Wilfrid Laurier University

Scholars Commons @ Laurier

Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)

1988

# The hermeneutics of Lonergan and Gadamer: A comparison (Bernard Lonergan, Hans-Georg Gadamer)

Terry Graham
*Wilfrid Laurier University*

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd

Part of the Biblical Studies Commons

## Recommended Citation

Graham, Terry, "The hermeneutics of Lonergan and Gadamer: A comparison (Bernard Lonergan, Hans-Georg Gadamer)" (1988). *Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)*. 104.
https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/104

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive) by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

## NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

## AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

# The Hermeneutics of Lonergan and Gadamer: A Comparison

by Terry Graham
B. A.. Wilfrid Laurier University, 1981

**Thesis**

Submitted to the Department of Religion and Culture

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree
Wilfrid Laurier University
1988

©Terry Graham 1988

Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-52745-5

# Abstract

This thesis treats the hermeneutical theories of the Canadian Jesuit philosopher Bernard Lonergan and the German Protestant thinker Hans-Georg Gadamer. It begins by determining the extent of the possible influence of the latter's work upon the former's theory of interpretation as outlined in his *Method in Theology*.

Beginning with an analysis of Lonergan's cognitive theory and his developing theory of interpretation (Chapter One), it continues with a discussion of the position put forward by Gadamer in his *Truth and Method* (Chapter Two). For both of these men, hermeneutics goes far beyond the interpretation of specific texts. There are four areas in which their work can be compared. Both are concerned with the priority of the question, the notion of application, the problem of objectivity, and the role of language (Chapter Three). In the final analysis, however, one cannot speak of an influence of Gadamer on Lonergan, although there are some recognizable parallels between the work of the two.

# Contents


Introduction 1

Chapter One: Lonergan on Cognition and Hermeneutics 7

Insight 7

(1) Insight as Activity 7

(2) Insight as Knowledge 11

(3) Interpretation 14

(4) Ethics 17

Method in Theology 18

(1) Basic Structure 18

(2) Interpretation as a Functional Speciality 21

(3) Development from *Insight* to *Method in Theology* 25

Chapter Two: Gadamer on Interpretation 29

(1) Introduction to Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics 29

(2) Heidegger's Influence 31

(3) Prejudice, Authority, and Tradition 32

(4) Application 33

(5) Experience 35

(6) Language and Interpretation 39

Chapter Three: The Hermeneutics of Gadamer and Lonergan Compared 50

(1) The Universal Viewpoint 50

(2) The Priority of the Question 51

(3) Objectivity 55

(4) The Use of the Platonic Dialogues 58

(5) The Role of Language 61

Conclusion 67

Bibliography 73

# Introduction

Over the past years there has been a growing interest in the Canadian Jesuit philosopher Bernard Lonergan and his transcendental method. Lonergan, who died in 1984, is best known for his books, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*[1] and *Method in Theology*.[2] *Insight*, first published in 1957, is concerned with the 'personal appropriation of one's own rational self-consciousness'. In that work, Lonergan outlines his cognitional theory of insight to give the reader a firm grasp of 'what it is we are doing when we are knowing'. From this he attempts to build a metaphysics of intelligible being, as well as making a preliminary sketch of an ethics based on his notion of the transcendent value of the good.

In *Method*, Lonergan's transcendental method is applied to theology, though it is general enough, he says, to be used in any human science. Lonergan distinguishes eight functional specialities that will incorporate the data into the results. These specialities are research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. The first four strive for historical accuracy and context while the latter four deal with the objectivisation of conversion that is needed to promote foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications in the individual. Lonergan believes that the task of modern theology is too diverse for any one scholar to keep abreast of and suggests a division of labour along the lines of his functional specialities. There can be no doubt as to the growing importance of Lonergan's thought: there have been a number of Lonergan Research Institutes created, both in North America and Europe. Boston University holds Lonergan workshops and regularly distributes fellowships for research in his work.[4]

Nevertheless, although the study of Lonergan's work has been extensive, no new attention has has been given to his hermeneutics though for both

*Insight* and *Method in Theology* it is a central issue.[5] In fact, hermeneutics is seminal even throughout Lonergan's lesser known works, from his early Thomistic work, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, to his reflections on foundational theology in *The Way to Nicea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology*.[6] The following paper is a preliminary investigation of the relationship between the thought of Gadamer and Lonergan on the concept of interpretation. It grew out of a wider interest in hermeneutics and my attraction to Lonergan's cognitional theory in general. As I began to investigate the subject more closely I noted a number of interesting parallels between Hans-Georg Gadamer, whose *Wahrheit und Methode*[7] had been published in 1960 but whose impact on the English-speaking world only came with the translation in 1975, after the publication of *Insight* and *Method in Theology*.

I was early convinced that Gadamer was influential on Lonergan from the number of times he was noted by Lonergan in *Method in Theology*. I had noted a development in Lonergan's concept of interpretation from *Insight* to *Method in Theology* and wondered if Gadamer had some role in this. Since the English translation of *Truth and Method*[8] did not appear until three years after the publication of *Method in Theology*, Lonergan had been reading Gadamer in German and so must have believed in the importance of that work.

An initial review of Gadamer's book in light of Lonergan's work would seem to suggest that the two have very little in common. In the preface to *Insight*, Lonergan states that he is seeking to "unify and organize the insights of mathematicians, scientists, and men of common sense" (*Insight*: xii). This organization of 'insight into insight' is to yield a philosophy and metaphysics that is comprehensive, critical, and methodical.

> It will be comprehensive because it embraces in a single view every statement in every philosophy. It will be critical because it discriminates between the products of the detached and disinterested desire to understand and, on the other hand, the products of the flight from understanding. It will be methodical because it transposes the statements of philosophers and metaphysicians to their origins in cognitional activity and it settles whether that activity is or is not aberrant by appealing not to philosophers and metaphysicians, but to the insights, methods, and procedures of mathematicians, scientists, and men of common sense (*Insight*. xiii)

Lonergan's reference to aberrant cognitional activity is a vital clue to the importance of what he deems to be proper cognitional activity throughout the book. His is a purely intellectual and rational cognitional theory based on the pure and detached motives of intelligence and reason. His philosophy, based on cognitional activity is practical, not in the sense of making any specific contribution to science, mathematics or common sense but rather to "seek a common ground on which men of intelligence might meet" (*Insight*: xiv). This common ground is where his cognitional theory of insight lies. His stated aim is to take the reader through a personal appropriation of that reader's rational self-consciousness, to gain a grasp of what it is one is doing when one is knowing.

In contrast, Gadamer directs his attention to radically different questions. In his introduction to *Truth and Method*, Gadamer states that he is seeking to understand the truth that science and methodology cannot apprehend or control.

> The phenomenon of understanding ... has an independent validity within science and resists any attempt to change it into a method of science. The following investigation starts with the resistance within modern science against the universal claim of scientific method It is concerned to seek that experience of truth that transcends the sphere of the control of scientific method wherever it is to be found, and to inquire into its legitimacy. Hence the human sciences are joined with modes of experience which lie outside science with the experiences of philosophy, of art, and of history itself These are all modes of experience in which a truth is communicated that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science (*Truth*. xii).

The experience of philosophy, for instance, comes only in history, in reading the texts of the great thinkers. Insofar as one can understand the philosophical insights of a Plato, Thomas Aquinas, or Hegel can one acquire one's own insights. Moreover, Gadamer places emphasis on the importance of art which, with its resistance to reasoning, also challenges scientific consciousness. Gadamer believes these other modes of experience reflect the hermeneutical phenomenon in its full extent. His critique of aesthetic and legal hermeneutics, outlined in *Truth and Method*, serves to bring the validity of these modes to their full justification.

In the foreword to the second edition, Gadamer reiterates his opposition to methodology.

> My revival of the expression 'hermeneutics', with its long tradition, has apparently led to some misunderstandings I did not intend to produce an art or technique of understanding, in the manner of the earlier hermeneutics. I did not wish to elaborate a system of rules to describe, let alone direct, the methodical procedure of the human sciences . My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing (*Truth*: xvi).

Armed with Heidegger's critique of temporality[2] and his analysis of language, Gadamer seeks the very foundational conditions of understanding itself. The universality that he claims for his philosophical hermeneutics is evident, not in the sense that he has found a methodological ideal, but rather in the fact that understanding pervades all human relations.

Despite the seemingly radical disparity of their projects (Lonergan and his all-embracing transcendental method and Gadamer with his aversion to any sort of method) there is a similarity that can be found once we get past their introductions. It is clear that Gadamer's *Truth and Method* has had some influence on Lonergan. The latter is not given to quoting others. In *Method in Theology*, however, where we find Lonergan's fully developed hermeneutical theory, Gadamer is cited nearly twenty times. It is my intention in this paper to examine the development of Lonergan's hermeneutics from *Insight* to *Method in Theology* to determine in what ways Lonergan was influenced by his reading of *Truth and Method*.

Any analysis of Lonergan's hermeneutics must be rooted in a full discussion of his cognitional theory. Thus my first chapter will deal mostly with *Insight*, where that theory is first worked out by Lonergan and note the relation of this theory to that of interpretation in *Method in Theology*. In my second chapter Gadamer's hermeneutical position is outlined as a basis for the comparative treatment of the two men in chapter three.

## Notes

[1] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978) Hereafter cited as *Insight*.

- Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979) Hereafter cited as *Method.*

Such a suggestion has resulted in the book, *Papal Infallibility: An Application of Lonergan's Theological Method* (Washington: University Press of America, 1983) In this response to Hans Kung, Tekippe and other scholars trace the doctrinal development of papal infallibility using Lonergan's transcendental method.

[4] In the fifteen years separating *Insight* and *Method in Theology* Lonergan had attracted a large following of young and diverse theologians and scholars such as David Tracy, Matthew Lamb, Bernard Tyrell, Philip McShane, and Frederick Crowe. Crowe, who now heads the *Lonergan Centre of Research* at Regis College at the University of Toronto has published extensively on on Lonergan's work including *Method in Theology: An Organon for Our Time* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980); "Bernard Lonergan's Thought on Ultimate Reality and Meaning," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 4 (19..) 58-59: "Exploration of Lonergan's New Notion of Value," *Science et Esprit* 29 (1977) 123-143: "Doctrines and Historicity in the Context of Lonergan's Method," *Thomistic Studies* 38 (1977) 115-124; "Dogma versus the Self-Correcting Process of Learning," *Foundations of Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972) 22-40: "Bernard Lonergan as Pastoral Theologian," *Gregorianum* 3 (1986) 451-470. Philip McShane has edited two books of essays on Lonergan: *Foundations of Theology,* (Notre Dame: University of Nortre Dame Press, 1972): *Searching for Cultural Foundations,* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984): while Matthew Lamb has written *History, Method, and Theology,* (Missoula: Scholars Press for the American Academy of Religion, 1978), and edited *Creativity and Method: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan,* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981).

[4] See Ronald McKinney, "The Hermeneutical Theory of Bernard Lonergan," *International Philosophical Quarterly,* 23 (1983) p. 277-290 A preliminary explication of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is given to show the

issues and controversies in modern hermeneutics, followed by a discussion of Lonergan's hermeneutical theory. McKinney attempts to refute the charge that Lonergan's theory is inadequate to address these modern issues and controversies.

[4] Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*(London: D--ton, Longman and Todd, 1968) Hereafter cited as *Verbum*. *The Way to Nicea: The Dialectical Development of Trintarian Theology*(Philadelph-a: Westminster Press, 1976) Hereafter cited as *Nicea*.

[5] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1960).

[6] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985) Hereafter cited as *Truth*.

[7] See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) 383-449.

# Chapter One
# Lonergan on Cognition and Hermeneutics

As already noted, it is important to have a general overview of Lonergan's cognitional theory for understanding his hermeneutics. For Lonergan, cognition and the intellect are the ground upon which all human knowledge is erected. Cognitional activity has three increments or levels to it: there is a level of presentations or experience, followed by a level of intelligence and understanding, culminating in a level of judgment (*Insight*: 271-274). For there to be real knowledge, all three levels must be utilized. Lonergan's cognitional theory is worked out in *Insight*, and it is to this work that we direct our initial attention.

## Insight

(1) Insight as activity

Lonergan divides *Insight* into two parts: the first treating insight as activity, the second insight as knowledge. He begins the book with a discussion of Archimedes cry of 'Eureka'. From this classical example he deduces five essential features of an insight: (1) it comes as a release to the tension of inquiry, (2) it comes suddenly and unexpectedly, (3) it is a function not of outer circumstances but of inner conditions, (4) it pivots between the concrete and the abstract, and (5) it passes into the habitual texture of one's mind (*Insight*: 3-6).

By using examples from mathematics, Lonergan attempts to show how 'banal' insights are layered or cluster together within an individual's consciousness to arrive at successively higher viewpoints. Focussing on insight as activity as opposed to insight as knowledge Lonergan states that "an insight is neither a definition nor a postulate nor an argument but a preconceptual

event" (*Insight*: 59).[1] Based on the preconceptual events of experiencing, understanding and judging, it is his aim to show the conscious occurance of the intellectual events that make it possible to know. Because he is concerned with the cognitional activity necessary to formulate an insight, he considers the actual content of the insight to be secondary to the form in which it takes.

Lonergan then distinguishes between two types of insights, namely, mathematical and practical. Practical insights arise through inquiry which needs empirical data to supplement its hypotheses. Mathematical insights, however, need no such data because it is a statistical inquiry.

> The circuit, then, of mathematical development may be named immanent; it moves from images through insights and conceptions to the production of symbolic images whence higher insights arise. But the circuit of scientific development includes action upon external things; it moves from observation and experiment to tabulations and graphs, from these to insights and formulations, from formulations to forecasts, from forecasts to operations, in which it obtains fresh evidence either for the confirmation or for the revision of existing views (*Insight: 85*).

The first five chapters treat insights taken from mathematics and physics while the next five take common sense as their subject matter. Common sense is contrasted with science to highlight, not only the distinction of domains, but also the complementary nature of inquiry.

> If one must recognize the differences in their objects, their criteria, their universes of discourse, their methodological precepts, one must also insist that they are the functionally related parts within a single knowledge of a single world. The intelligibility that science grasps comprehensively is the intelligibility of the concrete with which common sense deals effectively. To regard them as rivals or competitors is a mistake, for essentially they are partners and it is their successful co-operation that constitutes applied science and technology, that adds inventions to scientific discoveries, that supplements inventions with organizations, know-how, and specialized skills (*Insight*: 297-98).

According to Lonergan, common sense has no theoretical aspirations. It is concerned with day-to-day activities that have to do with the individual. Though common sense deals with the particular and concrete, there is still an intellectual development involved. Lonergan calls common sense a functioning core of insights which enable the individual to deal with situations in

the world by adding one or more relevant insights so that one can relatively understand the situation at hand (*Insight*: 175).

For Lonergan, common sense employs certain biases which have a twofold effect. First, it serves to keep the subjective field in focus by, secondly, limiting the field to what is concrete and particular. There is an individual bias which limits inquiry to what is good for the individual as opposed to what is good for the community. Thus there is a natural tension between egoism and altruism. It is up to the individual to balance his or her selfish desires with the demands of the community by using intelligence to find the appropriate equilibrium. So it is that intelligent people refrain from stealing to satisfy their needs because it is detrimental for the community to have people stealing from one another.

There is a group bias which gathers people together and organizes them into classes and hierarchies. Insights that promote harmonious intersubjectivity may be rejected by classes because they do not promote or benefit their own class. Societal development may become twisted and lead to decline because the dominant class ignores, rejects, or represses insights which may not benefit their dominance.

As well as individual and group biases, there is a general bias which is common to everyone: "For men are rational animals, but full development of their animality is both more common and more rapid than a full development of their intelligence and reasonableness" (*Insight*: 225). General bias, therefore, is an ubiquitous incompleteness of one's intelligence and reasonableness. One can never be perfectly intelligent and reasonable; one can only strive to be as perfect as possible. For Lonergan, the concept of the detached and disinterested desire to know is a pure motive which mixes with involved biases to prevent proper intellectual development. By one's intelligence one progresses and by one's biases one declines (*Insight*: 236).

