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March 27, 2018

## Self and Subject

Compared to his accounts of the subject, Lonergan's discussion of the self may seem sparse. There are few unqualified references to the self in any of his work's indexes, for example (i.e. self-affirmation, self-appropriation). However, I found three very fruitful ones. Two I will discuss now and the third will frame the second half of this discussion. At the beginning of the chapter on 'Self-affirmation of the Knower' in Insight he notes that "By the 'self' is meant a concrete and intelligible unity-identity-whole." In short, the self is a thing. In The Subject he notes that "The study of the subject ... is the study of oneself inasmuch as one is conscious.... It attends to operations and to their center and source which is the self". (p. 7) It follows, then, that the self is both conscious and unconscious, that more can be said of the self than can be said of the subject and that, since the self is both conscious and unconscious, the self as subject is distinct in some ways from the self.

It is misleading to focus on the use of the term 'self' in understanding what Lonergan means by the self, particularly in Insight. The key is focusing on the self as a thing. Lonergan states "At any stage of his development a man is an

individual existing unity differentiated by physical, chemical, organic, psychic, and intellectual conjugates.” (Insight, p, 495) ‘The individual existing unity’ is the self as a thing, so that we may substitute the term ‘self’ for the term ‘man’. Much of the discussions of man in the chapters on metaphysics are discussions about the self. While a harsh critic may say use of the term ‘man’ is a sign of a third person, chauvinistic, “metaphysical” viewpoint, a kinder interpreter would substitute ‘self’ for ‘man’ and oftentimes ‘I’ for both terms and consider the usage as having once been common, but now archaic, language and the harsher criticism misguided.

If this is the case, then while Lonergan is presenting the method of metaphysics, the elements of metaphysics, genetic method, dialectic, metaphysics as science and the implementation of explicit metaphysics, among other topics, he also is situating the subject of the self-affirmation of the knower, within the broader context of the self. I will provide two examples. The first is his discussion of the law of integration in development. He states that “The initiative of personal development may be organic, psychic, intellectual or external...” (p. 496) In the first three instances its source is the self. He adds that the development is complete, or fruitful, only when these areas become integrated, for to leave any one of them out is to distort the self in some way. The completion requires the participation, cooperation and action of the subject.

This is possible because we are embodied selves and subjects. The embodied subject is manifest in the psyche which supplies the images, feelings, sensations *et al* that constitute our experience. Dynamically it is manifest via the constructive “censor” where the operations and contents necessary to understand, judge and act seem to effortlessly appear. But the activity of the subject also leads to the development of the embodied self. Two instances come to mind.

The first is the development of the senses which occurs via conscious activity where that activity is the use of the sense organ itself which is concomitant with neural development that leads to more differentiated and habitual seeing and hearing, for example. The second is the development of skills where what was once performed deliberately becomes “second nature” and occurs spontaneously within more comprehensive deliberate activity. In the case of skills, the self becomes the embodied subject. What once was subject as deliberative becomes the self of habit.

Kierkegaard famously wrote

A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation’s relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation’s relating itself to itself. (pg. 13, Sickness unto Death)

You may think this account more aptly describes the subject than the self. But the subject is not fully self-constituting but is, rather, constituted by the self. We find

ourselves situated in a world before we know who or what we are or what all is in the world. As subjects we progressively find ourselves and this is one set of relations of the relating of the subject to the self. How, in general, are we to characterize this relating of the subject to the self?

In relating the subject to the self, we are relating what is inadequately distinguished. The distinction is inadequate since the subject is part of the self.

Lonergan notes:

Again, real distinctions are divided into adequate and inadequate. There is an adequate real distinction between Peter and Paul, between Peter's right hand and his left hand; but there is an inadequate real distinction between Peter and his hands. (p. 514)

This means that self and subject embody differences within a unity, identity, whole, which may seem to present a conundrum. How does the part, which is the subject, relate to the whole, the self? And how does the self, the whole, relate to the subject? As in our previous example of development, the role of the subject is to actualize the self. The actions of the subject are self-actualizing. The role of the self is to enable the subject's operations and provide the primary motivations for self-actualization and development. Also, the self, with the unwitting participation and cooperation of the subject, provides a context for action, our own world bound by our horizon fixed by "...the extent of our knowledge and the reach of our interests...." (The Subject, pg. 1)

