

The Notion of a Thing

Meghan Allerton and Terrance Quinn

Now the notion of a thing is grounded in an insight that grasps, not relations between data, but a unity, identity, whole in data; and this unity is grasped, not by considering data from any abstractive viewpoint, but by taking them in their concrete individuality and in the totality of their aspects. For if the reader will turn his mind to any object he names a thing, he will find that object to be a unity to which belongs every aspect of every datum within the unity. Thus, the dog Fido is a unity, and to Fido is ascribed a totality of data whether of color or shape, sound or odor, feeling or movement. Moreover, from this grasp of unity in a concrete totality of data there follow the various characteristics of things.¹

Introduction (James Duffy)

"Things" is the last of eight "five-finger exercise"² chapters in *Insight*. Although the notion of a thing might seem simple and obvious, Lonergan decided it best to take it up after clarifying what he means by *insight* in chapters 1–5 and constructing, "first, a pure theory of common sense, and secondly, an account of its dialectical involvement"³ in chapters 6–7. The claims that he makes in chapter 8 qualify and reinterpret claims he made in earlier chapters.⁴

¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 271. (Subsequently referred to as CWL 3).

² "The first eight chapters of *Insight* are a series of five-finger exercises inviting the reader to discover in himself [or herself] and for himself [or herself] just what happens when he [or she] understands." Bernard Lonergan, "Insight Revisited," *A Second Collection*, ed. William Ryan and Bernard Tyrrell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 269.

³ CWL 3, 293.

⁴ In the introduction, Lonergan describes how the context of each chapter expands that of the prior chapter and is broadened by that of the next. See CWL 3, 18–19.

The aim of chapter 8 is not to modify the way we ordinarily talk about “things in the garage” or “things on my desk,” although the effective implementation of the chapter might eventually revise ordinary shoptalk and garagetalk in a way that parallels revisions of ordinary notions of and talk about space and of time.⁵ That remote goal is to transform mythic consciousness that is incapable of distinguishing between “a sufficiently intense flow of sensitive representations, feelings, words, and actions”⁶ and invisible electrons, daffodils, puppies, and significant others.⁷ The remote goal of restoring the sense of the unknown pivots on the proximate goal—precision and control of non-ordinary meanings that are the fruits of two moves or ‘turnings’ that the interested reader might make.

The second proposed move is from appreciating my spontaneous bent towards “thing-ing” or “it-ing” to developing some heuristics for talking about my spontaneous bent. This is implicit in the phrase “there follow the various characteristics of things.” In the paragraphs that follow, we read that things “are subject to laws and probabilities” (271), that the notion of the thing required for scientific development “has as its properties both experiential and explanatory conjugates, which remains identical whether it is described or explained” (272–73), and that both the list of the four elements—earth, water, fire, and air—and the periodic table “are lists of kinds of things” (273).

It is possible to deny the first move on the grounds that such a spontaneous inclination does not exist. Such a denial would render the second move void. At the same time, such a denial would require self-attention, otherwise a person could not meaningfully utter a statement such as “I do not spontaneously incline towards unifying, nor do I think in unities.” One follow-up question could be to ask the one denying the notion of a thing about their meaning of the nouns and pronouns they

⁵ See n. 25 on page 70 of “The Heuristic Notions of Space and Time.” Revising, redeeming, and uplifting our ordinary blasé lives is “the big apple”—a global, collaborative, interdisciplinary project (see *Method in Theology* [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971], 364–367; CWL 14, 336–338 and Brendan Lovett’s second objectification in “The Dynamic State of Being in Love”) for those comfortable implementing the heuristics of chapter 8, a project “that at first will be denounced as absurd.” “Healing and Creating in History,” *A Third Collection*, 108.

⁶ CWL 3, 561.

⁷ “If atoms cannot be imagined, then by parity of reasoning, molecules cannot be imagined. If molecules cannot be imagined, then neither can cells. If cells cannot be imagined, then neither can plants.” CWL 3, 275.

spontaneously use. Another could be to elicit the denier's appreciation of the difference between removing the wings from a parakeet and taking the wheels off a bicycle.

