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HEIDEGGER, LONERGAN, AND THE MODERN PHILOSOPHIC TRADITION

by

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Approved by the Examining Committee:
For my parents.
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In the study of the history of Western philosophy, the received wisdom is that René Descartes set thought on a new trajectory and, together with Bacon and Hobbes, inaugurated the so-called modern age. As the story goes, this age was marked by a shift from Thomistic theology and Aristotelian metaphysics, science, and cosmology, to a more pluralistic theological scene and a metaphysics, science, and cosmology grounded in the nascent scientific method. This new age led to the idealism of Kant, Hegel, Schelling and Fichte and their materialist critics; to the empiricism of Locke and Hume; and finally to the rebellion against the foundational tenets of modern thought in Nietzsche, in Heidegger, and especially in the post-moderns, Derrida, Foucault, Zizek. It is not my intent, in the present work, to argue either for or against this received wisdom; but as received wisdom, this interpretation of the history of thought shaped the philosophic narrative of the twentieth century. For better or worse, it is often the mainstream readings of philosophic works that set the terms of the philosophic narrative to follow, and not so much the works themselves as understood by those who produced them.

One of the central tenets of this understanding of modern philosophy is that, with the modern age, philosophy took a markedly epistemological turn—a turn from “substance” to “subject,” to paraphrase Hegel. Questions of an Aristotelian provenance, like “What makes a thing to be a thing?” were replaced and supplanted by questions like “How does the human mind know what it knows? Can it know anything outside of itself?” This turn was inaugurated by Descartes himself, most commonly remembered for
his *Cogito, ergo sum*—a phrase so frequently uttered that its decisiveness in the history of thought is all but obscured. Embarking on an intellectual quest in pursuit of secure, reliable knowledge wholly free of any admixture with error, Descartes undertook to set knowing on a stable foundation. Largely as a result of Descartes’ efforts, we are the inheritors of such intellectual notions as the subject-object distinction, the primacy of the intellect, and the questionability of the existence of the external world.

But with the introduction of these notions, a deeply complicated, interrelated set of problems was introduced into the ongoing philosophic discourse. To an unprecedented extent, philosophy became involved in attempting to work out the relation between the inwardness of human consciousness, the concrete experiences of sensation and thought, and the firm, quantifiable external world that—somehow—confronts the human mind. If subject and object are distinct substances, then what commerce can they have? If the human being is essentially intellectual substance, and only incidentally corporeal, then what is its relation to history and society? How can we have certain knowledge of the external world, if even our ability to *access* that world is called into question?

The history of modern thought is marked by a series of attempts to resolve these questions. Kant postulated that it is the human mind itself that gives structure and intelligibility to the world as experienced—but in so doing, denied any possibility of the mind’s transcending its own inwardness and knowing the world directly. Hegel—in what is certainly the most remarkable and impressive of philosophies—attempted to bridge the gap between the subject and the object by relating consciousness, as a moment in the spiritual development of the world, to the universal spirit or mind that is the inner
intelligibility of the world itself. In the English-speaking world, the question of the relation of subject to object persists well into the twentieth century, and finds its expression in the works of Russell and Moore. But sometime around the turn of the twentieth century, the question began to arise whether the persistent difficulty in solving these problems posed by modern thought and epistemology, was not itself a result of defects or deficiencies within the questions themselves, irresolvable contradictions implied or explicitly contained within the questions themselves as formulated.

Bernard Lonergan and Martin Heidegger stand as two definitive alternatives in the effort to solve the epistemological problems arising from modern philosophy, especially Cartesianism and Kantianism. This statement, while sweeping, is I think justified, as long as it is properly understood. The claim is not necessarily that Lonergan and Heidegger are the definitive alternatives, but only that, in their breadth of scope, as well as in their intimate familiarity and concern with the philosophical tradition that preceded them, as well as their engagement with the most significant thought contemporary with them, there is an epoch-marking status to each of their philosophical contributions. Other definitive or foundational thinkers could be noted here, but for our purposes, we limit ourselves to these two—and the rationale is precisely that, by virtue of the extent to which each is familiar with and working in response to the philosophic

tradition that preceded him, the two are, at least in that particular, of a kind. Both see the situation of philosophy as problematic in light of the questions set by modern philosophy, especially epistemology, and also in light of the horizon established by modern experimental, empirical science. Further, this is not to say that, for either of them, some return to premodern ways of thinking holds the solution to the problems of the day; on the contrary, there can be no return, though there may—in a different way for each thinker—be a deeper appropriation of the submerged insights operative in the great minds of the past, from the pre-Socratics, through Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Scotus, down even to the problematic moderns, Descartes, Kant, Hegel.

The guiding premise of what follows is that both Heidegger and Lonergan are uniquely situated and suited to contribute to a conversation about the status of philosophy in the wake of the modern epoch. The guiding objective corresponding to that premise is to offer compelling evidence that these two thinkers, when taken together and considered in dialogue with one another, open up a horizon within which the problems of modern philosophy can be seen with a peculiar clarity, and potential solutions be sketched with an eye both to the history of Western thought and to contemporary philosophic debates rooted in the problematic set by the modern paradigm—for instance, those concerning non-intellectualist philosophical anthropology, scientism and reductionism, and existentialism and post-modernism. Of course, none of these ancillary topics will be treated here with the kind of attention they merit in their own right; the goal of this work

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2 See Thomas J. McPartland, Lonergan and Historiography: The Epistemological Philosophy of History (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 3: “Whitehead, Heidegger, Lonergan, and Post-Modernists have, along with others, railed against the Cartesian framework. But it is not so easy to escape. Karl Löwith, for example, claims that Heidegger still worked within that framework. Arguably, Lonergan has made the most radical break.”
can only be to sketch out the nature of this aforementioned horizon, and to present a reading of both Heidegger and Lonergan that enables these two twentieth-century thinkers to be understood uniquely as interlocutors within the debate about the status of philosophy in an age whose philosophic vision is largely shaped by the presuppositions and conclusions of modern thought.

As such, we will limit ourselves as much as possible to the seminal and mature works of each thinker, consulting only when necessary for clarifying purposes earlier, less-developed, and shorter works. We will restrict ourselves, also, to only those portions of these works that facilitate the particular dialogue we have in mind. This may strike the reader as a risky proposition: the volume of writings by both Heidegger and Lonergan is sizable, to say the least, and the scope of inquiry capacious; by what right, the reader may justly ask, can one come at these thinkers with a particular pre-formed question, and turn only to those portions of their respective oeuvres in which an answer can be gleaned? I suggest that the very capaciousness of their respective inquiries invites this approach: by a careful study of each thinker, one may arrive at certain fundamental questions broached by these thinkers—and then one may justly turn around and put those very questions to the texts, to see what answers they might yield up. This has been our approach here, and accordingly we have chosen to focus on three very broad areas: philosophy of mind, philosophy of the human person and social philosophy, and metaphysics. Very often, these three overlap.

The secondary literature, by virtue of its sheer volume (especially as regards Heidegger), has necessitated a similar approach. Certain guiding texts have stood out as
islands from the ocean of commentary: Fredrick Olafson’s 1987 volume *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind* has been indispensable; less frequently referenced but no less helpful in situating the basic question has been Kisiel’s *Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time* (1993). The latter text in particular seems to have exerted an influence on the entire field of Heideggerian studies since its appearance; the former volume, while perhaps less widely referenced, advances a particularly insightful reading of Heidegger, attentive to both the novelty of his approach, and its rootedness in the modern philosophic tradition. When it comes to Lonergan, one often finds that the best interpreter of Lonergan is Lonergan himself: a remarkably clear writer who teases out the implications and potential applications of his thought with notable frequency, Lonergan tends to anticipate his interpreters, and one finds in his own thought the roots of nearly every interpretive schema brought to bear on his work. Nonetheless, of particular help has been Thomas McPartland’s 2010 volume *Lonergan and Historiography: The Epistemological Philosophy of History*. In addition, the guiding question of this work was in no small part suggested by Fr. Joseph Flanagan’s 1993 essay, “Where the Late Lonergan Meets the Early Heidegger,” published in the *Lonergan Workshop*. Little more than a rough sketch, nonetheless it suggests some rich avenues of thought and asks some probing questions about the potential dialogue between these two thinkers. Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention the influence of Michael Sharkey’s 2003 work *Heidegger, Lonergan, and Authenticity*, which is—as far as I have seen—the only long and comprehensive comparison of these two thinkers.

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3 Including the present one. See Bernard Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). In this volume, Lonergan himself discusses the growing influence of Heidegger’s thought in Western philosophy.
But so far, we have spoken almost exclusively of comparison, as though it goes without saying that Lonergan and Heidegger can be compared on these terms. Of course, this stands to be proven. Indeed, it might even seem that, for Heidegger at least, our opening claim—that he is in some way responding to the problematic set by modern philosophy—is not valid: Heidegger hardly seems to be engaged in anything like an epistemology, and indeed he overtly declares that he is not involved in epistemology or philosophical anthropology or anything less full and robust than the asking of the question of being, which involves as one of its essential moments the elucidation of the ontological, existential structures of the human Dasein, the one who asks the question of being. All this is true. At the same time, his ontological investigation, as a re-grounding of the possibility of raising the question of being, is a definitive response to the problems set by modern philosophy: it is precisely because the history of philosophy has gotten off track and gotten itself bogged down in insoluble epistemological problems, based on certain key misapprehensions of the nature of human existence, that such a re-grounding is necessary. And on Lonergan’s side, one might seek to dismiss his definitiveness by indicating the extent to which, in matters of cognitional theory and gnoseology, he is fundamentally a Thomist or an Aristotelian. While it is certainly true that Lonergan’s debt to Thomas and Aristotle cannot be understated, the fact remains that, in the way that only a great thinker can, he appropriates from the ground up the insights of Thomas and Aristotle, expands the universe to which their thought is applicable, and brings it to a fuller realization of its own innate potencies than either Thomas or Aristotle did (or was historically situated to do).
The foregoing sets for us two preliminary tasks, before we may begin our attempt to put Lonergan and Heidegger into substantial dialogue. First, we must establish that each thinker is, in his own way, responding to the epistemological tradition. For the sake of a practical restriction of the scope of this inquiry, the present discussion will focus on Heidegger, and in particular on Being and Time, since Lonergan’s Insight is, for all intents and purposes, a direct response to the epistemological problems arising from modern philosophy. Second, we must establish that the distinct responses of Heidegger and Lonergan can form the basis for a meaningful conversation—one which will, I hope, indicate the extent to which both thinkers may be seen to be part of a higher order response to the problems of modern philosophy. With these tasks complete, we will set forth the general structure that the body of this work will follow, and indicate the basic thesis we aim to argue for.

4 While Heidegger’s later work, after the much-discussed Kehre or turning, will not be our focus here, nonetheless Heidegger’s work displays a continued interest in the problems of modern philosophy, even if the terms in which this dialogue is carried out have fundamentally changed: still, we see a concern with the one-sidedness of the subject-object dichotomy; still, Heidegger dwells on the question of truth; and, perhaps more abstractly, Heidegger’s proceedings are still shaped by the phenomenon of questioning as such. See especially Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” trans. William Lovitt, Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993); Heidegger, Identity and Difference, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
§1 — Heidegger’s Thought as a Response to Modern Epistemology

A first glance at Being and Time might not offer much to recommend the interpretation I am putting forward here, namely, that Heidegger is engaged in responding to the epistemological problems of modern philosophy. The work is very clearly about the question of being, putting it most clearly in dialogue with that ancient tradition of metaphysical thought which Heidegger sees himself as overcoming and moving beyond in some fundamental sense. It begins with the assertion that the question of being has been forgotten, and needs to be raised again in a more originary way.\(^5\) The book is a work of fundamental ontology, elucidating the ontological structures of Dasein, the human being considered as that being within being open to being as such, and always essentially implicated in the asking of the question of being. It is not, as Heidegger himself makes clear, a work of anthropology or psychology or epistemology—for all of these sciences deal with particular ranges of beings, without ever explicitly asking the question of being as such.\(^6\) In other words, as positive sciences, anthropology and psychology and epistemology ask after and investigate specific beings or ranges of beings as regards their qualities and properties, their systematic interconnections, and the like; but in asking the question of being, one asks not about this or that particular range of beings, but about the very being of beings as such—Heidegger calls this distinction between beings and being the “ontological difference.” Now, in asking this question of being as such, the questioner is co-implicated: as the unique sort of being capable of asking this


\(^6\) Ibid., 131: “What we have hitherto set forth needs to be rounded out in many ways by working out fully the existential a priori of philosophical anthropology and taking a look at it. But this is not the aim of our investigation. Its aim is one of fundamental ontology.”
question—capable of, for a moment, stepping out of a thoroughgoing and unreflective involvement with particular beings, and of raising the deeper question of what makes these beings to be as beings—the human being has a kind of primacy in the unfolding of the question. Because the question, then, can only be asked insofar as there is this unique kind of being within the realm of beings capable of asking about being as a whole, the question of being as such involves as a preliminary but indispensable task the analysis of the ontological structure of this very being, who makes possible the asking of the question. In other words, one cannot simply ask about how the human being operates at the level of mind or intellect, but must ask the more fundamental question of what the human being is, of its mode of be-ing.

Accordingly this analysis cannot take the form of an empirical psychology, because such a psychology always comes too late: whatever may be the case regarding the empirically discernible and verifiable psychological constitution of the human being, nonetheless this psychology is grounded upon Dasein’s basic comportment toward being, its fundamental way of being open to the world, of any possible disclosing of being. That is to say, the sensitive, psychological, intellectual, and other modes of dealing with beings are all posterior to the originary openness that finds only its particularized manifestation in human psychology. To be more concrete: the human being, considered as Dasein, is characterized by certain existential structures, chief among which is Being-in-the-world—

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7 It is well known but worth noting, again, that this “preliminary” task is, in fact, all that exists of Being and Time, which originally was to have not only a third division of its first part, but an entire second part, pursuing the question of being explicitly to its end. Which is as much as to say that, while Being and Time formulates the question of being, it never gives us the answer to that question.
indeed, Dasein is Being-in-the-world, its mode of being is Being-in-the-world. Dasein is always in a world; it is not an “isolated subject-Thing [in] the innocuous emptiness of a wordless occurring,” but rather is always, already involved in a world with certain significative points of reference. The world is no mere aggregate of indifferent “objects,” nor the sum total of all possible objects of experience, but is rather the fundamental totalizing horizon of existentially significant involvements. Whatever the particular modalities of Dasein’s existentiell dealings may be, whatever the empirically ascertainable facts of its psychology, still, Dasein’s basic existential-ontological constitution is the ground of these.

A specific example may illustrate the point: to be Dasein is to have an attunement or mood—which is no merely empirical fact, according to Heidegger, but a fundamental feature of the ontological constitution of Dasein. But only because Dasein primordially has a mood, can there be the subsequent empirical science of psychology, which investigates the particularities of these moods and dispositions, their deformations and perversions, and the like. In short, to properly understand that being, Dasein, who is always implicated in the asking of the question of being, no empirical investigation will suffice. Precisely because Dasein is ontological in its very essence, is it that being which can

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8 Later in his career, Heidegger will write Dasein as Da-sein, putting emphasis on the “there-ness” of the human person’s relation to being.


10 Heidegger will significantly distinguish between the “existential” and the “existentiell”: the former refers to the structural features of Dasein’s very being and bears a certain analogy to Kant’s “transcendental”, the latter refers to Dasein’s lived mode of concernful involvement or the “existentially significant” in the more everyday sense of the word. I have used “existentially significant” above only insofar as there is no adequate adjectival form of existentiell. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 12-13.

11 See III.2.b, below.
and *must* ask the question of being—and retreat from it in various ways—for it exists as
the question of its being. In its very being, Dasein must decide what it means to be. One
cannot assemble the ontological from the various elements of the sensory, the imaginative,
the intellectual, the psychological; for the ontological is the foundation, and all the
empirical particularities of Dasein have the character they do because Dasein is,
essentially, the kind of being it is. Simply, to examine the intellect, or the will, or
consciousness, or what have you, is premature so long as the question of what Dasein is,
of its basic mode of existence, goes unanswered.

Now, if all this is the case, it might seem that Heidegger has no real point of
contact with traditional epistemology, which takes seriously and deals primarily in
questions of a psychological bent. Further, Heidegger’s fundamental insight regarding the
nature of the human being—that as Dasein it is Being-in-the-world, and never a mere
“subject” over against “objects”—seems to exclude from the outset any possible contact
with traditional epistemology, which is specifically engaged in asking and answering the
question of how a relationship between subject and object may obtain such that
knowledge is possible. But that Heidegger’s own methods and concepts are so
diametrically opposed to the sorts of methods and concepts employed in traditional
epistemology is actually among the most telling indications that Heidegger *is* responding
to and having a protracted dialogue with this epistemology: for Heidegger frames all the
fundamental concepts of the first division of *Being and Time* in terms of a response to and
critique of what he sees as the misguided approach of post-Cartesian philosophy, with its
epistemological bent. Heidegger’s achievement in *Being and Time* is able to serve as a radical re-grounding of ontological questioning, one can argue, because it eschews traditional epistemological concepts and terminology. In fact, this is precisely the nature of Heidegger’s dialogue with that tradition: that he refuses to carelessly employ even the most incidental of epistemological terms is an indication of the thoroughness with which he means to respond to and critique that tradition.

None of this is to suggest that Heidegger does not explicitly deal with epistemological problems, for he does. Specifically, he makes it a point to contrast his own notion of the world with that regarded as determinative by the epistemological tradition which takes its bearings from Descartes. For Descartes, the world is chiefly characterized by extension. The world is the realm of “substances,” which is to say of beings characterized by extension: every “substance has some distinctive property from which the essence of the substantiality of that definite substance can be read off … Extension—namely in length, breadth, and thickness—makes up the real *Being* of that corporeal substance which we call the ‘world.”

None of this is to suggest that modern philosophy should be read as merely epistemological; as Heidegger makes plain and as we shall see, modern philosophy, and Kant in particular, is essentially engaged in the making of ontological claims—that is, in offering an interpretation of being. However, this philosophy is epistemological in a different, perhaps broader sense: while its concern is not simply with the problem of how knowing happens, nonetheless, there is a move toward the equation of being with perceivedness that reaches its climax in Kant. Accordingly, a theory of the fundamental concepts of knowing—what might at first blush appear to be an epistemology—turns out, in fact, to be a theory of being. There is a parallel to this movement in Lonergan, as we shall see later.

The second, unpublished half of *Being and Time* was to address Descartes (as well as Kant) in greater detail still, with an eye to “the problematic of the ‘res cogitans.’” See the outline of the projected work: Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 39-40.


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that it has extension; to be, for a corporeal entity, is to be extended. All “the other characteristics which this substance definitely possesses (especially divisio, figura, motus), can be conceived only as modi of extensio, while, on the other hand, extensio sine figura vel motu remains quite intelligible.”\textsuperscript{15} The measurable “primary” qualities of division, shape, motion, just as much as the merely subjective “secondary” qualities of color, taste, smell, and the like, are all founded upon an understanding of being as extension—only the former might be thought of as arrangements of what is extended, while the latter must be thought of as the effect had on a subject by the extended thing.

Excluding God—who, as Heidegger rightly points out, is conceived as an entity, even though his mode of being is thought to be entirely unlike that of created being—all substances are of two sorts: the res extensa and the res cogitans, the extended thing and the thinking thing. “To the substantia finita as res corporea,” Heidegger writes, “what must primarily be ‘assigned’ is the extensio … [but] we cannot come across it [i.e., substantiality as coincident with extension] in the way in which we come across those entities themselves which are substantially.” Thus, Heidegger goes on, substantiality is never raised as a question—it is merely assumed, “passed off as something incapable of explanation,” and explained only in terms of “whatever substantial property belongs most pre-eminently to the particular substance.”\textsuperscript{16} In other words, precisely because substantiality is not a substance—or more fundamentally for Heidegger, because being is not a being—the question of substantiality, like the question of being as such, is overlooked. Now, if extension is what makes a corporeal substance be what it is, then the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 90.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 94.
kind of knowing most appropriate to beings, given their mode of being, is the mathematical or scientific-mathematical, which regards the measurable and calculable. Since extension is what makes a being to be, what makes a corporeal substance corporeally substantial, then the science that examines extension, in fact, investigates being. So, mathematical understanding grasps eternal verities; and thus being in the truest sense must be eternal being, everlasting substance. In his “leaning towards mathematics,” Descartes turns the eternally present into the really real; the result is that the conception of being as extension is transformed into that of being as “constant presence-at-hand” (*Vorhandenheit*).

Now, if being is presence-at-hand, then the question of how “to get appropriate access to entities within-the-world” does not suggest itself as one that needs to be raised. The definitive mode of access is (in keeping with the Greek conception) νοεῖν, intellectual apprehension, which Heidegger renders “beholding” (*Anschauen*). This is not a sensory beholding—for “Descartes knows very well that entities do not proximally show themselves in their real Being,” but proximally reveal themselves in secondary qualities, which bear a relation to the biological flourishing of the human being “encumbered with” a body. In any event, knowing in the chief sense is a *kind* of intuition, albeit not sensory intuition; to know is to “behold,” in some way, the essential, and in this case mathematical, nature of some being. The upshot of the foregoing is the division of the

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17 Ibid., 95-6.
18 Ibid., 96.
world into two distinct realms—Nature and Spirit, Heidegger says in reference to Hegel, but more generally extension and mind. In contrast to the “world” considered as the totality of extension, which is to say the totality of extended things, there is the intellectual substance, the *res cogitans*, subsumed under the category of substantiality not because of extension (for it is non-extended) but because of Descartes’ tacit identification of extension with substantiality with being: in other words, Descartes certainly does not take the *res cogitans* to be extended—but because it is a *res*, a thing, it must be a substance. Because Descartes has made substantiality, considered originally as extension, an ontological category—that which makes a being to be—the category of substance is imputed to whatever has a “thingly” character—which, in this case, the *res cogitans* must have precisely because it is to be understood as a thing standing over against the world. This, according to Heidegger, is an “uncritical” holdover of a standard Scholastic position. We arrive, then, at the problem: two wholly different sorts of substances, squared off against one another, world and mind—and how shall the two have any commerce?

Now, this *res cogitans* is to be conceived as a purely thinking being. There is no need to rehearse here the process of thought that led Descartes to the *cogito*; it is enough that, for Descartes, the one indubitable ground of all knowledge, is knowledge of the self as a thinking being. Anything beyond this thinking has to be excluded as dubitable; only the

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20 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 89.


22 And it is worth noting here that the tendency of substantializing and reifying into a thing the human subject or Dasein is one of the chief targets of Heidegger’s criticism in *Being and Time* and beyond; see Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, 119-20.
existence of the self as a pure act of thinking is indubitable, for in the act of doubting, one comes up against this one indubitable reality: oneself as a thinking being.\textsuperscript{23} Now, as Olafson points out, the “achievement of such a conception of the self … has rightly been regarded as presaging the development in the modern period of a purely epistemic form of selfhood that claims the right to treat everything, \textit{including its own natural and historical existence in the world}, as an object of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{24} But such a conception of the self gives rise to several problems: first, as a thinking being, the \textit{res cogitans} can know nothing but its own states: as everything can be doubted but the thinking itself, we are left with the picture of a mind that directly apprehends only itself. If in its self-apprehension, mind encounters something like the experience of an “outer world,”\textsuperscript{25} then this experience is a state of the \textit{res cogitans} itself. Whether this state corresponds to any reality \textit{beyond} the \textit{res cogitans} is another question—and one that numerous modern thinkers have spilled much ink over. And since “the picture of the self that goes with this conceptualization limits its certain and direct apprehensions to its own internal states, it must reckon with the possibility that an external world does not exist” at all.\textsuperscript{26} This Cartesian conception of the self creates a gulf between the \textit{res cogitans}, the subject, and the \textit{res extensa}, the external object to be known, and the epistemology with which subsequent modern philosophy largely concerns itself takes the form of a continuing attempt to bridge this gap. As

\textsuperscript{23} Fundamentally speaking, the existence of God is also regarded as indubitable, though this is a conclusion that Descartes arrives at by means of universal doubt; it is the existence of God that establishes the reliability of man’s access to the world of beings.\textsuperscript{24} Olafson, \textit{Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind}, 6. My emphasis.\textsuperscript{25} And the language of inner and outer, here, is already problematic.\textsuperscript{26} Olafson, \textit{Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind}, 8.
Heidegger notes, “This distinction between subject and object pervades all the problems of modern philosophy and even extends into the development of contemporary phenomenology.”27

So the problem stands: if all the mind can know is its own states, we may suppose that these states are representations of some world beyond the mind—but how can the mind ever get beyond its own states, to know if those states correspond to what is actually out there? Quite simply, it cannot. To know that mental states correspond to extra-mental reality would require some meta-perspective, from which both mental contents and really existing beings could be viewed and compared. But if mind has been properly conceived as a purely thinking being that knows only its own states, then this solution only elevates the problem, rather than solving it: for this mind with its meta-perspective must also be thought as only knowing its own states, and thus the question may be raised again of whether these states correspond to what is actually the case. In short, as long as mind is conceived as a purely thinking substance that knows only its own states—or, more powerfully expressed, as long as mind is conceived as something which stands over against the world—then there is the requirement of establishing how this mind can have any relation to what is outside of itself. This becomes the chief concern of modern epistemology; indeed, it is so entirely determinative for Kant’s project that he goes on to claim that the “scandal of philosophy” is that no proof has been put forward for the existence of the external world. But for Heidegger, “it is not the failure of philosophers to produce such a proof that is the ‘scandal of philosophy’ … [Rather,] the scandal is …

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27 Heidegger, Basic Problems, 124.
that such proofs are still demanded.” In short, as long as mind and world are considered and defined in opposition and isolation from one another, the problem of establishing this connection will invariably present itself as the central and insurmountable problem of epistemology.

A secondary, but, for Heidegger a perhaps more important, problem presents itself here: in understanding the “I” as a purely mental substance, knowledge becomes the determinative and normative mode of being within the world. Any way of being in the world that is not knowledge is defective in some sense. But for Heidegger, knowing, as it has traditionally been interpreted in the history of philosophy, is a “founded” mode of access to reality. In the context of his discussion of the being of Dasein as Care, Heidegger goes on to treat the “problem” of the existence of the external world.

Fundamental to Dasein’s mode of being in the world is what Heidegger calls the “Care-structure,” the totality of concernful involvements with meaningful points of reference within the world. The world is disclosed to Dasein insofar as Dasein is always, already involved with certain projects and concernful undertakings—and thus the world cannot be thought of as an indifferent collection of “objects,” but is always given as the totalizing context within which Dasein is first given over to itself (as the for-the-sake-of-which of its projects) and to its various involvements. So, for Heidegger, it makes little sense to inquire

\[\text{Footnotes:}\]


29 It is worth noting in this connection that Heidegger does not view Kant’s project in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as epistemological, fundamentally speaking. Indeed, he claims that the epistemologizing interpretation of Kant entirely misses the mark, for Kant is inquiring into being. But this only strengthens our above point: the problem of post-Cartesian philosophy is not a merely epistemological problem, but a foundational ontological problem of the first order. See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 9-10.

30 See in this regard Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, 141.
whether the world exists, since the notion of “world” as a collection of mere objects that can be considered in an indifferent fashion is already a particular modification of Dasein’s original involvement with the world in the mode of Care. However, philosophy since Descartes, has, as a result of the seemingly unbridgeable gap between subject and object, raised this question—and as posed by traditional epistemology, it goes something like, “Can the reality of the external world (that is, the sum total of objects) be proved?” What does this phrase, “reality,” mean in this context? To be “real” is to be a res, a thing. The “real” is the extant. In traditional language, we might say that the real is that which exists—but Heidegger reserves the term “existence” for Dasein’s mode of being alone, and so in discussing his thought it is prudent that we do the same.31

So the question, reformulated, is whether the objects which stand over against the subject, are in fact extant—whether they are things. This question can only be answered, and “the analysis of Reality is only possible,” if we have achieved “appropriate access to the real.” Heidegger continues:

But it has long been held that the way to grasp the Real is by that kind of knowing which is characterized by beholding. Such knowing ‘is’ a way in which the soul—or consciousness—behaves. In so far as Reality has the character of something independent and “in itself”, the question of the meaning of “Reality” becomes linked with that of whether the Real can be independent ‘of consciousness’ or whether there can be a transcendence of consciousness into the ‘sphere’ of the Real.32

First, then, Heidegger’s interpretation of Dasein as Being-in-the-world, whose mode of being is Care, concernful involvement, involves an explicit rejection of the traditional


32 Heidegger, Being and Time, 202.
notion of “consciousness,” and even the terminology that goes with it. Second, and more specifically, Heidegger is deeply critical of the idea that “knowing” is the primary mode of access to the real—for knowing is a mode of access to entities within the world, but this access to particular entities is founded upon Dasein’s basic state, namely Being-in-the-world which “in turn has care as its even more primordial state of Being (ahead of itself—Being already in a world—as Being alongside entities within-the-world).”  

In other words, to make knowing the primary mode of access to reality, is to make foundational what is in fact but one particular comportment of the Dasein toward the world within which it has always already found itself in the mode of concernful involvement.

Thus, the works of the early Heidegger can and must be read as a definitive and thoroughgoing repudiation of the project of modern philosophy from Descartes forward—not because Heidegger is himself engaged in anything like epistemological theorizing, but because his project takes its bearings from the closing-off of the question of being effected by the reduction of being to substantiality, by the transformation of man’s original involvement in the world to the bloodless and overly intellectual dichotomy of subject and object. Certainly, a critique of epistemology is not all that Heidegger hopes to achieve through this early period; but the deficiencies of post-Cartesian epistemology clearly weigh heavily on his mind and at least partly determine the trajectory of his thought.

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33 Ibid.
§2 — Lonergan’s Thought as a Response to Modern Epistemology

In the preceding section, we had to offer some evidence that Heidegger is involved, in however small a measure, in a project of critiquing and moving beyond the modern epistemological project. Such evidence is not so necessary in Lonergan’s case, as *Insight* ostensibly stands fully within the general framework outlined by modern epistemology. After all, the work’s subtitle, *A Study of Human Understanding*, seems to be basically in the tradition of Locke, with his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and Hume, with his *Treatise of Human Nature* and *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. The temptation here, then, might be to think that Lonergan, rather than critiquing and moving beyond the epistemological tradition, is in fact still immersed in it: after all, he uses such conventional terminology as “subject,” “object,” “judgment,” in ways that Heidegger certainly would have rejected or at least qualified heavily. Indeed, insofar as Heideggerian philosophers have paid attention to Lonergan at all, this has more or less been their response. Accordingly, I will here present a preliminary outline of the ways in which Lonergan does decisively overcome the tradition whose terminology and nomenclature he has apparently so fully embraced. I say “preliminary” only because an extended discussion of the ways in which Lonergan sublates the modern epistemological tradition will, in fact, be one of the chief foci of what follows.

Lonergan, not unlike Heidegger, envisions his own project as bringing an intelligible order to the history of philosophy and of intellectual pursuits generally—not the order of a necessary historical development, but rather that of an immanent

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intelligibility discernible in the various philosophies, based on their rootedness in the characteristic operations of human cognition. Central to human cognition is the insight, the grasp of an intelligible scheme in a sensory or imaginative manifold; and of insight Lonergan says that “its function in cognitional activity is so central that to grasp it in its conditions, its working, and its results is to confer a basic yet startling unity on the whole field of human inquiry and human opinion.” In other words, if one grasps clearly and distinctly precisely what happens when one is engaged in understanding, one is in a position to understand not only the various philosophies, but also the immanent dynamism of the mind that gave rise to these philosophies; one is, again, in a position not only to understand the various sciences, but also the heuristic structure implicit in all scientific investigation, which is only gradually filled in by the framing and answering of questions. To quote Lonergan’s “slogan” for the work, Insight: “Thoroughly understand what it is to understand, and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further developments of understanding.”

But not all pronouncements of human intelligence, and certainly not all philosophies, are equally valid, for some are based on oversight rather than insight, and some are rooted in misapprehensions of cognitional process. A distinction may be drawn, then, between basic positions and basic counterpositions. A basic position is a philosophic stance that is consonant with its own epistemological and ontological presuppositions; a


36 Ibid., 22.
basic counterposition is one which involves a theoretical or performative contradiction.\textsuperscript{37}

For Lonergan—and all this is only by way of anticipation—perhaps the fundamental basic position is that the real is to be understood as “the concrete universe of being,” that is, the real is the fully intelligible;\textsuperscript{38} anything that is not intelligible is not real (just as a four-sided triangle is not a real being precisely because it is unintelligible and therefore unknowable whether in concept or in fact). This is a basic position because, insofar as one makes any pronouncement about the nature of the real, one has implicitly presumed that the real is intelligible—for otherwise one would not speak. Directly correlated to this basic position is the proper notion of a “thing,” namely a unity-identity-whole in data, an intelligible and unified whole, and not—critically—a body, an \textit{extended something}. The thing is a “unity” in data, a \textit{understandingly coherent something}; it is an “identity,” one with itself; it is a “whole,” not a mere part of some other entity. A dog, for instance, is a thing: it is a unified self-identical entity whole unto itself and not subsumed under another thing. The dog’s tongue, however, while in some sense unified and identifiable, is nonetheless not a discrete thing insofar as it is \textit{essentially} part of some other entity.\textsuperscript{39} With the thing one grasps, understandingly, a unified self-identical whole in the given data.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 413.

\textsuperscript{38} Full intelligibility corresponds not only to \textit{intelligent grasp} but also \textit{reasonable affirmation}. These notions will be fully developed in what follows. By way of anticipation, it is worth noting that a metaphysics which equates the real with the intelligible, but which does not understand that full intelligibility includes existential act, falls short of what Lonergan envisions.

\textsuperscript{39} One might quibble, here, about the way in which the dog can be said to be part of an environment or an ecosystem; and yet the dog does not constitute the ecosystem in the same way that the dog’s tongue partially constitutes the dog. At the same time, considered from the point of view of veterinary science or anatomy, the tongue might be taken as a distinct “thing” with its own intelligibility; nonetheless, it is ultimately subsumed under the intelligible organic whole that is the dog. See Peter Beer, “Transubstantiation Oder Transsignification?”, Sala and Schillebeeckx on the Eucharistic Presence,” \textit{Australian Lonergan Workshop}, ed. William H. Danaher (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993), 57-8.
A basic counterposition, on the other hand, invites its own reversal, because it is theoretically at odds with itself or is contradicted in the performance of actual acts of knowing. Counterpositions may cohere with one another, but “are incoherent with the activities of grasping them intelligently and affirming them reasonably.” Stated simply, the tacit gnoseological presuppositions of counterpositions are contradicted in the very performance of the positing of the counterposition—not unlike the very obvious rebuttal of a professed theoretical relativism, that one cannot simultaneously maintain that nothing is true while holding that “nothing is true” is a truer proposition than its contrary. Accordingly, for Lonergan there is a stable, non-historicist criterion whereby the different philosophies may be judged as to their truth or falsity: is a philosophy consonant with the very activities of intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation that were more or less imperfectly employed in its development and formulation?

Lonergan, markedly unlike Heidegger, sees in the thought of Aristotle and Aquinas intimations of an adequate understanding of what it is to understand—not because his is a dogmatic Aristotelianism or Thomism (quite the contrary in fact), but rather because he sees in these thinkers a careful attention to the very cognitive process in which they themselves are engaged as they attempt to philosophize. In other words, in Aristotle and Aquinas, there is at least a reasonable adherence to the basic positions. Now, to be sure, there is nothing like a robust epistemology in the thought of either Aristotle or

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40 Lonergan, *Insight*, 413.

41 This is of course not to suggest that Heidegger does not take seriously the work of the great philosophers; rather, he sees all philosophy as moving within a single horizon, set by the earliest interpretations of being by the first philosophers. While some philosophers may be more profound, more deeply aware of the problem of being, none of them succeeds, according to Heidegger, in radically re-thinking the fundamental presuppositions that have been handed down from the days of the Greeks.
Aquinas. The closest we get to cognitive theory in Aristotle occurs in the *De Anima* and *Metaphysics*, and here the description of knowing is more metaphysical and less psychological—though this is not to say that Aristotle is not a very astute observer of the psychology of understanding. On the contrary, Lonergan’s thought remains very broadly Aristotelian, even at those points when, by the weight of the evidence, he is forced to most strenuously critique Aristotle. And it is not in a psychological or epistemological treatise of Aquinas that Lonergan finds the guiding principles for his own thought, but rather in Aquinas’ own developing understanding of the processions of the trinity, and later in his metaphysical treatment of the relation of thinking and being in the *De Ente et Essentia*. In short, where Heidegger sees a continual and unabated failure to get to foundational questions from the very beginning of the western tradition, Lonergan sees certain philosophical high points, moments when a correct understanding was grasped, however briefly. This is not to suggest that a simple “return” is possible, as though one can simply be an Aristotelian, or be a Thomist, and then call it a day; rather, one must begin from the insights of an Aristotle or an Aquinas, and undertake the labor to think as they thought. This, it seems, is the original impetus guiding Lonergan’s writing of

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43 Ibid., 81.

44 It is worth noting in this connection the epigraph of *Insight*, taken from the *De Anima*: “τὰ μὲν εἴδη τὸ νοητικὸν ἐν τοῖς φαντάσμασι νοεῖ,” “the thinking power thinks the form in the image.” For Lonergan, Aristotle’s treatment of the imagination is exemplary, and he remains very faithful to the Aristotelian account in *Insight*.

45 This is not to suggest that Heidegger rejects the entire tradition out of hand, or that he does not think some thinkers philosophize more originarily; it is only to suggest that for Heidegger no prior philosophy can be finally paradigmatic of what an authentic understanding looks like, for they have all gone astray, and have been doomed to do so since philosophy got off on the wrong foot at the very outset.
Insight: to do for the twentieth century what Aquinas did for the thirteenth, and to do with Darwinism, relativity, and critical history what Aquinas did with Aristotle.  

By way of an addendum: this is not to suggest that Lonergan regards the philosophies of Aristotle and Aquinas as interchangeable, let alone that Aquinas’ thought is merely “Aristotle baptized,” as one sometimes hears said. On the contrary, Lonergan regards Aquinas as having made a number of significant and substantive contributions and improvements to Aristotle’s thought. Most notably, in Aquinas, there is a much fuller and more dynamic understanding of the existential dimension of being’s structure—and this will be critical in the development of Lonergan’s own brand of Thomistic thought. Where in Aristotle the questions of what makes a thing to be what it is and what makes it to be, simply, are in some sense conflated and answered at a single stroke—substantial form, the immanent intelligibility of the thing both makes it to be what it is and makes it to be as such—in Aquinas there is a recognition of the different orders of intelligibility operative at each of these stages. In other words, as there is a difference between the understanding that grasps intelligible structure and the reflective understanding that pronounces that understanding true, so there is a proportionate and isomorphic difference between the intelligible structure of a being (Aristotle’s substantial form) and its existential actuality (Aquinas’ act of existence). One can see in this Thomistic expansion


upon the Aristotelian formula\textsuperscript{49} the roots of Lonergan’s threefold cognitional structure, and therein one can see the roots of Lonergan’s explicit metaphysics.\textsuperscript{50}

In any event, all this is to say that with the Cartesian turn something went awry—not finally, fundamentally awry, not awry in such a way that the solution would be to turn around and go backwards—but awry nonetheless. With the great leaps of understanding that sprung from the legitimate insights of the modern philosophers came also a number of failures to understand, of biases and scotoses and systematic misinterpretations of the data of consciousness and thereby also the data given to consciousness. There emerges, then, a contrast between someone like a Hume (for example) and someone like an Aristotle. For Hume, and despite all his philosophic brilliance, there is a marked disconnect between his account of cognition, and the activities in which he himself is engaged in working out this account. He may describe ideas as washed-out sense impressions, and causality as but a custom of the mind, but his own philosophizing indicates that he has grasped necessary connections that in no way resemble watered-down sensory impressions. (If an idea is a washed-out sense impression, then what are we to make of Hume’s ideas about ideas? What original impression could correspond to them?) With Aristotle and Aquinas, on the other hand, and despite their incorrectness on a great number of empirical points, there is an account of knowing which, in fact,

\textsuperscript{49} This is perhaps an awkward turn of phrase. I do not mean to suggest that Aristotle’s metaphysics is somehow merely formulaic. Nor do I mean to suggest that Aquinas’ modifications to Aristotle’s metaphysics are merely an expansion in the sense that they do not fundamentally modify or override certain Aristotelian propositions. Rather, I mean to suggest that Aquinas thinks in broadly Aristotelian patterns, that his thought is original—in a sense—by being more thoroughly Aristotelian than Aristotle himself, by more fully grasping the radical implications of Aristotle’s metaphysical principles, especially those of potency and act.

\textsuperscript{50} For a fuller treatment of these themes, see esp. Étienne Gilson, \textit{Being and Some Philosophers}, 2nd ed. (Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2005), 74ff.
resonates with the very processes that give rise to the account: even if Aristotle or Aquinas may prove to be wrong about certain details regarding the processes involved in understanding, nonetheless his theory is not grounded upon an interpretation which is necessarily already contradicted in the very performance of the act of understanding. In short, with modernity, a number of basic counterpositions are enshrined as fundamental philosophic tenets; one cannot simply abandon modernity, because these counterpositions are interwoven with the legitimate insights of modern thought; and so a critical reflection on understanding itself is required to sort out the oversights from the insights.

For Lonergan, then, Aristotle and Aquinas stand as exemplars of how to proceed in the analysis of consciousness, and more specifically for our purposes, of how to begin responding to the problems inherent in the angle taken by philosophy since Descartes. Again, this is not to say that one may simply return to Aristotelianism or Thomism, for there are severe shortcomings to each: they admit knowledge only of the necessary and universal, but modern science is satisfied with verified possibility, the best available explanation of the relevant data; they treat history as merely incidental, but in fact history is constitutive of human culture and the world mediated by meaning. Rather than seeking a past answer to which a thoroughgoing return is possible, one must rather detect in the work of Aristotle and Aquinas a legitimately philosophical impulse, valuable particularly because it offers alternative conceptual schemes distinct from those of modern philosophy: for Aristotle and Aquinas, the real is the intelligible. Thus, whatever factual mistakes may crop up in their accounts of the real, nonetheless these mistakes are

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51 More fundamentally still, Lonergan disagrees with Aristotle’s understanding of being; see Insight, 760.
in principle revisable on Aristotelian or Thomist criteria, for the existent is in principle susceptible of being understood. In short, one may say with Lonergan that Aristotle and Aquinas remain relevant precisely because, while the contents of any act of knowing are revisable, nonetheless the condition for the possibility of that revision is that knowing itself is an un revisable, that the *eidos* of cognition can in fact be known and understood. If Aristotle and Aquinas have hit on something regarding what it is to know, then that very process of knowing should be able to distinguish the true from the false within their accounts. So for Lonergan, a response to the modern epistemological dilemma does not necessarily entail a critique or *Destruktion* of the history of philosophy; but it may involve a detailed analysis of just how each thinker in the philosophic tradition has approached or retreated from a theory of understanding which remains faithful to the act of understanding as consciously experienced and understood.

But none of this answers the much more fundamental question: why does Lonergan think that the modern philosophical project is in need of critiquing in the first place? To answer this question adequately would require us to take into account Lonergan’s entire ouevre, a task quite beyond the scope of the present investigation, let alone these introductory remarks. Nonetheless, something like a synthetic view must be attempted, and so we offer here an outline of Lonergan’s overriding philosophic concerns.

By his own admission, Lonergan’s great concern is the disorder in the Catholic theology of his time resulting from the downfall of Thomism. He believes that a methodological approach is required to remedy the defects of the current situation, but
for a methodological theology to be possible, it must have its basis in something as architectonic as, for instance, Aquinas’ transformed Aristotelian metaphysics. But no such metaphysical consensus exists. What is more, in Lonergan’s understanding, metaphysics can only be properly conceived as correlative to cognitional structure. If metaphysics is to be the unrevisable set of interlocking conditions which outlines the nature of the real as such, then it must necessarily be isomorphic with the unrevisable structure of cognition whereby the real is known—since, as we indicated briefly above, any fact is revisable, but only insofar as there is some unrevisable pattern of cognitive operations which makes revision itself possible. Accordingly, before there can be a methodological theology, there must be worked out a theory of cognitive operations upon which any positive science can be methodically grounded. This theory of cognitive operations is *Insight*; and Lonergan takes his bearings in the analysis of cognitional structure, not from some preconceived metaphysical position, but by asking exactly what it is scientists and mathematicians and people of common sense are doing when they understand something.

This brings us back to the heart of the issue. Why does Lonergan feel the need to critique the basic tenets of modern philosophy and the concomitant approach to science? Because that science has become the paradigm for what knowing is—and, to a certain extent, rightly so—it has carried with it many of the philosophical or quasi-philosophical suppositions and presuppositions that served as the foundation for or emerged concomitantly with modern scientific procedures. Science is based on certain very legitimate insights into the nature of understanding; for instance, that it is necessary to

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52 See Lonergan, *Insight*, 754ff. It is of course an over-simplification to suggest that there was a clear consensus in favor of Aristotelianism in Aquinas’ day. Nonetheless, the basic thrust of the metaphysical discourse was worked out in Aristotelian categories, with varying degrees of fidelity to Aristotle himself.
move beyond a description of how things appear to us to an explanation of how things are related to one another. So from Aristotelian science, with its admixture of explanation and description, we move toward an explanatory science of verified correlations; instead of saying that fire burns because it is hot, we explore the chemical processes inherent in combustion, which are in principle independent of any observer. But then we have the philosophic (or unphilosophic, as the case may be) presuppositions that come along with these advances: science mistakes its own vast, but still limited, field of inquiry for the whole of reality, mistakes its own reliable method of achieving knowledge with knowledge as such, and mistakes schematic images of things as they relate to one another as pictures of the really real. In short, its impulse is reductionistic in thrust and in effect, and since the targets of its reductionistic impulse concern the process of knowing as well as what counts as knowledge, Lonergan undertakes a critical analysis of cognitive process, in order to distinguish basic positions from basic counterpositions within the vast tangle of assumptions and precepts that forms the paradigmatically modern scientific-philosophical perspective.

With these two brief introductions out of the way, we must turn to a fuller account of how Heidegger and Lonergan, each in their own ways, respond to and seek to

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53 Cf., Lonergan, *Insight*, 151-2, 462. Lonergan rightly critiques certain confusions in Aristotle’s thought: for instance, Aristotle fails to fully distinguish understanding from a grasp of the virtually unconditioned; Aristotle fails to adequately distinguish sensory phenomena as *sensed* from sensory phenomena as *explained*. Nor do I mean to suggest that all Aristotelian science is merely descriptive, and all post-Newtonian science purely explanatory; on the contrary, both have their problematic admixtures of description and explanation. Nonetheless, the tendency of contemporary physics is toward a system of correlations—an explanatory schema—and away from any reliance on assigning absolute weight to sensory impressions as sensed.

