RESTATEMENT OF THE QUESTION OF BEING IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF BERNARD LONERGAN AS AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO METAPHYSICS

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this dissertation is my original work achieved through scientific research, personal reading and reflection. It has not been presented to any other university or college for an academic award, diploma, or degree. I acknowledge all the information from different sources.

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Dedication

To all students of metaphysics, past, present, and future, who courageously keep alive the fundamental question of being in a world often absorbed by what is merely useful and immediate.

Acknowledgement

As I present my Dissertation on the Re-statement of the Question of Being in the philosophy of Bernard Lonergan as an Alternative Approach to Metaphysics, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to God Almighty, whose grace, guidance, and unfailing love have sustained me throughout this doctoral journey. To my late parents, Mr Ludovick shirima (RIP) and Mrs. Dionisia Ludovick, (RIP), I am sincerely grateful for their love and sacrifices during their lifetime. To my siblings: Anisia, Arethas (RIP), Cyprian, Lucy, Severin, Anna, and William, I am grateful for your support and sacrifices. On the same note good friends who supported my studies in countless ways. Your patience, sacrifices, and unwavering belief in me made it possible to reach this milestone. Thank you so much. I am profoundly grateful to the Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers and the Spiritan Missionary Seminary for their spiritual, moral, and material support. Your prayers, encouragement, and formation have been a constant source of strength and inspiration. I am deeply indebted to my supervisors, Sr. Dr .Josephine Nyambedha Apiyo and Dr. Sabas Kimani, who accepted me as their student and later as my supervisors for this Dissertation. I am grateful for their invaluable guidance, constructive criticism, and constant encouragement. Their expertise, mentorship, and dedication have shaped this work and greatly enriched my academic growth. Thank you so much. I also extend my sincere thanks to my classmates, whose companionship, discussions, and shared experiences made this journey both rewarding and memorable. My confreres in the community and the Seminarians at Spritian Missionary Seminary, I appreciate you for your encouragement and support during this journey. My appreciation goes to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at CUEA the Head of the Philosophy Department, and the Philosophy department for providing a stimulating academic environment and to the CUEA Library staff for their assistance and for granting access to essential resources.

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Abstract

This dissertation addresses the problem of the abstractness and marginalization of traditional metaphysics in the contemporary world, especially within a culture shaped by modern philosophy and the empirical sciences. The classical approach to the question of being, while philosophically significant, has often appeared remote from concrete human experience and difficult to reconcile with scientific modes of verification. As a result, metaphysics has frequently been regarded as speculative, unverifiable, and practically irrelevant. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology, based on library and archival research, and is guided by Bernard Lonergan's cognitional theory and transcendental method. Through a close reading of Lonergan's *Insight*: *A Study of Human Understanding*, the dissertation examines the structure of human knowing as it unfolds through experiencing, understanding, and judging. This method enables the study to approach the question of being indirectly, beginning from the concrete and verifiable operations of human consciousness. The main objective of the study is to restate the question of being in Lonergan's philosophy as an alternative approach to metaphysics. Specifically, it seeks to demonstrate and analyze Lonergan's acts of insight, examine the correlation between knowing and being, and critically evaluate Lonergan's method as an alternative to the traditional abstract treatment of being. The study finds that Lonergan's approach provides a more adequate and relevant way of addressing the question of being in the contemporary context. By grounding the question of being in the invariant structure of human cognitional activity, Lonergan offers a concrete, verifiable, and critically realist framework that bridges the gap between traditional metaphysics, contemporary philosophy, and the empirical sciences.

Key Words: Being; Abstract Metaphysics; Bernard Lonergan; Cognitional Theory; Transcendental Method; Insight; Human Knowing; Critical Realism.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This dissertation examines Bernard Lonergan's contribution to the question of being. It argues that Lonergan's cognitional theory and transcendental method offer a viable alternative to traditional metaphysics, which has been increasingly marginalized in a science-dominated culture. By starting from the subject's operations of experiencing, understanding, and judging, and correlating these with the structure of proportionate being, the study restates the question of being within Lonergan's critical realism on a concrete and verifiable basis.

In dialogue with major figures such as Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Heidegger, and various schools of Thomism, it shows how Lonergan's approach overcomes both naïve realism and idealism, bridges the gap between metaphysics and the empirical sciences, and offers a renewed, methodical account of being that is transcultural, interdisciplinary, and relevant to contemporary philosophical debates. With this in mind, this chapter gives an overview of the study. It outlines the study's background, explains the problem being addressed, states the main goal and specific objectives, and provides the justification for the research. It also introduces the theoretical framework, describes the research methodology, defines the scope and delimitations, and reviews the relevant literature.

1.1 Background of the Study

This study is situated within the longstanding tension between the classical metaphysical approach to the question of being and the orientation of modern philosophy and the empirical sciences. In the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, metaphysics has commonly been understood as the science of being *qua* being.[1] Its object is approached at the highest level of abstraction,

[1] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* Hippocrate G. Apostle, trans. (Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1979), 1003a25-30.

where being is considered independently of matter and concrete experience.[2] While this approach gave metaphysics great systematic clarity, it also made metaphysics appear highly abstract and remote from the sensible world and from the methods of the empirical sciences.

In Aristotle, metaphysics investigates the ultimate causes and principles of reality. Being is treated as the broadest and most universal object of inquiry. Aquinas develops this Aristotelian understanding by introducing the notion of *esse* as the act of being, thereby giving being a more existential understanding.[3] Nevertheless, both Aristotle and Aquinas largely articulated metaphysics in terms of abstract concepts and principles. In this classical framework, metaphysics enjoyed a certain primacy and autonomy over the particular sciences.

In the modern period, however, this abstract treatment of being came under increasing criticism. Modern philosophy and the natural sciences reshaped the intellectual landscape by placing greater emphasis on what can be observed, measured, tested, and verified. Within this context, metaphysical inquiry began to appear speculative, unverifiable, and disconnected from empirical reality. This shift contributed to the growing marginalization of metaphysics in contemporary intellectual culture.

Kant played an important role in this development. By distinguishing between phenomena and noumena, he argued that human knowledge is limited to what appears within possible experience.[4] This position raised serious questions about the legitimacy of metaphysical claims concerning reality beyond experience. Later movements, especially logical positivism, radicalized this critique by arguing that metaphysical statements are meaningless if they cannot

[2] Jacques Maritain. *The Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Charles's Sons, 1938), 6.

[3] St Thomas Aquinas, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of St Thomas Aquinas,* trans. James Anderson (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc, 2003), 19-23.

[4] Terry J. Tekkipe, *Bernard Lonergan's Insight: A Comprehensive Commentary* (New York: University Press of America, 2003), 246.

be empirically verified. As a result, metaphysics was increasingly treated as problematic within modern philosophy and science.

The consequences of this development are visible in contemporary academic and cultural contexts. Metaphysics, once regarded as the "queen of the sciences," is often viewed today as abstract, impractical, and irrelevant to a scientifically oriented society. Philosophy, in general, is sometimes considered distant from ordinary human concerns and the practical demands of modern life. The decline in interest in philosophy at some academic institutions, including cases where philosophy departments have closed due to low student enrolment, illustrates this broader marginalization.

At the same time, the success of the empirical sciences has encouraged a worldview often described as scientism. In this view, science is not only methodologically autonomous but is also regarded as the sole reliable path to truth.[5] Questions concerning being, God, human meaning, value, and ultimate reality are either ignored, reduced to scientific explanations, or dismissed as meaningless. This creates a context in which traditional metaphysical inquiry struggles to justify its relevance and credibility.

Yet the question of being has not disappeared. As Heidegger observed, it may have been forgotten, covered over, or misunderstood, but it remains fundamental.[6] Human beings continue to ask questions about the meaning, structure, and ultimate ground of reality. The difficulty, therefore, lies not simply in the question of being itself, but in the manner in which it has often been posed. When being is treated merely as a highly abstract and indeterminate concept, detached from concrete human experience and from the operations by which human

[5] Lonergan, *Insight*, 704.

[6] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward R. (London: Harper and Row Publisher, 1962), 2.

beings come to know, metaphysics understandably appears remote and unconvincing within a scientific culture.

It is within this background that Bernard Lonergan's philosophical project becomes significant for the present study. Lonergan was deeply conversant with the classical tradition, especially Aristotle and Aquinas, as well as with modern philosophy and the empirical sciences. Rather than beginning directly with an abstract notion of being, he proposes an indirect route into the question of being through an analysis of human knowing.[7] In *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Lonergan begins with the question, "What am I doing when I am knowing?"[8] before proceeding to "What do I know when I know?"

For Lonergan, knowing is not a simple act of "taking a look" at reality. It is a structured and dynamic process that unfolds through experiencing, understanding, and judging.[9] These operations are unified by the pure desire to know, which directs human inquiry beyond particular data and partial explanations toward the totality of what can be known. This orientation provides a basis for reconsidering the question of being in relation to the concrete operations of human consciousness. "The pure desire to know and being are perfect correlates."[10]

Lonergan's cognitional theory therefore offers an important background for this study. It makes explicit the invariant structure of human knowing and shows how experiencing, understanding, and judging form a cumulative and self-correcting process. On this basis, Lonergan relates the structure of knowing to the structure of proportionate being. This relation opens the possibility

[7] Tekkipe, *Bernard Lonergan's Insight*,204.

[8] The first thirteen chapters of *Insight* Lonergan deal with this question.

[9] Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Lonergan Insight The Study of Human Understanding*. Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran, eds (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), XXViii.

[10] Tekkipe, *Bernard Lonergan's Insight,* 204.

of understanding metaphysics not as a detached and purely abstract discipline, but as an inquiry grounded in the operations through which human beings come to know reality.[11]

Against this background, the present study examines the possibility of restating the question of being in Bernard Lonergan's philosophy. It arises from the problem that the classical treatment of being, though philosophically important, has often appeared too abstract within contemporary scientific and philosophical contexts. The study therefore considers whether Lonergan's cognitional theory and transcendental method can provide a more concrete, verifiable, and critically realist approach to the question of being.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the classical metaphysical tradition, particularly in Aristotle and Aquinas, metaphysics is principally concerned with being as being. This object is commonly approached at the highest level of abstraction, where being is considered independently of matter and concrete experience. Although this approach gives metaphysics systematic depth and philosophical dignity, it also tends to present the question of being as highly abstract, remote from ordinary human experience, and difficult to relate to the empirical methods of modern science.

In the modern period, this abstract conception of metaphysics came under sustained criticism. Modern philosophy and the empirical sciences increasingly privilege what can be observed, measured, tested, and verified. As a result, metaphysical inquiry was often regarded as speculative, unverifiable, and practically irrelevant. Logical positivism intensified this critique by arguing that metaphysical statements lack meaning insofar as they cannot be empirically verified. Consequently, a significant gap emerged between traditional metaphysics, contemporary philosophy, and the empirically oriented outlook of modern science.

[11] Lonergan*, Insight,* 416.

The problem, therefore, is not simply the question of being itself, but the manner in which it has often been formulated and defended. When being is treated primarily as an abstract concept detached from concrete human knowing, metaphysics becomes vulnerable to the charge of irrelevance and unverifiability. This raises the need for a renewed approach capable of restating the question of being in a manner that is concrete, critical, and philosophically defensible.

Bernard Lonergan offers such an alternative by shifting the starting point of metaphysics from an abstract concept of being to the concrete operations of human knowing: experiencing, understanding, and judging. For Lonergan, metaphysics can be grounded in, and verified through, the invariant structure of human cognitional activity. The central problem addressed in this dissertation, therefore, is how the question of being can be restated through Lonergan's cognitional theory and transcendental method in a way that overcomes the excessive abstraction of traditional metaphysics and bridges the gap between metaphysics, contemporary philosophy, and the empirical sciences.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to critically examine and evaluate Lonergan's philosophical contribution. It does this by carefully examining his metaphysics in his book *Insight: The Study of Human Understanding*. This approach reveals that Lonergan views human knowing as a structured and dynamic process rather than a simple act of "taking a look" at reality.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the objective of the study is to restate the question of being in the philosophy of Lonergan by reading from his works in order:

1. To examine the Traditional Metaphysics and the Question of Being
2. To demonstrate and analyze Lonergan's acts of insight.
3. To examine in Lonergan's philosophy the correlation between knowing and being.

4. To critically evaluate Lonergan's method to the question of being as an alternative to the traditional abstract metaphysics.

1.4 Justification of the Study

This study is justified because the traditional conception of being was highly abstract and consequently led to the marginalization of metaphysics and philosophy in the scientifically dominated culture. This claim is not merely assumed; it can be demonstrated from the way being has been treated in the classical metaphysical tradition. In Aristotle, metaphysics is defined as the science that studies being *qua* being. This formulation gives metaphysics its universal scope, since it does not study one particular kind of being but being in its most comprehensive meaning. However, precisely because being is considered in abstraction from the particular determinations of sensible things, metaphysics tends to move away from concrete experience toward universal principles such as substance, causality, act, potency, form, and matter. By engaging with Lonergan's approach, this study seeks to restate the question of being in a concrete, verifiable way that could bridge the gap among metaphysics, contemporary philosophy, and the empirical sciences.

The main problem addressed in this dissertation, therefore, is the abstract nature of the question of being, and it has suggested an alternative approach to it, as stated by Lonergan in his masterpiece, *Insight*. Despite extensive efforts to study this question throughout the history and development of philosophy, particularly in metaphysics, it has remained abstract and thus ignored, forgotten, or misinterpreted, as Martin Heidegger would suggest.[12] Yet this is a basic question. The evidence for this cannot be mistaken; philosophy is pushed to the margin as insignificant and uninteresting. At Mwenge University in Moshi, for example, the philosophy department closed due to a lack of students interested in the subject.

[12] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward R. (London: Harper and Row Publisher, 1962), 2.

One of the claims against metaphysics and philosophy in general is that it is unverifiable. In the philosophical tradition, analytic philosophers are proponents of this claim. Based on their verification principle, metaphysical claims are simply considered nonsense, in other words, unverifiable in experience. This study has responded to such claims by logical positivists and analytic philosophers and has developed a metaphysics verifiable through the data of experience and data of consciousness. The question of being and the metaphysics that follow have been shown to be concrete and verifiable.

During the Scientific Revolution, the sciences broke free from the yoke of philosophy. Scientists just presumed metaphysics and philosophy in general. Even in recent times, scientists look at philosophy as an abstract body of theoretical knowledge that has very little to do with the everyday world. The fact is that science and philosophy still need each other. This study has been a dialogue not only with modern sciences but also with modern philosophy, thereby unveiling a complementary relationship between modern science and metaphysics by re-examining the question of being through modern methods in both science and philosophy.

This study has also developed an understanding of being corollary to knowing. The known has a structure that makes it knowable, and the knowing has a structure that makes it possible. The two structures are similar. Hence, Lonergan stated that "being is an objective of the pure desire to know."[13] This desire precedes and perverse cognitional process to its completion. We have discovered that being is all that is actually known and all that is potentially knowable.

In addition, Metaphysics has always been primary, and epistemology comes secondary. This study proposed reversing this order by familiarizing oneself with the process of human knowing before delving into metaphysics. The fruits of this approach have been a metaphysics

[13] Lonergan, *Insight*, 349.

that is verifiable through the invariant structure of human knowing.[14] Hence, this dissertation is a sincere effort to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, guided by Lonergan's philosophy. It has focused specifically on how Lonergan approaches the question of being. His approach to the question of being is foundational and can be applied to any field of study. It is transcultural and interdisciplinary. This is why the study was undertaken.

1.5 Research Methodology

The study is qualitative research. It engages the library and the archive, and it uses relevant books and other publications. The study employs Lonergan's transcendental method. This method has been used in the history of philosophy in various ways; it is important to clarify how Lonergan uses it and how this study appropriates it in this dissertation. First, Lonergan asserts that a method is a foundation for investigation rather than a set of rules for achieving a specific goal.[15] Secondly, he also states that "A method is a normative pattern of recurring and related operations that leads to cumulative and progressive results."[16] A method must be repeatable to either yield the same result, identify the mistake in the previous procedure, or give rise to new insight.

While the Kantian transcendental method sought to establish a priori possibility for experience, Lonergan's transcendental method sought to establish a priori elements in the self-consciousness of the knower. Lonergan's transcendental method then revolves around the human subject, such that, when experiencing an object, the subject not only experiences it but is also aware that he is experiencing it.[17] The human subject does not impose himself on the object but asks questions and discovers answers. This capacity to ask questions is innate in all human subjects. All human subjects are driven by what Lonergan calls transcendental

[14] Cronin, *A Contemporary First Philosophy,* 100.
[15] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), XI
[16] Lonergan *Method In Theology*, 4.
[17] Lonergan, *Method In Theology*, 8.

notions.[18] These notions are drives within human consciousness that make transcendence possible, from the lower levels to the highest. The study has not imposed itself on the data under investigation. Rather, he posed relevant questions and pointed out the need for a new way of looking at the question of being.

Lonergan's transcendental method revolves around the five precepts. These are to be attentive, to be intelligible, to be reasonable, to be responsible, and, lastly, to be in love. This study has used these precepts to present an alternative way of looking at the question of being. Lonergan's method consists of patterns of consciousness considering the revelation of God's love. Our first experience, therefore, is the experience of the inner gift of Divine love of God.[19] This experience gives us a direction to live towards what is true, good, and of value.

We become attentive to our experiences, of what we sense, perceive, imagine, hear, etc. At this level, feelings are the driving force behind the method. They give consciousness the power to advance to the next level of intelligibility. We become intelligible to activities such as inquiry, understanding, conceiving, and formulating. At this level, we express what we have come to understand.[20] What is understood is not necessarily true or false. It requires the faculty of rational judgment to affirm or deny that it is true or false. The method will open up to ethics, which is being responsible, and to theology, which is being in love, which is not our concern for now.

This method is significant because it engages with reality at the conscious level, and God's love is at its centre: hence, anyone engaging in this method will be open to receiving God's love.[21] The pattern of consciousness is already within us; anyone can apply it and overcome cultural and religious biases. It is general and empirical. One then needs to be attentive,

[18] Lonergan, *Method In Theology*, 23-24.
[19] Lonergan, *Method In Theology*, 361.
[20] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 6-9.
[21] Lonergan, *Method In Theology*, 361.

intelligible, and reasonable within one's horizon[22] of religious or cultural lived experience. This dissertation has adopted Lonergan's transcendental method to develop a new way of approaching the question of being, thereby contributing to the body of knowledge.

The study also employs the analytical method. This method is used to examine, clarify, and evaluate the major concepts, arguments, and philosophical assumptions relevant to the question of being in Lonergan's philosophy. Through analysis, the study broke down key notions such as experience, insight, judgment, objectivity, cognitional structure, proportionate being, and metaphysics in order to show their internal relationships and philosophical significance. The analytical method is also used to compare Lonergan's position with selected traditional and modern thinkers, especially Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and other Thomistic interpreters. This enables the study to identify the strengths and limitations of the traditional abstract approach to metaphysics and to demonstrate how Lonergan's cognitional theory provides an alternative, concrete, and verifiable approach to the question of being.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is conducted within the framework of Bernard Lonergan's metaphysics, particularly as grounded in his cognitional theory and transcendental method. Although Lonergan begins with the analysis of human knowing, his ultimate concern is metaphysical. He shows how the structure of knowing opens the way to the structure of being. Cognitional theory, therefore, is not treated in this dissertation as an end in itself, but as the methodological route through which the question of being can be restated in a concrete and verifiable manner.

[22] Horizon is the world as one knows it "mediated through meaning" This meaning arises from a familial, societal, religious, and cultural context. Also, one's horizon dictates what one chooses to do; and one actions. Consequently, one's horizon not only shapes and limits the way one knows one world, but it also shapes and limits the way one acts in that world. (see The method in Theology p 106 also p 28)

Lonergan's cognitional theory answers the question: What do we do when we are knowing? It holds that human knowing is not a single act of intuition or a mere act of "taking a look," but a dynamic and cumulative process that unfolds through experiencing, understanding, and judging. These activities are conscious and intentional because they are directed toward an object. In experience, data are given; in understanding, intelligibility is grasped; and in judgment, the truth of what has been understood is affirmed. Thus, the object is not simply present to the subject in a passive way, but becomes known through the subject's structured cognitional operations.

The significance of this theory for the present study is metaphysical. Cognitional theory serves as the guide for moving from the activities of knowing to the content of those activities, namely, being. Lonergan maintains that the pattern of relations among cognitional acts corresponds to the pattern of relations among their contents. This is what he means by the isomorphism between knowing and being: the structures discovered in the analysis of knowing have corresponding structures in proportionate being.[23] Consequently, Lonergan's approach to the question of being cannot be separated from his account of knowing. Knowing is intentional, and what it intends is being.

At the center of this framework is the unrestricted desire to know. Lonergan describes this dynamism as the pure question, radical intending, the pure desire to know, or the inner light.[24] This desire is prior to particular acts of knowing, yet it is immanent in them. It initiates inquiry, sustains the movement from experience to understanding, and guides the subject toward judgment. In this sense, the pure desire to know is the unifying force between cognitional

[23] Lonergan, *Insight*, 521–30.
[24] Lonergan, *Insight*, 34.

theory and metaphysics, because it directs the subject beyond particular data and partial explanations toward the totality of what is.

Therefore, the theoretical framework of this study is metaphysical, though methodologically grounded in cognitional theory. The study adopts Lonergan's cognitional theory as the foundation for restating the question of being, but its final concern remains the meaning, structure, and verification of being. By beginning from the invariant structure of human knowing, the study seeks to show that metaphysics need not remain an abstract and unverifiable discipline. Rather, metaphysics can be grounded in the concrete operations by which the human subject experiences, understands, judges, and affirms reality.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study is limited to a systematic and critical examination of the question of being in light of Bernard Lonergan's metaphysical position. Its primary focus is a close reading of Lonergan's major work, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding,* which serves as the principal text of the inquiry. The analysis is organized around the three fundamental questions that structure Lonergan's philosophical project: What am I doing when I am knowing? Why is doing that knowing? What do I know when I do it? Within this framework, the study examines the principal notions relevant to Lonergan's account, including experience, insight, judgment, objectivity, and the structure of human cognition. On this basis, it articulates and reconstructs Lonergan's contribution to the philosophical question of being, particularly as that contribution emerges from his analysis of cognitional structure.

Although the study situates Lonergan in relation to selected interlocutors in ancient and modern philosophy, these thinkers are considered only insofar as they clarify, contextualize, or illuminate his position. Accordingly, the inquiry does not attempt a comprehensive historical survey of metaphysical debates. Rather, it is delimited to a restatement of the question of being

through Lonergan's cognitional theory and transcendental method as an alternative approach to metaphysics. Questions concerning the ethical and political implications of Lonergan's thought, including its contribution to human flourishing and the good life, fall outside the immediate scope of this study and are reserved for further inquiry.

1.8 Literature Review

1.8.1 Lonergan's Philosophical Background

Lonergan's early writings are often attributed to Aquinas. His doctoral thesis focused on St Thomas's thoughts on operative grace. This was a Psychological and historical analysis of Aquinas's understanding of grace. He not only taught many theological courses but also wrote numerous theological articles on marriage, Christology, and related topics. These facts make some people regard him as a Theologian.[25] The dissertation also upheld this position, since his focus was on bringing out and analyzing Aquinas's theological content on Grace.

Later in 1968, Lonergan published another work titled *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*. This book is dedicated to Aquinas's concept of Verbum and explores how Aquinas explained the cognitional theory's terms and their relationships. These terms stem from experience understanding and judging. Knowing comprises these three activities, which culminate in the judgment of fact that something is. The process is made possible by the power of intellect. Aquinas distinguishes two modes of the intellect according to their functions in the knowing process. The first is the passive intellect and the second is the active intellect. Passive intellect is also known as possible intellect in some less precise translations. It is called passive not in the sense of being inert, but as far as it is potentially receptive of forms. Passive intellect is that by which we come to knowledge.[26]

[25] Mark D Morelli and Elizabeth A Morelli, ed. *The Lonergan Reader*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1997), 12.

[26] St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica* (Benziger Bros. edition, 1947) Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province**,** 1,79,1.

The active intellect is the power of the intellect that makes things intelligible by abstracting universal form from phantasy.[27] We are able to understand material objects through an immaterial form abstracted from matter. As far as it is in the matter, the form remains potential and particular to the matter. It requires that which is in act to bring it to actuality. This activity is the active intellect which illuminates[28] phantasm and abstracts from it universal or intelligible species.[29] It thus produces some modification in the passive intellect. The active intellect does not have ready-made ideas itself; it must draw its object from what is provided by the senses.[30] It's important to remember that our knowledge is not knowledge of ideas or concepts; it's knowledge of reality. The ideas and concepts we understand serve only as tools for grasping reality.[31] Further, Aquinas asserts that

> …the first principle of which we have an inborn awareness, are sort of likeness of the uncreated truth. So when we make judgments on other things by their means, we are said to judge of things by immutable description, or by the uncreated truth.[32]

He sounds Platonic in his thinking, such that all our knowledge is nothing but a participation in the eternal truth. However, this study upholds that Aquinas distinguished himself from Augustine by introducing his concept of the light of the intellect. The light of the intellect makes everything intelligible as a shared participation in divine light. While it's a separate substance sharing the divine light, it's also an immanent and private possession within us.[33] Thus, we experience, understand, and judge things by a created light within us. This light is an impression of the eternal light and truth.

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[27] *ST* 1,79,3

[28] This is Augustinian terminology but is used here in the different sense to signify an intransitive power of the soul. It is not an extrinsic power from outside the soul.

[29] *ST* 1,85,1.

[30] Frederick Copleston S.J. *A History of Philosophy, Vol II Medieval Philosophy from Augustine to Duns Scotus.* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 390.

[31] *ST,* 1,85,2.

[32] Christopher Martin, ed. The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, (London: Routledge, 1988), 145.

[33] Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *Verbum: Word and Idea In Aquinas,* In The *Collected Works Of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 94.

Joseph Maréchal, in his five-volume *The Point of Departure of Metaphysics,* accepts Aquinas' view that human understanding depends on the senses. He finds in Aquinas, as in Kant, certain a priori elements of the self-consciousness of the knower. He believes intelligence should be directed towards sensible forms as its object. In knowing material beings, we know our immaterial act of knowing. This process is indirect. We experience an immediate dynamic questioning that drives our desire to know.[34] This desire is boundless and can only be fulfilled by the ultimate answer: God. This view forms a horizon for knowledge in which absolute being is integrated into the creation. This is sufficient to form a transcendental horizon for knowledge, in which the Absolute Being and his creation are integrated.

The study agrees with Aquinas and Maréchal on the light of the intellect and the a priori elements of the knower's self-consciousness, respectively. However, in Lonergan, the study reconsidered Aquinas's concept of the light of active intellect as a created participation in divine light, and Maréchal's a priori condition for human consciousness. He expressed them as the human capacity to ask further questions. Questioning reveals the infinite power of the human mind.

However, we should note that Aquinas and Lonergan offer a compatible alternative. They offer us a choice for the starting point since one will lead to the other and form a kind of cycle, implying that,

> If one is assigning ontological causes, one must begin from metaphysics; if one is assigning cognitional reasons, one must begin from knowledge. Nor can one assign ontological causes without having cognitional reasons; nor can there be cognitional reasons without corresponding ontological causes.[35]

[34] Benedict Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom; An Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Introduction to Metaphysics.* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 78.

[35] https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/pdf/10.3138/uram.31.4.299#:~:text=If%20one%20is%20assigning%20onto,causes"%20(Collection%20144). Accessed Nov 13, 2023.

Lonergan, following Aquinas, maintains a reciprocal relation between metaphysics and cognitional theory: metaphysical claims presuppose epistemological conditions, while acts of knowing possess corresponding ontological implications. Accordingly, a critically grounded cognitional theory can provide the basis for a valid metaphysics. The present study therefore begins with the structure of human knowing and proceeds toward the question of being. This movement constitutes an alternative approach to metaphysics because it establishes metaphysical inquiry upon the concrete and verifiable operations through which reality is known.

Aristotle began from the cause and proceeded to the effect. In *Posterior Analytics*, he lays out a procedure for arriving at a conclusion. One can deduce a conclusion that is unknown from known premises. The known premises must be true, basic, immediate and more widely recognised than before reaching their conclusion.[36] Aristotle realises there are two ways things can be prior and familiar. He states, Things are more familiar and prior in two ways. Firstly, it's not the same to be prior by nature as it is to be prior in relation to us.[37] He distinguishes two orders: the order of knowledge and the order of being. In Book *Delta of the Metaphysics,* he states that ". . .Things that are prior in the formula are different from those that are prior in perception. . . For in formula universals are prior, in perception individuals."[38]

Although being is the most universal and intrinsically intelligible object, human beings, unlike God or angels, do not apprehend universals immediately. Human knowing begins with sensation and advances through understanding to judgment. This sequence belongs to the order of learning, in which being is reached indirectly through cognitional analysis. The order of

[36] Aristotle. *Posterior Analytics.* Trans. J. Barnes. In: *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. I. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 71a20–4.

[37] Elliot Dutmer, "Aristotle's Methodology for Natural Science in Physics 1–2: A New Interpretation," Journal of Ancient Philosophy 14, no. 2 (2020): 130–146, https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1981-9471.v14i2p130-146. See also Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics,* 115; 70b33–72a2

[38] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1018b30–5.

learning and the order of being should therefore not be treated as competing accounts, but as distinct and complementary approaches to the same metaphysical question. This study adopts the order of learning because its concrete starting point in cognitional activity renders metaphysics more intelligible and more compatible with the procedures of modern science.

1.8.2 Lonergan and the Thomists

In his book *Towards Wisdom,* Benedict Ashley pointed out that at the end of the twentieth century, "metaphysics," both in its early development and in its medieval sense, was largely abandoned except by Catholics. With the advance of modern science and Cartesianism, Metaphysics appeared entirely out-of-date. On the other hand, Catholics sought to translate theology into the concepts of modern philosophy. These philosophies were at war with each other. Consequently, these efforts proved not only unsuccessful but also produced numerous heresies.[39] Pope Leo XIII's 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* drew attention in Catholic circles to the revival of philosophical activity within the Thomistic tradition, which continued until Vatican II. Seven schools of Thomism emerged as a result.

The first effort to revive the precise reading of Aquinas was relegated to French Dominicans. We find in the works of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange an essentialist or conceptualistic study of Aquinas. This school holds that the object of metaphysics, namely being, is perceived at the third level of abstraction and does not depend on matter for its existence or knowledge. It is far removed from the material world.[40]

Abstraction of whatever sort implies a separation from matter. Abstraction is a mental process through which the mind grasps the nature of an object after being perceived by the senses. Aquinas said that abstraction is the consideration of one aspect whereby another aspect is not

[39] Ashley, *The Way Towards Wisdom,* 73.
[40] Ashley, *The Way Towards Wisdom,* 76.

considered. Abstraction is the operation of the intellect by which it draws a concept from our sensible image of a thing. The intellect abstracts the form that is known from the sensible image of the object experienced by the external senses.[41] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and other essentialists who reduce being to a concept are mistaken.

The essentialist position is internally problematic because being, as all-encompassing, cannot be reduced to a concept formed through the exclusion of one determination from another. Concepts are ordinarily defined according to genus and species, whereas being is neither a genus nor a species and therefore resists direct definition in those terms. The present study consequently argues that being cannot be adequately approached as an abstract conceptual object. A more satisfactory account begins indirectly with cognitional theory and examines the operations through which being is intended, understood, and affirmed.

Neo-Platonism took the direction of Plato in their study of Aquinas. This is evident in the works of Augustine. While others provided a moderate platinizing reading of Aquinas, like Cornelo Fabro, others are radical. These authors stress that Aquinas assimilates considerable elements of Platonic philosophy to his Aristotelian position.[42] This influence is unmistakable in Aquinas's doctrine of participation. Accordingly, in creatures, essence is distinct from existence. Every created being participates in the act of being: God alone is His act of being. The act of being of any finite being is participated since nothing outside God is its own act of being.[43]

He states, "Whatever is participated is related to participator as its act…but participated act of existing is limited by the receptive capacity of the participator."[44] Plato was profoundly influenced by Parmenides' distinction between the path of truth and the path of sense. Plato,

[41] Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 23-24.
[42] Ashley, *The Way Towards Wisdom,* 77.
[43] Aquinas, *Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas,* 31.
[44] Aquinas, *Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas,* 32.

therefore, divided the world into two realms. The world of sense perception, which is subject to change, and the world of forms, which is permanent, spiritual, and perfect. Being was represented by the world of form. Plato then asserts that knowledge is permanent and a priori, derived from the world of forms. It is never progressive. Lonergan, by contrast, develops metaphysics as progressive. Heuristic notions and structures are not determined by some Platonic recollection of a blissful state of contemplation. Instead, they emerge from human creativity during the process.[45]

The two schools of Thomism, essentialist and Platonizing, are very concerned with tradition. These efforts struggle to engage with modern thought. The transcendental Thomists made a daring effort to assimilate these traditions into modern thought. They are influenced by Maurice Blondel's philosophy of immanence. They are also influenced by the emergence of biological evolutionary theory.[46]

Unlike the three Schools described above, existential Thomism is led by Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson. They opposed Transcendental Thomism for its Cartesian and Kantian tendencies. They also attacked Essentialist Thomism. Existential Thomist holds that our knowledge of *esse,* that is, 'to be' of Aquinas and 'substance' of Aristotle, is not known intuitively or conceptually. It has to be known through existential judgement. While it affirms the real existence, it allows for the mystery of being that goes beyond conceptualisation.[47]

Like many existential philosophers, existential Thomists criticize the trajectory of modern philosophy and frequently oppose it to modern science. This oppositional stance restricts the possibility of constructive engagement with contemporary intellectual developments. Transcendental Thomism offers an important advantage in this respect because it places

[45] Lonergan, *Insight*, 417-18.
[46] Ashley, *The Way Towards Wisdom,* 77.
[47] Ashley, *The Way Towards Wisdom,* 80.

classical metaphysics in dialogue with modern philosophy and the empirical sciences. Rather than treating science and metaphysics as mutually exclusive, it understands them as complementary expressions of the human desire to know.

Transcendental Thomists use Kant's method to safeguard the certainty of metaphysics for modern times. Kant's method overcomes the limits of theoretical knowledge by grounding it in sensible reality. Without prejudice toward other Thomists, the study follows Lonergan, S.J., a Canadian philosopher, as a guide in this research. As a transcendental Thomist, he uses the transcendental method to develop and defend the validity of metaphysics in modern times. He achieves this by analysing the special sciences, which, in his view, reveal an inherent element of knowledge.[48]

The principal achievement of transcendental Thomism lies in its renewed attention to the constitutive role of the subject in human knowing. Although Aristotle and Aquinas recognized dimensions of this role, they did not fully develop the historical and sociological conditions that shape human horizons. Lonergan seeks to raise Catholic philosophy and theology to the level of twentieth-century intellectual development, much as Aquinas integrated Aristotelian thought into the Christian intellectual tradition of the thirteenth century. In Insight, Lonergan's principal dialogue partners are modern philosophy and the natural sciences, particularly Kant and the scientific method, which discloses the dynamic and progressive structure of human understanding.