Likewise, it is possible—here you might check your spontaneous reading of and reaction to my description of the two moves—to brush aside the questions “What is a thing?” and “What am I doing when I am thing-ing?” as impractical, merely speculative.⁸ In that case or situation, “the problem is not the spontaneous notion of thing, but arriving in the cosmopolis of the heuristic notion of the notion of thing.”⁹

Naturally, Fido-the-dog manages to attain biological ends in different situations without facing the two questions. Fido's out-there-now is “unquestioned and unquestionable,” not just for Fido, “but also for the general bias of common sense.”¹⁰ The person who is invited to make the two moves does not live exclusively in either a biological pattern or an intellectual pattern of experience,¹¹ and they might claim that Fido's sensitive integration of the out-there-now grounds a realism which makes understanding correctly a secondary matter.

Dogs know their masters, bones, other dogs, and not merely the appearance of things. Now this sensitive integration of sensible data also exists in the human animal and even in the human philosopher. Take it as

⁸ In “Common Sense as Object” —the chapter preceding “Things” —Lonergan writes about something called *cosmopolis* checking the overreach of our common sense and reversing the refusal of insights that “is rationalized by a distinction between theory and practice” (CWL 3, 267). The refusal writ large—various questions brushed aside over many years, sometimes because of a legitimate concern about short-term survival—has led to the cumulative deterioration of the situations (ibid., 254) in the course of my story, your story, history, her-story. This story is by no means easy to identify. See also what Patrick Brown writes regarding the very real possibility that his understanding of general bias is warped by general bias in “Dialectic Exercise on the General Bias,” *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis*, 13 (2020), 47–48.

⁹ Philip McShane, *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2015), 91. McShane notes a few pages later that Frederick Crowe “drew attention to a vagueness in Lonergan's use of the word *notion*, and it is detectable in his presentation of the notion of thing, and the notion of the notion of thing, and the heuristic notion of that notion.” n. 30, p. 99.

¹⁰ CWL 3, 293.

¹¹ The biological, aesthetic, intellectual, and dramatic patterns of experience are described in *Insight*, CWL 3, 204–211.

knowledge of reality, and there results the secular contrast between the solid sense of reality and bloodless categories of the mind.¹²

The person invited to make the two moves is capable of raising questions but is also “guided by a common sense that does not bother to ask nice questions on the meaning of familiar names.”¹³

One of the challenges faced by Allerton and others¹⁴ reading chapter 8 is to distinguish two types of classifications—those based on relations of things to our senses and those based on relations of things to one another. Whether one is studying *Bellis perennis* (common daisy) or *Sus scrofa* (wild boar), if a *species* is conceived not as Darwin conceived it but as “an intelligible solution to a problem of living in a given environment,”¹⁵ it helps to use convenient symbols to represent species of things, their conjugates, their schemes, series of coincidental aggregates of events, series of conjugates, and higher or lower genera of things.

The key notion in the explanatory species is that any lower species of things T_i , with their conjugates C_i and their schemes S_i , admit a series of coincidental aggregates of events, say E_{ijm} , E_{ijn} , E_{ijo} , . . . which stand in correspondence with a series of conjugates C_{jm} , C_{jn} , C_{jo} , . . . of a higher genus of things T_j .¹⁶

The convenient symbols are compact. They are filled in and filled out as empirical investigations develop and there is scientific progress regarding both events and conjugates.¹⁷ These symbols, as well as simpler ones such as x and X ,¹⁸ help those inquiring about real things to stretch beyond their

¹² Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, vol. 2, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, ed. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 20. (Subsequently referred to as CWL 2). See also CWL 3, 22–23.

¹³ CWL 3, 276.

¹⁴ Philip McShane describes his struggles in the winter of 1964–65 with chapter 8, “the last block to a first glimpse of what the book [*Insight*] was about,” in *The Everlasting Joy of Being Human* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2013), 23. He claims that identifying the already-out-there-now is pivotal for dealing with works describing out-of-body or near-death experiences. See page 24.

