

LONERGAN ON THE UNITY OF MAN

ABSTRACT

In *Insight*, Bernard Lonergan rounds off his chapter on ‘Metaphysics as Science’ by a concise section on the ‘Unity of Man.’ In this paper I carefully examine this restatement of the traditional Thomist position on the human soul. Lonergan argues that because it is spiritual, it is possible that the soul can subsist and act even though separated from the body. The unity of man is not compromised, however, because the soul is also the form of the body. Lonergan’s distinctive contribution turns on his cognitional theory, in particular, the act he terms ‘insight, so that the rejection of that theory, I claim, most likely precludes the possibility of the separated soul’s action. I find corroboration for this claim in the work of Sir Anthony Kenny, who exemplifies the conceptualism that Lonergan targets.

IMMORTALITY, INSIGHT, KENNY, LONERGAN, SOUL, UNITY

In a chapter on ‘Metaphysics as Science’ Bernard Lonergan illustrates the methodology that he has developed in *Insight* with a section entitled ‘The Unity of Man.’¹ Lonergan, actually, delicately weaves several strands together—the intelligibility of a soul without a body is intertwined with the unity of the human person given that the soul has dual functions—so that he is able to establish very traditional conclusions using a novel cognitional theory. By invoking an ‘explanatory’ rather than ‘descriptive’ analysis, Lonergan argues that the human soul could exist even when separated from matter. As will be shown, this argument draws on the account

¹ *CWL3*: Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 538-43.

Lonergan gave of the act he has termed ‘insight.’² Conceptualists, then, who overlook this act, are bound to find this argument lacking cogency and such seems to be the case with Sir Anthony Kenny’s response to cognate ideas in Aquinas.

THE STRUCTURE OF LONERGAN’S ‘THE UNITY OF MAN’

The structure of Lonergan’s argument will be given first in outline, and then each paragraph will be taken in turn. There are thirteen paragraphs taking up just six pages. In the first seven paragraphs Lonergan formulates the general principles of the solution with respect to spiritual reality in general, taking stock in the eighth. Thus far the analysis is explanatory. In the ninth paragraph Lonergan poses the question of the nature of the soul’s reality, and in the tenth points out the deficiencies of a descriptive analysis, sharpening the question in two succeeding paragraphs and finally solving the problem tackled in the section as a whole in the last paragraph.

In the first paragraph, then, Lonergan introduces the ‘special question of unity’ namely, the unity of man. He had just discussed the unity of the universe and the unity of any concrete existent, and can now tackle this traditional metaphysical theme which is introduced straight away.

Lonergan, however, does not use traditional language. Rendering ‘substantial form’ as ‘central form,’ and ‘accidental form’ as ‘conjugate form,’ Lonergan deals with what once would be called the soul and its powers. The first paragraph continues to flesh out the unity in the powers of the soul using the idea of ‘higher systems.’³ Such systems unify at a higher level what would

² Lonergan always distinguishes direct from reflective understanding in what follows, but in the summary these have been elided these under the heading ‘insight.’

³ See the index of *CWL3* for references. Note the use of ‘higher system on the move’ in Lonergan’s account of development.

is merely coincidental or non-systematic at a lower level.⁴ Just as electrons and atoms, plants and animals are one, so is man. But with man a special problem of unity arises.

In the second paragraph Lonergan refers to a ‘two-fold array of facts’ in man. Intelligence informs our living in two ways: unconsciously and consciously. Intellectual activity provides a higher system unconsciously, as it ‘grounds the pattern in which sensitive experience occurs.’ Previously Lonergan had treated the selection and setting aside of sensitive experiences in accordance with distinctive patterns of living, for example, those dealing with biological needs, practical goals, artistic liberation and intellectual inquiry.⁵ Consciously—‘this differs enormously from the former’—intellectual activity grounds knowledge of the universe, our function in it, and the willing of the execution of that function. The problem of duality is starting to take shape.