Like the transcendental Thomists, phenomenological Thomism endeavoured to respond to modern concerns. They adopt the phenomenological method of Husserl while remaining faithful to Aquinas critical realism. The phenomenological Thomistic method of metaphysics focuses on personalism. Its concern is with the emphasis on the human person's dignity and

[48] Ashley, *The way Towards Wisdom*, 78.

the moral responsibilities posed by modern materialism and relativism.[49] Lonergan, at the end of Chapter XVI on metaphysics as science, dedicates the last part to the notion of man as a unity. He says, "Man is one…this basic unity extends to the distinctive conjugate of human intellectual activity."[50]

Analytic Thomism defends the meaningfulness of metaphysics by using analytic tools, such as clarifying metaphysical terms and establishing the logical consistency of metaphysical arguments.[51] Like other analysts, however, they usually avoid epistemological questions. While some other analytic philosophers call metaphysics nonsense, analytic Thomists are content to show that calling metaphysics 'nonsense' is itself nonsense.[52]

Analytic Thomism contributes to metaphysics by clarifying concepts and testing the logical coherence of metaphysical propositions. Nevertheless, its predominant concern with linguistic analysis prevents it from developing metaphysics as a comprehensive discipline of being. Lonergan's approach addresses this limitation by integrating epistemological analysis with metaphysical inquiry. The present dissertation follows this integration by grounding its treatment of being in an explicit account of the operations and norms of human knowing.

1.8.3 Lonergan and the Transcendental Method

In his book *The Transcendental Method,* Otto Muck affirms that the Transcendental Method in neo-scholasticism cannot be discussed without mentioning Joseph Marechal. Marechal was the first to adopt the transcendental method and apply it to Aquinas's metaphysics. He then developed a transcendental method, demonstrating the connection between Thomistic metaphysics and transcendental philosophy. He thus overcomes the deficiencies in Kant and

[49] Ashley, *The Way Towards Wisdom,* 81.
[50] Lonergan, *Insight,* 514-515.
[51] Ashley, *The Way Towards Wisdom*, 81.
[52] Ashley, *The Way Towards Wisdom*, 82.

the Idealists' methods.[53] Marechal then became highly influential for subsequent transcendental Thomists such as Lonergan, Karl Rahner, and Coreth, to mention a few. Muck further indicates that adopting the transcendental method is an important step in the development of philosophy. Muck asserts that,

> The transcendental stance is sufficiently foundational and universal to be capable of establishing a relation to other philosophical methods. The exponents of the transcendental method in neo-scholasticism can therefore expect that this approach to philosophy directly promotes the task of developing philosophy through the contemporary problematic and thereby achieving the required clarification.[54]

The transcendental method is both foundational and universal because it identifies the conditions operative within every authentic act of knowing. Its universality enables it to enter into critical dialogue with methods employed in philosophy and the empirical sciences. Consequently, it provides philosophy with a systematic basis for engaging contemporary problems without abandoning the metaphysical question of reality.

Lonergan affirms that he employs Kant's transcendental method in the Kantian sense. This method reveals the conditions for knowing an object *a priori*.[55] Kant's transcendental method is limited to the subject and hence remains within the boundaries of finite beings. Kant, therefore, admits the impossibility of reaching absolute knowledge and being. Thus, for Kant, metaphysics is impossible. This study argues that, though Lonergan and other transcendental Thomists use Kant's transcendental method, they cannot be termed Kantian because they have remained faithful to the realism that our concept of the world is independent of the mind.

Kant claims knowledge is both a priori and synthetic. He lays more emphasis on the a *priori* nature of knowledge. By this emphasis, he gives the mind the power to organise and assign meaning to experiences, such that what we can know is limited only to the data of experience.

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[53] Otto Muck, *The Transcendental Method,* William D Seidensticker ed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 25-26.

[54] Muck, *The Transcendental Method,* 20.

[55] Lonergan, Method in Theology, 14.

Sala points out several criticisms and dangers inherent in this Kantian conception of *a priori*..[56] In the first place, if knowledge begins from experience, then what are the functions of the *a priori* representations? They are far removed from the experience such that it is impossible to explain their conjunction. A priori elements don't explain what we learn beyond our sensory experience.[57]

Lonergan aims to overcome the challenges posed by Kant's *a priori* conception by redefining its nature and function. This redefinition maintains the transcendental method's core purpose of fully turning to the subject. Hence, though we call Lonergan a transcendental Thomist, we should also be aware that he goes beyond Kant. Though he agrees with Kant that insight is both *a priori* and synthetic, he differs with him in holding that *a priori* does not constitute pre-concepts or categories, but rather questioning. Questioning fosters the expansion of consciousness, moving from one level to the next. Being is intrinsically intelligible; it can simply be known as it is.[58] *A priori*, an object's formal knowledge is not inherent to its essence but rather a defining characteristic.[59]

Insight begins with experience, but the subject has to wonder and pose the question for intelligence on the data of the senses, and the question for reflection on the understanding, to complete the process of knowing.[60] Lonergan's philosophy draws on data from introspective consciousness, cognitional processes, experience, understanding and judgement. Human knowing reaches its full potential when insight is crowned with judgement.[61] Consciousness is

[56] Sala Giovanni, *Lonergan and Kant Five Essays on Human Knowledge.* trans. Joseph Spoerl, ed. Robert M. Doran, (Toronto: University of Toronto, Press, 1994), 6.

[57] Giovanni, *Lonergan and Kant Five Essays on Human Knowledge,* 6.

[58] Lonergan, *Collected Works*, *Insight,* 667.

[59] Giovanni, *Lonergan and Kant Five Essays on Human Knowledge,* 8.

[60] Questioning does not come from the senses but the mind. Lonergan distinguishes two kinds of questions. Questions for intelligence seek more information about the data of experience; they are questions such as what, why, when et. They cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. The other type of question is a question for reflection, which seeks to confirm and judge the answers from the questions for intelligence. They are answered with either yes or no. Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works*, *Insight A Study of Human Understanding*, 297.

[61] Lonergan, *Collected Works*, *Insight A Study of Human Understanding.*397-98.

not something inward-looking; it's an awareness inherent in an empirical, intelligent, and rational cognitive act.[62] It is intentional and it intends being.

Otto Muck, in identifying the common feature for all the transcendental Thomists,[63] considers Lonergan as one of the transcendental Thomists. Lonergan himself seems to have no objection to the procedure that Muck used. However, he does not consider it to be pertinent to his intention.[64] Lonergan then disclaims his identity as a transcendental Thomist. He claims to work empirically rather than theoretically, as a transcendentalist. This dissertation follows the standard scholarly classification of Lonergan as a transcendental Thomist, while acknowledging his own reservations about that label.

1.8.4 Lonergan's Critiques

The transcendental turn adopted by Lonergan and other transcendental Thomists has not received universal acceptance. Some critics regard it as an unjustified accommodation to modern philosophy, while others consider it incompatible with the traditional metaphysical priority of being over knowing. The objections advanced by Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain are especially significant because they expose the central methodological dispute addressed by this dissertation: whether metaphysics must begin immediately with being or may proceed critically through an analysis of cognitional activity. Their criticisms therefore help to define the precise scholarly and philosophical problem to which Lonergan's alternative responds.

In his book*, Thomistic Realism and Critique of Knowledge,* Gilson criticises transcendental Thomists for using the Kantian method to develop metaphysics. He strongly opposes Marechal

[62] Lonergan, *Collected Works*, *Insight A Study of Human Understanding* 344-346. See also Giovanni B Sala, *Lonergan and Kant Five Essays on Human Knowledge* 10.

[63] A common feature is their transcendental method, starting from subjectivity as the route into Thomistic metaphysics.

[64] Lonergan, *Method In Theology*, 14.

for embracing the transcendental method to advance metaphysics. He argues that any attempt to begin with knowledge cannot lead to knowledge or the concept of being. As an immediate realist, he proposes beginning with being and moving to the knowledge of being.[65] What Gilson is trying to oppose here is the impossibility of having both immediate and critical realism at the same time. Gilson's criticism is addressed by Lonergan in the article *Metaphysics as Horizon.* Gilson is mistaken to consider transcendental Thomists use the transcendental method in the Kantian context.[66] Transcendental Thomists suspend the traditional affirmation of being to explore the inherent nature of consciousness and analyse the conditions that define it as a subject of knowledge.

Gilson overlooks the complex process we use to access being. Lonergan argues that Gilson's realism posits a whole being that cannot be broken down into step-by-step levels, each of which is inherently rational.[67] Lonergan states, "…the transcendental method is essentially the method for explicitating the whole…"[68] The concept of being, for Gilson, is apprehended directly by the intellect from the sensible datum through abstraction. This apprehension reaches a conscious level where the knowing subject becomes aware of the known object.[69] Maritain, like Gilson, also holds that our concept of being is attained through direct contact between our intellect and sensible data via abstraction.[70] He claims a general osmosis between senses and understanding but doesn't explain the detailed process..[71]

Maritain tried to develop the works of Aquinas, especially the social and political ideas. He desired to make Aquinas attractive in modern secular life. In his book *Preface to Metaphysics,*

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[65] Etienne Gilson, *Thomistic Realism and Critique of Knowledge,* Trans. Mark A Wauck, (San Franscisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 149.

[66] Emerich Coreth, *Metaphysics,* Joseph Donceel, Trans. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 204.

[67] Coreth, *Metaphysics*, 211.

[68] Coreth, *Metaphysics*, 211.

[69] Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge,* trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 205- 206.

[70] Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 63

[71] Coreth, *Metaphysics*, 208.

a series of lectures, he seeks to further explain Thomist metaphysics. The central to these lectures is the concept of being and the way we come to know it. Maritain points out that there are two kinds of beings, namely being as such and particularized being.

Being as such has been considered to be a separate object of the intellect over and above a particular being. This is inherited from Aristotle; later, Aquinas maintained the same position, and here Maritain upheld it.[72] In scholastic philosophy, the intellect's formal object is considered to be "being". As there are two kinds of beings, being as such and particular beings, the intellect also has two levels.[73]

Being as such came to be misunderstood as a separate object of the intellect over and above the particular being. This being is known in direct intuition. It is like a being that is out there waiting to be known by taking a look.[74] This study disagrees with Maritain because it holds that the intellect knows its object not directly, but through both the intellect and the senses. The impression Maritain is giving us here is as if the intellect knows being directly without the aid of sense. Maritain here makes a serious mistake. He misrepresents Aquinas.

Lonergan and other transcendental Thomists will correct this and argue that all our knowledge of being is mediated by the senses, yet transcends them. Transcendental Thomists regard the dynamism of the human intellect towards being as a foundation of the knowledge of being. The subject and being are constitutive of each other, hence making consciousness of being possible.[75] In his article *Metaphysics as a Horizon*, Lonergan points out that any horizon must have two poles: the objective and the subjective. These poles condition each other.[76] The

[72] Jacques Maritain, *Preface to Metaphysics; Seven Lectures on Being* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 49.

[73] Maritain, *Preface to Metaphysics*, 25.

[74] Maritain, *Preface to Metaphysics,* 48.

[75] By subject Lonergan means a conscious person. Consciousness is always intentional it is directed toward an object that is being. Consciousness is not empty but consciousness of something.

[76] Coreth, *Metaphysics*, 212.

objective pole represents the world of experience, while the subjective pole encompasses the *a priori* conditions necessary for its existence. The two poles are relational, such that you cannot have one without the other.

1.8.5 Lonergan and Historical Varieties of Theories of Being

The question "What is everything?" expresses the metaphysical search for a term comprehensive enough to signify the totality of reality without being reduced to any particular member of that totality. The term being emerged as the classical response to this search, yet its meaning has varied considerably throughout the history of philosophy. To establish the need for a renewed approach, the present study traces major interpretations of being from the pre-Socratics to contemporary philosophy. This historical review is not merely descriptive; it identifies recurring conceptual limitations that Lonergan's cognitional and transcendental method seeks to overcome.

Heraclitus, who lived during the 490 BCE, stated that, "all things are changing."[77] In this sense, then being was considered dynamic. The fundamental first principle of reality, then, was 'becoming', not 'being', as static. Parmenides[78], born in 515 BCE, developed a new way of looking at the question of being. He comes to the conclusion that being is a motionless sphere.[79] Reading from some of his fragments, he describes being as unborn and imperishable, whole, unique, immovable and without end.[80]

Parmenides' account retains the cosmological tendency to identify the first principle with a determinate kind of reality. By representing being as a unified and motionless sphere, he fails

[77] Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom*, 22.

[78] Parmenides is considered the founder of Metaphysics since he was the first to ponder on the question of being.

[79] Patricia Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides: Eleatic Monism and later Pre-Socratic thought*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 94-97.

[80] Philip wheelwright ed, *The pre-Socratic* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), 97. See Fragments 7 A-C.

to distinguish adequately between the universal intelligibility of being and the particular entities in which being is affirmed. His position consequently reifies being, treating what is universally intended by intelligence as though it were itself a particular material object. This confusion between universality and particularity prevents Parmenides from accounting for multiplicity, becoming, and differentiated reality.

The basic question Parmenides is seeking to answer is, does being change? His answer was no. Parmenides was wrong to answer this question. He blocks rather than promotes understanding.[81] Lonergan admits the existence of the sensible world, which gives us the point of departure for our investigation into the question of being. The knowledge of being is cumulative and open, not static. Parmenides, like many others, presumes that if you have a word, then you must have something distinct to which the word refers (reification). Being is not like other words that have a distinct representation of particular things. He thus mistakenly treats being as an ordinary concept.[82]

Plato, following the line of thought of his predecessors, made a systematic attempt to reconcile their conclusions. He was very much influenced by Parmenides. Plato, therefore, divided the world into two realms. The world of sense perception, ever-changing, contrasts with the world of forms, which is permanent, spiritual and perfect. For him, being was represented by the world of form. Plato then asserts that knowledge is permanent and *a priori*, derived from the world of forms. It is never progressive. Plato is trying to indicate that the early philosophers have not answered the question of being correctly. This study argues that he has not got it right, either. According to Lonergan, metaphysics, as noted earlier, is progressive. It results from the

[81] Cronin, *A Contemporary First Philosophy, 97.*
[82] Tekippe, Bernard Lonergan's insight: A comprehensive Commentary, 194.

creativity of human intelligence in the process.[83] This process completes at the level of judgment. Plato's fault is in missing the level of judgment.

Plato's metaphysical vocabulary frequently leaves the relations among reality, being, substance, and thing insufficiently differentiated. Aristotle advances the discussion by subjecting inherited terminology to systematic logical analysis. Through distinctions among substance and accident, potency and act, and form and matter, he transforms metaphysical inquiry from a largely descriptive discourse into an explanatory science. This conceptual precision constitutes a decisive development, although Lonergan will later argue that explanatory metaphysics also requires an explicit account of the cognitional operations through which such distinctions are reached and verified.

In the book *Gamma* for the first time, Aristotle uses the phrase 'being *qua* being' as he explains what first philosophy is all about. He's distinguishing between the formal and material aspects of the science of being. Unlike other sciences, such as physics and chemistry, which study the particular attributes of being, the science of being studies being universally, being as being. The material object of the first philosophy is all particular beings taken together. The formal object of a science is the viewpoint it adopts. The first philosophy studies being from the perspective of ultimate causes and principles. It studies being and what essentially belongs to it.[84]

In chapter two of the book *Gamma*, Aristotle discusses various meanings of the term being. According to Aristotle, the term being is used in more than one sense. Yet it is not used equivocally; these senses are related to something that is of a single nature.[85] The term being

[83] Lonergan, *Insight*, 417-18.
[84] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003a 25.
[85] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003a 25-35.

is not used equivocally but analogously.[86] He seeks to establish the primary meaning of the word being. This is an important development in Aristotle's understanding of being, which his predecessors failed to discover. They are confused between the primary and secondary senses of being.

Though the term being is used in more than one sense, its primary meaning is substance.[87] Plato did not make a distinction between '*on*' and '*ousia*'; he used them interchangeably. Aristotle was the first to distinguish between the two. *Ousia* is used for substance, and *on* is used for being. Parmenides and Plato could not make this distinction that we find in Aristotle. For Parmenides said being is and failed to realize that it is more than one. Aristotle resorts to identifying different types of beings.

In Book *Delta*, he accounts for the various meanings of being. He distinguishes four meanings of the word being. The first is accidental predication; accidents are predicated on a substance; they are imperfect forms of being. The second, essential predication, the essence is the whatness, which usually refers to substance, but even accidents have an essence. The third is a true being that is asserted in the true judgment, either positive or negative. The fourth, he talks of being potential or actual; this is what Parmenides failed to understand. He thought all beings are fully actual.[88]

Aristotle introduces the question of substance in the book *Zeta*. He dedicates the entire book to exploring the various meanings of the word substance. He makes an affirmation in the end that a substance is a form of a thing.[89] As we earlier noted, being is said to be substance. It is the widest possible concept, wider than substance, since it includes accidents and potentiality, etc.

[86] Equivocal is when the same term carries completely different meaning in each case of its use. Analogous, are the terms applied to several different subjects in which they are partly the same and partly different in each case.
[87] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*,1003b 5-10.
[88] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*,1017a10-30.
[89] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*,1041b25-30.

Unlike Plato, Aristotle is more successful because with him, philosophy moves from description to explanation.

According to Aristotle, unless defective, all men naturally desire knowledge or understanding.[90] Knowledge is mediated by the senses. In Lonergan, what is innate in all humans, a natural tendency, "a natural desire to know," which is before sensations and even to the knowledge of being. Lonergan calls this a notion of being. In addition, Lonergan presents four levels of consciousness: empirical, intellectual, rational, and rational self-consciousness.[91]

In these four levels, Plato and Aristotle got stuck at the second level of intellectual consciousness. Aristotle's understanding of being is static. He does not understand the concept of successive higher viewpoints..[92] Aristotle identified being with form. Since there are many forms, he left the problem of explaining the unity of being. Aquinas solved the problem by making an implicit distinction between the notion of being and the concept of being.

In the seventeenth century, Descartes introduced modern rationalism as a reaction against empiricism. With the spirit of modernity inaugurated by Descartes, metaphysical assumptions were reexamined, and the consequences have been unmistakable in the history of philosophy ever since. Descartes made a turn to the subject.[93] Cartesian metaphysics was dominated by an epistemology of idealistic tendencies.[94]

Descartes contends that man is capable of knowledge. He had to answer what man can know and what is known. To address these questions, he reaffirmed the Platonic view that certainty cannot arise from the ever-changing material world but must be grounded in innate ideas

[90] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a
[91] Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli, *Understanding and Being.* 16.
[92] Lonergan, *Insight*, 507.
[93] Roger Scruton, *A Short History of Modern Philosophy*: *From Descartes to Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge Group, 2002), 29-30
[94] Steenberghen, *Ontology*, 33.

possessing mathematical precision.[95] Descartes does not consider these innate ideas to be as objective as Plato had conceived. According to him, these ideas are innate. They are products of the mental process. This study argues that innate in us is the desire to know and not some ideas.

Descartes reintroduces philosophy to the old duality problem of mind and body, spiritual and material.[96] However, he fails to explain the relationship between the two. He fails to give a unified view of the whole reality and hence fails to answer the ultimate question of reality, being. His mistake was in conceiving metaphysics as founded on a logical system, namely, a deductive one. This logical system is grounded on self-evident principles. With this, the subject matter of metaphysics is relegated to these subjective possibilities of *a priori* knowledge, independent of sense experience.

As a mathematician, Descartes sought to apply mathematical methods to philosophy to attain the precision found in mathematics. Sciences are distinguished from one another by their objects of study. A method unrelated to a specific science cannot be applied to it. While the object of mathematics is simple, quantitative, the object of metaphysics is manifold and infinitely varied. Its method is qualitative.[97] Descartes was mistaken in applying a universally mathematical method to philosophy.

Descartes' mistake lies not in the pursuit of clarity and certainty, but in treating the method of mathematics as universally normative for every form of knowledge. Mathematics deals principally with quantity, order, extension, and relations capable of deductive expression from determinate principles. Metaphysics, by contrast, concerns being, truth, knowledge, freedom, God, the human subject, and the relation between mind and world. These realities possess a

[95] Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom*, 32.
[96] Steenberghen, *Ontology*, 33
[97] Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1964), 181-182.

breadth and concreteness that cannot be reduced to mathematical objects or grasped adequately through deduction from clear and distinct ideas alone.

By universalizing mathematical method, Descartes makes the certainty of the thinking subject the foundational criterion of philosophy. This turn to subjectivity produces several enduring difficulties. First, it diminishes the constitutive role of sensible experience by making knowledge depend primarily upon clear and distinct mental perception. Second, it establishes a dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* without adequately explaining their unity. Third, it renders problematic the passage from ideas within the mind to realities existing independently of it. Once the thinking subject becomes the first certainty, philosophy must still demonstrate how cognitional activity reaches being beyond subjective representation.

Cartesian mathematical method may secure formal precision, but it remains inadequate as a universal philosophical procedure because it reduces metaphysical inquiry to the search for indubitable ideas. Lonergan corrects this reduction by analyzing the complete structure of human knowing as a movement through experience, understanding, and judgment. Philosophical method must therefore begin not from deduction alone but from the concrete operations by which the subject raises questions, grasps intelligibility, evaluates evidence, and affirms reality. In this way, Lonergan preserves the Cartesian turn to the subject while overcoming its idealist and dualist consequences.

Kant, like Aristotle, asserts that metaphysics has the task of coordinating special sciences. However, Kant differs from Aristotle in that his metaphysics is *a priori*.[98] After reading David Hume, his faith in metaphysical knowledge was critically shaken. Hume's critical observation on the principle of causality, later generalised and extended by Kant to encompass metaphysics,

[98] Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom*, 36.

concluded that positive knowledge, metaphysics, was dead.[99] Kant said, "I was awakened from my dogmatic slumber."[100] He then had to devise ways to rescue metaphysics from Enlightenment culture and from Hume's attacks.

To escape from Hume's scepticism, Kant had to synthesize rationalism and empiricism.[101] He holds that our sense experience requires a priori elements of time and space to be possible. These forms of space and time transcend experience. Experience requires applying concepts to make knowledge of the phenomenon possible. Phenomena are the only known objects in this process. This launches an attack on traditional metaphysics and relaunches idealist metaphysics.[102]

Before Kant, the idea of truth was that it was a correspondence between the mind and reality. This was known as the correspondence theory of truth. Kant made a radical revision, revolutionary in the Copernican sense: the truth is the conformity of reality to the mind.[103] This system that Kant introduced was unstable. It soon broke into divergent thoughts. Transcendental idealism suppresses the idea of a thing in itself. This makes the mind the creator of its own object, hence destroying traditional metaphysics and establishing idealist metaphysics. In the Kantian sense, the science of being is coextensive with the science of the mind.

Heidegger, in his masterpiece *Being and Time,* published in 1927, makes a rare distinction between Being and beings. Heidegger reformulates the question of Being as the condition for the intelligibility of things.[104] He uses the term *Dasein,* rather than human being, as a new way

[99] Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience,* 179.
[100] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp. (Humpshire: Macmillan Press, 1929), 23.
[101] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 369
[102] Steenberghen, *Ontology* 35.
[103] Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom,* 37.
[104] Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1970), 9.

to describe the human mode of existence in contrast to the traditional mode.[105] *Dasein* has a special relationship with the Being. *Dasein* is constituted by disclosedness, that is, by understanding. Only through *Dasein* does Being become known.[106] *Dasein's* essence is in his existence.[107]

Heidegger departs from the scholastic and Sartrean meanings of 'existence' here. Etymologically, *Existenz* derives from Latin *Existere,* meaning 'standing out.' The point Heidegger makes here is that only *Dasein* is self-conscious and can be conscious of itself and its surroundings.[108] It is *Dasein's* ability to consider and be aware of its own occurrence. Thus, *Existenz* refers to the *Dasein* awareness that it is. Heidegger's analysis of the question of being points out the relationship between *Dasein* and Being. That is the nature of *Dasein* (man), which reveals the nature of Being. That is, *Dasein's* Essence is his existence. He does not explain the role of the *Dasein* when taken as a 'subject' in the question of Being.

Heidegger's decisive contribution lies in establishing the intrinsic relation between *Dasein* and the disclosure of Being. In this respect, his position approaches Lonergan's emphasis on the subject. Lonergan, however, provides a more differentiated account by identifying the conscious operations through which the subject intends and affirms being. Subjective acts possess objective correlates because experiencing, understanding, and judging are intentional operations directed beyond themselves. Being is therefore neither identical with these activities nor merely produced by them; it is what is intended and affirmed through their normative performance. The present study consequently argues that the subject is central to metaphysics, not as the creator of being, but as the conscious and rational agent through whom being becomes known.

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[105] Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, 22.
[106] Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, 23.
[107] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinso (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers,1962), 67.
[108] Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, 45.

1.8.6 Current Lonergan's Scholars and their Limitations

Although studies by Frederick E. Crowe, Robert M. Doran, Hugo A. Meynell, Brian Cronin, and Patrick H. Byrne acknowledge the importance of Bernard Lonergan's contribution to metaphysics, several scholarly gaps remain. First, much of the literature treats the question of being either within the traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic framework or within modern critiques of metaphysics, but it does not sufficiently show how Lonergan restates this question through the concrete operations of human knowing. Robert M. Doran. In "Preserving Lonergan's Understanding of Thomist Metaphysics: A Proposal and an Example," Doran explicitly treats Lonergan's question of being within a traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic framework. He argues that Lonergan's "appropriation of both Aristotle and Aquinas" must not be left behind and that Lonergan's metaphysics should be preserved through "his detailed reading of Aristotle and Aquinas."[109] This places the question of being primarily within the inherited metaphysical vocabulary of potency, act, form, causality, and proportionate being. Yet Doran's approach does not fully restate the question of being from the concrete structure of cognitional performance itself. Although he recognizes the importance of insight, judgment, and interiority, his emphasis falls on preserving and transposing Thomist metaphysical categories rather than beginning from the subject's actual operations of experiencing, understanding, and judging as the primary route by which being is affirmed.

Hugo A. Meynell addresses Lonergan's question of being in relation to modern critiques of metaphysics. In *Lonergan's Method: Its Nature and Uses*, Meynell reads Lonergan in explicit conversation with Kant, noting that Lonergan shares Kant's concern with epistemological problems while rejecting Kant's restriction of knowledge to the limits of sensation. For Meynell, Lonergan's real world is known "by putting questions to the data provided by

[109] Robert M. Doran, *Preserving Lonergan's Understanding of Thomist Metaphysics: A Proposal and an Example*, in Essays in Systematic Theology 29; originally presented at the Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, June 2008

sensation and by consciousness," and is therefore neither Kant's phenomenal world nor an unknowable thing-in-itself.[110] Meynell's An Introduction to the Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan likewise situates Lonergan's metaphysics within the wider problems of contemporary philosophy, including chapters on "The Method of Metaphysics" and "Lonergan and the Problems of Contemporary Philosophy."[111] However, Meynell's treatment remains largely apologetic and comparative: he shows how Lonergan answers modern epistemological objections to metaphysics, but he does not sufficiently unfold how the question of being is generated from within the concrete sequence of human knowing experience, insight, reflective grasp, and judgment. Thus, both Doran and Meynell illuminate important dimensions of Lonergan's metaphysics, but neither fully demonstrates how Lonergan restates the question of being through the verifiable operations of human cognitional activity.

Second, while some scholars recognize Lonergan's cognitional theory, the precise methodological connection between experiencing, understanding, judging, and the metaphysical affirmation of being remains insufficiently clarified. Frederick E. Crowe recognizes the central importance of Lonergan's cognitional theory, yet does not fully clarify the precise methodological connection between experiencing, understanding, judging, and the metaphysical affirmation of being. Crowe was one of Lonergan's major interpreters and editors, and his work helped establish Lonergan as a thinker whose philosophy moves from cognitional theory to epistemology, metaphysics, and method.[112] He therefore acknowledges that Lonergan's contribution cannot be reduced to a traditional metaphysical system, since Lonergan begins with the concrete operations of human consciousness experiencing,

[110] Hugo A. Meynell, *Lonergan's Method: Its Nature and Uses*, Scottish Journal of Theology 27, no. 2 (May 1974): 162–180

[111] Hugo A. Meynell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan*, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), especially "The Method of Metaphysics" and "Lonergan and the Problems of Contemporary Philosophy"

[112] https://iep.utm.edu/lonergan/

understanding, and judging as the basis for critical realism and methodical inquiry.[113] However, Crowe's principal contribution lies in interpreting, extending, and appropriating Lonergan's broader intellectual project rather than in offering a detailed demonstration of how the movement from experience through insight and judgment culminates in the affirmation of being. As a result, while Crowe helps to show the significance of Lonergan's cognitional theory for theology, philosophy, and method, he does not sufficiently develop the exact methodological passage by which human knowing becomes the ground for metaphysical affirmation. This leaves room for the present study to clarify how Lonergan's account of knowing provides not merely a theory of consciousness, but a concrete and verifiable route to the affirmation of being.

Third, Brian Cronin's interpretation of Lonergan is especially useful for showing how Lonergan may be read as a philosopher of cognitional self-appropriation and transcendental method. Cronin rightly emphasizes that Lonergan's metaphysics is grounded in the subject's concrete operations of knowing and that cognitional self-appropriation can be expanded into metaphysics.[114] He also shows that traditional metaphysical terms such as potency, form, and act can be heuristically reinterpreted in light of the structure of experiencing, understanding, and judging.[115] Nevertheless, Cronin's treatment remains primarily expository and methodological. It does not sufficiently demonstrate how Lonergan's transcendental method functions as a concrete and verifiable alternative to the abstract treatment of the question being in traditional metaphysics. This leaves room for the present study to clarify how Lonergan's method does not merely restate inherited metaphysical categories but grounds the affirmation of being in the verifiable structure of human cognitional activity.

[113] https://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/lonergan.htm
[114] https://www.lonergan.org/online_books/cronin/10.htm
[115] https://www.lonergan.org/online_books/cronin/epilogue.htm

Patrick H. Byrne recognizes that Lonergan's metaphysics cannot be separated from the analysis of scientific inquiry in *Insight*. In his "Insight and Beyond" course, Byrne explicitly asks, "Why Does Lonergan Begin with Science?" and treats mathematics and empirical science as the entry point into Lonergan's larger philosophical project.[116] This indicates that, for Byrne, Lonergan's metaphysics emerges from the same dynamic structure of questioning, insight, and judgment that operates in the empirical sciences. Byrne's chapter "The Passionateness of Being" further interprets Lonergan's contribution as a "First Philosophy" rooted in the subject's cognitional structure and in reflective self-appropriation.[117] However, while Byrne highlights the importance of science and cognitional structure for Lonergan's metaphysics, the relation between empirical science and metaphysical inquiry still requires fuller development in terms of Lonergan's claim that both are expressions of the pure, detached, unrestricted desire to know.

The present study addresses these scholarly gaps by systematically examining Lonergan's restatement of the question of being through cognitional theory and transcendental method. It first identifies the limitations of approaches that treat metaphysics principally as an abstract or deductive science. It then analyzes the cognitional movement from experience through understanding to judgment and demonstrates how this movement culminates in the affirmation of being. On this basis, the study explains the intrinsic correlation between knowing and being and evaluates Lonergan's method as an alternative foundation for metaphysical inquiry. Its distinctive contribution lies in showing that Lonergan neither abandons classical metaphysics

[116] Patrick H. Byrne, *Insight and Beyond*, Boston College Lonergan Institute, especially Class 4, Part 1, "Why Does Lonergan Begin with Science? Math & Science Compared."

[117] Patrick H. Byrne, "The Passionateness of Being: The Legacy of Bernard Lonergan, S.J.," in *Finding God in All Things: Celebrating Bernard Lonergan, John Courtney Murray, and Karl Rahner*, ed. Mark Bosco and David Stagaman (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), chap. 3.

nor merely translates its categories into modern terminology. Rather, he reconstructs metaphysics within a critically realist framework grounded in the verifiable operations of human consciousness. The question of being can thus be restated in a manner that is concrete, methodical, historically conscious, and capable of sustained dialogue with the empirical sciences.

CHAPTER TWO

TRADITIONAL METAPHYSICS AND THE QUESTION OF BEING: LIMITS AND RENEWAL IN LONERGAN

Introduction

This chapter critically examines the traditional abstract metaphysical approach to the question of being, assessing both its enduring achievements and its methodological limitations in relation to modern philosophy and the empirical sciences. Its central argument is not that metaphysics has been rendered obsolete, but that its continued validity depends upon methodological renewal. Such renewal requires metaphysics to move beyond a predominantly deductive deployment of abstract categories and to ground its claims critically in the concrete operations through which human beings attain knowledge. Lonergan provides the decisive mediating framework for this reconstruction. His cognitional theory shows that metaphysics need neither retreat into a pre-critical position nor capitulate to Kantian restriction, Heideggerian critique, or empirical reductionism. Rather, it can be reformulated through self-appropriation, historical consciousness, attentiveness to scientific inquiry, and recognition of the unrestricted desire to know as the dynamic orientation toward being.

2.1. The Meaning and Scope of the Question of Being

For Aristotle, the question of being is neither marginal nor merely one philosophical problem among others; it constitutes the proper concern of first philosophy. At the beginning of Book IV of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle identifies a science that studies being as being and the attributes belonging to it in virtue of itself. This formulation establishes the irreducibility of metaphysical inquiry because being cannot be confined to a particular genus or identified with one regional domain of investigation. Being is neither one object alongside others nor the exclusive concern of physics, mathematics, ethics, or politics. It designates, rather, the

comprehensive horizon within which every determinate object may be investigated as real and intelligible.

Nevertheless, Aristotle's formulation also discloses a methodological tension within classical metaphysics. The inquiry into being "as being" achieves universality by abstracting from the determinate characteristics of particular things and considering what belongs to them precisely insofar as they are. Although this abstraction secures the trans-categorial scope of metaphysics, it can become problematic when interpreted as sufficient in itself. If the movement to universality is detached from empirical particularity, historical development, and the cognitional operations by which metaphysical claims are reached, being risks being treated as a concept already possessed rather than as the comprehensive objective progressively intended, understood, and affirmed through inquiry.