¹⁵ CWL 3, 290.

¹⁶ CWL 3, 287.

¹⁷ “Without events, conjugates can be neither discovered nor verified. Without conjugates, events can be neither distinguished nor related.” CWL 3, 106.

¹⁸ Lowercase x might represent a known unknown, e.g., “the nature of fire” (see Bernard Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, vol. 18, Collected Works of

'common sense that does not bother to ask nice questions on the meaning of familiar names,' so that the explanatory meaning of the words *conjugates*, *schemes*, and *events* might become as familiar as the words *kitten* and *electron* and *Fido*.¹⁹

First Objectification (Meghan Allerton)

For me, the Assembled text from chapter 8 of *Insight* is a welcome invitation to my own searchings for the full meaning of *things* in Lonergan's work. By the full meaning I mean here a meaning reached when the climbing of *Insight* through the eighth chapter is carried forward as fully as possible into the adequate heuristic intended by Lonergan. Such an adequate heuristic is what McShane writes of—using the talk of physics—as a Standard Model.²⁰

Pushing for details of that heuristic has not really been part of the present tradition of Lonergan studies. I could creatively add illustrations from my own work on microorganisms, and I shall return to such creative efforts in the second objectification. But most immediately it seems good to move back to problems of Lonergan's apparently elementary presentation, introduction, of "the notion of the thing" in the first pages of *Insight* chapter eight.

The problem is posed nicely in so far as we pause seriously over the first sentence of the chapter. "So far, we have been dodging the question, What is a thing?" Now the curious 'thing' for me as a reader is that I was not part of Lonergan's "we": perhaps you shared that experience? Yes, I can take the 'we' to be the plural of the author that Lonergan uses regularly, though at times ambiguously. For example, later in the book he remarks "we are now familiar with the notion of empirical residue." Well, yes, he is. So here it seems to me that the luminous dodging has been all his. I just floated on through the topics

Bernard Lonergan, ed. Philip McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 113–14. Subsequently, CWL 18), while uppercase X could name the known unknown *cosmopolis*. See CWL, 3, 263. The symbols help formulate two types of questions that are modally distinct: What is x/X ? What might x/X be? Together these two types of questions nudge us to think geohistorically, for example, about the ongoing story of fire. Cf. James Duffy, "MacIntyre and Lonergan' Revisited," *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis*, 12 (2020), 82–84.

¹⁹ Another help for the philosopher reaching for a heuristic notion of the notion of a thing is to prescind from and put on the back burner debates about judgment, being, and objectivity. See further CWL 3, 293, at the bottom of the page and note 4 above.

²⁰ See, for example, references to Standard Model in *The Future: Core Precepts in Supramolecular Method and Nanochemistry* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2019), 45, 47, 77, and 78.

he writes of in this first page. It seems to me important to grapple with possible meanings of this “floating on.” Take the beginning of the first sentence of section one of the chapter: “Since the notion of thing involves a new type of insight ...” A pause over the meaning of those words can lead us to a foundational illumination. What is this “notion of thing” that involves a new type of insight? Is it not me and you in a spontaneity of unifying that is manifest from the beginning of our use of nouns? I am moving along here in the full context of my own standard model, which sweeps chapter 8 of *Insight* up into the light of the metaphysics that begins to emerge in chapter 15. My interest in the two zones of biology and music color my take on the *assembled text* and all of *Insight*.

In both areas of my interest there is, and was, never a matter of “dodging the question, What is a thing?” But how might I qualify this claim to refine our reading of the sentence?

There is the real non-dodged question that, might I suggest, is prior to what is mentioned in the rest of that first sentence? Somehow the reach of what Lonergan calls the notion of thing is an overarching prior reality in me, in you, so that it is there even in “recalling the main features of the old and now familiar type.”²¹ Perhaps it is a help here to leap into the beginning of chapter 12 of *Insight*. “If the main lines of cognitional process have been set down, it remains that certain fundamental and pervasive notions have still to be clarified.”²² In what sense is the spontaneously “undodgible” notion of thing weaved into the pure desire to know? Is the reach for unity that characterizes the notion of thing not the core of “the prior and enveloping drive”²³?

