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ON INTELLECTUAL CONVERSION[1]

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> Intellectual conversion is rare, even among Lonergan students[2]

> *… alius est actus quo intellectus intelligit lapidem, et alius est actus quo intellegit se intelligere lapidem…*[3]

Prelude

One evening at dinner, when I was an undergraduate studying literature in, I think, my third year and so in the academic year 1961-62, Philip McShane introduced me to *Insight* through a puzzle in Euclid: PROPOSITION I *PROBLEM To describe an equilateral triangle on a given finite straight line*.[4] He added another problem: *to prove that the circles, constructed to solve the first problem, intersect.* I do not remember what clues he gave me, how he disposed the phantasm to elicit understanding but I do remember that I was eating lamb chops and this tiny and publicly unimportant detail shows this to have been a cardinal moment in my intellectual, and not only intellectual, life. I finished the chops (there were two) quickly and spent the evening trying, without success of course, to prove what was

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[1] For comments and discussion my thanks to Cyril Barrett, SJ, Patrick Barry, William Desmond, John Dowling, William Mathews SJ, Raymond Moloney, SJ and David O Mahony.

[2] Philip McShane, "Implementation: the Ongoing Crisis of Method," in this issue, at 24.

[3] St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a, q.87, a.3, ad 2m.

[4] Isaac Todhunter, *Euclid's Elements* (London: Everyman Library / Dent, 1961), 7.

'visually' obvious.[5] I am grateful to Philip McShane for other things, other co-operations, other suggestions, disposals of other phantasms, but this essay is presented to him in thanks for that original moment.

I

Two questions: What is intellectual conversion? Why is naive realism attractive?

The attempt to elucidate intellectual conversion brings with it a peculiar risk. What it is can be asked by one who is not himself intellectually converted but it cannot be answered by him[6] unless he, in the course of his enquiry, becomes intellectually converted. Someone who is not intellectually converted *cannot* understand what intellectual conversion is. To this conclusion it may be objected that, without being oneself intellectually converted in Lonergan's sense of the term, it is possible to understand what Lonergan means by "intellectual conversion." The objection succeeds only in case Lonergan is mistaken. This seems peculiar to cognitional theory. For cognitional theory includes the activity of "objectifying the subject" and, if Lonergan's account of intellect is correct, then this can be discovered only by the subject who succeeds in that work of objectification. Whoever succeeds will understand and accept Lonergan's account to the extent that it is exact.[7]

When Lonergan writes of intellectual conversion, what the reader has before him are words that express a theory of conversion and this prompts one to ask if "intellectual conversion" is a theory only[8] or a personal intellectual shift from one state to another of which the theory is an account. When the student of logic learns the principle of contradiction,

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[5] I suspect most readers will know that this problem cannot be solved using only Euclid's definitions, postulates, and axioms. That it is "obvious" that the circles must intersect prevented, for several centuries, the discovery of this gap.

[6] Unless otherwise clear, 'he', 'him', and 'his' are used in their epicene sense.

[7] *Method*, 20.

[8] It is true that every discovery is a shift from one state, that of not understanding, to another, that of understanding.

what he learns is an account of a spontaneous, although developed, intelligent practice,[9] which were it absent, the student could not learn logic. The normal intelligent human adult operates with the principle of contradiction but need never formally learn of it.[10] The normal intelligent human adult asks questions of his environment, attempts to understand, suggests and tests hypotheses, judges and, in practical matters, decides but may never make these activities the object of his investigation. Any suggested account is an objectification of what already goes on; these "conscious and intelligent operations … as given in consciousness are the rock [upon which one can build and which is] … the subject in his conscious, unobjectified attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility."[11] Similarly, a correct account of intellectual conversion will be an account of a development that has already occurred or, in the limit, that occurs during the course of the investigation.

II

Every normal human adult asks questions, suggests hypotheses, submits these to the test, judges, and decides. If not every normal adult becomes intellectually converted, then what we are trying to account for is a development that may or may not occur but that may be, nonetheless, a development in a spontaneous direction, a naturally emergent development, an intrinsic finality of mind.[12]

Intrinsic is the conscious orientation from experience through understanding to judgement and decision. What we are oriented towards, what we intend, is Being (what is, reality), and so Being is intentionally intrinsic. We intend what is not yet known. Thus, if I ask if and how a circle and an ellipse are related I intend an answer as yet unknown to me. However, although I consciously intend the answer, I do not formally

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[9] This intelligent practice has not yet developed in, say, a three month old human baby.

[10] In some cultures contradictions are not alone recognized in practice but are referred to, as when someone says of another that he has contradicted himself.

[11] *Method*, 20.

[12] *CWL 3*, ch. XV.

know, merely by asking the question, that I intend the answer because I am concentrating on the object defined by the question rather than on the act of questioning. When it occurs to me that a circle is a special case of an ellipse and when I am satisfied with that answer, then I know the answer to that question but I have not yet engaged in the objectification of myself as questioner; I have simply engaged in the conscious and intentional activity of asking and answering a question.[13] It is one thing to understand the relation between circle and ellipse and quite another to understand my understanding of the relation.[14]

The question as to the relation between a circle and an ellipse emerges within a certain culture and can be asked only by humans who have reached both a certain intellectual background and *a certain age*. The human baby cannot yet ask the question and so it becomes a task within the scientific study of human intellectual development to discover how the basic pattern of knowing emerges.[15] The basic pattern of operations involved in knowing and deciding is established as the human infant develops into childhood and adulthood. This development occurs within society, and the emergence of the linguistic question is a crucial step in the effort to make sense of the surrounding world. In the course of development, the child experiences the difference between understanding and not understanding, between being correct and being mistaken.