54 For a well-developed index of some of the foundational positions that can be derived from Lonergan’s work, see Daniel A. Helminiak, *Brain, Consciousness, and God: A Lonerganian Integration* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015), 79-80.
overcome the trajectory set by the basic tenets of modern philosophical thought. In what follows, we will first lay out in greater detail the exact nature of Heidegger’s and Lonergan’s responses to the problematic set by modern thought. We will then explore at length four areas central to the thought of both Lonergan and Heidegger: (1) the primary way in which the human person interacts with the world, (2) the pre-reflective nature of this access to the world, (3) the centrality of historicity to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, (4) the place of judgment within the broader context of knowledge and the question of whether and to what extent knowing is foundational for human beings. The underlying logos of this organization is to highlight as clearly and as often as possible the points at which Lonergan’s and Heidegger’s thought tends to raise and address questions either overlooked or underemphasized by paradigmatically modern thought: (1) the unquestioned suggestion that the human person is essentially intellectual; (2) the corresponding belief that knowing is the fundamental mode of access to the real; (3) the question, basically un-raised by modern thought, of whether the human person is essentially shaped by his antecedent conditions and therefore historical; (4) the question of how judgment relates to evidence, and whether the knowledge ascertained in judgment is in any sense primary. In addressing these questions, we will treat each thinker independently—first Heidegger, then Lonergan—and following those treatments, we will put the two into dialogue in a final chapter on their respective notions of being and close with an exploratory remark regarding the possibility of a robust philosophical anthropology built on the fruitful conversation of these two minds. The general structure,

55 There has been an attempt at structural parallelism in the treatment of these topics in relation to both thinkers, but when clarity would be jeopardized by an artificial parallelism, I have preferred clarity to structural rigor.
then, is to proceed from a treatment of Lonergan’s and Heidegger’s respective understandings of modern thought, through a reading of their works with an eye to how they would respond to and seek to overcome these problems, to a treatment of the notion of being, so central to both, for the sake of highlighting the way that both thinkers, taken together, offer a robust ontological alternative to the presuppositions of prototypically modern thought. Central to this analysis will be Lonergan’s and Heidegger’s individual rejections of modern philosophy’s portrait of man as an intellectual substance, and their respective insights that fundamental to the process of coming-to-know is something pre-reflective and pre-conceptual.
In the introduction, we established that Heidegger is engaged in a response to the problem of modern philosophy. This response begins from a critique of Descartes’ original formulation of the subject-object distinction, and especially of the concomitant reduction of the human being to a purely intellectual substance, a *res cogitans*. As we have seen, this critique aims not simply at the epistemological bent of modern philosophy—though certainly Descartes set the tradition on that trajectory—but at the fundamental presuppositions regarding the nature of being which are implicit in the Cartesian and post-Cartesian approach. Accordingly, Heidegger interprets Kant—who might also be taken to be engaged in epistemology—in a more radical way. Kant, like Descartes, is putting forth an interpretation of *being*, and specifically of the being of the subject: the human being is taken as essentially intellect, an “isolated subject-Thing [in] the innocuous emptiness of a worldless occurring.”\(^{56}\) Over against this isolated subject is the world, namely, the sum total of extant objects. The two, world and subject, are in some way related or co-ordinated—for the subject apparently has knowledge of the world\(^{57}\)—but they are maintained in their distinction. Nothing, in other words, can impinge upon the purity of the subject as pure intellect, for anything else that might be drawn into the Cartesian conception of the isolated ego is purged through the project of universal doubt.

None of this is to suggest that Descartes or Kant is necessarily self-transparently engaged in a metaphysical project. The argument in no way hinges upon any insistence

\(^{56}\) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 188.

\(^{57}\) Though of course even this becomes problematic.
that either thinker interprets his own project in ontological terms. Descartes’ concern is to ground a method whereby clear and distinct knowledge can be attained with certainty and the possibility of error can, as far as possible, be excluded.\(^{58}\) Kant, for his part, is engaged in the not dissimilar project of delimiting the precise boundaries within which human knowing can achieve certain knowledge. That being said, Kant, at least as Heidegger interprets him, “always stresses here that as transcendental philosophy ontology has to do with the knowledge of objects.” This turn toward knowing, which has wrongly been interpreted as a merely epistemological concern, is in fact rooted in “Kant’s conviction … that being, actuality, equals perceivedness, being-known.”\(^{59}\) In this interpretation, ontology and a theory of knowing are co-extensive, for the fundamental categories of knowing coincide with the fundamental categories of being.

In any event, the foregoing brings to our attention three chief foci of Heidegger’s critique of the modern philosophical tradition: (1) the conception of man as res cogitans, (2) the subject-object distinction, and (3) the equation of perceiving, and therefore knowing (in the sense of intellectual knowing), with being. As should be clear enough, position (3) develops organically out of position (2), and position (2) in turn emerges from position (1). If one adheres to the Cartesian model of universal doubt, one eventually arrives at the

\(^{58}\) René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Richard Kennington (Newburyport: Focus, 2007), 2-4 (15-17): “[T]hose who only walk very slowly can advance much further if they always follow the right path [i.e., the method], than those who run and go astray.” The goal of all this is “clear and assured knowledge of all that is useful for life.” Note the double emphasis: utility on the one hand, certainty on the other.

\(^{59}\) Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, 128. Even concerning the “thing-in-itself,” that centerpiece of Kantian philosophy which is defined precisely by its unsusceptibility of being known, Heidegger writes: “In the concept of the thing-in-itself, whether or not it is knowable in its whatness, the traditional ontology of extantness is already implicitly contained” (Ibid., 147). The thing-in-itself, in some sense, is, and negatively speaking we can say about it at least that it is that one thing about which we cannot really say anything with regards its whatness—thus giving it a kind of whatness and a kind of extantness all its own.
one indubitable fact of the thinking ego, purified of all involvement with anything beyond itself; so there emerges the binary opposition of mind and world. And once the totality of the real is conceived in the binary terms of worldless-subject, here, and world-as-totality-of-objects, there, it follows that the model whereupon the relation of these two ostensibly distinct realms will be understood, will inevitably be that of intellectual knowing conceived on the model of “taking a look” (to borrow a Lonerganian phrase). And once intellectual knowing becomes the basic schema for understanding the relation of the subject and the world, it is only a short skip before the fully idealist position emerges (in Berkeley for instance), namely, that *esse est percipi*, that the categories of being can be reduced to the categories of knowing, and that the categories of knowing can be discovered through the critical project of reflecting upon the necessary conditions for the possibility of knowing anything at all. In what follows, therefore, we will present an interpretation of Heidegger’s response to each of these three positions, for the sake of providing the background against which his original thought, particularly in *Being and Time*, can be read as a response to the problems of modern philosophy.
§1 — Cartesian Doubt and the Res Cogitans

Descartes saw as his project the maximal attainment of “a clear and assured knowledge of all that is useful for life.” But to attain a “clear and assured knowledge,” he deemed it necessary to suspend assent to any position or belief, such that knowledge not be mixed with falsity. He writes, “[A]s regards all the opinions that I had hitherto accepted as credible, I could not do better than to undertake to reject them once and for all and replace them afterwards by better ones, or even by the same ones, when I had adjusted them to the standard of reason.” This strategy of doubting is motivated not so much by a lack of faith in any particular proposition; rather, it is a methodological tool to eliminate error and guarantee, as far as possible, accurate knowledge. Likening this methodological doubt to the tearing down of one’s house, such that one might thereafter rebuild it more perfectly, Descartes embarks upon a process of doubting everything that can be doubted. Famously, he comes up against the one absolutely undoubtable fact, namely, that “I” exist, and that “I” think. From this one foothold, this one indubitable fact, he builds his entire method, with its various philosophical, theological, and scientific pronouncements.

If Descartes sees his method of universal doubt as the surest way to avoid error, nonetheless, it is a method bound to conceive man on a basically intellectualist model. By strategically doubting all that can be doubted, Descartes essentially backs himself up into

60 Descartes, Discourse on Method, 4 (17).
61 Ibid., 13-14 (22).
the one strictly undoubtable fact. This fact has a duality to it: “I” exist, “I” think. Why this precise duality? The derivation of the first element of the duality is easy enough to grasp: if I am engaged in a project of doubting everything that can be doubted, nonetheless the one strictly indubitable fact is that I am, for I am the one doing the doubting. Anything else can be left aside—I cannot trust anything given in sensation, for instance, because I might be deceived; everything I see or hear might be a hallucination. But I cannot doubt the fact that I am doubting; and if my doubting is, then the “I” who does the doubting exists. Basically, one cannot help but catch oneself in the act of doubting; for in trying to doubt one’s own existence, one runs up against the fact of that existence, and this is a fact which cannot be gotten around or behind or beyond. The “I” is strictly indubitable.

The second element of the duality—that “I” am a thinking being—is a little less transparent. While everything conceived as external to the “I” may be doubted, the subject’s own activity cannot be doubted. Now, it might seem that this activity—doubting—should form the core of the Cartesian formulation of the nature of the self: dubito, ergo sum. But doubting, it seems, is an activity of thought, an exercise of the intellect; to doubt is to suspend belief in, to question the validity of, some thing. So from the fact that one comes up against one’s activity of doubting in this way, one comes up at the same

62 As we shall discuss later, it is also quite clear that Descartes, even in doubting, speaks and thinks in a language, which seems to stand behind and prior to [in some sense] all thinking and doubting.

63 There is, of course, something hyperbolic about Descartes universal doubt, hence the repeated emphasis on its being methodological. Descartes was not in a state of perplexity as to whether the external world existed; rather, in the pursuit of a suitable foundation for certain knowledge, methodological universal doubt is a device for attaining certainty.

64 Of course, the cogito has been formulated in such terms as these; nonetheless, Descartes builds his whole method on the premise that man is a thinking being. Doubt is essential for the devising of the method, but once the method is in place, the emphasis shifts to man as a thinking being, not a doubting being.
time against the fact that every doubting is a thinking, and that the subject therefore must at least minimally be capable of thought. By prescinding from all other determinations of the subject—for they are not self-grounding in the same way that the ego’s catching itself in the act of thinking is—we arrive at the conception of the human subject as a purely intellectual thing, a thinking being. Descartes writes, “I knew that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is only to think, and that does not need any place or depend on any material thing in order to be. So that this me, that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body … and that even if the body were not, the soul would not fail to be all that it is.” Indeed, at this point in the argument, nothing else can be said, for everything else has been doubted, and thus the one undoubtable fact remains this: I exist as a thinking substance. Descartes’ further declaration that an intellectual prescinding from corporeity can be extended to an essential or ontological distinction of thinking from embodiedness is, I think, a decidedly illegitimate move—and one he himself later seems to call into question in the

\[\text{Descartes, } \textit{Meditations}, \text{ 23-9, 33-4.}\]

\[\text{Descartes, } \textit{Discourse on Method}, \text{ 33 (33), my emphasis. Of course, “thinking” does not necessarily mean only intellectual activity, though Descartes seems to have no qualms about using “thinking” nature and “intelligent” nature almost interchangeably. He also dismisses imaginal thinking—so crucial for Aristotle and for Lonergan, not to mention the younger Descartes of the } \textit{Regulae}—\text{as the activity of those who “never elevate their mind above sensible things … such that whatever is not imaginable seems to them unintelligible.”}\]

\[\text{It is worth noting that we have actually reversed the direction of the Cartesian argument: in the activity of doubting, we run up against our own thinking. But if we are thinking, then we must exist. Hence the classic formulation, “I think, therefore I am.” Nonetheless, our purpose here is to provide some background to Descartes’ contention that man ought to be conceived as } \textit{res cogitans}, \text{ as a thinking being. In this context, and while the “I think” is formally first in Descartes’ argument, nonetheless it is the element of the argument most in need of elucidation, and the element which will be subjected to Heidegger’s most strenuous critique.}\]
But the argument was made, and at some point it “stuck”—such that all subsequent modern thought took its bearings from this originating interpretation.

One might wonder: why should any critique of the Cartesian argument be desired, or deemed necessary? Indeed, I concede that the argument, as far as it goes, is perfectly valid: if one sees a project of universal doubt as possible and worthwhile, and one carries this project through, one will invariably come up against the indubitability of the “I” who does the doubting. The problem with the argument, and the aspect of Descartes’ thought against which Heidegger will most forcefully argue, is precisely the conception of man as res cogitans, as a purely thinking being. Even independent of any evaluation of Descartes’ claims, we might wonder why this aspect of his argument should be deemed particularly vulnerable. I contend that by employing an intellectual procedure

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69 Descartes’ procedure, however, leaves unspoken many assumptions: that such universal doubt is possible, or that there is some value to truth which makes this procedure worthwhile—or, most basically, that any activity must have an objective substratum. This, as Heidegger notes, is a decidedly Scholastic holdover. Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, 123-4: “Descartes, who carried through the turn to the subject that was already prepared for in different ways, not only does not pose the question of the being of the subject but even interprets the subject’s being under the guidance of the concept of being and its pertinent categories as developed by ancient and medieval philosophy. Descartes’ basic ontological concepts are drawn directly from Suarez, Duns Scotus, and Thomas Aquinas.” See, also, Étienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, trans. A.H.C. Downes (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 321-2.
to ground all future knowledge, Descartes has, against his own overt intentions, smuggled an unjustified presupposition into the very foundation of his method: namely, that thinking is the only means whereby to achieve knowledge. Precisely because Descartes begins from an intellectualist interpretation of reality and of the nature of the human person—an intellectualist tradition, it should be noted, that he almost certainly picked up from the scholasticism against which he seeks to define himself and his project—his project of methodological, universal doubt will invariably lead him to the conclusion that the nature of man is to be a thinking being. One may wonder whether Descartes might have reached a different conclusion, a different formulation of the nature of the human person, if he had begun from a different set of presuppositions. How might the argument go if Descartes’ presumption was that feeling, as opposed to thinking, was the proper way to distinguish the true from the false? One can imagine a philosophy of affective response no less robust, no less rigorous, than Descartes’ philosophy, which nevertheless does not have the same foundations.

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70 See Bernard Williams, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1978), 46-7, quoted in Stephen R. Grimm, “Intellectualism in Epistemology,” *Mind* 120, no. 479 (July 2011), 727: “Descartes very carefully presents himself as now in a situation where he is devoted solely to inquiry, and to having, so long as the exercise lasts, no other interests. He stresses repeatedly...that his ‘Doubt’, his instrument of reflective inquiry, is not to be brought into practical matters: equally, no values drawn from those matters affect the inquiry. The strategic rationality which guides the inquiry is to be entirely internal to it: no questions about what, in a general economic sense, is worth inquiring into or checking, are, within the confines of inquiry, to count... With the exercise defined in these terms, then, so long as one remains within it, most of the considerations that rationally weigh with [the] everyday [inquirer] against his trying to raise his truth-ratio, merely lapse.” As will become clear in what follows, it is our contention, following Heidegger, that Descartes’ method is not, as Descartes himself takes it to be, without presuppositions. In fact, Heidegger’s project can be understood as an effort to replace Descartes’ ontology of the human being with one that doesn’t share the same reliance on unexamined presuppositions—Heidegger certainly has presuppositions, but he thinks their validity will be born out in the development of his philosophic project (i.e., the hermeneutic circle). See for instance Abraham Mansbach, “Heidegger’s Critique of Cartesianism,” 20th WCP: Heidegger’s Critique of Cartesianism, https://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Cont/ContMans.htm.

In the introduction, we intimated that Heidegger chiefly takes aim at Descartes’ construal of the human being as essentially an intellectual being, *res cogitans*. Stated simply, he thinks this reading dispenses, without justification, with certain aspects of humanness which are just as essential to what it is to be human as intellect or mind—if not more so. More precisely formulated, intellectual knowing is a “founded mode of access to the Real;” it is derivative of, parasitical upon, a more foundational, fundamental mode of access, which it can neither replace nor supersedes. Accordingly, to suggest that the human being is essentially *res cogitans* has consequences which go beyond anthropology or psychology (and Heidegger, as he himself points out, is chiefly engaged in neither of these disciplines). For to suggest that the human being is essentially intellect, essentially mind, is to suggest further that man’s primary mode of access to the real is by means of the intellect; but to take this step has already determined, in a very significant way, what “being” is or can be. In other words, to define man as *res cogitans* is to always, already prescind from whole realms of being which might be accessible to the human being, but in modes other than—and perhaps more foundational, more essential than—intellectual knowing.

It is worth reminding ourselves that Descartes, according to Heidegger, is not unique in identifying intellectual knowing as the human being’s fundamental mode of access to reality; since Plato at least, such a conception has prevailed. Descartes is unique, however, in his framing of the question. That Descartes understands intellectual knowing in the way he does puts a particular spin on his formulation of the question of man’s

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relation to the real. What’s more, this spin constricts in a very specific way how “being” can be interpreted—even if (and perhaps especially because) the question of being is not overtly raised. In the introduction we gave a brief overview of Heidegger’s critique of Descartes. We will return to that theme in more detail shortly. However, before we can adequately understand Heidegger’s objections to the Cartesian understanding of the human being and the notion of being implicit in that understanding, we must give some consideration to the nature, not only of the knower, but also of the known. If Heidegger, in other words, objects to the Cartesian thesis that man’s mode of access to being is by means of intellectual knowing, we must understand exactly what that knowing is; and to do that, we must understand what Descartes takes to be the object of knowing. Only then can we return to the fundamental question of what Heidegger thinks is misguided in conceiving the human being chiefly in terms of intellect.
The question before us, then, is: if the human being is essentially a knower, what is it that he or she knows? The first and most obvious part of the answer is the one already included in Descartes’ methodological doubt: namely, the knower knows himself as a knower. One can see in this movement on Descartes’ part the roots of the critical tradition which reaches its peak in Kant and its further metaphysical developments in Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte. But Descartes, by his procedure of methodologically doubting all that can be doubted, has apparently ruled out the possibility of any knowledge beyond the subject: the content of every thought may be doubted—it is only the one indubitable datum of one’s own thinking that cannot be doubted. Descartes seems to have closed off the possibility of any knowledge which reaches beyond the subject’s own immediate knowledge of himself.73

Descartes’ solution to this dilemma is as famous as it is controversial: to ground the mind’s access to a reality which goes beyond it, Descartes takes it upon himself to prove the existence of a perfectly good and beneficent God, who guarantees the correspondence of our impressions to reality. We need not go into the details of Descartes’ argument here, since our concern is with the content of knowing, and not the theological justifications Descartes employs to shore up our trust in this content. Stated simply, Descartes is convinced that a proof of God’s existence and goodness can be based upon the mind’s own operations: if a mind, which recognizes itself as finite, has within its power the ability to conceive of some infinite being, or again, if a mind, which recognizes

73 See Descartes, *Discourse*, 37. And it is worth noting, in this connection, that while I disagree with much of Descartes’ method, he is to be commended for grasping the depth of this problem with the clarity and depth that he did grasp it.
its own imperfection, has the power to conceive of some perfect being, then such a conception cannot be merely the product of this finite, imperfect mind. For Descartes, a finite mind cannot conceive of an infinite and perfect being, unless that idea has been implanted in it from without. And since, according to the foregoing, only an infinite and perfect being could have a conception of an infinite and perfect being innately, the idea of an infinite and perfect being must be implanted in the mind by an infinite and perfect being. Precisely because the mind is capable of conceiving the idea of an infinite and perfect being, such a being must exist—even more certainly than the I of the *Cogito*.74

The mind, then, is guaranteed by this perfectly good being, who because he is perfectly good would not deceive us, that its representations do in fact correspond to the reality that they seem to represent. So we, for our purposes, may move to the more pressing question of just what it is the mind knows. Well, chiefly it knows its own states; but these states are accurate representations—based on the trustworthiness of God—of the reality which exists beyond or outside of the mind.75 And so the mind can, in some fashion, know extra-mental reality. But what is the nature of this extra-mental reality which the mind knows? In contrast to the *res cogitans*, the mind considered as purely thinking substance, is *res extensa*, substance characterized by extension, that is, the taking up of space. Heidegger, interpreting Descartes, writes:

Extension is a state-of-Being constitutive for the entity we are talking about [i.e., the *res extensa*]; it is that which must already ‘be’ before any other ways

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74 Descartes, *Meditations*, 45-7: “For although the idea of substance is within me owing to the fact that I am a substance, nevertheless I should not have the idea of an infinite substance—since I am finite—if it had not proceeded from some substance which was veritably infinite.”

75 Neither of these prepositions is really adequate, insofar as both have a primarily spatial connotation, while the mind, as Descartes conceives it, really should not be thought in spatial terms at all.
in which Being is determined, so that these can ‘be’ what they are. … The ‘world’s’ extension and substantiality (which itself is characterized by extension) are accordingly demonstrated by showing how all the other characteristics which the substance definitely possesses (especially divisio, figura, motus), can be conceived only as modi of extensio, while, on the other hand, extensio sine figura vel motu remains quite intelligible.\footnote{Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 90.}

According to Heidegger’s interpretation of Descartes, extension is more than just the most obvious property of extramental realities; it is, in fact, ontologically constitutive of extramental reality. In other words, to be, for extramental realities, is to be extended. The “world” over against which the res cogitans is set, and about which it seeks knowledge, is the world of extension, the world characterized chiefly by spatial configuration and its various modalities; and accordingly, the mode of access to that world best suited to an adequate and accurate understanding of it is fundamentally a mathematical mode of access, for mathematics deals directly with the measurable properties of beings characterized in the first place by something like dimensionality. Not only does Descartes take the human being to be, basically, an intellectual being, but he also interprets that intellectuality in terms of mathematics: “Mathematical knowing is regarded by Descartes as the one manner of apprehending entities which can always give assurance that their Being has been securely grasped. If anything measures up in its own kind of Being to the Being that is accessible in mathematical knowledge, then it is in the authentic sense.” Real knowing is
mathematical knowing (at least when we are concerned with the knowing of extra-mental entities), and all rigorous knowing proceeds mathematically.\textsuperscript{77}

It is important to note the radical incongruity of these two modes of reality: while intellectual substance and corporeal substance are both called by the one name, “substance,” the “substanciality” of each is quite distinct. For corporeal substance, substantiality consists in extension; one may prescind from all other determinations of the corporeal substance, but it is, it has substantiality, by virtue of its being extended. For thinking substance, on the other hand, its substantiality consists in its very intellectuality. As Heidegger indicates, the notion of substantiality is, in Descartes’ thought, essentially a scholastic holdover: something is a substance in virtue of its being in some sense independent, not reliant on anything else for its being.\textsuperscript{78} To be a substance, then, is related to being subsistent.\textsuperscript{79} Of course, in the traditional conception to which Descartes, despite his insistence to the contrary, occasionally clings, all finite being is produced and held in being by God, and so no finite being can be called a substance in the absolute sense; nonetheless, an extended body, for instance, has a permanence and self-subsistence of a different order than, say, the color red, which must always inhere in some substantial thing—and so the idea of substance is appropriately applied also to finite entities, but with the caveat that, while they may be understood as independent and self-subsistent

\textsuperscript{77} See Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 95-6. It is perhaps worth noting, in brief, that while Descartes overtly insists on mathematical methodology as the guarantor of real knowledge, free from error, certain crucial moments in his own arguments are decidedly non-mathematical. See esp. Descartes, \textit{Meditations}, 78-9, 82-3, where Descartes speaks of the conjunction of the completely unextended soul and the essentially unextended body—but by what hurdle of thought could one conceive of a mathematically expressed relation that concerns a non-mathematical \textit{res}?

\textsuperscript{78} We can see here the roots of a Spinozan sort of pantheism: if God is the only substance, properly speaking, then all dependent substances are somehow contained or included within him.

\textsuperscript{79} Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 92.
within the realm of finite being, nonetheless they are radically dependent upon God, in comparison to whom they are absolutely contingent.

As I have already indicated, the brunt of Heidegger’s critique of Descartes is directed at the notion of the human being as a pure intellect, or even as a being which has access to reality primarily in the mode of intellection. Heidegger’s critique of this intellectualism plays itself out in a critique of Descartes’ notion of “world,” against the backdrop of which Heidegger is able to more robustly formulate his own notion of “world.” Given Descartes’ division of reality into the two realms of res cogitans and res extensa, there can be discerned a distinct sort of correlation between the subject and the world of objects toward which his knowing is oriented. This is to say, to answer the question of “what the knower knows” is to answer the question of what Descartes understands by “world,” as that extramental reality toward which the subject is oriented. As we shall see, this Cartesian notion of world leaves unclarified the question of how the subject is in the world, and distorts one’s understanding of the subject’s mode of access to the world.

For Descartes the world is the totality of extant objects. Corporeal reality is characterized chiefly by extension; thus, the world may properly be regarded as the whole collection of extended things. This notion of world leaves tacit and unformulated any account of the organization of these subjects or of their systematic relations. Now, it may

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80 Heidegger, Being and Time, 59: “[W]hat is more obvious than that a ‘subject’ is related to an ‘Object’ and vice versa? This ‘subject-Object-relationship’ must be presupposed. But while this presupposition is unimpeachable in its facticity, this makes it indeed a baleful one, if its ontological necessity and especially its ontological meaning are to be left in the dark. Thus the phenomenon of Being-in has for the most part been represented exclusively by a single exemplar—knowing the world. … Because knowing has been given this priority, our understanding of its ownmost kind of Being gets led astray, and accordingly Being-in-the-world must be exhibited even more precisely with regard to knowing the world, and must itself be made visible as an existential ‘modality’ of Being-in.”
be the case that a mathematical physics can explain the systematic interrelations of all extended objects in the universe, but, whatever may be the proper explanation of these interrelations, nonetheless the world, absolutely speaking, is the total inventory of extant things. For Descartes—quite unlike for Heidegger—the notion of world is not any sort of totalizing horizon, is not any sort of context within which the extant objects take on significance in and through their interrelations; rather, for Descartes, the world is identical with the objects “within” it, provided we are understood to mean all objects.81

Because the human mind is not an extended substance, but rather an intellectual substance, it cannot properly be said to exist at any position within the world, that is, within this totality of extended objects. More concretely, position is a function of extension; what is not extended does not take up space, and what does not take up space cannot occupy a position within space.82 Now, of course, the human intellect resides in a corporeal, extended entity, namely the human body; but for Descartes, mind and body are not a unity but a duality—they are “intimately conjoined,” but not one.83 This is a stark departure from the scholastic tradition which preceded him—and which, in its turn, took its bearings from Aristotle—for which the “soul,” including its intellectual component, is the “first actuality of a natural body having life potentially in it.”84 For Descartes, on the other hand, the intellect and the body it inhabits (the two being

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82 Like the notion of “world,” Descartes also leaves basically unclarified, at an ontological level, the notion of “space.”


conjoined at the pineal gland) are two distinct substances: even if the two cannot be separated in reality, nonetheless they are distinct not only in thought but in essence. Nonetheless, this intellect, by its being conjoined to a body, has access to the world of extension via the senses.

One might think that, at this point, the basic problem of the relation of the res cogitans to the res extensa is solved: by virtue of its inhabiting a corporeal entity, the res cogitans is granted access to a world of being. One might imagine that this solution resolves the basic tension we have been alluding to even if, with Heidegger, one were to want to critique the further Cartesian supposition that mathematical knowing is this thinking substance’s basic mode of access to the extended world, or to ask whether the essence of humanness ought to be conceived in terms of pure intellectuality. But in fact the problem is only further complicated at this point:

Descartes knows very well that entities do not proximally show themselves in their real Being. What is ‘proximally’ given is this waxen Thing which is coloured, flavoured, hard, and cold in definite ways, and which gives off its own special sound when struck. But this is not of any importance ontologically, nor, in general, is anything which is given through the senses … The senses do not enable us to cognize any entity in its Being; they merely serve to announce the ways in which ‘external’ Things within-the-world are useful or harmful for human creatures encumbered with bodies.

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85 Descartes, Meditations, 78-81. Descartes is somewhat ambiguous on this point: “I rightly conclude that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing [or a substance whose whole essence is to think. … [I]t is certain that this I [that is to say, my soul by which I am what I am], is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body, and can exist without it.” But also: “I am not only lodged in my body as a pilot in a vessel, but … am very closely united to it, and so to speak so intermingled with it that I seem to compose with it one whole.”

86 Heidegger, Being and Time, 96-7.
Instead, Descartes “prescribes for the world its ‘real’ Being, as it were, on the basis of an idea of Being whose source has not been unveiled and which has not been demonstrated in its own right—and idea in which Being is equated with constant presence at hand.”

Let us back up for a moment. For Descartes, the *res cogitans*, apparently because the objects toward which it is essentially geared are characterized by extension, is to be thought of as basically mathematical-intellectual. Mathematics, then, is the paradigm of knowledge; to know is to grasp something mathematically. But if this is case, then the *real* being of corporeal entities—and not the merely apparent being given directly to the senses—is mathematical dimensionality. Heidegger writes, “If anything measures up in its own kind of Being to the Being that is accessible in mathematical knowledge, then it *is* in the authentic sense. Such entities are those which always are what they are.” In other words, mathematics grasps necessary and unchanging connections; the principles and conclusions grasped in mathematics do not admit of variation by time or place. If, then, the very substantiality of extended substances is expressed in mathematics, then this substantiality must be the sort of thing expressible in the mathematical mode, which is to say, something not susceptible to variation with place or time, something necessary and universal. So, according to Heidegger’s interpretation, Descartes has in fact taken over,

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87 Ibid., 96.

88 This is yet another formulation of the foundational modern distinction between primary and secondary qualities.

89 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 95.

90 And lest this seem like a falsification of Descartes’ intention, it is worthwhile to remember that classical Newtonian physics, while it abandons the Aristotelian model according to which the supralunar real is eternal and unchanging, nonetheless does take itself to be expressing in mathematical forms the fundamental and unalterable laws of all physical being. That is, even if particular beings are not necessary and universal, the knowledge acquired in physics is taken to be a necessary and universal explanation of all physical beings.
unthinkingly, the traditional metaphysical identification of the eternal and unchanging with the really real. At the same time, he has given this traditional ontology a twist, so to speak, by making mathematics the paradigm of all knowing and setting the stage for modern mathematical physics.91

What is most significant for our purposes is perhaps the way in which the Cartesian interpretation of the nature of humanness and the duality implied in that interpretation rule out anything like a substantial historicity of the human person. Temporality, according to the traditional philosophical interpretation which Descartes despite himself takes over, is a property of matter, specifically matter in motion—Aristotle goes so far as to identify motion and time, and the entire philosophic tradition basically follows him.92 But if temporality is a property of matter in motion, then history is but the sequence of the states of matter. More importantly, the human subject, since he is essentially res cogitans, is essentially ahistorical; the human being only exists temporally, which is to say historically, because of the mind’s being conjoined with a body.

Considered in itself, the human being, the intellectual substance, cannot be historical, because to be historical is to be subject to temporality, and to be subject to temporality is to be material, that is an extended thing. The subject, considered absolutely, is nothing developmental, nothing historical, but a “pure” subject, what Kant will later call a transcendental ego; of course, this “pure” subject is always conjoined with an empirical

91 For a discussion of Heidegger’s reliance on a different “cogito,” and one which stands in a different tradition of philosophizing than the Scholastic tradition from which Descartes took his bearings, see Michael M. Sharkey, Heidegger, Lonergan, and Authenticity: An Inquiry into the Role of Intelligence in Praxis (Ann Arbor: ProQuest, 2003), 37-8.

92 See Aristotle, Metaphysics, 1071b5-1072a19. Augustine might be mentioned as an exception.
subject and a body, both of which are historical (the body ages, for instance). But considered in itself, the human person is intellectual substance; and as intellectual substance it is radically ahistorical.

Beginning from the ideal of universal, methodological doubt, Descartes is able to arrive at the idea of the human being, the indubitable subject arrived at in the *Cogito*, as an intellectual substance. This results in the division of finite reality into two distinct spheres: the intellectual substance and the extended substance. There arises a problem of how the intellectual substance can know anything beyond its own states, and this problem Descartes solves by offering a proof for the existence of a beneficent God who would not deceive us—provided we proceed methodically in our thinking. So the intellectual substance is able to know the extended world; but it is only the world, as extended, that can be conceived as temporal and therefore as having history. The subject itself is essentially worldless, essentially atemporal, essentially ahistorical. It is at this notion of the subject that Heidegger will take aim, and it is this understanding of subjectivity, with its concomitant but often implicit understanding of being, that in large part motivate Heidegger’s own philosophical project.
§3 — Lonergan’s Formulation of the Problem

Because Lonergan is explicitly engaged in the task of reviewing, critiquing, and contributing to the epistemological dialogue, it is somewhat more straightforward to give an overview and analysis of his attitude toward and the directionality of his response to modern philosophy. Nonetheless, because Lonergan, like Heidegger, is not doing epistemology properly speaking, it is critical that we understand in advance Lonergan’s precise attitude toward epistemology, and how he sees his critiques of the modern tradition as standing on a foundation very different than the one presupposed by Cartesian and post-Cartesian philosophy.

Basically, Lonergan sees as the fundamental defect in modern philosophy the mistaking of knowing for taking a look. More generally, there can be discerned two basic attitudes toward knowing in the Western philosophical tradition. On the one view, knowing is understood on the model of identity: in the act of knowing, there is some identity of knower and known. In this tradition stand Aristotle, Aquinas, and (to a certain extent) Hegel. On the other view, knowing is conceived as confrontation and is understood basically on the model of sensation: just as light rays impinge upon the eyes, the visual sensory organs, such that sight may occur, so too do “knowables” in some sense impinge upon the mind, such that knowing may occur. On this model, the “forms” of

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93 Though of course Lonergan’s work reads much more like epistemology than Heidegger’s.

94 However, Hegel—according to Lonergan—fails to adequately distinguish between intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation.

95 Of course, for Aristotle, sensing is also understood as identity; what we have in mind here is the physicalist understanding of sensation. It is worth noting that Lonergan disagrees to a certain important extent with the Aristotelian understanding of sensation. See for instance Lonergan, Insight, 390-91, 438, 459-60, 462, 507, 511
sensible objects are somehow “read off” of the sensed objects by the intellect. In this tradition stand the Platonists, Duns Scotus, and (in a somewhat different way) Descartes. The basic deficiency of the latter position is its tendency to focus on a series of activities related to understanding, without gaining a proper grasp of what understanding itself is. From this defect results the opacity of understanding to itself: the human mind devises a theory of knowing which in principle cannot be extended to encompass the knowing of knowing itself. In other words, the understanding involves itself in a performative contradiction—it is engaged in activities which stand in opposition to the interpretation offered of its activities, and thereby adopts a basic counterposition.

This latter view Lonergan labels the “conceptualist” position. “Conceptualists,” writes Lonergan, “conceive human intellect only in terms of what it does; but their neglect of what intellect is, prior to what it does, has a variety of causes. Most commonly they do not advert to the act of understanding.” For the conceptualist, the existence of concepts are a given: the conceptualist is concerned only with the stringing together of logically coherent systems of concepts, not with asking the question of how a concept first emerges in the human mind, of what distinguishes the man who really understands from the man who can merely parrot a definition or logical inference.

The conceptualist, then, is the inheritor of a certain sort of degraded Platonism: the intellect has its concepts by means of extroversion, an encounter with something “out

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96 Lonergan, Verbum, 195.

97 Ibid., 194. It is worth noting that, in situating the question of what intellect is prior to the question of what intellect does, Lonergan is making the question of what it means to know an ontological question, a question of what the essence of knowing, and hence of the knowing subject, really is.

98 Insight itself begins with a rudimentary example of how a concept is first arrived at—namely, by way of insight into phantasm. See Lonergan, Insight, 32-3.
there.” Lonergan summarizes the matter thus: “The Platonist conceives knowing as primarily confrontation, but the Aristotelian conceives knowing as primarily perfection, act, identity.” For the conceptualist, there is some “intellectual intuition” of eternally valid categories—concepts—which can be strung together into a logically sound whole, without the difficulties inherent in actually struggling to understand, in the difficult transition from potentially understanding to actually understanding. In contrast, those who follow Aristotle’s lead recognize that to understand is “perfection, act, identity.” In other words, actual understanding requires intelligence, a certain set of intellectual habits, that allow one to make the transition from potency to act with regard to understanding; the identity of the thinking power with the object thought is not an automatic result of confrontation with the “out there,” but rather the product of the struggle to understand. A concept is not “read off” a sensory presentation in some intuitive fashion; rather, understanding, in its characteristic activities, devises concepts that more or less adequately explain the phantasm, image, or data in question. Each of these conceptual explanations is subject to revision, for in each case it may be but a partial explanation; and intelligence, as Lonergan emphasizes repeatedly in Insight, is not satisfied with partial explanation. Intelligence, then, is essentially discursive; it raises questions and formulates potential answers. But only when the answers are able to put an end to all the relevant questions that intelligence can ask of the given data is there fully actualized understanding, an identity of thinking and being. In short, prior to any of the characteristic activities of the

99 Lonergan, Verbum, 195.
understanding, there is understanding itself—and understanding is characterized as a
“pure, unrestricted desire to know.”

See McPartland, Lonergan and Historiography, 3: “[Lonergan’s] distinction between intelligere and dicere was
more than a bombshell in Thomistic studies, for it challenged the most pervasive assumption of modern
thought, the ‘confrontation theory of truth,’ the view, prevalent also in most contemporary discussions of
the philosophy of history, that the act of knowing essentially entails a confrontation between subject and
object.”
A. The Pure Desire to Know and the Cartesian Turn

For Lonergan, as for Aristotle and Aquinas before him, the human intellect is characterized chiefly by a desire to understand. This desire to understand is “pure” because it is a desire quite unlike other desires: it is not so much like the sexual impulse or the urge to eat, but rather like the childlike curiosity that continually asks “Why?” Of the desire to know, Lonergan says that it “is to be known not by the misleading analogy of other desire, but by giving free rein to intelligent and rational consciousness. It is indeed impalpable, but also it is powerful. It pulls man out of the solid routine of perception and conation, instinct and habit, doing and enjoying. It holds him with the fascination of problems.”

The desire is unrestricted because it seeks to understand “everything about everything,” to borrow a Lonerganian turn of phrase. To return again to the example of the child asking “why,” we may note that the child is unsatisfied with any partial answer. No child is satisfied with the all-too-common attempt to end the questioning, “Just because.” As the child, so the fully-grown human’s desire to understand is unsatisfied with partial solutions or inadequate answers—so the desire to understand is not only pure but also unrestricted.

At first blush, Lonergan’s emphasis on the pure, unrestricted desire to know might seem to put him squarely in line not only with Aristotle and Aquinas, but also with Descartes who, as we discussed at length above, conceives the human individual as

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102 As we shall see, “everything about everything” fundamentally corresponds to the scope of the notion of being.

essentially intellect and only secondarily an embodied, corporeal substance. Nonetheless, both Lonergan’s understanding of the human being’s intellectual nature and his reconciliation of that nature with the basic facts of embodiment and historicity stand in fairly clear opposition to Descartes’ position.

First of all, we should remember that Descartes arrives at his understanding of the *res cogitans* by the route of methodological and universal doubt. Descartes’ understanding of the human being has relatively little to do with an examination of the human being engaged in his characteristic activities of asking questions and seeking complete understanding. Rather, Descartes’ begins from the presumption that no knowledge not immanently generated in the subject’s own intellect should be trusted. In other words, every belief becomes suspect, and unless a belief stands up to the scrutiny of Descartes’ own method, it must be abandoned. In the effort to doubt everything which can be doubted, Descartes backs himself into the one indubitable fact: that “I” am here, doing this thinking. This thinking is reified into what will later be called by Kant and others the “transcendental ego,” and it is conceived as a purely intellectual substance. Lonergan, on the other hand, feels no need to begin from a position of universal skepticism, for the effort to understand always operates upon some question and against some backdrop. Knowledge is not guaranteed only by rejecting everything in principle susceptible to doubt; it can also be guaranteed by understanding what it means to understand, and by subjecting the answers to one’s questions to the standards given by intelligence to itself, by its own self-understanding. More important still, Descartes’ implicit conception of
knowledge (an implicit conception which still holds sway over his developed understanding) fundamentally misconceives what knowing is and how it happens.

On the Cartesian model, all knowing must be developed systematically from a single indubitable point of origin. For Lonergan, on the contrary, all knowing begins from some basic background: historical, cultural, social, personal.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, there are distinct modes of knowing, corresponding to distinct fields of human activity. There is a knowing that is proper to the political sphere, and one proper to the scientific sphere. But each has its antecedents and prerequisites, both historical and psychological. The human mind does not spin out vast logical systems from the midst of a void, nor is every legitimate science or field of knowing a simple logical system deduced from first principles.¹⁰⁵ On the contrary, while various fields have their own logics, it is not some meta-logic, but rather a methodology grounded in an understanding of the characteristic operations of the human intellect which enables the human being to put various disciplines into dialogue, to understand their complex interrelations, and to grasp the ways in which they complement and qualify one another.

More relevant still is Lonergan’s observation regarding, and insistence upon, the centrality of belief to the growth and development of knowledge—and, it is worth noting, of scientific knowledge in particular.¹⁰⁶ There is a basic distinction to be drawn between


¹⁰⁵ This is not to deny the validity of the basics of formal logic—the principles of identity and non-contradiction, for instance. It is only to suggest that not all knowing is merely an extension of these basic logical principles, nor a deduction, on logical grounds, from some prior principle. Formal logic may be contrasted with dialectical methodology, the critical “logic” that grasps development. See Lonergan, *Insight*, 242.

“immanently generated knowledge” on the one hand and the kind of knowledge taken as reliable on the basis of authority or methodology or intuition, on the other. The progress of the sciences has hinged critically upon the ability of one generation of scientists to trust in the reliability of the work of the previous generation—for if each generation of scientists had to begin from square one, progress would be impossible. Rather, each generation of scientists takes as its starting point the conclusions of the previous generation. Take, for instance, the question of “whether the general theory of relativity reduces the error of 43 seconds of arc per century that arises in the Newtonian calculation of the perihelion of Mercury”:

An affirmative answer would presuppose (1) a number of different and quite accurate observations, (2) the principles and inferences introduced in constructing, mounting, and using the astronomical instruments, (3) the principles and lengthy calculations needed to determine the Newtonian expectations, and (4) the validity of the tensor calculus and the correctness with which it is employed to reach the Einsteinian approximation. But to secure the relevant observations, there is needed a succession of trained observers and the knowledge or belief that they were trained successfully, that they were conscientious, and that they obtained the results that are attributed to them. A long range of scientific issues is involved in the design and construction, the erection and use, of the astronomical instruments; the principles on which each of these issues was solved, if established scientifically, were established by a human collaboration that operates through belief; and whether or not the principles were applied correctly in the case of each instrument is a matter of further belief for all for whom the applications were not a matter of immanently generated knowledge. What is meant by Newtonian theory and by the general theory of relativity may be read in a variety of books that ultimately acknowledge Newton and Einstein as their sources; but not only the readers of the books but also most of the authors did not know but believed that Newton and Einstein were the sources. Finally, while one may know both Newtonian mechanics and the tensor calculus, one may be a bit hesitant about trusting one’s own unsupported judgment on the correctness of the Einsteinian approximation, or one may shrink from the labor of working out for oneself the relevant Newtonian calculations, or at least one will draw the line at undertaking a fresh and independent computation of the
mathematical tables that facilitate the calculations; and so one would be led to add still further beliefs to ground one’s belief in the superiority of the theory of relativity.\textsuperscript{107}

At every stage in the formulation and positing of a scientific question, not to mention the working out of an answer to the question as posited, belief is operative: in other words, the unfolding of scientific progress takes place within the broader context of a drama or narrative of inquiry, within which belief—in the trustworthiness of one’s predecessors, in the validity of mathematical tables and instruments of observation—operates as the thread that binds the narrative together.\textsuperscript{108} Now, in the course of this process of scientific development, prior conclusions can in fact be challenged, modified, and even reversed; but this is allowed to happen on the basis of taking these conclusions as the grounding for further investigations, for the inadequacy of the prior conclusions is nowhere demonstrated quite so clearly as in the evidence provided by further investigations which build upon these conclusions—for to build upon an inadequate substructure always invites the collapse of the superstructure.

No one, and especially not a scientist eager to advance and make new discoveries in his or her field, can hold him or herself to the patently absurd standard of trusting only the knowledge immanently generated within his or her own subjectivity. While Descartes may take this as the gold standard of—and, indeed, the only sure route to—knowledge, the fact remains that if each and every scientist clung to Descartes’ methodology, science could only advance roughly as far, or perhaps a little farther, than Descartes’ own science.

\textsuperscript{107} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 733-4.

\textsuperscript{108} We will return, in what follows, to the centrality of drama or narrative to the thought of both Lonergan and Heidegger.
did, given the limited amount of time in any individual human life and the need for every individual to work through, at least in some cursory and preparatory fashion, the methodological doubt that issues in clear and distinct ideas and the possibility of reliable knowledge. Furthermore, beyond the practical objection—that the constraints of time demand that one limit the scope of one’s investigation and trust the work of others in neighboring fields—there is the more fundamental objection: it is, for Lonergan, simply impossible to arrive at a knowledge which has no antecedents and takes no bearings from anything beyond itself. Consider, for instance, that Descartes’ philosophical musings go on, not only linguistically, but in a particular, concrete language, which undoubtedly shapes the conceptual topography of his argument. Consider, further, that his demand for certain knowledge is conditioned in no small measure by his own belonging to a tradition of philosophizing that places a premium upon knowledge. All of this serves at least as an indication that Descartes’ standard of knowledge may miss the mark in certain crucial regards—the evidence being the rather commonsense observation that, as a matter of fact, Descartes’ account doesn’t seem to line up with what we ordinarily take to be going on when we know something.

Let us dig deeper into the Lonerganian notion of inherited or belief-based knowledge. Each of us is, without exception, raised within a linguistic and cultural community that shapes the range and the terms of our questioning, whether scientific or

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109 Perhaps this fact explains Descartes’ own near-obsession with discovering the secret of immortality.

110 This is not to dismiss outright Descartes’ adoption of a fundamentally philosophical attitude: of course, it is often the job of philosophy to ask the questions that might seem absurd to common sense. Nonetheless, that Descartes’ account of knowledge does not seem reconcilable with the basic prerequisites of anything like “asking a question,” seems to cast some dubitability on his attempt to eliminate all doubt.
otherwise. In other words, for Lonergan, no acting or knowing occurs in a void; rather, everything that is known is known against a background of beliefs, customs, suppositions, habits of thought. To state the matter simply, the human being is essentially historical, for “our pasts have made us whatever we are and on that capital we have to live or else we must begin afresh. Not only is the individual an historical entity, living off his past, but the same holds for the group.” And again, each of us is part of a “living tradition which formed us and thereby brought us to the point where we began forming ourselves.” So it is fairly clear that every positive act of knowing, whether a simple knowing or a “fully-human knowing” (more on this distinction later), occurs within a context of other knowns, most of which are known only in the mode of belief. If I know, for instance, that the earth orbits the sun, and not vice versa, this is only possible because I know, also, that the sun is actually a massive celestial body (and not the small, glowing orb it appears to be), that it is a certain distance from the earth, and so forth. With the instance of knowing (that the earth orbits the sun), there are co-implicated a host of other knowns (that the sun is a massive celestial body), most of which are actually beliefs, and without which the initial known would not have any meaning. More broadly and fundamentally, there is the impossibility of formulating any question or having any knowledge without there being a historico-cultural backdrop against which such questioning and knowing may take place. To know even the rather simple fact that the earth orbits the sun is to already have a language, and more specifically a linguistic mode that regards the sun and the earth in

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basically scientific, as opposed to mythological or poetic or even commonsense everyday, terms; to ask what causes the earth to orbit the sun, for instance, is a question laden with presuppositions and modes of thinking handed down by a tradition, through a historical accretion of knowledge.