I go back now to *Insight* chapter 6 for further clues in our shared puzzling. “The artist exercises his [or her] intelligence in discovering ever novel forms that unify and relate the contents and acts of aesthetic experience.”²⁴ Is not the bent there predominantly to unify? Yet it is not towards the unity of a thing. In my biological research I am quite tuned into the fact that little things are my concern. But when I turn to play Beethoven’s *Für Elise*, I know that I do not turn to a thing but to another type of unity, a unity associated with the word *beauty*. While we might think of certain cars as beautiful, are we on the edge of the same realm? Switch from car to basket,

²¹ CWL 3, 270.

²² CWL 3, 372.

²³ CWL 3, 372.

²⁴ CWL 3, 208.

as James Joyce invites us. "Look at that basket, he said."²⁵ The basket is no more a thing than a car, but Joyce brings us to think about it as an aesthetic one. What might be the difference between a thing-one and an aesthetic-one?

As you see, I am inviting an acceptance of the assembled text in a way that raises the bar on our working forward to a standard model that has a sufficient full metaphysics of unity and the search in us for unity. In my second objectification I turn to the needed more precise move forward regarding the complexity of that unity. It is the move forward suggested by sections 3, 4, 5, and 6 of that eighth chapter but now lifting into the context of the metaphysics of the standard model, sketched densely and with increasing expansiveness in chapter 15. But here I wish to conclude my first objectification with the nudge found in Joyce's reflections:

To finish what I was saying about beauty, said Stephen, the most satisfying relations of the sensible must therefore correspond to the necessary phases of artistic apprehension. Find these and you find the qualities of universal beauty. Aquinas says: *ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur, integritas, consonantia, claritas*. I translate it so: Three things are needed for beauty: wholeness, harmony, and radiance. Do these correspond to the phases of apprehension? Are you following?²⁶

Second Objectification (Meghan Allerton)

I have been studying distributions of crustacean zooplankters, including *cladocerans* of the genus *Daphnia*. I collected samples in situ, in watersheds of Southern Ontario. Preserved samples were studied later, in the lab, in vitro. As I mentioned in my first objectification, one does not need to be a scientist to jump with delight—with *Daphnia* the water flea—to the conclusion that *Daphnia* is "alive." You might enjoy accessing a video link to see *Daphnia* dance.²⁷ But I am also a scientist, working in a global scientific community

²⁵ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, The Portable James Joyce, ed. Harry Levin (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 479.

²⁶ *Ibid.* This fitting text was previously shared with me by Philip McShane, in the spring of 2020.

²⁷ J.F. Haney et al. "An-Image-based Key to the Zooplankton of North America," version 5.0, released 2013, University of New Hampshire Center for Freshwater Biology, Center for Freshwater Biology, Department of Biological Sciences, cfb.unh.edu, *Daphnia lumholtzi*, http://cfb.unh.edu/cfbkey/html/Organisms/CCLadocera/FDaphnidae/GDaphnia/Daphnia_lumholtzi/daphnialumholtzi.html. See Quicktime videos at the bottom of the webpage.

that has devoted more than 250 years²⁸ to understanding *Daphnia*. And, astonishingly, the work goes on. So, I also go on now to consider the complexity of the unity-grasped that generically we call *Daphnia*. My immediate purpose is to indicate something of the view that results and work to be done, moving forward with the assembled text.