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[13] The peculiarity of usage here should be roundly admitted. To say "Peter is engaged in the conscious activity of asking a question" is to say that Peter is asking a question. Does Peter know what he is about? As 'know' is used here, Peter certainly knows what he is doing: he is asking a question. Does he know that when he asks a question he is looking for an answer? Again, he does know this. Did he not know it, he wouldn't be asking a question. This ordinary knowing of what one is doing is what Lonergan calls "conscious" and what St Thomas calls *ipsa mentis praesentia*. Of someone who, we suspect, is simply talking in his sleep or in delirium we might ask whether or not he knows that he is asking a question or making a statement and so on. When jesting Pilate asked of truth but did not wait for an answer, did he genuinely ask a question?

[14] *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 87, art. 3 ad 2m.

[15] What the developing child needs to know, at what intellectual stage he needs to be, before he can genuinely ask and understand the relation between circle and ellipse is a related but distinct question.

This ordinary intellectual and moral development is towards a conscious pattern of intellectual and moral acts that are not yet, and may never become, the object of any formal enquiry. Nonetheless, in everyday language, there is a set of ordinary words that express a preliminary, yet not ordered, account of thinking and deciding. Thus, anyone who asks a question, when asked what he is doing is able at once to say that he has asked a question. Anyone who fails to understand is able to report the failure by saying that he does not yet understand. Anyone who accepts that a suggestion is correct is able to say that that he now judges the suggestion to be correct and, when asked why he accepts the suggestion, will answer that he has grounds or reasons for his judgement and will be able to say. more or less well, what these grounds or reasons are. Anyone who thinks about what is to be done may, when he has decided on a course of action, announce that he has decided. There is, then, in everyday language an objectification of the acting subject, the extent and clarity of which will no doubt differ in different cultures but it seems unlikely that any cultural development would be such that people could ask and answer questions, could make judgements and come to decisions and yet be quite unable to say that they did any of these things.[16]

Consider the following matrix

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16

If any four numbers in the matrix are added together according to the rules set out below the resultant sum will be 34.

Rules: Choose a number, say, 5, then eliminate the

[16] No doubt infants ask questions and take in answers before they can identify what they are doing in language. It seems unlikely that there should be a language in which this identification remained closed to adults. It is, of course, impossible that there should be a language in which it was impossible to ask questions and give answers.

numbers in the row and column from which 5 is taken [i.e., 6, 7, and 8 from the row and 1, 9, and 13 from the column are eliminated]. Add three other numbers, each chosen according to the same rule, to 5 [e.g., if 2 is chosen 3 and 4 and 10 and 14 are eliminated. 1 and 6 have been eliminated already].

Question: Why is the sum of any four numbers chosen in this way, the number 34?

Someone may well work on this matrix and satisfy himself that indeed the sum is always 34 without understanding why and so may be expected to say: "I don't understand why 34 is always the sum." And when he has understood, he may be expected to exclaim that now he does understand. In saying that he does or does not understand he, in a preliminary way, objectifies his conscious operations. For now he is talking not about the puzzle but about himself.

There is, then, a first intellectual conversion, or development, from infancy to adulthood that consists in the establishment of the mature conscious pattern of intellectual and moral activities. Included in that development is the ability to refer to the activities that make up the pattern inasmuch as the person says: "I understand", "I'm still trying to understand", "I haven't yet made up my mind", "I've decided" and so on.

Intimately connected with this conversion or development is a second conversion. This is a moral conversion that determines the way in which a person conducts the intellectual life. When we ask a question we can attend more or less carefully, more or less casually to the relevant data, more or less intelligently to questions, more or less reasonably to the evaluation of hypotheses. Because we can, as a matter of lived fact, attend more or less carefully, intelligently and reasonably, how we attend is a moral fact. To attend carelessly is intellectually bad. It is also morally bad precisely because we can choose how we attend. To attend carefully is part of the intrinsic morality of the intellectual life.

To be intelligent does not require one formally to know what to be intelligent involves. But it does demand some understanding of what the instruction "Try to understand" means. It is no use asking someone who has not the least idea

of what is in practice involved in understanding, to try to understand the workings of the matrix. Equally, it is no use asking someone to try to understand who does know what is involved but is unwilling to make whatever effort is required of him.[17]

Everyone, the Duc de Rochefoucauld remarked, complains of his memory but none of his judgement. And yet there is a specific failure at the level of judgement: to judge on too little evidence or to fail to judge on enough.

The first three transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable regard the pattern of operations in knowing. They are immanent and operative. They are, in one sense, unexpressed.[18] But they are, in another sense, expressed in as much as they are quite commonly used as criticisms of, or exhortations to, others or ourselves: Pay attention, Try to understand, Don't judge too quickly.

The second intellectual conversion takes the intrinsic orientation towards truth as a deliberate goal. Sometimes there is no overriding difficulty against taking truth, however unpalatable, as a goal. If, on the other hand, acknowledgement of the truth in a particular domain would so undermine me that I yield to the temptation to conceal it, perhaps even from myself, the question as to who I am and how I am to be, may press upon me, however strenuously I try to avoid it. There is an existential tension between how I have decided to be and the intrinsic finality that I am. The second intellectual conversion is the deliberate choice of that finality. Moral conversion, as Lonergan writes of it in *Method*, "goes beyond the value, truth, to values generally."[19] This second intellectual conversion is moral conversion to the value, truth.