Aquinas develops Aristotle's metaphysical project by interpreting being not merely as the most universal object of thought but as act. In *De ente et essentia*, Aquinas distinguishes essence, that by which a thing is what it is, from existence, that by which it is.[118] In the *Summa Theologiae,* he argues that God is not a being whose essence receives existence, but *ipsum esse subsistens*, subsistent existence itself.[119] Aquinas thereby gives metaphysics an existential depth absent from a merely logical account of being. Being is not simply the widest concept; it is the act through which beings are actual. This insight remains one of the most significant achievements of classical metaphysics.

Nevertheless, this Thomistic deepening requires further methodological clarification. Aquinas's metaphysics presupposes that the intellect can move from creatures to God, from finite acts of existence to the subsistent act of existence. But modern philosophy asks how such

[118] Thomas Aquinas, *Aquinas on Being and Essence: A Translation and Interpretation*, trans. Joseph Bobik (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 169–70.

[119] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 3, a. 4.

movement is justified. Kant's critical philosophy challenges the assumption that reason can pass uncritically from concepts to reality. In *the Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that metaphysics must first submit itself to critique by examining the conditions under which objects can be known.[120] Thus, the question of being can no longer be separated from the question of knowing.

Lonergan's contribution is decisive at this point. He does not simply return to pre-critical metaphysics, nor does he accept the Kantian restriction of knowledge to phenomena. Instead, he asks the subject to attend to the concrete structure of knowing itself. In *The Insight*, Lonergan shows that knowing is not a simple act of looking but a compound structure involving experience, inquiry, insight, formulation, reflection, judgment, and decision.[121] Being, therefore, is not first possessed as an abstract concept. It is intended through the unrestricted dynamism of questioning. The question of being is thus inseparable from the subject's own self-transcending movement toward truth.

2.2. The Traditional Abstract Metaphysical Approach

The traditional abstract metaphysical approach begins with the conviction that reality possesses an intelligible structure. Aristotle's doctrine of substance, act and potency, form and matter, causality, and finality is ordered toward explaining why things are what they are and why they change as they do. His inquiry into being *qua* being seeks principles more fundamental than those of the particular sciences. Whereas physics studies mobile being and mathematics studies quantity, first philosophy studies being under its most universal aspect.[122]

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[120] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), Bxvi-Bxxii

[121] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 3, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 11-22.

[122] Metaphysics IV.1 1003a21-32

This universal scope gives metaphysics its dignity. It prevents philosophy from being reduced to fragmented forms of specialized inquiry. It asks what must be true of reality as such if any particular thing is to be intelligible. In this respect, classical metaphysics protects the mind from reductionism. It refuses to identify the real as anything other than what is measurable, useful, or empirically observable.

Aquinas intensifies this metaphysical vision by grounding finite being in the act of existence. His claim that God is *ipsum esse subsistens*[123] is not a merely theological assertion imposed upon philosophy; it follows from his metaphysical distinction between essence and existence. Created beings do not explain their own existence, for their essence does not include the necessity of existing. They participate in *esse*. Thus, Aquinas transforms Aristotelian metaphysics into an inquiry into finite being's dependence upon the divine act of being.

The traditional approach may therefore be described under four principal characteristics. First, it is universal because it seeks principles applicable to all beings. Second, it is abstract because it rises from empirical particulars to the highest concepts of being, essence, existence, causality, and substance. Third, it is foundational because it seeks ultimate explanations rather than merely proximate or functional accounts. Fourth, it is systematic because it attempts to integrate diverse realities within a coherent order of intelligibility.

These features remain philosophically valuable. Without metaphysical reflection, knowledge has become a fragmentation of the disconnected specializations. The sciences explain particular domains of reality, but they do not by themselves explain the meaning of being, truth, objectivity, value, or ultimate intelligibility. These same strengths become limitations because

[123] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 4, a. 2.

abstraction is separated from experience, method, history, and the concrete operations of the knowing subject.

2.3. The Strengths of the Traditional Approach to the Question of Being

2.3.1. Against Reductionism

A principal strength of traditional metaphysics is its resistance to reductionism. Aristotle's metaphysics refuses to reduce reality to material change alone. His analysis of substance, form, act, potency, and causality seeks to account for the intelligible structure of things rather than merely their observable motions. Aquinas likewise refuses to reduce being to essence, concept, or empirical fact; his account of *esse* points to existence as act and to finite being as participatory.

This anti-reductionist strength needs not only to be preserved but also to be transformed. We argue that human knowing is oriented toward being through the unrestricted desire to know.[124] The human subject is not satisfied with data alone. Data provoke questions; questions seek insights; insights require judgments; judgments move toward responsible affirmation. Thus, metaphysics preserves questions concerning meaning, truth, value, causality, and existence because these questions arise from the very dynamism of human consciousness.

2.3.2. The Intelligibility of Being

A second strength of the traditional approach is its affirmation that being is intelligible. Aristotle's inquiry presupposes that reality is not chaotic but ordered, and that its order can be grasped through causes and principles. Aquinas likewise assumes that created reality is

[124] Lonergan, Insight, 372

intelligible because it participates in divine wisdom and being.[125] The intelligibility of being is not accidental to classical metaphysics; it is the condition of metaphysical inquiry itself.

Lonergan radicalizes this point by locating the intelligibility of being in relation to the unrestricted desire to know. Being is not merely a concept abstracted from all beings; it is the total objective intended by intelligent and reasonable inquiry. In Insight, Lonergan argues that the human subject's questioning is unrestricted in scope: every answer gives rise to further questions until the mind seeks the totality of what is.[126] In this sense, being is correlative to the dynamism of inquiry. Reality is intelligible because it is what is to be known through the proper unfolding of experience, understanding, and judgment.

This insight also clarifies the relation between metaphysics and empirical science. Science presupposes that nature is intelligible. It assumes that patterns, laws, relations, structures, and systems can be discovered through inquiry. Thus, science and metaphysics need not be opposed. Both arise from the same human orientation toward intelligibility. The difference is that the sciences investigate particular domains of being, whereas metaphysics reflects on the comprehensive horizon of being and on the conditions that make such inquiry possible.

2.3.3. The Ultimacy of the Question

A third strength of traditional metaphysics lies in its concern for ultimate explanation. Aristotle's first philosophy seeks the first causes and principles of things.[127] Aquinas's metaphysics asks why finite beings exist at all and why their existence requires an ultimate

[125] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 12, a. 1.
[126] Lonergan, *Insight*, 372.
[127] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 982a5

ground.[128] These questions exceed the scope of the particular sciences, which explain phenomena through proximate causes, laws, models, and hypotheses.

Lonergan does not dismiss such ultimate questions. On the contrary, he shows why they arise necessarily from the unrestricted desire to know. The human mind does not stop at partial explanation. It asks about conditions, then about the conditions of those conditions, until it raises the question of the virtually unconditioned, the judgment that can be reasonably affirmed because the relevant conditions have been fulfilled.[129] Metaphysics is therefore not an arbitrary speculation beyond science; it emerges from the very structure of rational inquiry.

Questions such as why there is something rather than nothing, what causality means, how scientific laws refer to reality, and whether the universe has an ultimate ground cannot be settled by measurement alone. They require philosophical reflection on being, intelligibility, objectivity, and judgment. Traditional metaphysics is strong precisely because it refuses to suppress these ultimate questions.

2.3.4. The Integrative Function of Metaphysics

A fourth strength of traditional metaphysics is its integrative function. Human knowledge is differentiated into many disciplines, each with its own method and field of inquiry. Yet differentiation does not eliminate the need for unity. Metaphysics seeks a comprehensive horizon within which the various forms of knowledge can be critically related.

Lonergan preserves this integrative function but grounds it in method rather than in a merely deductive conceptual system. The unity of knowledge is not achieved by imposing fixed categories upon all disciplines. It is achieved by attending to the recurrent structure of human

[128] Aquinas, *On Being and Essence (De Ente et Essentia)*, ch. 4.
[129] Lonergan, *Insight*, 280.

knowing. Whether in common sense, science, philosophy, or theology, the subject experiences, inquires, understands, judges, and decides. Thus, the unity of knowledge is rooted in the polymorphic structured operations of consciousness.[130]

This point is crucial for the renewal of metaphysics. Traditional metaphysics rightly seeks unity, but it becomes problematic when it identifies unity with an ahistorical conceptual system. A Lonerganian metaphysics can retain the universal horizon of being while acknowledging the differentiated, historical, and self-correcting character of human inquiry.

2.4. Limitations of the Traditional Abstract Metaphysical Approach

2.4.1. The Abstraction of Being

The first limitation of the traditional abstract metaphysical approach lies in its tendency to treat being as separate from the concrete operations of human knowing. Metaphysics proceeds primarily through universal concepts; being can appear as a remote abstraction rather than as the objective intended through questioning, insight, and judgment.

This limitation is especially clear when Aristotle's formulation of being qua being is interpreted as though the metaphysician already possessed being conceptually. Aristotle's achievement remains indispensable, but his metaphysics does not yet provide a fully developed account of the subject's cognitional operations. Aquinas deepens the meaning of being through *esse*, but the later scholastic tradition sometimes reduced this insight to a conceptual framework detached from the drama of inquiry.

Lonergan's correction is methodological. Being is not first encountered as an already defined concept. It is intended in every question for intelligence and every question for reflection.

[130] Lonergan, *Insight*, 344

The subject asks, “What is it?” and then, “Is it so?” Through these questions, the mind moves from data to insight and from insight to judgment.[131] Traditional metaphysics neglects this movement and thus makes claims about being without critically appropriating the process by which such claims are reached.

2.4.2. Conceptual Rigidity

The second limitation is conceptual rigidity. Traditional metaphysical categories such as substance, essence, form, matter, causality, and finality retain genuine philosophical significance. These categories are treated as fixed schemes already complete in advance; they cease to function as expressions of insight and become obstacles to further inquiry.[132]

Contemporary science exposes this danger. Modern physics has revised older conceptions of matter, motion, space, time, and causality. Evolutionary biology has transformed the understanding of life, development, adaptation, and emergence. Neuroscience raises new questions about embodiment, consciousness, and cognition. These developments do not refute metaphysics, but they do challenge any metaphysics that simply applies inherited categories without revision.

Lonergan’s method offers a way beyond conceptual rigidity. Concepts are not static containers into which reality is forced. They are formulations of insight, and insights remain subject to verification, correction, and development. A renewed metaphysics must therefore preserve the intelligibility sought by classical categories while allowing those categories to be transformed through the self-correcting process of inquiry.

[131] Lonergan, *Insight*, 304-305.

[132] Lonergan, *Insight*, 417.

2.4.3. Lack of Historicity

The third limitation is insufficient attention to historicity. Traditional metaphysics often presents itself as a timeless reflection on timeless being.[133] While being itself is not reducible to history, human understanding of being develops historically. Philosophical concepts emerge within particular linguistic, cultural, and intellectual contexts. They are transmitted, revised, contested, and deepened over time.

Kant's critical philosophy marks a decisive moment in this historical development. In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant argues that metaphysics must examine its own possibility rather than proceed dogmatically. Heidegger later argues that the history of metaphysics is itself a history of forgetfulness, in which Being has been obscured by the objectifying treatment of beings. These critiques show that metaphysics cannot simply repeat inherited formulations as though they were immune from historical mediation.

Lonergan's account of historical consciousness enables metaphysics to respond without falling into relativism. The historically conditioned character of concepts does not mean that truth is impossible. Rather, it means that truth is reached through a developing process of inquiry, correction, and cumulative insight. A renewed metaphysics must therefore distinguish between the unrestricted orientation of the human spirit toward being and the historically conditioned formulations through which that orientation is expressed.

2.4.4. Neglect of Subjectivity

The fourth limitation is the neglect of subjectivity. Classical metaphysics often emphasizes objective being while giving less attention to the subject who asks the question of being.[134] Yet

[133] Lonergan, Bernard. *Method in Theology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 326.

[134] Lonergan, *Insight*, 432

the question of being is always raised by a conscious subject. The operations of experiencing, questioning, understanding, judging, and deciding are not accidental to metaphysics; they are the very route by which metaphysical knowledge is achieved.

This is the central importance of Lonergan's project. In Insight, he does not begin by constructing a metaphysical system from abstract definitions. He begins by inviting the reader to perform and appropriate the operations of knowing. His famous imperative, "Thoroughly understand what it is to understand,"[135] indicates that metaphysics must be grounded in self-appropriation. The subject must discover in oneself the dynamic structure by which objectivity is reached.

This does not make metaphysics subjective in the sense of arbitrary or private. Rather, it shows that authentic objectivity is achieved through authentic subjectivity. Objectivity is not attained by escaping the subject but by properly performing the operations of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. Thus, Lonergan overcomes the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity by showing that the self-transcending subject is the condition of objective knowing.[136]

2.5. Contemporary Philosophical Challenges

Contemporary philosophy challenges traditional abstract metaphysics by insisting that the question of being cannot be separated from the conditions through which being is known, experienced, interpreted, and disclosed. Kant's critical philosophy raises this challenge by asking how metaphysics is possible. He argues that human knowledge is shaped by the conditions of experience and that reason falls into illusion when it extends concepts beyond

[135] Lonergan, *Insight*, 22

[136] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 265.

their legitimate use without critique.[137] Thus, metaphysics cannot proceed as though the mind had immediate access to things apart from the conditions of knowing.

Heidegger radicalizes this challenge. In *Being and Time*, he argues that the fundamental question of philosophy is not simply the question of beings but the question of the meaning of Being. According to Heidegger, Western metaphysics has largely forgotten this question by treating Being as though it were another being or as though it could be grasped through the categories appropriate to entities.[138] This critique exposes the danger of an objectifying metaphysics that speaks about being without attending to the horizon in which Being is disclosed.

Lonergan's response differs from both Kant's and Heidegger's. Against a merely restrictive reading of Kant, Lonergan argues that human knowing reaches being through judgment. Against Heidegger's suspicion of metaphysical objectification, Lonergan shows that the question of being is rooted in the unrestricted desire to know. Being is not an object among objects, but neither is it inaccessible to rational affirmation. It is intended in inquiry and affirmed in judgment. Thus, Lonergan makes possible a critically grounded metaphysics that is neither dogmatic nor anti-metaphysical.

2.6. The Challenge of the Empirical Sciences

The empirical sciences pose a decisive challenge to traditional abstract metaphysics because they have transformed the intellectual horizon within which reality is understood. Modern science has not merely added new facts to an inherited worldview; it has altered the categories through which human beings think about matter, life, mind, causality, space, time, and the

[137] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A298/B355

[138] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 21-24 (§1).

universe. Physics has revised older conceptions of motion, matter, causality, and space-time. Biology has reshaped the understanding of life, development, adaptation, and evolution. Neuroscience has raised new questions concerning consciousness, cognition, and embodiment. Cosmology has situated human existence within an immense and dynamic universe.

These developments do not render metaphysics obsolete. On the contrary, they reveal its continuing necessity. Scientific theories do not simply report observable facts. They employ models, explanatory structures, assumptions about intelligibility, and judgments about evidence. Questions concerning laws of nature, causality, emergence, scientific realism, and the ontological commitments of scientific theories remain philosophical questions.

However, the sciences also expose the inadequacy of any metaphysics that remains isolated from scientific inquiry. A metaphysics that speaks about nature without attending to physics, about life without attending to biology, or about mind without attending to neuroscience risks becoming detached from reality as it is actually known. For this reason, a renewed metaphysics must take scientific knowledge seriously without reducing itself to science.

Lonergan is especially important because he begins from the actual structure of inquiry found in mathematics and empirical science. In the opening chapters of *Insight*, he analyzes insight not as a vague intuition but as the intelligible grasp that emerges from inquiry into data.[139] Scientific knowing is not mere observation. It is a heuristic and explanatory process that moves from data through questions, insights, formulations, hypotheses, verification, and judgment. Metaphysics, therefore, should not be imposed externally upon scientific knowing. It should arise from critical reflection on the operations by which human beings come to know reality.

[139] Lonergan, *Insight*, 4, Insight comes as a release of the tension of inquiry.

In this way, Lonergan avoids both dogmatic abstraction and reductive scientism. He does not reject science in order to defend metaphysics, nor does he reduce metaphysics to scientific method. Rather, he shows that both science and metaphysics emerge from the same unrestricted desire to know.[140] Science investigates determinate ranges of being; metaphysics reflects on being as the total objective of inquiry and on the conditions that make objective knowing possible.

2.7. Toward a Renewed Metaphysical Method

The limitations of traditional abstract metaphysics do not require the abandonment of metaphysics, but its methodological renewal. A renewed metaphysics must preserve the classical concerns of being, intelligibility, and ultimate explanation while grounding them in the concrete structure of human knowing.

First, metaphysics must begin from concrete human inquiry. Human beings do not possess being through immediate conceptual abstraction. They encounter data, raise questions, seek insights, formulate hypotheses, weigh evidence, make judgments, and revise their positions in light of further understanding. These operations are not merely psychological events; they constitute the normative pattern through which objective knowledge becomes possible.

Second, metaphysics must be critically grounded. Lonergan insists that metaphysics depends upon cognitional theory and epistemology. Before one can speak adequately about being, one must clarify what one is doing when one knows. Metaphysics becomes dogmatic when it begins with ready-made categories without examining the operations through which those categories are generated, verified, and affirmed. A renewed metaphysics must therefore ask how concepts arise from insight, how judgments are warranted, and how objectivity is achieved.

[140] Lonergan, *Insight* 372.

Third, metaphysics must be historically conscious. Human understanding develops within history, tradition, language, and culture. This historical mediation does not reduce truth to relativism. Rather, it shows that truth is reached through inquiry, correction, development, and cumulative insight. A Lonerganian metaphysics can distinguish between the permanent orientation of the human spirit toward being and the historically conditioned formulations through which that orientation is expressed.

Fourth, metaphysics must engage the empirical sciences. Lonergan does not oppose metaphysics to science, since both arise from the same unrestricted desire to know. Scientific inquiry moves from data through insight toward explanatory understanding and verified judgment. Metaphysics should therefore attend to the discoveries of physics, biology, cosmology, psychology, and neuroscience, not by reducing being to empirical data, but by reflecting critically on the intelligibility disclosed through scientific method.

Fifth, metaphysics must remain open to transcendence. The unrestricted desire to know is not satisfied by partial explanations or finite objects alone. It raises questions of ultimate ground, final intelligibility, and absolute being. In Aquinas, this movement finds expression in the metaphysical ascent from participated being to subsistent being itself. In Lonergan, it is grounded in the human spirit's unrestricted orientation toward the totality of being and the unconditioned. A renewed metaphysics must therefore remain attentive to the relation between finite being and the ultimate source of intelligibility.

Conclusion

The traditional abstract metaphysical approach to the question of being remains indispensable because it preserves the universality, intelligibility, ultimacy, and integrative function of metaphysical inquiry. Aristotle’s science of being *qua* being and Aquinas’s metaphysics of *esse* continue to provide profound resources for thinking about reality as a whole. However,

this traditional approach has become inadequate since it treats being primarily as an abstract concept, neglects the operations of knowing, resists historical development, and remains isolated from the empirical sciences.

Kant and Heidegger expose the need for a more critical and historically conscious metaphysics, but Lonergan provides the constructive path forward. By grounding metaphysics in the subject's self-appropriation of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, Lonergan renews the question of being without surrendering it to skepticism, historicism, or scientism. Being is not grasped by abstraction alone. It is intended through inquiry, illuminated by insight, affirmed in judgment, mediated by history, enriched by science, and opened toward ultimate intelligibility by the unrestricted desire to know.

CHAPTER THREE

DEMONSTRATING THE ACTS OF INSIGHT IN LONERGAN

Introduction

This chapter demonstrates the acts of insight in Lonergan's philosophy. It shows that insight, unlike intuitionism and idealism, is a process that mediates between experience and judgment. By analysing the structure of experiencing, understanding, and judging, it presents Lonergan's account of knowing as a viable alternative route into metaphysics. In this chapter, the term "demonstrating" means showing how the acts of insight operate within Lonergan's cognitional theory. The chapter does not merely define insight in the abstract; rather, it analyzes the concrete acts through which human knowing unfolds: experiencing, understanding, and judging. To demonstrate the acts of insight, therefore, is to explain how the subject moves from the data of experience, through inquiry and understanding, to the reflective judgment by which something is affirmed as true. In this sense, the chapter shows that insight is not a passive intuition or a simple act of looking, but a dynamic and structured process that mediates between experience and judgment.

3.1 Terminological Clarification

Several key terms require clarification: insight, consciousness, intuition, intelligence, and abstraction. In this dissertation, the term "insight" refers to an act of human understanding. This study conceives insight in two principal ways: as an activity and as a form of knowledge. Since it's a mental activity, we'll consider it conscious and intentional.[141]

Consciousness is a second term this study frequently uses. Lonergan describes consciousness as an internal experience of oneself and one's acts, whereas experience is taken in the strict

[141] Lonergan, *Insight*, 26

sense.[142] Consciousness is not some separate entity we have; it's simply built into how we, as subjects, operate and experience the world. The acts are interrelated and cumulative. Understanding is built upon experience, and judging is built upon understanding. These are transcendental activities.[143] Intuition, another term, describes a feeling or unexpected insight into a problem's solution. In everyday language, it's often used to refer to this kind of feeling. Philosophically, however, intuition is considered the highest form of knowledge. It's characterized by specific epistemic features such as passivity, immediacy and directedness. These are accompanied by self-evident infallibility and indubitability. In this context, intuition is assigned a negative philosophical connotation, meaning either knowing through the senses or intellectual knowing with direct contact between the knower and the object known. In other words, knowledge means looking closely at what we can sense around us or what we are conscious of in our minds.

Intelligence is treated as an integral component of the structure of knowing: experience, understanding, and judgment and is understood as a dynamic, self-correcting orientation toward intelligibility.[144] This study employs the term intelligence to refer to the process of knowing. Intelligence, therefore, is the capacity to discern a regularity in the frequencies by abstracting from their random characteristics and by centering on the point about which they oscillate. The gap between intelligibility lies in insight.[145]

The last term is abstraction. The study used it somewhat analogously to the Aristotelian tradition. In a simple and common view, Lonergan states, "The abstract is an impoverished replica of the concrete. Red means what is common to all instances of red. Man means what is

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[142]Eugene Webb, *Philosophers of Consciousness: Polanyi, Lonergan, Voegelin, Ricour, Girard, Kierkegaard* (London: University of Washington, 1988), 66.

[143] Transcendental here means each operation leads or opens up to a higher level of operation.

[144] Aristotle, *On the Soul*, *In The Collected Works of Aristotle.* Hippocrates G Apostle. Trans. (Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1991). 429a20

[145] Lonergan, *Insight,* 85

common to all instances of man."[146] This dissertation takes it in a dynamic sense in two moments. First, as an enriching anticipation of an intelligibility to be added to sensible presentations, abstraction here targets the potency in the sensible data that there is something to be known by insight. It does not separate or remove form from concrete living. Secondly, it is the erection of heuristic structures[147] and the attainment of insight, to be revealed in the data.[148] It is an act of grasping the essential and avoiding the inessential.

3.2 Lonergan's Life and Intellectual Background

Philosophy is inextricably linked to its horizon, historical background and personal perspective. These factors all influence philosophical inquiry. [149] In literary terms, the horizon represents the boundary of the visible world where the earth and sky seem to meet. It's the furthest point one can see from a specific vantage point. Hans-Georg Gadamer, in Truth and Method, posits that understanding is influenced by an individual's personal history and cultural background.[150]

He points out that the horizon is not a rigid frontier but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further. Our worldview is nothing but our horizon. Lonergan defines horizons as the sweep of our interests and knowledge; they are not only It's the source of further knowledge and care, but also the boundaries that limit our capacity to assimilate more than we have already attained.[151] For this reason, this study begins by situating Lonergan in the context that has shaped his worldview. Since our aim is not merely historical, we shall provide a brief account of the history that has shaped his philosophical thinking.

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[146] Lonergan, *Insight,* 111.

[147] Heuristic structure is a framework that guides inquiry and discovery, it is a dynamic and methodological tool.

[148] Lonergan, *Insight*, 112.

[149] Horizon is often associated with the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger. It refers to the context or background that shapes our perception and understanding of reality.

[150] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1985), 217.

[151] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton Longman, 1972), 236-37.

Bernard Joseph Francis Lonergan was born on December 17, 1904, in Buckingham, Quebec, Canada. He was the firstborn of three brothers.[152] His father, Lonergan, originally from Ireland, successfully integrated into the French-speaking culture. At eighteen, he entered the novitiate of the Jesuits. His time in the novitiate was profoundly influential on his future intellectual development. It offered spiritual formation and a solid foundation for his subsequent studies and writings. Lonergan's notion of self-transcendence can be traced back to his novitiate years.[153] Lonergan belonged to a generation of Jesuits whose religious training was framed by a classicist model of spiritual perfection; hence, during his novitiate, he spent much of his time reading the classics.[154] We have already noticed the elements of hard work and self-teaching. This has helped him to be a good philosopher and writer.[155]

3.2.1. Lonergan's Philosophical Preparation

When Lonergan was twenty-two, he began his university studies at Heythrop College in England. He was first exposed to scholastic manuals, which shaped his early understanding of metaphysics and epistemology. These years at the College were pivotal to his later philosophical thinking, as he was dissatisfied with the rigidity of the scholastic approach and preferred a dynamic, historical method of inquiry.[156] Although he completed his thesis on Ethics and Economics, Lonergan developed a significant interest in Philosophy during his time at Heythrop.

His interest was particularly focused on the theory of knowledge. Consequently, he not only read extensively from various philosophers but also wrote several articles. Notably, *The Form*

[152] Lonergan other siblings were Gregory and Mark

[153] Gordon Rixon, S.J., *Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism, Theological Studies* 62, no. 3 (2001): 479–503

[154] Rixon, S.J., *Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism,* 480.

[155] Frederick E. Crowe, *Lonergan*, *Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series*. Davies B, ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 11.

[156] Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964*, Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 29–38.

of Mathematical Inference and *True Judgment and Science.*[157] His university years and outstanding commitment enabled Lonergan to complete his first-degree program and prepared him for the serious tasks ahead. While in England, he was impressed by great figures such as G. K. Chesterton, Lewis Carroll and John Henry Newman.[158]

3.2.2. Lonergan's First Encounter with the Transcendental Thomism

It is impossible to think of the transcendental method in Neo-Scholasticism without mentioning Joseph Marechal, born in 1878 and died in 1944, and rightly so.[159] Historically, then, we can assert with confidence that the common source of the varieties of transcendental Thomism is Maréchal's philosophy, as outlined in his *Le Point de Départ de la Métaphysique,* written between 1922 and 1947.[160] Maréchal's legacy lies in his synthetic attempt to integrate late modern Kantian philosophy with Aristotelian-Thomist metaphysics. Lonergan's first encounter with transcendental Thomism occurred in Rome, during his doctoral studies. A fellow student, Stephanos Stephanou, an Athenian who had studied well with Maréchal, a Jesuit philosopher, introduced him to Maréchal.[161]

When Marechal taught psychology to Jesuit students in Louvain, Stefano had joined the Jesuit Sicilian province and been sent there to study philosophy. Lonergan's Philosophy was then influenced by Maréchal. This is contrary to the popular belief that Lonergan wrote his masterpiece, *Insight*, as a disciple of Aquinas.[162] He later met Aquinas through his moderator, Charles Boyer. Lonergan was deeply inspired by Aquinas's method of reaching conclusions by gradually combining various aspects of scriptural, patristic, theological, and dogmatic data

[157] F. Crowe, *Lonergan*, 15 -16.
[158] F. Crowe, *Lonergan*, 13.
[159] Otto Muck, S.J, *The Transcendental Method,* William D. Seidensticker, trans. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 25.
[160] Rikard Dahl, *Varieties of Transcendental Metaphysics A Comparison of Bernard Lonergan and Emerich Coreth,* academia.edu, accessed June 1, 2025, 6
[161] Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Burrell, D., ed. University of Notre Dame Press, USA 1967, xi
[162] F. Crowe, *Lonergan*, 39.

until he formulated a single, coherent perspective, or the vision of the whole.This realization led him to conclude that knowing is not solely syllogistic deduction but also involves attending to the data, considering and understanding the data accurately. This discovery ignited a lifelong passion in Lonergan to research human knowing.

3.2.3. Lonergan and Aquinas: The Challenges that Lonergan Took Up

The seventeenth century witnessed two significant shifts in the history of thought. The first was the scientific revolution, which pushed for a shift from Aristotle to modern, contemporary sciences.[163] During the Scientific Revolution, two theoretical drives emerged: the Aristotelian and the modern. The Aristotelian drive emphasized certainty, necessity, and metaphysical causality. The second was a critical philosophical movement, initiated by modern philosophers such as Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Hegel. This theoretical drive is more expansive, refined, and developed. etc. It aims to provide a comprehensive explanation of all data and emphasizes the development, probability, pluralism, and expansion of possible causal expressions.[164] Given these two contextual changes, the thought of Aquinas required radical rethinking. Lonergan responded with four main works.[165]

After he was introduced to Aquinas, he used the rest of his time to ascend to the mind of Aquinas. Hence, he wrote his dissertation on *Aquinas's Operative Grace*. This was serious work, trying to reconcile human freedom with God's attributes of all-powerfulness, all-knowingness, and salvific will. This was a great achievement Lonergan made in Thomistic theology.

Another important work Lonergan wrote on Aquinas was *Verbum: Words and Ideas in Aquinas.* In this work, Lonergan studies Aquinas' Trinitarian analogy as found in the *Summa Theologiae.*

[163] Modern empirical scientific revolution in philosophy, contemporary is concerned with historical consciousness.

[164] Nelson Falcao, *Knowing According to Bernard Lonergan* (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1987), 17

[165] Falcao, *Knowing According to Bernard Lonergan*, 17-18

Consequently, he delved into the heart of Aquinas' cognitional theory, an analysis of the human act of understanding.[166] This is why, sometimes, the assumption prevailed that he had begun his academic life as a Thomist, with the five *Verbum* articles marking the completion of this phase, and from that basis had gone on to incorporate into his thinking developments from the seven centuries that followed Thomas.[167] Some would rate it as the fundamental breakthrough in the history of his thought. Certainly, it holds a key position in the sequence, with the two masterpieces that followed: *Insight, the Study of Human Understanding,* and *Method in Theology*.

These works depend on each other: *Insight* depends on *Verbum,* and *Method in Theology* depends on *Insight*. In other words, *Insight* stands between these two works. *Insight*: *The Study of Human Understanding* will be our main focus without prejudice to the other two of Lonergan's works. We shall make considerable references to these works. The main purpose of insight is to attain insight… but into the act illustrated by insight into the insight...[168] Lonergan's primary intention in *Insight* is knowledge.

3.3 Describing the Acts of Insight

According to Lonergan, Insight is not merely a passive process but a dynamic, active process involving questioning, reflection, and refinement. It transforms experiential data into structured knowledge. It is self-assembling and self-constituting. It puts itself together one operation, summoning forth the next till the whole is reached.[169] These operations are conscious, rational, and intelligent. No single operation constitutes complete human knowing.

Insight stands between judgment and experience. Without insight, there can be no judgment or experience since there will be nothing understood to be judged, and experience will be just in

[166] Lonergan, *Verbum*, vii.
[167] Lonergan, *Verbum*, vii.
[168] Lonergan, *Insight*, 32.
[169] Bernard Lonergan, *Collection,* ed. F.E Crowe, S.J (London: Darton Longman, 1967), 223.

potency to be understood. In identifying acts of insight, we navigate through experiences, understanding, and judging. These acts must be taken together, since they contain and complete one another. When judging, we presuppose understanding and experience; similarly, understanding is possible if there is data to be understood and eventually judged.[170]

3.3.1 Lonergan's Three Philosophical Questions in *Insight*

Material in the *Insight* is divided into three parts, each addressing a related question. The first part is cognitional theory, and the related question is: What am I doing when I am knowing? It is a question about the activity of knowing. It covers the first ten chapters of *Insight*. It is an exercise in becoming aware of the components and unity of our knowing. We discovered that knowing is a structure of three components: experiencing, understanding, and judging.

These acts of Insight are not expressed in metaphysical terms as they were in Aquinas. On the contrary, in Lonergan's *Insight*, Metaphysics is expressed in cognitional terms and established by the cognitional principle. This has been our focus in this chapter. To understand what is to understand: not the content of understanding but the acts in understanding. The answer to this question will be derived from the data of consciousness, that is, cognitional theory.

The second part is epistemology, and the related question is, why am I doing that, knowing? This question will lead us to epistemology and philosophy of science. This is not our concern for now. The third part is metaphysics, and the question is, what do I know when I have known it? This brings us to metaphysics. It is a shift from the activities of knowing to the content of knowing, which is being. This will be our concern in the subsequent chapter when we shall relate knowing to being.

[170] Lonergan, *Collection*, 221-238.

3.3.2 Experiencing

Experiencing, in Lonergan's philosophy of knowing, constitutes the foundational level upon which understanding and judgment are built. It is not a merely passive reception of sensory impressions, nor can it be reduced to empiricism understood as a simple appeal to sense data.[171] Rather, experiencing is an intentional and conscious act in which the subject attends to the data of sense and the data of consciousness. In this respect, Lonergan treats experience not primarily as an object possessed by the knower, but as an activity performed by the knowing subject.[172] Experience is therefore already situated within the dynamic structure of human knowing, for it provides the material upon which inquiry operates, while at the same time remaining incomplete until it is carried forward into understanding and judgment.

This position enables Lonergan to distinguish his account of knowledge from those of Plato, Aristotle, and Kant. Plato, in grounding knowledge in the world of immutable Forms and in the doctrine of reminiscence, tends to regard sensory experience as a limitation rather than as a genuine condition of knowing. His account consequently gives priority to a static and ideal source of knowledge over the concrete operations of the human subject. Yet Cooper's interpretation of Plato's account of sense perception and knowledge suggests that sensation, when mediated by judgment, can contribute to knowledge.[173] This qualification is important because it reveals the inadequacy of any epistemology that dismisses sensation altogether. Nevertheless, Plato's emphasis on immutable Forms leaves knowledge insufficiently

[171] We consider empiricism as a form of intuition where knowing is reduced to direct experience of sensation.

[172] Eugene Webb, *Philosophers of Consciousness/ Polanyi, Lonergan* (London: University of Washington, 1988), 60.

[173] Jon M. Cooper, *Plato on Sense-Perception and Knowledge* (*Theaetetus,* 184-186). Phronesis 15, no. 1 (January 1, 1970): 123-146.

connected to the active and developmental process by which human beings actually come to know.

