

INSIGHTS AS THE SOURCE OF ALL MEANING

1. **Release of a tension of inquiry** (no tension, no insight): the world mediated by meaning that we create for ourselves is a function of the questions that we ask. The questions that we ask vary according to our intentions that in turn vary according to our horizon. *All* meaning is proportional to our being human.
2. **Are sudden and unexpected** (insights are not the result of any logical extension of what is already known; they bring something new into the world). This means that our own transcended selves are incomplete; there is always the possibility of new insights into who we are and what we stand for.
3. **Are a function of inner conditions** (outer conditions do not lead to insights; only the interior state of the human being does). This means that insights occur only as a result of an internal state of being, not of any external circumstance or situation. This is where intellectual, moral, and religious conversion come into play, for they set the initial conditions from which insights may arise.
4. **Pivots between the concrete and the abstract** (insight arise from concrete problems, but the solution to such problems lie in the universal realm of the abstract). Thus we have the shift from the concrete sensate realm of description to the “universal” world mediated by meaning that lies in the abstract realm of thought. But the inverse is also true: any abstract “solution” must fit the world of the concrete otherwise it falls into the category of oversights.
5. **Habitual** (insights are habitual, in the sense that once they occur that become part and parcel of the human mind; this allows for progressive and accumulative progress). But there is a cost, and that is something like as epistemology of naive realism where “objective” meaning is believed to be external to the subject.

Whether we like it or not, we exist in a tension between who we are (our transcended selves) and who we might become (our transcending selves). How large or small is this gap?

INSIGHTS SUBLATED

When it comes to the functional specialties, insights develop in a definite sequence starting with a person’s foundational stance (interior conditions) and ending with one’s mode of being in the world.

1. **Foundations** (horizon, intentions, operations, and above all conversion augmented by a differentiated consciousness that can give full expression to such radical changes in direction). It is here that the individual or group makes a choice between a multitude of possible mediating worlds and selects the one he or she considers “true.” All this corresponds to the cognitive activity of deciding.
2. **Doctrines** (the first thing to emerge from foundations are fundamental beliefs concerning reality). Of these beliefs,

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HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOUR OWN FOUNDATIONAL STANCE DOES NOT LEAD TO HELL?

the most important is the question of the existence of God (if god does not exist, than the sole source of moral behavior is whatever human beings consider moral—something whose norms vary from culture to culture. If god does exist, then there must be a universal perspective of which human proportionate knowing is but a subsample. All this corresponds to the cognitive activity of judging.

3. **Systematics** (explaining doctrines). The next set of insights have to do with explaining that set of fundamental doctrines established in the previous functional specialty. Why is the world (as judged to exist) the way that it is?
4. **Communications** (how we live in the world, especially how we interact with others). In foundations we have taken a stance; in doctrines, we have laid out the world as we know it; in systematics, we attempt to understand why the world is the way that it is known to be; in communications, we express all these in the manner in which we relate to others whose foundational stance and all that follows may well be completely at odds with our own. Here are the insights that allow us to do just that.

All this reflects the way we have chosen to exist in the world, to be in the world. What we have achieved we know as our transcended self; what we might be, because we are opened-ended dynamic non-linear beings, reflects our transcending self. And all this starts with our foundational stance and the possibility of ongoing intellectual, moral, and religious conversion.

A STARTLING STRANGENESS

The thing about insights, you end up with a startling strangeness that has to do with the “earth-shattering” experience of a new self to be understood, assimilated, and adapted. **This constitutes a fundamental change in one’s foundational stance**, for no longer can one consider that the truth is “out there to be known” but that what is or is not true ultimately resides within each individual. With that one enters a strange world indeed, one that requires a radical change in direction from outside to internal conditions as the source of sound insights.