In the third paragraph, names are given to this duality. Lonergan had argued that being is to be understood as the objective of the orientation he calls the ‘pure desire to know,’ manifest in questions such as: What is it? Is it really so? Concrete reality is intelligible, it is what we know when we understand correctly. However, being is of two kinds. Lonergan refers to the intelligibility that is also intelligent as ‘spiritual’ and the intelligibility that is not as ‘material.’ These are paired with the two ways that intelligence informs our living just mentioned.

In the fourth paragraph Lonergan draws on the account of abstraction he has developed and recalls a term of art, the ‘empirical residue.’ His understanding is crucial to the argument. ‘The empirical residue, then, is at once what spiritual intelligibility excludes and what material intelligibility includes.’ For Lonergan, this represents an intellectualist understanding of matter, and his illustration involves a list: ‘The universal can be thought, but cannot be, without the

⁴ A complicated argument is concluded in chapter 8 of *CWL3*.

⁵ For patterns of experience see chapter 6 of *CWL3*.

instance; the limit can be thought, but cannot be, without the continuum; the invariant can be considered, but does not exist, apart from particular places and times; ideal frequencies can be formulated, but cannot be verified, apart from actual frequencies.’ Here Lonergan is making the traditional point that matter is not a thing, but a principle of a thing.

In the fifth paragraph Lonergan introduces his distinctive methodological perspective (entailing the move from description to explanation and utilizing the structure of six metaphysical elements he has analyzed⁶) and continues to give a definition of matter/the material: ‘the material can be defined as whatever is constituted by the empirical residue or is conditioned intrinsically by that residue.’ These two considerations (constitution and conditioning) will recur in Lonergan’s solution. The latter is especially important: the spiritual is not intrinsically conditioned by matter. Lonergan concludes this paragraph by speaking of material central forms (differentiated by activities on the physical, chemical, organic, and psychic levels). Clearly intended in his sights is the spiritual central form with which he will conclude in his final paragraph, but which for now is bracketed.

In the sixth paragraph Lonergan reflects on the correctness of his definition of matter. If it is to apply to the material, and only to the material, it must not apply to the spiritual. Now, the definition has two parts, and so in the remainder of the paragraph Lonergan defends the part

⁶ These are: central and conjugate potency, form and act. Socrates is a human being because of a central form; he is a ‘this’ because of individuating matter, central potency; he exists because of his own act of existence, central act; he can understand because of his possible intellect (conjugate potency); he is an expert in philosophy because of his habit of wisdom (conjugate form); he actually understands because of his act of understanding (conjugate act). He has the power of sight (conjugate form); actually sees (conjugate act) because he has eyes (conjugate potency).

relating to ‘constitution’ by the empirical residue. Speaking very generally of ‘the spiritual,’ whether of spiritual souls, powers, or acts is not specified, Lonergan points out that ‘inasmuch as we are understanding’ we are abstracting from the empirical residue. Here Lonergan’s grammar is very precise. He employs the present tense using the present continuous ‘we are understanding’ rather than the present indicative, ‘we understand.’ That is to say, the spiritual is not constituted by the empirical residue.

In the seventh paragraph Lonergan defends the legitimacy of his understanding of matter (and conversely, of spirit) regarding the second part of the definition: if what he has formulated is correct, spirit must not be ‘intrinsically conditioned’ by the empirical residue. Lonergan’s defense again relies on the nature of abstraction and the operations he has analyzed at length: we inquire and we attain insight. Here Lonergan *does* use the present tense in the present indicative. In fact, at a first glance, Lonergan appears to rely on ‘insight’ to give very similar justifications in these two paragraphs for both defining characteristics of the spiritual—that it is not constituted by the empirical residue and that it is not intrinsically conditioned by the empirical residue. Lonergan appears to have under-explained his key distinction and this raises the question: what exactly does ‘intrinsically conditioned’ mean? How does this differ from ‘intrinsically constituted’?

At this point, with the eighth paragraph Lonergan takes stock of what has been explained in the previous seven paragraphs, and looks ahead to the solution of the problem that has arisen regarding the unity and duality of man that this section as a whole tackles. Having established certain principles that allow him to distinguish between material and spiritual reality, namely, constitution and conditioning by the empirical residue, Lonergan goes on to decide whether the human soul is spiritual.