All of this forms the backdrop of Lonergan’s rejection of the basic premises of the modern philosophical project: while there may be some apparent agreement between Lonergan and Descartes that the human being is essentially a knower, just what this means for each proves to be radically different. For Descartes, to be a knower is to purge oneself of all the influences of custom and tradition, to doubt everything that can be doubted, to spin out a web of knowledge from the single indubitable fact of one’s own existence as res cogitans. The Cartesian view has no place for belief, but only for what is demonstratively certain based on a series of logically necessitated relations beginning from the certainty of the Cogito. The Lonerganian view, in contrast, also sees the human being as essentially a knower, but conceives knowing as a part of the broader drama of human historicity. For Lonergan, even to ask a question, to seek understanding, is already to operate within a context delineated by history and culture, by language and tradition. This is not to suggest that knowing never exceeds the culturally or historically relative—for Lonergan is quite distant from the view that there is no truth which is not relative to this or that culture or epoch—but only to indicate that the Cartesian notion of a knowing with no suppositions and no debts to tradition is not only practically defective (for all knowing is facilitated by historico-cultural contextualization) but theoretically

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113 Of course, this should be read as a characterization of the Cartesian project, and not necessarily of Descartes himself—the emphasis here is on methodological doubt.
untenable, as the very notion of *asking a question* presumes some context, some collection of knowns and unknowns. In other words, knowing cannot be conceived as an extended deduction from the one indubitable fact of one’s own existence as a knower; rather, knowing proceeds from a collection of knowns and unknowns and, by clarification and expansion, seeks to minimize the quantity of unknowns while maximizing the quantity of knowns—all the while understanding that for every new discovery, there will inevitably be a dozen new questions.
III

Heidegger’s Response

In the previous chapter, we laid out the backdrop for seeing Heidegger’s thought as a response to modern philosophy. I argued that there can be discerned in his work—and particularly in *Being and Time*, which is our focus—an attempt to found the problem of being on a different ground than that offered by the modern philosophic tradition. In particular, we focused on Heidegger’s rejection of the Cartesian premises that are the groundwork for the entire modern project: (1) that man is essentially a thinking being, *res cogitans*, (2) that there is a peculiar distinction between subject and object, between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, or Spirit and Nature, or what have you, (3) that knowing is the primary mode of access to being. While it is customary to see these characteristically modern premises as basically epistemological, it is worth reminding ourselves that, for Heidegger, these Cartesian positions imply an understanding or interpretation of being, and so are not simply epistemological in scope. At the same time, there is in the modern project something of a distillation of the longstanding philosophical tendency to conceive knowing and being along the same lines—and so it makes sense that while the modern project is for Heidegger not simply epistemological, it should have an epistemological bent to it.

With that backdrop in place, we are in a position to move into a more detailed exposition of Heidegger’s own thought on the matter. In what follows, we will explore some of the fundamental Heideggerian notions developed and put forth in *Being and Time* and a handful of other early texts, and offer an indication of how each of these notions
not only can be understood, but in fact is *best* understood, as a response to as well as a
rejection and replacement of the foundational modern premises.
§1 — Being-in-the-world and Care

A. Dasein

Up to now, we have been using the term “Dasein” without further ado; but in the interest of setting the stage for the following inquiry, it will perhaps be worthwhile to take a moment to clarify precisely what we take Heidegger to have in mind when he uses this term. Dasein, then, is that being for which its own being is a problem. Dasein is the entity whose mode of existence is to be a question to itself, and to have to decide what it will make of itself. Dasein is that being for which existence precedes essence, in the sense that its whatness is not set in stone, not simply given over to it by nature, but rather must be discovered (and formed) in the course of its existence. And, we should note, “existence” is the proper term here: for while non-Dasein entities can be called “extant,” they cannot be said to exist. Only Dasein ek-sists, that is to say, stands outside of itself (ecstasy), or more concretely, projects itself upon possibilities, and by this activity, becomes what it shall be.

The kind of being which Dasein has, then, cannot be reduced to the kind of being extant entities have. Extant entities may be ready-to-hand or handy, that is, occurring within some “equipmental totality” within which they have some place and function; or they may be present-at-hand, simply there, in the inventory of world-stuff. But Dasein is never ready-to- or present-at-hand: it is the for-the-sake-of-which toward which all practical activity is implicitly or explicitly directed; and presence-at-hand results from a particular modification of Dasein’s default way of engaging with entities within the world.
Dasein is never a mere tool to be used, nor a mere item among other items. Dasein ex-
sists, and Dasein’s *mode* of ek-sistence is Being-in-the-world.\textsuperscript{114} 

**B. Being-in-the-world**

The primary and most obvious point at which Heidegger turns away from the 
etepistemological focus of modern philosophy is in his conception of “the world.” 
Conveniently, this notion is also so central to Heidegger’s philosophy, that to understand 
the Heideggerian conception of “world,” and what distinguishes it from, say, the 
Cartesian conception, puts one in a position to understand much of the remainder of 
Heidegger’s critique of the modern project. As we discussed above, for Descartes and the 
inheritors of his methodology, the world is conceived as the totality of extant objects.\textsuperscript{115} 
What, one might ask, is the world? For the modern philosopher, the answer is simple: 
everything that is. Or, in a slight variation on this response, one might conceive the world 
as some kind of *container* in which every extant thing is held, for we speak of things as 
being “in the world” (for example, “he’s the best pitcher in the world”). Nonetheless, even 
at a commonsense level, it is fairly clear that the world-as-container is, basically, the same 
as the totality of things *in* that container: when I say, “he’s the best pitcher in the world,” I

\textsuperscript{114} Heidegger will occasionally write out Dasein as “Da-sein”, putting emphasis on the human person as the 
“there” or “here” where being as such is made present, or the locus of the manifestation of being. See, for 
instance, the notes to the fifth edition of “What is Metaphysics?”: Martin Heidegger, “What is 
University Press, 1998), 88-9n.

simply mean that, out of all the entities comprising the totality of entities, this particular one is the best pitcher.\textsuperscript{116}

The notion of world as totality of objects, while apparently commonsensical, has carried a great deal of weight in traditional philosophy. Heidegger writes, “A glance at previous ontology shows that if one fails to see Being-in-the-world as a state of Dasein, the phenomenon of worldhood likewise gets passed over. One tries instead to Interpret the world in terms of the Being of those entities which are present-at-hand within-the-world but which are by no means proximally discovered—namely, in terms of Nature.”\textsuperscript{117} In other words, traditional ontology has made the mistake of trying to understand the world on the model of entities within the world, even while those entities themselves are not understood in their ontological roots; this gives rise to a Thing-ontology, which treats the categories that apply to substances as categories of being as such, without advancing to the realization that substantiality is a particular mode of being, one which takes presence-at-hand (which itself is connected with intellectual observation) as the definitive sort of being. So one either, with Kant, maintains that the world, precisely because it is not a thing within the world, exceeds the possibility of being understood with rational categories; or, one conceives the world as susceptible to the sort of understanding with

\textsuperscript{116} One might argue, convincingly, that this notion of “world” has its philosophical roots, or at least has something striking in common with, the characteristically pre-modern philosophical notion of being as an empty orientation toward everything, and everything about everything. Indeed, one finds some variation on this theme in Lonergan. And yet the Aristotelian and Thomistic interpretations—and Lonergan following them—understand this orientation as grounded in the isomorphism of intelligence and the intelligible (that is, all of being); and so being is not some indifferent “out there” collection of all that is, but rather the objective correlate of the dynamic orientation of the human mind toward everything that is.

\textsuperscript{117} Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 65.
which one understands things within the world, and thereby implicitly turns the world into a thing alongside other things.

In any case, the significant thing for Heidegger is that, in understanding the world on the model of entities within the world, one misses the distinctive philosophical character and import of the world itself. So, beyond the commonsense understanding, occasionally adopted by philosophers, of the world as the totality of objects, there is the somewhat more philosophical, but still inadequate, formulation, which conceives the world-qua-totality in terms of the “Being of those entities” within the world. For instance, Heidegger goes on to say that “‘world’ can become a term for any realm which encompasses a multiplicity of entities: for instance, when one talks of the ‘world’ of a mathematician, ‘world’ signifies the realm of possible objects of mathematics.”118 In this case, the character of the world is defined in terms of the sorts of entities which are a part of that world, instead of being simply an indifferent shorthand for all the things. The first of these definitions—the world as the totality of entities—is ontic: it doesn’t investigate “world” in regards to to its being; the second definition is ontological insofar as it seeks to understand the world as such. Nonetheless, the world it tries to understand is the world as conceived in the first definition; and so, for instance, to understand “the world of mathematics” is to understand the totality of mathematical entities in their mathematicality. It remains, thus, a Thing-ontology, crippled by the inadequacy of its original approach to the subject.

118 Ibid., 64-5.
What alternative conception of world, then, would be preferable? Let us recall Heidegger’s objection to Descartes’ conception of a worldless subject. In the Cartesian conception, the subject is set over against the world, and is conceived as essentially distinct from it: the subject is *res cogitans*, and the world is *res extensa*. The subject’s corporeal component is taken to be fundamentally distinct from the essence of the subject—the thinking self—and is, for all intents and purposes, just one thing among the many things that make up the extended world. World and subject, wholly distinct, must both be understood on their own terms. But this conception, argues Heidegger, misses what is really distinctive about the human ‘subject,’ about Dasein, that being which can be said to *be there* in a radically distinct (and, in fact, originary) way. For Heidegger, the subject *essentially* has a world, and this is no mere aggregate or totality of extant things:

The world in the sense in which Heidegger understands it is not the final resultant of an accumulation of entities that simply exist side by side with all their differences in an unproblematic way. Such a conception implies that the world is still being viewed from outside as by a *cosmotheoros*, and it misses what distinctively characterizes the world as that which we are *in*. “We” here refers to entities having the character of subjects; and it is the way of being *in* the world of such entities that is at issue. The central claim underlying Heidegger’s whole treatment of this matter is that to characterize the way we are in the world is also to characterize the way the world is for us; indeed, this is what distinguishes his concept of the world from that of an aggregate of entities.119

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119 Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind*, 32. I take issue, in a minor way, with Olafson’s casual use of the phrase “entities having the character of subjects,” given its radical departure from Heidegger’s own terminology and its seeming conflation of Heidegger’s meaning with a more Cartesian approach. Now, Olafson, at this stage in his argument, is simply setting up the problematic to be explored, and so it is natural that he should want to couch Heideggerian concepts in more familiar terms. Nonetheless, this formulation is dangerous, in that, in Heidegger’s model, Daseins do not simply have “the character of subjects;” rather, Dasein ek-sists, whereas other entities are merely extant. In other words, Dasein’s distinctiveness goes far beyond its mere being-a-subject, for Dasein’s mode of being is radically distinct from the mode of being of extant things. This is a point that Olafson makes in great detail later on, but which is glossed over here.
Rather, Dasein has its world “as that wherein a factual Dasein as such can be said to ‘live’”. ¹²⁰

Where in the Cartesian tradition we have the dichotomy of the worldless subject and the extended world—the subjective and the objective sphere—in Heidegger’s thought, we have a concept of world which transcends the distinction between the subjective and objective, and which cannot even be faithfully rendered in those terms. While it is true that every Dasein has its world, in the sense indicated above, and in the further sense that there is no Dasein without a world, nonetheless, the world cannot and must not be understood as a subjective construct or mental projection. “World” is not some notion or interpretation imposed upon extant things after the fact, nor even some basic concept whereby Dasein cannot help but interpret the world—for Dasein’s Being-in-the-world is prior to all concepts. Dasein, before it can discover anything like a totality of extant entities, is always already in a world.

But what kind of relationship obtains between Dasein and its world, such that Dasein can said to be in the world in this primordial, originary way? We can rule out, from the outset, anything like spatial adjacency, for we have already established that Dasein is not the kind of entity which is merely alongside other entities; more specifically, the notion that the way in which Dasein is in the world resembles the way that, say, furniture is in a room, falls back into the trap of conceiving the world as the aggregate of extant entities—but that is precisely the notion of world which Heidegger is seeking to upend and replace. Indeed, for Heidegger, spatiality—the very possibility of extant

¹²⁰ Heidegger, Being and Time, 65.
entities being alongside one another—is derivative of the primary in-ness which characterizes Dasein’s mode of being. Before Dasein finds itself in space, each and every Dasein has its place.

The contrast is worth spelling out. The notion of spatiality implies a multiplicity of location-points indifferent to any assignment of meaning or significance, like the coordinates on a Cartesian plane. Place, on the other hand, suggests a sense of belonging, a kind of co-ordination having less to do with a precise measurability and much more to do with a sense of where things stand in accordance with some framework of meaning that guides our pre-reflective living. Heidegger’s account of the ready-to-hand, of tools and equipment, serves to illustrate the distinction. Dasein’s basic way of being is, to anticipate, a concernful involvement with things in the world. More specifically, before Dasein ever arrives at the notion of a present-at-hand being, an entity considered as merely there, merely extant, Dasein lives in a world of meaning-imbued, useful things: whether nature or artifact, the human being first encounters things in the mode of usability.121 There is no “mere object;” even something unrecognized, something wholly unfamiliar, always already appears within a matrix of meaning.122 Just as the hammer is for driving nails and the nails are for holding something fast, so the “wood is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock; the river is water-power, the wind is wind ‘in the sails.’”123

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121 Ibid., 69-70.

122 See, for instance, Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1993), 45. Kisiel traces the development of Heidegger’s notion of environment, with a special eye, here, to the subsumption of all givens under the aegis of being-useful for some purpose outlined by the matrix of meaning (or, the environment) within which one finds oneself.

123 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 70.
What is perhaps most conspicuous about each of these items is that none of them can exist in isolation from the rest. A hammer, for instance, is essentially coordinated with other useful things: boards which will be nailed together, nails to form a shelf, which in turn will hold the books, which in turn will be used to learn to cook, and so forth. As Heidegger says, there is no such thing as “an equipment.” For, to “the Being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is. Equipment is essentially ‘something in order to…’ A totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the ‘in-order-to’, such as serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability.” These items of equipment are coordinated—not spatially, as on a coordinate plain—but by a system of significance and meaning: each equipmental item is for something. Or, as Olafson puts it, paraphrasing Heidegger, “it is not things but references (Verweisungen) [to use and meaning] that have the primary function within the structure of the world.” As such, each piece of equipment has its place: the hammer’s place might be in the toolbox, or in one’s belt, or in one’s hand, depending on what is demanded of it at this given moment.

The way in which place belongs essentially to the items of equipment within this “equipmental totality” is illustrated in Heidegger’s account of the way in which items of equipment can become conspicuous as equipment—for, clearly enough, when one is engaged in using a hammer or nails, one is not engaged in an explicit thinking of the equipmental status of these items. Their being is in their being-used. The understanding one has of them is not in the theoretical mode, but in the practical mode: one knows what

124 Ibid., 68.
125 Olafson, Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind, 41.
a hammer is, in this primary sense, by knowing the how-to of a hammer—how to hold it, how to swing it, what it is used for. But there can be disruptions to this immediacy. Heidegger gives us three instances. First, the tool may break: the head can fly off of the hammer, and the one using it is left with a useless stick in his hand. In this case, the tool becomes conspicuous. In its brokenness, it stands out as just what it is: because it is suddenly useless, its nature as a useful something is made apparent. “We discover its unusability,” Heidegger writes, “not by looking at it and establishing its properties, but rather by the circumspection of the dealings in which we use it. When its unusability is thus discovered, equipment becomes conspicuous. This conspicuousness presents the ready-to-hand equipment as in a certain un-readiness-to-hand.” The discovery of its uselessness happens through its ordinarily standing in a meaning-giving context—and not by any examination of its “properties.” Second, there is obstinacy, something obstructing the course of the work, an obstacle within the equipmental totality; we may think here of some extraneous concern intruding upon the performance of the task at hand, and allowing the tool to stand forth—suddenly strange and conspicuously un-involved—in its tool-like character.

Finally, and most significantly for our purposes, there is the obtrusiveness of the missing tool: one is building the shelf, but suddenly one cannot find the hammer. The absence of the item of equipment actually obtrudes upon one’s absorption in and concern for the work at hand. The item, in some fundamental sense, is out of place. The tool, here, should not be conceived as having some precise location in world-space from

126 Ibid., 43-5.
127 Heidegger, Being and Time, 73.
which it is, suddenly, absent; rather, the place of the tool is dictated by its significance in
the meaning-structure of the work itself. The tool is not missing because it fails to occupy
the proper space; it is missing because it is, suddenly, not ready-to-hand. It is this sense of
place, rather than an abstract and measurable spatiality, whereby Dasein orients itself
within the world.

This sense of place also allows us to understand the way in which Dasein can be
said to be in the world: these equipmental items can have a place precisely because it
belongs essentially to Dasein to always, already be involved in projects. But all these
projects are for the sake of Dasein. Just as each item of equipment is co-ordinated,
meaningfully, with other items of equipment, so the entire equipmental totality, including
the work, is directed toward some human need or desire. In other words, every project,
and therefore the totality of equipment whereby that project is realized, is for the sake of
some Dasein. To put the matter in yet other terms, in working out through its projects
the question of what it means to be, each Dasein is involved in a matrix of meaning
wherein the useful tools, the ready-to-hand items of these projects, are assigned their
proper places—again, not coordinates in an indifferent world-space, but places
understood in terms of references to meaning and significance.

128 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 111, 145 191-4. See especially 145: “[S]ignificance, as worldhood, is tied up
with the existential ‘for-the-sake-of-which’.” Now, for Heidegger, the “whom” of this for-the-sake-of-which
is, “proximally and for the most part,” inauthentic, fallen Dasein—the they-self: “The authentic ‘for-the-
sake-of-which’ has not been taken hold of; the projection of one’s own potentiality-for-Being has been
abandoned to the disposal of the ‘they’” (193). Nonetheless, every project has its orientation toward some
Dasein, whether in the mode of authenticity or inauthenticity. But here we are verging on a discussion of
care and concern, which we must defer until later.

129 Kisiel traces the genesis and development of Heidegger’s idea of a “preobjective, pretheoretical world as
the meaningful context for things” in great detail; see Theodore Kisiel, *Genesis*, 33-5.
And it should be noted that these categories do not only apply to “tools” in the narrow sense; rather, everything that enters Dasein’s world is regarded proximally and most readily in its tool-like character, its readiness-to-hand. If I should walk into a supermarket, it is quite unlikely that I will have an encounter with being as such and in its strangeness; much more likely, I will encounter a series of useful items, even though none of them is properly a tool: chicken fillets, a bag of rice, a potato, or what have you. Or if I am driving, things like street signs and traffic indicators are given to me primarily in the mode of their readiness-to-hand; but if they should be broken, or missing, or uninformative, then perhaps suddenly the strangeness of their being there will stand out for me, and they will obtrude upon me as objects with colors and shapes out there in the world. However, the world in its immediacy, for Dasein, is a world of useful things and meaningful points of reference.

Finally, for Heidegger, even relations to other persons are given, in some way, through the ready-to-hand. This might strike us as counterintuitive—certainly the factory-worker is aware of and among his fellows before he is aware of or among his tools. Or is this so certain? For it is the work that brings the workers together in the first place. More to the point, in essential relation to the work, writes Heidegger, “those Others for whom the ‘work’ [“Werk”] is destined are encountered too.” The thing built suggests a for-whom; and, writes Heidegger, when “we walk along the edge of a field … the field shows itself as belonging to such and such a person … [T]he book we have used was bought at So-and-so’s shop and given by such-and-such a person.”130 In the very use of

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130 Heidegger, Being and Time, 117-8.
the useful object, the ready-to-hand, there is included the trajectory of the for-whom, but also of the from-whom, the with-the-help-of-whom, or what have you; with every ready-to-hand thing, others are essentially brought along. Dasein finds itself in a world not only of pre-interpreted significances, of things with assigned meanings and uses, but also of other people, occupying their characteristic places, performing their characteristic activities, given by and giving forth one’s world just as essentially as equipmental things. But insofar as Dasein is given over to itself by its world, it is given over to itself through and by the others amidst whom it proximally finds itself; “proximally and for the most part” Dasein is not its own self, but the self given to it by its world, and especially by these others—the “they”. Dasein’s self, that is, is not primarily one of its own choosing or making, but the one essentially foisted upon it by those among whom it finds itself: Dasein’s self is, first of all, the self given by the “they,” or the “They-self.”

In any event, what becomes clear from the foregoing is that there is an essential correlation between Dasein and world, such that neither can be properly understood apart from the other: the notion of world is implied in the notion of Dasein, just as the notion of Dasein is understood—at least in an inchoate fashion—whenever we have any understanding of the world. Dasein is that to which a world, a referential totality of concernful involvements, essentially belongs, just as the world is that within which Dasein essentially, irreducibly, finds itself. And, perhaps more critically still, this is not the world of abstract, theoretical examination and reflection; rather, this is the world of immediate, lived involvement. Unlike the Cartesian “world,” which is an intellectual construct—the totality of entities—“world” in the Heideggerian sense is pre-theoretical, pre-intellectual.
Individual Daseins are involved concernfully with significant items, events, undertakings, long before any theoretical formulation may arise. There is a lived “understanding,” in the sense of knowing how to do things, of undertaking meaningful projects, long before there is theoretical understanding, intellectual knowing.\footnote{Thomas Sheehan, “Facticity and Ereignis,” Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays, ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 46-7: “We human beings are hermeneutical by nature: we cannot exist without understanding the meaning of … (If we can encounter something, we can make sense of it. If we cannot make sense of something, we cannot encounter it.)” More will be said on this later.}

In other words, Dasein is in the world before he or she cognizes the world, or grasps it in anything resembling a theoretical mode.\footnote{This fact will be of great significance when it comes time to turn to a treatment of Lonergan’s patterns of experience. For while Lonergan is certainly much more an “intellectualist” than is Heidegger, nonetheless, they both agree that the human person finds himself in a world of pre-theoretical involvements before any intellectual theorizing may arise, and, further, that this pre-theoretical way of being is essential, and not incidental, to human nature, conceived broadly.} Heidegger will sometimes, especially in his later works, characterize this as a “dwelling,” which roughly lines up with our discussion of place as opposed to space, above. In contradistinction to Descartes, for whom the human being is most properly conceived as a purely intellectual substance, wholly separable—in thought if not in fact—from the world of extant objects, for Heidegger, neither world nor Dasein can be conceived in its truth when thought in isolation from the other. World is precisely the matrix of meaningful involvements within which the individual Dasein finds him or herself; Dasein is precisely the being who exists within a matrix of meaningful involvements and who is forced to settle for him or herself the question of what it means to be. Not only is Dasein, the human subject in Descartes’ terms, not first of all an intellectual entity—for Dasein is involved with the world before he knows it theoretically—but also it is untrue to conceptually isolate the essence of
Dasein from the essence of the world, as though one could properly and truly conceive one without having already included some understanding of the other in that conception.

**C. Care**

By speaking of Dasein’s mode of Being-in-the-world as a pre-theoretical involvement within a matrix of meaningful points of reference (being alongside the ready-to-hand, Being-with Others),\(^{133}\) we have already gone some way toward indicating Dasein’s own *mode* of Being, what Heidegger will call “Care”. For, not only does Dasein always already find itself within a world of concernful involvements; more to the point, Dasein is always, already absorbed in that world in a certain way. Dasein, “proximally and for the most part,” is not itself; or, more precisely, Dasein does not exist in the mode of authenticity, of *Eigenlichkeit*, the state of being one’s own self.\(^{134}\) Heidegger, famously, speaks of the *Angst*, the anxiety, which arises from one’s confrontation with one’s own Being-in-the-world, and especially with the inauthentic and “fallen” mode of this Being-in-the-world: anxiety, Heidegger says, results from Dasein’s being “face to face with its *Being-free-for* (propensio in . . .) the authenticity of its Being.”\(^{135}\) Rather than face down this unactualized potentiality—that is, rather than coming to terms with his radical freedom\(^{136}\) and endeavoring to address his inauthenticity—Dasein has the tendency to become absorbed in the world, to let the “They-self” set the horizon of his possibilities.

\(^{133}\) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 181.

\(^{134}\) Ibid., 186.

\(^{135}\) Ibid., 188.

and projects. Moreover, it is the knowledge of one’s own death, or more properly the encountering of one’s death within one’s own life that opens up the possibility of the radical freedom; but for the most part we retreat from the certainty of our own deaths. Dasein, that is, flees from this Angst-ridden confrontation with its own freedom and likewise its own death, and it does so by becoming “lost in the ‘they,’ [where one] can dwell in tranquilized familiarity.”

Anxiety, then, is Dasein’s confrontation with its own possibility, its own potentiality, to exist in the mode of Eigenlichkeit; it is Dasein’s confrontation with its possibility to be its own self, and not the self handed over to it by the anonymous forces of culture, society, and history which Heidegger labels das Man, typically rendered “the ‘they.’” But anxiety, for Heidegger, is significant for yet another reason: namely, in anxiety, Dasein is brought before itself as a whole. In other words, by means of an analysis of Dasein’s existential anxiety, especially in regard to death, it is possible to get a grasp of Dasein in a more complete way than any of Heidegger’s preceding analyses has allowed for. For, in anxiety, Dasein attains a certain distance from itself; it looks upon itself, its own projects

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137 Heidegger, Being and Time, 189, 268. We will discuss das Man, “the they,” in greater detail below, as well as the Eigenlichkeit in the face of which Dasein has this anxiety.

138 Heidegger, Being and Time, 191-2. It is worth noting that, for Heidegger, authenticity is a modification of, not a thoroughgoing dispensing with, inauthenticity. No Dasein can escape its thrownness, its finding itself in a world not of its own making, with a language it did not devise, and concepts it did not choose, and so forth. One can, however, take up this thrownness either authentically or inauthentically, either as one’s own self, or as the self given to one by das Man.

139 Das Man, “the one,” in the sense suggested in “this is simply how one behaves,” or “this is how one dresses,” similar in connotation to the more common English phrase, “they say,” as in, “they say smoking causes cancer” or “they say the prisoner escaped.”

140 See Heidegger, Being and Time, 237-46. Each of these analyses—not all of which we have delved into here, in keeping with our own overriding concerns and questions—is undertaken, as Heidegger insists, with a view to the whole; nonetheless, each has focused on some aspect of Dasein’s mode of being in relation to the whole. Heidegger’s analysis of care purports to present Dasein as a totality, to offer a holistic view of all the heretofore elucidated parts.
and undertakings, its own life as bounded by pre-natal and post-death non-being; and in so looking, it is able to have some grasp of itself as a whole. While Dasein, in its typical fallen mode, is absorbed in the world, is lost, in a certain sense, among the things with which it is concerned, in anxiety this absorption and lostness is suspended or disrupted. One becomes indifferent to one’s projects, or, in a perhaps more Camusian twist, they come to strike one as absurd. In any event, one is in some sense removed from one’s typical self, and given something like an outsider’s view of one’s own life and projects, one’s own way of being.

Dasein is able to so stand outside of itself, because Dasein “is an entity for which, in its being, that Being is an issue.” In other words, Dasein, in its acting, must make something of itself; its every undertaking is contextualized by some fore-understanding (not yet theoretized or even thematized) of a possibility which the Dasein seeks to make actual in and through its own be-ing (with the fully active sense of the word intended here). “Understanding” here refers to a “self-projective Being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-Being,” and this potentiality is “that for the sake of which any Dasein is as it is.” In other words, in its undertakings or projects, Dasein projects itself (with the futural sense of “pro-” intended here) upon its own possibilities for being; and it is for the sake of this future and hence as-yet-unactualized being (we might say, “state of the future

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141 See, for instance, “What is Metaphysics?”

142 Again, this is facilitated in particular by the encounter with the certainty of one’s own death: death individuates radically, compels ownership of one’s own life. The encounter with one’s own death also tends to let everyday concerns and involvements fall aside, such that the more essential question—one’s authentic self—rises more forcefully to the fore.

143 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 191-2. See, also, p. 70 above.

that Dasein is as it is in the present. Ordinarily, this is done unreflectively, and one is unthinkingly absorbed in one’s concernful involvements; anxiety disrupts this absorption and distances Dasein from these involvements, allowing the entire structure of involvement to stand out in its distinctive character. But directedness toward a future state of being remains the very essence of Dasein’s way of being.

This directedness toward some future state of Dasein’s own self is encapsulated in the single term “care,” though it is, of course, spelled out in the various elements of Dasein’s existentiality already explored above—and others still to be explored. Care, then, is not one attitude among many, a mode of comportment to the world which Dasein may or may not adopt at any given moment. Rather, care is Dasein’s essential attitude toward the world; to be Dasein is to be characterized by care. In every action, and indeed in every utterance, the care-structure is revealed: and while, proximally and for the most part, care has “fallen” into absorption into the world of concernful involvement, care also brings Dasein face-to-face with its potentiality-to-be-its-Self authentically. This will be explored in greater depth below, but for our purposes, it is worth noting, here, the contrast between Heidegger’s essentially futural way of thinking, and the privileging of presence implicit in the Cartesian and post-Cartesian approach to philosophy. For Descartes and those operating within the trajectory of thought that he established, the human subject is

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146 Though, of course, for Heidegger, this privileging can be traced all the way back to Plato, for whom the forms are something like the eternally present, nonetheless, the emphasis on presence is brought to a head in modern philosophy, with the reduction of reality to a non-historical subject-thing on the one hand and an extended, and hence temporal, object-thing on the other: truth, being in the mind of the subject, is taken to be non-temporal, while the world of temporal flux is subject to understanding only insofar as some essential and non-temporal truth can be discerned in it. This is a distinction which, in his own way, Lonergan will maintain—but more on that later.
a thinking substance; as a non-extended entity, it is not subject in any meaningful sense to temporality, let alone historicity. While the “empirical self,” the self that one perceives to be affixed or attached to one’s transcendental self, is certainly subject to temporality—in the same way, it must be noted, that any other corporeal entity is—nonetheless, the essential self, namely the non-corporeal, non-personal, and hence non-temporal self, stands outside of time. For that self, what is the “now,” the present moment. As an intellectual being, what truly counts as “present” is not so much the ebb and flow of sensory impressions—though there is the eternal now even in this ebb and flow—but the essentially non-temporal achievements of the intellect: mathematics, geometry, those sciences which grasp necessary and universal connections in principle indifferent to the particularities of time and space.

Heidegger, in a move not unlike Einstein’s shattering and re-forming of science’s self-conception, dispenses with this notion of a non-corporeal and hence non-historical subject in so thoroughgoing a way that it is quite easy to overlook the extent to which his work does indeed constitute a response to the problematic set by modern Cartesian and post-Cartesian philosophy. First, for Heidegger, Dasein, unlike the Cartesian subject, is very certainly not chiefly intellectual, but rather actively involved in practical concerns; these concerns do have something of “understanding” about them, but by understanding Heidegger does not mean anything like an intellectual conception, but rather a sort of pre-theoretical sense of what to do and how to do it. In other words, one is already

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147 And see, in this connection, div. 2, ch. 6, note iv, where Heidegger contrasts his own discussion of time and temporality with that undertaken in Einsteinian relativity physics—a field, incidentally, critically important in Lonergan’s development of certain key notions in Insight.

148 We will discuss this in greater detail in what follows.
involved in certain projects before anything like a theoretical attitude can develop—and in fact, the development of a specifically theoretical attitude, say in the case of a scientist, can carry on for a long time quite unaccompanied by any more originary reflection on why the election of a scientific, theoretical attitude is worthwhile as an undertaking or project.

Furthermore, this means that the conception of the human subject as non-temporal in its essence cannot but be abandoned. It is in no way accidental to Dasein’s nature or essence that it finds itself involved in projects and undertakings; and indeed, the theoretical attitude—which so often, as in Descartes’ case, takes itself to be what is essentially human—is but a particular project and undertaking, a particular mode of comportment toward the world. But if projects, and hence projection, are essential to Dasein, that means that Dasein, far from being a-temporal, is in fact historical at the very core of its being, or, as Heidegger puts it, “temporality [is] the meaning of the Being of Dasein’s totality.”

For to engage in a project is to act out of the past, in the present, for the sake of some future. Rather than being essentially present-oriented, as the Cartesian view implies, human subjectivity, or, more properly, existentiality, embraces past, present, and future, and holds them all in a single, encompassing view.

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149 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 373. See also Kisiel, *Genesis*, 65: “What happens when the situation-character of experience is dampened or extinguished? Experience loses its contained unity, things fall apart, stripped of their former meaningful relations to one another, and stand in isolation as ‘bare’ things. The self is torn out of its absorption in its situation, its vital ties suppressed; it is ‘dehistoricized.’”

150 One might object that the *eternal* achievements of pure mathematics or (to a lesser extent) logic indicate that the human being is in some sense trans-temporal; however, I maintain that this would be not so much an objection as a confirmation of the point being made. Only if the human being can hold past, present, and future in a single view, is it possible to extract from the maze of fleeting moments a recurrent and reliable pattern governing the relations of numerical entities. But, in any event, the objects of mathematics and logic are in some sense their own “world,” and that world is an achievement of the human intellect in its historical engagement with questioning.
distinctively Heideggerian terms, we might say that Dasein is in the mode of thrownness, namely, being given over to a world and a self that it did not choose or make; this thrownness makes up Dasein’s first and ultimate horizon, the ultimate from-which (past) and into-which (future) it acts.\textsuperscript{151} Dasein’s present takes the form of an authentic or inauthentic taking up of this thrownness, a resolute pro-jection upon the future possibilities given by one’s world, or a falling into the anonymous leveling-down of the “they.”

Care, as Dasein’s fundamental mode of being, reveals Dasein’s essential temporality: concernful involvement is born out of the givenness of one’s past, one’s immediate involvements, which inform present action, undertaken for the sake of some project to be realized in a future that has been resolved upon. This observation brings us back around to Heidegger’s distinction, mentioned above, between existence—the way in which Dasein is—and extantness (\textit{Vorhandenheit}). Any \textit{thing}, any entity, is extant; it is, as opposed to not being. But only Dasein can be said to ek-sist, that is, to stand out of and beyond itself in its futural orientation toward and pro-jection upon not yet actual possibilities as bequeathed to it by its history. Thus, Dasein’s \textit{kind} of be-ing, its way of having being, is to ek-sist, that is, to live out the question of what it means for it to be by a futural orientation toward some meaning-imparting horizon which orders the directional intending of one’s lived involvements.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{151} Authenticity, being one’s own self, does not deprive Dasein of its particular world, its particular horizon; on the contrary, authentic “Being-one’s-Self” takes the definite form of an existentiell modification of the ‘they,’ and Dasein’s they-self has always “already abandoned itself to definite possibilities.” See Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 267, 270.

\textsuperscript{152} Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 276: “Dasein has been thrown into existence. It exists as an entity which has to be as it is and as it can be.”
Now, one might object that, certainly, Heidegger is not the first philosopher to take time seriously, for from the very beginning of the Western tradition, philosophy has been concerned with time—from the pre-Socratics, who first identified the problem of change; through Aristotle, who grounds some of the central claims of his *Metaphysics* on the logical necessity of time’s having neither beginning nor end; to Augustine, whose meditations on time in the *Confessions* were influential to Heidegger himself; through Kant, for whom time schematizes the categories of the understanding; to Husserl, who explores the present in terms of retension and protension, the subject’s having in this moment both past and future along with the present.\(^{153}\) Both the objective (or worldly) and the subjective (or inner) senses of time would seem to have been worked out with great care by thinkers working long before Heidegger; on what basis, then, can the claim be made not only that Heidegger’s approach to time is a response to and rejection of the time-notions put forth by modern philosophy, but also that it is a unique turn in the history of philosophy?

For most of the history of Western philosophy, time is incidental: it may be the medium of accidental change, but essences remain what they are and are, of themselves, atemporal. Leaving aside Augustine, for whom time has a certain theological significance that doesn’t bear directly on our question here, we can say that, with Descartes, a shift in thinking about time begins to occur, for the “world” of extended objects is wholly characterized by change, and hence by time. With the rise of post-Cartesian empiricism, there comes the notion that time is comprised of a series a discrete atomistic moments. In

Kant’s thinking, it is necessary for consciousness to be able to construct a unitary experience out of these distinct moments, and so in the *Critique* Kant makes the case that in the synthesis of the imagination, prior moments are brought to bear upon subsequent moments for the sake of making a coherent and hence intelligible sequence of temporal events. Nonetheless, the transcendental subject, as in Descartes’ thought, remains extra-temporal, for it is the non-extended locus of the manifestation and subsequent arrangement of the sensory impressions; and even the empirical subject can only be grasped as the correlate of the unity of the external object. And with Husserl, the unity of subjective time-consciousness is taken as the ground of the unity of the perceived object.

And yet, with each of these thinkers, the emphasis remains on time as it relates to *knowing*, that is, time considered as part of the intellectual process. Surely, both Kant and Husserl take their academic explanations to apply to the concrete experience of everyday men and women; nonetheless, the question in both cases revolves around how *knowing* happens, and stops to address commonsense involvements with the world in only a secondary way. Indeed, for Husserl, it is necessary to step out of the *Lebenswelt* in order to take up a properly phenomenological attitude. Most importantly, for both Kant and Husserl, as for Descartes before them, there remains a really foundational emphasis on the transcendental subject, however this subject may be characterized. And while it might seem that Heidegger, in his discussion of the existential structures of Dasein, maintains

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155 Ibid., 185.
something of the transcendental subject’s aloofness, nonetheless there is a key distinction: for Heidegger, factual Dasein is constituted by its historicity. Dasein is not merely temporal in its very nature, but is given over to itself in the mode of belonging to a history and a world of meaning-significations that it did not make and which it must take up—and this is “care”—in its own living out the question of what it means to be.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Heidegger, Being and Time, 267.
§2 — Historicity and Facticity

A central feature of modern philosophy is, as we have seen, its attention to the abstract and impersonal I. From this Ego Descartes began his philosophical project; in this Ego, Kant grounded the unity of experience; and it is this Ego which Husserl, in a significant but ultimately inadequately revolutionary move, understands to be intentional in its very nature. Heidegger, we have argued, is engaged not only in a rejection of that modern heritage, but also in a radical re-grounding of philosophy: in rejecting the notion of the impersonal I, in rejecting the notion that the human being is fundamentally an intellectual subject—whether one aware only of its representations or one intentionally directed toward the real—in this Destruktion, Heidegger is in fact involved in a constructive project. For if the human being is not what Descartes and his successors have taken it to be, then neither can human knowing, with which they so concerned themselves, be what they took it to be; and for Heidegger, more fundamentally still, this indicates that being cannot be what they took it to be. In rejecting the fundamental tenets of modern philosophy, Heidegger sets for himself the task of re-founding the human being’s mode of access to being and the kind of ontology this issues in.

The first step in our exploration of Heidegger’s response to the modern philosophical tradition was to discuss Dasein’s mode of being as Being-in-the-world and care: Dasein finds him or herself concernfully involved within a referential totality of significant objects. Proximally and for the most part Dasein loses him or herself within this world and falls captive to the average, levelling-down interpretations of the

157 Of course, the section of Being and Time which was supposed to have dealt explicitly with the Destruktion of the history of ontology never came to be; nonetheless, Heidegger is engaged in subtler forms of that project throughout the work. See especially Div. I, §§18B, 21, Div. 2, §§77, 82.
anonymous “They.” Also possible, however, is authentic existence, which is a taking up of one’s thrownness, one’s having found oneself in a world which one neither made nor chose, and acting from out of that situation in a projection upon possibilities which one resolutely resolves upon. The ultimate horizon, however, is always set by one’s facticity: Heidegger does not “trace matters back to a transcendental ego à la Husserl, but rather always and only to the sense-making structure of concrete human existence as ineluctably engaged with meaning (In-der-Welt-sein).” We are thrown into meaning—a meaning we did not choose, but which frames those choices which may be meaningful for us.

Already, then, the significance of human historicity is brought to the fore—historicity on both the large and the small scale. There is, on the largest relevant scale, world history: the events that occurred in the gradual movement from the past into the present. On a somewhat smaller scale there is communal history, what we might for the sake of convenience label “culture.” The various cultural histories, in their many intersections, are the threads which the world history weaves into an overarching

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158 This is, naturally, a heavily condensed portrait of Heidegger’s thought on authenticity, which occupies the entire second division of Being and Time; for a fuller discussion of Dasein’s authenticity, especially in relation to death, see my “Death and the Untimeliness of Philosophy: The Place of the Philosopher in Heidegger’s Being and Time,” Existentia 23, 3-4 (2013), 325-346.

159 Sheehan, “Facticity and Ereignis,” 45.

160 Ibid., 60. Sheehan’s essay, while right on many counts, does not pay adequate attention to the way in which one’s meaning-structure is always, already given to one, and—admittedly for good reason, given the thrust of his piece—focuses far more on the fact that human beings give meaning. A distinction is justified: meaning is given in thrownness, and the human individual lives in this meaning; but in taking up this thrownness and resolutely projecting upon future possibilities, the human being also gives meaning. See Heidegger, Being and Time, 270-1, where Heidegger makes much of Dasein’s being “abandoned to definite possibilities.”

161 Naturally, such history is not a mere collection of brute facts: the “meaning” of those facts is what is significant for our purposes, and meaning implies interpretation and received understanding.
narrative. Finally, there is personal history, or the way in which one understands oneself, and the way in which one is understood by others, in light of those things which have befallen one, or which one has chosen. Just as communal history is taken up in world history, so too can personal history be taken up in communal history—for what would historical narrative be without characters?

Heidegger’s concern with and treatment of history has at least two distinct facets. On the one hand, there is the sort of history we have been discussing with some detail here: human historicity, Dasein’s essential historicizing from out of a past into a future, Dasein’s thrown facticity, its finding itself in a certain world in a certain state, and having a certain weight of what has gone before upon it, in terms of the possibilities of its being (or, as Sheehan would put it, its “meaning-making”). On the other hand, there is the history of ontology, which Heidegger sets himself the task of de-structuring or deconstructing (a project, as noted above, not completed in *Being and Time*). This project, this *Destruktion*, is a tracing back to their pre-theoretical roots the traditional interpretations of being which have dominated Western philosophy since, at least, Plato. And yet, before we press on to an analysis of historicity insofar as it bears on our main thesis, it is worth noting that, for Heidegger, these two facets of history can be understood as intrinsically correlated. For the interpretations of being offered in the history of Western philosophy have grown out of the thrown facticity of the great philosophers: being is always, already

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162 It is, of course, critical to distinguish between history *qua* collection of concrete facts characterized by pastness and history *qua* the understanding of these facts in a narrative fashion; for our purposes, history will (unless otherwise noted) mean the latter. We will tend to refer to the concrete facts about the past in just those terms, or occasionally with the term “what went forward.”

163 See Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” 149, on the “rootlessness of Western thought.”
made manifest in certain definite ways, and in taking up and philosophizing about the
“meaning” of being, the philosophers have always been engaged in a response to meaning as disclosed in their very thrownness. It is for precisely this reason that Heidegger makes the apparently audacious, but in fact quite sensible, claim that the later thinkers can understand the earlier ones better than they understood themselves: for while the earlier are always already involved in a meaning which grips them and sets the horizon for even the most authentic of interpretations of being, the later can examine both the horizon and the explicit philosophizing with equal rigor.\textsuperscript{164} Heidegger takes his own project to be a step beyond these limitations precisely because his philosophy is a making-explicit of the fact that to be Dasein is to have been thrown into a pre-interpreted world of meaning and significance which one can appropriate, but not re-make—and is hence a radical re-grounding of philosophical inquiry.\textsuperscript{165}

\textit{A. Dasein as Historical}

Dasein can experience itself historically because it is historical in its very being; to be, for Dasein, is to ek-sist historically. ““Historicality,”” writes Heidegger, “stands for the state of Being that is constitutive for Dasein’s ‘historizing’ as such; only on the basis of such ‘historizing’ is anything like ‘world-history’ possible or can anything belong


\textsuperscript{165} Cf., Daniel A. Helminiak, \textit{Brain, Consciousness, and God: A Lonerganian Integration} (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015), 24, 28: Helminiak discusses Lonergan’s cognitional structure in terms of “meaning making.”
historically to world-history.” These lines, from the very beginning of *Being and Time*, are re-situated in light of the work’s final words:

Something like ‘Being’ has been disclosed in the understanding-of-Being which belongs to existent Dasein as a way in which it understands. Being has been disclosed in a preliminary way, though *non-conceptually* [my emphasis]; and this makes it possible for Dasein as existent Being-in-the-world to comport itself *towards entities*—towards those which it encounters within-the-world as well as towards itself as existent. *How is this disclosive understanding of Being at all possible for Dasein?* Can this question be answered by going back to the *primordial constitution-of-Being* of that Dasein by which Being is understood? The existential-ontological constitution of Dasein’s totality is grounded in temporality. Hence the ecstatical projection of Being must be made possible by some primordial way in which ecstatical temporality temporalizes. *How is this mode of the temporalizing of temporality to be Interpreted? Is there a way which leads from primordial time to the meaning of Being? Does time itself manifest itself as the horizon of Being?*

It is historicality which allows Dasein to exist as a whole, a totality; it is historicality which allows beings (or entities) to be encountered against the always, already disclosed backdrop of a pre-given “understanding-of-Being.”

But this is still vague; it will become clearer, however, if we call to mind Sheehan’s insistence, alluded to several times above, that *Sein* is best translated not, as seems most obvious, by the word “being,” which is its literal sense, but rather by “sense-making” or

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167 Ibid., 437. All emphases are Heidegger’s except where noted.
“meaning.” In light of this new way of thinking about Sein, certain features of the above passage are greatly clarified: entities may be encountered, for instance, precisely because Dasein has always a pre-conceptual sense of meaning, which situates entities and allows them to stand in sense-making (or meaningful) relationships with other things. (This should call to mind our earlier definition of “world” as a totality of meaningful points-of-reference, of tools having their proper place.) More importantly for our purposes is the new significance given to the final two questions quoted above: “Is there a way which leads from primordial time to the meaning of meaning? Does time itself manifest itself as the horizon of meaning?”

Dasein, as characterized by thrown facticity, is essentially historical, because history is the horizon of the pre-conceptual meaningfulness of the world, which allows for the encounter with entities, the interpretation of them, and the taking up of one’s thrown possibilities in meaningful, futurally-directed projects. There is a reciprocity, here: Dasein is historical in its very being, because it belongs essentially to Dasein to understand itself in terms of its past, but Dasein is able to understand itself in terms of its past because history is the horizon within which meaning is possible. Dasein’s characteristic activity is an interpretive acting into the future on the basis of an understanding of the past; but

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168 Sheehan, “Facticity and Ereignis,” 43, 50-2. While Sheehan couches this Heideggerian use of Sein in terms of the phenomenological turn and the obsolescence of traditional metaphysical questions in light of that advancement—such that one no longer asks about things but rather about meaning—the fact of the matter is that Heidegger’s identification of Sein with meaning or sense-making has deep roots in the Western tradition. Being and meaning are correlated terms; what is, is what can be understood; and the range of what can be understood is correlative with being. If something cannot be understood, cannot be brought into the interpretive framework of Dasein’s sense-making activities, then it is not, that is, does not have being. Heidegger’s breakthrough is not to take being and sense-making as co-implicative terms, but rather to grasp that understanding, in its correlation with being, is not merely intellectual understanding, but the full range of pre-theoretical understanding as well. This correlation between being and understanding will have significant implications in our later comparison of Heidegger and Lonergan.
Dasein can act into the future out of its past only because Dasein, as a meaning-making being, in its very essence is historical. If we return to the early pages of *Being and Time*, we find confirmation of this reading: “In its factical Being [read: sense-making], any Dasein is as it already was, and it is ‘what’ it already was. It is its past, whether explicitly or not.”\(^{169}\) Dasein’s *what-it-is*—and hence its meaning—can only be understood in view of its past: what it has been given over to, and what it has made of itself.\(^{170}\) Going on: “And this is so not only in that its past is, as it were, pushing itself along ‘behind’ it, and that Dasein possesses what is past as a property which is still present-at-hand and which sometimes has after-effects upon it: Dasein ‘is’ its past in the way of *its* own Being [read: meaning], which, to put it roughly, ‘historizes’ out of its future on each occasion.”\(^{171}\) So far from having its past as some indifferent attribute of itself, Dasein can be said to be its past, and this past in light of the futural orientation in which any particular Dasein is engaged: in acting into the future, Dasein *is* (that is, makes sense of) its past, just as this history sets the horizon for its future; and in acting out of its future, as a resolved-upon but not-yet-actual state of self for the sake of which one undertakes one’s projects.