The final aspect of insight as activity is judgment, for inquiry presupposes and anticipates that one will come to an understanding and make a judgment about what it is one is inquiring about. Thus Lonergan distinguishes three levels of cognitional process: experiencing, formulating, and judging. He makes a further distinction based upon the field of data.

> Data include data of sense and data of consciousness. Data of sense include colours, shapes, sounds, odours, tastes, the hard and soft, rough and smooth, hot and cold, wet and dry, and so forth. The direct mode of cognitional process begins from data of sense, advances through insights and formulations to reach reflection and judgment. Thus, empirical science pertains to the direct mode of cognitional process. On the other hand, the data of consciousness consist of acts of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, perceiving, imagining, inquiring, understanding, formulating, reflecting, judging, and so forth. As data, such acts are experienced; but, as experienced, they are not described, distinguished, compared, related, defined, for all such activities are the work of inquiry, insight, and formulation. Finally, such formulations are, of themselves, just hypotheses; they may be accurate or inaccurate, correct or mistaken; and to pronounce upon them is the work of reflection and judgment. Thus, the three levels of the direct mode of cognitional process provide the data for the introspective mode; and as the direct mode, so also the introspective unfolds on the three levels, an initial level of data, a second level of understanding and formulation, and a third level of reflection and judgment (*Insight*: 274).

The introspective mode Lonergan calls reflective understanding. Reflective insights take the data and evidence, deem it sufficient for the prospective judgment, and judge it to be 'virtually unconditioned'. He contrasts the virtually unconditioned with the formally unconditioned.

> 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 whatever. The virtually unconditioned has conditions indeed but they are fulfilled . . . By the mere fact that a question for reflection has been put, the prospective judgment is a conditioned; it stands in need of evidence sufficient for reasonable pronouncement. The function of reflective understanding is to meet the question for reflection by transforming the prospective judgment from the status of a conditioned to the status of a virtually unconditioned: and reflective understanding effects this transformation by grasping the conditions of the conditioned and their fulfilment (*Insight*. 280)

Lonergan uses the concept of a formally unconditioned judgment as an ideal example to highlight the cognitional process within reflective understanding. The nature of human cognitive activity excludes the capacity for making unconditioned judgments because all three levels of consciousness are needed

before a judgment can be made and the fact that a question has been formulated precludes a judgment which has no conditions.[2]

(2) Insight as Knowledge

From insight as activity, Lonergan then turns to insight as knowledge. What is it one knows after cognitional activity has taken place? Lonergan begins with the most elementary of judgments: the self-affirmation of the knower. 'I am a knower'. The fulfillment of this proposition is given in consciousness because as acts of perception occur, the 'I' in the proposition is experiencing them as known. Thus he begins with an explication of consciousness.

His notion of consciousness lies in the distinction between the contents of perception and the acts of perception. In its simplest terms, consciousness is an awareness in cognitional acts (*Insight*: 320). Acts of perception coalesce into a single knowing. It is the 'I' that is seeing, hearing, tasting etc. The 'I' does not receive the various acts of perception in a jumble but rather in a streamlined way. Thus there is a unity of consciousness that is *a priori* or else consciousness would change as the perceptions changed.

From this basis of the unity of consciousness, Lonergan proceeds to a metaphysical explication of knowledge.

> Being, then, is the objective of the pure desire to know. By the desire to know is meant the dynamic orientation manifested in questions for intelligence and for reflection. It is not the verbal utterance of questions. It is not the conceptual formulation of questions. It is not any insight or thought. It is not any reflective grasp or judgment. It is the prior and enveloping drive that carries cognitional process from sense and imagination to understanding, from understanding to judgment, from judgment to the complete context of correct judgments that is named knowledge (*Insight*: 348).

The notion of being permeates all cognitional activity. Since it is impossible to know all of being, Lonergan uses the term 'proportionate being' to describe what we know. The breadth and depth of our cognitional activity will reveal more and more proportionate being. If one does not think deeply, one only knows a little about being. If one reflects and thinks, one will learn more and more. It is the very core of meaning itself; when we have judged to know something, we know something about being (*Insight*: 360). Lonergan calls

the notion of being 'protean'. Being is capable of having many forms and is subject to much change while still retaining the basic notion of being. Thus the notion of being is, like inquiry, a general heuristic structure by which one frames or forms the question and the anticipated solution.

The complexity of knowledge is paralleled by a similar complexity of objectivity. In a passage to which we will have recourse later, Lonergan states:

> Principally the notion of objectivity is contained within a patterned context of judgments which serve as implicit definitions of the terms, object, subject. But besides this principal and complete notion, there also are partial aspects or components emergent within cognitional process. Thus, there is an experiential aspect of objectivity proper to sense and empirical consciousness. There is a normative aspect that is contained in the contrast between the detached and unrestricted desire to know and, on the other hand, merely subjective desires and fears. Finally, there is an absolute aspect that is contained in single judgments considered by themselves inasmuch as each rests on a grasp of the unconditioned and is posited without reservation (*Insight*: 375).

There is a common confusion, Lonergan says, which equates the experiential aspect of objectivity with the principal and complete notion. This naive realist position thinks that knowing is just taking a look at what is already out there to determine the objectivity of the situation. Such confusion disregards the subjective aspect of knowing, that is, the inquiring, the reflecting, the marshalling of the evidence, and the judging.[3] Knowing is not looking nor even understanding: knowing has to include judging. One moves from the given data to reflection upon it and finally to judging whether one's reflections are or are not true. The overcoming of this naive view, that objectivity is extroversion, is what Lonergan, in *Method in Theology*, calls an intellectual conversion.[4]

> Intellectual conversion is a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge. The myth is that knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what is there to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is what is out there now to be looked at. Now this myth overlooks the distinction between the world of immediacy, say, the world of the infant and, on the other hand, the world mediated

> by meaning. The world of immediacy is the sum of what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, smelt, felt. It conforms well enough to the myth's view of reality, objectivity, knowledge. But it is but a tiny fragment of the world mediated by meaning. For the world mediated by meaning is a world known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of the community. Knowing, accordingly, is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing. The criteria of objectivity are not just the criteria of ocular vision; they are the criteria of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, and of believing. The reality known is not just looked at: it is given in experience, organized and extrapolated by understanding, posited by judgment and belief (*Method*: 238).

Though the normative aspect of objectivity is only a partial aspect, it is the ground upon which the principal and complete notion is based because it arises from the detached and disinterested desire to know. Sense data do not occur in a cognitional vacuum but always emerges from the context of the person's interests and desires. It is the flow of sensations, mediated by memories and anticipations, which constitutes the perceptual flow, not the bare sensations themselves. "It is only when the perceptual flow goes wrong that the mere sensation bursts into consciousness as, for example, in the experience of trying to go down another step when already one has reached the floor" (*Insight*: 73).

After identifying objectivity with intelligence rather than extroversion, Lonergan is prepared to tackle truth and interpretation. If truth is to be found, it must rest on the proper unfolding of the detached and disinterested desire to know (*Insight*: 550).The appropriation of truth, for Lonergan, resides in the intellectual pattern of experience.

> For the appropriation of truth . . . makes demands upon the whole man; his consciousness has to slip into the intellectual pattern of experience and it has to remain there with the minimum of distractions; his subconsciousness has to throw up the images that lead to insight; his desire to know has to be sufficiently dominant to keep ever further questions complementing and correcting previous insights; his observation and his memory have to contribute spontaneously to the presentation and recall of relevant data in which the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the unconditioned is to be found (*Insight*: 561).

Lonergan realizes that people do not live consistently in the intellectual pattern nor does he expect them to. In *Method in Theology*. Lonergan equates such a life with that of a psychopath (*Method*: 122). All patterns of experience have an intelligence about them. There are dramatic. aesthetic, and biological patterns as well as individual, group, and general biases which blend with the intellectual pattern. The combinations and blendings of these patterns account for the polymorphism of human consciousness and raises the necessity of a properly grounded theory of interpretation.

(3) Interpretation

Introducing his theory of hermeneutics in *Insight*, Lonergan distinguishes between expression, simple interpretation, and reflective interpretation. The expression is. naturally enough, whatever is expressed in the document or text. An interpretation is a second expression addressed to a different audience. A reflective interpretation expresses a value judgment based on the interpreter's critical reflection of the expression. Interpretations are relative to the audiences they are addressed to and since there is a potentially infinite number of audiences, there is a potentially infinite number of interpretations (*Insight*: 564). This totality of viewpoints is a heuristic structure which provides the form in which the contents of an interpretation can be explicated. The form rests on the basis of our detached, disinterested, and unrestricted desire to know which provides the grounds for a universal viewpoint.

> [W]e would contend that there is at least one particular philosophy that could ground a universal viewpoint. For there is a particular philosophy that would take its stand upon the dynamic structure of human cognitional activity. that would distinguish the various elements involved in that structure. that would be able to construct any philosophic position by postulating appropriate and plausible omissions and confusions of the element, that would reach its own particular views by correcting all omissions and confusions. Now such a philosophy, though particular, would provide a base and ground for a universal viewpoint; for a universal viewpoint is the potential totality of all viewpoints; the potential totality of all viewpoints lies in the dynamic structure of cognitional activity; and the dynamic structure of cognitional activity is the basis of the particular philosophy in question (*Insight*: 568).

Because the universal viewpoint is potential, it leaves room for the interpreter to "exercise to the full his ingenuity and subtlety in determining a

writer's sources and intentions" (*Insight*: 571). Because Lonergan conceives intelligence and knowledge as always in a process of development, there will always be an incompleteness to an interpretation. Formally, however, Lonergan believes one can come to a clear and distinct interpretation because of the grasp of the virtually unconditioned within cognitional process. As to content, there will always be an incompleteness to the original document as well as subsequent interpretations because the protean notion of being that has been expressed can always be differentiated in a potentially infinite number of particular ways. Contingent and particular expressions present different aspects of the protean notion.

As a base for a methodical hermeneutics, made necessary because of these problems, Lonergan offers some hermeneutical canons. He distinguishes between literary and scientific interpretation and limits the canons to the latter. The former cannot be limited by scientific principles because literature uses disparate ways in which to convey the original insights of a given writer. A scientific interpretation, however, "is concerned to formulate the relevant insights and judgments, and to do so in a manner that is consonant with scientific collaboration and scientific method" (*Insight*: 586). Thus there is a canon of relevance, which "demands that the interpreter begin from the universal viewpoint and that his interpretation convey some differentiation of the protean notion of being" (*Insight*: 587). Simply put, it must be different from the original expression and yet be relevant to it.

Secondly, there is a canon of explanation in which the interpreter not only describes the original insights but explains how the author came to conceive, define and reach the insights expressed in the document (*Insight*: 587).

Thirdly, there is a canon of successive approximations by which the interpreter realizes that the totality of documents and texts is too manifold and diverse for one, or even one generation of interpreters to try to understand everything. This canon of successive approximations provides some principles of criticism that the interpreter can work from in order to stream and limit one's hermeneutical task. A first principle is the demand that one work from the universal viewpoint that Lonergan has worked out. The author's particular expression is a differentiation of the protean notion of being;

the exegete's interpretation is a further differentiation. It is the nature of a protean notion that it can be ever further differentiated because of the biases and blends of patterns of experience that each interpreter brings to the exegetical task. The potential of knowing all of being is held because of the universal viewpoint but the actualization of this totality of knowing is impossible in one person. By tracing the author's particular way of expressing the protean notion of being, the interpreter validates the author's insights and adds his or her own insights based on the interpreter's biases and patterns of experience. By interpreting the author's expression within the context of the totality of expressions, the interpreter is making a further specialization and differentiation of expression.

A second principle of criticism has to do with what Lonergan calls the "extrapolation of meaning" (*Insight*: 588). Meaning is immanent and based on the cognitive activity of grasping a virtually unconditioned and positing a judgment. From one's own meaning one proceeds to the author's meaning. One does that by first recognizing one's own place in the development of human intelligence and second, by recognizing where the author stands in that development. By understanding consciousness as the blendings of the various patterns of experience one is able to understand better the viewpoint from which others write.

Fourthly, there is a canon of parsimony. In its ordinary usage it means a tendency to be overcareful in spending: stinginess. Thus the intellectual pattern does not waste time on superfluous effort. It excludes what cannot be verified while using the resources of critical reflection to obtain fruitful insights into the given data. Through critical reflection one realizes that being is not the 'out-there' but the 'in-here'. Being is not extroversion but rather intelligence.

Fifthly, there is the canon of residues. This is the non-systematic component; the contingent, particular, accidental, features that cannot be grouped or systematized. There are non-systematic residues, for example, on the level of documents themselves:

> An unverifiable host of accidents can enter into the decisions that led to their production, into the circumstances under which they were composed,

> into the arbitrariness that governs their survival. Much that is obscure, ambiguous. unexplained, would be illuminated, were it not for the lamented hand of destructive time. were we more familiar with former modes of compilation and composition. were our information on authors and origins more complete Much that is unknown to us may yet be discovered (*Insight*: 593).

The intellectual pattern for Lonergan is paramount in his method. The detached and disinterested desire to know stands over and above all other desires by going beyond satisfaction to desire what is correct.

> A mong men's desires, there is one that is unique. It is the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know. As other desire, it has its satisfaction But unlike other desire, it is not content with satisfaction. Of itself, it heads beyond one's own joy in one's own insight to the further question whether one's own insight is correct. It is a desire to know and its immanent criterion is the attainment of an unconditioned that, by the fact that it is unconditioned, is independent of the individual's likes and dislikes, of his wishful and his anxious thinking (*Insight* 596)

(4) Ethics

In what remains of *Insight*, Lonergan deals with the possibility of an ethics based on the intellectua. pattern of experience. An ethics is possible for him because the detached, disinterested, and unrestricted desire to know heads beyond its own satisfaction of insights to the correctness of the insights (*Insight*: 596). Here again, Lonergan is concerned with the formal conditions that make it possible to make an ethical judgment. Here again, the dynamic structure of cognition is used to ground an intellectual ethics, much as it grounds metaphysical knowledge.

As there are three levels of cognition, so there are three levels of the good. Each level of cognition has a notion of the good (*Insight*: 595-96). The elementary level of the good is an object of desire and corresponds to empirical consciousness The second level of the good, corresponding to reflection and rationality, is the good of order. Because we are intelligent we can grasp order and system and recognize patterns that recur in the world and consciousness. The third level, corresponding to judgment, is the notion of value. Our desire for order means that we value order and hence our intellectual decisions and judgments are made with this value in mind (*Insight*: 597).

Since Lonergan locates his method within the dynamic structure of rational self-consciousness, he believes he is establishing a universal method. This universal method is transcendent yet immanent. It is immanent because it occurs within everyone's consciousness to a lesser or greater degree. It is transcendent because it goes beyond consciousness to establish being that is not oneself.

Just as he identifies intelligibility with being, so he equates the good with intelligible being. This identification "by-passes human feelings and sentiments to take its stand exclusively upon intelligible order and rational value" (*Insight*: 606). There is, however, still a large gap between knowing the right course of action and doing it. The rational necessity of a right action does not bind one to doing it. It is only in *Method in Theology* that he gives a satisfactory answer to the problem between knowing and doing. His account of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion in this later work, provides the existential impetus for an individual to act in an ethical manner.

## Method in Theology

(1) Basic Structure

*Method in Theology*, like *Insight*, is divided into two major sections; 'background' and 'foreground'. The 'background' of *Method in Theology* provides a precis of *Insight*. It deals with the backdrop of consciousness before one approaches the subject matter, in this case, theology. In his introduction, however, he makes it clear that theology is not paramount in his mind. "I am not writing theology but method in theology. I am concerned not with the objects that theologians expound but with the operations that theologians perform" (*Method*: xii).

