

*Eldorede 8***Lonergan's Educational Philosophy**

In the first lecture I introduced the topic of the transformation of education by focusing on a central problem of education, the problem of the relation of concepts to understanding.. Here I wish to enlarge on the context of this problem sufficiently to carry us forward to a better sense of the revolution that Lonergan is suggesting, and the difficulty of bringing it into practice.

The four presentations aim at doing that in an elementary fashion. To the reflections on the central problem I add reflections on the context of the discovery of what is to be cultivated in good education: I do this first by noting Lonergan's own struggle to find and express that what, that nature of the education, and of the educated: that struggle brought him to the writing of *Insight*.¹ Secondly, I will describe for you the nature of good education - describe, not explain, since explaining is something that would carry us even beyond working through *Insight*. The third lecture will carry forward the reflection on Lonergan's struggle from 1953 on, so as to bring out for you the fuller solution to the problem of education. Then in the final talk I shall move forward to see what is to be done concretely in our efforts to apply Lonergan's revolutionary suggestions.

We can get a sense of the difficulty of the problem by following the career of Lonergan, a topic of course interesting in itself. Born in 1904 in Canada, of Irish descent, he became a Jesuit in 1924 and lived in the Society of Jesus until his death in 1984. At the very beginning of his life as a Jesuit in training he became interested in method and in understanding, and one can trace his progress in understanding from his writings during the period when, as a student of philosophy, he was doing a degree in Latin, Greek and Mathematics in London University. He was discovering, for instance, that one needs a diagram or an image if one is to get to understand something. Later he would find this central piece of his philosophy in the writings of Aristotle, but for him at this stage it was as evident as the problem of getting from place A to place B; how, you may consider, does one give directions for a journey without an image? That last question

¹William Mathews deals with that in his book, *Lonergan's Quest. A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight*, University of Toronto Press, 2006.

seems very simple, yet we will see gradually, helped by the next two talks, that it is at the heart of our troubles in modern education.

Lonergan went on from philosophy and other studies in England to teach in a Jesuit school in Canada and then, in the mid-1930s, to study theology in Rome, and at the end of that period he faced into his first major work on Thomas Aquinas, a doctorate thesis on the nature of grace, but for us the important point to notice was that this study brought him into the zone of a what-question different from the one on which I focused in the first lecture. It is the what-to-do question, a question on which Thomas focused at the beginning of his massive work on grace and ethics, the second part of the *Summa Theologica*.² It is important to notice, however, that this area, and the what-to-do question, were not the centre of Lonergan's attention during that short busy troubled period of seventeen months in 1939 and 1940.³ But, despite its being forced to the side by other major issues such as the nature of providence and the operation on grace as Thomas slowly came to grips with these, Lonergan was quite aware of the centrality of the topic. At an early stage in his work he pauses to count the number of sections in Thomas discussion, "there are sixty three articles in a row all treat of the will"⁴ and later on he makes the remark, "the detailed study of the will at the beginning of the *Prima secundae* [qq. 6-17] is the culmination of the whole series of texts on divine operation in the will and its aim is to describe accurately the created mechanism on which God operates."⁵

There is little doubt but that Lonergan took Aquinas' description seriously: one only has to check the references in the thesis to that section of the *Summa Theologica* ⁶ and to detect the

²The key zone is Qq. 6-17 of what is called the *Prima Secundae*, the "first part of the second part" of the *Summa*. The first part of the *Summa* was on God, nature and creation; the third unfinished part was on the Incarnation and its effects in history and eternity.

³See Fr. Frederick Crowe's Preface to *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Collected Works, vol. 1, University of Toronto Press, 2000, xix. I refer to this work below simply as **Grace**.

⁴**Grace**, 94.

⁵**Grace**, 412.

⁶**Grace**, 488.

influence it had on the chapter on ethics in *Insight*⁷ written thirteen years later, in 1953. There is evidence, however, that this chapter was written in a hurry, as were the final chapter of the book *Insight*.⁸ Lonergan was scheduled to begin teaching at the Gregorian University in Rome in the autumn of 1953 and had to finish the book that summer. This hurry is relevant to our effort today to sketch his view of education. As the third lecture will show, Lonergan had still to tackle the major problem of making effective a sound philosophy of education.