Dasein’s very *ek-sistence* is historical; its mode of being is not incidentally, but essentially historical. In plainer terms: a human individual is not a static “thing,” and certainly not a mere “intellect.” Rather, it is a dynamic acting-forward, always becoming what it is by appropriating and taking up its past through its futural projection upon its

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\(^{169}\) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 20.

\(^{170}\) A comparison to Aristotle’s notion of habit might be fruitful, but falls outside of the present inquiry’s range of concern.

thrown, finite possibilities. But Dasein’s historicity is not merely personal, and does not belong to just *this one* Dasein. Rather, its “own past—and this always means the past of its ‘generation’—is not something which *follows along after* Dasein, but something which already goes ahead of it.”\(^{172}\) If it has been somewhat difficult to see how Dasein’s personal history “goes ahead of it,” it should be rather easier to see how the history of its generation goes before it: for, as we have emphasized again and again, human beings are not born into the midst of a collection of indifferent objects, of objective correlates of subjective experiences. Rather, human beings are thrown into a world, and this is a sphere of meaning. This referential totality of pre-interpreted significance is the first and final horizon of meaning-making, and so naturally one is not thrown, proximally and for the most part, into isolation—“an isolated-subject thing in the innocuous emptiness of a worldless occurring”\(^{173}\)—but rather finds oneself as part of a “generation,” given over to, but also taking up and appropriating, the pre-interpreted matrix of meaning given in language, custom, and so forth. This matrix of meaning is essentially given by the past, but is not something which follows after, as though the past were a ball and chain that Dasein and its generation cannot escape; this past is rather something which goes before, setting the framework and context within which each generation’s meaning-making can go on.\(^{174}\)

\(^{172}\) Ibid.

\(^{173}\) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 188.

\(^{174}\) This suggestion, of course, flies in the face of the basically libertarian, post-Enlightenment sensibilities that many of us more or less unthinkingly cling to regarding the nature of human freedom. I cannot take the time, here, to dispute that interpretation of human freedom as a being completely undetermined by any external or antecedent conditions; but, given our foregoing discussion of the way in which Daseins are, proximally and for the most part unthinkingly absorbed in the “they,” it should go without saying that Dasein is not properly characterized by absolute, libertarian freedom—at least not basically.
To say that Dasein’s past is always also the past of its generation is a specification of the broader claim that a pre-reflective framework of meaning is always already bequeathed by culture (which includes, but is not limited to, language), but it is a specification which emphasizes the historical aspect of this bequest. For the concrete situation into which Dasein its thrown—its particular facticity—is not the same from one generation to the next; each Dasein, or generation of Daseins, is thrown into a somewhat different world, and finds itself “abandoned” to quite different “definite possibilities.”

But it is perhaps worth taking a moment to emphasize the way in which the above can be applied to inauthentic, as well as authentic, Dasein. We have spoken much of resolutely taking up one’s thrown possibilities, of projecting upon future possibilities. But this is the language of authenticity, and it is not only authentic Dasein that is historically, though as one might expect, only authentic Dasein is authentically historical: Dasein, in its average everydayness, is historical as well. We have spoken, however briefly, of das Man, the “they,” the anonymous and indifferent voice of “what one does,” the faceless social force that dictates what things can and cannot be discussed, what things can and cannot be taken seriously, the hidden but omnipresent sense of what counts as real, always already a part of each and every factual Dasein, issuing in idle chatter, directionless curiosity, and pervasive ambiguity about what is really going forward. This “they” might, in less Heideggerian language, be called the voice of conventional wisdom, the sedimentary and sclerotic aggregation of custom, across history, into a pre-reflective interpretation of meaning, constitutive of the human being’s sense of what it is and how it ought to be.

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175 Heidegger, Being and Time, 270-1.
This “social normativity,” to use Sharkey’s term, is called by Heidegger Dasein’s “fallenness,” and while fallenness is not tantamount to inauthenticity per se, nonetheless the failure to resolutely take up one’s fallenness lies at the heart of inauthenticity.

Average, everyday Dasein does not so much engage in an active and resolute taking up of the concrete possibilities afforded by the world into which he or she is thrown—and this is not any sort of aspersion to be cast on what might be called “average folks,” but rather a simple fact of human life—as in an immersion in the ways of the “they.”

With each generation, these folkways undergo development and modification as conservative and liberal social forces vie for the control of public discourse. But for the most part, these forces all speak with the voice of the “they,” of some “common sense” of things. History, in this context of inauthenticity, is essentially the same as in the context of authenticity: the givenness of a certain horizon of meaning within which one is fated to live one’s life. But where authentic Dasein takes up this thrown facticity and resolves upon future possibilities in light of its definite possibilities, inauthentic Dasein is more or less abandoned to “what one says” and “what one does.” Again, this does not mean that everyday Dasein is unthinking, or unintelligent; but it does mean that the terms of his or her thinking are set, in an unappropriated way, by the public discourse afforded by the historical situation into which he or she is thrown. Every action, including the activity of both authentic and inauthentic Dasein, is born, in some way, out of one’s pastness, one’s

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176 See Sharkey, *Heidegger, Lonergan, and Authenticity*, 124. It is noteworthy that Sharkey explicitly calls this fallenness “bias,” giving a common name—as I think is appropriate—to a similar feature of both Heidegger and Lonergan’s analysis of the social dimension of the human person.

177 Even authentic Dasein lives, typically, in a state of absorption in the they-self; and, as indicated, even authenticity itself is only a modification of this way of being among the “they.”
thrown facticity; and so Dasein, in its essence, is historical, shaped indelibly by its past, which is not simply some attribute or characteristic of Dasein, but rather Dasein in its givenness to itself and its world. But it is authentic Dasein which resolutely projects itself upon a future, and so can be said to act, out of its future, for the sake of its future, within the world of concrete possibilities bequeathed by its past.\(^{178}\)

\textit{B. Historicity and Befindlichkeit}  

We have spoken much of Dasein’s being given over to himself, of being thrown into a world he neither made nor chose; and we have alluded to the disclosure of that world through various pre-theoretical involvements. But we have yet to look with any real rigor at what, in \textit{Being and Time}, is perhaps the central moment of this disclosive happening: namely, \textit{Befindlichkeit}, translated in a “necessary evil” sort of way by MacQuarrie and Robinson as “state-of-mind,” and by Stambaugh as “attunement,” neither of which quite captures the essence of what Heidegger is getting at.\(^{179}\)

\textit{Befindlichkeit}, which in ordinary speech means something like “feelings” or “sensitivities,” is aiming, etymologically, at an experience we have alluded to often: that of finding oneself in a certain state, in a certain world, with certain meaningful points of reference. The key

\(^{178}\) “Authentic” and “inauthentic” strike me as particularly problematic renderings of “\textit{Eigentlichkeit}” and “\textit{Uneigenlichkeit},” when something like “appropriated” or “being-one’s-ownmost” might be closer to the Heidegger’s original meaning, without any of the moral overtones of “authentic” and its opposite. But for better or worse “authenticity” is the term that has the most currency in the English-speaking world, and it seems imprudent to dispense with it entirely.

\(^{179}\) This is not to find fault with either translation. While I have typically hewn to MacQuarrie and Robinson for the purposes of quotations in this paper, as I find their translation overall just about the best one could hope to achieve in English, Stambaugh’s translation captures linguistically several philosophical subtleties that the older translation is only able to address in footnotes—“attunement” is one such case, though it is not perfect. Both translations are impressive, but no translation could do justice to the full denotative, connotative, and etymological range of meaning Heidegger is almost always working with. Generally speaking, though, I have preferred MacQuarrie and Robinson.
here is this “finding oneself” in some “state-of-mind,” “attuned” in a certain way to \( \text{Sein} \), which we may take as either “meaning” or “being.”\(^{180}\)

And, in fact, both of these translations—while each is inadequate taken alone—help us work our way toward a fuller understanding of just what Heidegger has in mind when he speaks of \( \text{Befindlichkeit} \). MacQuarrie and Robinson’s “state-of-mind” captures the very concrete down-to-earth phenomenon that Heidegger is referring to: the fact of having some sort of mood or attitude. But we are speaking here not so much of the affective responses—feelings—of which Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand will make so much, but rather of non-responsive moods, moods which, instead of being reactions to outward circumstances, set, in an originary way, the tonality of our involvement with the world and allow it to be disclosed in a certain way: “What we call a ‘feeling’ \([\text{Gefühle}]\) is neither a transitory epiphenomenon of our thinking and willing comportment, nor simply an impulse that provokes such comportment, nor merely a present condition we have to find some way of coping with.” Again, having a state-of-mind or “being attuned, in which we ‘are’ one way or another and which determines us through and through, lets us find ourselves among beings as a whole.”\(^{181}\) Rather than these moods being responses to things “out there,” they are the pre-theoretical \textit{way} in which we find ourselves, the modality in which we are opened up to beings such that they may disclose themselves to us. In addition to allowing beings to stand forth in their

\(^{180}\) I emphasize again that this option—how should one translate \( \text{Sein} \)?—should not be taken to represent a real alternative, so much as different approaches for conveying the meaning of a complex and weighty term: \textit{being} is that which has meaning, and \textit{meaning} is that which allows beings to stand forth in their being. The two interpretations of \( \text{Sein} \) are correlated and inseparable.

various aspects, different moods can reveal the whole of being in a variety of ways: “profound boredom” makes all our involvements recede into indifference, being in love enlivens the world such that “everything else lives in [the beloved’s] light”; most famously, anxiety, the peculiarly sedate anguish in the face of nothing in particular, reveals the world as a nullity. So, “state-of-mind,” as *Befindlichkeit* is rendered in the older translation, refers to this having a mood, not as a response to, but as a way of being opened up to, the world of meaning.

But it is precisely at this point that Stambaugh’s rendering, “attunement,” seems to prove itself more adequate to Heidegger’s meaning: for the essence of *Befindlichkeit*, one can see, is not the feeling-dimension, and certainly not anything like a private mental state (as “state of mind” so strongly suggests), but rather the phenomenon of being opened up to a world such that it can disclose itself in a certain way—in other words, being “attuned” in a certain way, such that the world can be manifest in a particular modality. This rendering captures the directedness of *Befindlichkeit* in a way that “state of mind,” with all its epistemological overtones, does not—and this is of particular significance for our purposes. *Befindlichkeit* is, perhaps, a “state of mind,” if by that one means a pre-theoretical mood which discloses being in a certain way, and not the private mental affairs


183 Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics,” 8-9. The precise significance of Heidegger’s claim that “anxiety makes manifest the nothing” goes rather beyond the immediate discussion, but certainly the sense of being pulled out of one’s meaningful involvements, as we have discussed above, is central to it. Incidentally, one may imagine a less-than-calm anxiety in the face of death likewise bringing one face to face with the question of authenticity—but that is neither here nor there.

184 The extension of the musical metaphor is my own, but I think it is consonant with Stambaugh’s translation and with Heidegger’s own meaning.
of inwardness and subjectivity.\textsuperscript{185} But it is essentially a being-open-to the world in a particular way, and therefore no mere “state” of one’s private inwardness—though, of course, for Heidegger, it is unlikely that “mind” could be conceived in purely private terms anyway.

*Befindlichkeit\textsuperscript{186} is, most basically, how one finds oneself, as the German makes clear (*Befindlichkeit* comes from *finden*, to find or discover). It is, to be sure, something like a mood or “state of mind,” and a being-attuned in such a way that the disclosure of the world has a particular flavor; but it is, also, not something one chooses or takes up, something one can have or not have. Dasein, essentially, *is* *Befindlichkeit*, just as he or she *is* Being-in-the-world and *is* care. Each of these, as a way of being, belongs in an essential “equiprimordial” way to Dasein’s own being: inseparable but conceptually (and experientially) distinct. But what does *Befindlichkeit* have to do with historicity?

I mention *Befindlichkeit* in the context of a discussion of Dasein’s historicity because it is a crucial element in Dasein’s way of taking up its pastness and living into its future—which is to say, Dasein as historical is essentially Dasein as having a mood and being pre-theoretically attuned to a world which is disclosed through this mood or attunement, through this way in which one finds oneself. In other words, Dasein’s historicality is inseparable from its having a mood, because, as we have already made plain, pastness is not just something that follows along behind Dasein, but something which goes before

\textsuperscript{185} Mood is *Stimmung*, which also means tuning or intonation, and therefore has connotative overtones in common with Stambaugh’s “attunement,” but not with the original *Befindlichkeit*. See also Olav Bryant Smith. *Myths of the Self: Narrative, Identity, and Postmodern Metaphysics* (Langham: Lexington Books, 2004), 81n.

Dasein. In acting out of its past—which is its very Dasein—and into its future, Dasein is always taking up and has always already taken up that pastness, whether in the mode of authenticity or in the average, everyday interpretation received from the anonymous “they”; but the disclosure of that pastness, the disclosure of thrown facticity, belongs to \textit{Befindlichkeit}. Dasein is not confronted, in some indifferent manner, by its past as some “already out there now real” thing;\textsuperscript{187} rather, Dasein \textit{is} its past in the mode of \textit{Befindlichkeit}, of being in a certain disposition with regard to itself and factual history that has established the horizon for its being, factically, as it is. Thrown facticity is disclosed in moods or states-of-mind, in “finding oneself” in such and such a state, dispositionally responsive to it in such and such a way. And just as different moods establish the modality wherein the world is disclosed to “attuned” Dasein, so too do different moods, different ways of finding oneself, wholly set the horizon within which one’s living out one’s historicity can go forward: the tranquil absorption in the “they,” as \textit{Befindlichkeit}, results in a way of living from out of one’s pastness quite distinct from, for instance, the anxiety that robs one of speech and forces one to confront in a radical way one’s being abandoned to a world one did not choose and the necessity of deciding how to take up one’s thrown facticity.

\textsuperscript{187} Following Sheehan, I feel justified using this Lonerganian phrase for the sake of contrasting Heidegger’s understanding with a more traditionally modern one.
§3 — Judgment

To this point, we have discussed, first, Heidegger’s understanding and formulation of the problematic of modern philosophy, and his reasons for rejecting it; we have, second, made a case that, in abandoning the terminology of the modern project, Heidegger is consciously engaged in an often implicit, but occasionally explicit, rejection of that trajectory of thought, both in its assumptions and its results. Third, in the past two sections, we have outlined the foundation which Heidegger lays as an alternative to the doctrines of modern philosophy: Being-in-the-world as pre-theoretical involvement in meaning, care as a concernful involvement in projects, which in keeping with Dasein’s essential historicity, are undertaken from out of a past characterized by thrown facticity and into a future, whether authentically or inauthentically. In the next two sections, we will turn to an examination of more properly epistemological questions, but attempt to articulate and answer them from within the Heideggerian understanding, if not necessarily in the Heideggerian idiom.

Accordingly, we turn to what is perhaps the central moment in traditional epistemologies, as well as in Lonergan’s thought: judgment. Judgment has, of course, been understood in a variety of ways, but in its traditional form, it typically looks something like the annexing of a predicate to a subject by means of the copula, such that the one can be said to belong to the other. Of course, as Aristotle explained at length in the *Metaphysics*, this copula—the verb “to be”—can have a variety of different significations in different sorts of judgments: the “to be” verb is used analogously. The copula in the judgment “the dog is black” means something rather different than in judgment “the dog
is Fido;” the first is a judgment of attribution, the second of identity.\textsuperscript{188} Further, there is the existential judgment: “Fido is.” Philosophers have spilled much ink over the interpretation of just what this last judgment really means, and the first half of Heidegger’s 1927 \textit{Basic Problems of Phenomenology} is largely concerned with just this question. Very briefly, one might hold that the judgment “Fido is” attributes some positive characteristic to Fido: the Fido that \textit{is} is different in its idea or concept than the Fido that \textit{is not}. Or, one might hold, like Aquinas, that the essence or concept of a thing is unchanged whether one predicates being of it or not—and for Aquinas this was evidence that existence must be bestowed from without, since it does not belong properly to the concept of anything, except for the one thing whose essence is to exist.\textsuperscript{189} Or, one might, like the Platonists, hold that the really real is the essentially intelligible, and that all imperfectly intelligible entities are merely participating in some higher order of reality, but not subsistent in themselves. In any event, each of these sorts of judgment—of attribution, of identity, of existence—has occupied at least some of the attention of practically every Western philosopher since Plato, and in this tendency the moderns are no different.

For Heidegger, it is arguably Kant—and not Descartes, upon whom we have already spent so much time—who offers the clearest and most prototypically modern articulation of the nature of the existential judgment. For Kant, “existence” is not a

\textsuperscript{188} Though of course there is the prior judgment of attribution which attributes the name Fido to \textit{this} dog; of the practical judgment that this dog \textit{shall} be named Fido, we can say nothing here.

\textsuperscript{189} There is, I think, a certain affinity between the case Aquinas seems to make for the Existence of God in the \textit{De Ente et Essentia} (though certainly he claims to be doing no such thing) and Lonergan’s own argument in \textit{Insight}, but that question lies well beyond the scope of this paper.
“something,” and therefore can add nothing to the concept of a thing. Kant famously illustrates his thesis: the concept of one hundred thalers remains exactly the same, whether the money is real or imaginary, that is, merely possible. If the money is in my pocket (or anywhere else, for that matter), it is real; if I am only daydreaming about it, it is imaginary. But nonetheless, the concept in question—one hundred thalers—remains exactly the same. Heidegger writes:

Kant says that existence is not a reality. This means that it is not a determination of the concept of a thing relating to its real content or, as he says succinctly, not a predicate of a thing itself. “A hundred actual thalers contains not the least bit more than a hundred possible thalers.” … The what-content of the concept “a hundred possible thalers” coincides with that of the concept “a hundred actual thalers.” No more thalers are thought in the concept “a hundred actual thalers,” no greater reality, but exactly the same amount. What is possible is also the same thing actually as far as its what-content is concerned; the what-content, the reality, of the possible and the actual thing must be the same.¹⁹⁰

For Kant—and his roots in Descartes’ thought are here evident—what distinguishes extantness, the fact that a thing is, from “being” in the sense of concept-content (or, in other words, what distinguishes the concept of something from its actual existence), is “position.” Heidegger explains, “Now something can be thought as posited merely relatively, or, better, we can think merely the relation (respectus logicus) of something as a mark to a thing, and then being, that is the position of this relation [“A is B”], is nothing but the combining concept in the judgment.” This is a judgment of attribution, or of identity, but not an existential judgment. On the other hand, it is possible to posit the thing “in and for itself,” and this is “tantamount to existence.”¹⁹¹ When, he writes,

¹⁹⁰ Heidegger, Basic Problems, 38.
¹⁹¹ Ibid., 39.
interpreting Kant, “I say ‘Something exists,’ in this positing I am not making a relational reference to any other thing or to some other characteristic of a thing, to some other real being; instead, I am here positing the thing in and for itself, free of relation.”192

From this, it becomes clear that what could be taken as the merely “epistemological” elements of modern philosophy—the subject-object distinction, the notion of man as an essentially intellectual entity, and the other prototypically modern positions enumerated above—are in fact ontological as well as epistemological, and are so in a particular way. Even Kant, who overtly rejects metaphysics, is engaged in something like an ontology: “The interpretation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason as epistemology completely misses the true meaning.”193 In Kant, as in Descartes before him, and in a trajectory of thought which runs in various ways through the entire modern philosophical tradition, ontology is undertaken in what could be conceived of as epistemological terms—which is as much as to say that modern philosophy breaks from pre-modern philosophy in endeavoring to understand being by first understanding the knowing subject, where pre-modern philosophy begins with beings and arrives at an ontology and a corresponding theory of knowing from that starting point.

With this in mind, it becomes possible to address Heidegger’s understanding of judgment: for, in both pre-modern and modern philosophy, judgment is the linchpin, the pivot between subject and object that makes possible both ontology and knowledge-
theory. But if modern philosophy has misconceived the relation of the human being to his world; if it has overlooked completely the nature of the world as such; if it has fundamentally misinterpreted the human being, Dasein, then certainly its particular formulations about the nature of judgment will be suspect. And as judgment is itself taken to be the crux of any correct epistemic-ontological formulation—for the human being is an intellectual being, and to know is to make a true judgment—it might prove to be the case that judgment itself needs to be resituated within a broader and more encompassing portrait of the way in which Dasein finds itself within a world.195

A. Understanding, Interpretation, Assertion

We have repeatedly emphasized that, for Heidegger, Dasein is not a subject confronted by a world conceived as a totality of objects; rather, Dasein always finds itself meaningfully involved in a world conceived as a matrix of significance.196 This is the basis of the Heideggerian notion of “understanding” (Verständnis), which signifies, in the first instance, not some abstract theoretical formulation, but rather an immediate sense of competence, or knowing-how to navigate the field of concrete possibilities provided by a world already endowed with a certain meaning: “The kind of Being which Dasein has, as potentiality-for-Being, lies existentially in understanding. Dasein is not something present-

194 And this is not to suggest that pre-modern philosophy is not vulnerable to a radical critique as well, for Heidegger himself executes this critique in various places. See, for instance, Heidegger, Basic Problems, 77-94, for a critique of medieval thought; and Martin Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 44-54, 94-101, for a philosophical-etymological critique of Greek thought.

195 Lonergan’s project, too, will involve a re-situation of the act of judgment, both within cognitive theory and within the drama of human living. See below.

196 Again, this is not to say that factical Dasein necessarily has this conception of itself and its world.
at-hand which possesses its competence [or know-how] for something by way of an extra; it is primarily Being-possible.” 197 That is, Dasein, as necessarily engaged in schemes of meaning, is potential-to certain concrete possibilities, and is in fact always already active with regard to some of these; its competence in maneuvering amidst these possibilities, of holding itself open as a concrete entity characterized by possibility-for, is understanding. Understanding discloses these possibilities, and Dasein “always has understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities.” 198 More strongly still, Dasein is its possibilities, much as it is its world, in the sense that its possibilities are not attributes it may or may not take upon itself; rather, the concrete possibilities of its thrown facticity belong to Dasein’s being—or, rather, its meaning—in such a way that in understanding, Dasein is revealed to itself as implicated in schemes of meaning, and as essentially doomed to choose among its possibilities—for, of course, Dasein is always already acting, has always already resolved more or less authentically upon certain possibilities. Every Dasein, in navigating its concrete possibilities, is confronted by its own having already made certain choices, whether authentically or otherwise.

Further, to say that Dasein always has an understanding is certainly not to say that Dasein always possesses clarity and insight with regard to its navigating the concrete

197 Heidegger, Being and Time, 143. See, also, Olafson, Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind, 112-3: “Although understanding is not a subspecies of knowledge, there is a kind of knowledge that has a clear affinity with it. This is the ‘knowing-how’ that is contrasted with ‘knowing-that’ by philosophers who are interested in some of the same things as Heidegger but do not want to abandon altogether the language of knowledge. The distinction between knowing how and knowing that derives from the fact that the latter is explicitly propositional and uses language as its vehicle, whereas the former is a skill that one may have without being able to formulate any propositions or truth-claims about the matter in question.” Olafson finds fault in the attempt to retain the language of “knowing” insofar as it brings with it all the denotative and connotative baggage of more traditional theories of knowing, especially their typically implicit “ontological assumptions.” This is a fair critique, but seems a bit odd at this precise moment in the argument: it would be difficult to find terms with more philosophical baggage than Heidegger’s verstehen and Verständnis.

198 Heidegger, Being and Time, 145.
possibilities of its factical existence. If we take understanding as a sort of operative familiarity with oneself (and therefore one’s possibilities) and one’s world, as an awareness of one’s being implicated in the necessity of choosing, then understanding can have both a positive and a negative form—though both stand under the broader heading of “understanding.” For, on the one hand, one may in fact grasp one’s possibilities, the ramifications of one’s choices, one’s involvements and modes of belonging in such a way that one does have something like an insight into the various courses of actions—projects—that are open to one. This would be something like a moment of clarity. But on the other hand—and this is, it seems, far more often the case—understanding is present as a lack of understanding: in other words, one understands that one does not adequately understand. Very often, human individuals are abandoned to making choices lacking full knowledge, without any clear sense of the repercussions of this or that option. But in such moments, understanding is still operative, for one must still navigate these choices, and the “know-how” that involves making decisions in the absence of full knowledge is itself a particular kind of understanding. And, of course, there is the intermediate alternative: not understanding, but thinking oneself to understand. This kind of self-delusion is closely bound up with the idle chatter and ambiguity of das Man—the assurance that one has already understood what needs to be understood.

So, understanding, then, is a pre-reflective, pre-theoretical, pre-conceptual familiarity with navigating one’s world, taking up one’s possibilities, and engaging in meaning. This involves both more concrete modes of know-how—knowing how to cook,

199 If this seems like an unusual formulation, refer to Heidegger’s discussion of how Dasein’s being proximally and for the most part in the untruth is possible only because Dasein is essentially in the truth. Cf., Heidegger, Being and Time, 227-8.
or drive a car, or button a shirt—and the more “abstract” (though this is not quite the right word): knowing how to make decisions of existentiell weight, knowing how to proceed in the face of uncertainty, knowing how to recognize that one does not fully understand the concrete situation. Whether Dasein is active or passive (and even passivity is a certain species of activity), the world of meaning to which his activities are correlated is one that is always, already imbued with a certain meaning; structures of significance already lay out the territory within which activity and passivity can be exercised, and the ever-present grasp of how to navigate this territory is “understanding.”

In this and the preceding chapters, I have on occasion used the formulation, “the world has always, already been interpreted in terms of concrete meaning and significance”—and while this formulation captures, in general terms, what Heidegger means by “understanding,” it is perhaps worthwhile at this juncture to speak more precisely: for, in Heidegger’s terminology, understanding and interpretation are distinct, albeit intimately related. Understanding refers to a pre-conceptual sense of how to navigate the significance-structures of the world into which one is thrown; interpretation (Auslegung), on the other hand, is something like a making explicit of what is grasped in understanding. “In interpretation,” Heidegger writes, “understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself.”

If, for instance, I am engaged in using some tool, understanding is operative in the very act of using it; but when the tool is understood “with regard to its ‘in-order-to,’” then understanding grasps the tool as a tool for this or that purpose.

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200 There is a certain affinity between this Heideggerian notion of understanding and the Aristotelian notion of “phronesis” or “practical wisdom,” a knowing one’s way almost intuitively around certain situations, even absent theoretical knowledge.

201 Heidegger, Being and Time, 148.
that concrete purpose: “The ‘as’ makes up the structure of the explicitness of something that is understood. It constitutes the interpretation.”

Understanding and interpretation are always operative. Dasein, as we have emphasized again and again, does not encounter the world as a collection of indifferent objects—of abstract sensory data—but rather as an organized, meaningfully-structured pattern of involvements and significations. Dasein is always, already engaged in navigating this framework of meaning—and this is understanding; and the meaningful reference points which establish this matrix of significance are not indifferent sensory objects, but rather useful things imbued with a certain significance. Contrary to the empiricist psychology put forth by post-Cartesian thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Hume, Heidegger suggests that what we first encounter is not some set of sensory data, but rather coherent meaningful entity-wholes: I do not encounter some brown, rectangular, hard thing, but rather I encounter a table. Interpretation is always operative in Dasein’s very pre-reflective experiencing of the world, allowing entities to show up as the entities they are. This explicit formulation may go unexpressed and be merely latent, but it is already operative in the way that human beings encounter the world:

Any mere pre-predicative seeing of the ready-to-hand is, in itself, something which already understands and interprets. … Whenever we see with this kind of sight, we already do so understandingly and interpretively. … In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a ‘signification’ over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as

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202 Ibid. See also Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind*, 117.

203 By “useful,” I do not mean merely utilitarian. Religious artifacts might be “useful,” for instance, not because they are utilized like some tool, but because they have some place in the world a community, which allows them to exist as meaningful objects.

204 Cf., Lonergan, *Insight*, 204, where Lonergan discusses “how abstract it is to speak of a sensation.”
such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation.\textsuperscript{205}

The kind of explicitness that belongs to interpretation, then, is not the explicitness of verbal articulation, but rather the conceptual explicitness that belongs to having distinguished between a merely operative familiarity, on the one hand, and an explicit attention to and elaboration of the elements of this familiarity, on the other.\textsuperscript{206}

Now, one might be tempted to interject, here, that the copula of judgment, traditionally conceived, is already implicitly present in the Heideggerian notion of interpretation: in understanding something as something, I am tacitly making the judgment that some thing has such and such properties or attributes. But to so identify interpretation with judgment would be to miss Heidegger’s meaning—for while judgment is certainly rooted in interpretation, it is nonetheless only a particular and derivative mode of expressing the content of interpretation. Interpretation is not so much a judgment—“this is a table; this table is brown”—as it is a thinking through of the meaning-founding relations that define the totality of involvements within which one always, already finds oneself—thinking through the referential totality of equipment, of the various elements that comprise that whole.

“Assertion” (\textit{Aussage}) is what Heidegger calls the specified and derivative modality of interpretation that coincides with what is traditionally called judgment.\textsuperscript{207} And while,

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\textsuperscript{205} Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 191. \\
\textsuperscript{206} Olafson, \textit{Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind}, 117: “Matters [involving the distinction between understanding and interpretation] are not made any more clear by the fact that understanding and interpretation are both, in principle, prior to any kind of linguistic expression, although the latter serves the purposes of both.” \\
\textsuperscript{207} Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 154. 
\end{flushright}
considered in itself, assertion is always parasitical upon interpretation and understanding, it nonetheless has been historically taken as the “primary and authentic ‘locus’ of truth.” Three tasks, then, stand before us in the present section: first, to determine how and in what precise sense assertion can be said to be derivative of interpretation; second, to give an overview, on the basis of our prior discussions, of how modern philosophy is guilty of taking assertion as primary; and third, to show how Heidegger’s notion of assertion as derivative is a response to the problematic set by modern philosophy. In this final step, we shall take a first step in the direction of the territory to be addressed in the final section of this chapter on Heidegger—namely, a discussion of how knowing itself must be regarded as a “founded” mode of access to the real.

**B. Assertion as Derivative**

If understanding is a pre-conceptual familiarity with navigating the concrete framework of meaning we call the “world,” and if interpretation is a more fully articulated, but still pre-linguistic, understanding, then assertion, as a specification of interpretation, is a linguistic expression of the meaning-content of what is explicitly grasped in interpretation and livingly grasped in understanding. For Heidegger, assertion has three chief characteristics, or, rather, aspects: assertion (1) is apophantic, a pointing out, which (2) takes the form of predication (3) for the sake of communication.

As a pointing out, assertion seeks to bring something before oneself or another in a particular modality of its being. Heidegger writes, “In the assertion ‘The hammer is too

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208 Ibid., 154.

209 Ibid., 154-6.
heavy’, what is discovered for sight is not a ‘meaning’, but an entity in the way that it is ready-to-hand. Even if the entity is not close enough to be grasped and ‘seen’, the pointing-out has in view the entity itself and not, let us say, a mere ‘representation.’”

Heidegger’s example, here, is of an equipmental artifact—that is, a tool—but I think a slight modification of the example reveals the general applicability of Heidegger’s understanding of assertion as pointing out. For readiness-to-hand is the specific modality of being of a hammer; but if one were to point out, for instance, an unanticipated variation in some set of otherwise regular data, what would be pointed out is not a usable entity, but rather an entity in its specific mode of being—in this case, in the mode of the kind of attention to the thing itself that belongs to scientific consciousness. If an entity is defined in terms of the kind of involvements it can have—for this is its being, and hence its meaning—then what assertion brings before one is the entity itself within the referential framework of meaning and significance that makes it what it is, whether this is a commonsense modality or a scientific one.

To digress momentarily: it might seem here that Heidegger is ruling out the equation of being with meaning that we have made central to this interpretation, for he says quite plainly that what “is discovered for sight” in assertion “is not a meaning” but rather an entity. But what Heidegger means in this context is not that being and meaning are not correlated; not that to speak of the being of something is not to speak of its significance or its place within structures of meaning. What he means, in this very precise

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210 Heidegger, Being and Time, 154.

context, is that assertion—that is, judgment—does not simply bring before one a “meaning” in the sense of a merely propositional content, nor a “representation” of some external thing. Assertion brings the thing itself before one’s sight, and makes it present precisely as the sort of thing it is—but it does so in a way that is parasitical upon understanding and interpretation, which have always, already made entities available in just this way, but without the addition of the “pointing out” or of the predication. One livingly and explicitly grasps the heaviness of the hammer, before one points out that the hammer is heavy.

In addition to pointing out, all assertion is essentially predication—and this is certainly the aspect of the Heideggerian notion of assertion that would seem most familiar to the philosopher operating within the traditional modern framework. Again, predication is not an element of assertion, but an aspect of assertion taken as whole: “‘Assertion’ means no less than ‘predication.’” We ‘assert’ a ‘predicate’ of a ‘subject’, and the ‘subject’ is given a definite character by the ‘predicate.’” The assertion qua predication does not, as one might suspect, “bring forth” the predicate. Rather, what is brought forth is the “subject,” or, in other terminology, the “object,” itself. The predicate brings forth the subject, again, in a particular modality of its being: in saying, for instance, that the hammer is “too heavy,” the specific kind of being of the hammer is brought to the fore:

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212 Though, of course, it certainly means more than predication.

213 Heidegger, Being and Time, 154.

214 I use “subject” and “object” here seemingly interchangeably not for the sake of introducing terminological confusion, but because the ambiguity reflects something of the ambiguity in the transition from pre-modern to modern philosophy: traditionally, the subject is the bearer of attributes, that of which some predicate is spoken. But in modern philosophy, the subject is the ego, the intellectual substance, over against the object of its understanding, namely the res extensa.
namely, its not being serviceable for the task at hand as a result of its excessive weight. As predication is a “narrowing” of the assertion—a bringing forth of the entity in a more narrowly specified aspect of its being—it can be said to be grounded upon and derivative of assertion considered as pointing out, just as assertion generally is derivative of understanding and interpretation.

Finally, assertion is communication. Assertion, as a pointing out, already has the seeds of communication within it; as communication, assertion becomes a kind of seeing with another. “Letting someone see with us,” Heidegger writes, “shares with the Other that entity which has been pointed out in its definite character. That which is ‘shared’ is our Being towards what has been pointed out—a Being in which we see it in common.”216 Assertion brings some entity to the attention of the other in the specific character indicated in the assertion: in saying that the hammer is heavy, what is communicated is not some abstract propositional content, but rather a modality of being-toward the hammer, such that it becomes available to the other in its very heaviness, and this “seeing,” as Heidegger calls it, is shared by both (or all) the parties to the communication. The communicative aspect of assertion, like the predicative, is a narrowing and specification of the apophantic: predication points out some entity in a highly specified modality, but communication aims to bring this entity into another’s sight in that specified mode. The entity, so brought into another’s purview, has not the directness of immediate involvement, but only the mediated involvement of an

215 And the introduction of “pointing out” prior to “predication” might indicate the primacy of Dasein’s being-with Others, over its being anything like an intellectual subject.

216 Heidegger, Being and Time, 155.
interpreted and asserted sharing; and as all discourse (Rede), of which assertion is a subtype, is liable to fall into idle chatter (Gerede), so can the involvement intended in the communicated assertion fail to be adequately expressed—the entity, then, is not revealed in its truth, but is concealed and hidden by the communicated, asserted interpretation.

As each of these aspects of assertion is, respectively, a further specification, derived from the assertion as a pointing-out, so too is assertion as such a derivative specification of interpretation. Most straightforwardly, it is clear that, whatever is pointed out, predicated of, communicated, in the assertion, is that which has already been grasped, implicitly in understanding, and explicitly in interpretation. In short, the content of every assertion is already grasped operatively—but in an unarticulated mode—prior to the precise formulation of the assertion itself: “The pointing out which assertion does is performed on the basis of what has already been disclosed in understanding or discovered circumspectively. Assertion is not a free-floating kind of behavior which, in its own right, might be capable of disclosing entities in general in a primary way.”217 Judgment or assertion, then, does not reveal anything, does not bring anything to the light of day; in order for any assertion to be made, entities must have already been disclosed in their definite characters to Dasein, for assertion “always maintains itself on the basis of Being-in-the-world.”218

Not only is assertion derivative, then, but it certainly cannot function as the “primary and authentic ‘locus’ of truth.” For truth, ἀλήθεια, is—in the Heideggerian interpretation—unconcealment, but we have already seen that assertion cannot be the

217 Heidegger, Being and Time, 156.

218 Ibid.
moment of primary disclosure: what is pointed out in the assertion must have already
been dis-covered, if any pointing out, any *apophansis*, is going to be possible. Indeed, if
assertion, in traditional philosophy, is interpreted as the judgment joining predicate to
subject; and if truth, traditionally, is taken as some sort of *adequatio* of the intellect to the
real, or vice versa, such that it is the judgment which is chiefly susceptible of truth or
falsity, and hence the primary locus of truth; then it goes without saying that Heidegger is
upending the entire philosophic tradition, by making it very clear that, as a matter of fact,
any judgment is always grounded in a fore-having that grasps understandingly and thinks
through circumspectively or interpretively, and that only on the basis of these modalities
of Being-in-the-world is anything like a judgment possible.

C. Judgment and Knowing

The upshot of the foregoing is the apparently simple, but actually paradigm-
shifting, notion that all knowing is premised upon a prior and non-theoretical involvement
within schemes of meaning. Modern philosophy—indeed practically all Western
philosophy—has taken judgment to be the heart of knowing; one has only grasped
“being” when one has made a judgment. But following Heidegger’s analysis, it becomes
apparent that to *know* anything, to make any *judgment*, requires an always, already
operative familiarity—at a pre-theoretical level—with entities. More fundamentally still,
the notion of a “pure intellect” or “mere subject” freed from any involvement gives way
to a thick notion of an embedded subject, a subject (more or less) shaped and created by
the pre-reflective involvements—the world—in which it finds itself. What is more, any
judgment—if its truth is taken to lie in some *adequatio* between the judgment itself and the “reality” to which it corresponds—can only be true or false insofar as there is some originary and disclosive *presence* to the entities about which one intends to make a judgment. In other words, here again, the involvement comes first. If truth, then, is not primarily disclosed in judgment—for truth itself is the disclosive horizon within which things are unconcealed—then judgment, certainly, cannot be the authentic locus of truth.

Now, while it is clearly the case that practically the entire history of philosophy can be accused of placing this sort of overemphasis on judgment—the sort of overemphasis that overlooks the rootedness of judgment in some prior disclosive encounter—there is a ratcheting up of the centrality of judgment in modern philosophy. For while Plato and Aristotle, and following them the medieval thinkers, view the human being as an assemblage of elements held in unity by the animating soul—the appetitive portion, the thumotic portion, the intellectual portion, or however one might be inclined to divide things up—there is a tendency in modern philosophy to flatten this anthropology, to (as we have seen) reduce the human person to a *merely* intellectual being. For, while Aristotle and Aquinas, and many other pre-moderns, would certainly take the intellect to be central—for man, though he is a *rational* animal, is still very much an *animal*—in Descartes and the inheritors of the tradition he initiated, man is *essentially* intellect, and only incidentally a corporeal being susceptible of appetitive and thumotic impulses. In this anthropology, judgment is not only the central act of knowing, but also the central act of the soul, its chief operation. Is it in any way incidental that the very foundation of Descartes’ entire philosophical system is the judgment, *Cogito, ergo sum*? This is a judgment
that not only reveals what man is, but in its very formulation is the essence of man: the fundamental principle from which the human soul knows and grasps itself is in fact judgment.

But if in the modern conception man is, essentially, the knowing subject, and the “authentic locus” of this knowing is judgment, then this re-situation of judgment undertaken by Heidegger represents not just a shift in knowledge-theory, nor in metaphysics conceived as some academic discipline, but also in philosophical anthropology, in the understanding of the human person—and again in the study of being, the study of the meaning of meaning. This leads us, then, to the final of our four sections on Heidegger’s constructive alternative to the problematic posed by modern philosophy—namely, a discussion of the implications of the claim, already alluded to in the foregoing, that knowing as such is a “founded” mode of access to the real.
§4 — Knowing as a Founded Mode of Access to the Real

The final step in our four-part analysis of Heidegger’s response to the problematic of modern philosophy will bring into focus the disparate elements touched on in the last three sections: for knowing, as we shall see, is a particular modality of Being-in-the-world, a particular sort of concernful involvement undertaken by historical Dasein, and judgment, the traditionally accepted centerpiece of the act of knowing, is itself but a specification and particularization of the sort of involvement in which “knowing,” as it has been traditionally understood, goes on. As we have already seen, Dasein, for Heidegger, is not primarily a subject confronted by a world of objects, and even to assume that epistemic posture is to have modified one’s basic mode of comportment toward reality in a particular way. Rather, Dasein finds itself in a world, involved in certain meaningful schemes of activity, given over to itself historically; it navigates this world in terms of tacit understanding and explicit interpretation, and, only if Dasein should happen to point out and communicate these understandings and interpretations by predicating something of a subject, can it be said to be involved in anything like a “judgment.”

But if traditional philosophy—and the epistemologically-oriented philosophy of the moderns in particular—has construed judgment as the centerpiece of the act of knowing, then certainly, in making assertion parasitical upon prior meaningful involvements, Heidegger has simultaneously made the case that knowing itself is a secondary and derivative way of getting at entities—for lived involvement is always primary.

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219 This is not to diminish the regularity with which such predication does happen in human speech; it is only to point out that it is not the primary way in which human beings use language. A comparison with Wittgenstein might be fruitful in this regard.
Indeed, he says as much himself:

But it has long been held that the way to grasp the Real is by that kind of knowing which is characterized by beholding.\textsuperscript{220} Such knowing ‘is’ as a way in which the soul—or consciousness—behaves. In so far as Reality has the character of something independent and “in itself”, the question of the meaning of “Reality” becomes linked with that of whether the Real can be independent ‘of consciousness’ or whether there can be a transcendence of consciousness into the ‘sphere’ of the Real.

But according to Heidegger’s own analytic, the essentials of which have been sketched out above, “knowing is a \textit{founded} mode of access to the Real. The Real is essentially accessible only as entities within-the-world,” that is to say, within a given Dasein’s sphere of concernful involvements. “All access to such entities is founded ontologically upon the basic state of Dasein, Being-in-the-world; and this in turn has care as its even more primordial state of Being (ahead of itself—Being already in a world—as Being alongside entities within-the-world).”\textsuperscript{221} Knowing, we may say in brief, is a particular \textit{way} of Being-in-the-world, but to take knowing itself—or intellectuality more generally—as the essence of the human being, is to overlook or deliberately ignore the fact that to know \textit{anything} presumes some sort of originary and disclosive access to reality grounded upon Dasein’s essentially \textit{having} a world.

But before we can speak more precisely about knowing’s status as a derivative mode of access to “the Real,” we must determine what Heidegger himself \textit{means} when he speaks of “the Real”—for this is not altogether clear. Perhaps more important still, we must determine what relation Heidegger’s concept and use of “the Real” bear to the corresponding concept and use in modern philosophy.

\textsuperscript{220} On the relation between the Real and beholding (or taking-a-look) Lonergan, too, will have much to say.

\textsuperscript{221} Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 202—and the above quote.
Here, as he often does, Heidegger ventures into an etymological-philosophical mode of interpretation: etymologically, realitas comes from res, that is, “thing.” But if reality means something like the totality of things, or even “thinghood,” then it stands to reason that implicit in the linguistic construction is the ontological equation of “things” with the really real, which is to say, an equation of being with the totality of things, and the being of beings with thinghood. He writes:

Even where the issue is not only one of ontical experience but also one of ontological understanding, the interpretation of Being takes its orientation in the first instance from the Being of entities within-the-world, and entities are first conceived as a context of Things (res) which are present-at-hand. “Being” acquires the meaning of “Reality”. Substantiality becomes the basic characteristic of Being. Corresponding to this way in which the understanding of Being has been diverted, even the ontological understanding of Dasein moves into the horizon of this conception of Being. Like any other entity, Dasein too is present-at-hand as Real. In this way, “Being in general” acquires the meaning of “Reality.”

First, let us note that Heidegger is careful to point out here the implications of substance-ontology on the interpretation of the human being: we can see in Descartes, for instance, the interpretation of the human being as a “thing,” for while the human being is certainly distinct from extended things, nonetheless it is still res cogitans, the thinking thing. Second, it should be clear from the foregoing that the problem of interpreting being as realitas is essentially tied up with the reduction of Dasein to an intellectual being, a subject over against objects, whose primary mode of access to the world is by means of the intellectual “beholding” that encounters entities in the mode of presence-at-hand. For, if being can be

222 The idea of “thinghood” has a long history in philosophy, going back to Aristotle’s οὐσία, typically translated “substance.”

223 This thing-ontology goes all the way back to Aristotle.

224 Heidegger, Being and Time, 201.
equated with realitas—that is, if to be is to be a thing—then the human being is in the same fashion as every other thing, and it is only some positive attribute (in this case, its being intellectual as opposed to extended) that differentiates the human being from any other kind of being. On Heidegger’s interpretation, however, the human being is in no way a thing among things; it is not some attribute that differentiates Dasein from entities, but rather its very modality of being—namely, existence and having a world. Dasein is in a different way than things, and only insofar as Dasein ek-sists, as Being-in-the-world, can things be manifest in their thingliness. And thirdly, as Heidegger makes clear, this thing-ontology impacts not only “ontical experience,” or ordinary thing-centric engagement within the world, but also “ontological understanding,” or attempts to get at the being of being: in other words, not only thing-oriented behaviors, understandings, and interpretations are shaped by this thing-ontology, but so too are attempts at metaphysical formulations. The primary case, here, would be Aristotle, whose entire Metaphysics revolves around the question of what makes a thing to be a thing; and, as Heidegger makes clear, despite their novelty in other areas, the moderns never got out from under the shadow of Aristotle in regard to this point.

So, then, the Real is co-extensive with thinghood. This is, Heidegger insists, an ontological interpretation, a theory of Being, brought to a head in the epistemological thrust of modern thought, but implicitly present since Aristotle’s equation of τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, what-it-was-and-is-to-be, with ὀόσια, substance or thinghood. The real, which these thinkers take to be all of being, is in fact a derivative notion, a subset of what is given to

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225 There is a certain way in which one may abstract from one’s own immediacy, and in this sense Descartes' approach is certainly not without merit; but it is too often taken (even by its author) as a complete view of the human situation, when in fact it is a very particular and highly rarefied view.
Dasein in its concernful involvements. But this raises a question: if by “the Real” Heidegger is signifying the characteristically modern interpretation of Being one finds in, say, Descartes and Kant, then what is the significance of going on to say, as Heidegger does, that knowing is a *founded* mode of access to the Real? One has already suggested that *realitas* is in some way a derived concept, a highly particularized modality of encounter with entities allowed to present themselves as presence-at-hand; what added significance is there in the suggestion that, not only is “Reality” as such a derivative (that is, founded) concept, but also that “Knowing,” which this interpretation of being takes as the basic mode of access to the world, is also a derivative mode of access to the real? In other words: if in calling being “Reality,” one has already settled upon a derived interpretation of being, then what purpose is there in pointing out that one element of this derived interpretation—namely the concept of “Knowing”—is itself a “founded mode of access”? This, it might seem, goes without saying.