Lonergan begins with a phenomenological sketch of mind. I use the word 'phenomenological' because he starts from the premise of intentional consciousness.[5] According to Lonergan, our intellect is structured in a conscious intending, with less conscious yet still intentional acts providing the ground upon which higher cognitional activity emerges. These less conscious intentional acts are insights which have passed into the habitual texture of

one's mind and which function automatically so as to allow the individual the freedom for higher thought. They are considered insights because a pattern of experience has been recognized and affirmed. These affirmations are the root of his method. Again, it is not the content of the affirmations with which he is concerned with but rather the formal conditions and structure of an insight.

He defines method as a "normative pattern of recurrant and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results" (*Method*: 4). As we have seen from *Insight*, Lonergan distinguishes and defines the basic procedures of the human mind, that is, experiencing, understanding, and judging, and calls them transcendental because they are the basic patterns of operations used in all cognitional activity. In *Method in Theology* Lonergan expands the three levels of consciousness into four levels:

> In our dream states consciousness and intentionality commonly are fragmentary and incoherent. When we awake, they take on a different hue to expand on four successive, related, but qualitatively different levels. There is the *empirical* level on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move. There is an *intellectual* level on which we inquire, come to understand, express what we have understood, work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression There is the *rational* level on which we reflect, marshal the evidence, pass judgment on the truth or falsity, certainty or probability, of a statement There is the *responsible* level on which we are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions (*Method*. 9).

From method Lonergan moves to the human good. Again, he believes that the truly good is a product of the intellect. Without the intellectual pattern of experience holding sway, the conception of the good is subject to the various biases and blendings of other forms of experience. As such, there are many conceptions of the good, some of which are mistaken and have to be corrected through attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility: the transcendental notions of consciousness. It is by using one's skill of rationality that one can overcome the biases which grip one's life.

From the good, Lonergan moves to meaning. He believes in the progress of humanity, of a progress from myth to rationality, from undifferentiated to differentiated consciousness.[6] He sees three stages to meaning.

> The stages in question are ideal constructs, and the key to the constructing is undifferentiation or differentiation of consciousness. In the main we have in mind the Western tradition and we distinguish three stages. In the first stage conscious and intentional operations follow the mode of common sense In a second stage besides the mode of common sense there is also the mode of theory, where the theory is controlled by a logic. In a third stage the modes of common sense and theory remain, science asserts its autonomy from philosophy, and there occur philosophies that leave theory to science and take their stand on interiority (*Method*. 85).

Lonergan believes that his transcendental method is one such example of a philosophy taking its stand on interiority.

The 'foreground' of *Method in Theology* is devoted to the eight functional specialities, designed to provide a transcendental methodology for theology and the other human sciences. He distinguishes two distinct phases within theology; one dealing with the past, where research, interpretation, history, and dialectic clarify the facts, and the other phase dealing with the present, where foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications provide the interpreter with his or her personal stand. As one inquires and assimilates the past, one moves from the facts to the values implicit in the facts. The interpreter uncovers the different messages in texts, tries to understand the oppositions within the dialectic of conflicting messages, and makes a personal stand as to what oneself believes. Here one is moving from the past to the present phase.

It is on the fourth level of consciousness, the level of " deliberation, evaluation, decision," that the moral and religious conversion take root.

> It is a decision about whom and what you are for and, again, whom and what you are against. It is a decision illuminated by the manifold possibilities exhibited in dialectic. It is a fully conscious decision about what one's horizon, one's outlook, one's world-view. It deliberately selects the frame-work, in which doctrines have their meaning, in which systematics reconciles, in which communications are effective (*Method*: 268).

Moral and religious conversion provide the existential impetus for doing what one thinks is good and right.[7] It becomes existentially important for the individual to lay a basis for one's moral and religious being because as one's experiences mount and memories accumulate, one's character is being built.

If one pays little or no attention to one's moral and religious aspect, then one's later actions in life may be haphazard, whimsical, or even dangerous.

(2) Interpretation as a Functional Specialty

Within this framework the need for a clear picture of interpretation is evident because interpreters many times disagree with each other, even contradicting each other while purportedly studying the same text. Oppositions in thought arise from perspectival or cognitional differences. The perspectivism that pervades the human sciences cannot be eliminated to attain the kind of universality that the natural sciences strive for. The lack of a proper cognitional theory, Lonergan says, however, can result in confusion which could be eliminated and thereby attain a universality distinct to the human sciences.

*Insight* provided general intellectual canons outlining the parameters of Lonergan's methodical hermeneutics. *Method in Theology*, however, begins with a common sense approach.

> There are three basic exegetical operations involved in understanding some text or document: understanding the text, judging the correctness of one's understanding of the text, and finally, stating that judgement. Understanding the text has four main aspects. One understands the object to which the text refers. One understands the words employed in the text. One understands the author that employed the words. One arrives at such an understanding through a process of learning and even at times as a result of a conversion. Needless to say, the four aspects are aspects of a single coming to understand (*Method*: 155).

Some texts do not stand in need of exegesis and Lonergan cites Euclid's *Elements* as one such example. There is little or no exegetical material on Euclid because there is only one correct interpretation: all others can be shown to be mistaken (*Method*: 154). On the other hand, Lonergan cites the Bible as an example of a text with a rich and varied body of exegetical literature. The protean notion of being that is expressed in the Bible is more susceptible to far-ranging interpretations than Euclid's *Elements*.

Lonergan insists that one must be familiar with the words the author is using. Many times the work one is studying is a translation. As such the exegete's task may be hindered because of a poor translation. Familiarity

with the original language eliminates this type of problem and may prevent one from making mistakes about the author's message due to a faulty translation. One has to see how the author uses words and syntax to perhaps get behind particularly dense passages which on first reading seem to be incomprehensible to the exegete. Difficult passages, once read and reread, are broken into more elementary expressions in order to get a clear grasp of the author's message.

Coincident with the familiarity of words is a familiarity of the objects expressed by the words. It only makes sense, Lonergan says, that if someone wants to study a text, one should have as much possible knowledge of the objects that the author talks about. This would include, of course, the exegetical material. In fact, he continues, there is a logic to Schleiermacher's contention that the interpreter will have a better understanding of the text than the author since the exegete has the advantage of a broader historical scope that is unavailable to the contemporary. It is a fallacy, however, because an exegete will never have access to all the details that went into making up the text. Though there is no hope of a complete understanding, the exegete, naturally enough, will want to have as thorough an understanding as possible. To not use the resources of critical reflection available to one is an inauthentic attempt of interpretation.

From the words and objects, the exegete may also turn to understanding the author writing the words. One is now moving from the accumulation of facts to an encounter with people and values.

> As one learns, one discovers more and more the questions that concerned the author, the issues that confronted him, the problems he was trying to solve, the material and methodical resources at his disposal for solving them. So one comes to set aside one's own initial interests and concerns, to share those of the author (*Method*: 163).

The dynamism of learning will incorporate some or all of these aspects at once into the search for understanding. As this process winds down and fewer relevant questions emerge, the understanding of the text will be expressed in the single topic which is generally a phrase or two supported by "an often enormously complex set of subordinate and interconnected questions and

answers"(*Method*: 164). The key to successful and correct understanding is to keep adverting to what has not been understood yet, "for that is the source of further questions, and to hit upon the questions directs attention to the parts or aspects of the text where answers may be found"(*Method*: 165). Once this set of questions and answers is completed the interpreter feels the overall understanding has been reached. Lonergan describes this as the "eventual enclosure of the interrelated multiplicity within a higher limited unity"(*Method*: 167).

The interpreter has now finished his task of coming to understand the text and is ready to move on to the next basic exegetical operation, that of judging the correctness of the understanding. It must be noted that when the interpreter has no more relevant questions that can lead to further insights which will give one a better understanding, he or she not only feels the task is done but, for the most part judges that understanding is correct. The interpreter must then take another moment and make an honest effort to find more relevant questions or issues that could complement, qualify or correct the insights already possessed (*Method*: 162).

Stating that judgment is the last basic exegetical operation of the functional specialty of interpretation. At this step in doing theology, all the interpreter does is to state what he or she has determined to be the author's intention. Functional specialization distinguishes and separates succesive stages in the process from data to results. Thus textual criticism aims at determining what was written. Interpretation determines what was meant within the texts and documents, while history attempts to assemble the interpretated texts and documents to construct a single narrative or view (*Method*: 168). The disagreements that occur after the interpreter has stated his or her judgement may not be eliminated by further study of the data because these disagreements may arise from an individual's perspective and there is little one can do to eliminate this perspectivism within interpretation. Further historical discoveries, like the diaries or letters of an author may render false what the interpreter previously thought was correct.This does not, however, mean the work done has become obsolete or irrelevant. The insights of the interpreter will still be a valuable guide to any further

understanding of unearthed material. It remains relevant within the horizon from which it was written because it has been grounded in the transcendental method. The transcendental precepts. 'Be attentive', 'Be intelligent', 'Be reasonable'. 'Be responsible', are a general guarantee that the exegete will provide an authentic interpretation.

> The basic idea of the method we are trying to develop takes its stand on discovering what human authenticity is . . . It is not an infallible method, for men are easily inauthentic, but it is a powerful method, for man's deepest need and most prized achievement is authenticity (*Method*: 254).

The dynamism of learning is not a merely logical process although logic and rationality play their part. Lonergan explains that understanding is a

> self-correcting process of learning that spirals into the meaning of the whole by using each new part...to correct the understanding reached in reading the earlier parts (*Method*: 159).

This notion of understanding surmounts the hermeneutical circle. The meaning of a text is an intentional entity and thus has a unified theme. This unity is made clear by the parts which are combined to reveal the overall intention of the author. These parts are the chapters, paragraphs, sentences and words. One can only grasp the total unity through its parts while, at the same time, each part only partially reveals the meaning of the whole. A seeming impasse arises in which the interpreter is caught in this logical circle from which he or she cannot escape to grasp the whole meaning. Lonergan dismisses this because of the way he has envisioned the process of coming to understand. This process is not a logical deduction: it is a spiralling into meaning through reading and rereading until one's cleverness, inventiveness or good luck happens upon the correct understanding which will satisfy the interpreter. Here again, the dependence on cognitional activity is paramount. A judgment occurs because the exegete recognizes the conditions needed for a prospective judgment, and further recognizes that the conditions are fulfilled. The other key to success, as mentioned previously, is to attend to the questions, puzzles, and problems that emerge in one's mind afte reading the text. Armed with these questions, another reading brings some answers and more questions until finally the core of insights gained will propel one to recognize and express the correct understanding of the text (*Method*: 159).

### (3) Development from *Insight* to *Method in Theology*

There is a distinct shift in emphasis within Lonergan's hermeneutics from *Insight* to *Method in Theology*. Far more than just being a shift from a general to a specific treatment of hermeneutics, which it is, there is an acknowledgement of the importance of existential phenomenology for hermeneutical thought. Lonergan's canons for a methodical hermeneutics in *Insight* offer a general intellectual framework for exegetes. The canon of relevance demands an interpretation that is relevant yet distinct. The canon of explanation provides an evaluative opinion based on one's critical reflection. The canon of successive approximations limits the field of study for the interpreter. The canon of parsimony demands that the hermeneutical work have a goal that is clear and capable of being achieved by not following up on insights that may be interesting but contribute nothing to the exegete's task at hand. The canon of residues identifies accidental features unique to the text or the author's intention which are incapable of being systematized.

By contrast, *Method in Theology* offers a more specific outline of the hermeneutical task. There is an intellectual hermeneutics which endeavors to understand the words of the text, understand the objects referred to in the text, understand the author who wrote the text, and understand oneself as the interpreter of the text. As well as this intellectual aspect, there is also an evaluative hermeneutics which describes the opposition of thought between texts or authors and then a decision on where you, the interpreter, stand in terms of the thoughts expressed.

Evaluative hermeneutics falls under the domain of the canon of explanation. One not only appropriates and interprets the data of research, one also appropriates the meaning and values implicit within that data. Evaluative hermeneutics occurs, not in the second functional specialty, interpretation, but rather in the fourth functional specialty, dialectic, where intentional consciousness is concerned with deciding.

> In brief, the first phase of theology is incomplete, if it is restricted to research, interpretation, and history. For as we have conceived these functional specialties, they approach but do not achieve an encounter with the past. They make the data available, they clarify what was meant, they

> narrate what occurred. Encounter is more. It is meeting persons, appreciating the values they represent, criticizing their defects, and allowing one's living to be challenged at its very roots by their words and by their deeds. Moreover, such an encounter is not just an optional addition to interpretation and to history Interpretation depends on one's self-understanding; the history one writes depends on one's horizon: and encounter is the one way in which self-understanding and horizon can be put to the test (*Method*: 247).

The full hermeneutical experience then, not only gathers the facts but also encounters the meaning and values of the author by testing them against one's own meanings and values.

There is a greater acknowledgment of the perspectivism of standpoints in *Method in Theology* because of this distinction between the intellectual and evaluative aspects. Incorrect factual judgments can be eliminated by the factual data that has been compiled. Perspectival differences however, "merely witness to the complexity of historical reality (*Method*: 235). Lonergan does suggest that many times a fundamental conflict is due to an inadequate cognitional theory, ethical stance or religious outlook. It is the function of dialectic "to bring such conflicts to light, and to provide a technique that objectifies subjective differences and promotes conversion" (*Method*: 235). The use of the intellectual pattern of experience as a general panacea, however, is not as pronounced. The exegetical rules outlined in *Method in Theology* attempt to deal more on the personal level of the interpreter who remains within his or her biases and prejudices. The prejudices of the author and oneself as the exegete, have to be clarified for an authentic evaluative explanation. The perspectival differences cannot be resolved by adverting to the intellectual pattern of experience. These differences are the result of the differentiation and polymorphism of human consciousness as it has evolved through Western tradition. They result from the common sense that permeates each culture. The emphasis on the intellectual overcoming of common sense is thus lessened and this, I believe, is at least partially due to Lonergan's encounter with Gadamer and *Truth and Method*. It is necessary, therefore, to turn to *Truth and Method* at this point to highlight Gadamer's emphasis on the personal appropriation of one's prejudices for an authentic hermeneutical evaluation of a text.

## Notes

[1] For more on insight as activity see Carol Skrenes, "Lonergan's Metaphysics: Ontological Implications of Insight-as-Event," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1984), 407-425.

[2] There is a growing body of commentaries and exegetical material on Lonergan's cognitional theory. See, for example, Hugo Meynell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1978): David Tracy, *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970); Bernard Tyrrell, *Bernard Lonergan's Philosophy of God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974); Gerald McCool, "History, Insight and Judgment in Thomism," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (1987), 299-313.

[3] In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan calls this position the 'empty head principle' because it ignores the fact that letters and words are just a series of spatially ordered signs. In order to even give a simple interpretation, one's experience, understanding, and judgment have to be used. (*Method*: 157). See also Hugo Meynell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1978) 94-104.

[4] For more on Lonergan's notion of intellectual conversion, see William Ryan, "The Transcendental Reduction according to Husserl and Intellectual Conversion according to Lonergan," *Creativity and Method* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981) 401-410.

[5] Intentionality is a fundamental precept in modern phenomenology. See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952) For a commentary on intentionality, see Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement* Volume 1 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976) 107-111

[6] For a dissenting view of not only the stages of meaning, but Lonergan's whole approach to theology, see Joseph Stephen O'Leary, "The Hermeneutics of Dogmatism," *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1980), 96-118. In this paper, Lonergan is soundly criticized for his distinction between undifferentiated and differentiated consciousness. "This reflects

Lonergan's total acceptance of the Aristotelean myth of a necessary progression from mythos to logos, a myth originally applying to the relation between the Pre-Socratics, thought of as muddle-headed, and the birth of conceptual reason in Socrates and Plato." (108).