We are spontaneously curious but this second conversion to truth as a value may include the conversion to discovery as a value. There is the bias that distorts the enquiry in which one is already engaged and this affects everyone for none engages in

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[17] What effort is, in practice, demanded will differ from person to person. For someone who is totally ignorant of mathematics, to learn some mathematics will be part of what is demanded of him.

[18] *Method*, 302.

[19] *Method*, 241-242.

no enquiry whatsoever. There is also the cultural and personal inclination to limit enquiry to what is obviously useful[20] and against this inclination stands the cultural and personal discovery that knowledge is valuable in itself.[21] Truth and so Being puts demands on us.

The first intellectual conversion is the spontaneous development of the patterned set of conscious intellectual operations. The second intellectual conversion is the deliberate choice of the value, truth and so "in a sense everyone knows and observes transcendental method. Everyone does so, precisely in the measure that he is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible."[22] The phrase "precisely in the measure that he is" indicates the moral dimension, for each one chooses this measure for himself. Although the moral choice is personal, there is a social and cultural aspect to it, for some cultures are to a greater extent than others the fruit of this choice and continue to encourage this choice. To become intellectually converted in this second sense is one of the accepted and defining values of an open society. Even within such a culture it is far easier and, because far easier commonplace, for the value to be lauded while the accepted practice remains mired in bias. And so, in some domains more than in others, the intellectual history of a society is the history of fashion.[23]

With this second intellectual conversion there may emerge the intellectual pattern of experience and the possibility of the discovery and development of the world of theory. The differentiation of consciousness in which there is "a radical opposition ... between the world of community, of common sense, the external world, the visible world and the world of theory."[24] The world of theory is not the inevitable consequence of this second intellectual conversion but relies upon it. The world of theory is a fruit of the intellectual pattern

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[20] What is "obviously useful" will, of course, differ from culture to culture, occasion to occasion, and person to person.

[21] *CWL 3*, ch. VI.

[22] *Method*, 14.

[23] *Insight*, 292-295.

[24] Bernard Lonergan, "Time and Meaning," lecture September 25th, 1962, typed notes, p. 14.

of experience yet is distinct from it for the intellectual pattern of experience can and does occur in the world of common sense, for example, in jural enquiry.

In the world of theory "things are conceived and known, not in their relations to our sensory apparatus or to our needs and desires, but in the relations constituted by their uniform interactions with one another."[25] The world of theory "is constructed only through a manifold use of commonsense knowledge and ordinary language"[26] and this is a slow, difficult, and not inevitable cultural process that depends crucially on this second intellectual conversion and emergence of the intellectual pattern of experience and the discovery of knowledge as a value in itself.

The third intellectual conversion is that to which Lonergan refers by the term 'intellectual conversion.' I have written of the first and the second to bring out the fact that the third is in some respects unlike them.

The third intellectual conversion is a discovery and, therefore, the answer to a question. According to Lonergan it is also the eradication of an error. "Intellectual conversion is a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity and human knowing."[27] As radical clarification, it is a discovery. As the elimination of a myth, that is, of a mistaken account, it is the eradication of an error.

It is a radical clarification concerning reality. Consider a game of chess. Not *the* game but an actual game in progress. Two people are watching the game. One knows chess well; the other knows something of board games but nothing of chess. Do both see what is going on? In one sense, they do and, in another sense, they do not. Each can see what is to be seen. But more is going on than what can literally be seen. What is going on is known by understanding correctly what is seen.[28]

When one player moves a small piece of wood from one

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[25] *Method*, 258, and see *CWL 3*, "Index" under 'Relation(s).'

[26] *Method*, 259.

[27] *Method*, 238.

[28] Whoever understands the game grasps the 'form' of the game in St Thomas' usage. See Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), #143.

place to another on the board, then both onlookers see this. One grasps the sense of the move within the game – he may well understand the move better than the player; the other understands the displacement of the piece as part of the game but can as yet make no further sense of it.

Both acknowledge that what is going on is not grasped simply by seeing the movement of the pieces. The one who knows no chess, knows that he does not grasp the sense of what is going on. The one who understands chess, understands to a greater or lesser extent what is going on. Both know in practice that what is going on is grasped by understanding the sense of the observed movements. In other words, both know, in their intelligent practice, that the reality of what is going on is reached by correctly understanding what they observe. Both know that what is going on is discovered by understanding what they see. Yet another – if convoluted – way of expressing this is to say that an intentional spontaneity, presupposition, or guiding principle[29] of their activity is that the reality of what is going on in this game of chess is reached only when they have correctly understood the moves made by the players.

The understanding of the game in progress is subjective in that it occurs in the enquiring subject who correctly understands the game. It is objective in as much as it is correct. As the movement from enquiring into what is going on to the judgement that one has correctly understood what is going on is a spontaneous and conscious pattern of inter-related activities, so there is a corresponding pattern of objectivity. To understand the game correctly the onlooker must follow attentively and accurately the moves that are actually made: he must constantly try to understand these moves and must check his hypotheses as the game progresses. If and only if he succeeds in correctly understanding the game will he have objective knowledge of the game. Only if *someone* correctly

[29] See R.G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1940) [hereafter *Metaphysics*]. An operative presupposition may be objectified and expressed as a proposition, as is done above, but as operative in the activity it is not a proposition nor is it usually adverted to. The set of operative presuppositions written of above are the conscious spontaneities of enquiry. Cf. *Method*, 18 and Barden, *After Principles* (Notre Dame UP, 1990), Ch. 5.

understands the game will there be objective knowledge of the game, for objectivity does not occur apart from subjects.[30]

The delusion that objectivity exists apart from subjects is really an awkward and misleading attempt to grasp the enquirer's self-transcendence.[31] The enquiring subject in true judgement reaches a truth that is independent of his judgement. Thus, when a correct understanding of the game of chess is reached, what is reached is knowledge of a fact, that is, knowledge of what is the case independently of the judgement. Here again, is a principle or presupposition of knowing; few say,[32] and none can coherently hold, that his understanding of the game is correct but that, nonetheless, the game is not as he understands it to be.[33] In other words, X's understanding of the game is correct if and only if the game is as he understands it to be.[34]

Logic seems independent of subjects but it is so in precisely the same way.[35] If it is true that llamas are native to

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[30] *CWL 3*, ch. XIII; *Method*, ch. 10, §9 and ch. §11, 8.