On Lonergan's return to Canada he began a period of thirteen years teaching theology there, but we should pause over two side interests of his in this period that are relevant to our reflections on education.⁹ First, there was the problem of the failure of economics, both theoretical and practical. Secondly, there was the problem of pushing further his own search for an understanding of knowing and doing. The first question was the major preoccupation of the years 1941-44. The second occupied him for the next five years, till 1949, when he began writing *Insight*. We will come to some reflections on that struggle shortly, in the context of the basic diagram of a reoriented philosophy of education.

The failure of economics remains with us today, and Lonergan's solution to the problem of those years up to 1944 remains unheard, ineffective. That is a separate and difficult story. Still, it is a story of a need in education, about which he wrote later, in a passage worth quoting fully, since it deals with the problem of bringing into play significant new ideas: "Now to change one's standard of living in any notable way is to live in a different fashion. It presupposes a grasp of new ideas. If the ideas are to be above the level of currently successful advertising, serious education must be undertaken. Finally, coming to grasp what serious education really is and, nonetheless, coming to accept that challenge constitutes the greatest challenge of the

⁷Work remains to be done on this issue: there is a beginning in the suggestions of the diagram on the "Dynamics of Doing" in Appendix A of *Phenomenology and Logic (Collected Works)*, University of Toronto Press, 2001, p.323).

⁸Among other evidence, there is letter to Fr.Crowe of the time in which Lonergan asks about the possibility of an extra year needed to finish properly the book *Insight*.

⁹It would be an altogether too large a diversion here to go into what is his deeper interest throughout this period, and indeed throughout his life: his interest in the dynamics of history and the place of the Incarnation in it.

modern economy.”¹⁰

Here it seem best, in order to bring out, concretely and pedagogically, the historical and personal difficulties of acquiring a new idea and carrying forward that idea with effective willingness, to take a simple illustration of such a transition that at first sight may seem a distraction. The illustration comes from Lonergan’s reflections on the emergence of language and on the grounding idea of language. Further, it illustrates marvelously both an ontogenetics of insight that is relevant to the phylogenetics to be discussed in the next lecture and the key point of the previous lecture. The question is, How can a fundamental new idea be communicated? The emergence of language is certainly a key instance of such a change. So let us reflect on what Lonergan says about its occurrence in a particular instance.

“The moment of language in human development is most strikingly illustrated by the story of Helen Keller’s discovery that the successive touches made on her hand by her teacher conveyed the names of objects. The moment, when she first caught on, was marked by the expression of profound emotion and, in turn, the emotion bore fruit in so powerful an interest that she signified her desire to learn and did learn the names of about twenty objects in a very short time. It was the beginning of an incredible career of learning”¹¹

This particular paragraph and the instance it describes is very much worth our attention here. Indeed, more accurately, it is worth our effort at self-attention, the self-attention that I described in the previous lecture. So, we need to be reading this at two levels: we are interested in the curious conversation of Helen and her teacher, Annie Sullivan.¹² But we are also interested

¹⁰Lonergan, *Macroeconomic Dynamics: An Essay in Circulation Analysis*, University of Toronto Press, 1999, 119.

¹¹Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 70.

¹²A worthwhile distraction here - at some later, much later, stage in your repetitions of this reading - is to recall the odd note (note 7) on the oddity of repetition in *Eldorede 0*. Reach out then to imagine the sequence of attitude’s of Helen’s hearing of the water-fingering during those five weeks. Might such a sequence be swept up into an integral attitude? Does this question not throw us forward to the problem of the control of meaning of history’s attitudes towards the fingering of the cosmos? But, in this present issue, can the two levels of reading be integrated into an integral attitude? Might that integral attitude be integrally related to the claim of Lonergan quoted at the end of note 7, *Eldorede 0*?

in the curious conversation between each of you and your teacher, Loneragan, or of any of you and myself. I would note, to bring out the importance of our effort, that this conversation and the key insight involved might well have been the centre of attention on the first page of *Insight* instead of the conversation that led Archimedes to his insight. It could have led to a very different book: instead of a philosophy of solitary scientific searching, it would have been closer to the philosophy of education that we seek.¹³ **But I really do wish you, and later generations, to take very seriously this suggested adventure in fantasyland: you as Helen, and I as Annie, at the bottom of the first page of chapter one of *Insight*, for five weeks!**