[7] The order in which the intellectual, moral, and religious conversion happens is somewhat ambiguous in *Method in Theology*. For commentary and clarification of this issue see Marc E. Smith "Can Moral and Religious Conversions be separated?" *Thought* 56 (1981), 178-184; B.C. Butler, "Bernard Lonergan and Conversion," *Worship* 49 (1975), 329-336; Walter Conn, "Moral Conversion: Development Toward Critical Self-Possession." *Thought* 58 (1983), 170-187; J.W. Sullivan, "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity." *Theology* (1983), 345-353.

# Chapter Two
# Gadamer on Interpretation

## Introduction to Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics

In order to see clearly the nature and extent of Gadamer's affinity with Lonergan it is necessary to outline the central claim of *Truth and Method*. The major thesis of the book is summed up in the last paragraph.

> Thus there is undoubtedly no understanding that is free of all prejudices, however much the will of our knowledge must be directed towards escaping their thrall. It has emerged throughout our investigation that the certainty that is imparted by the use of scientific methods does not suffice to guarantee truth. This is so especially of the human sciences, but this does not mean a diminution of their scientific quality, but, on the contrary, the justification of the claim to special humane significance that they have always made. The fact that in the knowing involved in them the knower's own being is involved marks, certainly, the limitation of 'method', but not that of science. Rather, what the tool of method does not achieve must—and effectively can— be achieved by a discipline of questioning and research, a discipline that guarantees truth (*Truth*: 446-47).

In the work as a whole Gadamer takes great care to show, through a historical analysis of certain themes in the history of hermeneutics, that the methods of natural science are not totally applicable to the human sciences. A more far-reaching claim is a warning about the ossification of methodological technique. Such ossification tends to equate results with truth. Truth, not only as a concept, but also as a living reality can never be subsumed by any one particular method. The one exception is philosophical hermeneutics, which Gadamer contends, is *the* fundamental mode of understanding. Philosophical hermeneutics, however, does not claim to understand the whole of truth but rather to understand that the whole of truth can never be captured by any one individual at any one time. It is an acknowledgement to the great width, breadth and depth that the concept of truth has. Philosophical hermeneutics thus limits human consciousness. For this reason Gadamer

outlines the modern phenomenological movement and its insights into human consciousness. He seizes on the fact that human consciousness is historically, temporally, and linguistically conditioned and cannot make claims about truth that go beyond these conditions. Using insights from aesthetic and legal hermeneutics, he draws upon both to combine them into his philosophical hermeneutics. He takes the 'theoria' of aesthetic and the 'praxis' of legal hermeneutics and infuses them into his own dynamic philosophical hermeneutics.

*Truth and Method* begins with a critique of aesthetics which, though invaluable for a thorough understanding of its later significance, need not be detailed in depth for this thesis.[1] The relevance of aesthetic understanding in *Truth and Method* serves as an introduction to its application in the human sciences. The experience of art holds a vital clue to the full hermeneutical experience. Art, culture, and morality, all have a unique element that is missing from science and reason. The former are determined largely by the 'sensus communis' which take circumstances and history rather than universal principles and reasoned proof as a condition of truth.

> Historia is a totally different source of truth from theoretical reason. This is what Cicero meant when he called it the vita memoriae. It exists in its own right because human passions cannot be governed by the universal prescriptions of reason. In this sphere one needs, rather, convincing examples as only history can offer them (*Truth*: 23).

It is Gadamer's contention that a fundamental connection between historical research and tradition was severed with the ascendence of the historical school in the late nineteenth century. In their attempt to legitimize history as a human science, historians such as Ranke and von Droysen sought to create an impartial and objective accounting of historical facts in opposition to the Hegelian idealism of 'absolute Spirit' and the progression of truth in art, religion, and philosophy (*Truth*: 186). The project of an empirical yet universal discipline of history was fraught with logical inconsistencies that were not overcome, Gadamer contends, until Heidegger and his analysis of 'Dasein' in *Being and Time* (*Truth*: 225-234).

### Heidegger's Influence

It was as a student that Gadamer first came under the influence of Heidegger and the phenomenological movement, and many of Heidegger's insights into modern human nature are incorporated into Gadamer's magnum opus, *Truth and Method*. Through the "impulse received by Heidegger" Gadamer investigates the concepts of truth and method as they have evolved in the *Geisteswissenschaften*(*Truth*: xv).

Gadamer contends that Heidegger and *Being and Time* has revolutionized philosophy and philosophical inquiry.

> The problem of hermeneutics gains a universal framework, even a new dimension, through his [Heidegger's] transcendental interpretation of understanding. The correspondence between the interpreter and his object, for which the thinking of the historical school was unable to offer any convincing account, now acquires a significance that is concretely demonstrable, and it is the task of hermeneutics to demonstrate it. That the structure of There-being [Dasein is thrown projection, that There-being is, in the realisation of its own being, understanding, must also be true of the act of understanding within the human sciences. The general structure of understanding acquires its concrete form in historical understanding, in that the commitments of custom and tradition and corresponding potentialities of one's own future become effective in understanding itself. There-being that projects itself in relation to its own potentiality-for-being has always 'been'. This is the meaning of the existential of 'throwness' (*Truth*: 234).

Heidegger saw a 'fore-structure of understanding' operating in human consciousness. This fore-structure, a constitutional feature of the human mind, projects a fore-meaning upon one's world in anticipation of encounters within the world. For Heidegger, 'Dasein' is 'thrown projection'.[2] Being 'thrown' means being born, immersed, and inculcated into an ongoing culture and tradition. One is already actively engaged in one's culture before one comes to an understanding of one's place in it. 'Projection,' for Heidegger and Gadamer, is the projection of possibilities; as one grows older and makes sense of the culture one becomes aware of possible roles and vocations that are available or 'at-hand.' The child has a less meaningful projection because of a lack of experience. As experiences accumulate and the child reaches maturity, the fore-structure has a closer approximation of what can be expected and can function more or less comfortably in the world.[3]

The same is true when one is interpreting a text. The fore-structure assumes that there is a meaning to a text and as a result the reader has some preliminary idea what the text is about. As one reads and comes to understand better what the text is saying, a new, fuller projection of meaning is cast upon the text. The more one reads the greater one's knowledge of the book: reading is a constant process of new projection that constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation (*Truth*: 236). Because these fore-meanings are often left unexamined, Gadamer believes that an explicit analysis of them on the part of the interpreter is necessary so that the interpreter understands what he or she is projecting upon the text and what the text is saying. Misunderstanding, Gadamer suggests, is often the result of the interpreter not realizing or being open to the meaning of the text. One must be ready to set aside one's own understanding, the better to understand the text. "The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings" (*Truth*: 236).

## Prejudice, Authority, and Tradition

In light of Heidegger's analysis of 'throwness', Gadamer sees the need to 'rehabilitate' the concept of prejudice and by that to allow the concepts of authority and tradition to shed the negative connotations that surround them. The pejorative sense that these concepts evoke, Gadamer contends, is a result of the Enlightenment's bias towards them (*Truth*: 246). As the positive sciences began to flourish in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they developed an autonomy at odds with the traditional authority of church and state. With the growing innovative discoveries made by the natural sciences, it became easy to give up the deference to authority. The Enlightenment's prejudice grew into a prejudice against authority: one's own reason and reasoning became the ideal and ultimate source of authority. Although authority has been deservedly maligned for fostering incorrect worldviews—the case of Galileo is the most celebrated example— Gadamer believes that the power of authority was unecessarily denigrated, for 'prejudice' etymologically does not mean a false judgment but a pre-judgment

(*Truth*: 240). The Enlightenment's emphasis upon the experiential aspect of the new natural sciences proved to be a prejudice in itself. Gadamer hopes, by way of his interpretative explication, to show the true nature of prejudice and thereby to remove the pejorative connotations of prejudice, authority and tradition.[4]

In fact Gadamer reveals how important prejudices are by calling them the conditions of understanding itself (*Truth*: 245). He acknowledges the distinction made between faith in authority and the use of one's own reason, but points out that the Enlightenment was over hasty in denigrating any truth-claims authority might have. The essence of authority, in fact, has little to do with blind obedience and more to do with knowledge.

> It is true that it is primarily persons that have authority; but the authority of persons is based ultimately, not on the subjection and abdication of reason, but on recognition and knowledge— knowledge, namely, that the other is superior to oneself in judgment and insight and that for this reason his judgment takes precedence, ie. it has priority over one's own. This is connected with the fact that authority cannot actually be bestowed, but is acquired and must be acquired, if someone is to lay claim to it. It rests on recognition and hence on an act of reason itself which, aware of its own limitations, accepts that others have better understanding. (*Truth*: 248)

With the rehabilitation of the concepts of prejudice, authority, and tradition, Gadamer believes that the human sciences will regain learning by example, a technique that has been lost since the Enlightenment. The study of history, for example, should not operate on the premise of distancing ourselves as much as possible from the era we are studying, but rather in trying to get closer to it to show the ongoing continuity between the past and present. Modern historical research is not only a faithful reconstruction of the past but also the transmission of tradition.

## Application

Learning by example means applying the examples to oneself. It is this notion of application in particular that has been lost and Gadamer traces this back to Schleiermacher and the historical consciousness of romantic hermeneutics.[5] Along with understanding and interpretation, application is

needed to complete the idea of understanding. Gadamer appeals to legal and theological hermeneutics for this completion.

> A law is not there to be understood historically, but to be made concretely valid through being interpreted. Similarly, a religious proclamation is not there to be understood as a merely historical document, but to be taken in a way in which it exercises its saving effect. (*Truth*: 275)

In this way the task of the interpreter is not simply to reproduce the message of the text, but to "consider the tension that exists between the identity of the common object and the changing situation in which it must be understood" (*Truth*: 276). The interpreter must work out how the text affects himself or herself in a present situation; in other words one must make an application of the message to oneself.[6]

To lend credence to the redefinition of hermeneutics, Gadamer turns to Aristotelian ethics to show that application is necessary for interpretation and understanding. Aristotle emphasized that knowledge of moral problems will help someone to make proper moral decisions. The goal is not the pure knowledge of morality, but rather the use of this knowledge in order to do something (*Truth*: 280). This is not the same, Gadamer points out, as the technique of a craftsman, although there are similarities. One cannot simply learn a technique of how to act morally like a craftsman learns how to glaze a bowl. It is only through experiences that one can gain a proper idea of what to do in order to be moral. One does not stand over and above what one is studying, but rather uses it with oneself to make the right choice in order to act properly (*Truth*: 283). Thus we do not possess moral knowledge in the same way as scientific knowledge. This is the heart of the distinction that Aristotle makes and that Gadamer emphasizes: it is the difference between the *techne* of science and the *phronesis* of morality.[7] Thus Gadamer concludes, with Aristotle, that *phronesis*, unlike *techne*, posesses a notion of application that is "neither a subsequent nor a merely occasional part of the phenomenon of understanding, but co-determines it as a whole from the beginning" (*Truth*: 289).

The notion of application remains a vital component within legal hermeneutics and Gadamer draws attention to its "exemplary significance"

(*Truth*: 289-305). It is not just having an understanding ol the history of the law itself but also having knowledge of the different applications that count. Gadamer is interested in legal hermeneutics because historical consciousness, by taking up the methodology of the natural sciences, has severed the proper application to tradition that is paralleled in legal hermeneutics, in which, one must remain aware of the original historical use of a law in order to apply it equitably to a present situation.

> Thus the legal historian cannot simply take the original application of the law as determining its original meaning. As an historian he will, rather, have to take account of the historical change that the law has undergone. He will have to understand the development from the original application to the present application of the law (*Truth*: 290).

Here again Gadamer emphasizes that a purely historical interest, detached from any practical application, is necessarily incomplete because of the lack of continuity between the past and present. "Historical knowledge can be gained only by seeing the past in its continuity with the present" (*Truth*: 292). This is done by applying the message of the text to oneself, by perhaps pretending to be the one to whom the text was originally addressed.

> But does application essentially and necessarily belong to understanding? From the point of view of modern science the answer will be that it does not, and it will be said that this kind of application that makes the interpreter, as it were, the person to whom the text was originally addressed, is quite unscientific and is to be wholly excluded in the historical sciences. The scientific nature of modern science consists precisely in the fact that it makes tradition objective and methodically eliminates any influence of the interpreter on understanding (*Truth*: 297).

The proper notion of application, Gadamer concludes, means first, understanding the text in terms of the specific situation in which it was written, and second applying the meaning and message of the text to oneself.

### Experience

According to Gadamer, the modern scientific attitude has diminished as well the concept of 'experience'.[8] As with the concept of 'prejudice', he wants to rehabilitate 'experience' so that its proper significance is revealed. Modern science takes no account of the inner historicality of experience.

Science merely wants the results of experience to be infinitely repeatable so that a universal claim of truth is maintained. Its measure of truth demands that everyone be able to come to the same conclusion because it is the same experience of something. This does seem to abolish its history in order to guarantee results. Experience is only regarded teleologically by science and one must look to other aspects of experience to grasp the full significance.

Gadamer returns to Aristotle and the *Posterior Analytics* as a support for his approach to experience. Science and technology begin with the universality of the concept but it is experience and observation that first bring to light enough similarity to show this universality. "Experience is not science itself, but it is a necessary condition of it" (*Truth*: 314). Though the nature of science is a continual affirming of knowledge, the nature of experience is a negative process.

> If we have an experience of an object, this means that we have not seen the thing correctly hitherto and now know it better. Thus the negativity of experience has a curiously productive meaning (*Truth*: 317).

Experience is not science. To experience does not mean to know everything but rather to have had many different experiences so that an individual is well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them. "The dialectic of experience has its own fulfillment not in definitive knowledge, but in that openness to experience that is encouraged by experience itself" (*Truth*: 319). Thus for Gadamer, there is a fundamental negativity that is an essential element in human nature. This negativity emerges as one moves from experience to insight. To have an insight into an experience is to have escaped from a misunderstanding that is now set straight. Taken to its furthest degree, experience is experience of human finitude (*Truth*: 320). For Gadamer, this is the essence of the concept of experience. It is not, as Hegel thought, the absolute fusion of past and present in self-consciousness nor, as Nietzsche thought, the eternal return of the same.

> Real experience is that in which man becomes aware of his finiteness. In it are discovered the limits of the power and the self-knowledge of his planning reason. It proves to be an illusion that everything can be reversed, that there is always time for everything and that everything somehow returns. The person who is involved and acts in history continually experiences, rather,

> that nothing returns. 'To recognise what is' does not mean to recognise what is just at this moment there, but to have insight into the limitations within which the future is still open to expectation and planning or, even more fundamentally, that all the expectation and planning of finite beings is finite and limited. Thus true experience is that of one's own historicality (*Truth*: 320-21).

Gadamer considers the basis of the hermeneutical experience to be hearing and not sight. The cleverness and inventiveness of this statement deserves some comment. He is not saying that sight does not provide some basis (obviously it does) but rather that it overshadows the significance of hearing. One is able to be more readily convinced by listening rather than reading. The experience of dialogue with another person draws one into an 'I and Thou' relationship that can be lost when studying texts. Gadamer wants the reader to have a real conversation with the text, to try to understand explicitly what the author is saying. This way something akin to moral knowledge can be gained. To try and disassociate oneself from tradition in order to better understand the text is to labour under a false prejudice of what understanding is. It is the openness to the other, the desire to listen to what the other is saying that leads from experience to insight (*Truth*: 324).

Gadamer cites the Platonic Dialogues as a model for his hermeneutics.[9]

> Among the greatest insights given us by Plato's account of Socrates is that, contrary to the general opinion, it is more difficult to ask questions than to answer them. When the partners in the Socratic dialogue are unable to answer Socrates' awkward questions and seek to turn the tables by assuming what is, as they suppose, the advantageous role of the questioner, they come to grief. Behind this comic motif in the Platonic dialogues there is the important critical distinction between genuine and false discourse. For someone who uses dialogue only in order to prove himself right and not to gain insight, asking questions will indeed seem easier than answering them . . . In the comic confusion between question and answer, knowledge and ignorance that Plato describes, there is the profound recognition of the priority of the question in all knowledge and discourse that really reveals something of an object (*Truth*: 326).