I begin by drawing attention to a central problem in biology, the description of which depends on experience in various sciences, and growth in self-attention. *Daphnia* is incredibly multi-talented. Nuclear Magnetic Resonance analysis reveals some of its biophysics. There is the TCA cycle, a “circular sequence” of chemical reactions by which zooplanktons (and many other organisms) metabolize oxygen and complex carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. But we can be amazed. The TCA cycle is one of not less than 338 biochemical pathways found “in” *Daphnia*.²⁹ A key observation is that, whether verified in vivo or ex vivo, these (bio)physical and (bio)chemical properties are abstracted from the unity-grasped, and in verification mainly they are remarkably remote to any individual *Daphnia*.³⁰ There are no molecules “inside” *Daphnia*.³¹ In each instance, through “explanatory knowledge by ... intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue”³² one comes to know that *Daphnia* has conjugate forms $p_i(D)$, $c_i(D)$, where ‘D’ is for *Daphnia*.³³ But in vivo, the central form *Daphnia* is found to be

²⁸ Dieter Ebert, *Ecology, Epidemiology, and Evolution of Parasitism in Daphnia* [Internet] (Bethesda, MD: National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2005), Chapter 2, Introduction to *Daphnia* Biology, available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK2042>.

²⁹ KEGG, Metabolic Pathways – *Daphnia pulex* (common water flea), https://www.genome.jp/kegg-bin/show_pathway?dpx01100.

³⁰ Recent methods provide in vivo nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) analysis. See, e.g., Mohammad Raza Akhter, *In vivo NMR-Based Metabolomics of Daphnia magna: Exploring the potential and limitations* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2015). The thesis includes detailed descriptions of NMR analysis.

³¹ However, there can be other things within the body of the organism, such as parasites, mutualistic microbiota, food matter that has not yet digested, foreign matter that slips through filtration, and—in medical research—nanoparticles introduced.

³² CWL 3, 457.

³³ I say “one comes to know that ...” “[I]n a sense, the act of understanding as an insight into phantasm is knowledge of form: but the form so known does not correspond to the philosophic concept of form; insight is to phantasm as form is to matter; but in that proportion, form is related to prime matter, but insight is related

not merely biochemical or biophysical. *Daphnia* is “self-serving”! For instance, through a sort of blind spontaneity, the unity secures for itself an ongoing supply of “reactants” (through locomotion, predation, filtering and feeding). *Daphnia* is photosensitive and, indeed, in many respects is found to be plant-like. But *Daphnia* also has a plethora of capacities-to-perform that are not merely plant-like. (Again, these are empirical results). Evidently, *Daphnia* also has conjugate forms $b_k(D)$ (botanical) and $z_l(D)$ (zoological).

The unity *Daphnia* is “aggreformic” but not an “aggregate.” All along, *Daphnia* is a center of our attention. *Daphnia* is “layered,” but with the understanding that “layered” means not “layers” but instances of “not merely,” where “not merely” is symbolized by ‘;’ (a symbolization introduced by McShane).³⁴ In other words, the grasped-unity *Daphnia* is of the form $D(p_i; c_j; b_k; z_l)$. And so, when *Daphnia* dances, all of *Daphnia* dances.

The assembled text, then, is pointing to a new stage of progress in biology. In all its ranging areas of inquiry, biology has³⁵ so far mainly consisted of combinations of description, biophysics, and biochemistry. But observation and experimental results reveal that *Daphnia* is not merely biochemistry and biophysics. So here is part of our challenge: we do not yet have explanatory terms and relations for *Daphnia*’s botanical and zoological “capacities-to-perform.” The unity-identity-whole called *Daphnia* **will be explanatorily distinguished from other zooplanktons as well as all other things by mutual relatedness in all their capacities-to-perform that are physical; chemical; botanical; and zoological.** The context is large. Every species of *Daphnia* lives in environments; environments are part of global ecosystems; and global ecosystems are ever in transition. And so, to explain *Daphnia*, in all of its mutual relatedness, our understanding also will need to be an increasingly informed evolutionary view.

What will botanical and zoological terms and relations be like? I invite you to jump with me to a key passage in *Insight*, where Lonergan describes the “study of an organism”:

to sensible qualities; strictly, then, it is not true that insight is a grasp of form; rather, insight is the grasp of the object in an inward aspect such that the mind, pivoting on the insight, is able to conceive, not without labor, the philosophic concepts of form and matter.” CWL 2, 38.