The conundrum has its concrete manifestations in the emergence of aspects of myself that may seem alien or other, unwanted or anxiety provoking. There are basic desires including the pure desire to know and our sexuality that at times may make us wonder how we can get back to being our “real” selves, the self I used to be. The mature view is expressed by Lonergan when he says

Nor are the pure desire and the sensitive psyche two things, one of them ‘I’ and the other ‘It’. They are the unfolding on different levels of a single, individual unity, identity whole. Both are ‘I’ and neither is merely ‘it’. If my intelligence is mine, so is my sexuality. If my reasonableness is mine, so are my dreams. (Insight, p.499)

So far, my approach has been fairly traditional in understanding the self.

But Lonergan presents an issue in a footnote in the chapter on things (Insight, footnote 3, p. 279-80), which, if we understand it appropriately, opens up both the field of the self and the self as field, the horizon for understanding the self and the self as horizon.

Lonergan distinguishes things and bodies. A thing is a unity identity whole whereas a body is an object of extroverted consciousness that may or may not be a thing but is not grasped as an intelligible unity. This presents a problem because typically we spontaneously understand bodies to be things when, for example, they may simply be an aggregate that is not an intelligible unity. The tendency in this case is to overlook, or perhaps not grasp, intelligibility, and consider the real thing

to be the already out there now body. There is a similar error made in understanding the self. There is the empirically conscious self which includes the consciousness of my body and of myself as an actor or an active center of control. This can be taken as the self, or if that seems philosophically naive, the self may be understood as something beyond experience as it is in Kant with the noumenal self and cognitive scientists with the neural self. So, a distinction can be made between the self for us as a conscious subject and the self in itself, or the self as a thing for us and the self as a thing in itself.

Considering the thing for us and the thing in itself we see that there are three options regarding the relations of the thing in itself to observation. The first case is where we can observe things in themselves, but we know they exist independently of our observing in particular and our experience in general. We can understand some of them independently of their relations to us or to any consciousness. Sensible objects are examples. In the second case, the thing in itself does not exist independently of consciousness, because it is experienced, or is conscious, in some sense. An example is the immanence of consciousness itself. The third is that the thing in itself is not observable. In this case we can have data regarding it, but we do not have any “direct” experience of it. Sub-atomic particles are an example.

Lonergan notes that considering the self to be “my body” and “an empirical consciousness of a center of power and self-satisfaction” provides an ambiguity

about the self that parallels the ambiguity between thing and body. He states “Corresponding to things that are understood and verified, there is the intelligently and rationally conscious subject to be considered in Chapter 11....” (Insight, “Self-Affirmation of the Knower”). (Insight, footnote 3, p. 279-80) So, there is more to consciousness than empirical consciousness and more to the self than the empirical self. The self, in-itself, is not independent of consciousness since it is comprised of types of consciousness, empirical, intelligent and rational. Intelligent and rational consciousness as components of the self *in itself* fall under the second alternative above where the thing in itself does not exist independently of consciousness. But if intelligence and rationality are conscious why are they so difficult to make present? Why do we require a book like Insight to affirm our knowing?

There are three reasons I would like to discuss that stem from cognitional structure itself. First, neither intelligence nor reasonableness are empirically conscious. Intelligence, as understanding, is intelligently conscious and reasonableness is rationally conscious.

The most common impediment to full self-appropriation is the tendency to understand consciousness in terms of extroverted consciousness. By full self-appropriation I mean not only the self-affirmation of myself as a knower and understanding the notion of being and objectivity, but also the appropriation of “the object”, or insight as knowledge, required for an explicit metaphysics. And

here there are issues intrinsic to understanding and judgment themselves, which make understanding the metaphysical elements as part of the self, problematic. Self-appropriation requires a turn to the intellectual pattern of experience regarding the scant empirical data provided by intelligent and rational consciousness. Why do I call this data scant when both intelligence and rationality are conscious? Because, as Lonergan notes about intelligibility, which applies also to understanding as intelligent intelligibility, it is not simply another datum. (p. 15, *The Subject*)

Second, knowing is by identity. As Lonergan notes “Intelligence and intelligibility are the obverse and reverse of the second level of knowing.... In like manner, reasonableness and groundedness are the obverse and reverse of the third level of knowing.” (*Insight*, p. 317) In *Topics in Education* and other places he favorably cites Aristotle’s claims that “sense in act is the sensible in act, intellect in act is the intelligible in act ....” (P. 182). Third, truth is intentionally independent of the subject but ontologically it resides only in the subject ....” (p. 3, *The Subject*) I will consider each of these in turn.