To have a question about something means that one is seeking knowledge that one does not have. To ask a question means that one is open to new experience and knowledge. The openness of the question implies that there

can be both a negative and a positive judgment and this is the basis of the essential relation between question and knowledge. "For it is the essence of knowledge not onl. to judge something correctly but at the same time and for the same reason to exclude what is wrong" (*Truth*: 328). It is not so much the deciding of the answer as it is the deciding of the question that leads to knowledge. This priority of the question over the answer is the basis of Gadamer's concept of knowledge. Knowledge is not the stored, archived results that science equates it with; it is the seeking, the asking, the process by which we achieve results. It is the desire to know because one realizes one does not know.

The asking of the question is not something that can be taught, and, more importantly, there is no methodical way in which to come to the solution of the question. Here the element of contingency emerges. Gadamer is trying to outline the process by which we come to an insight and an answer to a question. He believes it can be likened to a sudden idea.

> It is true that we do not speak of sudden ideas so much in regard to questions as to answers, eg. the solution of problems; and by this we mean to say that there is no methodical way to the thought that is the solution. But we also know that sudden thoughts do not come entirely unexpectedly. They always presuppose a pointer in the direction of an area of openness from which the idea can come, ie. they presuppose questions. The real nature of the sudden idea is perhaps less the sudden realisation of the solution to a problem than the sudden realisation of the question that advances into the openness and thus makes an answer possible. Every sudden idea has the structure of a question (*Truth*. 329).

As a result we can understand why conversations are significant for Gadamer. A conversation is based upon the art of asking questions. One has to face the other as a 'Thou' or as an end and not a means, to echo Kant's moral prescription. One has to try to understand what the other is saying or what occurs cannot be called a conversation. To come to an understanding one has to suspend one's own judgment about the matter and listen to what the other has to say. In this sense one accords the other some respect. Even if one believes the other to be wrong, one must still listen and respect his or her opinion. Within a conversation, if there is disagreement, a compromise can sometimes be arrived at through the 'to and fro of dialogue'. Obviously

this cannot be the same with a text. The text does ask a question of the interpreter, but one has to play both roles in this type of conversation. One has to translate the written marks on the pages back into meaningful language. One has to engage and involve oneself with the meaning. Language is the vehicle and medium of understanding. It is not merely a tool that one uses to antecedently express one's thoughts and ideas but the very basis by which we know. The text comes to us from the past, it is handed down. The conversation between the interpreter and the text is a conversation over history. The significance of this leads Gadamer to his treatment of tradition which is linguistic and meant to be interpreted.

## Language and Interpretation

> The full hermeneutical significance of the fact that tradition is linguistic in nature is clearly revealed when the tradition is a written one. In writing, language is detached from its full realisation. In the form of writing all tradition is simultaneous with any present time. Moreover, it involves a unique co-existence of past and present, insofar as present consciousness has the possibility of a free access to all that is handed down in writing. No longer dependent on repetition, which links past knowledge with the present, but, in its direct acquaintance with literary tradition, understanding consciousness has a genuine opportunity to widen its horizon and thus enrich its world by a whole new and deeper dimension (*Truth*: 352).

Written texts, therefore, are the proper objects for hermeneutics. Writing is a form of self-alienation because it transfers thought from one self to another. When one person reads what another has written, self-alienation is overcome. This is the highest task of understanding (*Truth*: 352). It does not matter when a text was written, the fact that it exists for reading means that the tradition and historical context from which the text was written can and does come alive for the interpreter. It is only alive insofar as it is mediated by the interpreter's being, but the text shares in that being by having a horizon that fuses with the interpreter. Though it may be that writing is antecedent to language, they both share a pure ideality of meaning because both refer to the same objects. Both share in pointing to objects or matters-of-state which are not linguistic, but through language we are able to understand. In this sense there is a sign function by which we know that a book is not

the same as the word 'book'. The word designates the object. On this note, Gadamer suggests that writing may actually be better than speech to convey meaning because it is detached from any emotional or psychological factors that the spoken word has. He is convinced that Schleiermacher was wrong in thinking that we have to get inside the author's mind to re-create his psychological state in order to better understand the text. The proper task of understanding is the sharing of a present meaning between what was written and the interpreter. Success for the interpreter means the clear, unambiguous grasp and understanding of the intended meaning (*Truth*: 355). Though the meaning of a text is fixed and has to be understood in terms of the specific situation in which it was written, the interpreter's pre-determined interests allows the fixed meaning to be taken from its historical context and to be used in new ways that were never intended by the author (*Truth*: 356).

Not only does language determine the hermeneutical object, but it determines the hermeneutical act as well. Historical consciousness distorted this relationship because of the desire to set aside one's own interpretation in order to see better what was in the text. The nature of interpretation is inexplicably bound up with understanding and there is an inner unity that historical consciousness has torn apart. Interpretation is not merely a means by which understanding is achieved. It is not a mere process that can be considered secondarily but is a condition necessary for understanding. Interpretation merges and disappears into understanding when the content of the words are understood.[9] Thus interpretation has no absolute significance of its own.

> The interpretative concepts are not, as such, thematic in understanding. Rather, it is their nature to disappear behind what they bring, in interpretation, into speech. Paradoxically, an interpretation is right when it is capable of disappearing in this way . . . This is also true in those cases when there is immediate understanding and no explicit interpretation is undertaken. For in these cases too interpretation must be possible. But this means that interpretation is contained potentially in the understanding process. It simply makes the understanding explicit. Thus interpretation is not a means through which understanding is achieved, but it has passed into the content of what is understood (*Truth*: 359).

Interpretation, therefore, does not create a new meaning, but rather highlights or illuminates the original meaning. There is no interpretation that

is correct in itself because each interpreter brings his or her own prejudices and concepts into an interpretation (*Truth*: 364). The problem is further compounded by an incorrect theory of language.

> It is obvious that an instrumentalist theory of signs that sees words and concepts as handy tools has missed the point of the hermeneutical phenomenon . . . The interpreter does not use words and concepts like an artisan who takes his tools in his hands and then puts them away. Rather, we must recognise that all understanding is interwoven with concepts and reject any theory that does not accept the intimate unity of word and object (*Truth*: 364-65).

One has to realize that though we are linguistically constituted this does not mean that we are bound by linguistics. Modern linguistics, as a discipline within the humanities, is based on an abstraction that takes no account of the meaning intended in propositions but rests wholly on formal procedure. One must reject these presuppositions of a philosophy of language because they reject the intimate unity of the word and object. With what Lonergan would call the 'differentiation of consciousness', Gadamer sees a development from "the unconsciousness of language via consciousness of language to the devaluation of language" (*Truth*: 366). The separation of the word and object denigrates language to a mere tool with which one faithfully reconstructs what an author has said, only using the formality of linguistics as a guide.

Where does the relationship between the word and object lie? Gadamer returns to Plato and the *Cratylus* to illustrate his point. In the *Cratylus* there is a discussion about the theory of signs which assigns names by convention and the theory which believes there is a natural agreement between words and the objects they name. There is a measure of truth in both these positions but it is equally obvious that both extremes are inaccurate as well. Do words point to an object as a sign or do they reflect objects like images? The most abstract sign is that of number because there is no mistaking what it points to. Badges, ciphers and the like have a more obtuse pointing because the specific marks that make them up is not universally recognized. The sign has no absolute significance because, as a sign, its task is to signify something else. When that something else is recognized the sign disappears into what it pointed to. A copy however, is not just a sign but is an actual representation

of the original. Gadamer is convinced that the *Cratylus* was responsible for changing thought about language from an image to a sign. "This is not just a terminological change, but it expresses an epoch-making decision about thought concerning language" (*Truth*: 374). This decision is responsible for the eventual devaluation of language. It is an ossification towards technical concepts that have only one definable meaning, which Gadamer equates with the goal of scientific inquiry. He calls it an act of violence against language because a word or concept is limited and not allowed to have a variation of meaning. This is important for a modern interpreter because one has to consider the contingencies in meaning that historical texts may have used that are at variance with its present meaning before the technification and ossification of concepts. The goal of a universal language, as envisoned by Leibniz or the twentieth-century positivists, may well rise above the contingencies and errors of the living language, but the knowledge gained is blind. Gadamer contends that there is a mysterious connection between the word and object such that "the ideality of the meaning lies in the word itself" (*Truth*: 377).

Gadamer sees the Christian idea of the incarnation as an even greater realization of the unity of word and object.

> This, the most important element in christian thought, is all the more important for us because in christian thought the incarnation is also closely connected with the problem of the word. The interpretation of the mystery of the Trinity, the most important task confronting the thinking of the middle ages, was based—first in the Fathers and then in systematic elaboration of Augustinianism in the scholastic period—on the relationship between human speech and thought. Here dogmatic theology relied chiefly on the prologue to St. John's gospel and, although theology used Greek ideas to try and solve its own theological problem, philosophy acquired by this means a dimension foreign to Greek thought. If the Word became flesh and the reality of the spirit was perfected only in this incarnation, then the logos is freed from its spirituality, which means, at the the same time, from its cosmic potentiality. The uniqueness of the redemptive event introduces the historical object into Western thought, brings the phenomenon of language out of its immersion in the ideality of meaning, and offers it to philosophical reflection. For, in contrast to the Greek logos, the word is pure event (*Truth*: 379).

Because of this Gadamer looks to Thomas Aquinas for the scholastic idea of the difference between the human word and the divine: 1. The human

word is potential before it is actualised; 2. The human word is essentially imperfect in that words never really perfectly express what we are thinking; 3. Human thought is an accident of the mind and as such cannot contain the whole of the object but is ever moving on to new thoughts and conceptions (*Truth*: 384-385). According to Aquinas, human thought is capable, albeit imperfectly, of participating with the divine by thinking. If God's Word is divine then we share in that divinity by thinking. Our finitude is united with divinity. The emanation feature of the Word does not mean that we have a mere copy, an imperfect representation because of our frail cognitive processes, but rather that we can partake of the divine through the mind itself (*Truth*: 393).

The imperfect nature of expressing the whole of one's thought, however, means that the transformation of particular experiences into universal concepts is not a well-ordered process but very often relies on mistakes and accidents. One arrives at truth but usually not the truth that was expected. This again is the negativity of experience, the disappointment of one's expectations that Gadamer wishes to emphasize. This is in keeping with the projection of anticipated meanings upon things. It is an approximation of an intended meaning which is complemented and corrected by the actual encounter with the object. As noted, Gadamer believes that this is a constitutional feature of the human mind. This projection of a fore-meaning is the dialectical movement of the mind.

This dialectical movement of the mind means that "the truth of the object is not contained in the name itself" (*Truth*: 389). The ability to move from this to that in thought and recognize similarity within multiplicity and create concepts, shows that the dialectic is fundamentally metaphoric in nature (*Truth*: 392). This, to Gadamer, means that language also projects an image of the object as opposed to pointing like the sign. "It can be stated as a fundamental principle that wherever words assume a mere sign function, the original connection between speaking and thinking, with which we are concerned, is changed into an instrumental relationship" (*Truth*: 392).

With the growing emergence of national languages the theological presuppositions of the medievals diminished. Modern thought about language

"seeks to study the way in which the naturalness of human language—an insight painfully won against the forces of rationalism and orthodoxy—unfolds in the range of experience of differences between human languages" (*Truth*:397). Gadamer turns to Wilhem von Humboldt, whom he calls the founder of modern philosophy of language, to show the transition from medieval to modern. Humboldt's contribution was to explain the different languages as "mirrors of the individual mentalities of the nations" (*Truth*: 397). Thus every language was a particular view of the world.

> He [Humboldt] recognised the living act of speech, linguistic energeia, as the essence of language, and thus overcame the dogmatism of the grammarians. On the basis of the concept of mental faculty, that dominates his whole thinking about language, he was able to formulate correctly the question of the origin of language, which had been weighed down with theological considerations. He showed how mistaken this question is if it involves the model of a human world without language, which emerged into language somehow at some time in the past. As against this, Humboldt rightly emphasised that language was human from its very beginning (*Truth*: 401).

With Humboldt as support, Gadamer finds justification for his belief that language is not just a possession and tool that one uses but is in fact the ground and condition for us having a world at all (*Truth*: 401).

The multiplicity of languages should not be considered as negative. The fact that no one word can adequately express the total meaning of an object is not a limiting feature but shows the range and variation that language can achieve as one attempts to define something. Human consciousness has a natural and primary process of dialectic which keeps it ever moving from question to answer and back to question again. Because of the capacity to express things differently one is free from one's habitat and this freedom lies in the different attitudes one has towards the world (*Truth*: 403). One is liberated from a single perspective which allows one to regard different perspectives with a seemingly infinite number of possibilities. Common sense places limits on these possibilities; one recognizes, along with others, that there are shared meanings that cannot be arbitrarily changed to suit a whim. The meaning of a chair, for example, cannot become the meaning of a table. It is only in the process in which a community of life is lived out that the

true being of language is revealed. The use of language by science is an alienation, a violence against language that destroys the original unity of word and object.

Because the world is linguistic and can be understood through interpretation and understanding, the question of a 'world-in-itself', Gadamer says, becomes problematical (*Truth*: 405). There is no world that exists beyond language; there are no pre-existent eternal ideas or noumena to which one appeals as the ground or unity of the multiplicity of the world. No matter how absolute one makes one's metaphysical system it still remains one perspective and hence open for the fusion of other perspectives. The 'world-in-itself' is still implied but it is the horizon of the totality of perspectives. The experience of the world in language is absolute. Science cannot claim to reveal 'being-in-itself' because it is only a part of the totality of language for language encompasses both community and science. Language is the mediating factor between finitude and infinity. "All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is within it an infinity of meaning to be elaborated and interpreted" (*Truth*: 416).

Thus for Gadamer the hermeneutical experience lies in a dialectical movement of the mind.

> A person who is trying to understand a text has also to keep something at a distance, namely everything that suggests itself, on the basis of his own prejudices, as the meaning expected, as soon as it is rejected by the sense of the text itself. Even the experience of the reversal of meaning, this constantly recurring experience in speech, which is the real experience of the dialectic, has its equivalent here. The unfolding of the totality of meaning towards which understanding is directed, forces us to make conjectures and to take them back again. The self-cancellation of the interpretation makes it possible for the thing itself-the meaning of the text-to assert itself. The movement of the interpretation is not dialectical primarily because the one-sidedness of every statement can be balanced by another side-this is, as we shall see, a secondary phenomenon in interpretation- but because the word that interpretatively encounters the meaning of the text expresses the whole of this meaning, ie allows an infinity of meaning to be represented within it in a finite way (*Truth*: 423).

There is a fundamental mystery for Gadamer in language and speech. When something is said there is also the projection of all that was left unsaid

which opens up a myriad of possible interpretations. The understanding of a text then has many interpretations and it is the task of hermeneutics to reveal a "totality of meaning in all its relations" (*Truth*: 429). The text never just speaks to one directly but comes to one already surrounded and determined by tradition. This is not a distortion of the pure understanding of the text but rather the basis for the hermeneutical experience. In a sense there is no pure understanding, it is all interpretation because there is no way one can understand an object in light of eternity. The fact of our finitude liberates consciousness from conceiving history in terms of eternity and seeks to understand how it itself is affected by the encounter with the text and its tradition.

The fact that tradition is linguistic means that there is a universal aspect to hermeneutics. "Being that can be understood is language" (*Truth*: 432). Language is not so much a sign as it is an image perhaps. The concept of an image takes into account the unity of word and object much better than the instrumental concept of sign. This opens the way to incorporate the concept of the beautiful so that it too can be of service to philosophical hermeneutics. The justification for this comes from Plato who saw the close connection between the idea of the good and the idea of the beautiful.