Aristotle corrects this Platonic tendency by rejecting the theory of innate ideas and by locating the beginning of knowledge in experience. In the final book of the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle argues that knowledge of first principles arises through a process that begins with perception, becomes memory, develops into experience, and finally yields universal understanding.[174] In this respect, Aristotle rightly recognizes that knowledge begins from experience rather than from innate recollection. However, Lonergan advances beyond Aristotle by insisting that knowledge does not merely begin with experience; it also transcends experience through the further acts of understanding and judgment. Experience supplies the data, but understanding grasps intelligibility within the data, and judgment affirms whether what has been understood is in fact so. Thus, understanding mediates between experience and judgment, while judgment completes the process of knowing.

The limitation in Aristotle's account becomes clearer when experience is reduced to the combination of sensation and memory. Aristotle states that "In man, experience comes into being from memory."[175] Memory, as an internal sense, preserves data received either through the external senses or through consciousness. Yet Aristotle does not sufficiently distinguish sensation from experience. Sensation may occur automatically when the relevant sense organ is functioning and is exposed to sensible data. Experience, however, requires more than the mere occurrence of sensation; it involves conscious attention to what is given. Without this qualification, Aristotle's account risks placing sensation and experience on the same level, thereby reducing knowing either to sense experience or to a mere act of "taking a look." Such

[174] Peter Adamson, *Posterior Analytics 2.19*: *A Dialogue With Plato*? In the *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Supplement*, no. 107 (2010): 1–19. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44214915. May 17, 2025.

[175] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, G Apostle, trans. In *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* Jonathan Barnes, ed. Vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 980b25.

a reduction would leave knowledge vulnerable to the very Platonic problem Aristotle sought to overcome, since it would not adequately explain how sensory data become intelligible and judgable within the subject's cognitional process.

Kant offers a further correction by recognizing that sensation is not purely passive. For Kant, sensation is the effect of an object upon the subject's capacity for representation.[176] Sensation therefore includes both receptive and active dimensions: external objects affect the senses, but the mind gives form to what is received through its a priori structures. On this account, raw sensation does not by itself constitute experience; it must be organized by the mind into coherent experience. Kant's distinction between the pure concepts of understanding and empirical experience is significant because it acknowledges the active role of the subject in knowing. However, Kant's account remains limited because the a priori categories function as fixed structures that condition experience in advance. Consequently, knowledge is restricted to what appears within the framework imposed by the mind, and the subject does not directly know reality as it is, but only reality as mediated through these fixed categories.

Lonergan appropriates Kant's insight into the active role of the subject but transforms it by rejecting the notion that knowing consists in applying fixed mental categories to sensory data. For Lonergan, the subject's activity is not primarily categorical but heuristic, dynamic, and interrogative. Human knowing unfolds through experiencing, understanding, and judging, and objects become known only through these structured cognitional operations. Thus, Lonergan does not deny that sensations occur naturally. He writes:

"Unless one is deaf, one cannot avoid hearing; unless one is blind, one has only to open one's eyes to see. The occurrence and the content of sensation stand in some immediate correlation

[176] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* B34.

with outer circumstances."[177] Sensation, then, is correlated with external conditions, but sensation alone is not yet full experience in the strict cognitional sense.

For Lonergan, the movement from sensation to perception already involves a transformation of the sensory flow. Sensations are completed by memory and prolonged by imaginative acts of anticipation, and this transformed flow constitutes perception.[178] Memory and imagination therefore play an essential role in organizing sensation into a more coherent field of experience. Moreover, experience is not governed simply by the mechanical relation between sense organs and external objects. Lonergan identifies within experience an immanent factor variously named conation, interest, attention, and purpose.[179] This means that experiencing is shaped by the subject's attentive and purposive orientation toward data. In the strict sense, experience is consciousness of the data of sense,[180] and it is immanent within the subject's cognitional operations.[181] It is an act of apprehending and attending to the data of sense and the data of consciousness.[182]

Therefore, Lonergan's account of experience provides a more adequate foundation for metaphysics than the positions of Plato, Aristotle, or Kant taken in isolation. Against Plato, Lonergan affirms the indispensable role of experience in knowing. Against Aristotle, he distinguishes sensation from experience and shows that experience becomes cognitively significant only within the broader movement toward understanding and judgment. Against Kant, he preserves the active role of the subject without reducing knowing to the imposition of fixed a priori categories. Experience, in Lonergan's sense, is the first level of a dynamic,

[177] Lonergan, *Insight*, 29

[178] Lonergan, *Insight*, 96

[179] Lonergan Insight 205.

[180] A datum of sense may be defined as the content of an act of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, or smelling. The cognitional process begins with data of sense and advances through insights and formulations to reach reflection and judgment. The data of consciousness consists of acts of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, judging, and so forth.

[181] Facao, *Knowing, According to Bernard Lonergan*, 53.

[182] Lonergan, *Insight*, 99

conscious, and intentional process that opens the subject to intelligibility and truth. No inquiry is possible without sense data, and no inquiry into the data of consciousness is possible without the experience of inquiry itself. Thus, experience is not complete knowledge, but it is the indispensable beginning of the cognitional process through which the subject moves toward understanding, judgment, and ultimately the affirmation of being.

3.3.3 Experience and Notion of Consciousness

A key defining term for experience is consciousness. There are many ways the term consciousness is understood in contemporary contexts. Our aim here is not to make a broad comparison of the use of the word consciousness. Our focus, instead, is on Lonergan's understanding of consciousness in relation to experience. Lonergan states that "By consciousness, is meant an awareness immanent in cognitional acts."[183] It is the subject's internal experience of himself and his acts. It is not some kind of inward-looking.[184]

Plato, Descartes, and Kant consider consciousness to be inward-looking, equating knowledge with the content of their inner perceptions or with merely looking at their consciousness. Consciousness for Lonergan has to do not with the contents of knowing but with the acts that lead to these contents. It is the experience of experiencing, understanding and judging. Hence, a conscious experience is the experience of the act of experiencing, not an awareness of that which is experienced.

3.3.7 Levels of Consciousness

The three levels of cognitional act correspond to three levels of consciousness, which form a unity of consciousness.[185] Consciousness, as we have defined it earlier, is immanent in the

[183] Lonergan, *Insight*, 346
[184] Lonergan, *Insight*, 344
[185] The active capacity for such unified, conscious, dynamic intentions Lonergan calls the transcendental notion. They are interrelated and cumulative. Understanding built upon experience, critical reflection reflects upon the understanding it seeks to verify.

cognitional activities of experience, understanding and judgement. Different kinds of acts have distinctive types of consciousness: empirical, intelligent, and rational.[186] The contents of these levels are cumulative. They form unities such that what is experienced is what is understood, and what is understood is what is judged. The object judged is one whole and forms a unit, so the acts in the subject form unity. Conscious acts are not so many isolated, random atoms of knowing, but many acts amalgamate into a single knowing.[187]

3.3.8 Polymorphism of Human Consciousness and Patterns of Experience

Polymorphism means that something can appear in different forms. When we talk about it in the context of human consciousness, we're pointing to the many layers and dimensions of our awareness, thoughts, and experiences of reality. This manifestation depends on the individual's context and activities, allowing our consciousness to be active in different ways and for different purposes. Lonergan identifies various patterns of consciousness, including biological, aesthetic, intellectual, dramatic, and mystical.

The biological pattern of experience is the first and is shared with other animals. At this level, the external senses are the key players, and extroversion is a basic characteristic of this pattern.[188] It organises our environment for our survival. It involves a routine concerning feeding, rest, reproduction, survival, and self-defence that pertain to the biological aspects of human life. To move to the next pattern, we must satisfy our basic biological needs. For example, if you are hungry, you cannot concentrate on other things like studying philosophy because your consciousness will focus on hunger.

An aesthetic pattern emerges above the biological pattern of experience. It is an experience of joy and beauty. It liberates experience from the drag of biological purposiveness and also frees

[186] Lonergan, *Insight*, 349.
[187] Lonergan, *Insight*, 349.
[188] Lonergan, *Insight*, 207.

intelligence from the wearying constraints of mathematical proofs, scientific verifications, and common-sense factualness. It offers freedom from both biological demands and the expectations of intelligence. While reading a novel, we do not criticize it; while composing music, we do not engage in metaphysical thinking.[189]

The intellectual pattern involves a desire to know, asking questions and giving answers, weighing evidence, etc. It is a search for the truth, for which the facts are represented. It is not easy to enter this pattern, and even once in it, one cannot stay there for long. It depends on aptitude for training, age and development, and on circumstances and opportunities to work towards given problems. To be talented is to find that one's experience slips easily into the intellectual pattern and insight comes readily.[190]

The mystical pattern of consciousness is not mentioned in the *Insight*. However, Lonergan acknowledges it in two places.[191] It is the experience of grace in prayer. It is the experience of God's presence in different degrees and modes. When in this pattern, our minds are conscious in a very different way than when listening to a lecture or writing an essay. We are simply in love with God. We may ask questions and answer them in an intellectual pattern. The answers may not be satisfying, and hence, we endeavour to enter the mystical pattern where we gain ultimate answers to our questions.[192]

A dramatic pattern is sometimes called a practical pattern, referring to ordinary human life in which man engages in everyday practical work. It seeks to have things done. We decide, we choose our values, and we relate to other people. This is the most complicated pattern because

[189] Lonergan, *Insight,* 207.
[190] Lonergan, *Insight,* 210.
[191] Lonergan, *Insight*, 602, 758.
[192] Lonergan, Insight, 210-214.

all sorts of conscious and unconscious forces are involved and conflict with one another. Each of these patterns corresponds to a specific activity or the way people engage with the world.[193] The problem with the polymorphism of human consciousness is that it's all mixed up, making it difficult to distinguish between different states. We transition from sleeping to praying, listening to lectures, playing football, driving, and so on, all within a few minutes, yet we remain the same person. etc. All these involve different patterns of experience. It proves to be hard to be detached and pure in our knowing. Most of the time, we find ourselves influenced by prejudice, bias, feelings, patriotism, loyalty to the self, family, clan, country, self-interest, etc.

3.3.9 Lonergan and the Phenomenon of Presence

Understanding how Lonergan discusses presence is key to grasping his view of consciousness. For him, presence is strongly connected to human consciousness and self-transcendence. It describes the way people genuinely and meaningfully encounter themselves and others.[194] There are two kinds of presence. One is material presence, which doesn't involve any awareness, for example, a car simply being in the garage. The other is intentional presence, which does involve consciousness or knowing. There are two main forms of this second kind. First, there's the way an object is present to a subject, for example, how a chair is present to someone. Second, there's the way a subject is present to themselves. This last type of presence, subject presence to the subject, is what catches our understanding of consciousness. Lonergan describes it as a presence in, as it were, another dimension, concomitant, correlative, and opposite to the presence of the object.[195]

We experience objects by paying attention to them, but we're present as subjects not by being attended to, but by attending. Things become objects for us because our consciousness directs

[193] Lonergan, *Insight*, 214

[194] Bernard J.F Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 3-20. Though he does not explicitly talk about presence but his exposition suggests the phenomenon of presence.

[195] Lonergan, *Collection,* 226.

itself toward them. But we are not conscious of ourselves in the same way that we are conscious of those objects. The subject experiences not only the object but also its subjective cognitive acts.

By attending to the object of consciousness, consciousness becomes intentional, that is, it is directed towards an object. The conscious subject exists through its own awareness. It doesn't become conscious by turning into just another thing; rather, it is that very consciousness itself. The subject is not something that exists behind consciousness; instead, it is that which is conscious. To know oneself as a subject, one must recognize oneself as the conscious subject, not as an object among objects.[196]

Many authors use the term 'consciousness' to denote being awake or to refer to anything that occurs in the mind. This could lead to considerable confusion, as it would place dogs and other animals on the same level as human beings. While dogs may be aware of a given object, their consciousness does not constitute their subjective cognitive awareness. Therefore, by consciousness, we refer to an awareness inherent in cognitional acts. This applies not only to experiencing but also to understanding and judging.

3.4. Understanding

At the level of experience, the data of consciousness includes experiencing, perceiving, imagining, remembering, etc. Our concern is not with the objects but with the acts that bring them about. At the level of experience, the data is not yet defined or clarified. It is potent to be understood. Understanding comprises the processes of inquiry, insight, and concept and hypothesis formulation.[197]

[196] Lonergan, Insight, 344.
[197] Falcao, *Knowing According to Bernard Lonergan,* 56.

While the data and intelligibility can change, the act of understanding itself does not change since it is prior to the data. In his article *Lonergan and Kant*: *Five Essays on Human Knowledge,* Giovan Sala, comparing Kant and Lonergan, points out the difference between Lonergan and Kant when he said that while Kant imposes the a priori conditions of sensibility and understanding to make experience and consequently understanding possible, Lonergan instead moves away from Kantian intuitionism by posing questions to the data and making an effort to understand it.[198] What is a priori in Lonergan is neither a concept nor a form of space and time, but the capacity to question.

In this regard, what makes a transition from experiencing to understanding, and eventually to judging, possible is the innate capacity to question the data of experience rather than the fixed concepts in the mind. questions about the data and making an effort to understand it.[199] What is a priori in Lonergan is neither a concept nor a form of space and time, but the capacity to question. In this regard, what makes a transition from experiencing to understanding, and eventually to judging, possible is the innate capacity to question the data of experience rather than the fixed concepts in the mind.

3.4.1. Genesis of the Act of Human Understanding

The act of understanding is at the centre of the whole edifice of the cognitional structure. All other operations prepare for it or presuppose it. In his book *Phenomenology of Human Understanding*, Cronin outlines the genus and species of human understanding. Genus provides the basis for all acts of human understanding, while species are particular acts, such as direct, inverse, or reflective insight.[200] We opine that this distinction is between a subjective act and the objective correlate or content of the act.

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[198] Giovan B Sala, *Lonergan and Kant*: *Five Essays on Human Knowledge* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015),

[199] Giovan B Sala, *Lonergan and Kant*: *Five Essays on Human Knowledge* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015),

[200] Cronin, *Phenomenology of Human Understanding,* 62.

3.4.2. Generic Conditions of the Acts of Understanding

All human knowing occurs under certain conditions. The conditions outlined here we shall call generic, since they act as a prototype to all kinds of human knowing. They form the basis of the acts of understanding. Cronin identifies these conditions as: the desire to know, active and passive components, and abstract ideas that emerge from images. Having identified these generic conditions, it is necessary to examine them more closely, beginning with the desire to know, since this desire functions as the dynamic orientation that initiates and sustains the entire process of human understanding.

The desire to know initiates the act of understanding. In ancient philosophy, Plato, in his dialogue *Theaetetus,* claims that knowledge begins with wonder.[201] Wonder is the intriguing desire to understand the data presented to us. Aristotle also, in his *Metaphysics*, affirms that by nature all men desire understanding.[202] Common to Plato and Aristotle is the phenomenon that the desire to know is innate in all human beings. Coming to know is like introducing light into the darkness, making things visible. The data of experience, in itself, is like darkness, and man's desire is like a light that makes the potential data of experience actually known, thereby dispelling the darkness from experience. The initiative starts from the mind by posing questions to the data of experience to understand it. The questioning does not come from the objects but originates from within the subject; it is dynamic and spontaneous.[203]

Husserl, drawing on the insight of Franz Brentano, connects all mental activities to their referent object. In other words, every mental act must have an object. The desire to know is a mental act; therefore, it must be defined in terms of a desire for something. In our case, it is a desire to know. There is intentionality in our questioning; in this instance, questioning seeks a

[201] Plato, *Theaetetus,* in *Plato Complete Works,* Cooper, John M., Hutchinson, eds. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 155d

[202] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a

[203] Cronin, *Phenomenology of Human Understanding*, 66-67.

particular answer. Without a question, no answer will be attained. This is intrinsic to understanding and is constituted in knowing.

The Active Element

In the traditional Western epistemology, knowing has been conceived as a practice of relating what is in the mind and that which we experience out there now. In such a process, the knowledge acquired becomes objective in the sense that it is independent of the observers. In his objection to traditional epistemology, Ernst von Glasersfeld proposes an alternative theory he calls radical constructivism. This theory of knowing offers a pragmatic approach to questions about reality and human understanding. Radical constructivism is based on two key ideas: we actively build our own knowledge, and we don't passively receive it. Cognition serves to adopt the experiential world rather than revealing the ontological reality.[204]

This theory does not differ from that of Plato and other intuitionists, who reduce knowing to mere looking. In this case, the looking is not directed outward but inward to satisfy the psychological urge. Knowing turns out to be subjective, and the notion of objectivity is underestimated. This has been a problem during modern times: how to bridge subjective conditions and objective contents. Lonergan, on the other hand, although influenced by the same approaches, transforms them into a reality where subjective conditions and objective contents intersect.[205]

To produce an act of understanding, according to Lonergan, we need not only the desire and questions that will direct our knowing, but also to engage in some active operations. The active elements in our understanding presuppose experience. To ask questions, we must have an experience that triggers the questioning. We ask questions about what we have experienced.

[204] Gráinne Walshe, *Radical Constructivism von Glasersfeld*, 359–71. Springer, Cham, 2020

[205] Keith Roscoe, *Lonergan's Theory of Cognition, Constructivism and Science Education*. *Science Education* 13, no. 6 (August 1, 2004): 541–51.

We do not ask questions about nothing. All human knowing, then, requires both the question of intelligence and the data of experience. This can be either real data, like colour, or imagined data, or a memory, etc.[206] The question of intelligence seeks to grasp an intelligible from the data of experience. Questions of intelligence are questions such as "what?" Why? and when etc.

Such a question, as we noted earlier, presupposes a given experience. The activity in this stage is to gather materials and organise them into a coherent structure that reveals answers to our questions. Unlike the constructivists and Kant, Lonergan does not construct reality as such. He works with the received data and poses relevant questions that help the subject understand the object. These questions are active elements in our process of knowing. Without questioning, knowing will remain static, as taking a look.

Passive Element

Though the active elements are essential to the act of understanding, they only form outer conditions for an act of understanding. Human understanding is governed by internal conditions that sometimes play a passive role in arriving at an understanding. The passive element of human understanding is out of our control. We cannot predict it, nor can we control it. It is passive in us. There are no rules or procedures to follow to achieve understanding. We desire to know that we do all we can, but we wait for it to come; there is no way to force it. We are not in full control of the stream of our act of understanding.[207] The mind is unlike a machine that operates automatically on a schedule and with predictability. Our learning cannot be controlled regularly. Our task is to create an environment where insight can emerge. Such inner conditions include questioning and seeking solutions.

[206] Cronin, *Phenomenology of Human Understanding*, 74
[207] Cronin, *Phenomenology of Human Understanding*, 77.

3.4.3 Notion of Abstraction

The doctrine of abstraction is essential to the study of knowing. It goes back not only to ancient times but also extends its influence even to medieval and modern times. Aristotle and Aquinas both agree that the human mind forms concepts through abstraction, in which it grasps universal concepts from images created by the perception of external objects. There are two ways of looking at abstraction: one is objective, and the other is subjective.

The positions taken by Aristotle and Aquinas are objective in the sense that they give attention to the object. Objects and truth exist independently of the subject. Knowledge is acquired through empirical observation and experience. Modern philosophers turned the whole doctrine into a matter of subjectivity, giving the subject greater importance. Truth and objects are mind-dependent.

These two perspectives have divided philosophers into two extreme positions, namely realism and idealism. Lonergan, though influenced by these perspectives, is neither an idealist nor a realist; instead, he takes a middle ground between the two. We consider his position to be a form of critical realism. This is because he integrates his experience, understanding, and judgment into his system to establish knowledge. The rational operation of the rational consciousness affirms the objective reality.

3.4.3.1 Formal Abstraction

In its scholastic sense, the word abstraction referred to the process of grasping concepts from sensible data. Formal abstraction, then, involves separating the concepts from their material attachment. Knowledge was considered perfect only if it was detached from its materiality. Formal abstraction occurs at three levels; we yield three levels of knowledge, variously called the three levels of abstraction.

The first level is a physical abstraction; the objects of abstraction, although they are considered to be a principle of individuation, remain clothed in their bodies. They can neither exist without bodies nor be understood without them.[208] At the second level, the mathematical level, the objects are abstracted and purified from matter. These objects, unlike the first, cannot exist without matter but are understood without matter; quantities, numbers. The third level consists of the objects which do not exist in the sensible and are understood independently of the sensible. These are objects proper to metaphysics. The matter has been eliminated or may never have existed in the material, such as God, angels, spirits, or substances: acts, potency, goodness, beauty, etc.[209]

3.4.3.2 Total Abstraction

In this kind of abstraction, the mind rises above the particular and progresses to grasping the universals. It begins from the general reality of undifferentiated notions and advances toward greater determination. It is the abstraction of the universal whole progressing by larger and larger universals. This type of abstraction forms the foundation of all human knowledge and is found across all sciences. For instance, we derive the concept of "man" from individuals like Peter and James, and from "man" we generalize to "animal," and so on.[210]

3.4.4 Lonergan and the Notion of Abstraction

Abstraction in Lonergan is an auxiliary process that forwards movement in the activity of understanding. Unfortunately, abstraction during the scholastic period has been conceived as a negative separation: moving away from the concrete world. This, in turn, makes the abstraction

[208] Jacque Maritain, *The Degree of Knowledge* (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1938), 44.

[209] Edward D. Simmons, *The Thomistic Doctrine of the Three Degrees of Formal Abstraction, The Thomist* 22, no. 1 (1959): 37–67. The above levels of abstraction can properly be called formal abstraction, *abstraction formalis,* In this kind of abstraction speculative sciences are distinguished from each other.

[210] Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 47.

process itself very abstract and static. We shall consider that abstraction is positive: in this sense, it is an enrichment of the concrete living by means of human activity of intelligence.[211]

Abstraction is then understood as an act of grasping the essential and avoiding the inessential: apprehending the intelligible in the sensible, the general in particular, and arriving at insight. The significance of this understanding from Lonergan is that abstraction is dynamic and heuristic: it allows for the further development of knowledge, since there will always be empirical residue in our understanding, data left to be understood later.[212]

3.4.4.1 Three Stages of Abstractions in Lonergan

At the core of Lonergan's theory of how we know is the idea of abstraction. It's his way of explaining how we move from simply having experiences to gaining insight and finally making judgments about them. He points out different kinds of abstractions, showing that knowledge is not just made of concepts; it also grows out of the ways we actively use our minds. Lonergan is not a conceptualist, as some portray him. According to Lonergan, knowing is not an application of fixed concepts abstracted from the mind to the data of experience. Lonergan argues that abstraction is dynamic, which means concepts are not fixed but evolve as understanding deepens. Concepts emerge from the prior acts of insight and are cumulative. In this way, we advocate for a dynamic, evolving concept of abstraction rather than a static process.

The Objective Stage

This stage is known as the objective stage, since insight anticipates an object in the sensory data. The intellect asks questions to uncover what is to be known. This stage consists of the illumination of imagination or phantasm. This is done by the spirit of wonder and enquiry. What is presented in the sensible is not only something to be felt but something to be

[211] Brian Cronin, *Foundation of Philosophy,* 166.

[212] Roscoe Keith. *Lonergan's Theory of Cognition, Constructivism and Science Education*. *Science Education* 13, no. 6 (August 1, 2004): 541–51.

understood. Lonergan states that: Abstraction, in its essential moments, is enriching, even when data is impoverished. It begins with an enriching anticipation of the intelligibility that will be added to a sensible presentation. There's something to be known through insight.[213]

The Intellect starts by paying attention to what we experience and noticing patterns or key elements in the world around us. At this point, it doesn't force its own ideas onto what it sees. Instead, it simply asks questions about the things it takes in, trying to make sense of them.

Apprehensive Stage

This is the moment of realization of the heuristic structure and anticipating the object to be known. This stage means an insight into the imagination. Unlike Dun Scotus, Descartes, Kant, etc, it is not merely taking a look at what is presented by the senses or imagination: knowing the universal independent of their modes of singularity. The mind knows what is intelligible, and a universal concept in the mind has its mode of universality in the mind; these exist outside the mind in another mode of singularity. Abstraction at this moment adds intelligibility to the concrete. This is still a transitional stage where understanding begins to take shape. The concepts are not well organised into a wider context and application.[214]

Formative Stage

This is a final stage, and it involves critical reflection and judgment. The insight gained in the second stage is evaluated for validity and coherence. This is a stage of formulating and expressing ideas in concept. It comes with a definition after reflection. At this stage, the negative element of abstraction appears. We omit irrelevant data and focus on accurately expressing abstract relations.

Separation is just a temporal one to return to the concrete. It is neither absolute nor definitive. This is because the empirical residue embodies the universal property of what intelligence

[213] Lonergan, *Insight*, 88.
[214] Cronin, *Foundation of Philosophy,*167.

abstracts. This universal property forms the basis for a second set of heuristic procedures grounded in the simple premise that the non-systematic cannot be systematized.[215] Abstraction, then, is a process of enriching rather than separating. Separation comes at a later stage, to formulate a theory that can be used later to return to the concrete and explain it.

In the *Insight*, Lonergan identifies two types of insight: direct and indirect. This is important for us to examine to see how our approach goes beyond the philosophy of enlightenment and also phenomenology. Direct insight occurs when we grasp the intelligibility of the situation, concept or problem. We become aware of a solution to a problem that we previously did not know how to solve; we suddenly see the point and understand the reason behind it.[216] Direct insight aligns with empiricism in that it emerges from experience. However, we must note that Lonergan does not admit passivity on the part of the subject. Hence, he goes beyond empiricism by emphasizing the active role of the mind in recognizing the patterns in the experience.

Direct insight in Lonergan also goes beyond the rationalism of Descartes and Kant. Though he incorporates their rationalism, he rejects the idea that knowledge is purely innate. The phenomenologies of Heidegger and Husserl focus primarily on subjective experience[217] and intentionality. They consider consciousness as an important element in the interpretation of reality, understood as intentional. Lonergan also shares this emphasis on consciousness; however, he insists on the structured process rather than purely subjective interpretation of knowing.

Inverse insight on the other end occurs when we realize that the previously expected intelligibility is missing. Instead of affirming it, inverse insight negates that there is any intelligibility. We realize that the point is that there is no point, or that the solution is to deny

[215] Lonergan, *Insight*, 88-89
[216] Lonergan, *Insight*, 44.
[217] Husserl and Heidegger, and other phenomenologists, focus on the subjective experience of consciousness, which is considered pure and detached.

that a solution exists.[218] Inverse insight also challenges empiricism, in that knowledge is not merely the accumulation of sensible data but also the self-correction of false assumptions.

3.5 Notion Judgment

Human knowing is dynamic; each stage opens the way to a higher level of knowing. The data of experience is the potential for understanding. When the right question of intelligence is posed, such as what it is, why it is here, and who is this, etc, we move from sensations to experiencing and to understanding. The questions of intelligence allow the data of sense to be understood. Again, the questions for reflection make the data understood to be affirmed as true or false. Lonergan's move from understanding to judgment represents a distinctive shift that sets him apart from most modern philosophers. He places greater emphasis on judgment as the capstone of knowing. The cognitional process culminates, when fully accomplished, in a reflective judgement. At this level, interpretation is comprehensive and the best that one can think of for the time being.[219]

3.5.1 An Analysis of an Act of Judgment

Insight without judgment would be incomplete knowledge. Insight, as such, presupposes both experience and judgment. Experience provides data that can be understood and formulated into concepts. Judgment will establish that what is understood is true or false. Judgment offers a transition from thinking to knowing, from fiction to fact, from subjectivity to objectivity. Truth in modern times is neglected, something that is negatively affecting modern culture. The truth is displaced with what is useful, what brings pleasure, what is successful, etc.

[218] Lonergan, *Insight*, 44

[219] Eugene Webb, *Philosophers of Consciousness: Polanyi, Lonergan* (London: University of Washington, 1988), 60-61

3.5.2. The Act of Judgment in Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant

Aristotle

Aristotle presents judgment as a synthesis of terms: the subject and predicate terms. A predicate modifies a subject term either by affirming or denying it. In the *Posterior Analytics,* Aristotle gives several examples, and most of these are simply suppositions. When, for instance, someone says, John will come tomorrow. This proposition is neither true nor false because the event has not happened yet.

A proposition that John is sick can also be true only when it is affirmed to be such. What is missing in Aristotle is the affirmation of the synthesis. Aquinas inherited the Aristotelian language of composition and division. He thence describes judgment in terms of composition and division.[220] Unlike Aristotle, Aquinas had a clear understanding of the distinction between a proposition, a synthesis of terms, and judgment, an affirmation of the truth about that synthesis.

In judgment, an intellect unites or composes. The predicate is truly united with the subject.[221] In this case, the form that is signified by the predicate is joined with the subject to form a proposition such as John is tall. In saying that, something is not, an intellect separates. In this case, it says the form signified by the predicate is not joined completely to the subject. Although Aquinas makes some significant developments of Aristotle's notion of judgment by presenting the two acts of intellect, he largely remains in metaphysical terms. He does not explain what happens in the process of dividing and composing.

[220] Giovanni B. Sala, *Intentionality versus Intuition, Lonergan and Kant: Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, trans. Joseph Spoerl, ed. Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 101.

[221] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae De Veritate*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan, S.J., Q. 1, a. 3, accessed June 3, 2025. https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/QDdeVer.htm

Descartes

The criterion of true judgment in Descartes was the clear and distinct ideas.[222] Descartes considers that whatever is clear and distinct is true. On the contrary, whatever is not clear and distinct is not true. In our opinion, Descartes fails to distinguish the acts of understanding. He makes them one act of intuition. [223] Accordingly, he argues that we shouldn't focus on what others think or on our own guesses. Instead, we should look for what we can clearly see and be sure of what we can understand directly or reason out with certainty. Descartes conceives that this is the only way we really gain knowledge.

In this sense, then, Descartes suggests that our knowledge is of our inner ideas that are clearly and distinctly perceived. We grasp these ideas through intellectual intuition. Knowing and judgment are nothing but looking at our inner ideas. Descartes fails to explain how these ideas represent the outer world out there; hence, he ends up in a kind of solipsism.

Kant

Kant systematically examines the logical structure of judgment. He distinguishes between synthetic judgment and analytic judgment.[224] While it was commonly accepted that synthetic judgments are always a *posteriori* and analytic judgments are a *priori*, Kant wants to justify the possibility of synthetic a priori judgments. What is missing in Kant is the distinction between a proposition and personal affirmation. Kant takes them to be one. Cronin points out that a proposition is one thing, and personal affirmation is another.[225] A proposition is a synthesis of terms that will require an affirmation or a denial.

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[222] Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Properly Conducting One's Reasoning*, Jonathan Beneth, trans. (Early Modern Texts, 2017), 54.

[223] René Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, trans. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach (Wikisource, 1954), Rule III.

[224] In these forms of Judgments, Kant wanted to examine the relationship between subject and predicate.

[225] Cronin, *Cognitional Theory and Epistemology*, 197

As shown previously, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, and Kant, to cite them as examples of the great figures in the history of philosophy, have failed to grasp the act of judgment correctly. They failed to grasp the distinction between a proposition and the self-affirmation of a proposition. Lonergan has made a great contribution to this; hence, his philosophical position can adequately address the challenges posed by relativism, scepticism, deconstructionism, and constructivism.

3.5.3. Lonergan's Notion of Judgment

In his analysis of the act of judgment, Lonergan offers three approaches: through utterances, sentences and propositions. The proposition is the most general of these. A proposition is an idea that can be expressed in language. This expression invites two different attitudes that give any judgment its characteristic, considering it or affirming it. Judgment is an affirmation of a proposition. Lonergan states that:

> Now, with regard to propositions, there are two distinct mental attitudes: one may merely consider them, or one may agree or disagree with them. Thus, what I write I also affirm; but what you are reading you may neither affirm nor deny but merely consider.[226]

A proposition can simply be something we think about: the content of our acts of imagining, defining, thinking, supposing, or considering. But a proposition can also be what we judge to be true or false. In that case, it's what we affirm or deny, what we agree or disagree with, what we accept or reject.

A proposition, then, may be something to be considered by others for further verification; in this case, it remains at the level of definition or concepts. At another level, it can be considered the content of judgment after verification; hence, it becomes either true or false. In the

[226] Lonergan, *Insight*, 296-297

traditional sense, verification is through the external object. Thus, the truth is conceived as the correspondence between what is in the mind and what is in reality.[227]

The second approach is through two kinds of questions: the question of intelligence that leads to the question of reflection.[228] The questions that lead to judgment differ from those that lead to direct insight. The question of intelligence warrants further clarification and more information. Questions for reflection anticipate different answers, such as simply Yes or No. Did he do that? Is he sick? etc. These questions seek an affirmation or denial of whether something is the case. When I ask you, do you understand? I expect you to say yes/no. When you say it is chemistry, then there is something wrong. Similarly, when asked what the time is, you say yes. This answer does not satisfy the question.

The third approach is that judgment is identified with a personal commitment. At this level, the person makes a personal commitment to what they know and affirm as true. A question for reflection has three possible answers: yes, no, and I don't know. When a person responds to such questions, they make a personal commitment to what they say. Judgment is the responsibility of the one who judges.[229]

Judgment is the final stage of the knowing process. We are left with one question: How can judgment be justified? In other words, how do we know that we know? This has been a perplexing question throughout modern philosophy. In his Metaphysics, Aristotle signals the sign of a person who understands. Accordingly, he states that the sign of understanding is the capacity to teach.[230] This is the capacity to represent concepts in a speech and express them. We consider Aristotle's answer insufficient because someone can teach what they have not

[227] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* Book IV, 7, 1011b25. In his *Metaphysics,* Aristotle defines truth and falsehood as: a falsity is a statement of that which is that it is not, or that which is not that it is not; and a truth is a statement of that which is that it is, or of that which is not that it is not.

[228] Lonergan, *Insight*, 297

[229] Lonergan, *Insight*, 297.

[230] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 981b5.

understood. In Lonergan's perspective, we know that we know through self-appropriation. We become aware of our cognitional processes when we grasp the unconditioned.

Lonergan states that the unconditioned is: "The unconditioned is the combination of a conditioned, a link between the conditioned and its conditions, and the fulfilment of the conditions."[231] We can put the connection between this claim and its conditions like this: I am a knower if I am a concrete, intelligible unity or whole, marked by acts such as sensing, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, grasping what is unconditional. These conditions are fulfilled and given to us in our own conscious experience. The criterion of the truth of our judgment is not some external guarantee but the reflective grasp of the sufficiency of the evidence. When we make a judgment, we know that we know, because we have reached a point where there is no further questioning. The unconditioned is grasped.