[31] In everyday conversation it is sometimes found that 'objective' means 'what everyone holds without question' or 'what is not simply someone's opinion' but the sense of something being true independently of the subject who discovers it to be true is in the background. To claim that a given proposition is objectively true is simply to claim that it is true.

[32] Some modern pragmatists and relativists seem to come close to saying this but I suspect that this is because they have, or think that their opponents have, an inflated, obscure, and confused idea of what it is for a proposition to be true or probable. As a prime example of this, see Richard Rorty's essay in *The New Republic*, October 18, 1982. pp. 28-34. Does anyone claim that a particular proposition is true but that what the proposition asserts is not the case? ("S is P" is true, yet S is not P.)

[33] *Method*, 338.

[34] I assume here that the correct understanding is intelligently and reasonably associated with the game and not merely correct by chance as might happen were someone to arrive at the correct answer to a sum while having made two unnoticed mistakes that happened to cancel each other. "For, it is said, it is only knowledge if things really are as he says. But that is not enough. It mustn't be just an accident that they are." Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, #408.

[35] *Method*, 338. The sentence: "If one considers logical proof to be basic, one wants an objectivity that is independent of the concrete existing subject" might seem to contradict what I have claimed in the text. I think that it does not. My argument is that however much one may want an objectivity that is independent of the concrete existing subject, one cannot

South America and that the animal I am looking at is a llama, then it is true that the animal I am looking at is native to South America. But the conclusion, although valid independently of the subject, and true independently of the subject if the premises are true, is not reached independently of the subject. Similarly, the judgement, "The structure [(A⊃B & A)]⊃ B is a valid inferential structure" is true independently of the subject making the judgement but the judgement is reached only by the self-transcending subject who makes it. Bergson remarks that one cannot prove a mathematical theorem to someone except by way of his learning to prove it for himself.[36]

What I have been trying to show in the discussion of the onlookers' efforts to understand the game of chess is that the presuppositions, principles, or spontaneities of their efforts include a notion of objectivity and reality an adequate account of which will be part of a correct understanding of the pattern of human enquiry. To this adequate account of the inherent and spontaneous notions of objectivity and reality, Lonergan refers when he writes that "intellectual conversion is a radical clarification."[37]

This radical clarification is an account. It states that the real is reached in judgement. "The real is, what is: and 'what is,' is known in the rational act, judgement."[38] To be able genuinely and personally to affirm this is to have come to, or towards, the third intellectual conversion. It cannot be come to unless one genuinely and personally raises the question to which this account is the answer. "In proportion as a man is thinking scientifically when he makes a statement, he knows that his statement is the answer to a question and knows what that question is."[39]

The sentence from *Verbum*, quoted in the foregoing

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get it and, hence, one does not get it in logic, however much one may mistakenly think that one does.

[36] Henri Bergson, "L'Effort Intellectuel" in *Oeuvres*, 5th ed. (P.U.F.. 1991), 943 [orig. *Revue Philosophique*, Jan. 1902]. See also my "Method in Philosophy" in John Mullarkey [ed.] *The New Bergson* (Manchester UP, 1999), 32-40.

[37] *Method*, 238.

[38] *CWL 2*, 20 and *passim*. See index under 'Real, Reality.'

[39] *Metaphysics*, ch. IV, proposition I.

paragraph, is not difficult to understand at a purely verbal level. It can take on the character of a *mantra:* its users may mistake incantation for conversion. It may be no more than a verbally understood sentence related to no question that the speaker has in fact asked.

"The real", "reality", "what is (really) the case" is what we hope to discover when we ask a question and what we in fact discover in a true answer. These are fundamental presuppositions of questioning: the questioner does not yet know the answer to his question; he does not yet know what, in this instance, is the case. Did he already know, he would not ask. But neither would he ask did he not presuppose that to reach a true answer was possible and that a true answer reveals what is the case.

Reflection on the example of the onlookers trying to make sense the game of chess shows that they will not understand simply by looking more carefully. To make sense of a move is quite different from observing, however clearly, that a player moved a piece from one square to another. In a physics that now is elementary but once was not, the scientist who asks how a ball rolls down a slope will be no nearer a solution if he confines himself to observing the movement of the ball. He will try to understand the movement and so must know what counts as understanding within the physics of his time.[40] His attention is directed to understanding how the ball descends. He knows what he is doing; he knows that his work is guided by a question, he knows when an idea occurs to him (for an idea to occur to him and for him to know this are identical – this is what St Thomas calls *ipsa mentis praesentia*);[41] he knows when he has reached an answer that satisfies him. Nonetheless, what he is asking about is the descent of the ball, not about the character of his thinking.

He may, however, change the focus of his enquiry to ask about his thinking. A curious feature of this new attention to oneself as one comes to know, this noticing oneself coming to

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[40] If the physicist invents a new idea of what counts as understanding, he has radically changed the question and has brought about a 'paradigm shift' within the science.