> Plato defines the beautiful in terms of measure, appropriateness and right proportions, and Aristotle states the elements (iede) of the beautiful to be order (taxis), right proportions (summetria) and definition (horismenon), and finds these present in an exemplary way in mathematics. The close connection between the mathematical orders of the beautiful and the order of the heavens means further that the cosmos, the model of all visible harmony, is at the same time the supreme example of beauty in the visible sphere. Harmonious proportion, symmetry, is the decisive condition of all beauty (*Truth*: 436).

At the same time it is not just symmetry that makes an object beautiful. Beauty is also related to the idea of 'shining' and 'light'. Light has a curiously reflective character in that when it shines on something it not only reveals the object but makes itself visible, "and it is not visible in any other way than by making something else visible" (*Truth*: 439). This metaphysics of light and the beautiful has always been an undercurrent within the history of metaphysics and it is Gadamer's intention to restore the "affinity between

the Platonic theory of the beauty and the idea of a universal hermeneutics" (*Truth*: 443).

The notion of poetry is important for Gadamer because it illustrates a fact about hermeneutical truth. A poetic utterance is vague and ambiguous yet it captures a meaning that yearns for interpretation. The value of the hermeneutical experience is not to try to understand all the interpretations in an ordered, compartmentalized fashion but rather to actually encounter what the poem says to one.

It is not an easy task to sum up the whole of Gadamer's argument in a systematic fashion. To do so, Gadamer might say, would destroy the essence of his argument. Being hermeneutically aware, one cannot constrict oneself to methodological systems which seek to limit truth and being in order to understand it. To become truly experienced, one must remain open to new experiences, new interpretations, and new understandings. The priority of hearing over sight as the basis of the hermeneutical experience reveals the fundamental importance of conversation and dialogue for understanding. Underlying this is the logic and dialectic of the question and answer. It is only because one is propelled to ask a question that one eventually comes to an answer. The significance lies not in the well-ordered results but in the encounter itself. It is the encounter that gives one the knowledge and self-understanding.

## Notes

[1] For a thorough discussion of the significance of aesthetics in *Truth and Method*, see Joel C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 63-132.

[2] For a fuller treatment of Dasein and 'throwness' see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) 67-77, 219-224.

[3] Although Gadamer acknowledges his debt to Heidegger, there are significant differences as well. See Robert Bernasconi, "Bridging the Abyss: Heidegger and Gadamer," *Research in Phenomenology* 16 (1982), 1-24. Bernasconi is also the editor of the English translation of Gadamer's

*The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) In his introduction, Bernasconi outlines the major difference between Gadamer and Heidegger.

> Gadamer denies epochal discontinuity while at the same time maintaining the truth of the work of art. two claims that were inseparable in Heidegger's discussion of art. The history of art has for Heidegger, like the history of philosophy, a certain unity even if it cannot be told as a continuous story. The decisive break therefore is found in the modern period, and so inevitably Gadamer must turn to the discussion of modern art and literature in order to justify his recasting of Heidegger's concepts (xvii)

[4] It was Gadamer's own interpretation of authority and tradition that spurred Jurgen Habermas into a response that has burgeoned into what is called the Gadamer-Habermas debate. For background and commentary on this, see Anne Meete Hjort, "The Conditions of Dialogue: Approaches to the Habermas-Gadamer Debate" *Eidos* 4 (1985). 11-37; Gary Shapiro, "Gadamer, Habermas and the Death of Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 26 (1986), 39-47; Paul Giurlanda, "Habermas' Critique of Gadamer: Does it Stand Up?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1987), 33-40.

[5] For a further discussion of Gadamer's critique of Schleiermacher, see Roger Lundin, "Hermeneutics and the Romantic Tradition," *Christian Scholar Review* 1 (1984), 3-18; Ronald Bontekoe, "A Fusion of Horizons: Gadamer and Schleiermacher," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1987), 3-16. Bontekoe tries to soften some of Gadamer's harsher criticisms of Schleiermacher by emphasizing the similarities between the two.

[6] For more on the application of the text to oneself see Joel C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 184-199.

[7] For more on the relationship between Aristotle and Gadamer, see Joseph Dunne, "Aristotle after Gadamer: An Analysis of the Distinction between the Concepts of Phronesis and Techne," *Irish Theological Journal* 2 (1985), 105-123

[8] It has been argued that Gadamer's conception of science and the modern scientific attitude is outdated in light of the works of Karl Popper

and Thomas Kuhn. For a further discussion of this issue, see Joel C. Weinsheimer. *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1985), 1-59.

[9] For more on the relationship between Gadamer and Plato, see Francis Ambrosio, "Gadamer, Plato, and the Discipline of Dialogue," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1987), 17-32

[10] For more on the notion of the disappearance of interpretation into understanding, see Joel C. Weinsheimer. *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 225-229.

# Chapter Three
# The Hermeneutics of Gadamer and Lonergan Compared

In spite of the initial differences in the approach to hermeneutics, both Gadamer and Lonergan agree on many themes and aspects within hermeneutics. In this chapter, their views on the universal viewpoint, the priority of the question, the concept of objectivity, and the role of language will be compared to show both the similarity and divergence of their positions.

## The Universal Viewpoint

For Lonergan, there is no question about working from a universal viewpoint. It is one of his hermeneutical canons in *Insight*. Working from a universal viewpoint frees the interpreter from a mere pedantic following of the rules. *Method in Theology* makes this point more explicit.

> Rules of hermeneutics or exegesis list the points worth considering in one's efforts to arrive at an understanding of the text. Such are an analysis of the composition of the text, the determination of the authors's purpose, knowledge of the people for whom he wrote, of the occasion on which he wrote, of the nature of the linguistic, grammatical, stylistic means he employed. However, the main point about all such rules is that one does not understand the text because one has observed the rules but, on the contrary, one observes the rules in order to arrive at an understanding of the text. Observing the rules can be no more than mere pedantry that leads to an understanding of nothing of any moment or to missing the point entirely. The essential observance is to note one's every failure to understand clearly and exactly and to sustain one's reading and rereading until inventiveness or good luck have eliminated one's failures in comprehension (*Method*: 159-60).

A universal viewpoint will accept any differentiation of the protean meaning of a text because there is no strict methodical means to understand over and above 'inventiveness or good luck'. Reading and rereading brings familiarity with the work and a better chance of 'hitting on' the meaning intended

by the author. Once that meaning is grasped, one moves into the next functional specialty, history, in which the text is placed in its historical context.

Gadamer as well does not want to limit interpretation. Since it is not just a formal reconstruction of the meaning but also the transmission of tradition that is involved, the interpreter must show the significance of the meaning to the present tradition. The text is first understood in terms of the specific situation in which it was written and then used by the interpreter to show the validity of its meaning for the present. This often means that the original meaning and situation in which it was written become secondary to the present significance that the interpreter sees.

> What is stated in the text must be detached from all contingent factors and grasped in its full ideality, in which alone it has validity. Thus, precisely because it entirely detaches the sense of what is said from the person saying it, the written word makes the reader, in his understanding of it, the arbiter of its claim to truth. The reader experiences in all its validity what is addressed to him and what he understands. . . The horizon of understanding cannot be limited either by what the writer had originally in mind, or by the horizon of the person to whom the text was originally addressed. . What is fixed in writing has detached itself from the the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships (*Truth*: 356-57).

As we have noted, Gadamer does not believe that an interpretation can be correct in itself because of the prejudices of each interpreter. Prejudices are not necessarily pejorative but they do determine how the intended message of the text will be grasped by the interpreter. A modern Catholic reader, for instance, may understand Martin Luther's work in a radically different sense than a modern Protestant reader. Each reader, however, in coming to understand a text, begins by asking a question about what the text means or, as Gadamer phrases it, having the text ask a question of the interpreter (*Truth*: 333).

### The Priority of the Question

For Gadamer, the importance of the hermeneutical priority of the question the question in all understanding, cannot be emphasized enough. The

question pervades all aspects of experience, from the foundational level of existence to the operational level of interpreting specific texts. His interpretation of the concept of experience, in contradistinction to the Aristotelian scientific tradition, focuses on the negativity of experience. In describing the process of knowledge, Gadamer disputes the traditional notion of positive growth.

> If we look at experience in this way in terms of its result, its real character as a process is overlooked. This process is, in fact, an essentially negative one. It cannot be described simply as the unbroken development of typical universals. This development takes place, rather, by continually false generalisations being refuted by experience and what was regarded as typical being shown not to be so. This is seen linguistically in the fact that we use the word 'experience' in two different senses: to refer to the experiences that fit in with our expectation and confirm it, and to the experience that we have. This latter, 'experience' in the real sense, is always negative. If we have an experience of an object, this means that we have not seen the thing correctly hitherto and now know it better. Thus the negativity of experience has a curiously productive meaning (*Truth*: 316-17).

This 'curiously productive meaning' is the awareness of the finite nature of human experience, as well as the awareness that one's prejudices play an important role in understanding. There is no historical objectivity by which certain epochs can be interpreted in terms of the whole because the whole of history is not empirically given. Therefore there is no objective standpoint by which to judge the adequacy or inadequacy, the rightness or wrongness of an historical interpretation. The awareness of the finite nature of experience and the working out of one's prejudices, which determine the investigation, leads the exegete to a suspension of those prejudices in the attempt to understand.

> Understanding begins . . . when something addresses us. This is the primary hermeneutical condition. We now know what this requires, namely the fundamental suspension of our own prejudices. But all suspension of judgments and hence, a fortiori, of prejudices, has logically the structure of a question (*Truth*: 266).

The suspension of one's prejudices allows the text and the author's meaning to be revealed. The process of understanding does not mean the simple abandonment of one's own prejudices in favor of the author's but rather

the fusing of one's horizon with the author's into the hermeneutical horizon. This fusion begins with a question about the text.

> For an historical text to be made the object of interpretation means that it asks a question of the interpreter. Thus interpretation always involves a relation to the question that is asked of the interpreter. To understand a text means to understand this question. But this takes place, as we showed, by our achieving the hermeneutical horizon. We now recognize this as the horizon of the question within which the sense of the text is determined (*Truth*: 333).

Thus it is a question that begins an interpretation of a text. The endurance of a text within a tradition means that it has a relevance for contemporary culture. It means that the message of the text still speaks to a present moment. By basing the hermeneutical experience on listening, Gadamer sees interpretation as having a conversation with the text. A detached historical interest omits the notion of application by which true historical knowledge is gained. The immediacy of a conversation and the 'to and fro of dialogue' is more conducive for the suspension of one's prejudices and views in the attempt to understand the other.

The priority of the question, not only for hermeneutics but for human understanding in general, is paramount for Lonergan as well. For Lonergan, human understanding is marked by spontaneous inquiry (*Insight*: 174). Though spontaneous inquiry is natural to people, intelligent inquiry requires that one ask questions in a more methodical way.

> The light and drive of intelligent inquiry unfolds methodically in mathematics and empirical science. In the human child it is a secret wonder that, once the mystery of language has been unravelled, rushes forth in a cascade of questions. . . The child would understand everything at once. It does not suspect that there is a strategy in the accumulation of insights, that the answers to many questions depends on answers to still other questions, that, often enough, advertence to these other questions arises only from the insight that to meet interesting questions one has to begin from quite uninteresting ones. There is, then, common to all men, the very spirit of inquiry that constitutes the scientific attitude. But in its native state it is untutored. Our intellectual career being to bud in the incessant "What?" and "Why?" of childhood. They flower only if we are willing, or constrained, to learn how to learn. They bring forth fruit only after the discovery that, if we really would master the answers, we somehow have to find them out ourselves (*Insight*: 173-4).

This spirit of inquiry is the underlying transcendental notion. It is the basis of conscious subjectivity and is a fourfold concept that is embodied by questions relating to each level of consciousness.[1]

> While categories are needed to put determinate questions and give determinate answers, the transcendentals are contained in questions prior to answers They are the radical intending that moves us from ignorance to knowledge. They are *a priori* because they go beyond what we know to seek what we do not know yet. They are unrestricted because answers are never complete and so only give rise to still further questions. They are comprehensive because they intend the unknown whole or totality of which our answers reveal only part. So intelligence takes us beyond experiencing to ask what and why and how and what for. Reasonableness takes us beyond the answers of intelligence to ask whether the answers are true and whether what they mean really is so. Responsibility goes beyond fact and desire and possibility to discern between what truly is good and what only apparently is good (*Method*: 11).

Out of the transcendental notions come the transcendental concepts of the intelligible, the true, the real, and the good. In turn, the transcendental precepts are derived from the concepts so that for each level of consciousness there is a fundamental rule to guard against bias: Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible (*Method*: 231).

Just as questions are basic in understanding so there are basic questions for understanding. Lonergan identifies three basic questions.

> Again, transcendental method is coincident with a notable part of what has been considered philosophy, but it is not any philosophy or all philosophy. Very precisely, it is a heightening of consciousness that brings to light our conscious and intentional operations and thereby leads to the answers to three basic questions. What am I doing when I am knowing? Why is doing that knowing? What do I know when I do it? The first answer is a cognitional theory. The second is an epistemology. The third is a metaphysics where, however, the metaphysics is transcendental, an integration of heuristic structures, and not some categorial speculation that reveals that all is water, or matter, or spirit, or process, or what have you (*Method*: 25).

Thus it is clear that even at the most fundamental level of conscious subjectivity, questions spur an individual to understand.

This priority of the question is reflected in the more specific task of understanding a text. A successful interpretation of a text means to have

answered all the relevant questions that you, as the interpreter. can ask. The openness of human nature to questioning is due to the unrestricted desire to know. Individual's can turn their attention to anything and find a question to ask. The unrestricted desire to know, however, is "mated to a limited capacity to attain knowledge" (*Insight*: 639). Thus if an interpreter wants to understand a text, he or she has to limit the range of possible questions.

> To answer any one question will give rise to further questions To answer them will give rise to still more. But, while this process can recur a number of times, while it might go on indefinitely if one keeps changing the topic, still it does not go indefinitely on one and the same topic . . .[T]here comes a point in an investigation when no further relevant questions arise, and then the possibility of judgment has emerged. When there are no further relevant questions. there are no further insights to complement, correct, qualify those that have been reached (*Method*: 163-64).

It is the priority of the question, then, that makes the universal viewpoint possible. Each interpreter will be struck by the text in his or her own particular way. It is one's own way of discovery that contributes to the full range of interpretations. Because questions are formulated on the basis of one's interests rather than a methodology, the concept of objectivity assumes a more subjective stance.

## Objectivity

One of Gadamer's main themes and radical critiques in *Truth and Method* is reserved for the objectivism of historical consciousness that was spawned by the nineteenth-century scientific notion of objectivity. In their rejection of Hegel's intellectual history of ideas. historians like Ranke and von Droysen sought a more impartial view to explain historical events. In spite of their attempts, Gadamer contends that the historical school was forced into a theological understanding of itself.

> Here the idea of infinite understanding (Intellectus infinitus), for which everything exists simultaneously (omnia simul) is transformed into the original image of historical impartiality. It is approached by the historian, who knows that all epochs and all historical phenomena are equally justified before God. Thus the consciousness of the historian represents the perfect culmination of human self-consciousness (*Truth*: 185).

Historical objectivism fails to recognize that human understanding is finite, tied to a particular time and place, and thus cannot actually rise above its own relativity and achieve absolute objective historical knowledge (*Truth*: 207). The certainty of the natural sciences, while alluring in its claim of universality, is very different from the kind of certainty one can achieve in history. Scientific certainty, Gadamer says, always has something Cartesian about it. "It is the result of a critical method that seeks only to allow what cannot be doubted" (*Truth*: 211). Method can never capture or encapsulate all of truth and the disclosure of truth can not be limited by any one method. Gadamer's conclusion is that the knowledge of human sciences is quite different from that of the inductive sciences; the knowledge of the former is acquired in a different way and has a quite different kind of objectivity (*Truth*: 213).