In fact, it does in some sense go without saying; but insofar as Heidegger is himself involved in a philosophic undertaking which might be thought to aim at something like knowing, it falls to Heidegger to explain in precisely what sense knowing is derivative, and what place that concept, seemingly so indispensable, might have in his own philosophy. First, then, it must be pointed out that this discussion of knowing takes place in the context of a broader discourse on the so-called “problem of the external world,” mentioned above. As such, to raise the question of whether or not knowing is a founded mode of access to the Real, is more fundamentally to ask the basically epistemological question of whether the objective correlates of the contents of the act of
knowing can in fact be said to be real—that is, to be extant. In this context, to say that knowing is a founded mode of access to the Real is basically to reject the suggestion that any proof can or need be offered for the existence of the external world: knowing, with its correlate reality, is already shown to be a particularized and derivative modality of Being-in-the-world. Before one is ever in any position to ask the question of the Reality of the world, one is already concernfully involved, historically informed Dasein: one always, already has a world, so to ask whether it really exists is about as meaningful as pondering over whether I myself really exist. The kind of thinking that asks for a proof of the external world (in the sense of the totality of objects) is, in other words, itself a particular way of having a world (in the Heideggerian sense).

Modern philosophy takes the question of the existence of the external world to be the kind of question that can be answered in an act of knowing; knowing, then, becomes the primary mode of access to the real, for insofar as the real is to be disclosed in its realitas, it must be disclosed in an act of knowing. It is knowing, and knowing alone, which can resolve the question of whether the content of the very act of knowing, in fact corresponds to some reality that stands outside of the subject’s own sphere. One can, perhaps, begin to see the difficulties inherent in this sort of formulation, and the roots of modernity’s struggles with representationalism—the notion that somehow a representation of the external reality is conveyed to the mind, against the criteria of which the mind can judge its own concepts and notions. One can also discern, again, the centrality of the judgment, considered as predication, in modern philosophy: for the

226 Of course, Descartes did just that, and it was not a fruitless exercise; nor is pondering over the existence of the world a fruitless exercise. But to suggest that the world is in need of proof is to miss the fact that no Dasein ever is without its world.
content of the act of knowing is the predicative conjunction of terms in a judgment, and if the judgment is to be considered true, then the conjunction expressed in that judgment must correspond to the reality. But if the reality can only be had through representation, and if it is only in knowing that a judgment can be made as to the reality (or “truth”) of what is given in representation, then we find ourselves at an impasse; and this is precisely the impasse (or, rather, it is one of the central dilemmas) that led Kant to produce his first Critique, which endeavors to demonstrate that human knowing can be objective, and can grasp the necessary and universal, irrespective of the human mind’s inability to pierce into the realm of the transcendental object itself, which remains forever beyond the sphere of a possible experience.

The double paradox just sketched gives us further insight into knowing’s status as a founded mode of access to the real: on the one hand, only a judgment (that is, knowing) can resolve the question of whether the external world exists, but on the other, the criteria whereby the judgment is rendered true or false is precisely the dubitable evidence of the senses given in representation. The only admissible evidence that can render the judgment true or false is what is called into question in the demand for a proof in the first place: the world can only be pronounced real if I prove that my representations correspond to reality—but that is precisely what is called into question when one asks for a proof of the external world. In interpreting the human being’s primary “point of contact” with the world as representation, but the primary criterion of the reliability of that evidence as a judgment with reference to the given representations, one has worked oneself into an in-principle irresolvable philosophical dilemma (or pseudo-dilemma). It is
for just this reason that Heidegger rejects not only the modern interpretation of man and of being, but also the very terminology wherein that interpretation is expressed:\footnote{227} for, Heidegger says, in using terms like “representation,” let alone “subject” and “object,” one has already presumed a particular ontology and anthropology, and in particular one has interpreted the human being as an intellectual substance confronted by a “world” understood as a totality of indifferently given objects. Rather than adopt these terms and refine them—and I do not think it is in error to suppose that such a thing is possible\footnote{228}—Heidegger re-orient that entire trajectory of thought by, first, offering an alternate ontology-anthropology, which interprets Dasein not as intellectual substance, but as concernfully involved, historically situated, given over to itself in its concrete possibilities, living in a framework of meaning which has always, already been interpreted for it. There are, on this most fundamental level, no indifferent representations; there are rather things of use and concern, concretized and made “real” for us in their belonging to meaningful and meaning-making schemes of lived involvement. A pair of glasses does not confront us as some object, standing over against us in the midst of a whirlwind of indifferent presentations, rather, our glasses are \textit{in our world} precisely in their being \textit{our} glasses, significant and indeed indispensable for navigating our lives. A pen, likewise, is no mere object, impinging upon our sensory system in the same way that a random flash of light might; rather, the pen is revealed in our always, already being involved in a meaningful

\footnote{227} And this will be a critical difference between Heidegger and Lonergan.

\footnote{228} Much of what Olafson is up to in his \textit{Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind} involves drawing analogues between Heideggerian concepts and more traditional philosophical concepts, and explaining the former in terms of the latter.
totality that makes it to be something, for us. One does not, first, see colors and hear pitches; one sees a face, one hears a bird’s call.

Heidegger speaks of knowing as a founded mode of access to the real for just this reason: not only is “reality” a derivative concept, but even if one grants the concept some philosophic significance, it turns out still to be rooted in a flawed ontology-anthropology, which takes the human being as something quite different from what he or she really is. In other words, the foundedness of knowing as a mode of access to the real needs to be explicitly spelled out because the interpretation of being as realitas is itself founded upon the interpretation of the human being as res cogitans. In taking subject and object as the dichotomous poles constituting experience—that is, in taking the subject as essentially worldless, instead of embedded in and constituted by a world—modern philosophy condemns itself to interpreting the human being as an object among other objects, albeit one with a handful of unique attributes. And one can almost see, in this founding hermeneutic decision, a tendency to conceive the human modality of being on the model of other sorts of entities: just as a chair may be set in the midst of various entities, so too the human being finds himself, indifferently, in the midst of various things. On the basis of this inadequate (and inattentive) anthropology, there follows an inadequate ontology: being is thinghood—to be is to be a thing—and just as things are extant in mutual indifference to one another, so too are human beings things among other things. They may be intellectual things, they may be rational things, but their being, that which makes them to be, is thinghood; and once the possibility is ruled out that the human modality of

229 It is due to the commonness of this interpretation that Heidegger feels a need to spend so much time explaining the nature of “in-ness” at work in the concept of Being-in-the-world—for it is certainly not an “in-ness” like the way that a chair is in a room.
being is different, and not just the sorts of attributes associated with the human being’s kind of thinghood, so too is ruled out the possibility that Dasein might not be able to be conceived on the model of other things. But Dasein ek-sists, where other entities are merely extant.

So, on the basis of a flawed anthropology, modern philosophy advances a flawed ontology, a flawed interpretation of the nature of being. It interprets (and this is true of pre-modern philosophy also) being as thinghood; and more critically, it interprets the human being as a thing among other things, albeit one characterized by intellect instead of extension, though, of course, no human being exists who is not also an extended substance. Following from its identification of the human being with intellectual substance, modern philosophy takes knowing—an intellectual beholding in which a true judgment is rendered—as the human being’s primary point of contact with “the Real,” which in turn is interpreted as co-extensive with thinghood. What is ignored and overlooked is that the human being, Dasein, is always already involved in certain ways; that objects reveal themselves not in indifference, but in schemes of concernful involvement. What is obscured is the fact that the “knowing” that takes place in judgment is always, already situated in a meaning-giving context, and is a particularized modality of involvement. One might even go so far as to say that the very philosophers who have made out the intellect to be the sole and essentially defining characteristic of man, have done so in part because they are so deeply involved in an intellectual modality of ek-sistence (and hence meaning-making), that the phenomenon of involvement as primordial fails to rise to the level of explicit awareness.
After this long chapter on Heidegger, it might be helpful, before we dive into the specifics of Lonergan’s response to the problematic posed by modern philosophy, to make clear once again some of the positions we are not trying to argue for. First, and most critically, I do not aim to suggest that Lonergan and Heidegger’s responses to modern philosophy are somehow the same, albeit expressed in different terminology. Secondly, I do not want the reader to suppose that I take Lonergan and Heidegger as proceeding from similar philosophical starting-points, for the concrete events that led to their respective writings of *Being and Time* and *Insight* are crucially and significantly distinct. Rather, I acknowledge that Lonergan’s and Heidegger’s philosophical projects are quite distinct: Heidegger’s might be called (in the simplest of terms) a radical re-grounding of ontology on a basis other than the one set forth in the ancients and brought to its crisis-point by the moderns. Lonergan’s, simultaneously more modest and more ambitious, is to provide some grounding unity to the entire trajectory of Western philosophy, by elucidating in enormous and expansive detail the one central moment of the cognitive process—namely, the insight. But both Heidegger and Lonergan are involved in a critical response to the problematic of modern philosophy; and both see a radical re-situating of the entire framework of questions that forms the modern project as an essential step in adequately responding to that problematic. And more importantly still, each thinker can, I aim to show, complement the other in certain key ways; and taken together, they can provide the

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230 The best books on these topics are Kisiel’s *Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time* and Matthews’ *Lonergan’s Quest*. Sharkey’s dissertation is also helpful on this topic: Michael Sharkey, *Heidegger, Lonergan, and Authenticity: An Inquiry into the Role of Intelligence in Praxis*, 10-16.
groundwork for a robust philosophical anthropology, extremely well-equipped to answer
some of the most pressing philosophical questions facing the current generation of
thinkers.

I have already indicated that the key to Lonergan’s entire philosophical project is
the “insight,” the sudden grasp of intelligibility in some imaginary or sensible
presentation, some set of data. Based upon a sprawling, exploratory analysis of this
“insight” and its various implications, Lonergan will develop a portrait of cognitive
structure which, at first blush, might seem radically different from Heidegger’s approach
to the question of being, and perhaps rather similar to the philosophies offered by, for
instance, Kant and Hume. But in fact, Lonergan, like Heidegger, is attempting to put
forth a portrait of the human being which resists the merely intellectualist interpretation
favored by the moderns—even though Lonergan may seem at crucial moments to be
some species of intellectualist. In Insight, we have a portrait of the human being as
dynamically involved in structures of meaning, living in certain concrete patterns of
experience and significance; within this broader context, the intellectual dimension of
man takes on an overriding importance, but only insofar as a value-response and a
decision found a truth-seeking pursuit which issues in intellectual development.

For the sake of making as apparent as possible the parallels between Heidegger’s
and Lonergan’s thinking that seem worthy of attention, this long section on Lonergan will
mirror, as closely as possible, the organizational structure of the chapter on Heidegger. As
with Heidegger, so with Lonergan we shall begin with what I take to be the crucial notion:
for Heidegger, it was Being-in-the-world, and for Lonergan, it is the insight. From there,
we shall develop an interpretation of Lonergan’s patterns of experience which shall lead into a treatment of his understanding of human historicity, and what place “knowledge” holds in this broader context; these sections will roughly parallel our treatment of historicity and judgment in the Heidegger chapter. Finally, we will address the Lonerganian notion of judgment, mirroring our discussion of Heidegger’s claim that knowing is a founded mode of access to the Real.
§1 - The Insight and the Fourfold Structure of Cognition

A. Background

As I have already suggested, two of the central developments in Lonergan’s thought, and those which put him most squarely into dialogue with Heidegger, are his increasing grasp, through his earlier writings, of the importance of a pre-conceptual moment in the genesis of knowing and, through his mature writings, a gradual appreciation of the importance of historicity in the development of human intelligence, both individual and communal. While our chief focus in this dissertation is Insight, it is not inappropriate, at the outset, to trace in very rough outline Lonergan’s development as a thinker: for while we may see in Heidegger’s composition of Being and Time the striking novelty of a young genius upending traditional thinking,231 in Lonergan’s case we have the gradual, indeed lifelong, development of a complete philosophy, ever reflecting upon and refining itself, and issuing finally in two momentous and central works.

Taking an interest in philosophy in his early twenties, Lonergan familiarized himself with Aristotle and with contemporary thought on logic:

I am afraid I must lapse into philosophy. I have been stung with that monomania now and then but I am little scholastic though as far as I know a good Catholic. Still modern logic is fair. The theory of knowledge is what is going to interest me most of all. I have read Aristotle his peri psuches and am of strong nominalist tendency.232

Leaving behind this early nominalism, Lonergan eventually found himself involved in the world of Thomist thinking, writing his doctoral dissertation on the development of

231 Though of course this is a caricature, and Being and Time, like all works, has its own history, its own growth and development.

Aquinas’ understanding of the relation between grace and freedom and turning, in the
1940s, to an in-depth study of Aquinas’ philosophy of the divine processions in the *Verbum*
articles. In the latter work, Lonergan goes to great lengths to make a distinction between
Aquinas’ “understanding of what it is to understand” (to borrow a phrase from *Insight*)
and a gnoseological position he names “conceptualism,” which is often taken to be
Aquinas’ position. This “conceptualism,” which Lonergan traces to the several
commenters on Aquinas, survives in various forms through the history of medieval
philosophy, and comes to inform the gnoseological approach of Descartes; from there, as
one might imagine, it takes root in various guises in the thinking of both the empiricists
and the rationalists.

In any event, the notion Lonergan has hit on in this earlier study of Aquinas will
prove to be the centerpiece of *Insight*, the first great work of the mature Lonergan:
knowing is not an immediate passage from sensation to concept, from concept to
judgment. At each stage, there is the gradual growth and development of intelligence. In
other words, there is both a formally and a substantially pre-conceptual moment in the
emergence of understanding and knowing. First, the transition from sensory presentation
to concept is not immediate, and so there is a formally pre-conceptual element to
knowing: there is some transitional event and moment between the presentation
(experience) and the concept (understanding). Second, beyond this formal pre-
conceptuality, there is the substantial pre-conceptuality that is part and parcel of the
entire process of knowing: for the ceaseless drive of intelligence in inquiry, what Lonergan
will later name the “pure unrestricted desire to know,” is the motor of cognitive process
generally and intelligence specifically. But the pure desire to know is not a concept or a web of concepts, as it is operative before all concepts and is the ground from which all concepts spring. It is tied up, then, with the immanent drama of human living, the tendency and indeed necessity of human beings to live through personal and cultural histories in narratively meaningful ways.

Now, the “transitional moment” between sensory or imaginative presentation and understanding, and likewise between understanding and judgment, is the occurrence of the insight; and it is the insight, too, which—to continue with the same image—is the cog in the motor of cognitive process, the “pure unrestricted desire to know.” And given that Lonergan saw fit to title his foundational work on cognitional theory *Insight*, it would seem worthwhile to spend some time on just what is meant by this term, and exactly how it can be said to be so central to cognitive process. The insight is the pivot between presentation and understanding, and the “reflective insight” stands in the same intermediary position between understanding and judgment considered as affirmation or denial of the intelligible content of some proposition; it is the pre-conceptual grasp of some intelligible pattern in a sensory or imaginative presentation; it is the uncoerceable, even unpredictable, culmination of the process of inquiry. It is the moment when the mind, prior to any formulation, conceptualization, or expression, identifies in the sensory or

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233 Just as there is, in Aquinas, intellectual habit and virtue, which is not some concept held or grasped by the intellect, but rather the habitual pattern that allows for the formation and development of concepts. See Lonergan, *Insight*, 378.
imaginative presentation some intelligible structure, some matrix of relations that answers
the question that the desire to know spontaneously puts to the presentations.\textsuperscript{234}

\section*{B. The Insight}

Lonergan saw fit, in \textit{Insight}, to introduce the notion of the insight with a few rather
down-to-earth examples, and it seems proper to follow his lead. The opening words of the
preface to \textit{Insight} give us some indication of just what Lonergan is after:

\begin{quote}
In the ideal detective story the reader is given all the clues yet fails to spot
the criminal. He may advert to each clue as it arises. He needs no further
clues to solve the mystery. Yet he can remain in the dark for the simple
reason that reaching the solution is not the mere apprehension of any clue,
not the mere memory of all, but a quite distinct activity of organizing
intelligence that places all the clues in a unique explanatory perspective. By
insight, then, is meant not any act of attention or advertence or memory,
but the supervening act of understanding.\textsuperscript{235}
\end{quote}

In the process of inquiry, when all the relevant clues have been gathered, when the data
stands before one, ready to be analyzed, still there remains the need for the penetration of
that data by intelligence. To merely observe all the relevant data is not enough: one can
stare at a spreadsheet or a diagram for as long as one likes, but until there is that moment
when something “clicks,” to use a familiar turn of phrase, one has not understood.\textsuperscript{236}

\textsuperscript{234} Lonergan speaks of insight as the transition both between presentation and understanding as well as
between understanding and judgment. This latter is, properly, the “reflective insight,” the insight which
grasps the virtually unconditioned. However, as Lonergan sees fit to call understanding “insight” simply, it
seems prudent to reserve the term “understanding” for the grasp of form which is the second moment in
cognitive process, and the term “insight,” whether reflective or otherwise, for the pivot between each of
these levels of cognitional process.

\textsuperscript{235} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 3. My emphasis.

\textsuperscript{236} Seeing and understanding, that is, are quite distinct sorts of activities, despite the frequency with which
we might use the phrase “I see” to indicate the achievement of understanding. Nor is Lonergan advocating
the abandonment of all such metaphor; nonetheless, the metaphor is not the fact, and understanding is not
the same as seeing, though the flash of understanding may well bear a certain resemblance to the sudden
turning on of a light in a dark room.
One’s mode of intending the data is transformed: at the one moment, it is an unorganized array, a baffling diagram, in need of some organizing principle to make it comprehensible; in the next moment, the table or diagram is a more or less lucid expression of an intelligible relation or set of relations which the mind has grasped. (Of course, there are transitional insights between complete lack of understanding and full comprehension.) Significantly, this grasp is pre-conceptual and, hence, pre-linguistic, and arises more readily when certain intellectual habits are formed and nurtured. One can perfectly well have the insight that the square of the hypotenuse of the triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of its sides, without yet having the conceptual or linguistic framework to express that grasp to others. And there are mundane, routine, everyday insights which more or less occur without ever rising to the level of explicit consciousness: the coffee machine isn’t working because I haven’t plugged it in, for instance. But essentially, the insight—whether intellectual, commonsensical, or belonging to some other mode of being in the world—is prior to any and every conceptual formulation. Of course, this conceptual framework will follow rather rapidly upon the having of the insight, and a vocabulary to express these concepts will either be ready-to-hand (as in the case of grasping something that others have grasped and given expression to before) or will have to be developed (as in the construction of a technical vocabulary out of

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237 Though, perhaps, if linguistic expression never follows, the insight might be considered incomplete, for intelligence expresses itself through words, in concepts.

238 Heideggerian overtones deliberate but not definitive: for Lonergan, there are certainly a multiplicity of distinct ways of being in the world (he calls them patterns of experience), and I will argue that patterns of experience and Being-in-the-world should be taken as conceptually similar in certain key ways, but nonetheless I do not intend, here, for this term to carry the full Heideggerian weight. In other words, “being in the world” is a convenient shorthand for a concrete modality of involvement, whereas Being-in-the-world is meant to call to mind explicitly and with conceptual purity the Heideggerian concept.
everyday language). But in any event, the grasp, the insight itself, is prior to this conceptualization which is prior in turn to its expression in linguistic form. This is not to deny the centrality to the thinking process of language—the particular insight is pre-conceptual and pre-linguistic, but its occasion will inevitably be tied up with the conceptual and linguistic (and hence the cultural and historical) framework within which one’s inquiry is taking place; or of the imagination—which to Lonergan is essential to the having of an insight, even if the intelligible grasped by the insight always goes beyond what the image can convey. It is only to suggest that in the genesis and growth of understanding, there is a moment which is decidedly not the mere stringing together of concepts already acquired, but is itself the generative principle of concepts, as well as the grasp that allows old concepts to be put together in new ways.

But more must be said about the insight itself, if we are to draw attention to the ways in which it undermines the prototypically modern understanding of knowing. Lonergan begins the preface with a word about detective stories, but he begins the first chapter of *Insight* with a “dramatic instance,” the famous discovery by Archimedes that he could weigh Hiero’s crown in water to determine the purity of its gold. One may imagine Archimedes straining to find a solution to the problem put to him, or starting upon various leads only to find them inadequate; but the climax of the story is Archimedes’ sudden realization, sitting in the baths at Syracuse, that water is displaced

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239 Conversely, one may imagine a case in which one repeats, again and again, some linguistic formulation, before finally having an insight into just what those words mean, as, for instance, the meaning of a line of poetry can dawn on one unexpectedly, though one has been reciting that line for years.

240 The insight and the formation of a concept are distinct moments in the generation of knowledge; but the insight grasps the intelligible principle which will be expressed in the concept.

when a massive object is immersed in it. As Lonergan points out, many others had no
doubt observed this phenomenon; this particular sensory presentation was not foreign to
them. But it was only Archimedes who explicitly grasped that there is some correlation
between the mass of the immersed object and the amount of water displaced and,
further, that this occurrence could be used to measure the mass of some object. In other
words, many people were privy to the sensory presentation in question, but it was only
Archimedes who had the insight into its general significance—and into its particular
significance for him, in solving the problem of the crown.

What comes to the fore, here, is the marked difference between an apprehension
of sensory or imaginative presentations—of simply looking or imagining—and a grasp of
intelligible relations expressed in the data in question. To see the water rise is one thing; to
understand the significance of this phenomenon is quite another. Insight, that is,
prescinds from the insignificant to grasp the essential; or, in more Lonerganian terms, it
graps the intelligible structure by means of an enriching abstraction from the “empirical
residue,” namely the intellectually insignificant differences of time and place that pertain
to the concrete entities to be understood. But there is a further significance to the
example of Archimedes, for it reveals five basic qualities of the insight in relation to the
process of inquiry. Each of these will emphasize in its own way what we have termed the
pre-conceptuality of the insight.

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242 Ibid., 50-56: “[T]he incidental, irrelevant, negligible consists in the empirical residue that, since it
possesses no immanent intelligibility of its own, is left over without explanation even when a science or
group of sciences reaches full development.”
First, insight “comes as a release to the tension of inquiry.” Central to Lonergan’s project in *Insight* and beyond is to make the case that understanding, as we have already seen, is not a merely automatic occurrence, not the mere conjoining of concepts resulting spontaneously in knowledge. More specifically, understanding takes place in the context of what might be called a narrative arc. The human individual, for reasons we shall explore later, is the kind of being that cannot help but desire to understand the *why* behind *everything* that enters into the purview of its experience— and the insight, the act of grasping some intelligibility in the sensory or imaginative given, is the resolution to that narrative arc. First, there are *sensory or imaginative presentations*; second, there are the *questions* spontaneously posed by the human mind; third, there is the moment of *understanding*, when some potential solution to the questions presents itself; and finally there is *reflective insight* which issues in a judgment, the “yes” or “no” to the posed solution.

Insight does not occur automatically, but develops out of the overarching and all-encompassing drive, grounded in the notion of being as the objective correlate of the desire to know, toward full and complete understanding that characterizes the human being’s spontaneous way of existing in the world. It thus makes perfect sense for Lonergan to speak of insight as a “release”—the very release that prompted Archimedes

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243 Ibid., 28.

244 To say “everything” might seem excessive, and certainly, concretely speaking, some things fall below the threshold of explicit interest, questioning, engagement. Nonetheless, the scope of the desire to know is unrestricted, and so, at least in principle, the range of phenomena which demand explanation is likewise unrestricted.

245 Lonergan’s understanding of being will be developed in substantial depth in the final chapter of this essay.
to exclaim “eureka.” But if insight is a release, if it is the resolution to the drama of inquiry, if—to put it differently—a concept is not an automatic result of the subject’s confrontation with some sensorially given object, but rather the hard-won prize of an effort to understand, then certainly understanding is no merely mechanical process.

Whatever the psycho-neural and properly psychological constituents of the act of understanding may be (and we shall turn to these constituents forthwith), still it remains indisputable, says Lonergan, that the moment of understanding, the insight, is a pre-conceptual achievement, for its most obvious and tangible characteristic is its having a place within the drama of trying to understand. Understanding emerges, first, in a dramatic context, before it aspires to the level of explicit conceptuality.

Second, insight is unexpected, “a new beginning.” Insight is not the following of some pre-established routine—although routine can be the matrix within which insight forms its new beginnings—but is rather the creative genius which “disregards established routines [and] originates the novelties that will be the routines of the future.”

Precisely insofar as insight is a grasping of intelligible relations in sensory or imaginative presentations, is it likewise unexpected: there is no foolproof way to transition from the diagram of a triangle, for instance, to a grasp of the fundamentals of trigonometry. One can memorize rules or certain patterns of operations; one can perform them as a computer might, step by step, and come up with the proper responses; but all that is

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246 See Michael M. Sharkey, *Heidegger, Lonergan, and Authenticity: An Inquiry into the Role of Intelligence in Praxis* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest, 2003), 20-21: “The ground of the togetherness of Being and man (sic), in Lonergan, is ‘transcendental intention’. It is the fundamental field of relation between Being and human being, human being and Being; and it consists, in its core, in the desirous anticipation of intelligibility and fact.”

markedly different from the sudden and unpredictable flash of understanding, when everything is put into an “explanatory perspective,” when one does not merely remember correctly which step comes next in some mechanized, routinized process, but actually grasps the principle upon which the process is based. Any person of reasonable intelligence can memorize the routine, but only the master—or the genius—understands the *why* of the routine, its principle.\textsuperscript{248} As insight is not reducible to any repeatable process or routine,\textsuperscript{249} it goes without saying that no conceptualism, which understands mental process as a quasi-mechanistic and automatic movement from sense to image to concept, can adequately account for the phenomenon of insight. The act of understanding is, again, essentially pre-conceptual: it has to do not with moving between concepts one already possesses, but with a grasp that places matters into an explanatory perspective which can, only then, issue in concepts. Unlike the Cartesian methodology, in which knowledge is thought to be deduced straightforwardly provided one has the correct starting point—intellectual subject, extended world, God as guarantor of the world’s trustworthiness—the Lonerganian approach sees no possibility of a closed conceptual system automatically generated from adequate first principles, but rather holds that each

\textsuperscript{248} This distinction, alluded to here and developed more fully elsewhere in *Insight*, is fundamentally Aristotelian, mirroring the distinction between experience, art, and wisdom in the *Metaphysics*. The man with experience can repeat a routine and knows the particulars; the person who possesses the art or skill knows the general principle, the *why*, which is instantiated in the routine and the particulars; and the wise man understands the causes of things in a broad, all-encompassing sort of way and is in possession of certain ultimate explanatory principles. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2002), 980a1-983a23.

\textsuperscript{249} Of course, Lonergan is essentially concerned with method and methodology, and so this disparagement of routine might seem one-sided—and it is. Routine *cannot* produce insight, but a set of repeatable routines founded on a set of original insights is absolutely essential for fostering the conditions within which insights can be more than chance occurrence. So, no educational routine can absolutely guarantee that the students will understand; nonetheless, without educational routine, the occurrence of insight would be mere chance, instead of a regular, albeit unpredictable, occurrence.
increment of knowledge is premised on the intelligent grasp, the *insight*, that puts two and two together, so to speak. The fundamental moment, the turning point from ignorance to understanding, is prior to the concept. To return to the dramatic instance: when Archimedes cried “*Eureka!*”, it was not because he had suddenly connected two concepts in mechanical fashion, but rather because he had had that flash of understanding that can issue in new concepts—in this case, hydrostatics and specific gravity.

Third, insight has more to do with “inner conditions” than “outer circumstances.”250 For Archimedes, to see the water rise was not enough, for many had observed the very same phenomena, as had, undoubtedly, Archimedes himself; but in the context of Archimedes’ own inquiry the rising of the water became all-important. As we have seen, insight cannot be routinized; furthermore, it cannot be forced or coerced. No outer circumstances can lead irresistibly to the having of an insight; no teacher can make a student understand. The best that can be hoped for is an adequate arrangement of the relevant data and an initiation in the habits of practice and thought that tend toward understanding. Beyond this, it is up to the student’s own restless desire to know, his or her native and inescapable drive toward understanding, to put the pieces together and grasp just what is going on.251 The discoveries of mathematicians and scientists, psychologists and sociologists, explain data which, at least in principle, are accessible to everyone; but it is only those who dispose their interiority, their lived consciousness, in such a way as to seek understanding, who make the discoveries that transform and develop the sciences, whether in major or minor ways. Again we see that the insight is pre-conceptual, for it is


251 Ibid., 197-8.
not the automatic result of some sensory or imaginative encounter, but the result of the individual’s restless desire to understand. Moreover, this is not to suggest that the “subject” is some purely intellectual being—on the contrary, we see again that insight takes place essentially in a dramatic context, for it is the questioning animating the scientist or the mathematician which is the driving force behind discovery. Without that questioning, without that pre-reflective dedication to the pursuit of understanding, the inner conditions that foster the emergence of insight would be absent, and no insight would be had.

Fourthly, insight is into sensory or imaginative presentations, but is a grasp that transcends the particularity of the sensory or the imaginative. A simple example will suffice here: the diagram of a right triangle is the material on which understanding works, into which one has an insight. One looks at the diagram, one endeavors to understand; suddenly, unexpectedly, one grasps just why the ratio of the sides to the hypotenuse is the way it is; but the diagram is particular, where the understanding expressed in the Pythagorean theorem is general, applicable to all right triangles, whether drawn or imagined, no matter the lengths of their sides nor the measurements of their non-right angles. The insight, to use Lonergan’s term, has pivoted between the concrete and the abstract.252 There is no bridge between the concrete and the abstract; mental process is not an automatic transition from one to the other; the insight, one might say, makes a leap (and Lonergan himself employs this term) from the particular to the general, insofar as there is no repeatable routine to ensure this passage. This leap, this pivot, is prior to the

\[252\] Ibid., 30.
concept. When one looks at the diagram of the right triangle, one knows very well that there are concepts to explain it—one may even know the names of these concepts. But one does not have these concepts in the mode of understanding, one has not arrived at them by grasping the intelligible relations present in the diagram, until one has made this leap for oneself. The grasp of intelligible relations is, again, prior to the formulation or expression of this grasp in concepts, and is distinct from the sort of discursive reasoning which moves among and between concepts (though an insight can be the fruit of this sort of discursive reasoning, by which a new relation of concepts is grasped). It is the unpredictable and spontaneous leap from the struggle to understand to actually understanding, from the particular items into which insight seeks understanding to the general grasp that can then go on to be expressed in concepts.

Finally, insight “passes into the habitual texture of one’s mind.” The passage or leap from not understanding to understanding is marked by the ease that accompanies the repetition of the original insight. When one does not understand, understanding comes with difficulty; but once one has understood—really understood—then to perform the same operation or solve the same type of problem again comes quite naturally. Quite unlike Descartes, who sought to guarantee understanding by eliminating as far as possible any knowledge not absolutely justified on its own terms, Lonergan explicitly maintains that intellectual habits and patterns of thought both arise out of concrete acts of understanding, and tend to give rise to acts of understanding. Descartes, in other words, may have doubted every dubitable positive fact—but even Descartes could not really

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253 Ibid., 30.
escape the habitually cultivated intellectual habits he had acquired, for they are prior to
any explicit concept. For further clarity on this point, one may think of a student,
following, time and again, the memorized pattern whereby some mathematical problem
can be solved; but then, for some students, there will come the deeper grasp that goes
beyond rote memorization and repetition. Some students will have an insight into why the
operation works the way it does, and then the solving of problems is no longer the
application of a memorized pattern of operations—which, all the while, one hopes one is
performing correctly, since one has no real grasp of why he or she is performing them—but rather the perfectly natural following of certain procedures suggested by the nature of
the problem itself. For such students, to solve the problem a second, a third, an nth time, is
no great struggle, because the insight has become a permanent addition to one’s mental
habits. It is in large measure due to insight’s becoming a part of the habitual texture of
the mind that concepts, syllogisms, indeed explicit logic itself, are possible; once one has
understood, and that understanding has become routine, one can begin to devise a
conceptual system and technical vocabulary with which to express what one has grasped.
But when has not yet understood, one has hardly the words to express why one does not
understand, let alone the concepts and vocabulary to explain the intended object of one's
desire to understand. And logic itself, the purely formal expression of non-particular rules
of thinking, can be achieved only as a result of the mind's habitual grasp of intelligible patterns regarding, not this or that object, but beings as such.  

These five features of insight, each in its own way, draw attention to insight’s status as pre-conceptual. Insight may, eventually, give rise to or issue in concepts, but is essentially prior to all concepts, as it is the spontaneous transition—unpredictable and uncoerceable—that grasps in a flash the intelligible relations immanent in some sensory or imaginative presentation. As insight, it is prior to conceptual articulation or linguistic expression, for it is individual, unique, spontaneous. So insight is pre-conceptual—but more than this, the insight is also in some sense the motor of all cognitive process, for at each moment in cognitive process, it is the insight that is the pivot to the next moment. So one begins with sensory or imaginative presentation; one has a desire to understand; the struggle to understand results in an insight which yields an understanding; this understanding is either adequate to the phenomena in question, or it is a mere “bright idea;” and the judgment that this understanding is or is not adequate to the reality in question is achieved, again, in the reflective insight that grasps the connection between the general and the particular, and sees the general as borne out in these particulars. This can be in the mode of necessity—for instance, the law of noncontradiction—or probability, in which case one judges that there is no statistically significant deviation from anticipated norms, or even of possibility or impossibility. Central, then, to the entire

It is a mistake, for Lonergan, to think that formal logic expresses the “structure” of the human mind or of reality; rather, the immanent dynamism of the human mind and its isomorphism with the real is the basis of all logics. Logic is static, but the structure of the mind is dynamic, “on the move.” The human mind, in other word, grasps system and systematic relations and connections, but system must be conceived as system on the move, with lower order systems giving way to higher order systems—and to each system corresponds a logic.
functioning of the human mind, is the insight, this pre-conceptual leap. Understanding is not an automatic process of reading off concepts from sensory presentations and then moving about in a realm of pure concepts, but an achievement of the restless dynamism of the human mind. Speaking of science, Lonergan writes:

Science does not advance by deducing new conclusions from old premises. Deduction is an operation that occurs only in the field of concepts and propositions. But the advance of science ... is a circuit: from data to inquiry, from inquiry to insight, from insight to the formulation of premises and the deduction of their implications, from such formulation to material operations which yield fresh insights named a higher viewpoint. A basic revision, then, is a leap. At a stroke, it is a grasp of the insufficiency both of the old laws and of the old standards. At a stroke, it generates both the new laws and the new standards.²⁵⁵

Knowledge proceeds through the spontaneous grasp of insight, and insight’s original context is the drama of human living, which provides the horizon and sets the parameters within which the spontaneity of intelligence may play out, and within which the giving of free rein to intelligence is always, first of all, a choice. It is the drama of human living—personal, cultural, global— which establishes the horizon of possible experiences and the concomitant possible questions, to which insight provides its various solutions. In other words, the Cartesian portrait of the mind divorced from anything outside itself, working only upon its own self, is to be rejected, for mind is always, already involved in patterns of inquiry and understanding, and to strip away the context within which understanding natively works is to obstruct the possibility of understanding understanding.

²⁵⁵ Lonergan, Insight, 190. My emphasis.
C. The Fourfold Structure

Already alluded to above is the fourfold structure of cognitive operations which can be grasped in thinking through the phenomena of inquiry and insight to their conclusions. We have emphasized, so far, the role of the insight in transitioning from sensory or imaginative presentations to a grasp of intelligible relations, and have made some reference to the “reflective insight” which reflects upon the intelligible relations grasped in the insight in light of the relevant, available data, to determine whether the intelligible relation is, in fact, adequate to the sensory or imaginative presentations in question. One may, that is, have an insight that grasps, tentatively, some intelligible structure in the presentations, only to discover that one has overlooked some crucial piece of evidence or misinterpreted the data of sensation such that one’s grasp is inadequate to the phenomena, and stands in need of revision. Aristotelian cosmology was a solution—and for a long time, the most viable solution—to the question posed by the movement of the heavens; but through the process of inquiry, of comparing the ever-expanding repository of available sensory data to the intelligible structure expressed conceptually and linguistically in works on Aristotelian cosmology, the Aristotelian solution to that problem was ultimately rejected, as a reflective insight grasped that the pattern of intelligible relations in the Aristotelian solution did not, in fact, satisfactorily answer the questions set by the data of sense. Or, one may have an “inverse insight” that there is in fact no intelligible structure to the data in question: asked to find an overarching cause for change over time in some set of data, a researcher might have the sudden insight that,

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Ibid., 43-50.
in fact, there is no overarching cause, that there is no single pattern explaining all the data at hand, and that the presumption that there is such a pattern obscures one’s view of the vast multiplicity of discrete causes behind the changes in question.

In any event, by tracing down the process of inquiry and insight, one arrives at a basic pattern of four operations which comprise, in a very generic way, the essential cognitive procedures at work in the generation of knowledge. These basic operations should not be seen as some abstract schema, imposed dictatorially upon a much more fluid reality; rather, in one’s own thinking through the question of whether this schema reflects the facts of the matter, one invariably finds oneself engaged in each of the constitutive activities of this schema. And while, in reality, the mind may not always progress effortlessly and without hesitation from one operation to the next—and in fact, it is probably rather rare that this sequence of operations is carried through in uninterrupted succession—nonetheless, these operations, says Lonergan, form the basis of the mind’s essential behaviors vis-à-vis the world.

The first of these operations corresponds roughly to what the epistemological tradition calls sensation or sensitivity, and what Lonergan names “presentation.” Simply enough, we are referring here to the mind’s capacity to be receptive to impressions, to be able to experience both the world and its own states. Presentation, then, is that whereby the mind has the “data” of sensation or of imagination. At first blush, this might seem like a characteristically modern way of thinking about the human being’s way of having its world, as though what is meant here is that the human mind is

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257 Ibid., 96.
merely receptive to some collection of indifferent sensations—which it can then process and organize and systematize and understand. Certainly, one might think, nothing could be more unlike the Heideggerian rejection of the modern notion of the subject/object distinction, of the human being as a merely intellectual substance, than the suggestion that the basic constituents of human experience are mere data points to be systematized and organized by some intellectual process. For, Lonergan says that the data “of sense include colors, shapes, sounds, odors, tastes, the hard and the soft, rough and smooth, hot and cold, wet and dry, and so forth.” But, in fact, and despite the terminological similarities between his account and those of the moderns, Lonergan has no such empiricist notion in mind. As we shall see in what follows, the “contents” of experience, the “data” of sense, are not discrete sensations—though certainly reflection can discern and cognitively isolate the distinct elements of any experience—but rather the already-organized, pre-reflectively and meaningfully structured world within which one finds oneself engaged in a variety of ways. This world within which one finds oneself may be the “data” of experience, upon which intelligence can work, but, as a matter of fact, one has always, already found oneself within a context of meaning and significance that demarcates the horizon of possible inquiry, the field within which intelligence may play.

The second of the mind’s characteristic operations is understanding, the grasp of intelligible structure within the presentations. When we have discussed the nature of insight, above, we have most often done so by illustrating the cognitive operation called

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259 Ibid., 204.
understanding: when the insight pivots between the concrete and the general, the grasp of intelligible relations at which it arrives is the content of the act of understanding. To understand, then, is to discern intelligible relations, to move in the direction of an explanatory account of perceived phenomena. Moreover, understanding is not some merely intellectual operation—some firmly delimited and intentionally undertaken operation of the mind in pursuit of the solution to a rigorously defined question. On the contrary, mind invariably seeks to understand the contents of the imaginative and sensory presentations: whether in an analytical or a dialectical or an aesthetic or a dramatic mode, the mind seeks to understand the given. This is why, of course, children ask questions incessantly, and why some adults continue to ask questions, whether as scientists or philosophers or poets; but it is also why human beings cannot resist the temptation to form narratives around the events of their lives, for to narrativize is to contextualize, and to place things into a proper explanatory context is to take a step in the direction of understanding.

Because understanding is an explanatory context and an intellectual grasp, it can issue in an account of the phenomena of experience; but insofar as this account is as yet susceptible of being proven incorrect, inadequate, or incomplete, understanding is not the terminus of cognitive process. Rather, there is the need for a further step: the reflective insight which takes both the intellectual grasp and the relevant data into a single view, and pronounces either the “yes” of affirmation or the “no” of denial in regard to the proposed explanation. Understanding, as a faculty, seeks an explanatory perspective with regard to the presentations; but the presentations themselves are evidence for or against
proposed explanations. Reflective understanding, then, returns to the contents of presentation, and seeks in them the evidence for a “yes” or “no” response to the question, “Is this explanation true?” And although understanding is susceptible of formulation in a proposition, it “may be simply an object of thought, the content of an act of conceiving, defining, thinking, supposing, considering. But a proposition may also be the content of an act of judging, and then it is the content of an affirming or denying, an agreeing or disagreeing, an assenting or dissenting.” It is a reflective insight which grasps the connection between the concrete evidence and the general explanation, and issues in the affirmation or denial. One may imagine, then, a fairly dynamic pattern of mental operations in which mind, in a rapid-fire sort of way, encounters a phenomenon demanding explanation, thinks through the various possible accounts, and just as quickly returns to the original phenomena to see whether the account is adequate to the evidence. Why won’t the burner of my stove turn on? Is the power out? No. Is the stove unplugged? No. Has a circuit breaker been tripped? Yes. Mind, confronted with a question, runs through various possible explanations, and checks each of them against the concrete data of sense or imagination. In so doing, it may come to a true understanding, or it may fail to arrive at an adequate explanation; but until adequate explanation is achieved, which is to say, so long as relevant questions still remain unanswered, the mind is not satisfied, and will continue to push toward an explanation, barring intellectual fatigue, or extraneous concerns, or what have you.

Lonergan, Insight, 296-7.
Now, because the possible explanations to the problems posed by the presentations are so diverse, and because the question of what counts as evidence itself requires an intelligible answer, various methodologies have been put forth, throughout history, to restrict admissible explanations and the sorts of data that may count as evidential. So, for instance, Lonergan is able to provide a list of the “canons of empirical method:” rigorous scientific methodology, that is, must impose firm restrictions on the sorts of explanations counted as plausible, and the sorts of data which may count for evidence. To suggest that water boils because invisible spirits work some occult effect upon it may be an account of a phenomenon of sense, but it is certainly not a scientific explanation, insofar as it introduces extraneous explanatory factors not demanded by the phenomenon itself, neither verifiable nor falsifiable in light of the data of direct or indirect observation.\textsuperscript{261}

But just as these canons of empirical method may be employed to restrict the scope of admissible evidence for empirical inquiry, so too might there be discerned a method for reliably navigating the data of inner consciousness: moods, thoughts, notions, and the like. And, unsurprisingly, for Lonergan the foundation of this method can be located in the fourfold structure of cognitive operations we are discussing here: the mind is able to “catch itself in the act” of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, and to recognize these operations as normative with regard to what counts as complete or incomplete understanding. So, for instance, the intuition that some higher power exists may certainly occur to a person; but what counts as fully human knowing is not the mere intuition, but

\footnotesize \begin{center}
\textsuperscript{261} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 93ff.
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the reflective judgment based upon evidence, explanatory of and conforming to the data of experience, whether empirical or spiritual or otherwise.

In any event, once the question of what counts as evidence is settled, the judgment may proceed, and the truth or falsity of the proposition in question be asserted. But in judging, the subject is engaged in taking responsibility. In asserting that “X is so,” I am in fact simultaneously asserting that I, as a responsible agent, have assessed the relevant evidence and deemed the proffered explanation satisfactory. If it is proved that, in fact, X is not so, then I am proved wrong. The evidence did not lie, and the proposition in question may have remained a mere object of consideration; but, more critically, I may have refrained from judgment, taking the time to more fully assess the proposition in light of the relevant evidence. In judging that “X is so,” I have committed myself to the truth of the proposition in question. From this basic level of responsibility implicit in the very notion of judgment, we may ascend to a more robust notion of responsibility—the fourth level of cognitive operation, namely, willing in freedom results which (ethically) do or (unethically) do not accord with what one has judged to be the case:

The detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know grasps intelligently and affirms reasonably not only the facts of the universe of being but also its practical possibilities. Such practical possibilities include

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262 We will return to this question in what follows.

263 Lonergan, Insight, 299. See also Robert M. Doran, “Imitating the Divine Relations: A Theological Contribution to Mimetic Theory,” Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies 23, no. 2 (2005), 163: “We are determined as intellectually, rationally, and morally conscious and consciously active and operative: materially or potentially by the objects of sensation, with an incipient and devalued formal and actual intelligibility in the reception of meanings and values, formally by our own acts of understanding as a release to our own inquiry, more formally still as these acts of understanding give rise to the act that is the first inner word (act from act), then actually by our own grasp of evidence and the judgments that proceed from that grasp (again, act from act), and effectively and constitutively by our deliberations and decisions flowing from our judgments of value (act from act once more).” But judgment, as “act from act,” is likewise subjected to the rule of responsible decision.
intelligent transformations not only of the environment in which man lives but also of man’s own spontaneous living. For that living exhibits an otherwise coincidental manifold into which man can introduce a higher system by his own understanding of himself and his own deliberate choices … Man is not only a knower but also a doer; the same intelligent and rational consciousness grounds the doing as well as the knowing; and from that identity of consciousness there springs inevitably an exigence for self-consistency in knowing and doing.²⁶⁴

As our concern is not primarily ethical, but rather gnoseological and ontological, we will leave aside any further discussion of how Lonergan’s treatment of ethics may or may not reflect a response to prototypically modern ethical theories, noting only that while Lonergan is not a Kantian, nonetheless his ethical theory (at least as elaborated in *Insight*) has a certain Kantian ring to it.

Let us now make a handful of remarks on the ways in which Lonergan’s cognitional theory represents a break from the modern tradition with which it may at first blush appear so consistent. First, and most significantly, Lonergan’s is a variegated account of cognitional operations. There is a tendency in modern thought—in the empiricists most pronouncedly, but also in Kant and his intellectual descendants—to flatten all cognitive operations to the level of something resembling sensory presentation, or some hybrid of sensory presentation and spontaneous, intuitive understanding. So for Hume, there is no mental operation which is not, in principle, reducible to a sensory impression or the washed-out sensory impression he names an idea; for Kant, judgment is not a truly separate mental operation, pertaining to the truth or falsity of propositions, but rather the conjoining of concepts. Even Hegel is unable to grasp adequately the

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²⁶⁴ Lonergan, *Insight*, 622. Knowledge must not only be consistent with itself (later judgments condition and can lead to the revision of earlier ones) but also with the *doing* of the knowing agent.
distinction between moving in and amongst concepts and the higher order cognitive operation wherein the virtually unconditioned is grasped which links the intellectual schema with the concrete presentations. Accordingly—since, for Lonergan, knowing and being are isomorphic—he, unlike the moderns, is able to advance a truly differentiated account of the real. He may not, like Heidegger, suggest that the human being’s fundamental modality of being is radically distinct, that man ex-sists; but he does suggest that the modern distinction between subject and object is inadequately specified, that it does not get to the root of the matter. It is not, simply, subject here and object there; the human being is not an intellectual thing among other things which happen to be corporeal, but is differentiated from the external world by being not only intelligible, but also intelligent, not only open to being understood, but constituted by an activity of self-understanding—an activity which has a biological, an aesthetic, a dramatic, and an intellectual component. The relation of the knower and the known cannot, then, be reduced to a confrontation between subject and object: Lonergan’s work “challenge[s] the most pervasive assumption of modern thought, the ‘confrontation theory of truth,’ the view … that the act of knowing essentially entails a confrontation of subject and object.” And, as McPartland goes on, “We need not stress too much the obvious: the whole tenor of modern culture had been framed within the Cartesian dualism of subject confronting object.” And, refusing “to posit an irrevocable bifurcation of subject and object, [Lonergan] shifts attention from horizons as finished products to the cognitive and

265 Ibid., 397-8. More on the precise significance of the virtually unconditioned later.

266 McPartland, Lonergan and Historiography, 3.
existential performance that constitutes them in the project of historical life.”\textsuperscript{267} The emphasis moves from subject as intellectual substance, to subject as dynamically, dramatically involved in an on-going expansion (or contraction) of worlds of meaning, stemming from the intellect’s restlessly seeking to understand ever further questions, as ever further realms of data to be understood are opened up.

