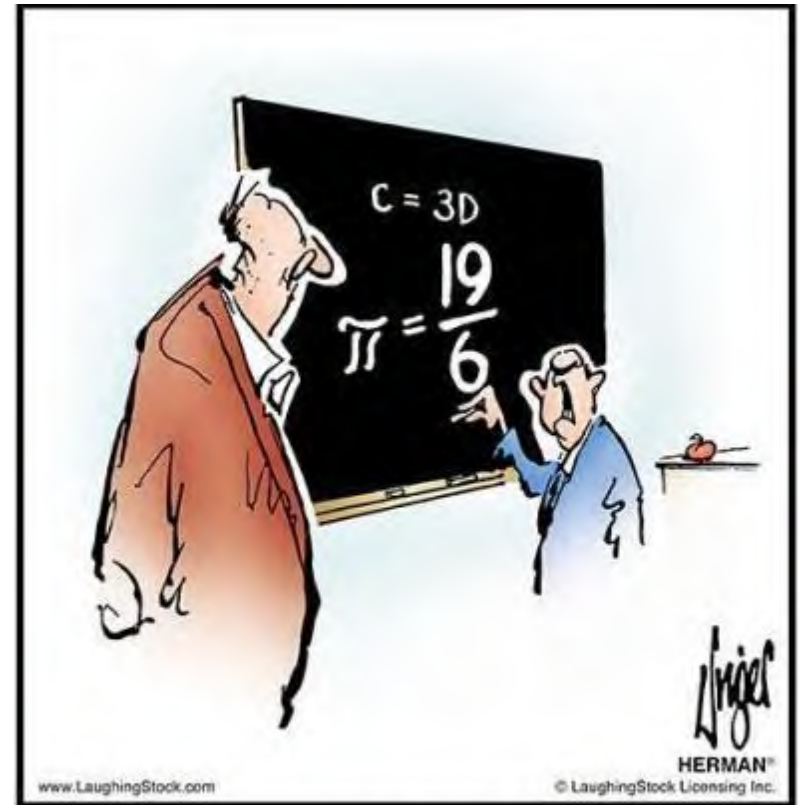
“I’d let you talk more, but you’re not as interesting as me.”

Since empirical residue “possesses no immanent intelligibility of its own, [it] is left over without explanation even when a science or group of sciences reaches full development.” (*Insight*, p. 55)

Reflect upon the Abstraction

“We have, then, a general formula for what metaphorically we describe as weighing the evidence, marshalling the pros and cons of the question. When do you have the evidence weighed? You have it weighed when you reach a virtually unconditioned.”

(Understanding and Being, p. 119)



**“I guess your job’s safe for
a few more weeks.”**

Judgment

An act of judgment “transforms a proposition from an object of thought into an object of knowledge.” (*Understanding and Being*, p. 111)

The act of reflective understanding or the reflective insight answers the question: *An sit?* - Is it so? Or, Is it true? This leads to the judgment: It is or It is not.

“When I say, ‘It is,’ I also mean, ‘It is true that it is.’ Truth in the implicit content of every judgment.” (*Understanding and Being*, p. 116)



“One day you’ll realize that the people most capable of running the country are too smart to get into politics.”

Reality Tests: Illusions, Delusions or Hallucinations?

“Again, psychic disturbances can eclipse judgment.... and one reaches in psychosis the impossibility of judging.”

(Being and Understanding, p. 123)

“... it is true that a person in a pathological state cannot spot what is wrong in his case. He does not have the freedom of control of the sensitive processes that permit correct judgment.”

(Being and Understanding, p. 175)



**“D’you know how many people
are hit by lightning every year?”**

Reflective Understanding: Determining the Sufficiency of Evidence

1. *Intellectual alertness*: “...one has to give the further questions a chance to arise.”
2. *Identifying the correct problem*: “Good judgment about concrete insights presupposes the prior acquisition of an organized set of complementary insights.”
3. *The Learning Curve*: “The [prior insights] occur within a self-correcting process in which the shortcomings of each insight provoke further questions to yield complementary insights.”
4. *Avoiding rashness and indecision*: “... a special effort is made to cope with temperament.”
(*Insight*, pp. 310-312)



“Please fasten your seatbelt. We’re expecting a little turbulence.”