[41] *Summa Theologiae* 1, q.87, art.1c.

know, is that one is not presented with puzzling data that are to be understood. To ask a question is to intend but not yet to know the answer. Consider: why is it that a circle is a special case of an ellipse? Only the reader who does not already know can ask this question.[42] Only the reader who does not already know and who has the necessary background can hope to answer the question. The question makes puzzling something that beforehand was not puzzling. Before the question emerges, the circle and the ellipse are simply two apparently quite different shapes. In asking about the movement from question to answer there is no *comparable* puzzle. Whoever attends to himself questioning understands at once that the question is oriented towards, looks for, an answer. Whoever notices himself coming to an understanding that yields a suggestion knows at once that this understanding is a suggested answer to the question and makes sense of data.[43]

Whoever asks why a circle is a special case of an ellipse wants to know something that is not apparent. He knows that he cannot know this by seeing the two figures more clearly – by, say, bringing them into better light. His teacher may bring the two foci of the ellipse closer together with the visual result that the new ellipse is more visually like a circle than was the former figure. The student may see that as the foci of the ellipse approach each other the ellipse becomes more and more like a circle and it may suddenly occur to him that a circle is an ellipse with coincident foci. He may also notice, but is less likely to notice, that the discovery that an ellipse with coincident foci is circular, is reached not by seeing but by understanding. What the enquirer may notice – but may equally overlook – is that the reality of the relation between circle and ellipse is reached when he is satisfied that a circle is a special case of an ellipse. This is a methodological discovery, a crucial feature of which is that it is the discovery of what one

[42] The question has not disappeared: it does not cease to be a question; only it is no longer an unanswered question. See *Metaphysics,* ch. IV, prop. I.

[43] Compare Collingwood, where he writes that every proposition is an answer to a question and cannot be understood unless the question to which it is an answer is understood.

already presupposes. The startling strangeness is coming home and seeing the place for the very first time. As Collingwood remarks: "In expounding these propositions I shall not be trying to convince the reader of anything, but only to remind him of what he already knows perfectly well."[44] For the reader already to know perfectly well what Collingwood makes clear, what St Thomas calls *ipsa mentis praesentia* is sufficient.

The startlingly strange discovery is a cardinal moment in a philosophical life. That cardinal moment occured in and for me during my effort to prove that when the centre of one circle lies on the circumference of another the circles interesect. The story of this is told in the prelude. The startling moment was not the realisation that I could not prove that they intersected. The startling moment was to notice that I could see[45] that they did *in fact* intersect and could not see, yet understood, that they *must* do so. What must be the case could not be seen, yet was fact. Conversion is personal, autobiographical.[46]

The "appropriation of one's interiority"[47] gives clarity about reality and objectivity and from it comes an account of knowing that makes the presuppositions explicit. It is a necessary step in intellectual conversion but for the discovery to penetrate one's thought explicitly takes time and effort throughout "the long and confused twilight of philosophic initiation."[48] The philosophical trajectory is longer than an initiation and lasts a lifetime. Having discovered that reality is reached in correct understanding, one may discover that, consequently, reality is intrinsically intelligible, and when one recognises that reality is intrinsically intelligible, the question

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[44] *Metaphysics*, 23.

[45] A subtler analysis is required of the proposition "The circles intersect." *CWL 2*, 86-87; *2 Coll*, 28, and my "Insight and Mirrors," *MJLS* 4.2 (October 1986), 102.

[46] *CWL 3*, 22-23: "The beginning, then, not only is self-knowledge and self-appropriation but also a criterion of the real." Further, philosophy's "primary function is to promote the self-appropriation that cuts to the root of philosophical differences and incomprehensions" (*Method*, 85). The importance of autobiography is a constant theme in William Mathews' work.

[47] *Method*, 83.

[48] *Method*, 85. At this point the pages from 83 to the end of the ninth section are crucial.

of the intelligibility of the existence of what in fact exists[49] may arise. But no question arises inevitably for questions arise in subjects or do not and "wonderment is not something that can be injected or inculcated."[50] How one will go on, always remains to be seen for the philosopher, no less than others, can suffer from loss of problems.[51]

III

Lonergan commonly writes of intellectual conversion as a shift from a mistaken idea of reality and objectivity to a correct idea. The central feature of the mistaken account is "that all knowing must be something like taking a look."[52]

In my account of the radical clarification 1 have written of it as the making explicit, or the objectification, of already operative presuppositions or spontaneities. I hope to have made it clear that these presuppositions or spontaneities are at work as much in commonsense as in theory. I have not presumed that the person who undertakes the task of radical clarification is committed to a contrary account. I have rather presumed that he is committed to no account whatsoever.

However, contrary accounts are put forward and adhered to. They are mistaken because, and precisely to the extent that, they do not square with the actions for which they presume to account. They can be shown to be mistaken, not by some conclusion derived from unquestionable premises, but only by bringing the person in the grip of error to a personal discovery of the presuppositions of his own actions. It is not possible logically to prove to someone that the real is what is intended in and by questioning, that is, it is impossible logically to

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[49] "It is not *how* the world is that is the mystical but *that* it is." Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 6.44; *Method*, 101: "…once that (the universe is intelligible) is granted, there arises the question whether the universe could be intelligible without having an intelligent ground." Yet whether or not the question arises is an autobiographical fact.

[50] See Cyril Barrett, SJ, "The Usefulness of God." *Milltown Studies* 42 (Summer 1998), 23-34; and John Dowling, "Philosophy of Religious Experience," in Dowling and P.J. McGrath, *Philosophy of Religion* (Dublin: Oscail, 1999), 14ff.