\textsuperscript{267} Ibid., 4.
§2 — *The Patterns of Experience*

At the close of the last chapter, we referred in passing to four distinct components of the activity of self-understanding by which the human being constitutes him or herself as an intelligent being. These components—the biological, the aesthetic, the dramatic, and the intellectual—Lonergan calls “patterns of experience.” As we have indicated, experience, for Lonergan, is not a manifold of “abstract” sensory impressions: this color, that tone, some other smell. Rather, every experience is always, already ordered or patterned in some way—and often in several interrelated ways at the same time:

No doubt we are all familiar with acts of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling. Still, such acts never occur in isolation both from one another and from all other events. On the contrary, they have a bodily basis: they are functionally related to bodily movements; and they occur in some dynamic context that somehow unifies a manifold of sensed contents and of acts of sensing.

One may, it is true, practice some mental exercise whereby, say, the experience of “red” is imaginatively and conceptually isolated from every surrounding and contextualizing sensory impression; but, nonetheless, it is clear that such an experience is not primary. Just as the infant discerns, not abstract sensory data, but faces and voices, so too the mature human individual does not perceive mere colors and tones, but rather impressions embedded in some meaningful context: the sound of a bird, the smell of one’s morning coffee, the distinct shade of blue of some book for which one is looking.

And not only are sensations primordially related to some meaning-imbued context, but they are also essentially related to human bodiliness. Heidegger, for his part,

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268 Lonergan, *Insight*, 204: “The notion of the pattern of experience may best be approached by remarking how abstract it is to speak of a sensation.”

269 Ibid.
may have spoken of Being-in-the-world as a particularized modality of being. Dasein’s unique way of ek-sisting in the meaning-making framework of the world; but for Lonergan, the human being’s way of inhabiting the world is characterized, also, by bodiliness, not incidentally as in the moderns, but essentially. Each sense impression—a term quite passive in denotation—is accompanied by bodily conation. The eye does not merely “receive” a sensation; rather, it moves, its pupil dilates or contracts—in short, the sensation is correlated to bodily activity and the body’s embeddedness within the world. And, Lonergan goes on, both “the sensations and the bodily movements are subject to an organizing control. Besides the systematic links between senses and sense organs, there is, immanent in experience, a factor variously named conation, interest, attention, purpose.” At the center of sensory process is the human individual, who is both consciously and pre-consciously directed in a certain way, such that certain “sensations”—but more properly points of meaning—stand out and take on special, attention-directing significance. When one is, to return to a prior example, looking for a missing book, one’s entire field of awareness is attuned to any “sensation” which might possibly be the book one is seeking: every rectangular object, every object of a roughly similar color, suddenly stands forth in the field of awareness. Could that be the book? Simultaneously, one’s mind begins sifting through memories, guided not by explicit deliberation or will, but by the almost gravitational pull of the overriding object of concern—the missing book—

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attempting to latch onto any recollection which might be relevant. Where could I have left that book?

Experience, then, is inherently and essentially a patterned or ordered stream, and not a mere manifold of indifferent sensations: “We speak of consciousness as a stream, but the stream involves not only the temporal succession of different contents, but also direction, striving, effort. Moreover, the direction of this stream is variable.”

Just as, when one is searching for a book, every element of the experiential process is subsumed under that overriding concern, so too when one is engaged, say, in playing the piano, the overriding concern dictates the prominence of the various elements of the experience: the notes on the score, the pitches of the keys struck, the position of the hands all rise to particular prominence. The smoothness of the ivory, the buzzing of an overhead fan, the slight pang of hunger, all recede into the background, as attention focuses only on the immediately relevant aspects of the experience. The direction of the stream, that is, has changed: no longer focused on the lost book, it is instead attuned to the performance. And from this inescapable conative directedness there also arises the possibility of distraction: if the hunger-pang suddenly becomes so prominent that I can no longer focus on the notes, the pitches, the hands, then I am no longer properly attuned to the act of playing the piano. Some extraneous concern has taken precedence.

Now, while attention can be directed toward any number of concrete (or abstract) points of concern, Lonergan singles out four generic sorts of patterns within the more general stream that consciousness can embark upon: the biological, the aesthetic, the

272 Ibid.
intellectual, and the dramatic. These four basic patterns of experience would seem to be the basic categories into which many, if not all, of the more particularized patterns might be grouped; nonetheless, one can think of other patterns of experience which might be equally basic—for instance, the spiritual or mystical, for which Lonergan does not seem to have much time in *Insight*.\(^{273}\) Similarly, one may think of experiences which seem to straddle two or three or perhaps all four of these modes: for instance, the art of fine cooking, which serves biology but is accompanied by a presentation at the level of the aesthetic, which requires a study at the level of the intellectual, and occurs within a context outlined by the drama of human living. In fact, this example seems to highlight the way in which all four patterns are, for a human being, probably more or less operative at any given moment. Very rarely—if ever—does a human being move purely within a biological pattern; and while aesthetic immersion may be possible, nonetheless there is quite likely an intellectual and dramatic element to such enjoyment. Likewise, while the scholar or scientist may be wholly absorbed in his research, nonetheless the decision to engage in that research, to pursue that study, was the result of the broader drama of his or her life. In any event, with this caveat out of the way—that the four patterns of experience should not be taken as a total account, nor should any of these patterns be taken as operating, in real living, wholly independently of the others—let us turn to a more detailed discussion of these four patterns. We shall, like Lonergan, dwell longest on

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\(^{273}\) Lonergan, *Insight*, 348: “When I listen to the story of Archimedes and when I read the recital of a mystical experience, there is a marked difference. What a mystic experiences I do not know. But though I never enjoyed so remarkable an insight as Archimedes, still I do know what it is to miss the point and to get the point, not to have a clue and then to catch on, to see things in a new light, to grasp how they hang together, to come to know why, the reason, the explanation, the cause.”
the *dramatic* pattern of experience, as doing so will conduce to our upcoming discussion of the Lonerganian notion of history, and how it relates to Heidegger’s understanding.

First, then, we have the biological pattern of experience, what Lonergan calls “animal extroversion,” the animal’s outward-oriented way of being immediately in an environment of helps and harms, of things that tend toward its flourishing and things that tend toward its corruption:

> Outer senses are the heralds of biological opportunities and dangers. Memory is the file of supplementary information. Imagination is the projection of courses of action. Conation and emotion are the pent-up pressure of elemental purposiveness. Finally, the complex sequence of delicately coordinated bodily movements is at once the consequence of striving and a cause of the continuous shift of sensible presentations.

This “pattern,” as Lonergan notes, is not some observer’s sense of routine or regularity in an observed animal; rather, it is the immanent directedness of the animal’s own stream of consciousness—or of our own when and insofar as we catch ourselves in the act of operating in the biological mode. Again, we emphasize: what shows up in an experience, and in this case a biologically oriented experience, are not discrete sensations, but rather “opportunities and dangers,” centers of meaning, albeit meaning at a fully pre-cognitive level. The lioness on the hunt does not *merely* see a collection of black and white stripes, as though those stripes are what is *really* real; rather, it sees *food* (pre-cognitively, of course), it sees the zebra, its prey; and the black-and-whiteness of its prey is, if registered at all, wholly secondary. These discrete sensory elements—color, scent, and what have you—are

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274 Note that this account assumes a non-reductionist understanding of biology: the animal *as a whole is truly* susceptible of thriving or failing. It is not merely a collection of cells, of molecules, of atoms, or what have you.

certainly discernible in the experience, but only show themselves as discrete sensory elements upon further reflection; in the experience, they are entirely latent within the biologically directed urge or conation toward the prey.276

Now, not all of the animal’s biological existence is a biologically-patterned conscious experience: “As in the plant, so in the animal there go forward immanent vital processes without the benefit,” or detriment, one might add, “of any conscious control. The formation and nutrition of organic structures and of their skeletal supports, the distribution and neural control of muscles, the physics of the vascular system,” and so forth, all go on within the animal organism without, typically, rising to the level of explicit consciousness.277 One does not grow and maintain one’s cells; rather, one’s cells grow and maintain themselves, as do one’s organ and skeletal and neural systems; and they are brought into a higher system by the organizing control of the brain and central nervous system. Nonetheless the distinction must be maintained between conscious and non-conscious process; the latter goes on without the animal needing to pay any attention to it; but the former, while intending the same end—namely the flourishing of the animal organism—is characterized by conation and experiential directedness, even if not by

276 It is perhaps worth spelling out the distinction between the conscious and the cognitive. When we say a process is “conscious,” we mean that it enters explicitly or implicitly into the field of awareness in an essential way. So, cellular metabolism would be an unconscious process: while we may, on occasions, become aware of it because of some disturbance (say, cancer), for the most part it goes on without our paying attention to it, and more critically, whether or not we pay attention to it. But even something so mundane as keeping a log of expenses is a conscious process, insofar as the doing requires the intervention of some level of awareness to get underway at all. The cognitive, on the other hand, is the explicitly “thinking” component of conscious process: one may go about one’s daily business in full consciousness, but without ever doing much in the way of cognitive activity. And yet the cognitive dimension immediately is in act when one confronts a problem to be solved, for then the fourfold cognitive structure is up-and-running, examining data, seeking explanations, trying them against the data—and this is so regardless of whether the question posed by data is concrete or abstract, commonsensical or scientific.

277 Lonergan, *Insight*, 206. Only in the case of some defect—a cancer, an illness—do these underlying processes rise to the level of consciousness. I am, typically, not aware of my eyes when I am engaged in seeing; but if I have a bit of dust in my eyes, suddenly the eye itself obtrudes upon the experience.
explicit cognizing. The plant may obtain the elements needed for its survival and
flourishing without the aid of conscious process; but in the animal, conscious process
exists first and foremost as a means for this more complex organism to secure the
necessities of its biological existence. In feeling hunger, the animal organism is aware of
itself, and is driven toward the securing of the necessaries of its survival; and in
experiencing the sexual urge, is driven not only toward its own flourishing but the survival
and flourishing of its own species—indeed, even to the extent that it may sacrifice itself
for its offspring.

In any event, conscious experience, even for the animal, is first of all an ordered
and organized stream, a directed involvement comprised not of discrete sensations but of
intended loci of biological significance: the predator to flee, the prey to pursue, the mate
to woo. But even for the animal—save perhaps the most basic—experience is not solely
biological. There is more than the struggle for food and mate: cats lay in the sun or chase
butterflies, dogs roll in the dust, and pigs have sex for pleasure. While one might try to
reduce these impulses to merely biological performances, the fact of the matter is that,
among the higher animals, there are apparently sensations that are pursued for their own
sake without any further reference to biological purposiveness or significance.278 This
enjoyment for its own sake Lonergan labels the aesthetic pattern of experience: “One can
well suspect that health and exercise are not the dominant motive in the world of sport;

278 There is always a danger in anthropomorphizing, in imputing human impulses, desires, enjoyments to
animals on the basis in a behavioral similarity; nonetheless, when no theory offers a merely biological,
merely utilitarian, explanation, it is reasonable to make this extension. Thus, I think it is not remiss of me to
make the claim, for instance, that kittens play—even (and perhaps especially) if this play may also serve
some biological purpose, for as in humans, so in animals, the patterns of experience may not operate in
complete independence from one another.
and it seems a little narrow to claim that good meals and fair women are the only instances of the aesthetic. Rather, one is led to acknowledge that experience can occur for the sake of experiencing, that it can slip beyond the confines of serious-minded biological purpose, and that this very liberation is a spontaneous, self-justifying joy.”

For an example, let us think of a person’s reaction to hearing the songs of birds: immediately—provided it is a pleasant singing—one begins to take pleasure in the song. Here there is no ulterior biological motive: one is not looking for the bird such that one might have it as a meal. Rather, one is merely absorbed by the pleasantness of the sounds themselves. But illustrated in this example, more critically, is the difference between Lonergan’s conception and the prototypically modern one: one does not hear pitches, tones, indifferent and atomistically discrete. Rather, one hears precisely birdsong—and this is not a subsequent or ancillary factor of the hearing, but its very essence. The pitch, tone, timbre, the lengths of the notes—all these are abstractions from the lived experience, from the aesthetically patterned experience of hearing birdsong. All these elements are present, it is true, but not in isolation, and not as themselves, but rather as birdsong. One can abstract them out, consider them independently, and in complete indifference to their origin and source; but primarily, one hears the song of a bird. The terminus of the experience’s intending is a meaningful reference point, not an abstract sensation. For the sake of a telling contrast, one may imagine a tomcat hearing the same pitches, tones, timbres, in their various durations; but the tomcat is in the biological mode,


280 If one hears a chirping or cooing one does not recognize, one might, likewise, wonder, “Is that a bird? Is that a squirrel?” Nonetheless, the experience is already patterned—one hears not the discrete pitches, but the song itself.
and he hears, not birdsong, but a sign that prey is nearby. Or, alternately, consider the
ornithologist at work in the field: she hears not prey, certainly, nor a merely pretty song.
Rather, she hears this very particular bird engaged in one of its characteristic
performances; she hears a mating song, or a warning-call, or perhaps she hears the bird
sing for mere joy. But, in any event, her experience is, again, not of the discrete sensory
elements, but of some meaningful reference point within a context of significance.
Experience does not intend isolated sensations, this or that sense-datum considered
atomistically; rather the “data” of experience, and therefore of the senses, are
meaningfully organized, patterned.

This example brings us to the third pattern of experience, the intellectual. In
considering the ornithologist, we were drawing attention to a pattern of experience
within which the mind, the intellectual mind, seeks to understand data of sensation, seeks to
arrive at an intellectual grasp of the sensory or imaginative presentations. The
ornithologist, to continue that example, seeks not only to identify this or that bird’s singing
but to understand the significance of that singing for the bird, to understand the patterns
of the bird’s reproductive cycle, to discern the nature of the bird’s migratory patterns, or
what have you. One can hear a bird sing, witness a bird mate, observe a bird fly south for
the winter; one may enjoy each of these performances aesthetically; one may take
account of them with an eye to the biological if the bird is to become food; or one may
seek to grasp the principle behind the bird’s behaviors, and this is an intellectual
undertaking. Simply put, the intellectual pattern experiences the presentations with the
ulterior motive of grasping their principle, or understanding the relations between things
—and ultimately, not that of things to the observer, but of things to one another, independent of any observer. In other words, explanation, properly understood, must be differentiated from mere description—where description operates in terms of the object’s relation to some observer, explanation operates in terms of an intellectual grasp of things in their relations to other things.\footnote{281}

An intellectually patterned experience is one in which extraneous detail is pre-reflectively filtered out, and excluded, in which the intellectually engaged subject has trained (or nearly trained) the entirety of his mental operations to fix on only those details immediately relevant to his inquiry. Lonergan writes:

To the liveliness of youth, study is hard. But in the seasoned mathematician, sensitive process easily contracts to an unruffled sequence of symbolic notations and schematic images. In the trained observer, outer sense forgets its primitive biological functions to take on a selective alertness that keeps pace with the refinements of elaborate and subtle classifications. In the theorist intent upon a problem, even the subconscious goes to work to yield at unexpected moments the suggestive images of clues and missing links, of patterns and perspectives, that evoke the desiderated insight and the delighted cry ‘Eureka!’\footnote{282}

Every mental faculty—memory, imagination, sensation—is engaged in the intellectual pursuit: “Memory ferrets out instances that would run counter to the prospective judgment. Imagination anticipates the shape of possibilities that would prove the judgment wrong.”\footnote{283} The intellectual pattern discerns intelligible structure, and prescinds from the empirical residue, the intellectually insignificant variations of time and place.

\footnote{281}{What will count as a "thing" in a fully developed science is a question which can only be settled by the development of science itself. See Lonergan, *Insight*, 463-7.}

\footnote{282}{Ibid., 209.}

\footnote{283}{Ibid.}
Of course, what we have indicated here is the purest case, and every intellectually patterned experience can vary in its purity. The demands of the biological sphere may impinge upon one’s attentiveness to the intellectual: the pangs of hunger may interrupt the inquiry, and severe pain or disease may likewise hinder one’s research. So too may the aesthetic intrude upon the purely intellectual: when the mathematician or physician steps back to look at his formula and pronounces it elegant, this is a judgment with an aesthetic component. And we may imagine our ornithologist struck suddenly by the beauty of the subject of her research. So, these patterns of experience, while intellectually distinguishable, do not exist in pure isolation in lived experience—though certainly approximations of this purity are possible and often desired: the researcher may find himself wishing he could do without food and sleep, and the vacationer, certainly, may find himself wishing he could enjoy sights and sounds without the lingering pressures of his day-to-day life intruding upon that experience. Nonetheless, one may discern even in the lived experience a distinction between biological concern, aesthetic enjoyment, and intellectual pursuit; and in the well-developed individual, the transition between these modes is often effortless and achieved in accordance with explicit willing.

Here, an observation is in order regarding the quite radical distinction between Lonergan’s “intellectualism,” especially this intellectual pattern of experience, and the intellectualist presumptions of prototypically modern philosophy. In the Cartesian conception, man is essentially mind, incidentally embedded in a body: one can properly consider what the human being is by considering an intellectual substance, a thinking being, and prescinding from the question of its corporeity, which is entirely secondary.
The intellectual, in other words, is taken to be *what is really going on* in experience, even though the average person is not explicitly aware of it. Thus Kant can maintain in the first *Critique* that his theory is as true for the philosopher as for the common person, even though the latter never achieves explicit awareness of the structure of his own experience. In contrast, Lonergan situates the intellectual pattern in the midst of three other patterns of experience, each of which highlights some aspect of the human being’s embodiedness, of his or her being much *more* than a merely intellectual being. The human being is basically biological; its senses and appetites serve, first of all, that biological purpose. Beyond this, it is susceptible, like the higher animals, to enjoyment for enjoyment’s sake. Not only does it crave nourishment and sustenance, it also can appreciate a fine meal; not only does it experience the sexual urge, but also it takes pleasure in sexual intercourse with no ulterior motive. And as we shall see, the human being is also historically embedded and finds itself within a framework of narrative meaning, within which it must establish its own purpose and story. All of this is to say that, for Lonergan as for Heidegger (though certainly for each in different ways), the intellectual is a *particularization* of the way the human being finds himself in the world: and perhaps, in gross terms, we might say that for Lonergan it is a refinement of pre-intellectual mental operations, whereas for Heidegger it is a falling away from the immediacy of presence. But, in any event, it *is* a particularization, and it would be a mistake to conceive the human being as an intellectual substance in the characteristically modern sense of that term. The intellectual, for Lonergan, may have overriding weight and validity; it may be able to examine the other patterns and make pronouncements upon them; and in this sense, it
may be said to have some primacy—hence my calling Lonergan an intellectualist. But nonetheless, the intellectual pattern is a particular modification of the human being’s pre-reflective way of being in the world, a re-training of mental patterns and sensitive directedness for particular purposes. In rejecting conceptualism, in rejecting the modern theory of concept formation, of sensation, Lonergan moves in the direction of a more robust phenomenological anthropology which assigns the intellect its proper embedded place.

Finally, we must turn to the dramatic pattern of experience, to which we have tacitly referred in speaking of “the lived drama of human existence.” The dramatic pattern holds all the others—in some sense—within itself, for they all have their context within the broader sweep of personal and communal drama. While the intellectual pattern may turn one’s gaze back upon the dramatic to dissect and analyze it, nonetheless the intellectual pattern and the virtues that enable its successes are situated in and acquire their primitive meaning from the dramatic pattern. While the aesthetic and biological patterns are present (in varying degrees) in animals, apparently without any dramatic framework to situate them, nonetheless in human beings the biological and the aesthetic are taken up within the dramatic and transformed: sexuality is situated within the context of romance, clothing serves as a form of self-expression, relaxation is solely (or chiefly) valued as a rest from the demands of one’s work, which in turn serves to dignify and provide structure and meaning to one’s existence. Being “palpable activities,” Lonergan writes,

there are motives and purposes; and in them it is not difficult to discern an artistic, or more precisely, a dramatic component.
For human desires are not simply the biological impulses of hunger for eating and sex for mating. Indeed, man is an animal for whom mere animality is indecent. It is true enough that eating and drinking are biological performances. But in man they are dignified by their spatial and psychological separation from the farm, the abattoir, the kitchen; they are ornamented by the elaborate equipment of the dining room, by the table manners imposed upon children, by the deportment of adult convention.  

For the human being, living cannot—if it is to be dignified—take the form of a mere immersion in the immediate or the sensory; rather, in his or her own performances the human being creates a work of art: the human being’s “first work of art is his own living.”

This drama, this artistry, is not merely personal, a purely individual undertaking; rather, it takes place and has its context within the broader community. The drama is not merely the story we as individuals tell ourselves, or imagine ourselves in to make sense of our activities—though there is certainly that element to it. More fundamentally, this drama is the broader, meaning-making context that establishes our world, the shared matrix of significance, of signs, of images, which informs and shapes our immediate understanding and lived involvement. Communal practices, religious rituals, the styles of clothing and cultural gestural peculiarities—all belong to the dramatic aspect of human living. Moreover, this dramatic element, this dramatic pattern, is all-encompassing: very rarely, if ever, is human experience merely biological, merely aesthetic, merely

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285 Ibid.  
intellectual. Each of these other patterns has its place and finds itself situated within the meaning-making context of the broader drama.

The human individual can live in the dramatic pattern because the aesthetic and intellectual patterns liberate him from biological immediacy; in some sense, the dramatic pattern is a higher synthesis of the intellectual and aesthetic, one that opens out onto questions and frameworks of shared meaning, common purpose, and stories that transcend the present moment to connect the past and the future in a comprehensive arc of significance. But the dramatic pattern does not replace lower order functions, whether biological or otherwise; rather, it takes them up into a higher-order integration. In Hegelian terms, the dramatic pattern is an Aufhebung, a sublation of lower-level needs, demands, exigencies, which transforms them and resituates them in a meaning-making context. The human being, for instance, must meet the biological demand for nourishment; but in human living, this need is taken up in the enriching context of the meal, the family, the community, such that there are manners, rituals, habits, and significant points of reference within what is, at its most basic level, a biological performance. So too with the sexual urge. In animals, sex may be surrounded by various performances: birds puff themselves up or display their colors, and various cats may fight over a mate. But in the human world, marriage is surrounded by a variety of extremely elaborate rituals and traditions, involving ceremonial dress, ancient vows or mantras, and the like. The wildly diverse array of forms such rituals may take is, incidentally, no reason to question their significance in human life; on the contrary, this

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287 One may think, for instance, of the extent to which the biological performance of eating is taken up in the symbology of many quite distinct religions: the Eucharist in Christianity, the tea ceremony in Japanese Buddhism.
very multiplicity shows forth the variegated working of human intelligence and
aestheticity in concrete situations, as well as the indispensability of such ritual—whatever
its concrete form—in human life.

But just as biological (and other) demands exert an influence on the forms that the
drama of human living may take, this drama exerts in turn an influence on underlying
biological and neural processes. Not only does the underlying manifold of biological and
neural facts shape the patterns conscious life takes on, but conscious life exerts, likewise,
an influence on the functioning of the underlying processes. Perceiving, for instance, “is a
function not only of position relative to an object, of the intensity of the light, the
healthiness of the eyes, but also of interest, anticipation, and activity.”288 The biological
and neural exigencies resulting in the power of sight enable this sight to exist as a
phenomenon of consciousness; but likewise, the pattern of experience within which sight
is taken up influences the very biological performance, such that besides “the demands of
neural processes, there also is the pattern of experience in which their demands are met;
and as the elements that enter consciousness are already within a pattern, there must be
exerted some preconscious selection and arrangement.”289 An indefinite and extremely
large collection of “sensations” (to use a characteristically modern term) impinge upon
my ocular systems at any given moment, but what rises to the level of explicit
consciousness is determined not only by the position of my eyes relative to the stimuli in
question, but also by the focus of my interest and attention: at this very moment, I am
perceiving, primarily, the screen of my laptop. So, to offer another example, while the

288 Lonergan, Insight, 213.
289 Ibid.
biological need for sustenance may, in various ways in differing cultures, give rise to a
multiplicity of rituals and manners surrounding the meal, so too can these customs and
rituals exert an inverse influence on the underlying biological process. As a concrete
example, we may think of certain foods which are taboo for certain peoples: biologically
speaking, they provide the same sustenance they might for anyone else. But for a person
for whom they are taboo, the very thought of eating them may turn the stomach, to the
point of overcoming even the biological impulse to eat. Some people may, in dire
circumstances, resort to cannibalism; but there are likely others for whom that taboo
would prove too strong even in the face of likely death.

Lonergan’s own example is from the realm of psychology, and feeds into his
broader social theory: just as, for a dramatically coherent experience to be possible,
attention or conation must select the relevant elements of the experience at the expense
of excluding others, so too does the concrete dramatic situation in which we find
ourselves determine what may and may not enter explicitly into our experience.²⁹⁰
Likewise, habits of attention may make individuals (and cultures) more or less inclined to
allow various things to rise to the level of explicit awareness: someone trained in music
theory is likely to be aware of various subtleties and nuances in a performance they are
exposed to, even if they are not explicitly listening with an ear to theoretical concerns. On
the other hand, routine exclusion of certain facets of experience can blind us to these
facets—this Lonergan calls a scotoma, literally a blind spot. And since, for Lonergan,
development is to be understood in terms of the formulation and answering of questions

²⁹⁰ Just so with Heidegger’s “world.”
for intelligence (in any variety of culturally and individually unique ways), the exclusion of or blindness to a question will almost always result in the exclusion of the further questions that would have arisen from the particularities of the proffered answer—its adequacy or inadequacy, its universality or particularity, the range of situations to which it may be applied. As such, a scotoma leads to a systemic pattern of exclusion:

Just as insight can be desired, so too it can be unwanted. Besides the love of light, there can be a love of darkness. If prepossessions and prejudices notoriously vitiate theoretical investigations, much more easily can elementary passions bias understanding in practical and personal matters. Nor has such a bias merely some single and isolated effect. To exclude an insight is also to exclude the further questions that would arise from it, and the complementary insights that would carry it towards a rounded and balanced viewpoint. To lack that fuller view results in behavior that generates misunderstanding both in ourselves and in others. To suffer such incomprehension favors a withdrawal from the outer drama of human living into the inner drama of fantasy.

This withdrawal can lead to all sorts of psychological and social disorders. There results a “differentiation of the persona that appears before others and the more intimate ego that in the daydream is at once the main actor and the sole spectator.” Withdrawn from the public sphere and the broader drama of human life, the individual loses out on “the corrections and the assurances that result from learning accurately the tested insights of others” and the reciprocal testing of one’s insights in the forge of public opinion, self-consistency, and concrete, real-world efficacy. From the scotoma, there may arise a system of repression: while primarily the pre-reflective activity of attention is to construct a coherent experience by excluding the extraneous, nonetheless this exclusion can begin to behave in an aberrant fashion, excluding not the extraneous elements of some


292 Ibid.
experience, but precisely those elements which might suggest the schematic images which could terminate in an insight. As a result, there is an exclusion of broader and more comprehensive perspectives which might allow for growth and development, and a stagnation and intensification of one’s immediate biases and presuppositions. This Lonergan calls the “dramatic bias.”

This dramatic bias can lead, finally, to a further series of biases which may impact not only the individual human life, but the course of communal history. The first of these biases, the individual bias, is the refusal to extend the pronouncements of intelligence beyond one’s own immediate concern; egoism is its basic manifestation. Lonergan writes, “[I]ntelligence is a principle of universalization and of ultimate synthesis,” that is, it seeks an ultimate explanatory perspective from which all narrower and partial perspectives may be ordered and contextualized; intelligence, as we have seen, aims always at full explanation, and does not rest content until such fullness is achieved and no further relevant questions may be asked. Now, egoism

is neither mere spontaneity [i.e., unthinkingly following biological urges] nor pure intelligence but an interference of spontaneity with the development of intelligence. With remarkable acumen, one solves one’s own problems. With startling modesty one does not venture to raise the relevant further questions, Can one’s solution be generalized? Is it compatible with the social order that exists? Is it compatible with any social order that proximately or even remotely is possible?293

Beyond individual bias, there is the bias of the group; and where individual bias resists the corrections and promptings of the broader group, group bias is buoyed by group feeling, by *thumos*, by the love of one’s own. Within society, a variety of distinct functional groups

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emerge, held together by a common understanding of purpose, of expected behavior, bound by a (sometimes almost tribal) loyalty. In this context, we may think of labor unions, or of different social classes, of artists’ collectives, of political parties; each of these groups is prone to mistaking its own good for the good of society at a whole, to resisting societal changes which, while they might be of benefit to the social whole, nonetheless seem to marginalize or diminish in significance the group in question. This substitution of the common good with the good of one’s smaller social community is group bias, and it can distort or prevent the intelligent development of society—for rather than subjecting proposed courses of action to the analysis of pure intelligence, these proposals are evaluated in light of their benefit to one’s own group, one’s clan, one’s tribe.294

Beyond the group and individual biases, there is what Lonergan calls the “general bias,” the bias of society—with its practical men and doers—against intelligence, theory, fully thinking things through. As the group can mistake its good for the good of the whole, and as any partial viewpoint can be mistaken for a comprehensive viewpoint, so too does common sense take itself to be the whole of human intelligence:

[Common sense] is concerned with the concrete and particular. It entertains no aspirations about reaching abstract and universal laws. It easily is led to rationalize its limitations by engendering a conviction that other forms of knowledge are useless or doubtfully valid. Every specialist runs the risk of turning his specialty into a bias by failing to recognize and appreciate the significance of other fields. Common sense almost invariably makes that mistake; for it is incapable of analyzing itself, incapable of making the discovery that it too is a specialized development of human knowledge, incapable of coming to grasp that its peculiar danger is to extend its legitimate concern for the concrete and the

immediately practical into disregard of larger issues and indifference to long-term results.295

The conjunction of these biases—but especially the communally significant group and general bias—results in social decline, either the shorter or the longer cycle. The shorter cycle sees the intelligent suggestions of one group ignored or written off by other, dominant groups, because of a conflict with the latter group’s own interests; the longer cycle sees long term, large scale social decline resulting from the tendency of commonsense men and women to exclude or fail to advert to the truly intelligent answers to the questions put forth by the broader dialectic of society. The shorter cycle can be overcome by a change in ruling party, by a revolution, minor or major, or even by gradually changing social sympathies; but the longer cycle can only be counteracted by the activity of intelligence in history, overcoming the inertia of years or decades or centuries of commonsense bias against intelligence. Undoing this longer cycle requires taking the long view of matters; but taking the long view is precisely what becomes most difficult when a culture or society is in the throes of upheaval, torn apart by internecine conflict and infighting, held captive by eminently “practical” solutions to its problems, which are in fact “practical” only in the sense that they respond to immediate concerns without any advertence to long-term results and ramifications.

In any event, with these four patterns of experience elaborated, we have a more or less thorough (which is not to say complete) portrait of the human being’s basic modalities of involvement with the world: animal extroversion, enjoyment for its own sake, intellectual inquiry into the intelligibility underlying sensory and imaginative

295 Ibid.
presentations, and finally the dramatic involvement wherein these other modalities of involvements are situated and taken up in meaning-making contexts, imbued with personal and communal and cultural and transcendent significance.

It is worth noting, at this juncture, that none of these patterns of experience can be mapped onto the understanding of experience put forward by the modern thinkers taking their bearings from Descartes. There is no pattern, here, where sensations are isolated, atomistic, discrete: in every pattern, even the most basic, experience has already taken the form of a sense-making whole, even if that “sense” is not yet at the level of explicit cognitional awareness, but only at the level of lived involvement. The animal, existing in its biological pattern, in other words, no more experiences the world as a series of indifferent sounds and colors than we do. In fact, it is only the human being, after much reflection and parsing of sense-making experiences down to their most basic (but not, therefore, most real) elements—like colors, tones, temperatures—who then makes the mistake of thinking that experience as such is in fact a direct access to these abstracted and incomplete experiential elements. What’s more, if one, with the moderns, wants to distinguish the primary from the secondary qualities, and to say that such phenomena as color have no inherence in the thing; that they are only effects of the thing upon our minds; that the really real is extension and its immediate properties; and if one, from this viewpoint wants to dismiss the legitimacy or even the reality of such experiences, one

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296 For there is nothing incorrect about saying that taste or the perception of color is the result of some object’s effects upon us, and that they do not inhere in the object themselves. This much is clear—at least at an empirical level, if not at a transcendental level, as Kant wanted to maintain. But if one wants to take this information, and use it to deny the reality of color- or taste-perception, then one has taken an unwarranted step. That the speed of time’s passage is not universal, but contingent upon the location and speed of the observer, did not lead Einstein to declare that there is no such thing as time; rather, it led him to formulate a theory of how these elements relate to each other and to any given observer, which is itself indifferent to the particularities of time and place.
has gone quite far down the road of mistaking a (admittedly very useful) philosophic construct, a descriptive tool, for the actual fundaments of human experience.297 It is the kind of mistake one would make if one were to think one could replace the score, say, of a Mozart symphony with a list of the twelve Western pitches and a number corresponding to how many times they each occur. What is primary are the various modes of involvement; and if, for Heidegger, our access to things was by means of our modality of Being-in-the-world, we might say that, for Lonergan, our access to things is accomplished through our biological and aesthetic involvement with bodies, our dramatic involvement with meaningful points of reference, and our intellectual involvement with the insights, notions, and concepts, which allow us to rigorously distinguish between not primary and secondary qualities, not the real and the merely apparent, but between the various modalities in which the corporeal-intellectual-dramatic whole that is the human being can deal with the givens of experience.

297 See Lonergan, Insight, 322-3.
§3 — Historicity and the Foundation of Knowledge

From our foregoing discussion of the patterns of experience, we have seen that, for Lonergan as for Heidegger, the human being is essentially an already-involved being—not one who confronts an indifferent collection of objects, but one whose world opens up in terms of pre-reflective centers of focus and attention, given largely in and through the mediation of communal and cultural and personal history. The infant, as it develops, focuses first on faces and voices; as it acquires language, the cultural history built into the language it receives highlights certain features of reality for special attention, and likewise excludes others from the realm of advertence and consideration; community and culture provide certain opportunities for meaningful work, meaningful projects, which transform and make use of innate abilities and capacities; and one’s history of choices and habits—as well as one’s biases and scotoses—open up or close off certain portions of the realm of possible experiences.

Human beings, in whatever historical and cultural situations they may find themselves, seek understanding—indeed, human history “is a veritable drama of inquiry.” Now, this understanding may occur in one of several modalities—the mythic, the philosophical or scientific, or that which affords to interiority and historicity a certain

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298 An example: in our contemporary world, germs and viruses are quite real for us, though we have never seen them; and we may imagine that, in some past and less disenchanted world, spirits and magic were quite real, while the notion of a germ or virus was quite unthought of. More interesting still is the much-repeated fact that the color blue, perhaps by virtue of its comparative rarity or perhaps because of its being a default sort of color, was unnamed and unthought by many cultures: Homer called the sea wine-dark, a description which certainly strikes modern ears as unusual.


primacy. But each of these is in its own way an expression of the desire to understand; and as Lonergan points out in *Method in Theology*, a sufficiently differentiated consciousness is required to pass from one of these modalities to the next, and to translate the understanding of one context to another.

In any event, one may rightly point out here that I am going back and forth between a few rather distinct senses of the phrase “the drama of human living.” There is, on the one hand, the drama of the individual’s life—his history of past choices, their results, and his response to and interpretation of these choices and results. But, as is evident, this personal drama always necessarily takes place in the broader context of the drama of human history as such, and the pivots between these levels are cultural: the various dramas of family, politics, religion, and so forth. The human individual is first given over to himself in the context of a unique historical horizon that provides a prior mode of thinking and understanding and sets the stage within which the “pure unrestricted desire to understand” may play out; in Heidegger’s terms, one might say that Dasein is *thrown* into a world which is always, already understood in a certain way, and that one’s self is not in the first instance one’s authentic self, but rather the They-self, the self whose identity is shaped more or less exclusively by the received interpretations of the anonymous “They” of culture, society, history. But whatever vocabulary one chooses, this much is certain: understanding and the quest to understand have their place in the

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301 Ibid., 32.


domain of human existentiality, and human living—whether world-historical or personal—is a living out of the question of what it means to be human. As MacPartland puts it, “according to Lonergan, human history is not merely a process but is more a project revolving around the question of what it means to be.” Now, there will be of course be substantial differences between Lonergan and Heidegger regarding just what this claim means—for Lonergan emphasizes that this history is “the search for meaning and the quest for value” in a way that Heidegger does not. Nonetheless, for both, the contextualization of understanding within the drama of human living is an ontological determination of humanness, and is of the essence of what it means to exist as a human person. At any rate, while personal history and world history are clearly distinct, it is apparent that the two are co-implicative—the one cannot be wholly understood without reference to the other. We shall address each in turn in this section, and examine the way in which both can be said to set the horizon within which understanding takes place. This will serve to open up a conversation with Heidegger, and to re-emphasize the pre-conceptual dimension of understanding to which we have been drawing attention.

Now, already in our discussion of the dramatic pattern were the seeds of Lonergan’s notion of history, only passingly touched on in Insight but brought to thematic prominence in Method in Theology. For “drama” implies a story or narrative across time, and the temporal aspect of this drama brings with it a historical dimension. But before we can discuss communal or cultural history as a constitutive element of the human person, we must perform the preliminary inquiry of formulating more precisely the way in which

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304 MacPartland, Lonergan and Historiography, 27, 35.
the human person is constituted by historicity in his very being; and in order to do that, we must discuss, as we did with Heidegger above, the way the human being finds himself with regard to temporality. This is a phenomenological undertaking, and will move us into a territory where the seeds of a conversation between our two thinkers are likely to find fertile ground.

A. The Temporality of the Human Person

First, then, we may find it helpful to draw attention, as Lonergan does in Method, to the rather obvious fact that there are at least two quite distinct notions of “time” suggested by our commonsense use of the word. The first has to do with a succession of uniform and therefore measurable intervals; this is the time that Aristotle discusses in the Metaphysics as “the number or measure determined by the successive equal stages of a local movement.”305 We might call this “clock time” or “scientific time,” for, no matter the units used for the measure, the principle remains the same: time, here, functions as a standardized measure to relate events and occurrences to one another, as occupying fixed points on some “line” of time. Likewise, the distance between these points may be expressed as a duration. Thus, we may say that Charles arrived at 11:00 and also that Charles departed at 11:30; and by virtue of the fixity of these points, we may also say that Charles was here for half an hour. One can imagine or devise some more precise measure for very fine calculations, or one may imagine or devise some vaster measure, say, for dealing with time on the cosmic scale. But, no matter the units one chooses, the principle is the same:

305 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 176.
time is conceived as a fixed measure of the point at which something occurred, or the duration between occurrences.

But in addition to “clock time,” there is experiential or existential time, the sense of time’s passage as experienced by a finite and temporally bound and existentially involved subject. If clock time is imagined as “a raceway of indivisible instants,” nonetheless that is an image that “little accords with our experience of time.”

For the subject—for every human person—there is a “now” relative to his or her unique position within the space-time continuum, relative to his or her place in history. This “now” is characterized on the one hand by the diversity of its contents, but on the other by the identity of its substratum. For while it is obviously the case that my perceptions and mental states alter, sometimes quite radically, from moment to moment, it is equally clear that, to be aware of this, there must be some substratum that remains the same across these moments and underpins this “now.” Lonergan writes:

There is succession in the flow of conscious and intentional acts; there is identity in the conscious subject of the acts; there may be either identity or succession in the object intended by the acts. Analysis may reveal that what actually is visible is a succession of different profiles; but experience reveals that what is perceived is the synthesis (Gestalt) of the profiles into a single object. … There results what is called the psychological present, which is not an instant, a mathematical point, but a time-span, so that our experience of time is, not a raceway of instants, but a now leisurely, a now rapid succession of overlapping time-spans. The time of experience is slow and dull, when the objects of experience change slowly and in expected

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306 Ibid. Emphases mine.
307 The distinction between position in space-time and place in history maps nicely onto the distinction between clock time and existential time, incidentally.
308 Both on the subjective and objective sides of the picture, we might add; but that is not our present concern.
ways. But time becomes a whirligig, when the objects of experience change rapidly and in novel and unexpected ways.\textsuperscript{309}

And so, we have time as experienced: it expands and contracts, thickens and thins out, in accordance as the subject is excited, bored, frightened, threatened, relaxed, content: vacations seem to fly by, but a dull workday seems interminable.

Of course, these two notions of time are not wholly unrelated, but neither should one of them be utterly reduced to the other—for, in some sense, they belong to different facets of the human being’s experience of the world. In other words, we may conceive history—the history that is written about, that is, and not the discipline that aims at historical knowledge—as the intersection of these two notions of time: various human subjects, experiencing and acting in a shared world, with events and occurrences dated in accordance with some agreed-upon and uniform measure. All the acting subjects may experience a single period of time quite differently from the existential angle: for the general leading a charge, it might seem to fly by, but for the soldier on the other side, waiting in the trench, unsure when the attack will come, it might seem to creep by ever so slowly. Nonetheless, it is clear that these events can be understood to have occurred at the same time, and this is the history that can be written about.\textsuperscript{310}

The actions of and events befalling individual actors in this history are collected and compiled, either by the actors themselves or by the community to which they belong; and these records become the materials the scholarly historian may work upon in lieu of

\textsuperscript{309} Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 177.

\textsuperscript{310} Of course, there are many other factors in writing history than discovering that two events happened at the same time—this is just the formal requirement for any history to be possible, not the ultimate goal of historical investigation.
direct access to historical events.\textsuperscript{311} Indeed, scholarly history often aims at something beyond the ability of contemporaries to achieve, namely, the cultural or world-historical import of events, which requires at least a range of vision beyond the immediate historical situation and, in the extreme, some sort of universal viewpoint to fully contextualize events.\textsuperscript{312} But without the first-hand writings of participants or the second-hand writings of observers, the scholarly historian would have few or no materials upon which to base his (in the ideal case) fully contextualized account of what went forward in some past time.\textsuperscript{313}

Now, “besides the memories of each individual, there are the pooled memories of the group, their celebration in song and story, their preservation in written narratives, in coins and monuments and every other trace of the group’s words and deeds left to posterity. Such is the field of historical investigation.”\textsuperscript{314} So in addition to diaries, memoirs, newspaper articles, and the like, there are the stories and narratives that pass into some culture or group’s common sense of its own history: the legends and tall-tales may turn into plays and monuments, and come to inform some group’s basic self-understanding. We might call this the “common sense of self” of a culture, a repository of shared wisdom, know-how, stories, identity-making commonalities, a framework for discussion grounded on shared meaning, and the like.

\textsuperscript{311} See McPartland, Lonergan and Historiography, 15.

\textsuperscript{312} I say “in the extreme” because such a universal viewpoint, at least with regard to historical investigations, seems to be a desideratum or an ideal to be striven for, but not necessarily a possible achievement.

\textsuperscript{313} And it is clear that historical events can be evaluated and re-evaluated as regards their merit in different fashions by different ages and cultures. See also McPartland, \textit{Lonergan and Historiography}, 85-91.

\textsuperscript{314} Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, 177.
Turning back for a moment to *Insight*, let us dive deeper into Lonergan’s two chapters on “common sense,” the first dealing with the human individual who is the subject of common sense, and the second dealing with the shared world of meaning within which that common sense is exercised. Common sense, for Lonergan, is basically a specialization of intelligence, just as scientific or artistic thinking is. But where scientific intelligence, as a specialization of the innate drive toward understanding characteristic of the human person, is concerned with universal explanatory conceptual systems, and where artistic thinking is concerned with the affective dimension of man, common sense is concerned with the concrete drama of day to day life, with how to behave and function within that drama. Fundamental to human self-understanding, then, is the construction of an overarching narrative within which to frame the events of one’s life.\(^{315}\) “The characters,” writes Lonergan, “in this drama are molded by the drama itself. As other insights emerge and accumulate, so too do the insights that govern the imaginative projects of dramatic living.”\(^{316}\) At the level of the aesthetic there is the elevation of human experience above mere biological motivation; customs, manners, and rituals replace the spontaneous inclinations of biological drive. These customs, manners, and rituals give rise to certain conventional patterns of behavior which outline the context within which human action can take on meaning and significance; and this meaning and significance itself brings with it and is itself a part of the narrative in terms of which human individuals frame the sense of the purposefulness of their own lives.

\(^{315}\) See, in this regard, Macintyre, *After Virtue*, 204-9

Common sense proper is the repository of conventional wisdom and know-how dictating general guidelines on how to behave within some social or cultural context. A culture just as much as a group within society is constituted by some ethos, such that “basically, social groups are defined implicitly by the pattern of relations of a social order, and they are constituted by the realization of those dynamic relations.” Within any such group, there is an accumulated fund of proverbs, guidelines, mores, and the like; it does not aspire “to universally valid knowledge, and it never attempts exhaustive communication. Its concern is concrete and particular. Its function is to master each situation as it arises.”

There is the particularized common sense of the various intra-cultural groups—so electricians, plumbers, software developers, all have their own brand of common sense. Beyond this, there is the common sense of certain broad swaths of the culture; we may think, for instance, of the common sense that goes along with living in New York City as opposed to, say, the common sense of rural life or of the farming community. But at the highest level there is the common sense of the culture as a whole, the general norms and mores and instances of practical wisdom that govern our behaviors and ways of thinking as, say, Americans, or Frenchmen, or Azerbaijanis. Thus, for Lonergan, there are certain conventional ways of behaving and doing things, dictated by culture, which is itself a product of some history, and these conventions mark off a terrain of potentially meaningful human activity; this activity is meaningful precisely because a narrative structure can be discerned in the emergence of individual activity from the cultural milieu.

