

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

Eighth Session—November 7th, 2018—Lonerger Center, TS Department, Concordia

Negation II: Inverse Insights

At this stage, the first form of negation stems from a question that cannot be answered within the insight itself: Is the insight true? (Note this instance of a shift to a higher perspective, a typical feature of the entire book.) The result of this shift is an *is/is not* question that requires a different set of cognitive operations than those used in generating an insight. Eventually, in the chapter on reflective intelligence, the existence of a separate level of cognitive operations called “judging” is affirmed that, when itself is judged true by appealing to the subject’s own coming to know, becomes the self-appropriation of the knower. Within the current chapter a second form of negation is affirmed that involves concrete objects, a spontaneous common sense or theoretical anticipation of what should be, and the negation of such anticipations through an inverse insight. In this way, the question that sets up the need for an insight is denied intelligibility.

WHERE WE ARE

1. Understanding (insights and their properties).
2. How insights are brought into the public realm (definitions).
3. How insights cluster together, encounter paradoxes, and set conditions for the emergence of a higher viewpoints (higher perspectives).
4. Two forms of negation (judgments & inverse insights).
5. Abstraction & human freedom (empirical residue).

INVERSE INSIGHT

1. positive object
2. negation
3. runs counter to spontaneous intelligence

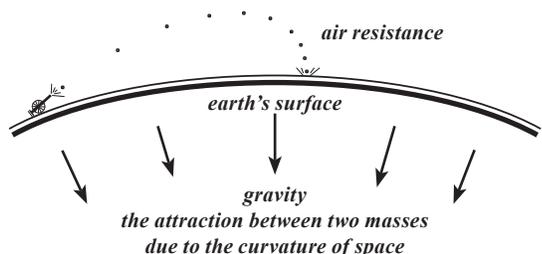
INSIGHTS

1. come as a release to the tension of inquiry,
 2. come suddenly and unexpectedly,
 3. are a function not of outer circumstances but internal conditions,
 4. pivot between the concrete and the abstract, and
 5. pass into the habitual texture of one’s mind.
- Inverse insights are simply a particular kind of insight.**

TWO KINDS OF NEGATION

Judgments. The first extends the notion of an insight to a higher level of cognitive operations that arise from a question that cannot be answered within the insight itself, i.e., is the insight true? (Note that this follows the pattern Lonergan describes and we covered last week of the emergence of a higher perspective that puts the lower into context.) This is a yes/no type question that requires collecting and weighing the evidence before making (hopefully) an unbiased judgment (in Lonergan’s terms, a virtually unconditioned judgment in which all significant questions affecting such a judgment are answered. Lonergan covers this topic far later in *Insight*, after exploring mathematical, empirical heuristics, and common sense realms of meaning as well as the difference between common sense bodies and theoretical things.)

Inverse Insights. In an inverse insight, the subject first attends to a concrete situation only to find that the spontaneous anticipated intelligibility fails to materialize; what seems to be obvious turns out to be very misleading. When this happens, the question generated by what is anticipated turns out to be false. The question itself is negated; common sense or theoretical intelligibility is denied. Although relatively rare, these kinds of insights are very important in human development for they block an obvious route of inquiry to expose an alternative unanticipated counter-intuitive path that often ends with new powerful formulations within a higher perspective.



extended concept: pure vacuum with no other masses present

In our experience, the motion of any object has to be the result of the application of some force. In the case of the canon ball, the initial force acts to propel the ball out of the canon, the mass attraction between the ball and the earth (gravity) pulls the ball down to the surface of the earth, while air resistance slows its horizontal motion.

This is Newton’s first law of motion. There are two concepts that come out of this. The first is acceleration, where any change in motion is the result of an application of force. The second is inertia, where the mass of the object represents the degree to which the object under some force will resist acceleration.

THE INVERSE INSIGHT

1. There is a concrete object, namely the canon ball (plus canon, earth, air, etc.).
2. Newton’s first law states that an object in motion will continue in motion unless a force is applied (negation).
3. This law runs counter to spontaneous intelligence (objects remain at rest unless some force is applied).

1. The presence of this particular kind of insight reminds us that what we spontaneously anticipate may not be true, i.e., we need to be careful of common sense or even theoretical expectations for they may not prove true.
2. Anticipation is an important part of coming to understand, for we need a framework to guide our attention. The form such anticipations are to take are critical when it comes to understanding world processes, for the world view we use to anticipate what there is to be known may be inadequate to the task of fully realizing what there is to be known.
3. Lonergan’s world view of emergent probability is a better empirically justified framework for understanding world processes than other world views such as evolution, indeterminism, or Newton’s mechanical universe.
4. Common sense bodies have little place in Lonergan’s world view, for what is real is a thing—a recurring scheme of operations—rather than a physical sensed body. It is “things” as recurring patterns of operations that “evolve”, not bodies (e.g., species).