Kant and Judgment

“I think what is wrong with Kant is not that he doesn’t make enough of intuition but that he makes too much of it, that he makes so much of it that he doesn’t grasp the full significance of judgment.”

(Understanding and Being, p. 389)

Regarding the differences between his method and Kantian analysis, Lonergan wrote:

“In any case we have argued that by their very genesis concepts are united with data. Concepts and theories are the products of insight and have to be checked against data.”

(Insight, p. 364)



The Example of Modern Science

“This discovery [scientific reasoning] taught us that intuitive conclusions are not always to be trusted, for they sometimes lead to the wrong clews [sic]. In our attempts to understand the laws of nature we find ... that the most obvious intuitive explanation is often the wrong one.”
(Einstein, pp. 6-7, 9)

“ Every speculation must be tested by experiment, and any results, no matter how attractive, must be rejected if they do not fit the facts.” (Einstein, p. 237)



Common Sense and Philosophy

“Briefly, common sense is intelligent; it involves insight.” (*Understanding and Being*, p.88)

“Common sense, ... consists of a basic nucleus of insights that enables a person to deal successfully with personal and material situations of the sort that arise in his ordinary living....”

(*Understanding and Being*, pp. 91-92)



“You gotta be careful in thunderstorms.”

“Common sense can be described negatively by noting that there is no methodical exploitation of universality. Universal definitions have to be introduced into human civilization and culture.”

(*Understanding and Being*, pp. 86)

Science and Common Sense

Science

- Methodical
- Develops technical jargon
- Principles and laws
- Tries to be exhaustive
- Universal
- Relates one thing to another thing
- Theoretical Aspirations
- Moves into the world of the unfamiliar

Common Sense

- Spontaneous
- No use for formal definitions
- Proverbs
- Content with what is only needed for the moment
- Particular
- Relates things to us
- Practical aspirations
- Remains in the world of the familiar

(Tekippe, 2003, pp 46-50)

The Modern Scientific Revolution

“The theory of relativity has changed our views on space and time, it has in fact revealed entirely new features of space and time, of which nothing is seen in Kant’s a priori forms of pure intuition.”
(Heisenberg, p. 89)

“The a priori concepts which Kant considered an undisputable truth are no longer contained in the scientific system of modern physics.”
(Heisenberg, p. 90)

Werner Heisenberg in 1933



“From the very structure of our cognitional apparatus, particulars are known through our senses, and our senses operate under spatiotemporal conditions. They cannot escape relativity, and so, if an absolute is wanted, it must be sought on the level of intelligence, which by abstraction from particulars provides a ground for invariant expressions.”
(*Insight*, p. 181)

Integration of Science, Common Sense and Philosophy

“If one’s philosophy is to fulfil an integrating function, it has to be cognizant not merely of commonsense knowledge but of scientific knowledge as well. If it is not ... philosophy is refusing the responsibility that belongs to its office.”

(Being and Understanding, p. 96)

The philosopher “has to be able to understand the type of thinking the scientist does....”



“Again, I do not think philosophy is based upon science any more than it is based upon common sense. Its basis is self-appropriation, appropriation of the self that one actually is.”

(Being and Understanding, p. 98)

The General Structure of the Cognitive Process (GEM)

- A Level of Presentations
 - Data of sense, data of consciousness, perceptions, images
- A Level of Intelligence
 - Questions for intelligence, insights, formulations, conceptions
- A Level of Reflection
 - Questions for critical reflection, grasping the unconditioned, judgment

(Insight, pp. 298-299)

Self-Appropriation: “I am a knower.”

We are present in ourselves, we take possession of ourselves as a subject, we are conscious of our consciousness when engagement occurs during the three levels of cognitional activity:

the experiential
the intellectual
the rational

It is not just that

1. What we experience, we inquire into
2. What we inquiry into, we understand
3. What we understand, we conceive
4. What we conceive, we reflect on
5. What we reflect on, we grasps as the virtually unconditioned

“We are also conscious of the initial conscious state of experiencing, inquiring, understanding, conceiving and reflecting. ”

(Being and Understanding, p. 206)



“There's nothing wrong with him. He just does that to make me look stupid.”