³⁴ See, e.g., Philip McShane, *A Brief History of Tongue. From Big Bang to Coloured Wholes* (Nova Scotia: Axial Press, 1998), 121–122.

³⁵ I am referring to what is traditionally thought of as “basic research in biology.” As history is revealing, however, and as Lonergan discovered of all areas, the full reaches of “the biology enterprise” are eight-fold.

A third step is to effect the transition from the thing-for-us to the thing-itself, from insights that grasp described parts as organs to insights that grasp conjugate forms systematizing otherwise coincidental manifolds of chemical and physical processes. By this transition one links physiology with biochemistry and biophysics. **To this end, there have to be invented appropriate symbolic images of the relevant chemical and physical processes; in these images there have to be grasped by insight the laws of the higher system that account for regularities beyond the range of physical and chemical explanation;** from these laws there has to be constructed the flexible circle of schemes of recurrence in which the organism functions; finally, this flexible circle of schemes must be coincident with the related set of capacities-for-performance that previously was grasped in sensibly presented organs.³⁶

The problem is empirical. Just as symbolism for chemistry emerged with Mendeleev's discoveries, the needed symbolisms for botany and zoology will emerge together with discovery of the higher laws of mutually related biological functions of vast ranges of emergent, existing, and extinct genera and species of organism—each of which, in its own growth and development, is itself a (genetic) sequence of systems, an unfolding idea.³⁷

Finally, still with *Daphnia's* help, the assembled text also moves me to observe that the unity that I am is not merely biological. I am a wondering, thinking, creative thing. While I have not yet invented new symbolisms for biology, I have invented a new step or two in ballroom dancing. And when I dance, it is all of wondering-growing-me who dances.

Third Objectification (Terrance Quinn)

"[T]he **unity** that **I** am is not merely biological. ... when **I dance**, it is all of wondering-growing-me who dances."³⁸

I pick up, then, where Allerton left off, or rather, danced offstage, not without her adding, however, an invitation to further inquiry. To be sure, enough was said to make a helpful contribution to the problem. By adverting to her experience in biology, it is evident that Allerton has made progress toward an explanatory heuristics of "the *Daphnia* thing," $D(p_i; c_j; b_k; z_l)$. No

³⁶ CWL 3, 489.

³⁷ "[A] multicellular structure is dominated by an idea that unfolds in the process of growth." CWL 3, 289.

³⁸ Allerton, at the end of her second objectification above. Boldface is introduced by me here, and below.

doubt, word-count limits precluded the possibility of further discussion, let alone of opening up new discussion points. New discussion points? From the last paragraph of the article, evidently and self-evidently, there is more to the problem than meets the eye of *Daphnia*.

What I do, then, is move more or less immediately into a poise of “second objectification.” To see something of the view that results, we need to open the “iris of attention,” so that we explicitly include the source of heuristics obtained by Allerton, the dancer of whom Allerton speaks, indeed, all dancers, you, and me. Moreover, I wish to do so in a way that might help scholars in contemporary Lonergan Studies.

As it is, Duffy already points the way: we need to develop “heuristics for talking about [our] spontaneous bent.”³⁹ “What am I doing when I am *thing-ing*?”⁴⁰ “[T]he problem is not the spontaneous notion of thing but [making progress toward a] heuristic notion of the notion of thing.”⁴¹ It is by following up on Allerton’s example and Duffy’s lead, that aspects of that heuristics begin to emerge as part of the view that results from Allerton’s first and second objectifications. But let’s get there in steps.

You may recall that Lonergan himself commented on the issue.

To conceive this notion as giving rise to some problem that is philosophic seems to me to be simply a mistake. In other words, we do have this notion of the thing, and as far as it goes, it is a perfectly satisfactory and functional and successful notion and attitude; there is nothing whatever to be said against it. However, it is not a philosophic notion.⁴²

So there “we” have it. Lonergan, Duffy and Allerton have all weighed in. But to be more precise, of course, I should say, “there *they* have it.” For the present invitation is for **your** judgment on the matter. “Judgement”? Recall the assembled text:

Now the notion of a thing is grounded in an insight that grasps, not relations between data, but a unity, identity, whole in data; and this unity is grasped, not by considering data from any abstractive

³⁹ Duffy, p. 96 above.