[51] See Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, #456.

[52] *Method*, 239.

prove[53] that questioning intends a reality other than the sum of what is sensed: it is possible only to show this. The person convinced by the showing – and conviction is personal[54] – is thus intellectually converted, his way of looking at things has been changed.[55]

A different enquiry would discover why such mistaken accounts arise. Why does the naive realist think that he knows the world by looking? Lonergan's reply is that the world of immediacy conforms well enough to the idea that knowing is looking and the "…world of immediacy is the sum of what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, smelt, felt."[56] This answer transforms into the recurrent claim that the opponent of' the critical realist account thinks of the world as the-already-out-there-now.

The suggestion that "the world of immediacy is the sum of what is see" is open to misconstrual since "what is seen" is less clear than might be thought. In common speech between two people who share the same language and everyday context, one might ask the other: "is that animal a pine marten or a mink?" Suppose the person asked replies that it is a pine marten. The questioner, since a pine marten resembles a mink, might well ask, "Are you sure? How do you know?" Both can see the animal equally well and so it turns out that the assertion that it is a pine marten is an interpretation of what is seen. One of them "sees it as" a pine marten whereas the other does not. But this "seeing as" is not like seeing a cloud as a camel, a whale

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[53] This is impossible because logical proof depends eventually on indemonstrable premises and we are here working at the level of these. See my *After Principles*. It is not possible to prove to someone that "If A, then B. And A. Therefore B" is a valid argument form: the learner must "see," "grasp," "understand," this. The learner grasps the validity of the argument form in the discovery that he cannot avoid it in his intelligent practice. See G. Isaye, "La metaphysique des simples," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* LXXXII, No.7 (Juillet-Août, 1960).

[54] *CWL 3*, 13: "No one else, no matter what his knowledge or his eloquence, no matter what his logical rigour or his persuasiveness, can do it for you."

[55] Cf. *Method*, 338, and Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, #461; *Philosophical Investigations*, #144. Changed, of course, either from a mistaken view or from no view at all.

[56] *Method*, 238.

or a weasel.[57] The everyday response is imbued with habitual understanding.[58]

To return. Before either is sure that the animal is a pine marten both see the animal. If the animal is in fact a pine marten, then what they see is a pine marten. What they see is the real pine marten. Precisely here, I think, is the source of a linguistic confusion that leads people astray. The naive realist slips from the assertion "What I see is the real pine marten" to the assertion "The real pine marten is known by seeing it." This slippage may well be associated with another common way of talking in which a question such as "Do you know what a pine marten is?" is used as the equivalent of "Can you recognise a pine marten when you see one?" or "Have you any idea at all what a pine marten is – for example, do you know that it is an animal, not a bird?" Before either is sure what animal it is, both see the animal. They see it "as an animal" for their seeing is mediated. The mediation, however, has become so habitual that there is "a deceptive appearance of 'immediacy.'"[59]

There is, then, a crucial difference between "(conceiving) the real as the empirically experienced"[60] and judging that what is empirically experienced is real. These are philosophical positions. The person who asserts that what he sees is a pine marten is not taking a philosophical position.

What is meant by the assertion: "The real pine marten is

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[57] As does Hamlet when mad or feigning madness in Act III, Scene II. Neither is it the 'seeing as' of which Wittgenstein writes in his discussion of the duck-rabbit figure in *Philosophical Investigations* IIxi. Think of taking a glass of gin for a glass of water. The person who, being thirsty, drank from the glass would say that he had thought it was water. Think of a culture in which a whale is "seen as" a fish.

[58] See Benedetto Croce's essay "The Myth of Sensation" [1942] in Sprigg [trans. and Introduction] *Philosophy, Poetry, History* (London: OUP, 1966), 72-76, and in Lonergan's account of the dramatic pattern of experience in *CWL 3*, ch.VI. §2.5, it is abundantly clear that the kind of knowing at work is not "the elementary type … constituted completely on the level of experience" (*CWL 3*, ch. VIII, §2).

[59] Cf. *Metaphysics*, 34.

[60] In *CWL 2*, 113 n.33, Lonergan attributes this view to Bergson. Bergson's position is, I think, more complex. See my "Method in Philosophy."

known by seeing it"? If what is meant is that when one sees a pine marten it is a real pine marten that one sees, the assertion is correct. If what is meant is that when one sees a pine marten one knows what is to be known of pine martens, the assertion is false and. furthermore, presupposes not simply that 'knowing' is like 'seeing' but that it is identical with seeing or, more generally, with the sum of sensing the pine marten, hearing it, touching it and so on. The ordinary and correct statement, 'That is a pine marten,' is then, by 'realists,' thought of as the expression of 'an immediate apprehension or intuition.'[61]

It might well be agreed that knowing the pine marten would have to include dissecting it and naming all the sinews and bones and so on. At an early stage in zoological investigation it is not clear how to understand animals. What the relevant and interesting questions are is not always obvious and paradigm shifts in a science are cardinal changes in the questions asked. At first there will be a tendency towards ever greater observational precision and the accumulation of small insights may pass almost unnoticed because the insights have become habitual and are, so to speak, obvious within the culture. Even the naturalist's classification may be thought of as no more than careful observation.