3.5.4 Lonergan and Kant's Limitation on Judgment

Kant's account of knowing is rigid and controlled by the fixed categories of the human mind. Lonergan overcomes such rigidity by refining and expanding the scope of human knowing beyond the fixed concepts. Kant limits knowing to phenomena, that which appears to us. According to him, human knowing is structured by a *priori* categories. This makes knowing limited and determined by such fixed concepts.[232]

Lonergan overcomes such limitations in Kant by introducing his concepts of the virtually unconditioned.[233] This concept describes a characteristic of judgment that goes beyond the fixed concepts. It is grounded in rational inquiry. Virtually unconditioned must be distinguished from the formerly unconditioned. Formerly unconditioned has no conditions to be fulfilled. In contrast, virtually unconditioned has conditions and requires that all the

[231] Lonergan, *Insight,* 343-344.
[232] Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A123-124.
[233] Lonergan, *Insight,* 305.

conditions are fulfilled for a given judgment: relevant questions are answered, and no further relevant condition is left.

Virtually unconditioned consists of three elements: conditioned, the link between the conditioned and its conditions and lastly the fulfilment of the conditions. Hence, a prospective judgment will be virtually unconditioned when the three elements mentioned are combined. For example, when I say, if it does not rain, I will go to town, this is a conditional proposition. It does not rain; this is a link between the condition and its fulfilment; therefore, I will go to town, a virtually unconditional judgement. Knowledge is not limited to preconceived and fixed structures; it emerges from critical reflection and verification. An individual becomes aware of his cognitive processes.

3.6 The Notion of Self-Affirmation in Lonergan's Philosophical Framework

Lonergan's three acts of insight don't just help us know things; they also deepen our understanding of ourselves. In this process, the subject is both the one who is affirmed and the one who affirms. For Lonergan, self-affirmation is a factual judgment that plays a central role in his philosophical account of self-knowledge and our grasp of reality. It is more than just being aware that you exist. It means actively engaging with how you understand things, which helps you gain a deeper sense of yourself and the world around you.

Self-affirmation as a knower is significant for us because, as we have stated elsewhere, the cognitive process and its content form a kind of unity that culminates in a whole. Knowing is not linear. Self-affirmation is a personal commitment to making an existential judgment that I am a knower. As a knower, all acts of insight coalesce around the self, and knowing becomes a unified whole. The 'self' in question is the concrete and intelligible unity-identity-whole that I am.[234] The affirmation is a judgment of fact and not a necessary judgment. Knowing is nothing

[234] Lonergan, *Insight*, 343-44.

but the performance of such acts as sensing, imagining, perceiving, judging, etc. These acts are conscious and intentional.[235] It involves an active, dynamic process that integrates the knower's experience, understanding, and judgment into a coherent, meaningful whole.

Aristotle suggested a way to defeat the sceptics: make them say anything, and they will contradict themselves. It is impossible to be a sceptic and speak about anything at the same time. Similarly, no one can be negative about self-affirmation as a knower and remain consistent. It is a fact that cannot be denied. In the *Insight,* Lonergan presents this argument about the self-affirmation of a knower: "Am I a knower? The answer yes is coherent, for if I am a knower, I can know that fact." [236]

From this quote above, there is only one possible answer to the question, "Am I a knower?" The answer is yes. Any other response would be contradictory. Lonergan's philosophy shows just how rich this self-affirmation is, especially in how it shapes our self-knowledge and connects our personal identity to deeper questions about existence. He stresses the importance of going beyond oneself and connects this idea to affirming who you are so that you can develop a deeper understanding and a more genuine sense of self. Acts of insight may be interfered with by biases, and hence, the process may fail to yield objective knowledge. Lonergan identifies four biases that need to be considered: individual bias, group bias, dramatic bias, and general bias.[237]

Individual Bias

Individual bias arises when a person is motivated by self-interest. This kind of bias leads to the incomplete development of intelligence because it goes beyond a merely inherited mentality. It fails to hinge on the initial, preliminary motivation provided by desires and fears, and on the

[235] Nordquest, David A. *Lonergan's Cognitional Theory: Toward A Critical Human Science*. *The Review of Politics* 56, no. 1 (1994): 71–99. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1407568.
[236] Lonergan, *Insight*, 353.
[237] Lonergan *Insight*, 244-252.

self-abnegation involved in allowing complete free play to intelligent inquiry. Its inquiry is reinforced by spontaneous desires and fears; by the same stroke, it is restrained from a consideration of any broader field. Necessarily, such an incompleteness of development is an exclusion of correct understanding.[238]

Dramatic Bias, Group Bias and General Bias

Along with individual bias is a dramatic bias. This happens when a person is controlled by unconscious conditions such as repressed emotions or desires. Most of the time, this bias occurs without our awareness. Group bias is a third, which arises from excessive allegiance to the community or group. It is at the expense of a larger context. For example, loyalty to the tradition may prevent new understanding and adaptability. The most pervasive of all biases is the general bias. It arises from failing to consider the bigger picture.

We may thus define biases as cognitive distortions that affect the process of human understanding, thereby creating a context in which acts of insight are inhibited. Individuals can confront their biases and assumptions by engaging in self-affirmation, leading to a more authentic understanding of themselves and reality. Self-affirmation is a powerful tool that enables us not only to identify these biases but also it is an effective way to overcome them. Self-affirmation helps us to transcend our subjective limitations and move towards authentic insight. The process allows the individuals to grasp the dynamic and polymorphic nature of their minds.

3.7 Objections to Lonergan's Acts of Insight

There are certain objections to Lonergan's cognitional theory. They arise from a misunderstanding of Lonergan's goals in outlining cognitional processes. The cognitional theory is the best among many others. In cognitional theory, or the activity of knowing, we

[238] Lonergan, *Insight*, 245-246.

haven't addressed the knowledge itself or its content. We've focused on the process leading to the content, that is, knowledge.

Critics have levelled criticism at cognitional theory, arguing that Lonergan focuses mostly on the process at the expense of its content. Cornelius Ryan Fay points out that Lonergan gets himself into a critical pickle by concentrating on the structure of knowing rather than the objects known.[239] He thus considers Lonergan to be an idealist or Kantian in orientation rather than a realist. Hence, Lonergan is considered to have deviated from Aquinas's realism. Aquinas considers knowledge, thus, to be the existence of the known in the knower, and the sense attains the real accident of the body.[240] When knowing is reduced to mere sensation or looking, knowledge becomes not only static but also dogmatic.[241] Lonergan strongly rejects the idea that equates seeing with knowledge.

Aquinas talks about two kinds of "seeing." The first is bodily sight: it happens when physical things affect our sense organs, and it stops at what we can perceive with our senses. The second is intellectual sight, which belongs to the active intellect, the part of the mind that makes things truly known. Just as the sun lets us see objects, the active intellect lets us understand them. In this way, for Aquinas, knowing is basically a kind of seeing. This study acknowledges that Lonergan's approach, while initially inspired by Aquinas's cognitional theory, diverges from Aquinas's orientation towards direct realism. Aquinas lacks the objective condition that makes knowledge objective. The objective condition consists of immanent operations that, in themselves, have nothing to contribute to objective human knowing.[242] However, without such

[239] Cornelius Ryan Fay, *Fr. Lonergan and the Participation School, The New Scholasticism* 34, no. 4 (1960): 461–87.

[240] We shall term this a direct realism, or naïve realism.

[241] Edward MacKinnon, *Understanding According to Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.* In The Thomist: *A Speculative Quarterly Review,* Volume 28, Number 4, October 1964, pp. 475-522.

[242] Lonergan, *Insight,* 523.

conditions and immanent operations, knowing is reduced to a mere looking.[243] This study holds that cognitional activity is inherently objective because knowing is intrinsically linked to being.

The second category of objections concerns the validity of Lonergan's entire process of knowing. Does the human mind function in that manner? This is a difficult question because it requires a simple or standard method for evaluating it. Unfortunately, there is no established authority or doctrine against which we can judge the knowing process apart from the knower. The question posed is the question of judgment: is it true? This question requires reflective insight as we examine our processes when making a self-affirmation. The answer to this question can be answered by each individual. Here, Lonergan clarifies his use of the terms.

> By the 'self is meant a concrete and intelligible unity-identity-whole. By 'self-affirmation' is meant that the self both affirms and is affirmed. By 'self-affirmation of the knower', it means that the self as affirmed is characterised by such occurrences as sensing, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, grasping the unconditioned, and affirming.[244]

This dissertation accepts Lonergan's system as true and correct. Edward Mackinnon considers it superior to earlier systems, making it more difficult to oppose.[245] It is superior because it avoids both empiricism's reductions and rationalism's abstraction. While the study supports Mackinnon, thinks Lonergan's system offers the best alternative to epistemology and a path to metaphysics.

In his article, Andres Ayala mistakenly considers Lonergan's notion of experience similar to that of Kant.[246] According to Kant, the faculties of sensibility and understanding do not penetrate each other.[247] The faculty of sensibility is receptive, while the faculty of understanding is active and spontaneous.[248] In an attempt to escape the Kantian approach,

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[243] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 237-238

[244] Lonergan, *Insight*, 345.

[245] Edward M. MacKinnon, Understanding according to Bernard J.F. Lonergan ,S.J. In the Thomist (Vol.28, No. 2 April 1964)

[246] Andres Ayala, *The Weaknesses of Critical Realism: On Lonergan's Cognitional Theory*

[247] Sala*, Lonergan and Kant, 22.*

[248] Mark D. Morelli*, "The Realist Response to Idealism in England and Lonergan's Critical Realism." In the Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies 21 (2003): 1–23.*

Lonergan suggests questioning or the desire to know to replace Kant's category of understanding.[249] Ayala rejects this notion of questioning as a foundation for knowledge. He argues that neither questioning nor the object presupposed has any intelligible content to be known. The question remains: where does the intelligible content come from?

In his conclusion, Ayala restates his position, which downplays experience as the starting point of cognitional theory. He thus states that:

> Lonergan's position on the critical problem could be expressed in this way: What am I doing when I know, if experience is considered as data without organization, meaning and existence?" and "What am I doing when I know, if the content of knowledge can never be more than a subjective modification, in the sense that nobody can know anything outside of him or herself?[250]

As it was mentioned earlier, many of these objections to Lonergan's cognitional theory stem from misunderstandings. To begin with, we contend that sense experience serves as the starting point for further probing questions and knowledge. Question for intelligence and further, the question for reflection leading to judgment.

Ayala's question is: Where does intelligibility come from? Does it arise from the object of sense or from the question itself? The answer is that it does not stem from sense experience but rather from insight or understanding. Insight, as Lonergan states, involves grasping what a being is in terms of its intrinsic principles and causes. This constitutes intellectual knowledge, culminating in judgment. Knowing encompasses all activities: experience, understanding, and judgment. Many critics, such as Ayala, have failed to recognise this as a synthesis of the whole.

In addition, Lonergan's primary objective in developing cognitional theory was not to focus on the content of these activities but rather on the activities that would reveal it. Consequently, our present goal is to transition from the activities to the content, the intrinsic principles of being. This study asserts that activities and their contents must be considered together, as isolating one

[249] *Lonergan, Insight, 34*

[250] Andres Ayala, *The Weaknesses of Critical Realism: On Lonergan's Cognitional Theory, International Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 7, No. 2, 2020. 63-105

aspect may lead to a misinterpretation. Since the object known is a unified whole, the process of acquiring knowledge must also form a unified whole. Isolating an aspect can be highly misleading. In the Preface to Insight, Lonergan states:

> Fifthly, one cannot unify and organize knowing without concluding to a unification and organization of the known. But a unification and organization of what is known in mathematics, in the sciences, and by common sense is a metaphysics. Hence, in the measure that insight into insight unifies and organizes all our knowing, it will imply a metaphysics.[251]

Lonergan posits an intrinsic relationship between knowing and its object. The structure of knowing mirrors the known. Consequently, the structure of knowing is intentional, always directed towards an object. Insight, therefore, is inherently about something. Knowing and the known are intrinsically of similar form. This will be our approach as we transition from insight to the object, from knowing to the content of knowing.

The position we have taken in the analysis of knowing in the Lonergan philosophy presents two alternatives to all but two other approaches to knowing. Firstly, there are those who, like Lonergan, adopt a turn toward the subject as a defining characteristic of the modern philosophical differentiation of consciousness.[252] However, unlike Lonergan, they have failed to work their way through and beyond idealism, subjectivism and relativism. Secondly, those who reject the turn to the subject out of fear of immanentism resort to empiricism, naïve realism, and dogmatism.

Lonergan's success in moving beyond idealism, empiricism, relativism, and dogmatism can be attributed to his reorientation of the modern philosophical differentiation of consciousness. By differentiation of consciousness, Lonergan means the capacity to perform distinct and purposeful operations.[253] The first of these operations is the consciousness itself. He

[251] Lonergan, *Insight,* preface, xi.
[252] Lonergan, *Method In Theology,* 81-85.
[253] Eugene Webb, *Philosophers of Consciousness/ Polanyi, Lonergan* (London: University of Washington, 1988), 72.

understands consciousness as a self-presence immanent in all cognitional operations. Consciousness as an experience enables a shift from Descartes's search for certitude to a search for correct understanding. Similarly, a turn from the epistemological question of Kant, what are the conditions of valid knowing? To the primacy of the cognitive question, what am I doing when I am knowing? In this way, this study considers Lonergan's approach to offer a viable alternative to epistemology and metaphysics, the understanding of being.

Conclusion

Therefore, from the foregoing discussions about the acts of insight in Lonergan's Philosophy, we draw the following conclusion: the question this chapter tried to answer was, What do we do when we are knowing? He therefore concludes that knowing is a process that passes through three stages. It begins with experience and culminates in judgment. Insight hinges between judgment and experience. The three activities must be taken together, such that no single act in isolation can be considered a complete human knowing. Judgment must be a judgment of that which is experienced; similarly, understanding must be taken together with experience and judgment. Hence, knowing is not merely looking.

Secondly, these acts of knowing are not automatic. Each act is intentional in the sense that it is oriented towards an object. Since the current study's aim was not on the content, he did not identify the objects of these orientations. It will be his concern in the discussions that follow. Intentional acts are conscious mental acts. Consciousness involves paying attention to the data we receive. Our state of consciousness or patterns shift every few minutes, and it is important to be aware of these changes to minimise our differences.

Thirdly, to move from the object to knowledge, the intellect must play its role. It must abstract the form from the sensible images. In this study understanding of abstraction is different from that of the tradition. He understands abstraction not as a separation from but as an addition of

the intelligible forms to the data of experience. He drew some insight from Kant's a *priori* conditions for human understanding. However, this study's approach differs from Kant's in that the intellect does not impose itself on the data but instead questions the data in order to understand and judge it. Therefore, Lonergan's acts of insight go beyond Platonic reminiscence, commonsense, Cartesian empiricism, and Kantian idealism.

The chapter has demonstrated that Lonergan develops a refined notion of the philosophy of knowing, leading to an alternative path to metaphysics. He considers Lonergan's account of knowing to be a viable alternative to other accounts. The following chapter will examine how the structure of human knowing, as demonstrated in chapter two, corresponds to the structure of proportionate being, thereby demonstrating how Lonergan's critical realism offers a transformed and contemporary understanding of being and metaphysics.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN KNOWING AND BEING

Introduction

This chapter serves two purposes: to shift from demonstrating the process of knowing to a thorough examination of the content inherent in that process, and to systematically explore the relationship between the two. At the heart of these discussions is a basic question: how does Lonergan's view restate what we mean by being? The key idea is that knowing is always directed toward something (being) that exists. In other words, every act of knowing assumes there is some real object or content it knows. As a result, there is no such thing as knowing in the abstract; it always involves specific, concrete content. Following the previous chapter's discussion, the present discussion is organized into several sections: first, an exploration of the constitutive features of being both in traditional and in Lonergan; second, an elucidation of the interconnection between knowing and being in Lonergan; and finally, a redefinition of metaphysics that emerges from this relationship. The study demonstrates that Lonergan's account of the cognitional process provides a rigorous and philosophically significant alternative approach to contemporary metaphysics.

4.0. Terminological Clarification

When asked what metaphysics is, most people will readily give a classical Aristotelian definition: it is the study of being *qua* being. However, when prompted to explain further, they may find themselves trapped in the abstract concept of being *qua* being. Metaphysics here will be considered along with the cognitional process. Thus, Lonergan redefines metaphysics as the department of human knowledge that underpins, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all other departments.[254] He considers metaphysics a dynamic development that unfolds in three stages: latent, problematic, and explicit. It is rather a methodology than a system of abstract thought.

[254] Lonergan, *Insight*, 415.

The redefinition of metaphysics goes hand in hand with the redefinition of being, and this implies a change in methods. This redefinition will guarantee to enhance philosophical discourse by fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and offering a more integrative approach to Metaphysics.

As previously noted, the word being is understood differently. In the context of this research, being will refer to proportionate being, a being known through experience, understanding, and judgment.[255] Since our knowing is unrestricted, the knowledge of proportionate being will open to a higher horizon to reach the transcendental being. Once the proportionate being is fully known, it will open the way towards the transcendental being. This process is dialectical, as there will always be a position and a counterposition.

In everyday language, the word notion refers to a concept or idea about something. It encompasses the concept of being or an idea of being. In this context, the term notion will be used to describe an orientation or anticipation.[256] Being, considered in a proper sense, will be viewed as a notion rather than a concept or idea. Therefore, the notion of being comes even before the knowledge of being. Notion is considered dynamic and concrete; thus, it will be the notion of being dynamic and concrete.

As noted in this chapter, we explore the correlation between knowing and being referred to as isomorphism. This term captures the structural similarity between the processes of knowing (the acts and operations constituting cognition) and the structure of what is known (the object of cognition). Here, *isomorphism* means that every step in the process of knowing, such as experiencing, understanding, and judging, corresponds to a corresponding aspect of proportionate being. Human cognition reflects the reality it perceives. Every instance of

[255] Lonergan Insight, 416.

[256] Chris S. Friel, *Lonergan's Notion of Being (Updated)*, Academia.edu, accessed October 29, 2025, https://www.academia.edu/33021278/Lonergans_Notion_of_Being_updated

knowledge involves integrating experiential content, an intelligible form grasped through understanding, and affirmed actuality in judgment. Cognition unfolds within structured heuristic frameworks mirroring the isomorphic relationship between subject and object. This dynamic mutuality reveals how the mind knows and shapes reality.[257]

4.1 Structure of the Proportionate Being: A Metaphysical and Descriptive Exposition

The aim here is to describe the relationship between knowing and being, thereby revealing an alternative approach to metaphysics and to the understanding of being. The approach is indirect, proceeding through cognititional processes. The proportionate being is the being that is known through experience, understanding and judgment.[258] This structure already provides the framework for its intelligibility. Through inquiry into our experiences, the being is revealed and affirmed.

The structure of knowing forms a unity because the being is transcendentally known as one.[259] One here signifies the metaphysical unity, which is undivided. Therefore, the structure of knowing must form a unity that mirrors the unity of the known. It has already been discussed how Lonergan expresses the activities of knowing in the cognitional process. These activities are intentional and aim at being. Being is intelligible and reveals itself as knowable.

Since knowing has a structure, being, as intended in knowing, likewise has a structure. In traditional philosophy, being is composed of the three elements: potency, form, and act. These are regarded as the metaphysical structure of being. Accordingly, experience corresponds to potency, understanding to form, and judgment to act. Each will be examined separately below.

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[257] Lonergan *Insight*, 425.

[258] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 676.

[259] Martin O Vaske, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 181-85.

4.1.1. The Doctrine of Potency and Act in Relation to Lonergan's Restatement of Being

The philosophical doctrines of potency and act are essential for understanding being and reality. Aristotle introduced these concepts, particularly in his physics and metaphysics, to explain motion and change.[260] Potency is the starting point of change, either in itself or in relation to others.[261] Two elements are necessary for any change: the cause of the change and the thing that is changed.[262] These concepts have shaped classical metaphysics, and they remain useful in our contemporary understanding of being.

In his metaphysics, Aristotle posits that potency can be understood in multiple senses. Nevertheless, its primary sense is the capacity to become. It is the capacity to become something. Potency is always directed towards a certain act or a given perfection. Potency and act can be understood in two ways: as physical, in explaining change, and as metaphysical, as the constitutive principles of being.[263] These are not beings in themselves but distinct principles through which being can be known and explained.[264]

In his metaphysics, Aristotle distinguishes between two types of potency: passive and active.[265] These two are the originating cause of change or motion. Passive potency is the metaphysical capacity to receive an act. This can be understood in two ways: passively and actively.[266] He states that, "Potency means a principle of motion or of change which is in a thing other than a thing moved or changed, or in the thing moved or changed but *qua* others."[267]

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[260] These were the problems during ancient times between Parmenides and Heracletus. Plato also wrestled with the same problem.

[261] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1019a20

[262] This is in harmony with the principle of causation that something cannot be a cause of itself.

[263] Although it is legitimate to refer to potency and acts as physical, it is correct to think of them as extended physical parts since they do not admit any further division or composition. They are principles.

[264] This is considered to be a minor real distinction in the sense that potency and act are two constitutive principles and parts of real being. By distinct, we mean nonidentical. This distinction is the one that enables us to explain motion and change.

[265] Aristotle, *Metaphysics, 1019a15-20*

[266] Robert M. Doran, *Preserving Lonergan's Understanding of Thomist Metaphysics: A Proposal and an Example*, Essays in Systematic Theology 29 (2011), 7.

[267] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 109a15

Things change either because they have the capacity to change internally or because they are caused to change by external factors. When discussing the capacity to change, two other possibilities are simultaneously identified: the capacity to receive change and the capacity to effect change. One cannot exist without the other. Hence, Aristotle considers potency to be understood in more than one sense: one as passive potency, meaning that by which something is changed or moved by another. This simply means the capacity to be acted upon by another.

Second, the active potency signifies the capacity to effect change or motion insofar as the changes or motion are already present in both. A maize seed has the potency to become a maize plant; thus, it is a passive potency. Environmental conditions can act on seeds, causing them to germinate and grow into maize plants, thereby activating their potential. Aquinas gives an example of a builder and a building, suggesting that the art of building is not in the building itself. So, potency here cannot be considered active because the building does not contain the art of building. By contrast, when a doctor heals another doctor, both have the active potency to cure patients. Hence, the one healing the other is considered to possess an active potency.[268]

Potency and act must be considered together, as potency is meaningless without its corresponding act.[269] Act is related to other concepts such as perfection, formal cause, etc, as such, then act is the perfection of that which is imperfect, namely, potency. It is also a formal cause of all that exists. Things exist in act either as pure or mixed. As pure, they are simple, uncomposed, and unlimited. There can only be one type of such act, and that is God. The demonstration of such an act is reserved for theology.[270]

There is another type of act which is considered in the order of existence. That which makes things exist in this way and not the other. This is what Aquinas calls the act of being or *esse.*

[268] Robert J. Kreyche, *First Philosophy: An Introductory Text in Metaphysics* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1959), 100.
[269] Kreyche R. *First Philosophy,* 93.
[270] Kreyche R, *First Philosophy,* 98.

The being that is limited by its essence to this particular kind of being. It is described as limited and prone to constant change. The act is of two kinds: the first act and the second act. The first act is related to the form that signifies existence, and the second act signifies the operation.[271] All beings share the same being, but they are distinguished from each other by the essences which limit the acts of being to this particular operation. For example, humans, though animals, are distinct from other animals by their essence, specifically, rationality.

In Aristotle's metaphysics, form is taken together with matter to form a composite. In Book *Zeta,* Aristotle talks of substance as a primary category of being. He asserts that substance is concrete and composed of three principles: matter, a material like bronze. By matter, he means "that which in itself is not stated as being the whatness of something, nor a quiddity, nor any other sense of being."[272] Matter here is related to the potency; it is open to being acted upon. Form is related to essence, and it is considered to be that which gives shape to a determinate identity to the matter. Aristotle presents form as a primary aspect of a substance because it determines what a thing is.[273]

4.1.2. The Relationship Between Potency Form and Act

A relationship, in a philosophical sense, can be either a real relation or a logical relation. The logical relation exists only in the mind, for example, the parts of the proposition, premises in an act of reasoning, etc. This kind of relation is proper for the notional beings. Real relation is the relationship between real, concrete things. The third type of relation can be a transcendental relation. In this kind of relation, there is no restriction to any given category of being, but it is found in all the categories.[274] As individual parts of the composition, potency, form, and act are not real things but principles since they cannot be broken further.[275]

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[271] St Thomas Aquinas, *Introduction to the Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas,* James Anderson Trans. (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 1953), 28-29.

[272] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1029a5-25

[273] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1035a5

[274] Kreyche, *First Philosophy*, 91.

[275] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1012b35-1013a-20.

Potency, form and act, though distinct from each other, constitute a single unit of one intrinsic composition.[276] These three components have a transcendental relationship with one another. The word 'transcendental' has been used differently throughout the history of philosophy. By transcendental, here, it means a kind of unity between principles that have a natural correspondence with one another. Potency is naturally attracted towards its act, and form always determines and transforms potency into act. In this regard, this transcendental relation is considered to be dynamic, aiming towards the highest perfection.

4.2. The Impossibility of the Definition of Potency Form and Act

Being is transcendental; it is not determined to this or that category, but rather transcends all other categories; thus, all categories are categories of being. The constituent parts that form being are nothing but first principles, beyond which no further division is possible. These principles are not determinate; hence, their composition (being) is also indeterminate. They neither belong to any genus[277] nor species. In this way, then, no logical definition of potency, form and act is possible. Consequently, the only remaining option is to make a descriptive analysis of these terms. Like seeing someone sitting and concluding that they will eventually stand and walk, or someone sleeping and positing that they will get up.

The conception of the term being is essential since this is the first object that the intellect grasps. There will be no understanding without first grasping the meaning of being. As such, it is an object of metaphysics. In this sense, exploring its meaning will, in turn, be an exploration of metaphysics.[278] The doctrine of being is traceable to Parmenides and has been conceived differently in ancient, medieval, and contemporary periods. During the classical period, Aristotle was credited with giving the doctrine of being a systematic analysis that synthesized

[276] W. A Stewart, *Introduction to Lonergan's Insight*, (New York: the Edwin Melles Press, 1996), 156.

[277] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1024a30-35. Genus is that part of the essence in which two or more species share in common. For example, a cat and a dog belong to the genus animal.

[278] Our Usage will be limited to Aristotle and Aquinas

his predecessors' positions. He speaks of being as an analogous concept that can be said in more than one sense. However, in these different senses of the word, being is said to be substance.[279]

Accordingly, substance is the primary category of all reality. The other nine depend on this category. It is the first. Aristotle's understanding presents being as static and unchanging, though he regards it as the first and most knowable object of our minds. Aristotle seems to emphasize the objective reality rather than the subjective role in knowing being. He believed that reality possesses inherent intelligent features that make it knowable. These objective features are independent of the human mind and are the basis for knowledge. Therefore, in perspective, the human mind should conform to the objective reality that exists outside of it.

Although Aquinas developed his concept of being from Aristotle, he expanded it to incorporate aspects of faith. Aristotle focused on substance as the primary sense of being, while Aquinas emphasized the participation of being in the highest being. Aquinas further distinguishes essence from existence to account for the difference between the creator and the created. The composite beings are composed of the essence and existence. A creature's essence is distinguished from existence, such that existence is received into the essence from outside. However, in God, this distinction of essence and existence is not there. God's existence is his essence. He is one, and from him all other beings originate.

4.2.1. Traditional Approach and Impossibility of the Definition of Being

We noted earlier that the elements of being cannot be defined in the strict sense of logic. We can only describe them. Being, as the object of metaphysics, is an acceptable position for both Aristotle and Aquinas. Being is known in the third degree of abstraction, where all matter is

[279] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Internet Classics Archive*, accessed October 29, 2025, https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.7.vii.html.

removed. In this sense, then, being is the most abstract concept there is. It does not depend on the matter for its existence nor its understanding. Consequently, the metaphysics that is developed from this also becomes the most abstract subject there is. Being can also hardly be defined in a strict sense; we can only describe it.

Aquinas developed and redefined being in terms of the act of being, that is, *esse,* distinguishing it from the abstract being of Aristotle, *ens*. Aquinas introduces the distinction between essence and act of being. The two are related as potency and act. As we stated earlier, potency and act, although they are constituent parts of being, are distinct from each other. So, the essence and the act of being are constitutive principles that are distinct from each other. In a way, essence is to act of being a potency, and act of being is to essence an act.

The essence and the act of being together form a substance. Essence then limits the being to this particular mode. Hence, being without essence is the most abstract concept, and in the our opinion, no existential judgment can be made about it; therefore, it cannot be known directly. This study agrees with Aquinas that essence and act of being are the two principles of any substance. This helps us to escape the abstract concept of substance in Aristotle.

Aquinas argues that essence and *esse* are distinct in finite beings. This study raises no objection to this but identifies the difficulty in understanding the act of being apart from its corresponding essence. In other words, can things exist without a mode of existence as this being? Aquinas asserts that whatever is not part of essence must come from outside it. Being is not part of essence, and therefore it is united to the essence. Now, the essence and act of being are related to each other as potency relates to the act, such that the act of being actualizes the essence. Aquinas here helps to move from a descriptive understanding of Aristotle to an explanatory understanding of essence and *esse.* Potence is without meaning outside its corresponding act;

similarly, the study points out that *ens* is an empty concept without its corresponding essence that limits it to this particular mode of existence.

Moreover, since being does not belong to any genus or species, we also conclude that it cannot be defined in the strict logical sense. Since any logical definition must contain the genus from which something originates, and the distinctive features that distinguish it from all other members of the same class. For example, we define man as a rational animal: animal is the genus to which man belongs, and rational is a specific difference that distinguishes man from all other animals. Because it fails to meet these criteria, it remains a descriptive concept and thus lacks objectivity. In this study's judgment, then, this makes traditional metaphysics not only a subjective discipline but also one that is difficult to pursue. Hence, a call for another approach.

4.3. Lonergan's Indirect Approach to the Structure of the Proportionate Being

The study introduces Lonergan's indirect approach to transition from the traditional metaphysical framework, which conceptualizes being in abstract, often inaccessible terms, It is a systematic approach that explains the structure of proportionate being. Lonergan does not rely solely on descriptive or metaphysical accounts, as in the works of Aristotle and Aquinas. Lonergan situates the analysis of being within the context of cognitional activity. He thereby shifts the emphasis from static principles to dynamic processes of human knowing. This approach, according to this study, is relevant to current developments in technologies that emulate human intelligence, especially in areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and neuroscience.

This study opines that this change of the method provides a more precise explanation of being. The fundamental elements of being, potency, form, and act are understood in relation to the corresponding activities of experiencing, understanding, and judging. In doing so, Lonergan's

approach upholds the insights of the classical tradition and makes the structure of proportionate being accessible through the analysis of human cognition. According to this study, this allows for a detailed exploration of metaphysics that is both philosophically sound and empirically grounded, effectively bridging the gap between classical metaphysics, modern philosophy and modern science.

4.3.1 T**he Question of Being and Lonergan's Cognitional Theory**

This study notes that Aristotle gave potency ontological status in his attempt to explain change. He defines it in terms of potentiality and actuality. Lonergan, on the other hand, assigns to potency a cognitional status as a part of form and act. Instead of looking at potency as only a capacity, Lonergan considers it a condition for intelligibility. Potency is understood in two ways: potency in knowing, that the mind's capacity to know, human mind is structured to grasp intelligibility. This is seen in the ability to gather sense data, an intellectual inquiry seeking understanding and identifying patterns, and the power to assess truth.[280] Potency in the known is the reality's capacity to be known or understood; reality or being is structured in a way that it can be known. The knower is structured to know, and the being is structured to be known.[281] Lonergan redefines potency in relation to experience.

He asserts that, "Potency denotes the component of proportionate being to be known in fully explanatory knowledge by an intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue."[282] Knowing is heuristic; it anticipates that which is unknown in sensation. A sensible presentation will always invite some curiosity that there is something to be known, that is, intelligibility. If, for example, we examine water, we do so with the expectation that there is something to be understood. Experiencing as a conscious act is an organized examination of the data of the

[280] Brian Cronin, *A Contemporary First Philosophy: A World View of Everything* (Oregon: Pickwick Publication, 2022), 118.

[281] Cronin, *A Contemporary First Philosophy,* 119.

[282] Lonergan, *Insight,* 457. See also What is systematic theology? - PDF Free Download. https://epdf.pub/what-is-systematic-theology.html

senses. It is also intentional that it intends potency that which can be known. The study here emphasises that in Lonergan's metaphysics, potency is not only about the possibility of change, but it is also about the condition for the understanding of being. It has to be taken together with form and act.

In Aristotle, form is a co-principle of nature with matter. All finite beings are composed of these two principles. Form is that which gives nature to the matter and makes it what it is. In other words, form is also called essence: it is the defining essence of matter, determining its function and purpose. The study points out that Lonergan uses the same concept and gives form epistemological status, thereby shifting our understanding of form from the metaphysical nature of an object to a principle of intelligibility grounded in the condition for intelligibility, potency.

Lonergan defines form as "The component of proportionate being to be known, not by understanding the names of things, nor by understanding their relations to us, but by understanding them fully in their relations to one another**.**"[283] This definition aligns with realist metaphysics, which holds that reality is objectively known and independent of the human mind. However, Lonergan is considered a critical realist since he grants the human mind the power to know reality. Form is not to be equated with knowing the names of things, since that does not reveal the true nature of things. Also, we do not know things by relating them solely to ourselves, as this leads to subjectivism. It has to be the way things interact and connect. Form, then, is discovering a pattern, structure, and relation that exists between things.

In Aristotle's metaphysical framework, act is related to a potency in that potency always aims toward actuality. Lonergan sees it in relation to the cognitional activity of judging. Hence, he defines act as "The component of proportionate being to be known by uttering the virtually

[283] Lonergan, Insight, 457.

unconditioned yes of reasonable judgment."[284] By a virtually unconditional judgment, Lonergan means that there are conditions for the judgment and that they are fulfilled.[285] By Judgement, we suggest the judgment of fact that something exists as concrete. It is a movement from the possible essences to the grasp of the real existing entities.[286]

The three elements, potency, form and act, are three principles through which any proportionate being is. What is experienced is what is understood; and what is understood is what is affirmed.[287] This study then concludes that, since being is one, the three are not three beings but form a unity into one proportionate being. This mirrors the unit in the knowing that the three levels of cognitional activity yield a single knowing. As the contents of the three levels of cognitive activity are unified, so the three contents also form a single known, proportionate being. Potency is a presentation to be understood, judgment is a denial or affirmation of that which is understood, and form is what insight grasps from the data of presentation, form concepts, relations, definitions, etc.

4.3.2. Isomorphism of Knowing and Being

The study holds that knowing and being have matching structures. What we know is not just something our mind invents; it's deeply connected to what actually exists outside us as the object of knowledge. Even though knowing and being are different in terms of what they are, they still depend on each other. The human mind is always capable of coming to know anything, and reality itself is always open to being known. Both sides have features that can help deepen and enrich understanding.