⁴⁰ Duffy, p. 97.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Bernard Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, vol. 5, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Elizabeth Morelli and Mark Morelli (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 107. (Subsequently referred to as CWL 5).

viewpoint, but by taking them in their concrete individuality and the totality of their aspects.⁴³

The core question is: **Is it so?** I am merely repeating the invitation given by Duffy, but it is an invitation that mainly has been missed and for present purposes is worth repeating. For, if taken up, it can help us toward glimpsing something of the view that results from Allerton's objectifications.

I invite you, then, to pause, *here-now*. Pause? *Here-now?* Readers practiced in scholarly writing may find this pause unnecessary either because "self-attention" has not been part of your scholarship or perhaps because, as an experienced Lonergan scholar, you've "been there done that." "Notion of a thing? Got it!" But might your thinging not be worth another "look," perhaps many more "looks"? As Allerton relays, the global community of biologists has been working for more than 250 years,⁴⁴ in the effort to understand the compound one-eyed *Daphnia*. Marvelous progress has been made; and the work goes on. I am inviting you to pause, here, *herenow*, for 250 precious seconds. For that way, as Duffy, Allerton, and Lonergan suggest, there will be no "dodging the question."⁴⁵ The personal challenge is to have a go at answering the 'Is it so?' question, not by appealing to philosophical argument but **by adverting to your experience**.



"As you see, I am inviting an acceptance of the assembled text [now also including Allerton's text] in a way that [further] raises the bar on our working forward to a standard model that has a sufficient, full metaphysics of unity and the search **in us** for unity."⁴⁶ But again, in a poise of second objectification, I am also working toward bringing out aspects of the view that results.

Allerton herself provides additional clues.

Allerton: "Is it not **I** and **you** in a spontaneity of unifying that is manifest from the beginning of our use of nouns?"⁴⁷

⁴³ CWL 3, 271.

⁴⁴ Allerton, p. 102 above.

⁴⁵ CWL 3, 270.

⁴⁶ Allerton, p. 101.

⁴⁷ Allerton, p. 100.

Allerton: "In **my** biological research I am quite tuned into the fact that little things are **my** concern."⁴⁸

Allerton: "As I mentioned in **my** first objectification, one does not need to be a scientist to **jump with delight**—with *Daphnia* the water flea."⁴⁹

No, one does not need to be a scientist if the work of explaining is not one's vocation. But wanting to explain was an essential feature of Lonergan's vocation, and it is a central effort to which he invites his readers. An historical problem, however, is that "[p]ushing for details ... has not really been part of the present tradition of Lonergan studies."⁵⁰ And so, the full import of Allerton's detailed self-observations in biology are liable to be missed.

However, even if your foundations do not *yet* reach out to include scientific understanding, there is still a way in, or, if not exactly "in," at least another way to be invited in. How is that? If you are interested in Lonergan's works, you may be open to inquiry about your own acts and operations. But *now*, with regard to the assembled text from chapter eight of *Insight*, it is *youherenow* that is, who are, the catch. If **you** are interested in understanding **your** nature, are **you** not, then, a **unity**, at least in the sense of a unity in some way grasped by **you**, even if only tentatively, vaguely, and descriptively?

Let's take this a little further. You are familiar with terms such as inquiry, image, insight, formulation, and so on. They are names for your experiences, yes? Consider just one of these: "image," say. A translation from Aristotle speaks to what can be self-observed: "The faculty of thinking then thinks the forms in the images."⁵¹ And, as Aquinas later re-affirmed,⁵² this too is not a philosophical view but an observation, a self-observation about experience, discerned in instances. But what then of instances wherein you are thinking about yourself? What image or images do you have of you, a grasped-unity that wonders and thinks about "itself," yourself, grasping unities?