Lonergan distinguishes consciousness and knowledge. I can be conscious of something and not know it. For all practical purposes it may not exist for me. Consider the placement of the tongue at the front of the roof of the mouth when pronouncing the letter D. You may not have known that that is what you have

been doing, but it has been conscious all along, but not adverted to. We are empirically conscious of the tongue and its placement. Now you also may grasp that there is a relation between the placement of the tongue and the sound of D. That is not another datum. We are intelligently conscious of the relation. If we affirm the truth of the relation, that the placement of the tongue actually does influence the sound of the letter D, then we know something real and are rationally conscious of it; not as a datum but as a reality. I am trying to illustrate three types of consciousness via a relatively simple example. But if we attended simply to the example without the context of it being an illustration, the focus would be on the tongue, the roof of the mouth, and their relations to the sound of D, not the three types of consciousness. So, all three can be operative without being known and this is the case for all of us at some time in our lives. If you consider the history of philosophy and the oversight of intelligence and reasonableness as conscious, it seems this has been the case most of the time. Empirical consciousness is relatively easy to identify. Distinguishing the other two has clearly been more problematic.

Turning to the notion of knowing by identity and focusing on understanding I hope to provide some reasons understanding has proven so difficult to adequately apprehend. Unless I am trying to understand understanding, when I get an insight what is discovered is not understanding, but another intelligible. What I have is

intelligence as an intelligibility. Though intelligence is in act, as in act it is the intelligibility. So intelligence is not conscious as it would be in an insight into insight, that is, of itself as it is in itself, but is conscious as something else. This is not to say that insight does not have coincidental manifestations for empirical consciousness like the elation of solving a problem, but that intelligent consciousness itself is not present in the same way. This is suggestive of Heidegger's notion of truth as both a revealing and concealing of being. Understanding per se is concealed in the revealing.

While understanding understanding is difficult due to this issue of identity, understanding knowing via rational consciousness as an identity of consciousness and being, or of rational consciousness and the intelligibility of the metaphysical element, Act, is made difficult due to difference, which is the third difficulty. Truth is the relationship of knowledge to reality. A true judgment affirms something real within the context of an objectivity that distinguishes things from one another and from ourselves. Within that context, whenever I know something other than myself, it is known implicitly, or intended, as not me. Likewise, Lonergan notes that the absolute objectivity of judgment is that of an absolute that is "...withdrawn from relativity to the subject that utters it, the place in which he utters it, the time at which he utters it ...." And this permits the publicity of our knowing.

But to know our knowing adequately we have to understand this absolute, the virtually unconditioned, as conscious. So, though the relativity is withdrawn in the self-transcendence of judgment, it is retained within the context of truth, which resides ontologically only in the subject. The relation of intelligent and rational consciousness, ourselves, to beings is via knowledge. So cognitive consciousness is not simply experience, understanding and judging, but also potency, form and act via knowledge. I think there is a subtlety here that should not be underestimated. Cognitional structure permits form and act to be components of extroverted consciousness while being virtually unknown as such or merely implicit. It also allows them to be known within the full light of day in the intellectual pattern of experience which permits some transformation of extroverted consciousness via the apprehension of the truth of ourselves. Due to the spontaneities of extroverted consciousness a habitual transformation can be difficult to attain. As Lonergan notes

Accordingly, by deserting the position on being and reverting to the counterposition, one can form a notion of the real to which intelligibility is extrinsic. Moreover, since such desertion and reversion can take place inadvertently by a mere shift in the pattern of one's experience, it can happen easily enough that the intrinsic intelligibility of being will seem a puzzling or a preposterous view. (p. 523, Insight)