We read of Archimedes leap of insight, but there is little account of his long struggle toward it, except that Archimedes is recognized as massively and feelingfully willing to face that struggle. He concretely wanted to know. What of Helen and her five frustrating weeks listening to the signs made by Annie? It is difficult to get clear on this: one can assume that initially the signing was recognized as a game, but towards the end and certainly at the end it was grasped as a magnificent liberation and, as Loneragan writes, “it was the beginning of an incredible career of learning”. What, now of us here? The conversation invites a struggle. For each of us there is some mix of the attitude of Archimedes and of Helen. But all of us have some attitude regarding what is going on, and investigating that attitude in both its general and its personal form is a central challenge to us as educators. After all, is not the attitude of students a vary basic component in the success or failure of education?

Obviously, we can little more here than draw attention to a task, the investigation of attitude. Our thus drawing attention is equivalent to Loneragan drawing attention to Archimedes’ attitude. The noticing in the case of our task is no more a decent beginning of a philosophy of education than is the noticing of Archimedes a philosophy of science. But this in itself is worth pausing over. What is Loneragan’s philosophy of education? Like Helen, it may take us five weeks, indeed five months, to get to a stage of finding just what the real question is.

¹³Loneragan remarked to me, in a discussion we had about the educational significance of the lectures reproduced later in *Topics in Education*, that in those lectures “I was just trying to work out a few things”. His view of what he was at is to some extent expressed in section 3 of his first chapter, “Toward a Catholic Philosophy of Education”, but it is better expressed in the actual selection and treatment of topics.

The real question is, of course, the question about attitude, capacity, need. Notice the manner in which introduced this question: the question about. Here we are at the heart of the strategy and the discovery that makes Lonergan's perspective unique and uniquely acceptable. We must, literally, take it to heart, and do this slowly and patiently. As we do so we will find that we have returned to the Principle about teaching stated in the first lecture.¹⁴ But this is something you may follow up later. Let us hold to the present approach.

The question is about attitude: the attitude of Helen, of Archimedes, of the students in our schools, of teachers, but primarily it is a the question about my own attitude. For those of us who are Christian it is interesting to note that this question is expressed by the first words the evangelist John has Jesus say, in the 38th verse of his first chapter. "What do you want?"¹⁵ But in our context of a philosophy of education we are to inquire about that question, that attitude. The books cited in the previous note bring to our attention, indeed to our self-attention, that we are to discover this attitude of mine is, in its fundamentals, common to all of us, to all the people in the Scriptures including Jesus, and to all those who speak, or are spoken of, in any sacred books. I can be helped, indeed, to find that fundamental attitude in myself by checking the questions that occur in any scripture, and we had an instance of that just now. "What do you want?" No one listening then or now has any doubt about what Jesus is referring to: the attitude that makes the listeners human. But the method of discovering what that is, that is what makes Lonergan's perspective unique and uniquely acceptable, or I could say, uniquely unavoidable. A philosophy of education is valid in so far as it emerges from an appreciation of that fundamental questing attitude in each of us, but the appreciation is reach not by reading a book but by reading ourselves. So: Lonergan invites us to ask, What is the character of that in me which leads me to ask those two questions that we have been considering so far today: What-is-that? What-am-I-to-do? They are two questions that were so evident in us to our parents when we were small and

¹⁴The Principle is given in section 4 of that lecture: It is: **When teaching children geometry one is teaching children children.**

¹⁵On the occurrence of questions in the scriptures and their importance see Lonergan's Doctrinal book on The Trinity (to be published in English in Volume 9 of the *Collected Works, The Triune God*), the final section, and also P.McShane, *Music That Is Soundless*, Axial Publishing, Cape Breton, 2005, the Appendix, "Bible, Meaning, Metaphysics".

troublesome questioners.