Some kind of expression is needed to hold all of this together, one's capacities to see, to touch, to imagine, to wonder, to think (and in particular, to *thing*, even if it is only "thinging about oneself"). If we are serious about following up in inquiry about our acts and operations, if we wish to get beyond initial description (such as obtained by Aristotle and Aquinas), if we

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Allerton, p. 101.

⁵⁰ Allerton, p. 99.

⁵¹ Aristotle, *On the Soul, The Works of Aristotle: De Anima*, trans. J. A. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1931), Book III, part 7, par. 5.

⁵² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 84, a. 7.

are to include all that you and I can do, if we wish to engage with problems and progress of our times, if we are to take Allerton's achievement and her observation that we too somehow are 'things,' and push all of this for all that it is worth, and so if we are to make progress toward "[inventing] appropriate symbolic images of the relevant chemical and physical [and botanical and zoological] processes; [so that] in these images there [will be] grasped by insight the laws of the higher system that account for regularities beyond the range of physical and chemical [and botanical and zoological] explanation"⁵³ then, as is emergent from scientific practice, there is the need for some kind of heuristics of the form $f(p_i; c_j; b_k; z_l; u_m; q_n)$ ⁵⁴, a symbolism invented by McShane, called *W1*.⁵⁵

And yet, still more is needed. For if, in particular, we advert to instances in experience wherein we speak about our experience, our wonder, our what-ing, our knowing, our doing—including, for instance, what we wonder, know and do about *Daphnia*—the need for a further and more complex heuristics also begins to emerge. That heuristics needs to include our sensing, wondering, thinking, and speaking ... about our sensing, wondering, thinking, and speaking. And so, in the dark as it were (for we are far from a "heuristic grip"),⁵⁶ we bump up against McShane's *W2*:⁵⁷

$$V\{W(p_i; c_j; b_k; z_l; u_m; q_n) > HS(p_i; c_j; b_k; z_l; u_m; q_n)\}$$

This is fully heuristic. So, how does this symbolism figure into our inquiry about "the notion of thing"? Again, pause, advert to, *herenow*, concretely, in an instance, or two, of the indefinitely vast subclass of words in your biography, but also in history, words that express grasped unity. Even if one only things about oneself, it is evident and self-evident that this class of words is non-empty. But of course, there are indefinitely vast and emergent ranges of genera and species of grasping unity-identity-whole—in our lives, in art, in science, in history; about oneself, about one's life, about one's art, about one's science, about history, about all. And so we come to the need, in

⁵³ CWL 3, 489. Allerton cites this text on p. 104, n. 36.

⁵⁴ Philip McShane, *A Brief History of Tongue* (Nova Scotia: Axial Press, 1998), 119. See also *W1* in *Prehumous 2*, "Metagrams and Metaphysics," pp. 3–4, available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/prehumous>.

⁵⁵ See note 54.

⁵⁶ Philip McShane, *A Brief History of Tongue* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 1998), 119–123. See also *W2* in *Prehumous 2*, "Metagrams and Metaphysics," p. 4, available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.org/prehumous>.

⁵⁷ See note 56. McShane's discussion richly fills out the search for heuristics.

particular, of explanatory heuristics for words that express one's grasp of unity-identity-whole, genera and species of which will be specified by future increasingly luminous scientific progress:

$$V\{W(p_i; c_j; b_k; z_l; u_m; q_n) > HS(p_i; c_j; b_k; z_l; u_m; q_n)\}_{\text{unity-identity-whole}}$$

Meghan Allerton is a doctoral candidate in the Environmental and Life Sciences graduate program at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario. She contributed to *Seeding Global Collaboration* (2016) and has published in *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy & Education*. She holds an M.Env.Sc. and an Honours B.Sc. from the University of Toronto.

Terrance Quinn is Professor Emeritus from Middle Tennessee State University and is an active scholar. He has publications in the mathematical sciences, foundations of science, and regarding Lonergan's work. He also has been contributing to the economics literature. His personal website is terrancequinn.com and he can be reached at terrance.quinn@mtsu.edu.