In the ninth paragraph Lonergan affirms the duality that arises in man in virtue of the fact that he has both material and spiritual ‘conjugate forms’ but he insists that, nonetheless, man is one.

Here he draws on what he established in an earlier chapter on self-affirmation, man's unity is grounded in his soul or 'central form.' This unity is not simply that referred to in the first paragraph, the unity that all beings possess, but that unity possessed by intelligent beings. Lonergan can now pose forthrightly the question as to the spirituality or materiality of the human soul.

In the next two paragraphs the cogency of his method is underlined, for Lonergan insists that so long as the problem is merely described, it is possible to 'straddle the issue.' It might be said that man is at the boundary of matter-spirit without deciding on one rather than the other. As the center of sensitive experience it is material; as the center of the transformation of sensitive experience by inquiry and insight it is spiritual. However, in the eleventh paragraph, the explanatory definitions of matter and spirit are invoked so as to force the issue as to whether or not the soul of man is intrinsically conditioned by matter.

Lonergan, then, in the twelfth paragraph draws the parallel with insight. Insight (the act of understanding) is into what is presented to imagination, and so is conditioned extrinsically by matter, but nonetheless is not conditioned intrinsically by matter. Might this also be the case with the human soul? This would open up the possibility that man could be separated from matter without ceasing to ground an existing unity and identity.

Finally Lonergan makes the claim that such a possibility is viable. Material reality cannot perform the role or function of spiritual reality but spiritual reality can perform the role and function of material reality because the spiritual is comprehensive. Presumably, Lonergan means that whereas intelligence can know and be known, mere intelligibility can only be known.⁷

⁷ However, Lonergan may be invoking considerations that he has not explicitly articulated. If so, he may have texts such as *ST* 1.57.2 (and parallels) from Aquinas regarding angelic knowledge of singulars in mind, see *CWL*2, 44 n. 150; 53 n. 190; 161 n. 53.

Lonergan concludes that despite the duality of both material and spiritual conjugate forms, the central form of man that is the ultimate explanation of the unity of man must be spiritual in nature. It is clear from this that the notion of a human soul separated from the body is not incoherent for Lonergan. His final conclusion, though, concerns the unity of man—the principle of which is a spiritual soul.

Such seems to be the structure of Lonergan's argument. Of special interest in what follows is the difference between the sixth and seventh paragraphs, both of which make use of the idea of abstraction. Before reexamining these paragraphs (on constitution and conditioning) the rudiments of Lonergan's cognitional theory must be presented.

THE CONTEXT AND CONTENT OF INSIGHT

After completing his treatment of metaphysics as a science, and the above mentioned argument for the unity of man grounded in a spiritual soul, Lonergan noted that his conclusions were very traditional. In both positions 'there are matter and spirit, with spirit independent in existence and operation both of matter and of the empirical residue (the *conditiones materiae*).'⁸ This reference to material *conditions* is obviously relevant to what Lonergan thinks about spiritual reality being not intrinsically *conditioned* by the empirical residue. In *Insight* Lonergan refers to 'material conditions' (in English) just once, at the very beginning, where he makes a point of contrasting the two approaches that he had studied previously in *Word and Idea in Aquinas*—the *Verbum* articles.⁹ This gives 'the intellectualist (though not the conceptualist) meaning of the abstraction of form from material conditions.'¹⁰ By 'intellectualism' Lonergan means the

⁸ *CWL3*, 545.