This interconnectedness is at the heart of Lonergan's critical realism. In simple terms, this view holds that we can truly know reality, but only through our own active engagement and

[284] Lonergan, Insight, 457.
[285] Formerly unconditional judgments are a type of judgment without any condition for them to be true.
[286] Cronin, *A Contemporary First Philosophy,* 154.
[287] Lonergan, *Insight,* 457.

questioning. At the same time, truth itself is not just a matter of how things appear to us personally; it is rooted in the objective intelligibility of being. On this basis, Lonergan argues that "If the knowing consists of a related set of acts and the known is the related set of contents of these acts, then the pattern of the relations between the acts is similar in form to the pattern of the relations between the contents of the acts."[288]

This study then affirms that, from Lonergan's perspective, knowing consists of dynamic acts rather than a snapshot. These acts include experiencing, understanding and judging. These acts of knowing are intentional and pertain to the set of known content. The known is also built in a structure that can be known. The form of knowing mirrors the form of the known. Knowing and what is known cannot be separated.

4.3.3. Philosophical Implications of Isomorphism

The isomorphism between knowing and the known is important to Lonergan because it highlights that knowledge is objective. The mind has a structure that enables it to know, and the object has a structure that allows it to be known. This study affirms that the mind, therefore, does not impose itself on objects but only reflects the form already present in the object to be known. The human mind is designed to understand reality. The reality is, therefore, intelligible, and the human mind is designed to know it.[289] This position overcomes both the limitations of empiricism and idealism.

This study concludes that the mind is not limited to the impressions it receives from the sensible objects, but plays an active role in bringing about the knowledge. Additionally, it does not generate ideas from within itself and impose them on external objects; instead, it engages in a

[288] Moran, Edward Francis. *The Theological Methodology of Bernard Lonergan*." (1976). https://core.ac.uk/download/163082666.pdf. See also Lonergan, *Insight,* 425.

[289] This is against the scepticism, a position that knowledge is impossible, also it is also against idealism that knowledge is only about the ideas in the mind imposed on reality. It is also against empiricism that knowledge is a passive reception from the sense experience.

dialogue with them. Although the knower and the known are in different domains, they are structurally connected. Knowledge arises when the form in the intellect matches the form in the being. They match not as copies of each other but as participation in each other. With the doctrine of Isomorphism, Lonergan has synthesised the extreme positions of idealism and realism, adopting a critical realist stance.

4.3.4. Lonergan and the Understanding of Being

In the traditional sense, being has proved to be the most universal and abstract concept. Hence, it has been very difficult for us even to define it concretely. Lonergan approaches being in a modern way rather than a traditional one. The contemporary approach will offer an alternative perspective on metaphysics. He approaches it indirectly through cognitional theory. Hence, at the beginning of the chapter, twelve of the *Insight,* on the *Notion of Being*, Lonergan defines being as "an objective of the pure desire to know."[290] He makes a move from the first question about what we do when we know to what we know when we have known it.

Lonergan is pointing out another way of doing philosophy, which involves moving away from the abstract conception of being out there, thereby undermining the knowing subject. Instead of isolating a subject from being, Lonergan brings them together and points out something significant about the knowing subject in relation to the knowledge of being. This, in turn, would make the whole philosophy empirical and verifiable. Empirical and verifiable because it is grounded in the concrete data of sensation and consciousness.

4.3.5. Lonergan's Alternative Definition of Being

This study had earlier noticed that, in the strict sense, being cannot be defined, since it is the most universal concept and encompasses all things. To define being, Lonergan considers it a notion, not a concept. By notion, he means not a vague idea or concept but an orientation that

[290] Lonergan, *Insight*, 372.

guides an inquiry and structures our knowing.[291] Lonergan then defines being as "the objective of the pure desire to know."[292] Human knowing is possible only through the desire that drives it. It is what Aristotle called wonder that is the foundation of philosophy. The object of our knowledge, then, is always being. What we achieve in knowing is nothing but being. Pure desire is the motivation behind all knowing. It precedes yet directs the whole process of knowing and extends beyond it. This definition is the second-order definition. He states,

> Our definition of being, then, is of the second order. Other definitions determine what is meant. But this definition is more remote for it assigns, not what is meant by being, but how that meaning is to be determined. It asserts that if you know, then you know being; it asserts that if you wish to know, then you wish to know being; but it does not settle whether you know or what you know, whether your wish will be fulfilled or what you will know when it is fulfilled.[293]

The second-order views are linked to Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Arthur William Russell. The first-order definition of being refers to the direct knowledge of being through the act of experiencing, understanding and judging. It is about the object's existence and its determination: essence and existence. It is about the structure of the being as grasped by the intellect. For example, saying this book exists. The book is a subject S, and "exists" is a predicate P. If I say this tree is tall, someone understands that tall modifies the subject, this tree. But if I say this tree exists, its existence does not modify anything about the subject, this tree, since it already exists.

The second-order definition is indirect. It defines being not by pointing out what it is, but by analysing the conditions that make it known. When Lonergan defines being as the objective of the pure desire to know, he does not specify what being is; instead, he provides an orientation of the mind towards it. Being is not a property or a predicate of an object. The desire has to be pure in the sense that the free intelligence and rational consciousness must guide it.[294] It is a

[291] Paul Kidder, *The Ultimacy of Question in Lonergan's Philosophy*, *University of Toronto Press Journals*, 2021, https://utppublishing.com/doi/pdf/10.3138/uram.31.4.299.
[292] Lonergan, *Insight,* 372.
[293] Lonergan, *Insight,* 374.
[294] Lonergan, *Insight,* 373.

disinterested desire for the content of the act of knowing that is being. Being can be either what is already known or what will be known.[295]

4.4. Judgment as a Path to Being

The connection between being and self-transcendence was lost during the modern era. During the classical medieval period, being and self-transcendence were deeply interconnected such that self-transcendence was an ontological journey towards being. In modern times, this connection was obscured and shifted. Subjectivity was separated from objectivity. This is evident in the philosophy of Descartes, who divided reality into *res cogitans* and *res extensa,* thereby emphasising *res cogitans* not only as the starting point of knowledge but also as existence itself.

Kant, like Descartes, made a distinction between *noumena and phenomena.* He limited human knowledge to the phenomenal world of appearances and denied that the *noumenal* world is knowable at all. This study observes that, in both Descartes and Kant, self-transcendence becomes an obstacle to reaching being. Lonergan, among others, has tried to recover this lost connection between being and self-transcendence.[296] Rival schools emerged in the modern era: rationalism, empiricism, idealism, and others. Knowing was either reduced to empirical sensory data or to mere ideas in the mind.

In his article *Judgment and the Recovery of Being*, David Fleischacker presents Lonergan's approach to being through judgment as a remedy to this disconnection.[297] Fleischacker points out that through judgment, we can transcend biases and superficial viewpoints and attain what truly is: being. This, in turn, is what Lonergan terms self-transcendence. It is a process through

[295] Lonergan, *Insight,* 374.
[296] The other philosophers referred here are Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre.
[297] David Fleischacker, *Judgement and the Recovery of Being.* Lonergan institute, March 24, 2017. Https://lonergan.org/2017/03/24/judgment.

which individuals move beyond their immediate biases, limitations, and self-interest to engage more deeply with truth.[298]

Through judgment, we participate in the world meaningfully. We encounter the intelligible being. Unlike Kant, who puts a barrier between reality and the human mind, Lonergan considers reality knowable, and judgment serves as the gateway towards it. In judgment, we affirm the reality that is known as such. It is not a separate operation; rather, it must be considered alongside experience and understanding. At judgment, we transform what we have experienced and understood into the known reality. Judgment mediates our concepts and ideas in relation to being.

4.5 Implications of Lonergan's Definition of Being

Lonergan's definition of being then implies that being is not a concept but rather a notion. A concept is a grasp of the important, leaving out the unimportant. Being is all-encompassing; it includes everything, both the important and unimportant. This study observes that considering "being" as a concept is therefore very limiting. A notion here refers to an intelligent and reasonable conscious anticipation. The notion of being then is,

> The dynamic orientation manifested in our questions for intelligence and for reflection, the prior and enveloping drive that carries the cognitional process from sense and imagination to understanding, from understanding to judgment, and from judgment to the complete context of correct judgments.[299]

The notion of being is used in the context of the desire to know, as this desire initiates the entire process of knowing. The notion of being is then prior (*a priori*) not only to the knowledge of being but also to experiencing and insight. Though it is *a priori*, it depends on them on the occasion of the operation. Our desire to know is unrestricted, so it is the notion of being.[300] The notion of being is different from the concept of being. Concepts are products of abstraction and

[298] Brian Cronin, Foundation of Philosophy, …..

[299] Weis, Lauren Elizabeth. *The Metaphysics of Sex and Gender: Human Embodiment, Multiplicity, and Contingency*. (2008). https://core.ac.uk/download/151481550.pdf.

[300] Lonergan, *Insight,* 375-376.

are static. The notion of being, in contrast, is concrete, dynamic, and universal. Lonergan states, "being is completely concrete and completely universal. It is completely concrete: over and above the being of anything, there is nothing more of that being. It is completely universal: apart from the realm of being, there is simply nothing."[301]

The notion of being is an operative, spontaneous force in all cognitional activities. The notion of being is innate in all humans and works in the same way. It is not something we learn, but it is native in all human beings. It drives us to ask questions. It is to be understood in the context of the pure desire to know. It is operative in the cognitional process. It is before and goes beyond what is known in judgment, that is, being. The actual being known is not completely known. There is always more to be known. The notion serves as an orientation, a conscious operation insofar as it constitutes understanding. In the *Insight*, Lonergan gives an example of an eye oriented to seeing and a hunger oriented to eating. Although these are desires, they cannot be considered notions. Notion arises only insofar as understanding discerns future function in present structure.[302]

The spontaneous notion of being is significant because it sets a standard against which all answers must be measured. Since the notion of being is common and innate to all humans, the metaphysics developed from this approach is transcultural. It goes beyond the limits of relativism. Philosophy today suffers from pluralism and disagreement because there is no common ground upon which it is built. In times when anti-foundationalism is the prevailing view, the spontaneous operative notion of being may be considered in the modern context as a means to minimise plurality and promote unity in philosophical discourses, as it provides a normative foundation.

[301] Lonergan, *Insight,* 374-375.
[302] Lonergan, Insight, 378.

Being, in the traditional sense, is an object of metaphysical inquiry. It is ontological and static. Being is what is. On the contrary, for Lonergan, being as notional is a heuristic and dynamic condition of the mind to anticipate what is intelligible. The notion of being is not what it is, but a condition that prompts us to ask the right questions in our inquiry. Being is then an objective of our pure desire to know. The notion of being penetrates all knowing; hence, it is universal. It applies to all inquiries, as it provides a condition for all knowing.

The notion of being is all-pervasive. It penetrates all cognitional stages. At the level of experience, the intellect must pose a set of questions to move from instinct to experience. Here, Lonergan states, the notion of being "underpins all cognitional contents. Without the pure desire to know, sensitive living would remain in its routine of perception and conation, instinct and habit, emotion and action."[303] Every one of these acts of knowing is intentional; they intend being. The notion of being gives them their orientation and intelligibility. Aristotle views wonder as the starting point of knowledge. This is what releases our tension of the desire to know. Thus, we are capable of moving from experience to understanding and making a judgment.

The notion of being is present not only in all these operations in knowing, but also it is present in the content of our knowing, as it is in the cognitional processes. It is universal and transcendental. Universal because it can be applied to any field of study, and transcendental because it penetrates and goes beyond cognitional processes and their contents.[304] It is prior to both the cognitional operations and their contents. Regarding it, it is the supreme heuristic notion. Prior to every content, it is the notion of the to-be-known that underlies it. As each

[303] Lonergan, *Insight,* 880.
[304] Lonergan, *Insight,* 380-381.

content emerges, the to-be-known through that content passes without residue into the known through that content.[305]

The notion of being is unique and stands out as a new understanding of being in Lonergan. While the traditional philosophy conceived of being as a concept or idea, Lonergan redefines being as a notion, understood as an anticipation or orientation. This orientation or anticipation is dynamic, leading to the totality of correct judgment. This study previously stated that Lonergan defined being as the objective of pure desire to know; it adds that the notion of being is grasped when this desire is realised in the subjective cognitional activities: experiencing, understanding, and judging. Since the object known is one, the operations must also be taken together. This approach reshapes the entire way of looking at being and metaphysics that develops from it.

The notion of being is not a concept: concepts are the expressions of that which is understood at insight. They are static and universal in representation. Conversely, they can be applied to each particular object where they are abstracted. Concepts are, by their very nature, abstract. The notion of being is present in the formulation of all concepts. Concepts are the content of what we understand from the data of experience. The notion of being penetrates not only insight into the concept, but also the concepts, bringing them to the level of judgment. In this way, the notion of being cannot be a concept but a dynamic orientation that generates concepts and guides them toward correct judgment.

Concepts are abstract, static, and universal. Plato's conception of the world suggests that the physical world is a reflection of the world of perfect form. The form is universal and unchanging, from which all changes can be explained. They are universal because they are not

[305] Lonergan, *Insight,* 381

bound to a specific time; instead, they transcend it.[306] Plato compares the Sun with the form that makes things visible. Aristotle conceives of a concept as a product of the process where the forms or essence are abstracted from their constituent matter.[307] Kant posits that concepts are the means through which we organise the world of experience. They are before experience itself, and they proceed from the mind.[308] For some pragmatists, concepts do not mirror objective reality but rather serve as social tools designed to enhance communication and collaboration.[309] As social tools, concepts are dynamic and not universal.

Concepts are abstracted and determined by their content. An idea of a chair, for instance, is abstracted from several chairs and applies to all chairs. They are abstract. The notion of being is not abstract, as it is not derived from anything. It is, however, determined by its content that is the correct judgment.[310] Being *qua* being, in Aristotle's metaphysics, is the most abstract and foundational concept.[311] It is the most abstract, as it detaches from other categories of being, such as quality, quantity, and relations. It does not depend on matter for its existence or understanding. It is completely detached from matter.

Aristotle treats being as an analogous concept that can be applied in different ways: as substance, accident, potentiality, etc. He states that being is primarily a substance.[312] A substance is that which exists on itself and makes it possible for all other categories to exist. While other categories change, substance endures all the changes. Lonergan agrees with Aristotle in part, since he considers being to be univocal in some instances and analogous in others. He asserts that, "What frequently enough is meant by the analogy of being is precisely

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[306] Plato, *Republic VII*, in *the Complete Works of Plato*, ed. G. John M Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 509d-511e.

[307] Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. J. A. Smith, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), III. 4–5.

[308] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B74–B76.

[309] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*, *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 65–78.

[310] Lonergan, *Insight,* 386.

[311] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.1 (1003a21)

[312] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII.1 (1028a10)

what we mean by saying that the notion of being underpins, penetrates, and goes beyond other contents."[313] Thus, it is univocal, in that it underpins all other contents as the one desire to know that regards one unrestricted objective. It is analogous: it penetrates all other contents, and its meaning varies as one moves from one field to another.[314]

The notion of being is grounded in the concrete universe. It is of the universe because questions stop when there are no more questions to ask. It is concrete because, before reaching the concrete, further questions will arise.[315] The universe includes all that is and can be. The notion of being also encompasses all that is and can be. It is a transcendental orientation of the human mind towards the totality of the intelligibility of reality. In Lonergan's perspective, the notion of being is concrete in the sense that it is not limited to senses, but also what is understood and affirmed by a correct judgment. It is not abstracted from reality, but a drive towards the fullness of reality.

4.6. Lonergan and Other Theories of Being

Having stated what being is in Lonergan, this study now intends to compare Lonergan's theory with other theories of being in the history of philosophy. The aim is to demonstrate that Lonergan's approach is not only viable but also limitless, as it can be applied to all other areas of study. This makes it more compatible with the sciences of the day, which claim to be based on the principle of verification. The philosophy of being that Lonergan developed, like any science, is also verifiable in the data of sensation and the data of consciousness. It is not abstract but concrete in the sense that it is not limited to sense experience but goes beyond it to attain a correct judgment.

[313] Lonergan, *Insight,* 386.
[314] Lonergan, *Insight,* 386.
[315] Lonergan, *Insight,* 387.

The first study of being is very much associated with Parmenides. He was the one who began talking about, being, ancient times. Later philosophers built upon what he said, either by refining his understanding or by taking a different view. He conceived of being in static terms as a concept that does not allow change. He completely underestimated the fact that the world is changing. He said, "Change is an illusion." [316] He conceives change in relation to the senses; the senses constitute the change. This study finds that although Parmenides pioneers the study of being, he ultimately falls into an illusion he attributes to others.

This study notes that when Parmenides denies change, he also denies many other phenomena related to it. He thus denies the fact about time. All changes happen in time and are measured in time. All scientific investigations and findings are conducted and reported in a timely manner. In denying the fact of change, Parmenides stands in opposition not only to change but also to science itself. Hence, his position serves as a foundation for thought, but it is illusory in contemporary times, as change is real and its denial is simply a contradiction. Change is real; thus, Parmenides' system may be incompatible not only with Lonergan but also with the empirical sciences.

Consequently, this study contrasts Parmenides's position with Lonergan's. In *Insight,* Lonergan rejects Parmenides's conclusions, though he appreciates Parmenides's effort to advance his account of being. In his conclusion, Parmenides becomes materialistic, identifying being with a material object when he says that being is a round shape, such as a ball.[317] Lonergan considers Parmenides' position not only materialistic but also conceptualist, because he treats being as a concept, such as a man or a circle.[318] It is materialistic, since by denying the fact of change, he ends up with a single undivided being, like a single solid rock, a static

[316] Parmenides, *Fragments*, in *The Presocratic Philosophers*, eds. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), Fragment 8.

[317] Being is rounded ball like

[318] Lonergan, *Insight,* 388-389.

thing. He is also conceptual, insofar as he holds that a being can be fully grasped as a concept of man or of a triangle.

The study holds the position that, unlike Parmenides, Lonergan considers being not as a concept with fixed content that a single act of the senses can grasp. Still, it is the horizon of our inquiry, such that whenever we ask any question, we are asking about being. It is a totality of what is known and can be known through the acts of experiencing, understanding and judging. It is neither material nor concept, since it is indeterminate: it is an open-ended and unrestricted desire to know everything that exists. Lonergan's approach is compatible with contemporary sciences because its conclusions are open to revision in light of new data.

Plato sought to go beyond Parmenides' limitations by positing the real as the ideal form, thereby explaining the world of change. He thus admits both the static and the dynamic world. Therefore, being is either said to be static in the realm of eternal form or dynamic in the realm of change.[319] Through the dialectic of process, the soul rises to discover the eternal truth or the form of the good. This study finds that the weakness of Plato's philosophy lies in its failure to incorporate judgment into his system. He ended up at the level of intelligence, forgetting the question for reflection, which transcends form to the level of judgment.[320] Lonergan, while acknowledging Plato's efforts, finds some limitations. He states that,

> Judgment, then, is not a synthesis of terms but the unconditioned positing of such a synthesis. Corresponding to judgment, there is not a synthesis of Forms but the absolute of fact. Platonism is magnificent in its devotion to the pure desire to know. But its failure to grasp the nature of judgment resulted in a deviation from the concrete universe of fact to an ideal heaven.[321]

Judgment is not a combination or synthesis of concepts or form or manipulation of ideas, as Plato considered. It is an affirmation of what is true, that is, the grasp of the virtual

[319] Plato, *Republic Book VI,* 509b
[320] Lonergan, *Insight,* 389.
[321] Lonergan, *Insight,* 390.

unconditional in the concrete. Although Plato exhibits some elements of pure desire to know, which Lonergan praises, he remains at the conceptual level of synthesising the forms. He does not articulate the nature of judgment, but instead emphasises the forms. Eventually, he deviates from the concrete universe and moves to the idealised static world of forms.[322]

Lonergan, by contrast, moves beyond the Platonic forms and envisions judgment as the culmination of human knowledge. At judgment, we move from ideas to truth. This is true knowledge: real, actual and concrete. It is real because it is objective in the sense that it is not a mental construct but affirmed in true judgment by the human mind. It is actual because it has an essence which specifies its mode of being. It is concrete because there are no further questions to answer: it is virtually unconditioned.

Aristotle does not break completely from his master with regard to judgment as a synthesis.[323] However, he goes beyond Plato by distinguishing between the two questions that lead to judgment. In the *De Interpretatione,* Aristotle defines judgment as the statement that is either true or false.[324] This is a declarative sentence which states that something is either true or false.[325] Aristotle continues to define judgment as a synthesis, but as one that affirms or denies. Lonergan considers Aristotle's notion of judgment to remain within the Platonic conceptual framework. Lonergan states,

> But you would put him a question he had not adequately considered, if you asked him whether the virtually unconditioned was a third component in our knowing or, on the other hand, merely a rubber stamp of approval attached to the conceptual unification of its sensible and intelligible components.[326]

This study clarifies that Plato and Aristotle considered judgment a passive element in our knowing, merely attached to experience and understanding; it is the product of these two acts.

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[322] The concrete is the actual, historical and empirical world.

[323] Lonergan, *Insight,* 390.

[324] Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, tranE. M. Edghill (New York: Random House, 1941). 17a1–3

[325] This kind of sentence has truth values attached to it. They are distinguished from other types of sentences, such as questions, commands, etc, which do not have any truth values attached to them.

[326] Lonergan, *Insight,* 390.

Judgment, as virtually unconditional, is not the third component added to experience and understanding. It is, in fact, an act of affirmation after all relevant questions have been answered. It is not a synthesis but an affirmation of such a synthesis as true or false.[327] It is a distinct yet constitutive part of the structure of knowing, without which knowing is incomplete. It remains either empirical or conceptual. Aristotle asks what being is. This is a question for intelligence. That question expresses the demand for understanding, for knowledge of the cause. The answer he gives is that the cause of being is its immanent form.[328]

Lonergan further affirms that,

> Aristotle broke with his Parmenidean and Platonist antecedents by identifying being with the concrete universe as in fact it is known to be in fact. But Aristotle did not break with their supposition that the notion of being was a conceptual content. He asked what being is. In other words, he supposed that being is some conceptual content, and he demanded what act of understanding occurred prior to the formulation of that content.[329]

Unlike Parmenides and Plato, Aristotle redirected the notion of being toward the concrete, empirical world by introducing his doctrine of hylomorphism. That finite beings are composed of matter and form. However, Lonergan considers that he continues to treat the notion of being as if it were an object of thought, a concept. By asking a question, 'what is being,' he assumes being as a knowable essence and a definable whatness. This closes the notion of being. The notion of being is an open-ended horizon of all that can be known. Hence, asking what is being already constitutes a misunderstanding, since being is not a thing to be defined but the totality of what is to be known through correct judgment.

During the medieval period, the metaphysical frameworks of Plato and Aristotle remained influential. They were like footnotes to later philosophers, not only in the medieval period but in Western philosophy as a whole. Aquinas is among those most influenced by Aristotle. Although Aquinas goes beyond Aristotelian limitations, we can still find Aristotelian thought

[327] Lonergan, *Insight,* 372.
[328] Lonergan, *Insight,* 390-391.
[329] Lonergan, *Insight,* 391

in his philosophical framework. Aquinas'unique contribution to metaphysics lies in his analysis of the distinction between being and essence. It is in and through essences that being has being.[330]

Essence relates to being as potency is to the act. Being then actualises the essence in concrete reality. Being is that by which essence is actual. Aquinas makes this distinction to distinguish the infinite being, God, from finite beings, creatures. He also uses this distinction to explain the unity and multiplicity of being.[331] Whereas God's essence and his being are the same, the creatures' essence and existence are distinct. Hence, God must be one and simple, while the creatures must be composed and hence plural. The essence of a finite thing does not necessarily signify its being.

Lonergan notices that Aquinas does not make explicit the distinction between the notion of being and the concept of being. He states that,

> …while he did not distinguish explicitly between the *intentio intendens* or notion of being and the *intentio intenta* or concept of being, still, he was remarkably aware of the implications of that distinction.[332]

Although he does not make his use explicit, he carefully employs them and respects their structure in epistemology, judgment, and metaphysics. In the *De Veritate,* Aquinas consistently distinguishes between the act of understanding and the act of judgment.[333] His central claim is that truth is the conformity of the intellect to the thing. The intellect first grasps the essence of a thing, and then it affirms it to be true or false. The act of judgment is caused by the intelligibility found in things themselves as they measure with the intellect.[334]

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[330] Lonergan, *Insight,* 396

[331] Aquinas, *Being and Essence* chap 4.

[332] Lonergan, *Insight,* 394.

[333] Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate* Robert W. Mulligan, S.J. trans. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952) q. 1, a. 1

[334] Lonergan will. Explore this further as the isomorphism of the knowing and the known. The known has an intelligible structure that makes it knowable, and the knower has a similar structure that makes it know.

Aquinas, like Aristotle, separates the act of judgment as if it were extrinsic to the knowing. Aquinas, again like Aristotle, holds that the human intellect is a potential omnipotence, a *potens omnia facere et fieri.*[335] This explains the doctrine of identity: that is, in knowing, the intellect becomes that which it knows. However, the act of judgment is not identical with what is known, but an affirmation that what is known is so: either true or false. It is intrinsic to the act of knowing.

4.7. An Alternative Understanding of Metaphysics

We believe that Lonergan's new way of understanding metaphysics changes how it relates to other fields of knowledge. Instead of treating metaphysics as a higher, separate discipline that oversees the empirical sciences, Lonergan moves away from that traditional, top-down model. Historically, this assumption that metaphysics comes first led to its decline in influence, especially during the Scientific Revolution, when empirical methods took over, and traditional metaphysics was increasingly criticized for not being verifiable or practically relevant.

Lonergan, on the other hand, bases metaphysics on how human knowing actually works and offers a clear, methodical approach that can be verified and checked. This move not only makes metaphysics more credible in today's philosophical discussions but also shows how closely it is linked to, and can both inform and be informed by, the natural and human sciences. In light of this, we believes that Lonergan's theory represents an important shift. It brings metaphysics back as a serious and careful field of study, one that can genuinely engage with today's scientific thinking and meet modern expectations for solid evidence and cross-disciplinary coherence.

Lonergan doesn't separate metaphysics from other sciences, but instead rebuilds it on the cognitional theory. This theory underpins the structure of knowing, ensuring that metaphysics

[335] Lonergan, *Insight,* 393

retains its philosophical accuracy while remaining compatible with the empirical sciences. By introducing the structure of knowing, we believe Lonergan provides metaphysics with an empirical foundation, analogous to that of other sciences. It is based on experience and observation.

Observation and experience have become a shared ground on which both metaphysics and empirical sciences begin. This is evident in the empirical sciences, where claims must be tested against observable facts and revised when new data emerge. In a similar way, Lonergan argues that metaphysics must not begin from abstract concepts alone, but from the concrete operations of human knowing: experiencing, understanding, and judging. These operations provide metaphysics with a verifiable foundation, since every metaphysical claim can be related back to cognitional facts and to the data of experience and consciousness. Thus, both science and Lonergan's renewed metaphysics share a methodological concern for evidence, verification, and critical revision.

We considers that cognitional theory makes metaphysics critical. It begins with the way we know through conscious operations of experiencing, understanding and judging. This differs from traditional metaphysics, which begins with abstract concepts and principles. By engaging with conscious operations, the subject actively engages with the known object. This leads to critical realism, whereby we know reality not by passively receiving it, but by actively attending to it.

This study also maintains that basing metaphysics on conscious acts of knowing makes it dynamic and open to ongoing revision, much like the empirical sciences. Its dynamic character comes from being rooted in patterns of discovery rather than in the fixed doctrines of traditional metaphysics. As a result, we believe that this approach can serve as a bridge between different disciplines. Though the human mind is finite, it has an infinite horizon. Our desire to know is

unlimited, yet what we can know is limited to our finite nature. What we come to understand will always invite further revision as new data becomes available. Karl Popper, a well-known philosopher of science, says that our current understanding of the world is only provisional and just works for now. When new evidence comes along, we should be ready to change our conclusions.[336]

This study judges that Lonergan offers a metaphysics that is not only methodical but also verifiable. All sciences are founded on the principle of verifiability. Each scientific statement must be verified by empirical fact. In Lonergan's perspective, metaphysics and its object must also be verifiable. It is verifiable through the structure of human knowing. Such that every metaphysical claim must be verified in its cognitional fact, in other words, Lonergan states, "… every statement in philosophy and metaphysics can be shown to imply statements regarding cognitional fact."[337] Philosophy and metaphysics are accountable to cognitional verification.

4.7.1. Significance of Lonergan's Understanding of Metaphysics

This study affirms that Lonergan's redefinition of metaphysics is revolutionary and differs from traditional metaphysics. He situates his definition within the history of philosophy and science, highlighting both positions and counter-positions. A position is established by acts of knowing, such as experiencing, understanding, and judging. A counter position invites reversal of the basic position. It is a dialectic process, and Lonergan states, "In the light of the dialectic, then, the historical series of philosophies would be regarded as a sequence of contributions to a single but complex goal." [338] Position and counter-position must lead to a single goal of knowledge.

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[336] Mitra, *Suddhachit. An Analysis of the Falsification Criterion of Karl Popper: A Critical Review*. *Tattva–Journal of Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (2020): 1–18.

[337] Lonergan, *Insight,* 5

[338] Lonergan, *Insight,* 413-314

We consider that Lonergan's Metaphysics is not contained in the dead, static scripts of books but in the active life of the dynamic mind. Doing metaphysics, then, is not about remembering some abstract definition that puzzles people. It is about transforming the human mind. It is to be firmly in control of one's knowing. This study then holds that to be a metaphysician is to have the ability to distinguish between the position and the counter-position; to develop positions and to reverse counter-positions. It is not only recognising what is true, but also its reversal. To be a metaphysician is not only about holding an opinion about being, but also about engaging in the self-correcting process.

Lonergan defines metaphysics as "The department of human knowledge that underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all other departments."[339] This study sees this definition as very significant. Recalling the traditional definition, metaphysics was defined as the science of being *qua* being. This study observes that this science was placed above all other sciences and considered independent of them, while ordering all other particular sciences. We then uphold Lonergan's definition because, unlike the traditional definition, it offers an alternative orientation to what metaphysics studies: being, in terms of how it is revealed in the act of human knowing. In this way, it establishes a ground that orients all other sciences while depending on them for its content.

Metaphysics, as a department of knowledge, underlies all other departments. It gives a foundational framework for other departments of knowledge. It is a self-affirmation of the subject as a knower through empirical, intellectual and rational consciousness. The shift from empirical to rational consciousness is made possible by a pure desire that directs the entire process. This drive is a shared condition for the possibility of any knowledge. Metaphysics

[339] Lonergan, *Insight,* 415

then underlies all other departments of knowledge by laying a foundation in the pure desire to know.

The formal object of a science is the point of view of that given science. The particular departments of knowledge are separated from each other by their formal object, that is, their point of view. For example, while a human being is one, different sciences may study particular aspects of the human body, such as the eye, internal organs, the heart, and so forth; hence, we have various specialities, including opticians, cardiologists, and others. The formal object of metaphysics is being, which for this study is an objective of the pure desire to know. This is the origin of all departments of knowledge. Metaphysics is said to penetrate all other departments by giving them their original drive and coherence.

Metaphysics is not something that is placed in the library on a piece of paper, but it's a dialectic practice of the mind to move from position to counter-position.[340] Metaphysics springs from the pure desire to know and is unrestricted to any particular viewpoint. It distinguishes positions from counter-positions in the whole of knowledge.[341] Our desire to know always places us towards a fuller knowledge. Counter position reverses the position for coherence when new questions arise from the previous position. It is in this way that metaphysics acts as a transforming principle, as it develops all positions to their fullest extent.

The final purpose of metaphysics in Lonergan is to unify all departments of knowledge. Hence, it studies all that is in reality, not the whole reality as it is. This means parts of the whole and not the whole as it is. The particular sciences devote themselves to the study of the part of the whole by responding to the limited range of questions. Metaphysics poses an original, total

[340]Metaphysics is not something in a book but something in a mind. It's not by a book but only by the mind in which it is. Books can stimulate precise visual experiences, invite acts of insight, and lead to a grasp of the virtually unconditioned. See also, Lonegan, *insight*, 421.

[341] Lonergan, *Insight,* 415.

question, and it moves toward the total answer by transforming and integrating all other answers. Metaphysics, then, is the whole in knowledge but not the whole of knowledge.[342]

4.7.2. Lonergan's Stages in the Development of Metaphysics

Lonergan's metaphysics emphasises its gradual development through various stages. The earliest stage, latent metaphysics, is operative in all human knowing but lacks clarity about its common source, leading to confusion between data and understanding. Despite this, it sets a foundation for later stages. It is not something we consciously hold, but an orientation built into our cognitional operations. It is found in scientific and common-sense knowledge in our everyday lives. It is often open to distortion by counter-positions. Lonergan believes that everyone has metaphysics, even if they are not aware of it.[343]

This transitional stage in metaphysics is challenging. It's no longer latent but actively seeks to break free from the uncritical fragmentation of knowledge. Human consciousness manifests itself in various forms, such as scientific, common sense, aesthetic, and religious. Although these forms differ from one another, they constitute a unified subject; each carries its own framework, leading to conflicting perspectives.[344] This makes metaphysics problematic because it lacks a method to reconcile these different perspectives. At its second stage of development, metaphysics is insightful but lacks integration.

Lonergan defines explicit metaphysics as a "Conception, affirmation, and implementation of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being."[345] A proportionate being is a being that is accessible through human experience, understanding and judgment. The integral heuristic structure is the ordered set of all heuristic notions. He further clarifies that, "A heuristic notion, then, is the notion of an unknown content, and it is determined by anticipating the type of act

[342] Lonergan, *Insight,* 416.
[343] Lonergan, *Insight,* 416.
[344] Lonergan, *Insight,* 416.
[345] Lonergan, *Insight,* 416.

through which the unknown would become known. A heuristic structure is an ordered set of heuristic notions."[346]

This study understands explicit metaphysics as a conception, meaning an intellectual grasp of the structure of proportionate being through the act of knowing. It affirms that the structure of knowing truly reflects reality, the structure of being. The study, then, perceives explicit metaphysics not only as a theory but as a method for understanding reality that originates in reflection on our knowing process. The three stages can be compared to the three stages of human development: childhood, adulthood, and mature age.

This study explains further that latent metaphysics is like an unconscious yet active child. Children cannot make many distinctions about what they know. For instance, they might refer to all objects in the water as "fish" or all women as their mothers, with little distinction. The problematic stage is sometimes compared to adolescence, where there's a lot of potential and energy that needs guidance to mature fully. There's a struggle to identify, define, distinguish, and clarify, but there's not enough wisdom to perform these operations. Explicit metaphysics is akin to a mature individual (mature age) who has attained sufficient wisdom to comprehend the totality of reality and is self-aware of their actions.