There are two aspects to this skill-acquiring process. The first is **assimilation**, where the individual makes a judgment that such-and-such is true. The second is a long process of **adaption** to the reality affirmed through judging. (Cf. *Method*, skills, Piaget.) The first is relatively easy, though in Lonergan’s case in requires the act of self-appropriation of oneself as a knower. The latter is a far more difficult process, since it occurs on two different levels: the high level operators and the concrete implications. These high level operators are laid out in Lonergan’s transcendental method while the specifics have to do with metaphysics, ethics, and the possibility of

transcendent knowledge. But it is one thing to know this as an academic exercise (assimilation) and another to work out the implications in one’s own coming to know and to be (adaption).

Assimilation involves a three-fold ongoing conversion: intellectual, moral, and religious. Why is this so important?

The first thing to keep in mind is that there is no pure “non-converted” or “converted”, only people who are engaged in a dialectic between life-affirming and death-embracing generative principles. It is not a battle between good and evil, for in the end only one is truly powerful; the other exists on deceit, manipulation, and downright lies. Each person, each culture, lies on this continuum. Each person, each culture, rejects one pole and is attracted to the other. Those attracted to the life-affirming pole gather together in a common bond while those whose concern is domination gather around the other. Each side finds the other repellent, distasteful, deplorable.

Create an internal hell and you will make in manifest in all you experience, understand, and judge. As Peterson makes clear, in some sense words create the world (metaphorically?), a position well articulated in Christianity. He goes on to state that it is not something we can fully fathom, but he believes it to be true. He then asks if you want to create a hellish world through the injudicious and malevolent use of language?

This is complicated by the very real possibility that what everyone things is true may well not be true. (Mark Twain?) To what extent is your world mediated by meaning contaminated by various attempts by one person or another, one group or another, to justify or rationalize their own exercise of power? Almost all any person knows is built around trust. For example, I’ve never been to Japan or Australia but I know both exists partly because it’s “common knowledge” and partly because I trust those who say these two places exist.

Therein lies the problem. Are they trustworthy or do they have a hidden agenda? Are they biased in one way or another, either by refusing to experience certain aspects of reality, by being unintelligent or unconcerned, or by unsound judgment? And the fact that everyone knows it doesn’t mean that it’s true, only that the deception may range across the board. Political correctness is a good case in point. But the real damage is not in the proper or “correct” public language but in the resulting failure to ask questions. Whole areas of important discussions are no longer possible, in effect creating blind spots in the public realm. Just to raise certain questions leads to immediate ostracizing. Then there are such things as mass delusions as well as the madness of crowds, e.g., Holland tulips.

Any excessively contaminated knowledge only leads to disaster, something that can be readily observed in computers where the adage “garbage in, garbage out” defines an entire set of unreliable conclusions. Suppose this applies to the sphere of public discourse? Then it’s highly likely that we are making decisions based on highly contaminated mediated worlds.

FOUNDATIONS

Lonergan’s functional specialty of foundations in concerned with the initial state of being of any individual as he or she unfolds over the subsequent specialties of doctrines, systematics, and communications. There are two primary aspects to this: the initial state of being involving life-affirming or death-embracing generative principles, and the degree to which the individual has achieved a fully differentiated mind. The former sets the initial conditions while the latter expresses these in the world at large.

Each of these has an impact on what kinds of insights are likely to emerge and what kinds are associated with very low probabilities of coming into being. The following parameters in some sense establish the horizon and intentions of the knower and doer:

- critical realist vs some form of naive realism
- moral courage and the struggle for personal freedom to do the good
- falling in love with a Divine Mystery that is greater than oneself
- common sense interests such as dramatics, aesthetics, intellectual, and biological
- theoretical realms of meaning such as the hard sciences
- the possibility of transcendental knowledge
- the realm of interiority

We are seeking not the whole foundation of these specialties [doctrines, systematics, & communications] ... but just the added foundation needed to move from the indirect discourse that sets forth the convictions and opinions of others to the direct discourse that states what is so.

... It is the person that takes sides, and the side that he takes will depend on the fact that he has or has not been converted.

At its real root ... foundations occurs on the fourth level of human consciousness, on the level of deliberation, evaluation, decision. It is a decision about whom and what you are for and, again, whom and what you are against.

Method, 267-8