What is this way? What kind of objectivity is it? According to Gadamer, the overcoming of the logical and epistemological inconsistencies of the historical school began with the phenomenological movement. It was Husserl's analysis of what he called the 'life-world' that gave a completely new meaning to the question of objectivity and showed science's concept of objectivity to appear as only a particular and partial case.

> Using a conscious counter-formulation against a concept of the world that includes the universe of what can be made objective by science, Husserl calls this phenomenological concept of the world, 'life-world', ie the world in which we are immersed in the natural attitude that never becomes for us an object as such, but that constitutes the pre-given basis of all experience This world horizon is a presupposition of all science as well and is, therefore, more fundamental. As horizon phenomenon this 'world' is essentially related to subjectivity, and this relation means also that it 'exists in transiency'. The life-world exists in a movement of constant relativity of validity (*Truth*: 218).

It was Heidegger, Gadamer contends, who brought the question of being and objectivity into focus with the publication of his *Being and Time*. As the title suggests, the determination of being is bound by the horizon of time (*Truth*: 227). The facticity of human existence involves what Heidegger has called 'throwness' and 'projection of possibilities'. We are born and immersed in an ongoing tradition which is laden with meaning. As we grow

older and assimilate this meaning we see various possibilities open to us, various roles within the community which one may aspire to, and we introject these possibilities into ourselves. For Gadamer, and the whole phenomenological movement, the concept of objectivity is radically different from the traditional standpoint.

Lonergan, by means of his 'intellectual conversion' has a similar radical notion of the concept of objectivity. By identifying objectivity with intelligence rather than extroversion, Lonergan believes that he has surmounted the partial aspects and arrived at a complete principal notion of objectivity based on the cognitive activity of knowing.

> This complexity of our knowing involves a parallel complexity in our notion of objectivity. Principally the notion of objectivity is contained within a patterned context of judgments which serve as implicit definitions of the terms, object, subject. But besides this principal and complete notion, there also are partial aspects or components emergent within cognitional process. Thus, there is an experiential aspect of objectivity proper to sense and empirical consciousness. There is a normative aspect that is contained in the contrast between the detached and unrestricted desire to know and, on the other hand, merely subjective desires and fears. Finally, there is an absolute aspect that is contained in single judgments considered by themselves inasmuch as each rests on a grasp of the unconditioned and is posited without reservation (*Insight*: 375).

It is the normative aspect of objectivity that serves as the ground for all other aspects including the principal and complete notion.

> [A]ll objectivity rests upon the unrestricted, detached, disinterested desire to know. It is that desire that sets up the canons of normative objectivity. It is that desire that gives rise to the absolute objectivity implicit in judgment. It is that desire that yields the constellation of judgments that implicitly define the principal notion of distinct objects in the universe of being, some of which know others. (*Insight*: 383).

The notion of objectivity is based upon one's cognitive activity and as such has a very subjective tinge to it. Dealing as he is with a phenomenology of the living-present, Lonergan makes a shift in the meaning of terms, objective and subjective.

> There are areas in which investigators commonly agree, such as mathematics and science; in such fields objective knowledge is obtainable. There are other

> areas, such as philosophy, ethics, religion, in which agreement commonly is lacking; such disagreement is explained by the subjectivity of philosophers, moralists, religious people. But whether subjectivity is always mistaken, wrong, evil, is a further question. Positivists, behaviorists, naturalists would tend to say that it is. Others, however, would insist on distinguishing between an authentic and an unauthentic subjectivity. What results from the former is neither mistaken nor wrong nor evil. It just is something quite different from the objective knowledge attainable in mathematics and in science (*Method*. 265).

For theology, as well as all the human sciences that use the past to understand the present, genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity (*Method*: 292). It is not attained by an objective method by which one can be shown to be wrong. There are no objective criteria by which to test one's convictions because in a world mediated by meaning, the criteria is subjective. Lonergan hopes that his transcendental method, with its goal of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, will help one to achieve authentic subjectivity and, therefore, correct interpretations. If one is alert, intelligent, rational, and responsible, one will be successful in their hermeneutical task.

Just as the priority of the question led Lonergan and Gadamer to a further discussion about the nature of objectivity, it also brings up their use of the Platonic Dialogues. It was in the Platonic Dialogues that Gadamer first worked out the dialectic of question and answer, the dialectic that Lonergan calls the unrestricted desire to know.

### The Use of the Platonic Dialogues

Gadamer sees the Platonic dialogues as an exemplary model for hermeneutics.[2] The dialogues are in conversational form, which, as we have noted is the basis for Gadamer's hermeneutical experience. The modest claim of Socrates, that he only knew that he did not know, has a 'curiously productive meaning' for knowledge. In addition to the knowledge of not knowing, Gadamer uses the Platonic Dialogues as support for his view of the priority of the question in knowledge. The superiority of Socrates was in his ability to ask the right questions rather than having the right answers.

> The priority that the question holds in knowledge shows in the most basic way the limitedness of the idea of method for knowledge from which our argument as a whole has proceeded. There is no such thing as a method of learning to ask questions, of learning to see what needs to be questioned. On the contrary, the example of Socrates teaches that the important thing is the knowledge that one does not know Hence the Socratic dialectic, which leads, through its art of confusing the interlocutor, to this knowledge, sets up the presuppositions of the question. All questioning and desire to know presuppose a knowledge that one does not know; so much so, indeed, that it is a particular lack of knowledge that leads to a particular question (*Truth*: 329).

Throughout the dialogues of Plato there is a "profound recognition of the priority of the question in all knowledge and discourse that really reveals something of an object" (*Method*: 326).

While Gadamer lauds the Dialogues for the emphasis on the priority of the question and the 'curiously productive' knowledge of not knowing, he is also highly critical of the *Cratylus*.

> The legitimate question whether the word is nothing but a 'pure sign' or has something about if of the 'image' is thoroughly discredited by the *Cratylus*. Since the argument that the word is a copy is worked out there ad absurdum, the only alternative seems to be that it is a sign. Although it is not especially emphasized, this emerges as a result of the negative discussion of the *Cratylus* and is sealed by knowledge being banished to the intelligible sphere, so that ever since in all discussion on language the concept of the image has been replaced by that of the sign. This is not just a terminological change, but it expresses an epoch-making decision about thought concerning language (*Truth*: 374).

Lonergan's use of Socrates and the Platonic Dialogues reveals an orientation opposite to that of Gadamer. The knowledge of not knowing, which Gadamer finds so praiseworthy, Lonergan calls ambiguous (*Insight*: 542). And the "epoch-making decision about thought concerning language" is a perfect example for Lonergan of the transition from common sense to theory.

> The intrusion of the systematic exigence into the realm of common sense is beautifully illustrated by Plato's early dialogues. Socrates would ask for the definition of this or that virture. No one could afford to admit that he had no idea of what was meant by courage or temperance or justice. No one could deny that such common names must possess some common meaning found in each instance of courage, or temperance, or justice. And not one,

> not even Socrates, was able to pin down just what that common meaning was. If from Plato's dialogues one shifts to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, one can find definitions worked out both for virtue and vice in general and for a series of virtues each flanked by two opposite vices, one sinning by excess, and the other by defect. But these answers to Socrates' questions have now ceased to be the single objective. The systematic exigence not merely raises questions that common sense cannot answer but also demands a context for its answers, a context that common sense cannot supply or comprehend. This context is theory, and the objects to which it refers are in the realm of theory (*Method*: 82).

It is clear from the above examples that both Gadamer and Lonergan use the Platonic Dialogues in different ways. Lonergan was not a serious Platonic scholar whereas Gadamer has worked extensively on Plato, so it is by no means surprising to see a more complex interpretation from Gadamer.[3] Though no one has criticized Lonergan for his use of Plato, it has been his use of historical texts in general that has come under scrutiny.

This has been particularly noted in *The Way to Nicea.* This book was an attempt to show the dialectical progression of ante-Nicene dogma which culminated in the adoption of the Greek term *homoousios* into the Nicene Creed. Lonergan outlines the various positions held by the Arians, Manicheans, etc., and exposes the deficiency and inadequacy of their thought. He thus reverses their counter-positions and concludes with the rightness of the Nicene Creed as adopted. Charles Hefling comments:

> It can be (and has been) construed as proving that Lonergan's analysis of the ante-Nicene movement, far from being an exercise in critical or even dialectical history, is just window-dressing, since the conclusions about doctrinal development that he purports to draw from a scholarly interpretation of the patristic documents are already implied in the "fundamental" doctrines with which . . . he presumes his readers are familiar. In short, he has molded historical evidence to fit a party line.[4]

Joseph Stephen O'Leary, in his paper *The Hermeneutics of Dogmatism*, takes great exception to Lonergan and his dialectical study of the Nicene Creed in *The Way to Nicea.* O'Leary calls Lonergan's attempt to show the dialectical development of dogma "misguided . . . absurdly schematic . . . entirely false."[5] While admitting that it is a "scandal to his critics and a stumbling block to some of his followers," Hefling defends this 'jejune'

work by appealing to the pedagogical background from which *The Way to Nicea* emerged. Lonergan finished this work at Rome in 1964, partly as a way to teach his seminarian students the traditional foundations of theology. As such, *The Way to Nicea* does presuppose these traditional foundations and should be read with that in mind. Criticism directed towards these presuppositions, Hefling concludes, is misguided because of the audience that *The Way to Nicea* is directed to.[6]

Lonergan does, however, firmly believe in the transition from mythos to logos, from undifferentiated to differentiated consciousness. Though he accepts that there can be decline (based on the refusal to accept insights), he remains committed to what has been called the myth of progress.[7] Lonergan's use of the Platonic Dialogues as an example of this transition reveal an intention not found in Gadamer. Gadamer's critique of the *Cratylus* leads him to conclude that language has become thought of as a mere tool, whereas Lonergan sees this as the progress into the theoretical language of Aristotle.

## The Role of Language

Gadamer devotes the final section of his book to an analysis of language. Language, more so than temporality, determines what being is. It is important to remember that the concept of language is central to Gadamer's thought.

> Being that can be understood is language. The hermeneutical phenomenon here draws into its own universality the nature of what is understood, by determining it in a universal sense as language, and its own relation to beings as interpretation . . . for man's relation to the world is absolutely and fundamentally linguistic in nature, and hence intelligible. Thus hermeneutics is, as we have seen, a universal aspect of philosophy, and not just the methodological basis of the so-called human sciences (*Truth*: 432-33)

The fact that humanity is free to rise above the habitat enables a language to emerge and a 'world' to be constituted. If one starts from a linguistic nature of understanding, the key to interpretation lies in the realization and emphasis on "the finiteness of the linguistic event, in which understanding is constantly concretised" (*Truth*: 433). This concretization, as has been noted,

is realized when the projection of one's fore-meanings encounter the meaning of the text and a judgment is made on the congruence or incongruence of these meanings. The hermeneutical process is successful when some meaning from the past has been brought to bear upon one's life in the present, and a fusion of horizons expands one's viewpoint.

Human consciousness is unique in having a linguistic relationship with the world. This uniqueness is further multiplied by the fact that there are different languages whose words have a range of variable meanings. These 'natural' languages, as Gadamer calls them, are not only the medium of hermeneutical experience but also determine the object and the act of hermeneutics. All must be expressed through language so therefore all being is revealed through language. Language is the horizon of a hermeneutic ontology (*Truth*: 397).

Language is divided into speaking and writing. Written texts are the proper objects of hermeneutics and the understanding of these texts means to have a present involvement with what is written, a present sharing of the author's meaning (*Truth*: 3[illegible]3-54). Because the nature of historical objects enables them to be interpreted according to the present horizon of the interpreter, they cannot be limited "either by what the writer had originally in mind, or by the horizon of the persons to whom the text was originally addressed" (*Truth*: 356). Thus there is no interpretation that is correct 'in itself' because the full hermeneutical experience goes beyond a simple reproduction of meaning to the application of that meaning to oneself. Since tradition is now conceived as only having a relative validity, because of the shift to a linguistic and temporally constituted nature of understanding, there is a freedom on the part of the interpreter to explore possible meanings based on one's own contingent experiences within tradition. Tradition becomes meaningful only when one is intent on understanding the historical texts. The attempt to understand involves the projection of one's fore-meanings upon the text, the suspension of one's prejudices, and the fusion of the past and present meaning into the hermeneutical horizon.

Gadamer is highly critical of the modern view that language is merely symbolic form.

> There is a development from the complete unconsciousness of language, that we find in classical Greece, to the instrumentalist devaluation of language that we find in modern times. This process of developing consciousness, which also involves a change in the attitude to language, makes it possible for 'language' as such, ie its form, separated from all content, to become an independent object of attention (*Truth*: 365).

As we have seen, Gadamer traces this shift in attitude back to Plato's dialogue, the *Cratylus*. The sign theory of language that has come to dominate modern linguistics has its roots in the *Cratylus*.

The importance of the role of language, while paramount for Gadamer, is not as developed in Lonergan, whose own emphasis on rational intelligence gives language a more instrumental role. Being is found in the unrestricted desire to know and language is a complicated tool which, once mastered, allows for untold gains of knowledge.

> For a language is an enormously complicated tool with an almost endless variety of parts that admit a far greater number of significant combinations. If insight is needed to see how other tools are to be used properly and effectively, insight is similarly needed to use a language properly and effectively (*Insight*: 11)

Lonergan calls the development from 'mythos' to 'logos' the differentiation of consciousness. With this differentiation has come the further development of language, which has included a recurrent attempt through history to develop a universal language which would express the totality of being. Lonergan does not necessarily believe that a universal language could ever exist although he is much more sympathetic to the aims and ideals of empirical sciences to explain and order nature than Gadamer. The latter's concept of 'natural' language is the realm of common sense for Lonergan. Whereas Gadamer holds little value for technical and scientific language, Lonergan is quite willing to distinguish and differentiate different types of language.

> Words are vocal tools of communication. Their use occurs when a speaker or writer communicates his thoughts or judgments or decisions to listeners or readers. They are effective tools only in the measure that the speaker or writer correctly estimates the cultural development of listeners or readers and chooses just the works that have a meaning for them. So one can distinguish between philosophic language, a scientific or mathematical language, a literary language, and a language of the people (*Insight*: 544)

Each language has its own specific function; the language of the people is used to communicate common sense insights, a literary language expresses feeling as well as thought, scientific language uses precise and technical terms to express its specialized domain, while a philosophic language, being concerned with integrating personal knowledge is a blend of the others.

The world mediated by meaning is linguistic by nature because it involves reflecting and judging. Language is a conventional set of signs that can be changed while still admitting a genetic naturalness to the acquisition and appropriation of terms and their corresponding objects. But Lonergan is not totally unsympathetic to the natural mystery of language.

> The interpenetration of knowledge and expression implies a solidarity, almost a fusion, of the development of knowledge and the development of language. Words are sensible, they support and heighten the resonance of human intersubjectivity; the mere presence of another releases in the dynamism of sensitive consciousness a modification of the flow of feelings and emotions, images and memories, attitudes and sentiments; but words possess their own retinues of associated representations and affects, and so the addition of speech to presence brings about a specialized, directed modification of intersubjective reaction and response. Still, beyond the psychology of words, there is their meaning. They belong together in typical patterns, and learning a language is a matter, first, of grasping such patterns and, secondly, of gradually allowing the insights, by which the patterns are grasped, to be short-circuited by a sensitive routine that permits the attention of intelligence to concentrate on higher-level controls Just as the concert pianist is not thinking of the place of middle C, so the speaker or writer is not thinking of the meaning of his words. *Rem tene et verba sequentur*. But these sensitive routines, these typical patterns are able to carry the meaning of words only because initially there occurred the insights that linked words intelligibly not only with one another but also with terms of meaning and with sources of meaning (*Insight* 554)

Although Lonergan realizes the limitations of science and scientific method, he is much more sympathetic to scientific inquiry than Gadamer. Science is not capable of explaining being, only of using it to attain empirical results. Lonergan sees nothing wrong with the scientific ideal because he limits the pursuit. As the differentiation of consciousness has unfolded there has been a shift from common sense to theory. Rationality has progressed to interiority with phenomenological thought. Lonergan has incorporated these three realms of meaning into his thinking to account for the

polymorphism of human consciousness. The search for a universal language has been a recurrant theme in modern philosophy from Leibniz to Russell. If philosophy wants to explain consciousness, however, it must account for this polymorphism, and Lonergan says "it seems unlikely that a philosophy, which integrates the personal knowledge of living and changing minds, will ever be able to wrap itself completely in the restful cocoon of a technical language" (*Insight*: 427).