In one of the sets of lectures[62] that led to *Method in Theology*, Lonergan, referring to "Whitehead's bifurcation of nature – the everyday view of things, trees, animals and so on; and the further theoretical view…" writes of the biologist who goes with his son to the zoo where both look at a giraffe: "The boy notices the long neck and the short tail and so on. What does the father see? He sees an interlocking set of systems, the skeletal system, the muscular system, the digestive system, the vascular system, the nervous system and so on, interlocking and giving you this living thing. And this giraffe is one way of

[61] Cf. *Metaphysics*, 34: "And if I never think at all except in this quite casual and unscientific way, I shall always be content to believe that this is all that knowledge can ever be: the simple 'intuition' or apprehension' of things confronting us which absolutely and in themselves just are what we 'intuite' or 'apprehend' them as being."

[62] "Transcendental Philosophy and the Study of Religion: an Outline," typed notes, n.d. Ch. 3 "Horizons and Categories," §4.

having all these systems interlocked and functioning." More precisely, what the zoologist *sees* is exactly what the boy sees.[63] He may recall his habitual knowledge of mammals in general and more specifically ruminants: he may recall more particularly what he knows about giraffes and how they differ from, and are related to, other ruminants. Lonergan continues: "Is it the same animal? Yes. Entirely different apprehensions of the same animal, one the theoretic apprehension, the other the common sense apprehension." I should prefer to say that the biologist shares his son's apprehension and goes on, or may go on, from it to the theoretic apprehension. He sees what the boy sees but can think what his son cannot yet think. And yet his seeing is impregnated with his background understanding. But would it be were the animal suddenly to turn on him?

What account is to be given of this common sense apprehension of the pine marten or the giraffe? And it is worth remarking that between the boy and the zoologist are the keeper in charge of the giraffes and the naturalist whose apprehensions, if perhaps still within the realm of common sense, are exceedingly different from the boy's.

Seeing a giraffe is not a philosophical theory about reality: it is not a theory about itself: it is simply the ordinary apprehension. When Lonergan writes of the "already out there now real"[64] he is offering an account of an aspect of, or some elements in, that elementary apprehension.

The 'already out there now real' is, then, an account of some elements in what the boy looking at the giraffe is doing. The boy comes upon the giraffe. If it is the first time that he has seen a giraffe he will ask what it is, that is, what it is called?[65] He experiences himself as being with the giraffe in the surrounding world of being with his father, in the zoo, in

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[63] In his 1962 lecture on "Time and Meaning," typed notes, p.14, Lonergan uses the same example but writes: "A biologist looks at the same animal (the giraffe). He thinks of it as a unity of systems."

[64] *Passim* in his writings, e.g., *CWL 3*, ch, VIII, §2; *Method*, ch. 10, §9.

[65] "What is it?" is commonly used as the equivalent of "What is the animal called?" and "Do you know what that animal is?" as the equivalent of "Do you know what that animal is called?" But "Is that a pine marten or a mink?", "Is that a stoat or a weasel", these ask for more than a name.

sunshine or rain, heat or cold, when his underlying mood is joy or sadness and so on. The giraffe is the focus of attention but he is present to himself as being with the giraffe. The present surrounding world in which he finds himself is given now, yet were he to move from the giraffe to the zebra enclosure he would not suppose that the giraffe no longer existed; nor does he attend to the supposition that the giraffe endures; yet the way in which he is present to himself is within a world that now includes the giraffe. Only the extremely neurally damaged live in a world bounded by the very immediate past and an expectation of only a very immediate future. We live in a world in part constituted by what we now see, hear and smell, in part by memory, including the memory of what we have read and heard, in part by present interest. Common sense questions, understanding, and accepted interpretations penetrate the whole. The 'already-out there-now-real' neither is, nor does Lonergan put it forward as, an account of this complex way of being in the world. Rather, it is put forward as an account of elements in the complexity; elements that contribute to the constitution of the present complex experience. At an early stage in a person's development 'the already out there now real' may constitute[66] an entire way of being in the world: "A world quite apart from questions and answers, a world in which we lived before we spoke…"[67] Lonergan may in places give the impression that he thinks that we as adults sometimes live in this immediate world: I think to understand him thus is mistaken.

In so far as elements of the original immediate world remain in our ordinary way of being in the world, they are not to be repudiated. The boy at the giraffe enclosure has no theory

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[66] Whether or not the human world, at an early stage of individual development, is constituted entirely by the 'already out there now real' is a difficult question within developmental psychology.

[67] *Method*, 263. See *CWL 3*, ch, VIII, §2. Antonio Demasio's discussion of what he calls *core consciousness* may be found illuminating here: core consciousness "provides the organism with a sense of self about one moment – now – and about one place – here…" *The Feeling of What Happens* ([1999] New York: Vintage, 2000), 16: see also the third chapter. None but the extremely disturbed lives as adults in the world of core consciousness.

of reality (neither has the zoologist); he takes it as given that he and the giraffe are not identical, that is, he deals with the giraffe as with something other than himself: his presence to himself is as one to whom the giraffe is present as other than himself: for him the giraffe is real. But if he uses the word 'real' to say, for instance, that the giraffe is 'real,' he is not talking about a theory of reality, he simply means that the giraffe is a real rather than, say, a stuffed giraffe or a particularly effective hologram or model.[68] He can be, and may know that he can be, mistaken about whether or not the giraffe is real in this sense. But that he lives in the real world is utterly taken for granted; to ask whether or not the giraffe is real may be on occasion a question within his ken; to ask whether or not the world including himself is real does not occur to him; to ask whether the real is reached by correctly understanding is a question quite outside his horizon. The boy lives and takes it for granted that he lives in the real world:[69] he does not ask if the real is reached in sensation or in judgement. He is not a naive realist; he knows the world mediated by meaning. He does not think that he knows it by looking. This is not because he thinks otherwise but because he does not think about the matter at all.