Patterns of Experience (1)



"I was just about to ask you how you liked your new glasses!"

Aesthetic – the pursuit of an artistic experience for its own sake, bringing forth a self-justifying joy and exhibiting a sense of wonder in art

Biological – the pursuit of conditions and opportunities allowing for the fulfillment of bodily sensations and functions such as reproduction and self-preservation



"It's the first time he's played with the Boston Symphony."

Patterns of Experience (2)



"As your former Latin professor, I can't say you've exactly made my day."

Dramatic – a person, as an actor in a wider social and cultural context, is concerned with getting things done, living a life of dignity, and enacting a role in life that is assigned and chosen

Intellectual – the pursuit of abstraction, an engagement in the detached spirit of inquiry



"Four blocks north. If it's not there, eight blocks south."

Patterns of Experience (3)



Practical - pertains to the successful performance of daily tasks and the discovery and implementation of immediate solutions that will work in the concrete, particular world for the individual and community

"I know I'm not supposed to interfere, but how's the dog going to climb through that?"

Common Sense

“Common sense is practical. It seeks knowledge, not for the sake of the pleasure of contemplation, but to use knowledge in making and doing.”



“You gotta be careful in thunderstorms.”

“But the practicality of common sense engenders and maintains enormous structures of technology, economics, politics, and culture, that not only separate man from nature but also add a series of new levels or dimensions in the network of human relationships.” (*Insight*, p. 232)

Flights from Understanding: The Individual and the Community



**"I suppose you know you've been standing
there for over an hour and the
toaster's not plugged in."**

"Just as insight can be desired, so too it can be unwanted. Besides the love of light, there can be a love of darkness. To exclude an insight is also to exclude the further questions that would arise from it, the complementary insights that would carry it towards a rounded and balanced viewpoint." (*Insight*, p. 214)

Common Sense and the Individual: Dramatic Bias - Scotosis



“Fundamentally, the scotosis is an unconscious process. It arises, not in conscious acts, but in the censorship that governs the emergence of psychic contents.”
(*Insight*, pp. 214-215)

Correcting the Flight from Understanding



**"Sorry to keep you both waiting out here.
Where's your wife?"**

“Just as the disorder is linked with a refusal to understand, so its cure is an insight a ‘lightning flash of illumination.’ “ (*Insight*, p. 224)

Common Sense and the Pervasiveness of Practicality

“The discoveries of practical intelligence, which once were an incidental addition to the spontaneous fabric of human living, now penetrate and overwhelm its every aspect.”



“For just as technology and capital formation interpose their schemes of recurrence between man and the rhythms of nature, so economics and politics are vast structures of interdependence invented by practical intelligence for the mastery not of nature but of man.”
(*Insight*, p. 238)

Common Sense in the Community: Individual Bias

“Egoism, is an incomplete development of intelligence. “

“Operative within him there is the eros of the mind, the desire and drive to understand: he knows its value, for he gives free rein where his own interests are concerned; yet he also repudiates its mastery, for he will not grant serious consideration to its further relevant questions.” (*Insight*, pp. 245 and 247)



“Yes, Miller, I heard about
your promotion.”

Oversights and the Strongman

“In the egoist there are additional grounds for an uneasy conscience, for it is not by sheer inadvertence but also by a conscious self-orientation that he devotes his energies to sizing up the social order, ferreting out its weak points and its loopholes, and discovering devices that give access to its rewards while evading its demands for proportionate contributions.” (*Insight*, p. 246)