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318 See the discussion of group bias, above.
Now, if we have maintained a distinction between the personal drama of human living and the overarching drama of human history, nonetheless, the two—as indicated—are not wholly distinct. And Lonergan's introduction of the notion of a personal drama of living indicates to some degree exactly what is the pivot between the personal and the world-historical: this pivot is man’s sociality, his being simultaneously a product and producer of culture. Lonergan writes:

Such artistry [i.e., the artistry whereby biological impulses are adorned, liberated aesthetically, and transformed into artistic performances] is dramatic. It is in the presence of others, and the others too are also actors in the primordial drama that the theatre only imitates. If aesthetic values, realized in one’s own living, yield one the satisfaction of good performance, still it is well to have the objectivity of that satisfaction confirmed by the admiration of others; it is better to be united with others by winning their approval; it is best to be bound to them by deserving and obtaining their respect and even their affection. For man is a social animal. He is born in one family only to found another of his own. His artistry and his knowledge accumulate over the centuries because he imitates and learns from others. The execution of his practical schemes requires the collaboration of others. Still, the network of man's social relationships has not the fixity of organization of the hive or the anthill; nor again is it primarily the product of pure intelligence devising blueprints for human behavior.319

Man’s existentiality demands not only that his actions have some context in a personal drama which contextualizes and makes sense of these actions; it also demands that these actions take place in some broader context still, in the presence of others. In other words, the personal drama is always and necessarily embedded in a social and cultural drama. And this social and cultural drama is not the result of a “pure intelligence,” timeless and

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eternal, but rather of an embedded and fallible intelligence working itself out over time—which is to say, in history.  

Human living, then, is characterized by a dramatic pattern, a narrativizing self-interpretation. Within this drama, the intellectual, as a distinct pattern of experience, is a value chosen and pursued; there is no science, that is, without the free commitment of the scientist. More fundamentally still, every act of understanding, whether intellectual or mythical or commonsensical or mystical, takes place within, first, the drama of the individual’s own life and, second, within the broader drama of human history as a whole. The upshot of all this is the acknowledgment that man is not, as Lonergan has already made clear, a pure intelligence. While the human individual is certainly capable of reckoning in concepts, of abstracting himself to some greater or lesser degree from lived immediacy and moving in a world of logical connections, nonetheless that world is not his first home, and nor can that world be said to have any existential primacy. Intelligence begins as a development from out of the drama of life; and the act of understanding can be said to hinge on the pre-conceptual, to have the pre-conceptual as one of its constituting moments, precisely because every instance of understanding emerges within a context (as well as expresses a grasp) that is not in the first instance reducible to an interrelation of concepts. Certainly, this is a repudiation of the Cartesian or Kantian identification of true human subjectivity with a matrix or network of interrelated conceptual processes, and likewise of the notion that the intellectual is primary in the human individual in such a way that all other human activities can be reduced to it: for,

Likewise, progress and decline are to be understood in terms of the human community’s success or failure in following the precepts of intelligence in directing in their historical, dramatic applications. See McPartland, *Lonergan and Historiography*, 15.
just as culture is in some sense prior to the individual, even as the individual exerts a reflexive influence on culture, likewise the drama of life is in some sense prior to its intellectual component, even if that intellectual component may reflect upon and alter some of the particulars about the nature of the drama.\footnote{If one elects to become a physicist, and one hones one’s intelligence in that very particularized way, is there really much doubt that one’s dramatic spontaneity will be, in some measure, transformed and enriched by the particular way of viewing the world afforded by that study? And the same goes, likewise, for a devotion to the arts, or to philosophy, or what have you.}

Intelligence, then, can turn around and reflect on its own embeddedness, its own belonging to a social and cultural milieu and a certain historical drama. Likewise, intelligence is not totally bound within culture or history, such that trans-cultural or trans-historical understandings should be impossible; but part of the operation of cognitional process is the leap from immediacy to generality, from dramatic embeddedness to a broader understanding. The restless drive of intelligence, in short, is prior to every concept, for it is even prior to the unfolding of the lived drama of human existentiality—but it is only within this context that concrete questions arise upon which intelligence may work in the having of insights and the eventual formation of concepts. But, inversely, it is this restless drive, this common pre-reflective impulse toward understanding—which, to be clear, is in no way the same as any Cartesian or Kantian identification of the subject with a pure intelligence—that grounds the commonality and mutual comprehensibility of cultures and societies to one another.

To state the above more clearly: if the concrete questions upon which intelligence always works are given by the historical and cultural situation within which the human individual finds himself, this indicates that, conversely, the driving force of human history
and culture is the playing out of this embedded intelligence. That there are distinct cultural-historical situations within which human intelligence may operate is a result of the various different solutions that intelligence may put forth to the problems posed by living. This can be so precisely because the operation of intelligence is recurrent and, as recurrent, ever tied to the concrete situation in which it operates. So the spontaneous intelligence of primitive humans—we may imagine—went to work upon the problems posed by the natural environment; distinct localities may have suggested distinct solutions to these problems—so clothing, for instance, will vary from one locality to the next. Once human beings move beyond mere biological absorption, these distinct solutions will come to be interpreted aesthetically, and will take on some cultural signification, and eventually distinct cultures will emerge with distinct ethere, and these distinct ethere will give rise to distinct sorts of problems. Embedded and culturally informed human intelligence, working upon these problems, will pose a variety of solutions, and this will result in a plurality of cultures, of religions, of economic arrangements. Moreover, within each distinct culture, there will be the progress or decline that results from the systematic employment of intelligence or, on the other hand, the systematic resistance to the promptings of intelligence that result from the various biases. “Now the history of man’s material progress,” writes Lonergan, “lies essentially in the expansion of these ideas [i.e., solutions to problems posed by the concrete situation]. As inventions accumulate, they set problems calling for new solutions.” We see, again, that intelligence works, first and foremost, upon and within the concrete situation; and even the sort of “pure intelligence”

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322 Lonergan, Insight, 233.

323 Ibid.
to which philosophy aspires, develops, comes to maturity, and continues to exist within the concrete situation informed by culture and history.

So then, for Lonergan as for Heidegger, human beings are essentially already-involved beings; intelligence, essential but not the whole picture, is not “pure,” but works always upon the concrete situation afforded by prior involvements. No project of methodological doubt will ever fully extricate human intelligence from historical and meaning-giving contexts—and nor is this essentially desirable. Intelligence in human beings moves not in a web of concepts and purely logical connections, but pivots back and forth between concrete situations, tentative understandings, reflective judgments. It is an embedded intelligence, for it operates in a cultural and linguistic milieu, upon the problems posed by its culture and its own personal history. Even in the realm of the intellectual pattern, properly speaking, insight and understanding are cumulative: scientists take as foundational the understandings put forth by past generations of scientists, express themselves in an inherited but also developing technical vocabulary. They simultaneously push the envelope and find themselves indebted to the discoveries of other inquirers more and less remote in human history: even the most earth-shattering of scientific discoveries, for instance, owe their debt to Hawking and Einstein, but just as much to Newton and Euclid. Human knowledge—whether commonsensical or scientific or aesthetic—is a common fund, received but also expanded by each subsequent generation. Pure intelligence working only upon its own immanent concepts is a wheel spinning in the void, with no traction and no direction; but human intelligence is never in a void, for it always works upon images, presented by sense or imagination, in a matrix
outlined by culture and history, with skills and techniques more or less refined by communal and personal history. As far back as Aristotle, there was the realization that “there can be no thinking without an image,” that intelligence must always have data upon which and with which to work; and with Lonergan there is the further recognition that intelligence must always have a cultural milieu within which to play itself out: a language, conventional habits of thinking, received scientific or aesthetic knowledge. Far from the implicit reductionism of the modern school of thinking, in which all experiences—perhaps unbeknownst to the knower—are really composed of the various intellectually distinguishable elements identified by Descartes or by Kant, for Lonergan, and insofar as the real is the intelligible, experience is precisely that upon which intelligence goes to work, such that it makes no sense to suppose that experience is, in fact, comprised of the various elements isolated, identified, and named by the workings of intelligence. The human mind does not “confront” a world, as though we were discussing a collision of one object with another; rather, it penetrates the real by means of inquiry, by asking questions of it. And in this context, it makes no sense to suppose that the mind can then dismiss the reality of the framework and milieu within which it ordinarily operates and which is, always and inescapably, the matrix within which it orients itself, in favor of a handful of overly-intellectualized concepts arrived at only by the exercise of analytic intelligence upon the experience it seeks to deprive of ultimate reality.

324 I don't mean to suggest that Aristotle failed to have this insight. Aristotle recognizes, as much as anyone, the significance of civilization and education when it comes to the development of intelligence, and his treatment of the intellectual virtues, but especially prudence, in the Nicomachean Ethics would make for a good conversation partner for Lonergan. But he has no fully developed theory of culture or history, in large part because these concepts, in the way we are using them, did not exist for him. Or, we might say, they were not part of his world and milieu.
§4 — The Virtually Unconditioned and the Self-Affirmation of the Knower

In the final words of the prior chapter, we alluded to Lonergan’s identification of the real with the intelligible. It is to this topic we must presently turn, and specifically to contrast it with the discussion of Heidegger’s treatment of judgment in the parallel section of the last chapter. For, in Lonergan’s work, there is an isomorphism between the intelligence and reality—but this is not to say that the real and the conceptually coherent are equivalent (this was Hegel’s mistake), but that the real and the reasonably affirmed are, in some sense, equivalent. Judgment, then, and the notion of the virtually unconditioned will form the centerpiece of the present chapter, and the parallel to Heidegger will set us up to embark upon our final discussion of the ways in which Heidegger and Lonergan may be said to complement one another, especially in regards to their notions of being.

For Lonergan, we must point out from the outset, judgment—that third moment of cognitive process which we have discussed in some detail above—must not (at least not exclusively) be thought of in the terms made so familiar by Kant: for Lonergan, judgment properly speaking is neither the judgment of analysis nor the judgment of synthesis. On the one hand, the analytic judgment—the judgment which unpacks what is already contained within a concept—is only a grasp of conceptual coherency; on the other hand, the synthetic judgment, which grasps the necessary connection of two non-analytically related concepts, is in its own way a proposition expressing conceptual coherence—not of the single concept being unpacked, but of the relation of concepts to one another given the discernible structure of reality (or the mind, as the case may be). The former
judgment, the analytic, doesn’t really get us anywhere, since it only grasps what is already contained in a concept; but, in a certain sense, neither does the synthetic judgment, for, in Lonergan’s terminology, it only corresponds to an intellectual grasp, to understanding. Certainly with an analytic judgment, but even with a synthetic judgment, there is still the further step, the true judgment, the independent intellectual operation of affirming or denying the expressed proposition. Whether I say, “All bachelors are unmarried males” (the analytic proposition) or “5+7=12” (the synthetic judgment), there is required the further step of determining the truth or falsity of the proposition. In the first case, I must simply verify that my words mean what I intend them to mean, and then I can say “yes” to the proposition, affirm it to be the case; in the second case, I must have a (fairly basic) insight into the arithmetic relations of whole units, such that I can affirm the equation as “true.”

Let us take a more complex illustration. Copernicus, in reflecting on Ptolemean-Aristotelian cosmology, deemed its solution to the problem posed by celestial movements inadequate, its calculations unnecessarily complex and convoluted; having so deemed, he went to work to devise an equally (or more) accurate, but greatly simplified schema. In other words, the Ptolemean-Aristotelian framework was an intellectual grasp, formulated by the understanding, as a means to explain a certain subset of perceived phenomena. For years, many quite intelligent minds affirmed the correctness of this framework: in other words, they judged it to be true. They did this, first, because it was conceptually coherent, but secondly and perhaps more importantly, because it was the best explanatory system available. The Copernican, Galilean, and Newtonian systems were adopted insofar as
they were proven to have greater explanatory power: they explained a broader range of phenomena with a comparatively simpler set of principles and derivative operations. But, particularities of history aside, the point is this: that the Ptolemaic-Aristotelian system was internally coherent, that it could be coerced to speak to every possible permutation of the celestial movements, was not enough. The human mind aims not only at coherence (for the real, upon which it works, is not explainable as a logical system); it doesn’t rest content at the first available explanation. Rather, it seeks the best possible explanation, and it does so by putting available explanations to the test, refining them, overturning them, affirming them in some limited way and extending them to other areas of potential applicability to see if they truly pass muster. If an instance arises which seems to contradict the best available explanation, then immediately men and women will go to work to find a better, more robust explanation. In short, there is to be drawn a firm distinction between putting forward an explanatory schema and affirming that it is in fact true to the phenomena that it aimed to explain—between an act of understanding and an act of judgment. There is likewise to be drawn a firm distinction between a hypothesis, a theory, a proffered explanation, on the one hand, and a verified hypothesis, an accepted theory, and a true explanation, on the other.

All this, we have discussed before: understanding goes to work on sensory or imaginative presentations, an insight is had, a conceptual framework is formulated to explain the presentations, and finally there is a reflective judgment whereby the conceptual framework is either affirmed or denied, accepted or rejected. What we have not discussed is the precise significance of Lonergan’s notion of the “virtually
unconditioned” in judgment, and how this ties into his broader theory of the human being, his anthropology.

In speaking of judgment, we are implicitly discussing evidence: what counts as evidential, what constitutes sufficient evidence for a judgment, and when and whether it is possible to deem a question unanswerable because sufficient evidence is not forthcoming.

In a “conceptualist” theory of knowing, because understanding and judging are not adequately differentiated, affirming something to be the case is conceived as a nearly automatic result of combining concepts into explanatory schemata; correct understanding becomes merely a matter of grasping concepts correctly, which, in turn, becomes merely a matter of perceiving correctly, as concepts are “read off” of the sensory presentations. In such a theory of knowing, the question of what counts as evidence does not immediately suggest itself, because presentations lead irresistibly to concepts, and moving in a logically sound manner in the realm of concepts is all that is required: once Hegel, for instance, begins from the division of Being and Non-being, his logic is irresistible, while the question of “evidence” never comes up.\footnote{If the real is a logically coherent system, what need could there ever be for further evidence? All one must do is be logically rigorous.}

But in Lonergan’s critical realism, which rejects the automatic transition from impression to concept, and with it the automatic transition into a realm of pure logic, the question of evidence becomes central: if knowing has the structure of pivoting from presentations to intellectual formulations and then back to presentations for the sake of verifying the formulations, then it becomes critically important to determine what constitutes adequate evidence for the affirmation of the explanatory schema. Precisely because understanding
is seeking to explain presentations, it goes without saying that—at least for a single individual—the presentations will seem to “confirm” the postulated explanation—otherwise, it never would have occurred to the person. In turning back to the presentations with an eye to affirmation or denial, there is a need for rigor and a critical examination of evidence: the presentations have already suggested a possible explanation, but now it remains to be seen whether those presentations can support the affirmation of that explanation.

If the above sounds remarkably like the so-called “Scientific Method,” that is no coincidence, for modern science is precisely a methodology for carefully delimiting what may and may not count as evidence for the sake of arriving at correct understanding. Above, we briefly referenced the “canons of empirical method;” quite simply, these canons are science’s guidelines for what counts as evidence. A scientific explanation must be susceptible of verification by observation or calculation; it must not appeal to non-verifiable or occult unobservables; it must be the simplest explanation that can account for the phenomenon—because otherwise, it would be guilty of postulating an explanation that exceeds the possibility of evidence-based affirmation. All this is as much as to say that to have a fully worked out theory of knowing, one must have a sufficient theory of what is admissible as evidence; and to have a fully worked out philosophy of man, one must grasp the way in which knowing is situated within the broader drama of human living. Perhaps surprisingly, our discussion of evidence and the virtually unconditioned will lead into a discussion of the “self-affirmation of the knower,” which will bring us full circle to a fully
rooted and situated theory of human intelligence, quite at odds with the intellectualist
tendencies of modern thought.

A. The Virtually Unconditioned

If we were to hypothesize as to what would count as “knowledge” in the ideal
case, we might be tempted to suggest that necessary connection is part of that equation: if
anything is to count as knowledge, it is a grasp that something must be the way it is by the
force of logical necessity. So, for instance, Aristotle posits as indubitable (though not in
precisely those terms) the principles of identity and non-contradiction: every being is
itself, and cannot both be and not be in the same regard at the same time.\(^\text{326}\) One may
resist such pronouncements as these—suggest that they are so obvious as to be
meaningless, or, on the other hand, that they overlook the inherent complexities and
ambiguities of human life. But even in so doing, one is suggesting that some thing is in fact
not the way it is being portrayed, and is in some other way; or one might be tempted to
qualify an assertion with “to some degree” or “in a certain way.” These are all concessions
to the indubitability of the principle of non-contradiction, for no thinking can happen
without it: a thing may have many attributes at different times or in different regards or
different degrees, but it may never have two contrary attributes at precisely the same time
in precisely the same regard and to precisely the same degree.\(^\text{327}\)


\(^\text{327}\) We leave aside, here, any thorough-going discussion of the problems posed by quantum mechanics; for
our purposes, suffice it to say that a “wavicle,” or what have you, is a “thing” precisely insofar as it is
grasped as a unity-identity-whole in data which displays the qualities of both a particle and a wave at the
same time—but not necessarily in the same way, for it is to the observer that the attribution of wave-like or
particle-like qualities belongs.
In knowing that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time in the same
way and to the same degree, in grasping the principle of non-contradiction, one grasps an
unconditional. The truth of the claim is not situational, and is not conditioned by any
further considerations: when one grasps the terms, one grasps the correctness of the
proposition. When one understands that “2 + 3 = 5,” one does not—if one truly
understands—raise the further question, “But what if the two are oranges and the three
are apples?” Such a question is a triviality and an irrelevance. The knowledge is
unconditioned: a grasp of the terms entails a grasp of the conclusion. The same can be
said for any syllogism expressing a necessary connection.328

So, knowing in the ideal case would be a grasp of necessary connection, a grasp of
the unconditioned. But certainly, there must be the possibility of knowing facts, making
correct statements about concrete realities, about matters that do not hang together on
the basis of necessary logical inference. When I say, “Water boils at 212 degrees
Fahrenheit,” I am not expressing a logically necessitated connection, but a factually
correct assertion, a general law that—while it may admit of apparent exceptions, such as
the influence of altitude and pressure—is nonetheless certainly worth affirming as “true”
in some significant sense. Clearly, such a knowing is not a grasp of a truly unconditioned
relationship: as we’ve already indicated, altitude is one such condition. Nor would we
want to suggest that, to arrive at a correct proposition, one must systematically and
explicitly exclude from consideration every possible variable, for there is an actually

328 This is not to say that learning or understanding takes the form of a series of related syllogisms. On the
contrary, understanding happens through insight, and knowledge happens through reflective insight. But
syllogisms are an instance of knowing, and, in this case, a telling one.
indefinite and practically infinite number of such variables in the vast majority of instances of knowledge.

Lonergan solves this problem by putting forth the notion of the “virtually unconditioned.” He writes, “To grasp evidence as sufficient for a prospective judgment is to grasp the prospective judgment as virtually unconditioned. Distinguish, then, between the formally and the virtually unconditioned. The formally unconditioned has no conditions whatsoever. The virtually unconditioned has conditions indeed, but they are fulfilled.”

Structurally, this is the basic form of a syllogism: the major premise contains a conditional statement, while the minor premise fulfills the condition set by the major premise. The conclusion follows as a result: “Reflective insight grasps the pattern [of the syllogism], and by rational compulsion there follows the judgment.”

Now, if the syllogism is the basic form of the grasp of the virtually unconditioned, this is not to say that all judgments are reached by an explicit syllogistic exercise; rather, and conversely, it is the syllogism that is grounded in the inner dynamism of the human mind, its innate workings. In other words, prior to all concepts and formulations, the mind is engaged essentially in pivoting from experience to formulation, and from formulation to judgment. Lonergan offers a rather helpful instance of the commonsense operations of mind, summarized in syllogistic form below:

i. If my home is in disarray upon returning home, when it was clean upon my leaving this morning, then something has happened

ii. But my home was clean this morning, and is now in disarray

iii. Therefore, something has happened

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330 Ibid., 306.
Quite obviously, nobody, upon returning home to a state of damage and disorder, would go through the formal process of laying out a syllogism; nonetheless, the basic steps undertaken pre-reflectively by the mind are much the same:

The three elements have been assembled. On the level of presentations there are two sets of data [the home in the morning and the evening]. On the level of intelligence there is an insight referring both sets to the same things. When both levels are taken together, there is involved the notion of knowing change. Reflective understanding grasps all three as a virtually unconditioned to ground the judgment ‘Something happened.’

We have here a simple and concrete instance of a grasp of the virtually unconditioned: if the set of data pertaining to a single thing (my home) has changed, then quite clearly something happened. There need not be explicit reflection or syllogizing; there need only be the irresistible dynamism of the mind toward knowledge.

It is perhaps worth noting, at this time, that we have here a very concrete illustration of the difference between Lonergan’s understanding of “experience” and that put forth by prototypical modern philosophy. The man’s experience, upon returning home, does involve the “data of sense”—certainly, this is central. But his very experience, at the most basic level, is also shot through with understanding: he experiences not a collection of sights and sounds, but his home, and since the collection of sights and sounds pertaining to that same thing, that same unity-identity-whole grasped in data, has altered substantially, he is able to hypothesize that something has happened. Built into the experience is the mind’s grasp of distinct things, which is a function not of brute sensation, but of the conjunction of sensation and intelligence.

In any event, we now have a handful of examples of the virtually unconditioned: any judgment hangs on a conditional (whether explicit or otherwise), and when those
conditions are fulfilled, we make our judgment, sometimes with deliberation, but most often as a result of the irresistible and pre-reflective operations of the mind. Now, since knowledge can be of different sorts (commonsensical, logical, scientific, genetic, philosophical, theological, statistical), the precise quality of the virtually unconditioned may be somewhat distinct in various cases. The observation that “water boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit” has something of the scientific to it, but it is primarily a judgment of common sense; accordingly, it easily accords with the commonsense modality of judgment, which seeks not rules which hold at all times and places, but practical knowledge and know-how aimed at getting things done. Likewise, with a statistical judgment, we do not expect or demand the precision of a logical judgment: if 80% of the voting population supports candidate A, it is reasonable to assume that candidate will win, and no one would call the judgment “Candidate A will win the election” rash or overhasty, even if it turns out to be wrong. So, judgments of facts, in all their various modalities, are engaged in marshaling evidence and determining the sufficiency of that evidence to the judgment in question; and the sufficiency of that evidence is determined, in turn, by the nature of the judgment one is about to make. What counts as evidence, then, is any set of data which leads the mind, sometimes irresistibly, sometimes with an air of caution, to grasp the virtually unconditioned.

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331 The scientist would be remiss not to reference the influence of pressure, among other variables, in such a statement.
B. Self-Affirmation of the Knower

If, then, there can be discerned in knowing a basic structure, a basic progression from presentations to intellectual grasp to reasonable affirmation based upon evidence; and if this final step, the judgment, is not some “synthesis” of two concepts, but rather a distinct act, a saying “yes” or “no” to a proposed solution to the problems posed by the presentations; and if one should happen to catch oneself in the act of performing these operations, of moving without further ado from presentation to formulation to judgment; then this very catching in the act serves to pose to one the question, “Am I a knower?” For Lonergan, this question and its inevitable answer—“Yes, I am a knower”—serve as a foundational instance of knowing. For while the grasp of cognitional structure, the grasp that I am, in fact, a knower, is certainly not the first instance of knowing that goes on in a typical human life, nonetheless a correct answer to and understanding of that question serves to clarify many further questions about knowing that may arise, and to lay out, in a heuristic fashion, the basic structure of all that can be known.

But let us return to the more basic claim: in catching myself in the act of performing cognitive operations, I have, in fact, experienced the “presentations” necessary to pose the question, “Am I a knower?” When I catch myself formulating possible explanations, or engaging in an act of judgment—“my home is in disarray, something must have happened!”—I am in a position to pose the further question to myself, “Do I really know that?” In stark contrast to Descartes’ procedure of methodologically doubting all that can be doubted, Lonergan recognizes that, as a matter of concrete fact, we are all always already involved in acts of knowing. And yet, they have
this in common: both, in a manner of speaking, back into an affirmation of the self as a knower. Descartes, in trying to doubt all that can be doubted, finds that he cannot doubt himself; Lonergan, in beginning from concrete acts of knowing (whether theoretical or practical) and distilling out the elements of that knowing, arrives at the self-affirmation of the knower.

But so far, we have been using this term—“self-affirmation of the knower”—without properly laying out just what it means. Lonergan writes:

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’ is meant that the self as affirmed is characterized by such occurrences as sensing, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, grasping the unconditioned, and affirming. The affirmation to be made is a judgment of fact. It is not that I exist necessarily, but merely that in fact I do. It is not that I am of necessity a knower, but merely that in fact I am.

The self-affirmation of the knower could be thought of, then, as a second-degree sort of judgment: in catching myself in the act of knowing—even the most basic, everyday knowing—the cognitive operations that make up the process of knowing become the data of presentation to be explained by an intellectual grasp. Descartes’ philosophic response, as much as Lonergan’s, is a potential solution to the question posed by these data—but where Descartes attempts to discover what knowing is by doubting everything that can be doubted, Lonergan attempts to discover what knowing is by pointing to the simple fact that we are all already engaged in knowing all the time, and merely have to catch

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332 Though, obviously, for Lonergan this self is a fully-embodied, historical, dramatic being, dynamically oriented toward the beneficial, the intelligible, the real, the good; for Descartes, this self is essentially a pure intellect, conjoined incidentally with physical being.

333 See Lonergan, Insight, 436.

334 Ibid., 343.
ourselves in the act. Indeed, this “catching oneself in the act” is rather different from Descartes’ procedure: for Descartes comes up against the self as the one indubitable object, an intellectual substance encountered through introspective analysis. But, for Lonergan, introspective analysis fails precisely insofar as it encounters the subject qua object, and not in its very subjectivity: “To heighten one’s presence to oneself, one does not introspect; one raises the level of one’s activity.” If Lonergan, like Descartes, offers a potential solution to the problem posed by the fact of intellectual operations, then when we speak of the self-affirmation of the knower, we are speaking of the judgment which may be made in regard to a proffered explanation. So far, in discussing both Heidegger and Lonergan, we have rejected, in large part, the Cartesian solution to the problem: man is not an intellectual substance incidentally conjoined to matter which knows the world by confrontation and itself by mere reflection. But what of the Lonerganian solution?

The essence of the Lonerganian solution is the threefold structure—presentation, intellectual grasp, judgment. If we were to dispute the adequacy of this solution, we might do it by appealing to further evidence—but this would only prove Lonergan’s point. In fact, any attempt to dispute his account would be involved, very probably, in all three

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335 Lonergan, *Insight*, 436: The “proximate results” of universal doubt “will be illusory, for doubting affects, not the underlying texture and fabric of the mind, but only the explicit judgments that issue from it. One can profess in all sincerity to doubt all that can be doubted, but one cannot abolish at a stroke the past developments of one’s mentality, one’s accumulation of insights, one’s prepossessions and prejudices, one’s habitual orientation in life.” In other words, the posture of universal doubt—much like the “principle of the empty head”—takes itself to be a means of securing correct knowledge, when in fact it serves to allow prejudice and bias to determine one’s understandings and judgments unacknowledged. See also Lonergan, *Method*, 157-8.

cognitional processes:\textsuperscript{337} it would involve an appeal to evidence, a new explanation, a judgment that Lonergan is not correct and that this new explanation is. In short, in trying to doubt the structure, one catches oneself in the act of employing the structure: every intellectual formulation within that structure is subject to revision, but the structure itself is not, as it itself is the condition for the possibility of the revision of other intellectual formulations.\textsuperscript{338} Finally, we might suggest that the evidence is inadequate to make the judgment and affirm that I am, in fact, a knower, characterized by these three moments in the cognitional process. But this is not an objection so much as a challenge, and it is to the adequacy of the evidence to the judgment that we presently turn.

What, then, is the evidence that I am, in fact, a knower? To affirm myself as a knower would be to grasp, in data, a unity-identity-whole—which is myself—that can be known as a knowing thing. First, there is the observation that, in formulating that question, I am presuming that I am either a knower or not a knower; if I know that I am a knower, no further relevant questions arise and the problem is solved. But if I claim to know that I am not a knower,\textsuperscript{339} then I am already involved in a performative contradiction: I claim to be engaged in precisely what I disclaim the possibility of being

\textsuperscript{337} We leave aside, for the sake of simplicity, the fourth level of cognitive structure, since it pertains only to the ethical dimension.

\textsuperscript{338} See Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 359: “The impossibility of such revision appears from the very notion of revision. A revision appeals to data. It contends that previous theory does not satisfactorily account for all the data. It claims to have reached complementary insights that lead to more accurate statements. … Now, if in fact revision is as described, then it presupposes that cognitional process falls on the three levels of presentation, intelligence, and reflection.”

\textsuperscript{339} And not in some roundabout Socratic or heuristic sense: certainly, we can know quite well that we do not know things, because if we understand what knowing is, we can understand that in such and such a case it is not happening. I am fully aware that I do not know, for instance, how the hard drive of a computer works; nonetheless, such a thing is knowable in principle, and I could learn it should I so choose. We are speaking, here, of the more radical claim, namely, “I am not the sort of being that can know things.”
engaged in, namely knowing. Moreover, such a disclaiming of the possibility of knowing—unless it is the inadequately thought out pronouncement of an unenlightened skeptic—would have to be based on some evidence (“I can not be a knower because of this, that, and the other thing…”), would have to involve an intellectual formulation, and would itself be a judgment; in other words, to dispute one’s status as a knower, one must engage in the very intellectual operations wherein Lonergan has outlined the process of knowing.\textsuperscript{340}

A second piece of evidence would be the unity of conscious experience:

Besides cognitional contents there are cognitional acts; different kinds of acts have different kinds of awareness: empirical, intelligent, rational. But the contents cumulate into unities [and] … just as there are unities on the side of the object, so there are unities on the side of the subject. Conscious acts are not so many isolated random atoms of knowing, but many acts coalesce into a single knowing. Not only is there a similarity between my seeing and your hearing, inasmuch as both acts are conscious; there is also an identity involved when my seeing and my hearing … are compared.\textsuperscript{341}

In every conscious act—every intending, every sensory experience, every act of imagining, every attempt to understand, every intellectual formulation, and every judgment—I am immediately aware of myself as a unity that grounds those acts, a unity to which they all pertain. I can know an object as both blue and noisy, for instance, because I am immediately aware that my seeing and my hearing pertain not only to the same object, but to the same subject: if either of these was not the case, discerning a discrete object in the world, let alone grasping it as a unity-identity-whole in data, would not be

\textsuperscript{340} Of course, one might go the route of suggesting that consciousness is an epiphenomenon of matter in motion, and the task of debunking this misguided notion is somewhat more involved, and beyond the scope of our current concern.

\textsuperscript{341} Lonergan, \textit{Insight}, 349.
possible. But as a matter of fact, I consciously experience myself as a unity, and can intellectually grasp myself as a unity-identity-whole in data—in short, as a discrete thing both receptive to stimuli and actively engaged in coordinating myself in relation to those stimuli, attempting to understand them, and so forth. To separate the conscious acts from the single consciousness which is their ground is always already an abstraction. If I grasp myself as a unity-identity-whole in data then I am at least half-way toward grasping my status as a knower: for I at least have an understanding of myself as an understanding thing, even if I have not yet affirmed the judgment, “Yes, I am a knower.”

With these two pieces of evidence taken together, an affirmative response to the question of whether I am a knower becomes practically inevitable. “Each,” writes Lonergan, “has to ask the question of himself. But anyone who asks it is rationally conscious. … [A]sking the question does not mean repeating the words, but entering the dynamic state in which dissatisfaction with mere theory manifests itself in a demand for fact.” In short, “If I ask [the question], I know what it means.” And if I turn around and wonder what I might mean by “I”, then the “answer is difficult to formulate, but strangely, in some obscure fashion, I know very well what it means without formulation.” Judgment, as we have seen, is a sort of rational compulsion: when the evidence is sufficient, I almost cannot help but make the judgment that such and such is

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342 Ibid., 350.

343 If all this talk of being a “knowing thing” runs too close to Descartes for comfort, it is worth remembering that for Lonergan knowing is a fully situated and integrated activity of the human being as a whole: a corporeal entity characterized by biological extroversion, dramatically and historically situated within a trajectory of communal and personal development, the subject seeks insight into and engages in knowing from the concrete situation, in conventional and linguistic terms.

344 Lonergan, Insight, 352.

345 Ibid.
so. And that is precisely the situation in which a human individual finds him or herself when asking the question, “Am I the kind of being capable of knowing things? A being characterized by the threefold process of presentation-understanding-judgment? A being with an impulse for understanding, a natural desire to understand?” I know, intuitively and without further ado, that by “I” I mean myself, the something that is always there no matter what the contents of any given experience might be, no matter how radically the objects intended might change. And in so knowing, I know that I know. What’s more, in entering the dynamic orientation entailed in asking the question, I know myself to be unsatisfied with mere supposition, and I catch myself in the act of scanning the presentations, trying to wrap my mind around the understanding by formulating it, I find myself rationally compelled to affirm the proffered explanation. I know that denying the explanation would be self-contradictory, and that violates a basic rational instinct. I may be large, I may contain multitudes, but nonetheless I cannot reasonably be content with being a contradiction, with claiming to be one thing while, in the very performance, showing myself to be quite another. In short, the weight of evidence is irresistible, and when one understands what knowing is, one cannot help but affirm one’s status as a knower.346

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346 For a further discussion, see Lonergan, Cogntional Structure, 214-9.
C. Concluding Thoughts on Lonergan

The foregoing has been an attempt to offer evidence, in a format running parallel to our chapter on Heidegger, that Lonergan’s project ought to be understood as a foundational critique of the project of modern philosophy since Descartes. While Lonergan’s manner of responding to modern thought does not necessarily have the same tone as Heidegger’s, and while Lonergan is clearly much more comfortable than Heidegger with using, when appropriate, the terminology of modern philosophy, I submit that nonetheless his critique is equally foundational. Beginning with the basics of cognitional structure, we argued that Lonergan stands in marked opposition to the encounter theory of knowing as well as the related conceptualist theory: to know an object is not to have it impinge upon us and imprint a concept on the mind, but to bring all presentations, by virtue of the unrestricted desire to know, under the sway of intelligence and reflection, to pivot by insight from presentations to understandings to affirmations or denials. This is as much as to say that the human being is not a res cogitans over against a world of corporeal objects, but is rather a fully embedded intellect that navigates the world by intelligence and the asking of questions, but also by instinct, conation, and desire.

In examining the patterns of experience, we called into question the prototypically modern notion of an experience: consciousness intends not discrete colors and tones and the like, but experiences which are pre-reflectively ordered in accordance with some pattern, be it the biological, the aesthetic, the intellectual, the dramatic. Moreover, when Lonergan assigns to the intellectual pattern some overriding weight, it is not because the
human being can be conceived as a pure intellect conjoined incidentally to matter, but because the intellectual mode has the power to explain the other modes, notwithstanding the fact that, primarily, the human being navigates the world in terms of the dramatic pattern of experience.

With this discussion of the patterns of experience out of the way, we were able to turn to a discussion of the place of history in Lonergan’s thought. Here, we found that the human being was not a pure ego, capable of eliminating every extraneous factor by some process of methodological doubt in an effort to achieve a pure knowledge unmixed with error or uncertainty; rather, the human being is radically conditioned by its historical situation, its culture, its upbringing, its own history of choices and habits of body and mind. The human being thinks in a language, and begins asking questions from the concrete situation in which he or she finds him or herself. That cognitional process is undeniable, that it is the same in all human beings, that it is not changed by history or culture—this is the foundation of the possibility of knowledge which transcends time and place, transcends individuals and cultures. But time and place, identity and culture shape the way that knowledge is appropriated, shape the terms in which it is expressed, and shape the horizon within which new questions will be asked and new solutions formulated.

This most recent section laid out the just-mentioned universality of cognitive process by assembling the evidence for the possibility of the judgment, “I am a knower.” In contrast to Descartes’ method of trying to escape every assumption, every received piece of knowledge, and every unsure thing, Lonergan asks us to catch ourselves in the act
of knowing, to understand what that knowing is, and then to affirm that we are, in fact, knowers. This affirmation of the nature of the human person is in some sense a parallel to Heidegger’s laying out of the existential structures of Dasein in *Being and Time*, though obviously the emphases and details of these two accounts vary in many significant ways. This self-affirmation is not a judgment of necessity, but one of fact—a grasp of the virtually unconditioned, a grasp of the fact that, in the very act of knowing, I can know that I am a knower. With all this out of the way, we may turn to our final chapter, a direct comparison of Lonergan and Heidegger in light of their respective notions of being. If, to this point, we have shown how each is a rejection of the basic assumptions of modern thought, in this next and final chapter, we shall examine how, with their distinct but ultimately commensurate understandings of “being”, Lonergan and Heidegger ground a philosophical anthropology both more robust and more adequate to the basic phenomenological facts of human experience than that offered by Descartes and his heirs. It is to this final chapter that we now turn.
Complementarity: The Notion of Being

If there is one conspicuous theme in the writings of both Heidegger and Lonergan that I have heretofore failed to devote adequate attention to, that would be the notion of “being.” Part of the title of some of Heidegger’s most important works, and at almost the precise center of *Insight*, in the title of one of its most crucial chapters, is the word “being,” which, to this point, I have only talked around rather than about. The time has come to remedy this apparent oversight by directly comparing Heidegger and Lonergan with regard to their distinct but deeply related understandings of being.

Since I have staked my claims about the complementarity of Heidegger and Lonergan on the suggestion that, taken together, they offer a robust philosophical anthropology, one might be inclined to question why the focus of this present and final chapter should be on the notion of being and not, say, a further examination of the elements of each thinker’s thought which most closely verge on social philosophy. By way of anticipation, I offer the following suggestion: Heidegger and Lonergan have in common a commitment to the notion of man as an ontological being, and any anthropology that ignores or overlooks the human person’s directedness toward being has failed to take into account the very cornerstone of what makes human beings the sorts of beings they are. In short, an understanding of being in its relation to the human person is the cornerstone of the thought of both Lonergan and Heidegger: all of the foregoing, which has explicitly sought to lay out the ways in which Lonergan and Heidegger reject the reduction of man to a merely intellectual being and the radical distinction of subject
and object, has also been a propaedeutic for a discussion of the way in which the human being is open to being. In other words, for both Lonergan and Heidegger, an understanding of being is not part of some bloodless metaphysical pursuit—though certainly the study of being does belong in some sense to metaphysics; rather, a correct understanding of being leads into a correct understanding of that being which understands being as being, who is (to use a Heideggerian phrase) that being for whom being is an issue and (to use a Lonerganian notion) that being who can grasp the isomorphism between the structure of its own mind and the structure of being as such.

In both these turns of phrase, we can detect a rather sharp break from the modern understanding, wherein the notion of being remains, basically, unclarified. Descartes calls man a *res cogitans* and the world beyond man’s mind *res extensa*, but neither he nor the thinkers who followed him adequately clarified what exactly was the nature of this *res* such that it could be said of both of a pair of, apparently, entirely dissimilar sorts of things. Kant too fails to clarify this distinction, for being is (as we’ve seen) position, and man has both an empirical and a transcendental self grounded in the transcendental unity of apperception. For Lonergan, however, this poses no problem, for both man and the items of the world beyond his mind are “things” precisely insofar as they admit of being understood in a coherent grasp, and “being” is precisely the objective correlative of the subjective desire to understand. And for Heidegger, too, there is no difficulty, for the notion of being is clarified and allowed to be used in the first instance only of Dasein, the human being, for whom Being-in-the-world is constitutive: the world is correlated to

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Dasein precisely insofar as it is co-constitutive of Dasein’s being, and the world is co-
constituted by Dasein’s Being-there insofar as Dasein opens up the world and allows
things to stand forth in their being.

But already we have introduced the central problematic of this chapter: in what
sense are Lonergan’s and Heidegger’s understandings comparable? I submit that for both
thinkers, the understanding of being is inextricably tied up with the human person’s being
correlated to the world within which he finds himself in a very particular way, such that,
in the relation of the one to the other, both are allowed to come to themselves and be
what they are. For both thinkers, the relation of man to the world cannot be understood
on the model of Descartes’ firm distinction: subject here, object there. For both,
“subjectivity” (though clearly Heidegger would avoid that term) is shot through with
worldliness, such that to try to understand man apart from the world to which he is
essentially correlated is to miss not just half the picture, but nearly the whole picture.

For Lonergan, the human person is oriented to the world, in the first place, by the
unrestricted desire to know, which encompasses everything within its scope; and while it is
conceivable for a person to retreat into the purely inner drama as a result of scotosis and
repression, nonetheless the proper sphere for man is the one that essentially intersects the
shared world. There is a properly “worldly” element to each of the four patterns of
experience, and while it is the intellectual pattern within which the desire to know chiefly
belongs, nonetheless every person’s unique subjectivity is shaped through and through by

\[348\] Notwithstanding the fact that Lonergan is perfectly comfortable using the language of subject and object
when it is accurate and appropriate—for after all, the distinction does not wholly collapse, but simply needs
to be amplified and understood in its proper context. Subject and object are not two fundamentally opposed
categories, but the poles at either end of a continuum.
history, culture, and habit. Moreover, history, culture, and habit, just because they are not “extended” things, are no less part of the shared world of a culture or community than are the tangible items around which history, culture, and habit orient themselves.\(^\text{349}\) They, too, admit of being understood; and insofar as the desire to understand is unrestricted, and being is the correlate of this desire to understand, they pertain essentially to the relationship of man and being.

For Heidegger, being is at the center: for man is the only being for which its own being arises as an explicit question, and *Being and Time* as a work, is an attempt to elucidate the existential structures of man’s way of being: his worldliness, his fallenness, his finitude and deathboundness. If for Lonergan, man can be understood on the model of a movement toward a fuller grasp of being—for the unrestricted desire to know is always operative, and the range of questions demanding answers is always expanding—then for Heidegger, man must be understood in terms of a falling-away from an appropriate grasp of being. Ever since the question was first raised, Heidegger suggests, philosophers and all those who try to address the question of being have fallen away from the original experiences that gave rise to the question—more and more, they fall into the same cycles of stale answers. As he says in the very opening paragraph of *Being and Time*, the question of being “is not just any question. It is one which provided a stimulus for the researches of Plato and Aristotle, only to subside from then on as a theme for actual

\(^{349}\) In this connection, see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 7.
investigation. What these two men achieved was to persist through many alterations and ‘retouchings’ down to the ‘logic’ of Hegel.”

And this is not to suggest that, for Heidegger, the question is only operative when raised explicitly: on the contrary, the question of being haunts the human soul. It is in some sense the question behind all questions, and, more fundamentally still, the decisive factor behind those moods and affective responses we discussed earlier. Underlying that most fundamental and revelatory of moods, anxiety, is the haunting question: what is the ground of all this? Ordinarily distracted by beings, absorbed by our concern with the things of the world, we allow the question to recede into forgetfulness—but it sleeps just below the surface. When all involvements fall away, we find ourselves face to face with that fundamental question once again, and with it the threat of “the nothing,” and we pass into the mood of anxiety—which, because it reveals “the nothing,” also serves to reveal beings as a whole, as though looked upon from the relative distance of unattachment, uninvolve...
existence. Being and the human person are essentially correlated, and it is essentially for
the human being that being emerges as a question—whether in the interminable drive
toward full understanding, or in the mystery of there being anything rather than nothing
which lurks below the surface of every inquiry, or in the totalizing horizon established in
and through human historicity—culture, community, past choices, the pre-given
interpretations of the anonymous “They.”

With this observation, then, we have come up against the fundamental point upon
which to compare Lonergan and Heidegger, and to see what the nature of that dialogue
might be. Already we have indicated the centrality of being, but now we are in a position
to point out a certain bifurcation in the way the two engage the question of being—a
bifurcation which, nonetheless, will serve to highlight a more fundamental similarity. On
the one hand, for both thinkers, “being” is understood as essentially correlated to the
reach of man’s questioning. Everything that is, is fundamentally one with everything that
enters into man’s world; and being, as the correlate of the desire to understand, is similarly
unrestricted, such that if one were to suppose that something were essentially outside of
man’s capacity to question and seek understanding, one would be supposing an unreality,
a non-being. As such, man in some sense belongs to being, and being in some sense
belongs with man.

But here we hit upon the aforementioned bifurcation: for in Lonergan’s thought
we can, perhaps, discern a certain optimism in the possibility of an ever-expanding range
of knowledge and questioning, the continuous movement from obscurity toward
understanding. And in Heidegger’s thought we can discern that already-mentioned falling
away from being, such that the history of philosophy is, in some sense, a history of failures to ask the question of being in an adequately profound way. And yet, I will argue that this apparent divergence is in fact the result of a deeper agreement, and that in both thinkers we can discern some hint of the notion that man and being belong together in these cycles of moving toward and falling away: that progress always brings with it the threat of ever more catastrophic decline, that the systematic exploration of the question of being always brings with it the risk of the reduction of that question to a sclerotic and technical language which fails to convey the urgency of the original questioning.

In what follows then I will first lay out in some detail both the Heideggerian and the Lonerganian notions of being, and the apparent distinctions between these two understandings, especially in terms of a moving-toward as opposed to a falling-away-from. Next, I will try to show that the distinctions between these two positions are far less stable than a casual comparison might suggest. Finally and in conclusion I will attempt to give some evidence for my claim that Lonergan and Heidegger are actually in some sort of fundamental agreement upon the relationship of man and being, and that this dialogue, if extended, could bear the fruit of a robust philosophical anthropology both rooted in the Western philosophic tradition and open to the richness offered by contemporary science as well as other religious, cultural, and philosophical traditions.
Lonergan’s understanding of being is deeply rooted in the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition from which he takes his bearing. Within that tradition, there is an idea of the human being as essentially open to the whole, and teleologically directed toward it as a knower toward the known. This understanding is markedly different from the one put forward by Descartes and his descendants, all of whom take as a given that what the human being knows is, in one way or another, primarily his own mind; for Aristotle and Thomas, mind is essentially oriented toward intelligibles beyond itself. And even if it can be truly said that things must be known according to the mode of the knower, this is only to say that human knowing is finite in its scope, and not that the primary terminus of its knowing activity is the mind itself. Mind can only know things that are like itself—like knows like—but fortunately for Aristotle and Thomas, being itself, the real, everything that exists, is like mind, insofar as mind is intelligent\textsuperscript{353} and every existing thing is intelligible: the essence or whatness or quiddity or \textit{to-ti-en-einai} of any thing is precisely its intelligible structure.\textsuperscript{354}

Now, this is not to say that Lonergan simply plucks Aristotle’s or Aquinas’ theory of being out of antiquity or the middle ages and and props it up as the once-for-all solution to that problem. For one, Aristotle and Aquinas, as a side effect of their historical moments, never had to wrestle with idealism, modernism, existentialism, or post-modernism—which, at the time of the writing of \textit{Insight} itself was only in its infancy. Because those questions are not raised, the classical theories of being fail to address

\textsuperscript{353} Note that the claim is \textit{not} that man is an intellectual substance.

\textsuperscript{354} See above, pp. 26-7.
certain concerns which would immediately occur to a contemporary thinker. Nonetheless, for Lonergan, the basic structure of the correct answer is still to be found in Aristotelian-Thomist thought: the human mind is oriented toward the whole of being, being is everything that is, and everything that is, by virtue of what it means for a thing to be, is intelligible. Moreover, the specific contributions of Aquinas—the distinction between substantial form and existential act—are absolutely fundamental for the cognitive and metaphysical structures articulated by Lonergan.