But now Lonergan, and we as speaking for him today, asks that we make the difficult shift to self-attention. Part of the difficulty we have, and those teaching Lonergan have, is grasping that it is difficult.¹⁶ Here is where the story of Helen is so helpful, both in relation to us and in relation to human history. In relation to us: we may well, today, or, for those of us who earlier have been led into Lonergan's method, some previous day or month, think of the required exercises of self-attention as some sort of game, distracting us from our real life of wants. If you know the story of Helen's reaction to Anne's exercises you may well find that something equivalent happens in you. We will have a chance to illustrate that in the final session today. You may want to know, What is this so-called new philosophy of education and how does it differ from that of Emmanuel Kant or John Dewey? Whereas we want you to notice you and your basic wants: your basic wants, capacities, needs. I could add significantly to this statement by saying that we want you to want to notice: but let us leave that extra turn until later in this lecture.

Immediately we come to a step that illustrates the very problem with which we are dealing. So, I use now the sentence that you have heard before here: "A diagram may help". It is a diagram from Lonergan, and indeed it is a diagram or structure that he developed when he prepared his lecture of 1959 on education.¹⁷ We are going to use the version of that diagram or display that he presented on page 48 of *Method in Theology*.

¹⁶This is a point repeated made in Lonergan's lectures published as *Phenomenology and Logic*. See the index under, e.g., *Augustine, Schools*.

¹⁷See chapter 2 of *Topics in Education*, "The Human Good as Object: Its Invariant Structure".

<i>Individual</i>		<i>Social</i>	<i>Ends</i>
<i>Potentiality</i>	<i>Actuation</i>		
capacity, need	operation	cooperation	particular good
plasticity, perfectibility	development, skill	institution, role, task	good of order
liberty	orientation, conversion	personal relations	terminal value

First, let us focus on the first two words, the words listed under *potentiality*: *capacity*, *need*. The strategy of self-attention leads us to ask about that in us in some serious fashion, but a fashion that at first is obscure and confusing. Lonigan puts the matter well. “The method of metaphysics primarily is pedagogical: it is headed towards an end that is unknown and as yet cannot be disclosed; from the viewpoint of the pupil it proceeds by cajoling or forcing attention and not by ex-plaining the intended goal and by inviting an intelligent and reasonable response.”¹⁸ Is this not a marvelous description of those five weeks in which Annie cajoled and forced Helen’s attention? Helen resented it. But we might well ask about elements of resentment in ourselves in this present context. There is something in us, indeed in the ethos of our culture, that leads us to expect the respect of being given clear directions, not directions like Annie Sullivan’s. Perhaps consider here also Archimedes: he is different from us and from Helen in this matter of resentment. Nature, if you like, is a rough teacher, and Archimedes accepts this. Do we accept this. And what of Lonigan, either as resenting or resented?

We left off considering his life during his thirteen years of teaching in Canada. The central five years were his years of what we might call his “Archimedean struggle” and by 1949 he was able to utter his own Eureka, “I’ve got it”. He return to a study of Aquinas, a study which is now available in the book *Verbum. Word and Idea in Aquinas*.¹⁹ The study, certainly, was

¹⁸*Insight*, 398[422].

¹⁹*Collected Works, volume 2*, University of Toronto Press, 1995.

related to a problem in Trinitarian theology²⁰ but for us the relevant identification is that offered to us by the two diagrams of Appendix A of *Phenomenology and Logic* that have been provided for these lectures. Understanding ourselves with the help of these two diagrams is the central task of a philosophy of education. But it is a massively difficult task, especially when the entire global culture is orientated away from that task. And, to come back to the issue of resentment, the Epilogue to the *Verbum* articles makes it pretty evident that his odd exercises, and his invitation to share them, were resented. And on the question of Lonergan's resentment: did he resent the resistance that held him in suspense, not for five weeks but for 500 weeks in his Roman years, just not getting the 8-finger exercise of global collaboration? I think not.

Still, we should pause over the diagram and identify together the names of the parts of ourselves with which we are dealing. [A pause over the diagrams would be good here, with the invitation to pause further during the discussion period or any other time]

The is-question, so familiar linguistically to us, relates to establishing the validity of any particular idea, even the simplest. I may have an idea that it is raining outside, but I had best check, "is it really raining?" Similarly, with an idea for doing: the idea of going out - away from this odd talk - after this second lecture might occur to one of us: but is-it-to-be-done? Both these is-questions have been the source of endless debate and confusion, especially in the Western tradition, and we are not about to enter that debate now. But what Lonergan's slow and patient work of 1944-1953 shows us is how to break out of those debates.