By identifying the three stages in the development of metaphysics, the study suggests that metaphysics is not a static body of doctrine. It proves that metaphysics has a history and continues to respond to new questions and problems. It can be improved when we understand cognitional processes well.

[346] Lonergan, *Insight,* 417.

4.8. The Notion of Objectivity

The notion of objectivity is at the heart of Lonergan's method of how we come to know. It is not only about knowing, but also about how we decide and act on what we know. It is the foundation of his method; the method must guide the process towards objectivity. Lonergan redefines objectivity not as something out there, independent of us, but as a fruit of authentic subjectivity. Subjectivity is not an obstacle to objectivity and truth, but a very condition for arriving at the truth. Objectivity is achieved by being truly human in our knowing. Objectivity is born when knowing is approached faithfully from the subjective point.

A practical example of Lonergan's idea that objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity is a doctor diagnosing a patient with headaches and fatigue. Instead of thinking objectivity is just the lab results "out there," Lonergan would say the diagnosis becomes objective when the doctor's inner operations are authentic: the doctor is attentive by carefully listening to the patient's story and noting context, intelligent by asking relevant questions and considering different possible explanations, reasonable by honestly weighing the evidence and being willing to say "I don't know yet, we need more tests," and responsible by choosing a treatment plan that truly seeks the patient's good rather than what is easiest. So in this case, the doctor's authentic subjectivity—being genuinely attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible is precisely what makes the final diagnosis and action objectively trustworthy, showing that subjectivity is not the enemy of objectivity but the necessary path to it.

Lonergan maintains that the gap between the subject and the object can be bridged by engaging the human mind with the object. The knowledge gained about the object simultaneously reveals the structure of human consciousness. In this way, we hold that knowledge becomes objective, free from the prejudices of the subjective acts that produce it. Hence, according to Lonergan,

genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.[347] Subjectivity is related to intentionality: that every mental act is directed towards an object. In our case, the subject is a conscious being insofar as he engages in a particular type of activity.

The subject is authentic when he is attentive to the data of experience, intelligent in understanding what is to be understood in that data, and reasonable regarding what is understood. As stated earlier, when this is done, these operations are intentional; they are directed towards their object. The object known forms a unity, and we call it being. Being is defined by Lonergan as an objective of pure desire to know. It is a process, not a product, that is ready now. It is a dynamic achievement of the cognitional processes. We go beyond biases by critically reflecting on our own consciousness.

He thus identifies three levels of objectivity: normative, experiential, and absolute. These three levels of objectivity are the dynamic achievements of the three levels of consciousness: empirical, intellectual, and rational. Each of these levels of consciousness achieves a specific objectivity that opens onto the higher level of objectivity. As cognitional theory is transcendental, so is the notion of objectivity in Lonergan. It's a journey toward absolute objectivity in which all conditions are fulfilled.[348]

4.8.1. Principal and Partial Aspects of Objectivity

In the *Insight*, Lonergan identifies four aspects of objectivity related to the four levels of consciousness. Since the aim here is limited to the proportionate being, this study restricts this discussion to the three aspects of objectivity. These will include absolute, normative, and empirical objectivity. These, for Lonergan, are partial aspects of objectivity since they are not patterned in the context with other sets of judgments. They rather emerge from the cognitional

[347] Lonergan, *Insight,* 404, also Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 292
[348] Lonergan, *Insight* 402.

process. The principal or complete notion of objectivity is contained within a patterned context of judgments.[349]

Judgment is the final step in the cognititional process in which truth is affirmed. One judgment alone is not enough for genuine objectivity. Genuine objectivity requires connecting with other judgments in a similar context. It must be reasonable, intelligent, and harmonious with the broader pattern of different judgments. A judgment is not isolated but rather in relation to others and to how they reinforce one another. In Lonergan, objectivity arises when these operations proceed from the self-transcending operations; hence, the judgement attained becomes existential. A single judgment in isolation, therefore, is insufficient for genuine objectivity.[350]

Lonergan is taking a direction different from the traditional philosophy of Aristotle and later Aquinas. In Aristotle's philosophy, objectivity is grounded in his metaphysics and epistemology; however, metaphysics receives greater emphasis than epistemology. In his metaphysics, he distinguishes between the primary substances, which are the immediate objects of sensation, and secondary substances, which are essences or the forms of the objects. Objective knowledge, then, is of the secondary substances, since they are universal, unlike the primary substances.[351]

In *Aristotle's Categories*, chapter five, primary substances are individual entities that exist independently and do not exist in others. eg this tree, John, etc. They cannot be predicated of anything else; thus, they serve as the subject of their predicate. They are neither predicated of the subject nor present in the subject. The secondary substance taken as essence refers to the species and genera to which the primary substance belongs. Eg man is a species and animal is

[349] Lonergan, *Insight,* 399.

[350] Lonergan, *Insight*, 400. The notion of objectivity resides in a context of judgments; without a plurality of judgments that satisfy a definite pattern, the notion does not emerge.

a genus to which it belongs. They are predicated of the primary substance and they are abstract and universal. In this sense, Aristotle's notion of objectivity is also abstract, not concrete.

Aquinas was influenced by Aristotle's distinction between primary and secondary substances; however, he reinterpreted it within the context of his own metaphysics. The primary substances are individual material beings. To explain this distinction, he introduces his doctrine of hylomorphism, which posits that material beings are composed of matter and form (or essence). He calls matter designated matter, and it is responsible for the individuation of these material substances. Form is the actualising principle of these material entities.[352] He accepts the secondary substances as essences, but note that they are conceptual and universal, not actual beings.

Both Aristotle and Aquinas agree that objectivity is the correspondence between the intellect and physical objects. They define substance as independent existence, so objectivity is the abstract content of these substances. The study regards that Lonergan, unlike the two, sees objectivity as a process within the subject. The subject attends to the data of experience, sorts the intelligible from the data, and gives a reason for intelligibility. In doing so, the subject transcends their biases and moves towards objectivity. An authentic subjectivity is therefore not an obstacle to objectivity in Lonergan's perspective, but rather a bridge.

Conclusion

In the foregoing discussions, this study has argued that there is a correlation between knowing and being. In Lonergan's perspective, being is intelligible and has a structure that renders it knowable. At the same time, the human mind has a structure that enables it to know. The two structures are of similar form, hence Lonergan terms the correlation between knowing and being an isomorphic relation. Thus, he defines being in terms of knowing: being is the objective

[352] Aquinas On *Being and Essence*, Chap 4.

of the unrestricted desire to know. Since the desire is dynamic, being is also understood in a dynamic sense.

Although Lonergan is turning to the subject, as many other modern thinkers do, he transcends their limitations by bridging the gap between the object and the subject through the act of consciousness. The study argued that, unlike Descartes or Kant, Lonergan does not permit innate ideas as a foundation of reality. He instead argues that the desire to know is innate in all humans. It is propelled by questioning. The mind poses a relevant question to the data of experience. The subject becomes aware of activities by attending to what can be known in the data experience.

When the process is successful, the subject moves to understanding and judgment. The entire process culminates in judgment. At the level of judgment, we make an affirmation about the object of our knowledge. We affirm it either as true or deny it as false. At judgment, Lonergan identifies the notion of objectivity. We have argued that authentic subjectivity is a ground of genuine objectivity. In this way, subjectivity is no longer an enemy of objectivity but a mutual partner. As the notion of being is dynamic, so is the notion of objectivity. Lonergan then redefines being and the notion of objectivity in relation to the cognitional theory. It is not static but progressive and cumulative.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF LONERGAN'S APPROACH TO THE QUESTION OF BEING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will critically examine Lonergan's approach to the question of being and assess its strengths and limitations. It argues that Lonergan's approach makes a significant contribution to twentieth-century philosophy by offering an alternative to both the traditional and modern accounts of the question of being. The chapter affirms that Lonergan's cognitional-metaphysics framework effectively addresses the ongoing divide between subjectivity and objectivity. It is a dynamic and verifiable method that revitalizes metaphysics for contemporary philosophy and science.

5.1 Lonergan's Philosophical Foundations and Assumptions

After outlining the main aim of this chapter and Lonergan's contribution to twentieth-century metaphysics, the study turns to the foundations that make this approach possible. In particular, he focuses on clarifying cognitional theory and critical realism, as these are central to Lonergan's understanding of being.

5.1.1 The Cognitional Theory as Foundational

Hugo Meynell, in his book *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan,* describes cognitional-metaphysical as a distinctive methodological characteristic of Lonergan. It starts with cognitional theory and implies being.[353] In this framework, cognitional processes take precedence, but not in isolation from being, since they point to the structure of being. These processes include acts such as experiencing, understanding, and judging. These acts uncover

[353] Hugo A. Meynell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 48-83

the intrinsic structure of proportionate being: potency, form, and act.[354] This general structure of knowing can be clarified through a concrete example of human development.

For example, during human development, the fetus grows through several stages. First, a fetus, before it grows further, has the potential to become a fully human being. It does so by developing physical structures and internal organs. When these structures are fully developed, they acquire a specific form or essence, male or female. When born into the world, it becomes fully realized in act.

In the process of knowing, experience is like having a raw potential or potency. Understanding shapes this potential into an insight or form, and judgment affirms the truth of that insight. Lonergan's approach goes beyond both Descartes and Kant. Descartes prioritized distinct ideas and overlooked the subjective operations that produce knowledge. Kant also concentrated on the object, ignoring the role of the knowing subject.

Cognitional theory, as a methodological foundation, rests on two assumptions: first, that knowing begins with experience and culminates in judgment.[355] Experience is a conscious act that intends potency. Potency is that which is anticipated in experience and awaits understanding and affirmation. Experience leads to understanding, which corresponds to the form or essence, relation, etc. What is understood needs to be affirmed either as true or false in the act of judgment. The process is a dynamic whole where each operation depends on the others.[356]

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[354] Bernard Lonergan, "Lonergan and Aquinas: Isomorphism and Proportionality." Lonergan Institute. 2008. https://lonergan.org/2008/09/29/lonergan-and-aquinas-isomorphism-and-proportionality/ Accessed March 10, 2026

[355] Meynell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan,* 49.

[356] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Cognitional Structure*, *Continuum* 2, no. 3 (1964): 530–42, accessed February 3, 2026, https://scholarship.shu.edu/lib_pub/157/.

Secondly, knowing is expressed through an invariant structure that also reveals being. There is an isomorphic relationship between knowing and being.[357] Knowing involves three mutual operations that disclose the structure of being. It was mentioned that the three acts of knowing experience, understanding, and judging reflect the structure of being: potency, form, and act.[358] In this way, the mind has a structure that enables it to know; since knowing is intentional, it intends being. Being also has a structure that makes it knowable. This structure is not limited to philosophical analysis. It is also applicable in ordinary and scientific practice. This is evident in the medical field, for example.

In the medical field, for example, a doctor, upon encountering a patient, a doctor collects information from the patient, thereby identifying potential data to be understood. Experiencing is the first stage. Using medical expertise, the doctor will interpret the patient's experience data, seeking to understand the nature of the illness. When he understands, he judges it to be true. Then he will determine the treatment plan based on what is understood and affirmed.

In light of this, it becomes clear that a sound philosophical inquiry must follow a similar pattern, beginning from lived experience rather than abstract theories. Philosophy and metaphysics, in particular, must not begin with abstract speculations about substance and essence, etc. It must start with concrete, verifiable experiences. Verification in this context refers to immediate, direct awareness of the subject's cognitional activities. Immediate consciousness means the introspective, first-person attentiveness to the operations of one's mind as they move from experience to understanding and judgment.[359]

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[357] Jeremy D. Wilkins, *Lonergan's Isomorphism of Knowing and Being*, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2019): 77–91, https://doi.org/10.5840/ipq2019111110.

[358] Peter E. Kidder, *The Relation of Knowing and Being in Lonergan's Philosophy*, *PhilPapers*, accessed February 19, 2026, https://philpapers.org/rec/KIDTRO-2.

[359] Lonergan, Bernard. *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. Chapter 9. https://bernardlonergan.com/archive/40900dte050/

It must be reflective and deliberate to enable the inquirer to account for their mental operations, which others can recognize and replicate through a similar process. Thus, Lonergan's standards of verification rely on the repeatability of conscious operations whose occurrence and sequences can be authenticated by disciplined self-reflection. This is the unique position Lonergan takes. This position is compatible with other sciences grounded in the verification principle. The data of consciousness and sensation can verify metaphysical claims and the question of being.[360] Having established the cognitional structure that intends being, we can now consider how Lonergan understands subjectivity and objectivity through his critical realism.

5.1.2 Lonergan's Critical Realism as a Mediation of Subjectivity and Objectivity

Lonergan does not deny that the real is objective. While he maintains this position, he also asserts that it can be known through human subjective consciousness, operating through experiencing, understanding, and judgment. In this way, then, subjectivism and objectivism are mediated. They cannot be taken separately but must be taken together as complementary. Objectivity is not a neutral notion; it is achieved when several subjective conditions are fulfilled. Lonergan state,

> The question arises: What is objectivity? If the answer is to be intelligent and reasonable, then the pure desire and its normative exigencies must be respected. Moreover, there must be materials into which intelligence inquires and on which reasonableness reflects. Further, if there is a definitive answer, the unconditioned and so the absolute will be attained. Finally, if the question and answer have a point, there will be other judgments which, if they occur in an appropriate pattern, will yield the principal notion.[361]

Therefore, from the above assertion, it can be underscored that, for Lonergan, objectivity is a dynamic interaction between the subject's desire to know and the data to which questions of

[360] Victoria M. Wulf, *Bernard Lonergan's Transcendental Realism* (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1999), https://research.library.fordham.edu/dissertations/AAI9955975.

[361] Lonergan, *Insight,* 408.

intelligence are applied. In this way, objectivity is not merely given but achieved through a process in which subjective operations converge in intelligent and reasonable judgment.

The first subjective condition is the pure desire to know and the obligation to follow reason. This is the first step towards objectivity, yet it directly involves a subjective operation. It is a breakthrough. Reason acts on real data of experience. Intelligence requires material content for inquiry. The inquiry will lead to a definitive answer, provided all required conditions are met. From the posited conditions, objectivity then is the process by which intelligence and reason engage with the real material, guided by the pure desire to know that will produce judgment.

Critical realism, then, as a philosophical position or method, posits that while reality is objective, it requires subjective conscious operations to be known. Lonergan applies this method in his metaphysics to resolve the extremes of naïve realism and idealism.[362] Lonergan's critical realism goes beyond both extremes by considering the subjective operation of human knowing as an alternative entry into objective reality.[363]

Lonergan's critical realism grounds genuine objectivity in authentic subjectivity. In this way, it affirms that subjectivity and objectivity are complementary. Being is known not directly, as in naïve realism, nor is it known through the mind alone as ideas; rather, it is known through a mediated process in which a subject engages in cognitional activities: being attentive, being intelligible and being reasonable. These precepts, when well followed, yield objective knowledge. With these assumptions in mind, we can now situate Lonergan's method in the broader history of the question of being. In the following section, this study therefore revisits

[362] Naïve realists reduce reality to a mere sensation as if it were a taking a look. They fail to recognise the dynamic process of human knowing that begins from experience and culminates in judgment.

[363] Victoria M. Wulf, *Bernard Lonergan's Transcendental Realism*

the key figures from Parmenides to Kant. The purpose is to highlight their limitations and show how Lonergan overcame them.

5.2 Lonergan and the Historical Limitation of the Question of Being

5.2.1 From Parmenides to Plato

In the history of philosophy, as mentioned earlier in Chapter One of this dissertation, the question of being has undergone a series of developments. Although Parmenides was the first to undertake a systematic investigation into the meaning of being, he remained not only abstract in his conclusions but also identified being with a single, unchanging reality, denying the reality of change and multiplicity in the sensible world.[364] He viewed being as unified and unchanging. Considering that being as such was something positive, as it enabled him to develop a unified view of reality. However, because he denied the possibility of change, his understanding is incompatible not only with later philosophers but also with contemporary science. Parmenides' identification of being with absolute permanence provoked an opposing vision in Heraclitus.

Heraclitus viewed being as a constant state of change. He associated change with a physical flowing river, famously stating, "You cannot step in the same river twice."[365] However, if all things are in perpetual change, they risk losing the meaning of being, since there would be no reference point against which being can be understood. Hence, from the standpoint of metaphysics seeking stable being, he overlooked the importance of permanence and the foundation of change, ultimately leading to epistemological nihilism. Concepts are expressed through language. They are relatively stable, though some change may occur over time. If

[364] W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. 2, The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 1–5

[365] Heraclitus, *Fragments*, in *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed., ed. G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 187–90, fr. 49a.

everything is in constant flux, it would be impossible to express anything in language, even the change itself.[366] Therefore, being would become inexplicable.

Plato's main contribution is in his reconciliation between Parmenides and Heraclitus positions. He therefore brings together the insights of both Parmenides and Heraclitus. He proposed a synthesis that unites change and permanence. He does this by assigning each realm its own status. He regards the changing sensible world as less real and less truly knowable than the unchanging realm, which he treats as a primary focus of being and truth. He regarded all changing beings as reflections of the being that is permanent and good. Like Parmenides, he admits that being does not change; it is the same. However, Plato does not accept Parmenides strict monism. He conceives of form as more than one: justice, beauty, equality, etc. At the same time, he acknowledges change as a fact.

His position creates a dualistic tension which he and his followers fail to reconcile. He does not explain the metaphysical unity between the two realms, specifically how they influence each other. His conceptions are highly idealistic and abstract, making them difficult to grasp, as they are detached from the concrete world. Aristotle inherited the tension between change and permanence. He seeks to address them differently through the doctrine of hylomorphism. This was later picked and developed by Aquinas, hence shaping the metaphysical tradition that Lonergan retrieves and revises.

5.2.2 Aristotle and Aquinas

Aristotle raised the question of being to its most abstract level. Among the three theoretical sciences, he regarded metaphysics, or first philosophy, as the highest because it studies being as being, especially immaterial and ultimate causes. According to Aristotle, being is an object

[366] G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 183–90.

of metaphysics. Being is said in more than one way; however, it is primarily said to be substance. It is located in the concrete sensible world of change. While substances remain unchanging, accidents or attributes change. In this way, he brings together the realities of change and permanence, allowing both to coexist in the same being. The conceptualization of being is very abstract, making it difficult to understand, and it may even seem incompatible with more concrete sciences.

Aquinas, though influenced by Aristotle, conceived of the object of Metaphysics somewhat differently. He develops his understanding of being by differentiating between infinite and finite being. He thus understands being in terms of participation in the order of the highest being. He made several developments regarding the concept of being as an act of being. It is composed of being and essence. In a finite being, essence is distinct from being, whereas in an infinite being, there is no distinction between being and essence. There is only one kind of such being.

Aquinas remained consistent with Aristotle's line of thought. In their metaphysical treatment, they both viewed being as the highest abstraction. This could appear static, especially when contrasted with later, more explicitly dynamic accounts. At this stage, the discussion shifts from antiquity and the medieval period to the developments brought about by modern philosophy. The classical synthesis was reconfigured in the modern period. Instead of beginning with being, thinkers such as Descartes turned to the subject as the new starting point for philosophy.

5.2.3 The Modern Turn to the Subject

During the modern era, René Descartes ushered in a shift in philosophy from objectivity to subjectivity. He provides a new beginning by emphasizing the subject's role in understanding being. In his classification of being, he employs Aristotle’s conception of substance; however, he considers substance to be twofold: infinite substance that God is, and finite substance, which

is divided into the *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. This dichotomy restored philosophy to Platonic duality. Both Descartes and Plato fail to explain how the two interact to produce an integrated and unified concept of being. This failure led subsequent philosophers to attempt to resolve and unify the concept of being, albeit with limited success.

The reaction to Descartes' philosophy of duality led philosophers to follow either *res cogitans* or *res extensa*. Hence, we have rationalism on the one hand and empiricism on the other. These have been two extreme positions in the understanding of being. Whereas, in general, rationalists reduce being to ideas in the mind, empiricists reduce being to material. As Heraclitus and Parmenides differed in their views on the nature of change and permanence, rationalists conceived of being as permanent, unchanging ideas, while empiricists considered being as material and ever-changing. Hume radicalized empiricism by subjecting the notion of causation to sceptical critique, arguing that we have no rational access to necessary connection. If this is taken strictly, it threatens the foundations of both philosophy and science. Kant was among the first major figures to seek a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. His transcendental method became highly significant to subsequent philosophers, especially Lonergan.

5.2.4 Kant and Transcendental Method

The next major contribution in this historical account comes with Kant. He tries to reconcile rationalism and empiricism, which sets the stage for contemporary debates. Kant made the first attempt to respond to Hume's critique of the foundations of philosophy and sciences. He sought to mediate them. Though his intention was pure and good, he ended up with transcendental idealism. He emphasized the active role of the understanding in structuring experience, giving the mind a constitutive role in knowledge, alongside sensibility. Kant employed the transcendental method to establish the possibility of a priori, synthetic knowledge. At the heart of the transcendental method is the establishment of the *a priori* conditions of possibility for

knowledge. According to Kant, space and time are forms of intuition that are necessary for human experience. They are not being themselves, but conditions.

The Kantian transcendental method has been a standard method that subsequent philosophers and some theologians have applied in their studies. It has been a key method, especially among the German Idealists such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schelling and G. W.F. Hegel. Some Thomists have also employed this method to reinterpret Aquinas's philosophy in the modern era. These are Joseph Maréchal**,** Bernard Lonergan, Karl Rahner, and Pierre Rousselot.

Having traced the development of the question of being from Parmenides to Kant, we can now evaluate and examine Lonergan's method. We shall see how Lonergan's Method stands in relation to both the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition and some key figures in contemporary approaches. Against that historical background, the study turns to a precise evaluation of Lonergan's method. The study compares cognitional theory with other alternative approaches.

5.3 Comparative Analysis of Lonergan's Method and Alternative Approaches

The Aristotelian-Thomist tradition is the closest system to Lonergan both historically and conceptually. This study therefore, began with them because Lonergan learnt from them and developed his philosophy departing from them.

5.3.1 Lonergan and Aristotelian- Thomist Tradition

The main concern here is to compare Lonergan's application of the transcendental method to the study of being based on cognitional theory with traditional and contemporary approaches. Hence, grounding metaphysics in the self-appropriation of the knower. The following are evaluative criteria: the method employed, either deductive or empirical, transcendental, etc., the role of experience and empiricism in establishing philosophical claims, and the standards

or process of verification within metaphysical inquiry. This comparison will help us to know why the stated differences between Lonergan and other alternative approaches are significant.

In this way, this dissertation will conclude that, by restating the question of being, Lonergan offers a new approach to metaphysics in contemporary times that is in harmony not only with modern philosophy but also with modern science. Instead of making a direct approach to the question of being, Lonergan approaches it indirectly through cognitional theory. The definition he suggests is second-order. It seeks to establish the condition for the possibility of any knowledge of being.

Lonergan situates his metaphysical approach within the philosophical-historical context. As noted earlier, Lonergan seeks to transcend the limitations of previous metaphysical approaches, from ancient times to the present. Such limitations include abstraction, as with Parmenides, Aristotle, Aquinas, etc. Plato introduced the problem of duality, which later appeared in Descartes's philosophy. Lonergan does not dismiss these historical attempts. He, rather like Aristotle and Aquinas, acknowledges their contributions because each historical period has its own questions and solutions.

In his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Thomas S. Kuhn argues that in contemporary times, each science defines itself not only by the object it studies but also by the methods it employs to investigate and test its conclusions. These methods change over time to reflect the very nature of science.[367] In the Aristotelian and Thomist systems, philosophy and metaphysics, in particular, employed deductive logic, which elevated them above all other sciences.[368] Aristotle in book *Gamma* states that there is a science that investigates being as being and what essentially belongs to it."[369]

[367] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 114.

[368] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 993b5-25

[369] Aristotle, Metaphysics, 1003a25

He called this science first philosophy because it begins with the basic first principles and causes known in themselves. It searches for the first principles and the cause of all reality.[370] This methodology could not withstand the scientist's rigorous empirical scrutiny. Thus, during the Scientific Revolution, metaphysics was largely left behind, awaiting a viable method. The problem with Aristotle was that he conceived of knowledge hierarchically, placing first philosophy at the top to guide the empirical sciences through method and concepts.

Lonergan's understanding of the question of being builds on Aristotle and Aquinas. He employs critical realism as a method, recognising both objective reality and the subjective operations of human knowing. Consequently, he recovers and critically develops Aristotle's Metaphysics. It is important, however, to note here that Aristotle's metaphysics was not concerned with empirical method in the modern scientific sense. However, he aimed to ground his investigation in an analysis of experience and to offer various senses of being. Aristotle's method remains highly abstract by contemporary standards. Nevertheless, it involves a systematic observation of the world as it appears, reflecting his philosophical and limited empirical ambitions.

Lonergan draws on insights from both Aquinas and modern science. He retrieves what is valid in Aristotle's Metaphysics but reinterprets it in the light of the cognitional theory. In doing this, Lonergan not only redefined being but also proposed an alternative approach to it. Traditional metaphysical claims are accepted only if they align with the structure of human knowing as developed by Lonergan.

Aware of modern analytic philosophy and rigorous empirical scientific methodology, Lonergan saw the need to reinterpret not only Aristotle but also Aquinas.[371] Aristotle and Aquinas alike employ a scholastic method of clarification through further distinctions. In

[370] Aristotle, Metaphysics, 982a3, 983a23
[371] Lonergan, *Insight,* 15-16.

Metaphysics, Aristotle clarifies the meaning of being to avoid confusion. He states that being is said in more than one way: as substance, quantity, quality, true, potential, actual, etc.[372] By making such distinctions, he does not develop any empirical verification of the meaning of being but only makes a linguistic advancement on how we talk about being. He is building up an abstract conceptual system.

Aquinas makes a further distinction between *esse* and *ens*, or being and being as such. This distinction does not exist in Aristotle. Aquinas introduces it to clarify the difference between God and creatures. As mentioned earlier, God is a Being whose essence is his existence; there is no difference between essence and existence in God. However, the creature's essence differs from its being. Lonergan reinterpreted both Aristotle and Aquinas and went beyond their verbalism by grounding metaphysics in cognitional analysis.

Lonergan uses a critical realist approach within the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition. He keeps the parts that fit with how we actually come to know things and reworks the parts that are just abstract wording. His approach seamlessly integrates valid insights with contemporary scientific knowledge, aligning his work with analytical metaphysics. Aristotle and Aquinas have given Lonergan a Metaphysical horizon. Alfred North Whitehead offers a contrasting model for rethinking being in a dynamic, scientific age. Lonergan's method is distinct from the process philosophy. This will be clarified by comparing Lonergan's and Whitehead's process philosophies.

5.3.2 Whitehead and Lonergan

The father of process philosophy, Whitehead, sought to develop an understanding of reality relevant to modern science. To this end, he developed a metaphysics that shifted from Aristotelian tradition. Whitehead saw the rise of modern science as a response to the demand

[372] Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book IV, 2–3.

for a dynamic metaphysical framework that goes beyond the static Aristotelian substance.[373] Whitehead's fundamental building block of all reality was the actual occasion, or prehension. In his book *Process and Reality*, Whitehead states that, "Actual entities, also termed actual occasions, are the final real things of which the world is made up."[374] These are events or processes that interact and influence each other.

Whitehead conceived being not only as a substance but also as a substance that constantly changes. He thus made a contribution to the modern metaphysical framework that goes beyond Aristotelian tradition, which conceived of substance as an underlying, static principle of all reality. Nevertheless, Whitehead's metaphysical framework remains abstract and speculative because the actual entities, though foundational, are empirically unverifiable.

Whitehead's actual entities are ontological, a basic principle in his system. However, from the epistemological standpoint, they are abstract. This is because they cannot be accessed or verified empirically. Therefore, while they are ontological constituents of the real world, our knowledge of them remains speculative. There is no direct or concrete experience to verify them. Thus, Whitehead needs another method to complement it. In contrast, Lonergan's verification demands emphasize that metaphysical categories should be rooted in and tested by cognitional analysis accessible and verifiable through experience, understanding and judgment. In this way, Lonergan provides a rigorous foundation that overcomes the epistemological abstract limitations that emerged in Whitehead.

Lonergan, like Whitehead, saw the need to update the Aristotelian tradition to meet the demands of modern science. Although Whitehead and Lonergan had similar ambitions, their approaches are very different. Lonergan employed critical and hermeneutic methods. He thus

[373] Beard, *Method in Metaphysics*, 7
[374] Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 18

reinterpreted Aristotelian tradition in the modern scientific context. He does not abandon Aristotle's insights completely but retrieves them. Beards states,

> Lonergan pursues a hermeneutic of both suspicion and retrieval regarding the Aristotelian metaphysical tradition, and this hermeneutic is grounded upon the critical realism position argued for in cognitional theory and epistemology. This entails that much that is central to the Aristotelian metaphysical position is retained and, indeed, vindicated in a critical fashion.[375]

Lonergan, therefore, through the appropriation of Aristotle's metaphysics, takes up Aristotle's ideas and concepts and examines them in the light of the transcendental method through cognitional structure. As we have seen, all ideas and concepts from traditional metaphysics are understood in the light of cognitional theory in Lonergan's metaphysical framework. Lonergan grounds his metaphysics in the firm method of critical realism.

This method has proven effective in addressing issues in contemporary metaphysics. It offers a way out of Kantian Scepticism regarding the possibility of metaphysics, as well as of Whitehead's speculative method.[376] Other than Whitehead's process philosophy, analytic philosophy stands out as a response to speculative metaphysics. Lonergan integrates and goes beyond analytic philosophy to escape both Aristotle's abstraction and Whitehead's speculation.

5.3.3 Analytic Philosophy and Lonergan

Analytic philosophy, as a branch of philosophy, emphasises the use of formal logic and linguistic analysis to clarify and address philosophical problems. Their methodology then is language analysis. This movement developed during the twentieth century as a reaction against speculative and abstract approaches to philosophy. They consider language as the point of departure for philosophical investigation. Analytic philosophy seeks to establish clarity of concepts and ideas by clarifying language.

[375] Beard, *Method in Metaphysics*, 70.
[376] Beard, *Method in Metaphysics,* 332.

Lonergan also seeks a similar goal in philosophy: clarity, coherence, and the validity of arguments. While the analytic philosophers see language clarification as a doorway to philosophical progress, Lonergan approaches clarification by examining and articulating the conscious operations of the human mind. Both analytic and Lonergan share the common goal of enhancing philosophical communication by resolving confusion in language use. However, instead of beginning with ideas or concepts, Lonergan begins with cognitional theory. He seeks to ground metaphysics in the structure of knowing.

Through this process, Lonergan establishes a comprehensive metaphysical system that aspires to standards of clarity and verification valued by analytic philosophy. He does not take metaphysics as a bunch of meaningless statements. He grounds metaphysics on the verifiable conscious cognitional acts. Hence, the metaphysics developed is verifiable. Lonergan's metaphysics, therefore, is not a set of meaningless statements, but it is a system that is verified through the analysis of cognitional acts. Lonergan's metaphysics then seeks to bridge the gap between abstract theorising and lived experience. It provides a platform for dialogue between analytic and continental traditions.

Like the analytic philosophers, Lonergan also sees the need to clarify concepts to avoid ambiguity. Unlike the analytic philosophy, Lonergan emphasises the connection between mental acts and language. He holds that meaning is at most accessible through human language. However, he does not see value in any language clarification that is not grounded in the mental acts. Language that is banished from mental acts remains detached and highly abstract, which may collapse philosophical discussions into verbalism. Analytic philosophy, therefore, seeks clarity through language; Lonergan complements this with the phenomenological method, which emphasises turning to the subject's consciousness and experiences.

5.3.4 Phenomenological Method and Lonergan's Transcendental Method

The phenomenological method in the modern sense is attributed to Edmund Husserl. In developing this method, Husserl aimed at a rigorous scientific reflection of reality and life. In Husserl's sense, phenomenology seeks to understand how phenomena appear and manifest themselves in consciousness. Phenomenology moves away from the abstract and old argumentative analysis of internal contradiction. It seeks to formulate the depth sphere of phenomena and life on the basis of experience: seeing things as they are.[377]

Husserl's phenomenology is built on the legacy of the Greek philosophers who sought to understand the ordered universe as a whole.[378] However, he does not remain in their impersonal and abstract approach. He rather emphasises the dynamic and temporal nature of experience. Husserl's views on internal time-consciousness and temporality as the ultimate ground of experience.[379] In this way, he sees experience as evolving over time. Husserl then does not accept the static conception of being as held by the traditional approach.

Lonergan's method shares some common features with Husserl's phenomenological method. First, they all aim to ground philosophy in concrete human experience by examining how human consciousness liberates metaphysics from abstraction. Secondly, they reject naïve realism and seek to develop a verifiable philosophy in concrete phenomena. Lonergan holds that knowing is mediated by the senses; we do not see reality directly but experience, understand, and judge it. All our claims must be supported by critical reflection and evidence. Philosophy must be verifiable, not a set of abstract and disconnected concepts from actual experience.

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[377] Jan Patocka, and James Dodd. *An Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*. Open Court, 1996. EBSCOhost.

[378] Patocka and Dodd. *An Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*

[379] Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*, John Barnett Brough trans. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991) 78-90

Husserl sees phenomenology as the science of conscious experience, focusing on the intentional structure in which objects are given. Experience is the primary data for philosophical analysis. Lonergan's transcendental method and Husserlian phenomenology reject pre-given metaphysical systems or objectivist accounts of knowledge, both of which emphasise first-person access to consciousness. Lonergan's method begins with an analysis of our cognitional operations and formulates transcendental precepts such as 'be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible'. Like Husserl, Lonergan grounds philosophy in a careful reflection on the subject's conscious activity rather than in pre-given systems. With these alternative methods in view, we can now turn to Lonergan's method and its implications for the question of being.

5.4 Lonergan's Method: Critical Realism and the Question of Being

At the heart of Lonergan's method, critical realism, is the possibility of objective knowledge of being through mediated, self-appropriated knowing.

5.4.1 Critical Realism and Objectivity of Being

Critical realism, as a philosophical approach, holds that knowledge of reality is objective yet mediated by the human mind.[380] While scientific positivism reduces knowledge to observable facts and postmodernism denies objective reality altogether, critical realism mediates between these two extremes: it holds that reality is objective and exists independently of human cognition. At the same time, it holds a position that, though objective, is intelligible.

5.4.2 Restating the Question of Being

Method and process always lead to the content. Lonergan adopts a different approach to access being. Instead of relying on the deductive logic of Aristotle and Aquinas, he reframes his

[380] Andrew Beards, *Method in Metaphysics: Lonergan and the Future of Analytical Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 5

method in terms of cognitional theory and epistemology. This approach is indirect and restates the questions of being in a way that reshapes our understanding of reality. Being is then understood not as an abstract and static concept, as in the traditional approach. Lonergan's method redefines being as a dynamic inquiry, situates the human mind as a method, integrates philosophy and science, and finally addresses misconceptions about the question of being and its methodology.