Now, the central question of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* could be formulated, “What makes a thing a thing?” After many twists and turns, open—admittedly—to a variety of interpretations, the basic answer seems to be something like its *intelligibility* or intelligible structure—or, in the traditional terminology, its substantial form. In Lonergan’s understanding of a thing, we can discern the Aristotelian influence, for Lonergan calls a thing a “unity-identity-whole” in data, a discrete and holistically intelligible unity. A “thing,” properly speaking, is not a “body,” and its thingness does not hinge on its being a spatially distinct collection of matter. On the contrary, a thing’s thinghood springs from its standing apart in the sphere of intelligibility, in its being intellectually discernible: unique, unity, identity, whole. This suggests, first of all, that typically all of us navigate the world in terms of “bodies” more than in terms of “things,”

355 Of course, Heidegger sees this question as inadequately foundational.

356 As indicated above, the precise breadth with which this question is formulated might issue in either a distinctly Aristotelian or Thomistic response. If intelligible structure makes a thing to *be what it is* and to *be simply*, then one approaches an Aristotelian interpretation. If intelligible structure makes a thing to *be what it is*, but relies upon an existential act given from some higher source of existence—ultimately a being whose essence is to exist—to *be simply*, then one approaches a Thomistic interpretation.

for the grasp of a “thing” in the full sense of the word is an intellectual achievement. And, to be sure, some of these corporeally discrete bodies may in fact prove to be “things” upon further examination: we may deal with and perceive other human beings as “bodies” for the most part, but this in no way alters the fact that they are, in fact, things, intelligible unities grasped in the data of experience and affirmed.

Now, because of the regularity with which we deal with bodies and the comparable rarity with which we take the time to explicitly grasp a unity-identity-whole in data, it should come as no surprise that even philosophers, in their thinking through the question of being, might make the mistake of saying “thing” when what they have in mind is “body.” But in Aristotle’s thought there is at least the safeguard against this error—namely, of a thing’s very thinghood being one with its intelligibility. More radically, we can say that (in a sense) to be is to be intelligible: for whether a thing is corporeal, spiritual, ideal, or what have you, its being nonetheless inheres in its being intelligible. As we’ve indicated, a four-sided triangle cannot exist, not chiefly because such a thing is not imaginable (though certainly it is not), but properly because it is not intelligible.

But, by the same stroke, one can discern the fundamentally Thomistic influence on Lonergan’s conception of being, of the thing. For to be is not simply to be intelligible. Every being—every extant thing—must of course have its intelligible structure, its substantial form, as a fundamental constituent of its being. Every being is what it is by virtue of its substantial form instantiated in matter—a thing is a unity-identity-whole

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I suspect that even Aristotle, at times, is guilty of this confusion, even though he properly conceives the notion of a “thing” and “thinghood.”
grasped intelligently in data. But where Aristotle conflates a thing’s being-intelligible with its being-as-such, Aquinas relates the dynamism of potency and act not only to the hierarchy of matter and form, but also to that of intelligible structure to actual existence.\(^{359}\) In other words, to be is not simply to be intelligible, but to have that intelligible structure conjoined to the act of the existence. To rephrase the same in more typically Lonerganian language, one need only recollect that questions for understanding—what is it?—are quite distinct from questions for reflective reasonability—is it so? That is to say, the question of intelligible structure is of a different order than the question of actual existence.

If, then, Lonergan takes from Aristotle the insight that a thing’s thinghood consists in its intelligible structure, and from Aquinas the insight that existence is an actuality of a different order than intelligible structure, then it makes sense that his theory of being would revolve around the intelligibility of the totality intended in the human person’s unrestricted desire to know—a drive which rests content not simply with grasping intelligible structure, but only with the complete term of knowledge, the affirmation of actuality. In other words, because the human person is characterized by an unrestricted orientation toward the whole, being can notionally be understood as the terminus or objective correlate of this subjective drive or orientation.\(^{360}\) But here we must clarify what, precisely, we mean by the term “notionally,” for that is not altogether clear. Let us suggest that it is somewhat elucidated by being contrasted with “concept.” A “concept” is the result of an act of understanding—a having in one’s grasp, as the German *Begriff* so


nicely suggests. A notion, by contrast, is a having in the mode of heuristic anticipation. Lonergan says that “a notion arises ... insofar as understanding discerns future function in present structure.” A notion is an operative and dynamic orientation, and “it is prior to conception and goes beyond it.” Conceptualization is a result of insight; it is the crystallization of some understanding into a determinate concept with some determinate content, abstracting from the irrelevant and including only the essential. But a notion is an operative and dynamic orientation. The notion of being is precisely not a concept, but rather the operative and dynamic orientation of the human mind, prior to and beyond any conceptualization, toward the totality of what is the case. To put a finer point on it still: had Lonergan spoken instead of the concept of being, had he declared that the determinate conceptual content of being is the aggregate of the known and the to-be-known, he would have made an idealist claim, for then the real would be reducible to the known, instead of the totality of reality being subsumed under the notion of being, as susceptible to penetration by intelligence, even if not actually understood by any mind. As Aquinas knew and as Aristotle discovered, “the intelligible in act is the intellect in act.” Or, in more Lonerganian terms, outside of being there is nothing, and being is being precisely insofar as it is an intelligible susceptible to intellectual grasp and intelligent affirmation.

So, on the one hand, we see that being is intimately tied to the structure and inner dynamism of the human mind; and on the other hand, there is never any suggestion that being is merely a result or product or side-effect of human understanding. Because the

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361 Ibid., 378-9.
human being is open to the whole—and so open in a structured, intelligible way—being itself can be understood as the objective correlate of that openness, isomorphically structured and intelligible; and because we are speaking of being as a notion, instead of a concept, being itself is not thereby reduced to some one, single, positive, clearly delineated conceptual formulation. The conceptual content intended by the notion of being is as-yet-unknown—but we can know that being as such is the objective of the unrestricted desire to know, whatever that objective may prove to be as human understanding expands in scope and depth, and penetrates deeper into all fields of inquiry. And because being is understood as a notion, not a concept, it can be truly said that the “notion of being abstracts from nothing whatever. It is all-inclusive. Its content is determined by the totality of correct judgments.” On this basis, “it is possible to distinguish between the general character of the concrete universe and … the concrete universe in all its details.”

While the notion of being itself is not abstract, since it covers every possible content as determined by the “totality of correct judgments,” nonetheless particularized determinations of “the general character of the concrete universe” on the basis of some subset of judgments—correct or otherwise—are necessarily abstract, for by definition they prescind from some aspects of the real in the pursuit of an adequate explanatory schema. Barring the possibility of a full and complete conceptual content commensurate with the unrestricted reach of the notion of being, every determination of the general character of the concrete universe is forced to select as principally relevant some restricted set of data, questions, insights, judgments. Thereby do we arrive at the plurality

362 Ibid., 386.
of philosophies and interpretations of the whole. Nonetheless, because understanding inherently drives at full understanding and leaves no question unanswered, incorrect or incomplete explanations tend to invite their own reversal—since they do not satisfactorily answer every relevant question—while more complete and correct explanations tend to endure and to encourage their further development. Chief among the philosophies that invite their own reversals are those which declare that being is unintelligible, that the real is not susceptible of being penetrated by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation.\textsuperscript{363}

But although Lonergan assigns no concrete conceptual content to the notion of being—precisely insofar as it is a notion and not a concept—nonetheless he maintains that the general structure of the to-be-known can be outlined in advance. We know, that is, that knowing has a determinate structure—experience, understanding, judgment—and we know too that there obtains an isomorphism between the act of knowing and the thing known. Just as knowing has its determinate structure, so too does the known—whatever it may be. In short, a “thing”—as opposed to a body—is characterized by its having a structure parallel to the structure of the mind that knows it \textit{qua} thing. Lonergan employs familiar Aristotelian terms, though in a somewhat novel way: potency corresponds to the aspect of the thing known “by an intellectually pattered experience of the empirical residue,” the “matter” upon which the senses and imagination work, and from which the intellect prescinds.\textsuperscript{364} Form corresponds to the intellectual grasp that understands things in their “relations to one another.” And act corresponds to the “virtually unconditioned

\textsuperscript{363} See above pp. 23-25.

\textsuperscript{364} See p. 145 above.
yes of reasonable judgment.” The known—whatever it may be—can be known, in advance, in the mode of heuristic anticipation, to have this intelligible structure of an individual empirical residue, intelligible form, and an actual occurrence. Moreover, beyond the “things” to be understood, there are the loci of purely explanatory relations of mutually defined terms within which the thing is situated, and therefore Lonergan distinguishes between central and conjugate potencies, forms, and acts: the former correspond to the individual-intelligible-existing unity-identity-wholes and the latter to the intelligible “properties” or “conjugates” co-yoked to the unity-identity-wholes.

Now, one might object that this structure, outlined here, does not seem to apply beyond the realm of the perceptible—for the “empirical residue” is built into these notions. But there can be no empirical residue of something like the soul or God. Is Lonergan, like his Enlightenment predecessors, seeking to restrict the scope of intelligent inquiry only to the empirical world? On the contrary, Lonergan deliberately restricts the scope of his metaphysics, in its initial formulation, to the world of what he calls “proportionate being.” Since such doubt exists as to whether the human mind may penetrate to a knowledge that entirely transcends the sensible, Lonergan avoids that controversy—at the beginning—by defining proportionate being as that range of being that is proportionate to or fully isomorphic with the structure of the human mind: “In its full

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366 One detects in this third component of the metaphysical structure of any possible object the influence of Aquinas, for whom actual existence or esse is a constitutive component of the real.

367 It is important to remember, in this context, that traditional Aristotelian “accidents” which are descriptive instead of explanatory are not conjugate forms in the Lonerganian sense: color as seen is not a conjugate form, but mass or temperature as measured and co-defined in terms of other explanatory principles may be.
sweep, being is whatever is to be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation. But being that is proportionate to human knowing not only is to be understood and affirmed but also is to be experienced. So proportionate being may be defined as whatever is to be known by human experience, intelligent grasp, and reasonable affirmation." And yet this deliberate restriction on Lonergan’s part only makes more pressing the further question of whether the human mind is capable of pushing beyond the need for direct experience—of achieving a metaphysics not of proportionate being only but of being as such.

This Lonergan does in the final three chapters of *Insight*, which treat the ethical realm, natural knowledge of God, and special transcendent knowledge, respectively. Each of these topics, in its own way, represents a kind of knowledge that leaves direct sensory and intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue behind: ethics, by considering what ought to be as opposed to what is; natural knowledge of God, by asking whether the world taken as a whole is subject to the penetration of intelligibility just as things within the world are; and special transcendent knowledge, by inquiring as to whether anything of God’s nature can be known by the human intellect. And, for Lonergan, each of these topics necessitates an extension of intelligent grasp and reasonable formulation to ever more rarefied atmospheres of thought. Ethics, in the broadest of terms, is a matter of recognizing in the present state of the world certain deficiencies with regard to its possible states, and intending—in one’s actions—the

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achievement of those possible superior states of being. General transcendent knowledge (or natural knowledge of God) is a matter of extending the mind’s own mandate for full intelligibility to the whole of reality, ultimately arriving at the conclusion that, if the real is to be fully intelligible, then it must have an intelligible ground—or, as Lonergan so succinctly and pristinely puts it, “If the real is completely intelligible, God exists. But the real is completely intelligible. Therefore, God exists.” And special transcendent knowledge grasps that, if one follows the path of full intelligibility, one is compelled by the force of argument to acknowledge that God is not an impersonal power but the fullness of being, bringing about the elimination of evil and imperfection in accordance with created being’s own immanent laws of emergence and higher order integrations.

One might be tempted to see these final two chapters—both of which treat God in their own ways—as the goal (or perhaps more pejoratively, the ulterior motive) of Lonergan’s project in *Insight*. After all, Lonergan was first and foremost a theologian, and yet the questions of the existence and nature of God have been sidelined in favor of questions of cognitional theory and epistemology for nearly the whole of *Insight*. Nonetheless, I think we can only interpret these chapters as the goal of *Insight* in a very particularized way—namely, insofar as being itself, when considered from top to bottom, tends to demand of its own accord a treatment of its ground and origin. In other words, a

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369 Ibid., 621-2: “[W]illing is rational and so moral. The detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know grasps intelligently and affirms reasonably not only the facts of the universe of being but also its practical possibilities. ... Man is not only a knower but also a doer; the same intelligent and rational consciousness grounds the doing as well as the knowing; and from that identity there springs inevitably an exigence for self-consistency in knowing and doing.”

370 Ibid., 695.
treatment of being that fails to wrestle with the question of necessary being thus runs the risk of leaving out both the foundation and the pinnacle of its intended subject matter.

In the first of these chapters, Lonergan extends the notion of being—all that is to be understood by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation—to the question of the ground of being as a whole. Put differently: if the pure, disinterested desire to know—the subjective side of the notion of being—is directed telically or in the mode of finality toward complete knowing, there arises the question of whether this drive ought to be restricted to the realm of proportionate being, or whether on the other hand it ought to press on to the question of the potential intelligibility of being that \textit{transcends} full proportionality to human faculties. Does the drive for understanding come up short when it expands beyond the possibility of “an intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue,” or do intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation press on? Lonergan writes:

\begin{quote}
Man wants to understand completely. As the desire to understand is the opposite of total obscurantism, so the unrestricted desire to understand is the opposite of any and every partial obscurantism no matter how slight. The rejection of total obscurantism is the demand that some questions, at least, are not to be met with an arbitrary exclamation, ‘Let’s forget it!’ The rejection of any and every partial obscurantism is the demand that no question whatever is to be met arbitrarily, that every question is to be submitted to the process of intelligent grasp and critical reflection.\cite{Ibid., 661}
\end{quote}

If one concedes the intelligibility of every proportionate being, nonetheless one cannot in the same breath deny the intelligibility of the world of intelligible being considered as a whole by maintaining that it lacks any intelligible ground, or that its emergence from non-being was a random occurrence unable to be penetrated by intelligence, for to do so

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{371} Ibid., 661.
\end{footnote}
would impugn the intelligibility of the whole and involve one in a counterposition inviting its own reversal. Apart from being there is nothing, and as the desire to understand intends being as such, it thereby intends not only proportionate being, but every being whatever, regardless of its nature. And so, the drive to understand is content not only with raising the question of the existence of God, but is compelled by its nature to raise the question of God’s nature—to move beyond the an sit to the quid sit. The drive for complete understanding finds its terminus only in a complete intelligibility. Lonergan meets this question by raising the problem of evil, about which we cannot go into detail here; suffice it to say that the full intelligibility of the world is complicated by the existence of evil, and that the solution to this incoherence lies in a further (supernatural) development of human willingness, emergent in accordance with the norms of genetic process, but impossible without the action of God on human hearts.

In any event, the scope of the notion of being, like the scope of its intended object, is unrestricted. Because being is an unrestricted notion, it can be said to underlie and underpin every particularized inquiry, grasp, and affirmation:

Without the pure desire to know, sensitive living would remain in its routine of perception and conation, instinct and habit, emotion and action. What breaks that circuit and releases intellectual activity is the wonder Aristotle described as the beginning of all science and philosophy. But that wonder is intelligent inquiry. It selects data for insight, and by that selecting it underpins even the empirical component in our knowing.

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372 Ibid., 662.

373 Ibid., 740-51.

374 Ibid., 380.
With every inquiry, grasp, and affirmation, then, it would seem that man is moving closer
toward the whole, or, put in other terms, by filling in the empty notion of being, man is
coming closer and closer to a complete grasp of the full conceptual content heuristically
anticipated by the notion of being. There is, then, a way of reading Lonergan that, his
caveats on the non-automatic nature of progress notwithstanding, might construe him as
suggesting that the human race is, somehow, on a path toward complete knowing, and
that with enough time and dedication, mankind might come to know the totality of the
concrete universe of being.

And yet, a proper grasp of Lonergan’s understanding of what it means to
understand rules this out: for classical laws grasp generalities, and statistical laws
determine regularities and non-systematic deviations, and genetic laws grasp
development. But classical laws are abstract, and cannot be applied to concrete situations
without pivoting through schematic images and statistical residues—and once images, let
alone concrete situations, are introduced, the question of occurrence is raised, and
statistical law must be brought to bear upon the inquiry. And once change over time is
discerned, genetic law must be brought into the picture. In short, where understanding is
abstract, the concrete totality of being is definitionally not, and even the most capacious
and developed understanding would be stymied by the existence of other intelligent
subjects at various degrees of self-transparency, and by a world that is only fully
intelligible in its orientation or idea, and not in its concrete existence.\textsuperscript{375} In other words, as
the mind and the real are isomorphic, and as the mind moves from lack of understanding

\textsuperscript{375} Ibid., 710-2.
to fuller understanding, so too the real is developmental in nature: far from being a finished, completed, fully intelligible *actuality*, it is an admixture of intelligence and stupidity, intelligibility and resistance to intelligibility. While, for Lonergan, the real is fully intelligible, that does not necessarily mean that it is fully intelligible in act, for the concrete admits of deviations from classical laws and statistical regularities and genetical anticipations, and these deviations require higher order systems and fuller understandings to be able to be understood.

So, then, being must be understood as the totality of the real intended in man’s questioning. By raising questions, and positing answers, and raising ever further questions, it is possible to discern something of the general structure of the whole of being by way of heuristic anticipation. And yet, because every positive understanding is finite in scope, every interpretation of the real is based on some restricted set of data, and thereby susceptible of missing the mark in varying degrees. Nonetheless, in identifying the recurrent pattern and innate structure of cognition and of the human person *qua* knower, Lonergan has correctly understood (we presume) not just any random subset of data, but that very subset that highlights the structure of the whole. Might Lonergan be wrong about particular details—his theory of emergent probability, his ethics, his understanding of the social life of man? Certainly. But if he has correctly identified the structure of cognitive process—and we have already pointed out the radical difficulty of calling this structure into question—then he has likewise identified something of the structure of any possible known. But since to be is to be knowable, to be subject to intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation, he has also thereby outlined the nature of the real as such. And
this is not to say that all questions are settled, for the knowledge afforded by the
isomorphism of knowing and the real is schematic and structural—and content can,
despite Kant, only be so far deduced from structure. Nonetheless, the human person and
the totality of the real are in some sense promised to one another, and man emerges, in
the Lonerganian interpretation, as that one unique and remarkable being within the
totality of being who is capable of turning around and understanding not only himself;
but the whole of being as well.
§2 — Heidegger on the Notion of Being

While Lonergan’s understanding of being is laid out in plain terms in the central chapter of his magnum opus, Heidegger’s understanding—despite the prominence of the word “Being” in the titles of so many of his works, including Being and Time—is not quite so plainly declared. This, however, is not to suggest that it is nowhere to be found. And while a closer reading is required to come to terms with precisely the way in which Heidegger is using that term, nonetheless the groundwork has been laid in the foregoing chapters, and the task of elucidating Heidegger’s notion of being should, at this point, pose us no great obstacle.376

Let us recall, then, the interpretive avenue suggested by Sheehan—namely, that when we encounter the word Sein, regularly translated being, we should interpret it as “sense-making” or “meaning-making.”377 As I have suggested above, I have certain reservations about too easily deeming these terms simply equivalent: it runs the risk of losing sight of Heidegger’s place in the broader history of Western thought, and of taking phenomenology to be the extent of Heidegger’s philosophical concern. But with these hesitancies aside, Sheehan offers us a point of attack for seeing the similarities between Lonergan’s understanding of being and Heidegger’s—since, for both, being is correlated with something like “meaning” or “understanding” or “making sense of things” (if not, in Heidegger’s case, “intelligibility” in the precisely Lonerganian sense of that term). In short, for Heidegger, being and meaning-making are correlated, and that which falls

376 Olafson, Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind, 134-5.
377 Sheehan, “Facticity and Ereignis,” 45-60.
entirely outside of the scope of human concern is precisely non-being—for human concern, ultimately, is directed at the whole.

In any event, let us first lay out what I take to be the background and foundation of Sheehan’s claim. To begin, let us observe that most of Heidegger’s discussion of “being” in Being and Time is in the mode of talking around rather than talking about: one cannot really rely on any direct statements from Heidegger, on any outright definitions of being. He speaks at length about “the Being of Dasein,” about “Being-in-the-world,” about “Being-in” as such, and so forth—but for the most part, his discussions of being itself and as such are fairly limited, and in any event do not proceed in the definitional fashion we saw in Lonergan.\textsuperscript{378} Of course, this is in part because of Being and Time’s status as an unfinished work: the second division in which the explicit treatment of being was to be laid out, and for which the first division was to serve as a propaedeutic, is nowhere to be found.

Nonetheless, in the introduction to Being and Time, Heidegger gives us a clue as to his own understanding of being, while also laying out three conventional ways of thinking about being, all of which miss the mark in some important way. Heidegger provisionally defines being, without much further ado, as “that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood, however we may discuss them in detail.”\textsuperscript{379} I take this preliminary definition to be indicative of the guiding orientation of

\textsuperscript{378} Heidegger spends plenty of time laying out other great thinkers’ understandings of being—much of Basic Problems revolves around precisely this—but we rarely encounter such clear articulations and definitions of Heidegger’s own notion of being, and very often what we do get takes the form of a critique and response to these other notions—like, for instance, Kant’s in Basic Problems.

\textsuperscript{379} Heidegger, Being and Time, 6. My emphasis.
Heidegger’s questioning—but it is still too close to the “everyday” understanding of being, which is to say, too conceptually unclarified, to be the final word. In any event, this understanding of being—while correctly oriented—still runs the risks of being burdened by the three aforementioned conventional understandings. First, there is being considered as the “most universal concept;” this is the traditionally philosophical understanding of being, found in various forms in the thought of Plato and Aristotle, the medievals and Hegel. The philosophical tradition has, according to Heidegger, yet to get out from under the weight of this way of thinking about being. Second, there is the technically correct yet nonetheless inadequate proposition that, since being (as it is conventionally thought) is the most general category, it cannot be defined—for definition operates in terms of some specific difference, which being lacks due to its generality. Finally, there is the position that being is self-evident, since the notion of being implicitly enters into every expression, articulation, and thought: the “to be” is the basis of every grasp of identity or difference, every association, every comparison, and what have you. But, says Heidegger, precisely because being is most familiar, it is most opaque: man exists, in some sense, as a question to himself—the question of being. Lost, for the most part, amidst the multiplicity of individual beings, most people fail to explicitly pursue the question of being itself.

Rather than stopping, at this point, to offer a different or more adequate definition of being, Heidegger suggests that the proper approach is to take a questioning posture with regard to being: “The question of the meaning of Being must be formulated. If it is a fundamental question, or indeed the fundamental question, it must be made transparent,

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380 Ibid., 3-4.
and in an appropriate way.” And continuing, “Every inquiry is a seeking [Suchen]. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought. … Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way.” Being, in other words, is so familiar that it can go unnoticed, and it is therefore necessary to adjust our posture with regard to it, such that we can bring it forth into the light of day. There is something heuristic, then, to Heidegger’s understanding of how to formulate the question of being; furthermore, the asking of that question is not a purely intellectual or conceptual affair, but rather the adopting of a particular comportment toward the object of the question, namely being. But what precisely does that comportment look like?

Dasein is unique in that it is the one being for whom its own being is a question—through its undertakings, it discerns its own essence. Dasein ek-sists, stands outside of itself, and by living toward some future possibility, determines what it shall be. But Dasein is also the only being who asks the question of being as such, the question of what makes beings to be, the question of why there is something rather than nothing. This question is, indeed, a haunting of the soul of Dasein: whether Dasein adopts any explicitly theoretical attitude or not, the question remains. When involvements and attachments are shaken loose, when Dasein is—for however brief a time—no longer lost amidst the multiplicity of things, that most fundamental question obtrudes upon him or her. And the two questions are related: Dasein is most fully confronted by the question of its own being when it considers its own inevitable death, and at the same time this anxiety pries it away.

381 Ibid., 5.
from any concrete involvement and allows the question of why there is anything rather than nothing to stand forth.

Now, because Dasein is the one being for whom this question is not only possible but also, to some extent, unavoidable, Heidegger makes the Dasein analytic the centerpiece of *Being and Time* (at least as far as the extant portion of the originally planned work is concerned): in other words, an understanding of how Dasein has access to the world is indispensable in the raising and answering of the question of being. And since Dasein’s fundamental mode of access to the world is *care*, it can be said that in some fundamental sense being is, first and foremost, all that that enters into the sphere of Dasein’s concern, everything which may proximally or remotely enter into its world.\(^{382}\)

Heidegger writes:

> Of course, only as long as Dasein *is* (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), ‘is there’ Being. When Dasein does not exist, ‘independence’ ‘is’ not either, nor ‘is’ the ‘in-itself’. In such a case this this sort of thing can be neither understood nor not understood. In such a case even entities within-the-world can neither be discovered nor lie hidden. *In such a case* it cannot be said that entities are, nor can it be said that they are *not*.\(^{383}\)

Now, this is not to say that “entities” or, perhaps better, “bodies” (to use Lonergan’s term) do not have an existence apart from the mind of Dasein, as though their very extantness is owed entirely to Dasein. As Olafson notes:

> That this is a revisionary use of the concept of being seems beyond dispute, although it does not follow that it is without philosophical precedents. It does appear, however, that even if this construal of the concept of being proves to be justifiable, those who, like Heidegger, use it in this way must use it in an implicit pairing with a concept of being that is

\(^{382}\) See Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind*, 140-50; also, Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 212.

\(^{383}\) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 212.
not tied to understanding or to Dasein and is in fact applicable to anything that can be described as an entity.\textsuperscript{384}

Olafson’s point here is clear: if we want to correlate being with Dasein, that is well and good, but we still need a complementary notion of being (namely, extantness) to use with regard to “entities” which obviously are but which are outside of Dasein’s sphere of concern. It is worth noting two possible confusions in Olafson’s thought here: first, in calling the extant-but-not-understood (that is, not correlated to Dasein) “entities” or “things”, Olafson seems to fall into the trap Lonergan warned us of: confusing things (intelligible unities in data, or, in this case, anything within the realm of human concern) with bodies (the extant).\textsuperscript{385} Apart from Dasein’s understanding, there cannot be entities properly speaking, because to so call them belies a correlation to the notion of being, and thereby to Dasein, to understanding, and so forth. Second, unless one flattens the distinction between beings and extant “bodies” (obviously, not a Heideggerian distinction, but one that is nonetheless critical here, even if the terminology seems odd), there is no need to call explicit attention to this secondary being-concept (extantness), for it goes without saying that the range of the “to be” covers absolutely everything: both what is and what is not. The moment any extant “thing” enters the sphere of Dasein’s concern, it takes on one or another being-designation (at least implicitly), and prior to or independent of its entering this sphere of concern, it neither is nor is not, insofar as there is no being to offer such a judgment—and this is markedly distinct from any judgment that it does not exist. There simply is no being at hand to make the call. And since no

\textsuperscript{384} Olafson, \textit{Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind}, 140.

\textsuperscript{385} Though it is certainly quite difficult to get around such language; I was guilty of it, just above. Nonetheless, Olafson seems to use “entities” and “things” without further ado.
being can be completely and entirely outside of the realm of Dasein’s concern—in such a case it would simply not be—the secondary being-concept is only helpful in making fine philosophical distinctions, and has no bearing on how the word being is used in its primary and fundamental sense.

So, then, there is a fundamental correlation of being and Dasein—the two are, in a fundamental way, co-implicated. In his later writings, Heidegger goes so far as to call being the “Destiny” of Dasein.386 To Dasein alone is bequeathed the possibility of letting beings stand forth in their very being. To Dasein alone belongs the possibility of opening up a space within which the disclosure of being may go forth:

Man obviously is a being. As such he belongs to the totality of Being—just like the stone, the tree, or the eagle. To “belong” here still means to be in the order of Being. But man’s distinctive feature lies in this, that he, as the being who thinks, is open to Being, face to face with Being; thus man remains referred to Being and answers to it. Man is essentially this relationship of responding to being, and he is only this. This “only” does not mean a limitation, but rather an excess. A belonging to Being prevails within man, a belonging which listens to Being because it is appropriated to Being. … Man and Being are appropriated to each other. They belong to each other.387

But this talk of letting beings stand forth in their being harkens back to the preliminary definition of being Heidegger mentioned passingly in _Being and Time_. In these later writings, Heidegger revisits the question of being as “that which determines entities as entities”388 in somewhat other terms: “the Being of beings means Being which is beings. … Being becomes present in the manner of a transition to beings. … Being shows itself

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386 Heidegger, _Identity and Difference_, 51.
387 Ibid., 31-2.
388 Heidegger, _Being and Time_, 6.
as the unconcealing overwhelming. Beings as such appear in the manner of the arrival that keeps itself concealed in unconcealedness.” These words are, without a doubt, dense, almost opaque. Nonetheless, we see unambiguously that being shows itself in the disclosure of beings—that is, reveals itself, in its own concealment, in its essential difference from beings. As being is concealed through routine involvements with beings, so is it revealed as concealed in its revealing of beings, its allowing them to stand forth in their being, but also in their difference from being as such:

Unexpectedly it may happen that thinking finds itself called upon to ask: what does it say, this Being that is mentioned so often? If Being here shows itself concurrently as the Being of …, thus in the genitive of the difference, then the preceding question is more properly: what do you make of the difference if Being as well as beings appear by virtue of the difference, each in its own way? […] The difference of Being and beings, as the differentiation of overwhelming and arrival, is the perdurance of the two in unconcealing keeping in concealment. Within this perdurance there prevails a clearing of what veils and closes itself off—and this its prevalence bestows the being apart, and the being toward each other, of overwhelming and arrival.

Being opens for Dasein a clearing within which beings may stand forth in their being—so while Dasein itself makes possible the disclosure of beings in their being, being itself bestows the original openness which allows this disclosure to go forth. Being becomes present to itself in Dasein’s being-open toward being. Being and Dasein stand co-related, their being-together that which originally opens up the possibility of the disclosure of beings in the openness of their being.

So while the terms may be different, nonetheless there can be no doubt that for both Heidegger and Lonergan an essential correlation of man and being is included in a

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390 Ibid.
properly developed understanding of what it means to be a human being. I do not mean to suggest that Heidegger and Lonergan conceive this correlation identically; but in both thinkers, the flatness of the modern interpretation of man is rejected. Man is not a subject over against some indifferent object—rather, the human being is dynamically oriented toward the whole, and stands essentially in a relationship with being. Man does not, essentially, confront indifferent objects out there, but rather is oriented toward and drawn on by being.

In any event, this much is clear: without Dasein and its operative understanding of being, no extant “thing” can be said to be, nor not to be, in the primary sense—for there is, then, no being to understand being, and being resides in the sphere of Dasein’s concern and understanding, just as extantness belongs to the bodies “out there.” But this correlation of being with Dasein (or, for that matter, of being with the human’s unrestricted desire to know) brings us up against the ways in which being is accessible to Dasein, and therefore also to the question of what the correct questioning posture with regard to being might be. For if being is correlated to the realm of human concern, then it goes without saying that man encounters being not chiefly through direct “confrontation”—red, hard, wet, loud, and the like—but through the mediation of language, culture, history: in short, man encounters things with pre-interpreted meaning and significance and intelligibility. But if language, culture, and history not only color but fundamentally shape the way in which being is accessed, then there is the possibility or inevitability that they will serve to reveal as well as to conceal being. Language can be vague, it can deceive, it can take the merely apparent as really real or dismiss the really
real in favor of some elaborate explanatory schema; notwithstanding the indispensability of language for understanding and navigating the world, it can also serve to restrict the human person’s access to the things themselves. We have already touched on the various fallen modes of discourse (idle chatter, curiosity, ambiguity), and do not need to revisit them here except to point out that Heidegger has a deep concern for the way in which our conventional linguistic formulations—even those of philosophers—can restrict our ability to see the things themselves. A correct questioning posture, then, is one which strives to counteract these tendencies of language to fall into untruth, into a pattern of concealment. Nonetheless, it would seem that, for Heidegger, the basic tendency is for Dasein to fall away from truth, to fall away from the things themselves, to fall away from an adequate grasp of being, and even of the way to approach being.

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391 See my “Death and the Untimeliness of Philosophy” for a fuller development of this idea.

§3 — The Apparent Divergence

If we concede that there is a certain similarity in Heidegger and Lonergan’s correlation of being with Dasein or the human person, such that being is most properly understood as tied up with the human being’s orientation toward the whole, we nonetheless come up against an apparent divergence between the two—one which, while ultimately grounded in a deeper affinity, nonetheless indicates something of the way in which Heidegger and Lonergan may be said to complement one another. In Heidegger, we would seem to find an understanding which places being at the beginning—always, already revealed—but inevitably covered over and obscured, as time goes forward, by the accretion of more and more derivative, untrue, fallen interpretations. Being is in the mode of something in the process of being lost, such that, for instance, the later Heidegger can speak of man as the shepherd of being and language as the house of being—as though human beings must prepare a place for being and tend to it, lest it be covered over entirely. In Lonergan, on the other hand, being is discussed chiefly in the mode of heuristic anticipation: if being is the objective correlate of the desire to know, then in some sense it lies at the end of all human striving to understand. More simply stated, one could read Heidegger’s thought on being as a history of decline, and Lonergan’s as a history of progress. First, let us explore the way in which these caricatures have their truth; second, let us break down this tenuous distinction and see

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393 See Lonergan, *Insight*, 300-3, where he discusses incremental progress toward the “whole of knowledge.”

394 That *Insight* culminates in a discussion of God while Heidegger’s work often engages in a critique of any onto-theology is perhaps another sign of this apparent divergence.
what we may learn in the process about the way in which both thinkers have reclaimed a fuller portrait of the human person from the modern tradition’s reductive tendencies.

*Being and Time* begins with the suggestion that the question of being—that all-important, inevitable question that is a haunting of the human soul—has been forgotten, and that not only has it been forgotten, but that it has been obscured from the very beginnings of the philosophical tradition by a misguided attempt to understand *being as such* on the model of entities. The question of what makes a thing a thing took precedence in the thought of Plato and Aristotle, and due to that original bias, the question of why there is *anything* rather than *nothing* never emerged as a thematic question in the history of Western thought.\(^{395}\) At the beginning—even before Plato and Aristotle—there was a glimpse, in the Western world, of being; but in the attempt to understand it, pin it down, and wrap our minds around it, we settled on a particular interpretation. And as any point of view implies other viewpoints from which things are not being seen, and every angle of observation reveals as well as conceals, this original glimpse was reduced to a single view, and all Western philosophy is founded on that single view.

For Heidegger, then, a questioning posture with regard to being is one which opens up the possibility of an originary encounter, one which allows us to be struck by

\(^{395}\) See, for instance, Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, 91-93, where Heidegger discusses Aquinas’ failure to explicitly raise the question of being by deferring to a basically Aristotelian distinction between *res* and *existere* (as potency to act), and its similarity to Kant’s position—the emphasis being that the entire history of thought has not yet stopped building on Aristotle’s basic foundation, and that therefore certain crucial questions are already ruled out. I take Heidegger to underestimate the originary nature of Aquinas’ thought. As one indication of the potential problems with Heidegger’s reading, cf. *Basic Problems* 87-92 and *On Being and Essence* 55-6; where Heidegger speaks of “existentia”, Aquinas speaks of “esse”; Heidegger reads Aquinas as taking “actuality” as a “*res*” added on to the “*essentia*,” which fails to appreciate the sense of activity suggested by “esse”; see also *Identity and Difference*, 60, where Heidegger speaks of God as “causa sui,” a notion fundamentally at odds with Aquinas own thought on the matter—see Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 56.
being in its strangeness, as opposed to the apparent familiarity described in *Being and Time*’s opening pages—a familiarity which, in fact, obscures our view of being even further. But the need for this questioning posture suggests that something has been lost—and original openness to being that has worn down over the years. Indeed, some of Heidegger’s later work hints most forcefully in this direction: “The Question Concerning Technology,” for instance, points out the reduction of all being to standing-reserve, energy-in-potency waiting to be released, such that not only does *being as such* fail to stand forth, but even things in their thingliness (the foundation of the Western tradition) are obscured in favor of their usability.396 Being recedes ever farther into the background, under ever narrowed layers of reductive interpretation, further and further restricted viewpoints. Even the phenomenon of fallen discourse suggests almost irresistibly that Heidegger is particularly concerned with the *loss* of our access to being—the emphasis is invariably far more on the inevitability of falling away, and far less on the ways in which being may be approached anew. For this reason, it is easy to read Heidegger as a philosopher of decline, if not an outright pessimist, who sees the human race as getting farther and farther away from its ownmost truth.

If a surface reading of Heidegger leaves us with this impression of pessimism, perhaps an equally casual reading of Lonergan will leave us with the impression of optimism. As *Being and Time* begins with an observation of what has been lost, *Insight* begins (more or less) with the observation that huge gains have been made by the scientific method, and the suggestion that, perhaps if we can understand why science has been so

successful (and ultimately understand what it is to understand), then we can glimpse in
that explicit methodology an intellectual pattern, able to be extended to other fields—and
have similar successes there. The mere fact that Lonergan would later write a work on
*Method in Theology* suggests that there is at least something to this interpretation. Indeed,
methodology is central to much of Lonergan’s work: since brilliance and genius are fairly
unreliable, it is much more important to have a stable method of inquiry and discovery, if
progress is to be made in the sciences. Even the revolutionary breakthroughs, Lonergan
observes, do not emerge out of the blue, but have their basis in slowly acquired habits of
mind, and in the painstaking labors of scientists and thinkers.\(^{397}\)

What is more, Lonergan has no compunction about using phrases such as “the
whole of knowledge” in regard to the goal of human intellectual pursuits:

> The questions we answer are few compared to the questions that await an
answer. Knowing is a dynamic structure. If each judgment is a total
increment consisting of many parts, still it is only a minute contribution
towards the whole of knowledge. … The business of the human mind in
this life seems to be, not contemplation of what we know, but relentless
devotion to the task of adding increments to a merely habitual
knowledge.\(^{398}\)

We may grant that this “whole of knowledge” be relegated to some hypothetical future
state, or even to some afterlife or paradise, and still be struck by the apparent optimism of
the phrase: whatever else may be the case, knowing and the known are co-ordinated, and
there at least exists the possibility of a “whole” of knowledge. The real, that is, must be
taken as fully intelligible, and fully susceptible to penetration by human understanding,
essentially and remotely if not practically and proximately.

\(^{397}\) *Lonergan, Insight*, 443-4.

\(^{398}\) Ibid., 303.
And yet what both of these readings miss is the astuteness and honesty of both Heidegger’s and Lonergan’s analyses of the human condition, of human prospects for advancement and knowledge, of the open-endedness which the situation contemporary to both thinkers afforded for the future. There can be no doubt that Heidegger’s language bears the stamp of a certain foreboding: man is fallen, discourse is fallen, and the weight of this fallenness closes off enormous avenues of interpretation and action both for the human race collectively and human individuals specifically. And yet, one can scarcely read Heidegger well without becoming aware of the extent to which he takes determination and freedom to belong inextricably to one another.

If the human person is, in some sense, doomed to a particular interpretation of the world, always already bound up in a way of thinking and doing that he or she did not choose, certainly there are concrete possibilities that are either temporarily or permanently inaccessible. In some sense, one might consider this as a limit on one’s freedom, if freedom is considered in the basically libertarian mode: the absence of external restrictions. One might, then, see in Heidegger a fundamental denial of the possibility of freedom. And one might rightly contrast this with prototypically modern thought which (whether one reads Descartes or Kant) locates the possibility of human freedom precisely in the human being’s non-corporeal status—unbound by the laws of physical nature, the soul is unfettered in its action. And yet the role of history, of habit, of the shaping power of language have all been made clear in the foregoing; to deny that man is essentially “thrown,” given over to a set of possibilities he did not choose, a set of
possibilities which narrows further with every concrete decision, seems at this point a fool’s errand.

Yet we may wonder whether this is a surrender of freedom. Two points are particularly salient here. First, the notion of unrestricted freedom is a myth: if we concede that language is a shaping force, and simultaneously concede that a fully human life is not possible without language, then it goes without saying that, factically, no human being has unrestricted freedom, even if we maintain that the number of possibilities open to him or her is somewhat larger than ordinarily recognized. At the same time, we can recognize that some sort of “shaping” is required for every meaningful exercise of freedom: to be free from every external constraint (which, as indicated, is not even really possible) would be meaningless, if one were still dominated by the primal passions of the child. To be free for meaningful action is to be shaped in various ways: one is not free to play the piano unless one has been shaped by the discipline of practice, and the more disciplined one is, the freer one becomes. “Possibility,” writes Heidegger, “does not signify a free-floating potentiality-for-Being in the sense of some ‘liberty of indifference’ … In every case Dasein … has already got itself into definite possibilities.” At the same time, this “means that Dasein is Being-possible which has been delivered over to itself—thrown possibility through and through. Dasein is the possibility of Being-free for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. Its Being-possible is transparent to itself in different possible ways and degrees.”399 For Heidegger, freedom cannot be reduced to some abstract characteristic of “all men;” rather, Dasein’s freedom is always this Dasein’s freedom, his or her unique

399 Heidegger, Being and Time, 144.
freedom for certain concrete possibilities. That there is an enormous element of
thrownness and un-chosenness about this freedom goes without saying, but it is also the
freedom of this person, one’s own freedom-for. One may or may not authentically resolve
upon and take up one’s possibilities; nonetheless as possibilities they are one’s own,
whether they are taken up or not.

Secondly, and most critically, by virtue of his essential orientation toward being,
Dasein is lifted out of mere immersion in the world of routine, habit, of customary and
fallen interpretations. Whether by means of anxiety or boredom or being-in-love, Dasein
can be pried loose from the customary involvements; all particularity can shrink away in
the haze of indifference—or of bliss. From this distance, one may happen to consider
being as a whole; one may be confronted by the strangeness of the fact that there is
anything rather than nothing; or one may become acutely aware of one’s utter singularity.
If anxiety goes uninterrupted, one bumps up against the inevitability of death—and in
the face of death, one is radically individualized. As no one may die for another, so may
no one live for another: one’s choices, one’s possibilities, no matter how fully shaped by
unchosen antecedent conditions, are radically and only one’s own. The question of one’s
own being rises to the fore, and one’s own life becomes the provisional answer to the
question of what it means to be. Dasein is uniquely that being within the whole of being
who can get a hold on being as a whole, whether he is pried loose by existential dread or
by philosophical rumination. In this light, determination becomes the condition of a
fuller and more mature sense of freedom.
And so, for Heidegger, it is not *simply* the case that we are doomed to a particular interpretation of being, that we cannot escape the shadow of the moderns—though certainly each of these is true in some measure. Each of these statements is the “negative” side of a “positive” interpretation: namely, that the closing off of possibilities of the interpretation of being is also the opening up of a field within which an authentic grasp of being is possible. I take this to be the fundamental purpose of “The Question Concerning Technology”, which at the outset might appear to be a straightforward critique of the modern predicament in regards to technology, but in fact culminates in the assertion that the heightening of the dangers of a restricted perspective on being is essentially concomitant with a heightening of the clarity and depth of the questioning of being: “The closer we come to the danger [of viewing everything through the lens of the technological interpretation of being, as standing reserve], the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become.”⁴⁰⁰ And so the suggestion that there is something fatalistic to Heidegger’s writing is in fact quite wide of the mark: the possibilities confronting us, as the heirs of the heirs of the modern tradition, are uniquely our own possibilities, and it is from within this restricted horizon that the possibility of freedom opens up *uniquely* for us—while at the same time we recognize that by virtue of our orientation toward the whole of being, our being essentially characterized by that broadest and first and deepest of questions, we are liberated from mere determination.

And as Heidegger is not so pessimistic about the possibilities facing the human person as a first glance might suggest, neither is Lonergan as unaware of the concrete and structural restrictions preventing the ever-proceeding expansion of knowledge. Indeed, precisely because Lonergan is concerned with the reclamation of a meaningful notion of progress from the overly-optimistic moderns (who, again, he often sounds so much akin to on a surface reading), he is also able to bring to the fore a meaningful notion of decline. If progress in knowledge takes the form of ever-expanding fields of inquiry and ever more capacious understandings of the world in all its components, nonetheless there is still the threat of decline: the gradual atrophying of these spheres of understanding, the restriction of our viewpoint. And these two forces of progress and decline are not simply opposed to one another: they form a dialectic, and for the most part are operative simultaneously in any intellectual—or, indeed, any human—pursuit. To take a concrete example: as modern science has proven tremendously effective in grasping the inner structure of the various facets of the real—of understanding things in relation to one another—nonetheless the unreflective assumptions that have come along with modern science (that the real is the material, that the sphere of research that science has deliberately restricted itself to is in fact equivalent to the real) have tended to relegate other human pursuits to the periphery, such that we often approach our problems from an overly technical perspective, instead of recognizing that every scientific pursuit initially springs from the dedication of individual human beings who take the scientific endeavor upon themselves out of an act of love.
For Lonergan, this “longer cycle” of decline is rooted in the general bias of common sense. Intellectual pursuits and intellectual progress do not occur in a void, but rather within a culture or society which can either promote or discourage such researches—whether in terms of prevailing cultural attitudes: a dogmatically religious culture is unlikely to foster researches into areas which might call dogmas into question, while a dogmatically scientistic culture is unlikely to foster inquiry into spiritual matters; or in the more concrete terms of providing funding for researches. Since culture operates at the level of common sense, of received interpretations and a communal fund of understanding, the likelihood of progress and decline are not dictated solely by the passion of the scientists, philosophers, artists, poets, and the like, but far more by the broader cultural currents which will either allow for or discourage certain researches, and within which certain inquiries will either be suggested or will remain unthought of.

Because common sense intends things as they are related to us, where the attitude of inquiry intends things as they are related to one another, and because neither common sense nor science is prone to recognize that its own sphere of operation and relevance is limited in precisely this fashion, there is always the danger that men of common sense will regard the scientist with suspicion and fail to trust his abstruse pronouncements, and the equally real danger that scientists will take their abstruse pronouncements to be something like a picture of the really real, in which case the attitudes and views of the common man can only be regarded as backwards and juvenile. In fact, science and common sense operate on distinct sets of data, or rather upon the same set of proximate
data considered in radically different ways. But because this distinction is for the most part not clearly grasped, intellectual pursuits and common sense will tend to be at odds with one another: the intellectuals will retreat to the ivory towers, the poets and artists will develop their own idiom inaccessible to those outside of their sphere, and men of common sense will eschew the difficulty of careful consideration and rational planning in favor of the immediately effectual. In short, the communities men and women in various walks of life will become more insular, broad and wide-ranging perspectives on the real will be dismissed or go unheard, and the “whole of knowledge” Lonergan takes as the subjective correlate of the whole of being will be yet further removed from the realm of possible achievement.

401 Lonergan, Insight, 322-323.
Epilogue

With all this said, we must very briefly return to the suggestion that guided this dissertation: namely, that understanding Lonergan and Heidegger as each in his own way responding to the problematic set by modern thought, one finds fertile ground for a potential philosophical anthropology for which Lonergan and Heidegger would be the critical guideposts. The foregoing, then, has only been a foundation, a groundwork, an exploratory expedition. I have attempted to suggest that, by re-grounding philosophical questioning on a foundation radically other than that put forth by the moderns, Lonergan and Heidegger have opened up a fruitful avenue of discourse within which the peculiar problems facing modern man may find, if not their answers, at least their clearest and most penetrating formulations. I hold that it is upon the notion of being in particular that this anthropology should be built, and it is for that reason that I have ended this essay with that topic. Nonetheless, even the foregoing chapters outlining the problems posed by modern philosophy, and the ways in which Lonergan and Heidegger provide tools for surmounting or circumventing those problems, are, I hope, some modest contribution to that larger project. By way of a conclusion, I propose that these two thinkers in their various ways have exploded the modern project from within, and that it falls to their students and readers to understand the ways in which the Cartesian paradigm still holds sway, and the ways in which Lonergan and Heidegger, taken together, offer a path out of that tangle of conceptions, formulations, and impasses.
1. Primary Sources — Heidegger and Lonergan


2. Other Primary Sources


3. Secondary Sources


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