

# A Directed Workshop on *Insight*, Chapter 1: Elements

Fifth Session—October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018—Lonergan Center, TS Department, Concordia

*Going public: how do insights make the transition from internal conditions and private realizations to public utility? Today we started the section of definitions, for definitions bring into the realm of public discourse any new understanding an individual might have achieved in his or her search for understanding.*

## NOTE

*This is an exercise not at the intellectual level of institutions and the good of order but at the reflective level of actualizing freedom through personal encounter with others also concerned over terminal value. Therefore the question to ask yourself is: how does this enhance my own realm of interiority and through that change how I relate to society at large?*

## CLUES

Insight don't become public for the simple reason that at first there are just a perceptual difference as the unconscious psyche worked on the problem set by the conscious mind. Archimedes had the clue: the splashing of water over the bath's edges as he immersed himself in the water.

## CONCEPTS

The intellect steps in: suppose this, suppose that, what if ... Here we have the shift from the concrete (let's say, the physical wheel of a wagon) and the abstract (mathematical circles). Points have no dimension; lines have only length, etc. So what, you ask? Well, the epistemology of conceptualism has no standing in reality; concepts do not exist as eternal truths outside human knowing (we don't live in Plato's cave). Concepts are of human creation arising out of the play of human intellect. Limit that play and you limit the emergence of concepts, which may be the thing to do if you wish to constrain the populace to a reductionist world mediated by meaning constrained by the material sensate world. A little noticed aspect of human freedom?

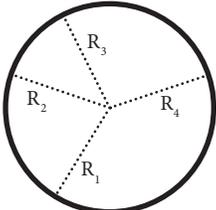
## IMAGE

It seems impossible to rid ourselves of the idea that knowing is seeing, if to understand an insight we require a mental phantasm—an image—to hold everything together. Yet we need an image of some sort in our mind, seemingly concrete yet not sensate, that unites concepts, relationships, and necessity into one coherent whole (the insight). Lonergan bases his example in mathematics, a realm of the purely abstract devoid of any contact with the sensate world. Yet the same idea of an image exists in all the other realms of human meaning, e.g., Plato's cave, the physicist's atom, or even the common sense notion of socialism as a Utopian ideal. All require an image, crudely defined or not, residing in the human mind. No image, no definition? And no notion of necessity.

## THREE DEFINITIONS AS TO WHY A CIRCLE IS ROUND

(equal radii, equal curvature, equal pressure)

If ...  $R_1 = R_2 = R_3 = R_4 = R_n$



then ... the closed curve must be a circle

**Clue:** cartwheel, equal spokes

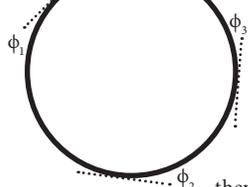
**Concepts:** point, line

**Image:** perfect circle, not real

**Question:** immanent reason why a circle is perfectly round

**Necessity:** if the radii are all of equal length, then the resulting curved line *must* be perfectly round.

If the angle  $\phi$  ...  
 $\phi_1 = \phi_2 = \phi_3 = \phi_n$



then ... the closed curve must be a circle

**Clue:** identical curve

**Concepts:** curvature, tangent

**Image:** perfect circle, not real

**Question:** immanent reason why a circle is perfectly round

**Necessity:** if the curvature at any point on the circle is the same as that at any other point, the curved closed line *must* be perfectly round.

## QUESTION

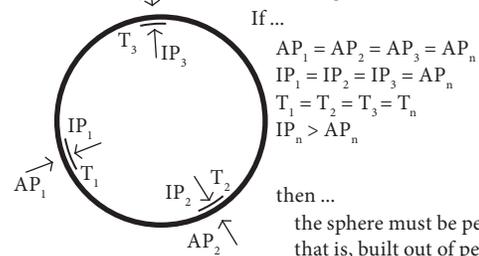
No question; no insight; no respective element in the individual's world mediated by meaning. Blinds spots open up, simply because the individual (or society) has no interest in some aspect of human existence. Why ask questions about the nature of reality if all you are concerned with is keeping a roof over your head and a supply of meals at hand? Hence, intentionality is *always* a factor in human knowing. And since insights have their roots in concrete problems and specific questions, any limits placed on human experience, are limits placed on human understanding. In some ways this is the purpose behind critical theory (Frankfurt school) and political correctness: limit questions, limit experience, and you limit the capacity of those so limited to understand reality. In a world fragmented by common sense bias, the only common factor becomes the material world, the materialist world of the economist and political analysisist.

And there are different kinds of questions. For the most part, human questions have to do with the realm of common sense: how the world relates to our own interests and concerns. The rise of a different question initiated by Socrates who inquired about the essential meaning of "virtue" opened up the realm of theory. (Everyone know what they meant by a virtuous man or women, yet no one could define the meaning of the term.) Note that theoretical or philosophical, or even theological these days, questions lie beyond practical intelligence concerned with getting on with the affairs of the world. This common sense bias leads only to the continuing fragmentation of society and ends with a new dark age as contemporary institutions become irrelevant to human affairs.

AP=Atmospheric pressure

IP=Internal Pressure

T=Tensile Strength



**Clue:** balloon (3 dimensional circle)

**Concepts:** tensile strength, pressure

**Image:** perfect sphere, not real

**Question:** immanent reason why a sphere is perfectly round

**Necessity:** if the tensile strength of a balloon is the same at any point on its surface, and the pressure expanding the balloon outwards is the same at any point of the inner side of the balloon, and the outside pressure remains the same all over, then the balloon *must* be perfectly spherical.