In the fourth talk we will struggle forward a little with that break-out or break forward along the lines he suggested in the first talk. How do we actually ask and answer is-questions? Well, take our long experience of doing so, and investigate what we do while doing so. It seems quite simple, does it not? Yet it remains, in all our cultures, an untried strategy. And that is the topic of the conclusion of this lecture, leading to the reflections of our third session on the full solution, the full strategy of global progress in education and culture.

We have used the story of Helen Keller as an illustration of difficulty, and it can be used

²⁰In 1961 I responded to a request by the editor of *Theological Studies* for an article that would present the theological results of Lonergan's work in *Verbum*: the result was the article "The Hypothesis of Intelligible Emanations in God", *Theological Studies*, 1962, which gives the theological result of Lonergan's searchings.

both in reflecting on ourselves and in reflecting on the history of human slowness or obtuseness. Helen just did not know where the simple exercises were going. We could go further with this and show how Helen had been misdirected by her parents: she was not open or sympathetic to the direction in which Annie Sullivan was taking her. And this is true of us, both individually and as groups and nations in present times.

Lonegan sums up the problem very neatly by inventing a phrase, “the truncated subject.” What does he mean by *the truncated subject*? And before we go on, I invite you to notice the key difficulty here: a truncated subject cannot get the meaning of the answer, no more than Helen Keller could get the meaning of Annie Sullivan hand-signals. Holding that suspicion in mind, let us pause over Lonergan’s pointers on this topic.

The pointers occur in an essay entitled “The Subject”: the first part of the essay is titled “The Neglected Subject”, and the second is titled “The Truncated Subject”.²¹ First, let us get a simple view on the meaning of truncated from its botanical or zoological meaning. Then the meaning is “reduce to a trunk”: cut off the top, the head. When we turn to ourselves as subjects we find the richer meaning: we can be spontaneous as puzzlers, but never bother investigating what in ourselves that makes us puzzlers. And our ordinary living can leave us, to quote Lonegan, “with the feeling that one has no need to study the subject and, to that extent, we are led to a neglect of the subject.”²² This is a very normal situation. But it can be worse: we can be taught in such a way as to be led away from attending to ourselves, and we will illustrate that presently. The result is the truncated subject and, to quote Lonegan again, “The neglected subject does not know himself. The truncated subject not only does not know himself but also is unaware of his ignorance and so, in one way or another, concludes that what he does not know does not exist.”²³

At this stage we are in a position to read the diagram, the organized spread of names, in a

²¹The essay, “The Subject” is available in B.Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, edited by William Ryan and Bernard Tyrrell, Darton Longman and Todd, London, 1974, 69-86. It is referred to below as **Subject**.

²²**Subject**, 73.

²³*Ibid.*

way that can carry us forward in our introductory effort. The key to our reading is our attention - or better, our self-attention - to the terms under *Potentiality*: “capacity, need”. Capacity, need: what do they mean to us here and now, after a little effort? We have been thinking about our capacity and need to ask questions. Are these orientations somewhat evident to us, sufficiently evident even for us to have a sense that there is something there to explore? Then we are escaping the state of being neglected subjects. But we must be careful here, since the culture invites us to be just nominalists, to not escape the state of being neglected subjects. That culture, as already remarked, is truncated, and while this is a huge topic we can get a glimpse of the truncation by simply adverting to what psychology and sociology has to say about our capacities. The sociologist talks earnestly about behavior: but the study of the dynamics of inquiry are excluded from that field: and similarly with psychology. No subtle test is required to back up the claims of the previous sentence: one simply has to check the indices of texts on psychology and sociology for entries under *Question*: regularly there is nothing there except perhaps some reference to questionnaires.

This discovery can lead us to get a glimpse of the present meaning of **institutions** such as the study and application of psychology and sociology. We are now pausing over words in the centre of the diagram: institutions, roles, tasks, and perhaps had we sufficient time we could move towards horror at the fact that contemporary institutions of maintaining a state of truncation in cultures.

The emergence of such a horror does take time, reflection, self-attention. Lonegan asks us to take that time and reach that horror in his lengthy discussion of the end of chapter 7 of *Insight*, where he deals with this massive problem of present global culture.²⁴ It is summed up in a single sentence in *Method in Theology*: “such is the monster that has stood forth in our time.”²⁵ And one may add the context of his reflections, in his direct discussion of education in 1959, on barbarism and cover-ups: “There are the outer and inner barbarians growing to ever larger proportions. And finally, there is the universal state as an outward peace to cover over inner

²⁴Section 8 of chapter 7 of *Insight*.