Benito Mussolini

Common Sense in the Community: Group Bias

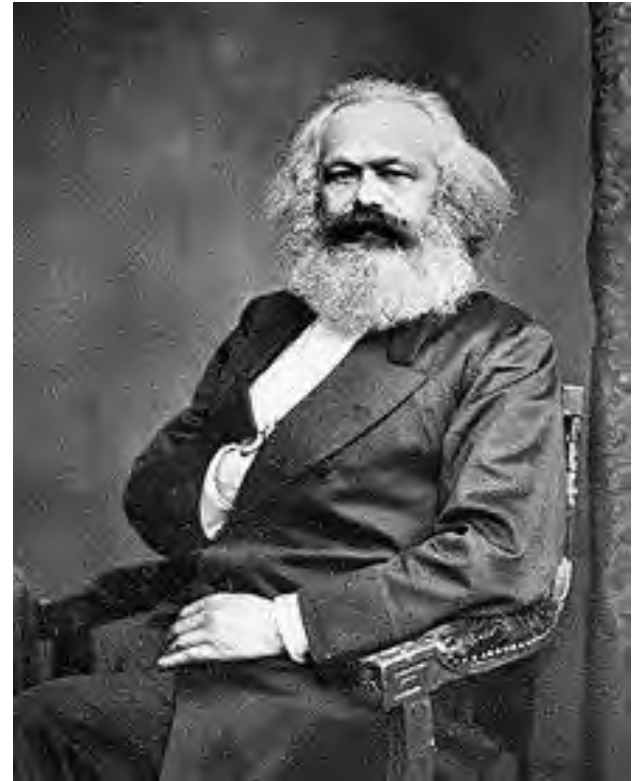


**“Members of the jury, have you reached
a verdict on this crook?”**

“Just as the individual egoist puts further questions up to a point, but desists before reaching conclusions incompatible with his egoism, so also the group is prone to have a blind spot for the insights that reveal its well-being to be excessive or its usefulness at an end.” (*Insight*, p. 248)

Oversights and Social Class

“The advantage of one group commonly is disadvantageous to another... Society becomes stratified.... Classes become distinguished ... and the new differentiation finds expression not only in conceptual labels but also in deep feelings of frustration, resentment, bitterness, and hatred.”
(*Insight*, p. 249)



Karl Marx in 1875

Common Sense in the Community: General Bias

“For common sense is unequal to the task of thinking on the level of history.”



“Have I got time for a cup of coffee?”

The general bias of common sense’s “complacent practicality easily twists to the view that, as insistent desires and contracting fears necessitate and justify the realization of ideas, so ideas without that warrant are a matter of indifference.”

(*Insight*, p. 253)

Common Sense and the Totalitarian Temptation

“The helplessness of tolerance to provide coherent solutions to social problems called forth the totalitarian, who takes the narrow and complacent practicality of common sense and elevates it to the role of a complete and exclusive viewpoint. On the totalitarian view every type of intellectual independence ... has no better basis than non-conscious myth.”

(Insight, p. 256)

For the totalitarian,

“The time has come for the conscious myth that will secure man’s total subordination to the requirements of reality. Reality is the economic development, the military equipment, and the political dominance of the all-inclusive state. Its ends justify all means.”

(Insight, p. 257)



Overcoming Bias and Long Term Decline

“... there is such a thing as progress, and its principle is liberty.”

“...it [social science] can be of inestimable value in aiding man to understand himself and in guiding him in the implementation of that understanding, if, only if, it can learn to distinguish between progress and decline, between the liberty that generates progress and the bias that generates decline.”

“... human science cannot be merely empirical; it has to be critical; to reach a critical standpoint it has to be normative.”

(Insight, pp. 259 and 261)



The General Structure of the Cognitive Process (GEM)

- A Level of Presentations
 - Data of sense, data of consciousness, questions regarding data, images
- A Level of Intelligence
 - Questions for intelligence, insights, formulations, conceptions
- A Level of Reflection
 - Questions for critical reflection, grasping the unconditioned, judgment

(Insight, pp. 298-299)

Self-Appropriation: “I am a knower.”

We are present in ourselves, we take possession of ourselves as a subject, we are conscious of our consciousness when engagement occurs during the three levels of cognitional activity:

the experiential
the intellectual
the rational

It is not just that

1. What we experience, we inquire into
2. What we inquiry into, we understand
3. What we understand, we conceive
4. What we conceive, we reflect on
5. What we reflect on, we grasps as the virtually unconditioned



**"I haven't understood one word you said.
Come back when your face gets better."**

We are also conscious of the initial conscious state of experiencing, inquiring, understanding, conceiving and reflecting.

(Being and Understanding, p. 206)

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