Is the giraffe "already out there now" for the onlooker? The words in this phrase are glossed in *Method*.[70] For the onlooker who comes upon it, the giraffe is "given prior to any questions about it," it is spatially separate from the onlooker as "the object of extraverted consciousness," it occupies a place in lived space different from the space occupied by the onlooker

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[68] Had he encountered a giraffe only in a story he might well have asked whether or not giraffes were real or, like unicorns and dragons, imaginary.

[69] In common usage 'real' is used in contrast to 'pretend' or 'imaginary' or 'illusory' etc.: "Is that real money?"; "Is that a real oasis or a mirage?"; "Did the magician really cut his assistant in half?"; "Is the unicorn a real animal?"; "Is he really amused or just pretending?" "He's not living in the real world" is more or less the equivalent of something like this: "His understanding of how things work in society is faulty." The boy "who takes it for granted that he lives in the real world" does not, of course, say this: he just lives in the real world: he takes it for granted in as much as no questions arise.

[70] 262ff.

for "sensed objects are spatial," it is present visually to the onlooker at this moment "for the time of sensing runs along with the time of what is sensed." Finally, the giraffe "is *real*: for it is bound up with one's living and acting and so must be just as real as they are."

But here emerges an ambiguity. Writing of the intellectual pattern of experience in the fourteenth chapter of *Insight*, Lonergan says that "when some other pattern is dominant, then the self of our self-affirmation seems quite different from one's actual self, the universe of being seems as unreal as Plato's noetic heaven, and objectivity spontaneously becomes a matter of meeting persons and dealing with things that are 'really out there.'"[71] The ambiguity is in the term "objectivity." Is "objectivity" a term used to identify a feature within the dramatic pattern of common sense experience, or does it refer to a mistaken account of objectivity?

Commonly when Peter meets Paul he sees him, hears him, talks to him, touches him, smells him. He may not see him for he may be blind: he may not hear him for he may be deaf and so on, but if Peter senses Paul in no way whatsoever, he does not meet him. To meet another person includes sensing him and this is the experiential component in the meeting. But Peter tries to make sense of Paul-as-experienced.[72] In his meeting there are three components to objectivity even if he does not know of them. Yet here are three perfectly ordinary questions that, later, might be addressed to Peter: did you meet Paul? what did you think of him? are you sure of your opinion?

Peter and Paul do not meet "in a world quite apart form questions and answers, a world in which we lived before we spoke and while we were learning to speak, a world into which we try to withdraw when we would forget the world mediated by meaning…"[73] That is not how we meet each other.[74] Neither

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[71] *CWL 3*, 411. This passage is quoted in McShane, 24.

[72] Much of the 'making sense' is, of course, habitual. Peter at once 'sees Paul as,' say, a human adult.

[73] *Method*, 273.

[74] We meet each other daily with greater or less subtlety, honesty, affection, love, dislike, envy, hatred. To know theoretically how we meet each other is an arduous undertaking. Think, of a few among many, of Buber, Unamuno, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Levinas, Desmond in

do we meet as objects to be understood within the world of theory. Nor should we. Nonetheless, to meet each other demands objective knowing.[75]

"The naive realist knows the world mediated by meaning but thinks he knows it by looking." If this is true, what the naive realist thinks is mistaken. His thought is at odds with his thinking; he resembles one who asserts that there is no truth. It is perfectly understandable that someone should have no theory about how he knows the world. But why should someone have a theory so at odds with what actually goes on?

We begin philosophy as adults. We live in a complex interpreted world. We do not see or hear a sentence as a mere sequence of sounds or written shapes. Try to eliminate the "thought" from the foregoing and see the printed letters as nothing but shapes. Meaning seems immediate. Then compare this with looking a page of Chinese characters if you can't read Chinese. Familiar objects, too, are immediately accepted. We see cups and saucers and spoons. We see coins and banknotes. We see dogs and cats and cows. The questions that gave rise to our present habitual understanding of spoons, cups, saucers, dogs, cats, and so on are lost in our past. The familiarity of everyday habitual understanding conceals understanding.[76]

That the habitual world in which we live is imbued with understanding is concealed because the habitual insights are so obvious and so immediate. Hume noticed that he could not literally see that the fire caused the water in the pan to boil. His error was that, having noticed that he could not *see* the cause, he concluded that cause was not real but a convenient way of dealing with the world. Hume knew that we *lived* in a world mediated by meaning but denied that knowledge of this life-world was knowledge of the world. He knew that he could not see relations; he overlooked that relations are "what insight

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recent times. Think of Aristotle's analysis of friendship.

[75] Lonergan, "Cognitional Structure," in *CWL 4*, 220-221.

[76] When habitual understanding fails the familiar becomes questionable. Think of someone who no longer recognises a spoon. He can see the spoon. He no longer sees it *as a spoon*, but perhaps as an implement, as an ornament or as an oddly shaped piece of metal. Perhaps, like Oliver Sachs' patient, he sees a glove as a purse for coins of different sizes.

knows in sensitive presentation."[77] Knowing that relations were not the object of sense, he thought of them as unreal and of reality as the totality of immediately sensed things, not of facts.[78] The world thus became unintelligible and intelligence a way of dealing with absurdity. In that context the question of the ultimate intelligibility of existence does not arise; to ask whether the unintelligible is intelligible is doubly absurd. The way from Hume to the present, however tortuous, is not long.

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[77] *CWL 2*, 42.

[78] The inverse of Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* 1.1. See Lonergan on the reality of relations in *CWL 3*, ch.XVI, §2 and in *Divinarum Personarum conceptionem analogicam* (Rome: Gregorian UP, 1959), Appendix III.