To restate the question of being, in the philosophy of Lonergan, we need to ask where we begin and which questions we ask to have the right answer. Regarding the starting point, Lonergan states,

> Just as metaphysics can exist only in a mind and can be produced only by the mind in which it is to be, so also metaphysics can begin only in minds that exist, and it can proceed only from their actual texture and complexion. Bluntly, the starting point of metaphysics is people as they are.[381]

Lonergan's starting point of Metaphysics is not being itself but the conditions for the possibility of knowing being. Lonergan proposes that a conscious mental operation be a methodological starting point. These conscious mental acts constitute experiencing, understanding, and judging. To move from one level of consciousness to the next, the right questions need to be asked.

As understood in the phenomenological tradition, which dates back to Frantz Brentano, all mental acts are intentional. They are directed towards a definitive object. Dermot Moran, in his book *Introduction to Phenomenology,* quoting from Brentano, writes,

> Every mental phenomenon includes as object within itself although they do not do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love something is loved, in hate hated and in desire desired and so on.[382]

The object intended in knowing in Lonergan's perspective is being. The question of being, therefore, in Lonergan's approach is redefined in terms of knowing. This change in the entry

[381] Lonergan, *Insight,* 422
[382] Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 46

point to understanding being is significant because it elevates philosophy above abstract speculation about reality. By redefining being in relation to knowing, Lonergan centres philosophical inquiry on the process of knowing and the conditions of human understanding. In this way, he ensures that the question of being is built on concrete human experience and cognition.

The question one poses determines the answer. The right questions always invite the correct answers, while the wrong questions invite the wrong ones. In the traditional philosophy, the question Aristotle asked shaped his answers about the meaning of being. The question 'what is being?' is the question about a concept. As we stated earlier, concepts are static and are products of abstraction; hence, they are abstract as well. Instead of asking what being is, Lonergan asks how we know being. This question does not result in an abstract conception. It directs the set of activities towards the knowledge of being.

Lonergan's approach helps to address not only the problems of scepticism but also those of relativism. Relativism bases knowledge on a subject and produces knowledge that is relative to the knower's conditions. This has been a common trend in modern philosophical thinking. On the other extreme, there has been scepticism, which doubts the possibility of knowledge. In light of these effects, Lonergan's approach focuses on how humans come to know being: the process bridges subjective experience and objective knowledge, thereby overcoming their extreme limitations.

Lonergan developed a method applicable not only to metaphysics but also to any scientific inquiry.[383] The method here is understood as the human mind's flexibility and adaptability.[384]

[383] Lonergan's understanding of method is unique in that it involves the recurrence of the intelligent and reasonable operations of the human mind that yield cumulative results in terms of insights and judgments of fact.

[384] Andrew Beards, *Method In Metaphysics: Lonergan and Future of Analytic Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 20.

This is significant for Lonergan because all operations take place in the mind. In his book *Method in Metaphysics*, Beards notes that, "It is the human mind that produces, refines, revises, accepts, modifies, and rejects logical schemes, scientific theories, historical accounts, and the opinions we hold in ordinary life; it is the conscious operations of the mind that constitute the fundamental method."[385] The operations of human minds respond to new data, and it unfolds over time. This gives Lonergan's method a dynamic character. This is important for understanding of both science and metaphysics.

5.4.4 Dynamic Nature Lonergan's Method

The human mind is inherently dynamic: it is always evolving through new experiences that generate additional knowledge. The history of science shows, as Popper has shown, that scientific progress occurs through change and the accumulation of knowledge.[386] When new data are discovered, conclusions and theories are adjusted to incorporate them. Popper argues that for a theory to be scientific, it must be falsifiable. The history of science, then, is the history of the development of the human mind. Thus, the human mind is the common ground upon which both philosophy and the sciences begin their processes.

The change of method invites the changes in results. When the same method is applied, there is a risk of obtaining a similar result. To understand being differently also requires a change in the methodology for studying it. Lonergan has taken a different method, and his understanding of the question of being has also been considerably renewed. Being is thus said to be dynamic, reflecting the method's dynamic nature. Method and content affect each other mutually. It is now a common slogan and cry in modern society that the new realities of our times cannot be

[385] Beards, *Method in Metaphysics,* 21.

[386] The knowledge we have about reality is only plausible and works for now; when we receive new data, we revise our conclusions.

studied by the old methods of our distant past. Applying old methods to new realities risks being irrelevant. These considerations raise the question of where metaphysics must begin.

5.4.5 The Starting Point of Metaphysics in Lonergan

Lonergan asserts that metaphysics is not limited to books but exists in the mind. He states, "Just as metaphysics can exist only in a mind and can be produced only by the mind in which it is to be, so also metaphysics can begin only in minds that exist, and it can proceed only from their actual texture and complexion."[387] The development of metaphysics relies on the actual nature and structure of active human minds. This process is a journey towards self-knowledge, characterised by attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness.

Understanding of reality occurs in a context where objects impose themselves on the senses, and the human mind then works on the data received from the external world. It is important to note here that consciousness is essential. It is not mere looking but paying attention to acts such as seeing, defining, and judging. Metaphysics then starts with the active human mind conscious of its active data.[388] An eye detached from the body is not aware ad cannot see the seeing unless attached to the active body.

This position by Lonergan may face counterarguments from other philosophical thought, such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, who argues that metaphysics is not an isolated activity of the mind but rather derives from social, linguistic, and historical contexts. Likewise, Thomas Kuhn suggests that human knowledge requires more than individual cognition. These are genuine concerns; however, they overlook the perspective from which Lonergan examines the nature of the human mind and its contents. The mind and its content cannot be separated. Culture, language, and social context are known aspects of the mind that are not mutually exclusive.

[387] Lonergan, *Insight,* 421
[388] The active data is the data that the subject is conscious about.

5.4.6 The Question of Being and the Transcendental Method

Lonergan adopts the transcendental method, though not in the Kantian sense. This method seeks to establish the possibility of knowing what being is. The method employs the operation of the human mind in the process of knowing being. At all times, the process reflects its content. The human mind desires to know being in its totality, as Aristotle conceived it to be. That is the knowledge of being as a whole. Lonergan's approach, through the transcendental method, makes it possible not to know being as a whole, but to know all that is in the whole being. Hence, the purpose of his approach in metaphysics is not to know the whole being but all that is in being. The transcendental method is deeply personal. The question of being becomes inseparable from the journey towards self-knowledge.

5.4.7 The Question of Being as a Journey to Self-Knowledge

The process is personal; no one can do metaphysics for someone else. Lonergan states that, "No one can understand for another or judge for another. Such acts are one's own and only one's own."[389] It is attained through individual consciousness by attending to the data of the senses and the data of consciousness. It is not a set of abstract theories in books; books can only stimulate and direct inner processes. The process then leads to self-knowledge. This result can only exist in the self-affirming subject's empirical, intellectual, and rational consciousness.[390] The content of the process is therefore self-knowledge: being. Having discussed Lonergan's method and the restatement of being, we can now look at the principal strength of his approach.

[389] Lonergan, *Insight,* 421
[390] Lonergan, *Insight*, 421.

5.5 Strengths of Lonergan's Approach to the Question of Being

5.5.1 Verifiable in the Cognitional Acts

Lonergan's approach, unlike others that begin with the abstract concepts of being, is grounded in concrete, verifiable cognitional operations in the data of sense and consciousness. The emphasis on returning to concrete data makes metaphysical claims not only revisable but also testable, as they appeal to concrete conscious operations. It is not a closed deductive system. It can be revised and repeated as understanding deepens. It makes metaphysics accessible to everyday life because it applies to all humans. It is not only for the specialists. It becomes an account of what all humans already do; this is why, by avoiding abstraction, philosophy becomes both accessible and existentially relevant. It is not purely theoretical.

Cognitional operations are conscious acts of experiencing, understanding, and judging. These three acts are not separate; they form a unified process that leads from one to the next and allows revisiting previous steps for revision and verification. The operations of consciousness anyone can discover through self-appropriation. This empirical foundation, which Lonergan calls the generalised empirical method, provides distinctive evidence and verification for his philosophy.[391] The purely deductive system in traditional philosophy starts with abstract principles and does not return to experience for verification. Lonergan's process is relevant to everyday life because we move from sensation to experience by asking questions and affirming our judgments. Consequently, we proceed to decision-making and acting based on the knowledge acquired.

[391] Generalised empirical method stands to the data of consciousness as empirical method stands to the data of sense. This is different from the method of science, which is limited to the data of sensation only.

5.5.2 Integration of Epistemology and Metaphysics in Lonergan

Jonathan Lear, in his book *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand,* points out that the questions about knowledge in Aristotle are integrated into metaphysics, psychology, and science.[392] Metaphysics was considered not only superior but also the first. Lonergan, through his doctrine of isomorphism, bridges epistemology and metaphysics. In his philosophical framework, then epistemology reveals metaphysics, hence it precedes it.[393] This integration is significant, especially in resolving the modern divides between subjectivism and objectivism and between the mind and the body.

In early modern philosophy, there was a turn from the object to the subject. The emphasis was not placed on the object but rather on the subject. Epistemology and metaphysics were sharply divided in the philosophy of Descartes, Kant, etc. They emphasized epistemology at the expense of metaphysics. However, they remained with difficult questions about knowledge. Is knowledge subjective or objective? Descartes could not clearly demonstrate the relationship between mind and body, whether they are separate or parts of a single reality. By integrating epistemology with metaphysics, Lonergan resolved these modern conflicts. For him, the genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.

5.5.3 Transcultural Foundation of Knowledge

Lonergan's approach is transcultural, enabling it to address the question of the pluralism of knowledge worldwide.[394] He achieves this by grounding knowledge in cognitional operations rather than linking it to a specific object, culture, or context. Different cultures produce different knowledge: diverse horizons generate different understandings. Lonergan attributes this

[392] Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 11

[393] Lonergan, B. J. (1964). *Cognitional Structure*. Continuum 2(3), pp. 530-542. https://scholarship.shu.edu/lib_pub/157/

[394] Pluralism refers to the co-existence of diverse perspectives, philosophies or cultural frameworks, emphasising the acceptance and appreciation of diversity. It highlights the challenges of communication and mutual understanding across different viewpoints and traditions.

pluralism to the four patterns of experience.[395] While the objects of knowledge may vary from one culture to another, the underlying operation that leads us to this knowledge remains consistent across all cultures and times. This provides a common foundation for dialogue and helps prevent the imposition of one's worldview on others.

Though Lonergan's approach affirms epistemic pluralism, it overcomes two extreme positions related to it: relativism, which denies the common ground of knowledge, and absolutism, which claims that a particular culture has a monopoly on complete and final knowledge. Transcendental precepts and cognitional structure provide a foundation for all knowing. Its revisional nature and development in cultures overcomes the absolutist nature of knowledge.[396]

5.5.4 Rigorous and Self-Correcting Approach

Lonergan's approach is rigorous because it is precise, requires evidence, and avoids speculation. Lonergan's method insists on attention to data. Explicitly opposing speculative, ungrounded theorizing.[397] It is also self-correcting, with a built-in mechanism that allows one to identify and correct mistakes. Moreover, the approach is self-reflexive: when one realizes that they have failed to pay sufficient attention to the data of experience and have hurried to judgment, one can review the process, attend more carefully to the data, and thereby enhance the accuracy of their understanding and judgment. Since it is formulated in very general terms, this approach can be applied across a broad range of disciplines.[398]

This approach is significant because it encourages one to be self-critical and revise their conclusions, especially when data have been misunderstood or omitted. In medical fields,

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[395] Gerard Walmsley. *Lonergan on Philosophic Pluralism : The Polymorphism of Conciousness As the Key to Philosophy*. (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 2008), 205.

[396] Lonergan, *Cognitional Structure*, 8

[397] Robert M. Doran, *Subject and Psyche: A Study in the Foundations of Theology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994),

[398] Wulf, V. M. (n.d.). *Bernard Lonergan's Transcendental Realism*. https://research.library.fordham.edu/dissertations/AAI9955975

mistakes can be fatal. This approach is useful because it helps medical practitioners be more careful and review their conclusions and any noticeable changes in their subject. At the same time, conduct a thorough investigation and do not rely solely on prior experience; gather new evidence for each case.

When a doctor meets a new patient, they may first conduct a diagnosis and then prescribe a treatment plan. Sometimes, the temptation is to generalize a treatment plan for one patient to all similar cases. While this may work for many, some individuals may be exceptional and require revision. In some cases, some doctors also ignore patients' real experiences and prescribe medication to patients without a proper diagnosis.[399] In any case, experience is the point of reference and should not be skipped. If anything goes wrong, the process needs to be revised until a solution is found.

5.5.5 Non-Conceptualistic

Conceptualism here is used in opposition to realism. It means that the real exists independent of the objects out there now. They ontologically exist only as objects of thought. Lonergan is alleged to be a conceptualist on account of his epistemological turn to the subject, emphasising the role of insight in concept formations. He may be mistaken for the Kantian Idealist, since he uses the Kantian transcendental method. If being is accessed only by the subject's act of understanding, it risks being conceptualistic or idealistic. This is because it will be the product of only the mental operations. However, in concept formations, Lonergan's framework does not separate itself from the reality these concepts represent.

Lonergan redefines concepts in relation to the dynamic acts of knowing, thereby endowing them with a dynamic status. Concepts are not an imposition of the mind on reality, as Kant

[399] Though unpublished, there are a few cases where people find themselves ignored and the doctors rush into a prescription which sometimes doesn't work.

pointed out. Concepts are the product of the genuine acts of understanding. Lonergan states that, "Concepts do not occur at random; they emerge in thinking, supposing, considering, defining, formulating; and that many-named activity occurs, not at random, but in conjunction with an act of insight."[400]

These operations are intentional; thinking is thinking about something, supposing is also directed towards a specific object, considering is considering something, and defining is defining something. It is then in this way that Lonergan escapes from being either conceptualistic or idealistic. The concept formation is not always disentangled from the reality that imposes itself on the mind. What the mind does is to impose questions on the data so as to make it intelligible.

Concept clarification is not about linguistic accuracy, but about ensuring concepts remain true to the acts of understanding as they reflect the structure of being. Knowing is a dynamic process of discovery, not a static collection of concepts. In a world driven by Artificial Intelligence, humans have reduced knowledge to mere information transfer and conceptualisation. They focus on the products of intellectual activity rather than on the intellectual activity that brings them about.

5.5.6 Non-Verbalism

In Lonergan's philosophical framework, words and concepts are closely related. Borrowing from St. Augustine, Lonergan argues that while concepts are inner words, and when they are represented in languages, they become outer concepts. Lonergan develops the idea of inner concept (*verbum mentale)* in dialogue with St. Augustine and Aquinas. He expresses that inner

[400] Lonergan, *Insight,* 33.

words are expressed in spoken languages or written languages. The correspondence of inner words is mainly not to outer words, but to reality: reality divides into essence and existence.[401] Words are a product of insight or understanding; thus, words detached from the object understood remain meaningless. Logical positivists, to the contrary, false propositions are not meaningless; they mean something; what they mean is an inner word, and only because that inner word is false, does the false proposition lack objective reference. In this sense, then inner words must have objective reference.[402]

In a time when mere words are mistaken for what is understood, they become a source of not only confusion but also endless and fruitless discussions. Concepts and words that we use must be tested against their corresponding acts of understanding, not be used merely for rhetorical purposes. Contemporary debates in philosophy sometimes become more complex simply because the words used are not taken together with their meanings as derived from the acts of understanding and their objective reference.

As noted earlier, driven by artificial intelligence, knowledge is reduced to the transfer of information from one person to another, directly or indirectly through an AI program, into the human mind without due process. Education in contemporary times risks transferring knowledge from the teacher's mind to the students without either party understanding what it is. Like children who repeat words they hear from their parents without understanding their meaning, knowledge that is transferred without helping the receivers understand it makes them childish. These strengths are not theoretical only but have practical implications for metaphysics and epistemology. The following section will explore some of these implications.

[401] Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 17

[402] Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 15.

5.6 Implications for Contemporary Metaphysics

5.6.1 Substance and Process Metaphysics

In Aristotle's metaphysics, being is said in more than one way, understood analogically. However, he was specific that being is said to be substance. Substance was considered an enduring thing, underlying all reality. To understand reality was equivalent to understanding the meaning of substance. Since substance was unchanging, the real must also be unchanging. At the other extreme, process metaphysics also advocates the temporal change of reality. This also ignores the permanence of the real world: although things change, we have reference points that do not change to help us know anything; for if all things change, there would be no possibility of knowing anything.

Lonergan, by contrast, offers an alternative approach, grounding Metaphysics in cognitional theory within the structure of human knowing. This generates a unique metaphysics in which the metaphysical categories are derived from cognitional analysis rather than from conceptualisation. This approach addresses the problem of static metaphysics, which may not account for change and development. The reality of change and development cannot be ignored, as they exist. Science develops and affects all other areas of life. There is a need for a philosophical approach that is compatible with contemporary science and culture. Lonergan's approach offers the best alternative to traditional metaphysics.

Cognitional-based metaphysics, as advocated by Lonergan, risks reducing metaphysics to a form of philosophical idealism. This means that being is mind dependent. However, as we have stated earlier, being is intelligible, and there is nothing beyond being. Therefore, if it does not depend on human cognition, it cannot be known. Likewise, if there was anything beyond being, there would be no possibility of knowing it. In this case, then being is intelligible, and nothing is beyond being, because it cannot be known. Cognitional-based metaphysics is not idealistic; it is grounded in the concrete, empirical world yet transcends it.

Lonergan's approach offers an alternative approach to metaphysics; however, it does not address reality beyond human cognition. Therefore, while it offers a significant alternative to metaphysics, it requires revision or supplementation to address the full range of metaphysical questions, including the nature of materiality, transcendent being (God), the contingency of being, death, and absurdity. These escape the structures of intelligibility. These questions, however, are phenomenological and existential.

5.6.2 Implication in Epistemology

The dichotomy between subject and object has long been a problem in philosophical discourse. Objectivity has been seen as incompatible with subjectivity; hence, two philosophical positions emerged: realism takes truth as object-oriented and independent of the subject, whereas the subjective position holds that truth is subjective and always subject-dependent. The question, then, is whether truth is subjective or objective. Lonergan takes a different route: instead of grounding truth in either the subject or the object, he considers them together. He posits that objectivity grounded in an act of judgment is a fruit of authentic subjectivity and cognitional operations.

This approach is significant because it goes beyond the correspondent theory of truth and knowledge, which holds that truth consists in the correspondence between what is in the mind and what is in reality. Correspondent theory, though it relates the ideas in the mind to the reality outside, does not explain the source of the ideas that correspond to the objects to be understood. Lonergan's approach allows for the three-stage process: being attentive to the data of experience, being intelligent and being reasonable. Truth or objectivity is achieved at the third stage without excluding the other two stages.

It is also significant because the old problem of the dichotomy between the knower and the known, the object and the subject, collapses into critical realism. Critical realism holds that

while the object is out there to be known. It presents itself as an intelligible thing to be grasped, understood and affirmed. Subjectivity is no longer a distant enemy of objectivity; rather, they are complementary. Objects have a structure that is intelligible, and the mind has a structure to grasp such intelligibility. It's like a spanner and a bolt in a loose sense.

Lonergan addresses contemporary epistemological pluralism by addressing the source of such plurality. It is either the absence of a common foundation or the absence of any foundation at all. Different domains may require different criteria for knowledge. Pragmatists, for example, rely on practice and context as foundations of knowledge and truth. Others, such as people of faith, rely on belief as a criterion for knowledge and truth. Empiricists rely on sense perception as a criterion of truth. Lonergan's approach offers a foundation that goes beyond practice, beliefs or the material physical world. The foundation is the cognitional operations themselves, which are at work in all human beings.

5.7 Contemporary Relevance and Applicability

Lonergan's approach to metaphysics is relevant in contemporary times in many ways. This method is applicable not only to philosophy but also to all disciplines. Lonergan himself applied it in his study of philosophy, economics, mathematics, and related fields. This is possible because he grounds everything on the cognitional processes. We come to know through experience, understanding and judgment. These operations are conscious, hence intentional. It addresses contemporary concerns about knowledge science and methods.

Lonergan developed a generalised empirical method which invites knowers to take the data of sensation seriously to acquire experience that will later be understood and affirmed. Every discipline at its best follows the same basic pattern of knowing. First, what exists must also be experienced. What we see, hear, feel, and read, etc., we pose questions of intelligence to discover patterns and relations, and to formulate insights and theories. What is understood is

checked further at the level of judgment. We check, test and decide whether our understanding is actually true. These steps appear in physics, theology, psychology, and related fields; this method is therefore not limited to philosophy but guides any serious inquiry.

The method is both theoretical and practical. Lonergan has applied this method in economics. He uses it to analyse how economies function and to identify the source of misunderstandings. Economists often think similarly and follow the same pattern. Lonergan grounded metaphysics on the cognitional theory. It goes beyond the ready-made metaphysical system or purely logical construction. Each of these operations is intentional: experience intends potency, understanding intends form, and judgment intends act. Despite the strength of Lonergan's method, the following section will identify areas where further research and dialogue may be required.

5.8 Areas for Further Research

5.8.1 Further Integration with the Phenomenology: Pre-reflective Experiences

Husserl, in his phenomenology, identifies two kinds of experience: immanent and transcendental. Reflective experience and pre-reflective experiences.[403] Pre-reflective experience occurs even before we reflect or think about something. This is a distinction between phenomenological experience and ordinary experience. Phenomenological experiences are experiences that have transcended their materiality. They are said to be pre-reflective: they occur even without engaging the world directly. Ordinary experience is the direct awareness of objects in our consciousness.[404]

Lonergan, in his part, does not make this distinction between ordinary experience and phenomenological experience. He rather incorporates them in the three levels of consciousness, namely: experiencing, understanding and judging. What Husserl or Heidegger call ordinary

[403] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book*, F. Kersten trans. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1983), 36–41.

[404] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, Dorion Cairns trans. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), Med. II.

experience would fit Lonergan's level of experiencing, and phenomenological experience would be a level of understanding and judging. Lonergan takes them together as a part of the dynamic whole. The whole act of knowing is directed towards the whole being.

5.8.2 Concerns of Analytic Philosophy: Circularity and Self-Referential Character

The transcendental character of Lonergan's approach, borrowed from Kant, seems to produce a circular argument. The transcendental method seeks to establish the condition for the possibility of experience or knowledge. Lonergan's approach grounds all knowledge in the self-appropriation of the knower. Self-appropriation is itself a knowledge. The question then is, if self-appropriation is itself a knowledge, how can it claim to discover the cognitional structure that brings it about? In other words, if self-appropriation is the knowledge, it must presuppose something other than itself to cause it.

This is rather a difficult challenge to address. It's difficult because we need a higher system in order to challenge it. Since we have no other system higher than this, we fall back on self-appropriation and the cognitional structure that we deny as grounds for our verification. Cognitive psychology suggests that most of our cognitive activities are unconscious. If this is the case, then Lonergan's approach becomes very limited in capturing human knowing, which is then considered to happen in the unconscious mind.

While it is true that knowledge cannot be forced, Lonergan states that it happens in the habitual texture of the mind.[405] When the environment for the knowledge is put in place, then insight happens at its own time. However, it is not automatic, and we can be aware of the process we go through to prepare the ground for the occurrence of knowledge: posing relevant questions to

[405] Lonergan, *Insight,* 5

the data of experience and understanding. Reducing knowledge to an automatic, unconscious operation is to reduce man to the level of lower animals.

5.8.3 Postmodern Challenges: Universalism and Contextualism

As stated earlier, cognitional structure is not only invariant but also universal. It is assumed to be the same for all human beings regardless of their culture, customs and traditions. In this way, then, the knowledge acquired through this invariant cognitional structure must also be universal and objective. In opposition to this position, Michael Foucault argues that knowledge and truth depend on historical context. He argues that what a society takes to be truth depends on historically specific regimes of truth that organise and validate knowledge.

> …One is used, in fact, to consider that discourses and their systematic ordering are not only the ultimate state, the final result of a long and often sinuous development involving language (langue) and thought, empirical experience and categories, the lived and ideal necessities, the contingency of events and the play of formal constraints. [406]

Accordingly, Foucault, like other post-modernists, believes that the truth and system of knowledge are nothing but the function of discourses and systems in a given historical system. They define each other. knowledge and truth, then, are conceived as the outcome of individual thinking shaped by discourse, conditioned by language, categories, practices, institutions, and historical events.

Derrida also points out that the metaphysical categories are historical and context-dependent. "Derrida argues that this contradiction can only be resolved by accepting that there is no centre or origin, and that meaning cannot be completely fixed."[407] Instead, knowledge and truth are by-products of cognitional operations. In this sense, then, while contexts may differ, the process and structure remain the same. However, Lonergan's approach may partly answer the questions

[406] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, A. M. Sheridan Smith, trans. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 75-76.

[407] Tim Smith-Laing, *A Macat Analysis of Jacques Derrida's Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* (London: Macat International Ltd, 2017), 11.

posed by postmodernism, but it calls for further dialogue with it. The questions of historicism and contextualism remain open for further exploration in Lonergan's philosophical approach. The focus is on whether these systems are incompatible or reconcilable.

CONCLUSION

This chapter offered a critical assessment of Lonergan's approach and its implications. It has shown how Lonergan's cognitional metaphysical framework retrieves and transforms the Aristotelian–Thomist tradition, while avoiding both Parmenidean stasis and purely conceptual treatments of being. In dialogue with Whitehead, the chapter argued that Lonergan shares the concern to move beyond a static substance metaphysics, but grounds his account in verifiable cognitional analysis rather than in speculative categories such as actual occasions. In relation to analytic philosophy, the chapter suggested that Lonergan meets the demand for clarity and verification by showing that metaphysical statements ultimately imply claims about cognitional fact. In conversation with phenomenology, the chapter showed that Lonergan's transcendental method shares its concern to return to experience and consciousness, while integrating this concern into an explicit theory of knowledge and being. Finally, the study indicated how Lonergan's critical realism can mediate between objectivism and subjectivism, and how his transcendental precepts and invariant cognitional structure offer a possible response to relativism and epistemic pluralism, even if questions about historicity and context remain open.

General Conclusion

This dissertation set out to restate the question of being in Lonergan's philosophy and to examine whether his cognitional theory and transcendental method provide an alternative approach to metaphysics. The study was motivated by the problem that traditional metaphysics, especially in its abstract treatment of being *qua* being, has often seemed remote from concrete human experience. Against this background, the dissertation has argued that Lonergan offers a credible renewal of metaphysics by relocating the question of being within the concrete operations of human knowing. Instead of asking what being is, the question is restated as: how do we know being?

The study has shown that traditional metaphysics possesses enduring strengths. Aristotle's inquiry into being qua being preserves the universality and ultimacy of metaphysical reflection, while Aquinas's doctrine of *esse* deepens the meaning of being as act. Nevertheless, the study also found that the traditional approach becomes inadequate when being is treated primarily through abstraction without sufficient attention to the knowing subject, historical development, empirical inquiry, and the concrete process by which truth is affirmed. This inadequacy partly explains the marginalization of metaphysics in modern philosophy and in a scientific culture that demands evidence, method, and verification.

Lonergan's contribution becomes decisive precisely at this point. His analysis of human knowing reveals that knowledge is not a simple act of looking, nor the passive reception of data, nor the imposition of innate ideas upon experience. Knowing is a dynamic and structured process that unfolds through experiencing, understanding, and judging. Experience provides the data; understanding grasps intelligibility within the data; judgment affirms whether what has been understood is actually so. The study therefore found that judgment is central to Lonergan's account because it is the point at which the mind moves from possibility, hypothesis, and formulation to truth and being.

The prin cipal finding of this research is that Lonergan does not abandon the classical question of being but restates it methodologically. Instead of beginning with the idea of being as an already-possessed abstract concept, Lonergan begins with the human subject as one who experiences, understands, judges, and affirms. This shift does not reduce being to subjectivity. Rather, it shows that being is reached through authentic subjectivity, that is, through the cognitional operations. The question of being is therefore not merely a speculative question about an abstract object; it is a question that emerges from the unrestricted desire to know and is fulfilled progressively through insight and judgment.

A second major finding is that Lonergan establishes an isomorphic relation between knowing and being. The structure of knowing corresponds to the structure of proportionate being: experience corresponds to potency, understanding to form, and judgment to act. This correlation enables Lonergan to move from cognitional theory to metaphysics without falling into idealism or naïve realism. The mind does not create reality, but neither does it know reality by mere passive reception. Rather, reality is intelligible, and the human subject reaches it through the properly ordered operations of consciousness. In this way, Lonergan's critical realism mediates between subjectivity and objectivity.

The new knowledge generated by this study lies in its demonstration that Lonergan's restatement of the question of being provides a concrete, verifiable, and methodologically renewed metaphysics. The study has shown that being can be approached not merely as an abstract concept but as the objective of the pure desire to know. This means that being is what is intended in every genuine question, progressively understood through insight, and responsibly affirmed in judgment. By presenting being as a dynamic notion rather than a static concept, the study contributes a renewed interpretation of metaphysics as an inquiry grounded in the actual operations of human consciousness.

This research has also generated new knowledge by showing that Lonergan's metaphysics can bridge the gap between classical metaphysics and contemporary scientific thought. Since both science and metaphysics arise from the desire to know, both depend on experience, inquiry, intelligibility, and judgment. The empirical sciences investigate particular domains of being, while metaphysics reflects on the total horizon within which all such inquiries become intelligible. Lonergan's approach therefore does not oppose metaphysics to science; it provides a framework within which metaphysics and science can be understood as complementary expressions of the same human orientation toward truth.

Furthermore, the study has shown that Lonergan's approach contributes to contemporary debates about objectivity, relativism, and pluralism. By grounding objectivity in authentic subjectivity, Lonergan overcomes the false opposition between the knowing subject and the known object. Objectivity is not attained by escaping the subject but by being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. This provides a transcultural foundation for knowledge, since all human beings, despite differences of language, culture, history, and horizon, share the same basic cognitional structure. Thus, Lonergan offers a way of affirming both the plurality of human horizons and the possibility of objective truth.

The study has also clarified that Lonergan's method remains open and self-correcting. Since human knowing develops through further questions, new insights, and revised judgments, metaphysics itself must be understood as progressive rather than static. This makes Lonergan's approach especially relevant for contemporary philosophy, where fixed systems are often challenged by historical consciousness, linguistic plurality, scientific development, and postmodern critiques. Lonergan does not close metaphysical inquiry; he provides a disciplined method by which it can continue responsibly.

At the same time, the study has identified areas that require further research. Lonergan's account is principally concerned with proportionate being, that is, being accessible through human experience, understanding, and judgment. Questions concerning transcendent being, God, grace, evil, death, and ultimate absurdity require further development, especially in relation to theology, existential philosophy, and phenomenology. In addition, postmodern concerns about history, language, power, and context invite further dialogue with Lonergan's claims about invariant cognitional structure and transcultural foundations of knowledge.

In conclusion, this dissertation has argued that Lonergan's restatement of the question of being is a significant contribution to contemporary metaphysics. It retrieves the classical concern for being while overcoming the excessive abstraction that weakened traditional metaphysics in the modern context. It responds to modern philosophy by taking the subject seriously, yet avoids idealism by showing that authentic subjectivity leads to objective knowledge. It responds to the empirical sciences by grounding metaphysics in experience, inquiry, verification, and judgment. The study therefore concludes that Lonergan's cognitional-metaphysical framework offers a concrete, critical, verifiable, and interdisciplinary approach to the question of being. Its enduring value lies in demonstrating that metaphysics remains possible, relevant, and necessary when grounded in the living operations of human knowing.

From this overall study, we hold the following convictions:

First, Lonergan's restatement of the question of being overcomes a central weakness of the traditional approach, namely, its excessive abstraction and practical disconnection from contemporary scientific and cultural contexts. By approaching being indirectly through cognitional theory, Lonergan does not abandon the metaphysical question; rather, he relocates it within the concrete operations of the human subject. Being is no longer a remote, indeterminate abstraction but that which is known whenever knowing is authentic. This move,

in our judgment, allows metaphysics to re-enter fruitful dialogue with the empirical sciences, because both are now grounded in experience, inquiry, and verifiable judgment.

Secondly, Lonergan's integration of epistemology and metaphysics is one of his most important contributions. By showing that knowing and being are isomorphic, he dissolves the sharp dichotomy between subject and object that has plagued modern philosophy. In his critical realism, objectivity is not achieved by denying the subject but by fostering authentic subjectivity: attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility. This account not only answers forms of naïve realism and idealism but also provides a more adequate foundation for interdisciplinary work, where questions of method and truth are unavoidable.

Thirdly, Lonergan's approach offers a genuinely transcultural foundation for knowledge. While acknowledging the pluralism of horizons, languages, and traditions, he locates the basis of unity in the invariant structure of cognitional operations. All human beings, regardless of culture, know through experience, understanding, and judgment. This does not eliminate diversity, but it does provide a common ground for dialogue. In a time when both absolutism and relativism are tempting extremes, this is a significant and timely contribution.

At the same time, this study has revealed some limitations and open questions. Lonergan's focus is on proportionate being, that is, being accessible through human experience, understanding, and judgment. Questions concerning non-proportional beings such as God, grace, evil, death, and ultimate absurdity are only indirectly addressed and often postponed to theology. Moreover, postmodern critiques of universalism and context dependence, as found in Foucault and Derrida, invite further exploration of how an invariant cognitional structure can be reconciled with the historical and socio-linguistic conditioning of all discourse. Lonergan's notions of horizon, bias, and dialectic provide important resources here, but further work is needed to develop this dialogue.

Finally, this dissertation has argued that Lonergan's restatement of the question of being is not merely an internal refinement within Thomism but a serious proposal for contemporary metaphysics more broadly. By grounding metaphysics in the data of consciousness and by insisting on the verifiability of metaphysical claims through cognitional analysis, Lonergan offers a path beyond both the abstraction of classical metaphysics and the scepticism of much modern thought. In our judgment, Lonergan's approach does not solve every philosophical problem, nor does it close the history of metaphysics. Rather, it provides a healthy and flexible framework within which further questions about being, knowledge, ethics, religion, and culture can be pursued.

For these reasons, the dissertation concludes that Lonergan's restatement of the question of being is a significant and credible contribution to twentieth-century philosophy. It restores metaphysics as a living, critical enterprise, rooted in human self-knowledge and open to dialogue with all the sciences. This is its enduring value and its chief promise for future research.

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