²⁵*Method in Theology*, 40. See also the later reflection on decay in section 10.4 of chapter 3 of the same work: “The culture has become a slum”(ibid., 99).

emptiness.”²⁶

We are reading that diagram as Lonegan presented it, and I would note that it can be read within the context of *Insight* and also, very differently, within the context of his later discovery of functional specialization. The second reading of it is the topic of the next lecture. Here we stay with the reading from the point of view of *Insight*. Our reading, of course, is mainly descriptive at this stage, but it is a great help toward appreciating the present problem of education and the various roads towards its solution.

So far, then, we have noticed the reading of two pieces of the diagram: the corner that asks us for our appreciation of our capacity; the centerpiece that nudges us to think about the institutions in which we live. Depending on our background, our meaning for these terms can be very full: so we may have in mind institutions ranging from global government and World Bank, down to local details of institutions of education at national and local levels. Although there are undoubtedly barbarians within us, possessing our opinions and orientations, perhaps the most important point to remember at this stage is the growing group of barbarians outside that Lonegan talks about, the barbarians especially in human studies that nurture, as he says, “an outward peace to cover over human emptiness”. So, boards of education and departments of education can continue tranquilly their business as usual; the relevant committees for change are dominated by neglected and truncated subjectivity which “leaves one with the feeling that there is no need to study the subject.”²⁷

That is the core of the state describe by Lonegan in those pages of chapter 7 of *Insight*. What is to be done? He has no group solution. The book carries forward primarily with suggestions suitable for the struggling individual.²⁸ Yet he does outline characteristics of a needed structure, which he names *Cosmopolis*.²⁹ And he has no doubt about the core of

²⁶*Topic in Education*, 64.

²⁷**Subject**, 73.

²⁸Suggestions could be noted here: e.g. from the first page of chapter 14, or from the section on the place of satire and humour in chapter 18.

²⁹As with the previous note, this note could become detailed, giving the points re the character of cosmopolis, differentiating between the methodological component of cosmopolis

transformation: it is liberty, liberty taking a stand against the hierarchy of officials and bureaucrats. “The principle of progress is liberty, for the ideas occur to the man on the spot, their only satisfactory expression is their implementation, their only adequate correction is the emergence of further insights; on the other hand, one might as well declare openly that all new ideas are taboo, as require that they be examined, evaluated, and approved by some hierarchy of officials and bureaucrats.”³⁰

Let us return now to the “capacity” diagram and find the word *liberty*: it is at the bottom of the column named *Potentiality*, and also at the front of the third line. We must pause over the three lines in order to get a better grasp of how we need to read them, either within the context of *Insight* or in the later context of *Method in Theology*.

The first two lines point to the real situation. So, the good of order is the actual situation, even if we view it as massively disordered, “barbarians growing to ever larger proportions.” What, then, is the third line? Think of it as the untapped potential within that actual order, the liberty unreleased, the objectives unsuspected, especially the terminal goal of education and history. Then view the two inner sets of terms as freshly and dynamically as possible. In this you are helped by the image of those five weeks of personal relating between Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan, and the oscillations of orientations right up to that final conversion to the spontaneously luminous use of words.

But all this is enormously difficult. What we are doing today is more impressionistic than contentful. But perhaps it is enough to give a sense of crisis, a sense that can become the core of a popular tradition. “Such popular tradition is something essential to human living. It is what an existentialist would call an existential category. It is the constitutive component of the group as human. It is an aesthetic apprehension of the group’s origin. The aesthetic apprehension of the group’s origin and story becomes operative whenever the group debates, judges, evaluates, decides, or acts - especially in a crisis.”³¹ And more especially when there is a way of meeting the

and the “grace” component, differentiating the re-distribution and refined differentiation of the tasks of cosmopolis in its global-functional sequence of re-incarnation all very difficult topics.

³⁰*Insight*, 234[259].

³¹*Topics in Education*, 250.

crisis within the story, which there is, in this story of Lonagan. But that is the topic of the following lecture.