## Notes

[1] For more on Lonergan's conception of intentionality and transcendental subjectivity see Gerald McCool, "History, Insight and Judgment in Thomism," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (1987), 299-313; Joseph Bracken, "Authentic Subjectivity and Genuine Objectivity," *Horizons* 11 (1984), 351-368; William Ryan, "The Transcendental Reduction according to Husserl and Intellectual Conversion according to Lonergan," *Creativity and Method: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981) 401-410.

[2] Gadamer's interpretation of Plato plays a formative role in the model of his hermeneutics. For further discussion on Plato's influence, see Francis Ambrosio, "Gadamer, Plato, and the Discipline of Dialogue," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1987), 17-32.

Gadamer has devoted much scholarship to his interpretation of Plato. With the ongoing translation of his works into English, it is becoming increasingly clear that Plato's influence is seminal in Gadamer's thought. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* (Binghamton: Vail-Ballou Press, 1986).

[4] See Charles Hefling, "On Reading The Way to Nicea," *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987) 154.

[5] See Joseph Stephen O'Leary, "The Hermeneutics of Dogmatism," *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1980), 96-118

[6] See Charles Hefling, "On Reading The Way to Nicea," *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987) 155.

[7] See Joseph Stephen O'Leary, "The Hermenéutics of Dogmatism," *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1980), 154-155

# Conclusion

It is obvious that there is a great deal of similarity and affinity in the hermeneutical thought of Lonergan and Gadamer. But the question which was raised in the introduction, namely, the degree to which Lonergan has been influenced by Gadamer, must be more closely examined. In the chapters above I have provided the analysis necessary for coming to a conclusion on this matter. It has been necessary to give, what Lonergan would call, a simple interpretation of both his and Gadamer's thought before venturing into reflective analysis. To have an intellectual grasp of the meaning of an argument means running through the fragments of that argument until some clarity becomes evident. What has become clear in this paper is that both Lonergan and Gadamer base their hermeneutic thought on their analysis of human nature. The operational principles that both outline for hermeneutics reflect what they understand to be the deeper operational principles of human thought. Thus both Lonergan and Gadamer, in their respective works, outline what each believe to be an 'understanding of understanding.'

The most important key to understanding Lonergan's transcendental approach is to be aware of the emphasis he places on cognitive activity. The fact that judgments are asserted by individuals, Lonergan says, indicates that the activity of judging exists in a 'rudimentary fashion' within the cognitional process itself. Since judging is the last event of the cognitional process, Lonergan concludes that the judger has already made a constellation of judgments in reflective consciousness which implicitly define the conditions needed for the judgment to be made. The threefold cognitive structure of experiencing, understanding, and reflection, later expanded to four in *Method in Theology* with the addition of the responsible level, becomes the ground upon which Lonergan bases many aspects of his thought in *Insight*. The concepts of truth, objectivity, and the good are all linked in an isomorphic

relationship to empirical, rational, and reflective responsible consciousness. Each level of consciousness pertains to a partial aspect of the concept while being grounded by the detached and disinterested desire to know.

Gadamer's approach is different. It is in light of his Heideggerian tradition that his 'understanding of understanding' is best understood. From Heidegger. Gadamer has appropriated the concept of the fore-structure of understanding. Underlying this concept is the 'throwness' and the projection of possibilities from which Gadamer emphasizes the radical finitude of human consciousness in the world. We are born into an ongoing tradition that we continue to interpret as we move towards maturity. This interpretative process includes projecting possible roles that we aspire to attain in our culture.

Like the projection of roles, understanding a text operates in much the same way for Gadamer. We project a fore-meaning only to have it corrected by what the text actually says. As the text asserts its own meaning, we come to suspend our prejudices underlying the fore-meaning we have projected. The text's assertion and the interpreter's suspension fuse into the hermeneutical horizon from which the interpreter grasps the meaning of the text and applies it to his or her present situation.

The notion of application has been excluded from the human sciences, Gadamer contends, because it has been thought of as 'unscientific' (*Truth*: 297). The scientific ideal has been to divorce oneself from the tradition one is studying in order to get a better look at it. By pretending to extinguish one's subjectivity, one could attain a more objective understanding of the tradition in question. This pretence, Gadamer claims, is not possible because it rests on a mistaken epistemological assumption about the nature of human thought.

> There is no such thing, in fact, as a point outside history from which the identity of a problem can be conceived within the vicissitudes of the various attempts to solve it. It is true that all understanding of the texts of philosophy requires the recognition of the knowledge that they contain. Without this we would understand nothing at all. But this does not mean that we in any way step outside the historical conditions in which we find ourselves and in which we understand . . . The standpoint that is beyond any standpoint . . . is a pure illusion (*Truth*. 398-99).

Human thought cannot assume a divine standpoint from which to view history and, when it tries, the finite and limited prejudices of the interpreter never fail to show through. It is better and more correct, says Gadamer, to realize the subjective limitations that determine human thought in order to make an interpretation of history. Interpretation is not just a reconstruction of history but an application of the reconstruction in terms of contemporary culture.

Lonergan is in total agreement with Gadamer on the notion of application.

> H G Gadamer has contended that one really grasps the meaning of a text only when one brings its implications to bear upon contemporary living. This, of course, is paralleled by Reinhold Niebuhr's insistence that history is understood in the effort to change it. I have no intention of disputing such views, for they seem to me straight-forward applications of Newman's distinction between notional and real apprehension (*Method*. 169).

Lonergan is here obviously treading on the same ground as Gadamer but one could not conclude that he has been influenced by the German philosopher. Rather, Lonergan sees Gadamer as an ally but not as a source for his notion of the right use of application in hermeneutics. Lonergan's reference to John Henry Newman reveals the independent path that he took in his formulation of the importance of application for hermeneutics. It has been reported that Lonergan read Newman's *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*[1] six times and considered it to be *the* classic in epistemology.[2] Though this seems a somewhat exaggerated account, it is reasonable to suppose that Newman's influence is paramount.

Nor can Gadamer's influence account for Lonergan's insistence on the priority of the question for hermeneutics. Lonergan had already arrived at this position through his analysis of cognitive activity in *Insight*.

> The immanent source of transcendence in man is his detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know. As it is the origin of all his questions, it is the origin of the radical, further questions that take him beyond the defined limits of particular issues (*Insight*: 636).

The unrestricted desire to know is 'mated' with a limited capacity to understand. One answer cannot adequately express all that a question seeks

to understand. As such it will give rise to further questions. To understand a text, therefore, the interpreter is to "keep adverting to what has not yet been understood, for that is the source of further questions, and to hit upon the questions directs attention to the parts or aspects of the text where answers may be found" (*Method*: 164). The emphasis on the priority of the question that is found in both Lonergan and Gadamer reveals the underlying common emphasis on the subjective nature of the human sciences. Though in *Insight*, Lonergan deals at length on the truth of an interpretation, in *Method in Theology*, he cites Gadamer to support what seems to be a modified position concerning interpretation:

> Nor may one expect the discovery of some "objective" criterion or test or control. For that meaning of the "objective" is mere delusion. Genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity. It is to be attained only by attaining authentic subjectivity. To seek and employ some alternative prop or crutch invariably leads to some measure of reductionism. As Hans-Georg Gadamer has contended at length in his *Wahrheit und Methode*, there are no satisfactory methodical criteria that prescind from the criteria of truth (*Method* 292)

It seems that Lonergan's reading of *Wahrheit und Methode* had made a significant impression on him (I am deliberately distinguishing here between *beeindruck* as opposed to *beeinflusst*, to use Gadamer's own German distinction). The lack of 'methodical criteria' by which to judge the truth of an interpretation is a case in point. Lonergan's early insistence on the importance of the intellectual pattern of experience as the source of truth is somewhat tempered and muted in *Method in Theology*.

Lonergan also cites Gadamer for the latter's critique of romantic hermeneutics as well as the interpretation of Wilhelm Dilthey. In Lonergan's chapter on history and historians, *Wahrheit und Methode* is referred to eleven times. The same cannot be said, however, for Lonergan's use of the Platonic Dialogues. Gadamer's interpretation of Plato, as we have seen, is seminal for his own hermeneutics. For Gadamer, it is not the right answers that are important but rather the right questions, just as it is for Lonergan's other favourite author, whom he cites in this chapter, R.G. Collingwood. Hence Gadamer's respect for Socrates and the Platonic Dialogues. As a way

of philosophizing. Gadamer is convinced that the dialectic of question and answer, as exemplified by Socrates, is the proper manner of inquiry for the human sciences.

In contrast, in spite of his reading of Gadamer and Collingwood, Lonergan uses the Platonic Dialogues in comparison with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as an example of progress from undifferentiated to differentiated consciousness. As a way of philosophizing, the Socratic dialectic is only a means to reach the proper cognitional theory. This one-sided interpretation seems to betray a somewhat cavalier attitude towards history, an attitude that has also been noted in *The Way to Nicea*,[3] and which does not appear to have been overcome by his reading of Gadamer.

Nor does Lonergan seem to have taken seriously Gadamer's continued insistence on the role of language. As we have seen, Gadamer abhors the instrumental conception of language that many moderns, including Lonergan, have and hold to. Even though Lonergan believes language to be a complicated tool, he is not totally unsympathetic to what he calls the interpenetration of language and expression. The polymorphism of human consciousness attests to the complexity of human knowledge. To think that an universal language could be created that would capture the range and variation of all human experience, is for Lonergan, to labor under a stilted conception of human experience. This seems to suggest that Lonergan was on his way to a more considered analysis of his theory of language. In spite of his reading of Gadamer, however, Lonergan hurries through his discussion of language because of his emphasis on epistemological results rather than the process. As a builder of systems, Lonergan is more concerned with a general congruence of his edifice of thought, unlike Gadamer, who is satisfied to probe the incongruence of naively assumed concepts.

Because Gadamer is a contemporary of Lonergan, his direct influence on the latter is obviously more difficult to prove than the influence of a historical source such as the thought of John Henry Newman. As I have indicated, the priority of the question and the notion of application are two aspects which reveal a striking similarity. The lack of objective or methodical criteria by which to judge the truth of an interpretation reveal a distinct influence, while

the role of language and the use of the Platonic Dialogues reveal a distinct difference in thought in which the dissimilarity is so great that one sometimes wonders if Lonergan seriously came to grips with Gadamer's position or in fact a more adequate philosophy of history.

## Notes

[1] John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979). Lonergan is referring to Newman's famous characterization of notional and real assent: "To apprehend notionally is to have breadth of mind, but to be shallow; to apprehend really is to be deep, but to be narrow-minded. The latter is the conservative principle of knowledge, and the former the principle of its advancement" (47).

[2] See George Worgul, "The Ghost of Newman in the Lonergan Corpus" *The Modern Schoolman* 54 (1977) 319

[3] See James Pambrun, "Through O'Callaghan to Lonergan: A Reconsideration of the Achievement of Bernard Lonergan" *Eglise et Theologie* 12 (1981) 389-411. Although he is less severe in his criticism of Lonergan than O'Leary in the latter's "The Hermeneutics of Dogmatism," Pambrun nevertheless expresses caution about Lonergan's method:

> But there is, I believe, a difficulty inherent in Lonergan's method . . . Why? Because in one unique way Lonergan's method stands above and outside of history. It travels through history as an invariant pattern of consciousness. It has also, having become fully conscious of itself in this cognitional method, appeared to have dug an abyss between itself and history (400).

Setting aside the more severe criticisms of O'Leary and the more devotional defence of Hefling, it seems that Pambrun has 'hit on' the major chink in Longeran's thought.

# Bibliography

## Primary Sources

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method.* Trans. by Garrett Barden and John Cumming. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Philosophical Hermeneutics.* Trans. by David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays.* Trans. by Nicholas Walker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Gadamer-Hans Georg. *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy.* Trans. by P. Christopher Smith. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato.* Trans. by P. Christopher Smith. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Method in Theology.* New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Insight.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan.* New York: Herder and Herder, 1967.

Lonergan, Bernard. *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan.* London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974.

Lonergan, Bernard. *The Way to Nicea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas.* London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1968.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas.* London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971.

Lonergan, Bernard. *The Subject.* Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1969.

**Secondary Sources**

Ambrosio, Francis, "Gadamer, Plato, and the Discipline of Dialogue." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1987), 17-32.

Bernasconi, Robert, "Bridging the Abyss: Heidegger and Gadamer." *Research in Phenomenology* 16 (1982), 1-24.

Bontekoe, Ronald. "A Fusion of Horizons: Gadamer and Schleiermacher." *International Philosophical Quaterly* 27 (1987), 3-16.

Bracken, Joseph. "Authentic Subjectivity and Genuine Objectivity." *Horizons* 11 (1984), 290-303.

Budenholzer, Frank E., "Science and Religion: Seeking a Common Horizon." *Zygon* 19 (1984), 351-368.

Butler, B.C. "Bernard Lonergan and Conversion." *Worship* 49 (1975), 329-336.

Conn, Walter E. "Moral Conversion: Development Toward Critical Self-Possession." *Thought* 58 (1983), 170-187.

Crowe, Frederick E., "Doctrines and Historicity in the Context of Lonergan's Method in Theology." *Thomistic Studies* 38 (1977), 115-124.

Dunne, Joseph. "Aristotle after Gadamer: An Analysis of the Distinction between the Concepts of Phronesis and Techne." *Irish Theological Journal* 2 (1985), 105-123.

Giurlanda, Paul. "Habermas' Critique of Gadamer: Does it Stand Up?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1987), 33-41.

Griswold, Charles. "Gadamer and the Interpretation of Plato." *Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1981), 171-178.

Hjort, Anne Meete. "The Conditions of Dialogue: Approaches to the Habermas-Gadamer Debate." *Eidos* 4 (1985), 11-37.

Hogan, John P. "Hermeneutics and the Logic of Question and Answer." *Heythrop Journal* 28 (1987), 263-284.

Lundin, Roger. "Hermeneutics and the Romantic Tradition." *Christian Scholar's Review* 1 (1984), 3-18.

McCool, Gerald. "History, Insight and Judgment in Thomism." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (1987), 299-313.

McKinney, Ronald. "Lonergan's Notion of Dialectic." *Thomist* (1982), 221-241.

McKinney, Ronald. "The Hermeneutical Theory of Bernard Lonergan." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (1983), 277-290.

O'Leary, Joseph Stephen. "The Hermeneutics of Dogmatism." *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1980), 96-118.

Ryan, William. "Transcendental Reduction and Intellectual Conversion." *Creativity and Method* Edited by Matthew Lamb. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981, 401-410.

Schrijver, Georges De. "Hermeneutics and Tradition." *Journal of Ecclesiastical Studies* (1982), 32-47.

Serequeberhan, Tsenay. "Heidegger and Gadamer." *Man and World* 20 (1987), 41-64.

Skrenes, Carol. "Lonergan's Metaphysics: Ontological Implications of Insight-as-Event." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1984), 407-425.

Smith, Marc E. "Can Moral and Religious Conversions be Separated?" *Thought* 56 (1981), 178-184.

Sullivan, J.W., "Lonergan, Conversion and Objectivity." *Theology* (1983), 345-353.