⁹ *CWL2*: Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

¹⁰ *CWL3*, 16.

thesis that concepts emerge from, and are formed because of prior acts of understanding, characterized by Lonergan as ‘insights.’ Conceptualism, on the contrary, ignores this act. Thus Lonergan spoke of two kinds of abstraction. By *formative* abstraction, recognized by conceptualists, we form universal concepts or definitions by an abstraction from the here and now of particular instances. But Lonergan also analyses *apprehensive* abstraction, which he identifies with the act of insight. Here, one also abstracts from ‘matter.’ However, as Lonergan’s complex treatment reveals, we can speak of matter in many ways—common, signate, sensible, intelligible, individual, ‘material parts’ and so on. Lonergan fashions the idea of the ‘empirical residue’ to explain what he means by the intellectualist meaning of abstraction of form from material conditions and he will claim, the answer is simple—if one grasps insight.¹¹

The main points of Lonergan’s cognitional theory can be summarized as follows. Lonergan follows Aquinas in distinguishing the first operation of the mind (understanding, conceiving) and the second (reflecting, judging). For the purpose in hand, exploring cognitional theory relevant to understanding the immortality of the soul, a simplified account need only consider the first operation. Again to simplify, Lonergan’s example of the cart-wheel and the mathematical definition of a circle may be considered. Lonergan began with simple mathematical examples because they most clearly displayed the ‘context and content’ of insight.¹²

Regarding the ‘context’ of insight, that is to say, insight considered as an act which is structurally related to other acts—the ‘mechanism’ of insight, so to speak—Lonergan spoke of five steps.

¹¹ *CWL2*, 155.

¹² Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 269.

First of all some datum is presented, for example the round shape of a cart-wheel. This shape will be known as circle by common-sense, and so a nominal definition is assumed at the outset. By no means does Lonergan deny that such experience, mediated by ordinary language, can be thought of as knowledge. Nor does Lonergan deny that such an act ‘grasps a universal in a particular’—he notes that Aquinas held that sense can, in a certain way, grasp a universal in a particular—but this act is not yet what Lonergan will refer to as insight.¹³

Second, there is the distinctly mathematical question, as to what it is that makes the circle perfectly round. This question expresses a particular type of wonder about essential definitions. The cart-wheel enters into the horizon of mathematical inquiry. So, for example, insofar as a student is alert and curious, a diagram presented by a teacher of mathematics may be interesting. The phantasm, or image, is illuminated, so that an instance becomes an example. Teachers, or we ourselves, use diagrams as tools in response to inquiry which may aptly be thought of in terms of ‘light.’

Third, a schematic image¹⁴ comes to be produced. Perhaps the imagination (informed by wonder) will throw up the clue, or perhaps a teacher will provide a diagram that illustrates the essentials. For example, a rod, neither getting longer or shorter may be made to rotate about a fixed point like the hands of a clock. Because this schematic image contains what is significant for understanding, it will be proportioned to the insight that it will make more manifest. Concomitantly, some aspects of the diagram will be significant: the teacher might use a red pen, or draw on the left hand corner of the board and so on. In more traditional language, the

¹³ Lonergan refers to *In II Post. Anal. Lect. 20* in *CWL2*, 44 n. 150.

¹⁴ Note that the term ‘schematic image’ can be found in *Verbum* (*CWL2*, 61), *Insight* (*CWL3*, 208) and *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), 86.

‘schematic image’ corresponds to what is called ‘common matter,’ or the ‘parts of the form’ in the analysis given by Aristotle and Aquinas.

In the fourth step the act of insight grasps those aspects in the diagram that are necessary and sufficient for circularity. The schematic image triggers the insight. A teacher causes the student to see particular images (by presenting the diagram in red, say) provided the room is not dark and the student has their eyes open. Sensitive experience is intrinsically conditioned by images. Similarly, the teacher causes the student to understand, though the ‘lights’ (step two) must also be on. Roughly, ‘insight’ is akin to the opening of eyes—though Lonergan frequently cautions against such a metaphor because he wishes to stress that insight is mediated by inquiry. For Lonergan, although the image is an instrumental cause of the insight, the principle of understanding is the desire to understand. Insight is extrinsically conditioned by images but intrinsically conditioned by inquiry.

Thus we ‘see’ that this but not that is what makes for circularity. Some aspects, but not all are grasped as relevant. In attending to the image, both relevant and irrelevant are given, ‘intuited’ we might say, but it is insight, or ‘apprehensive abstraction’ that grasps a ‘must’ (or necessity, intelligible unity) in the datum. Because we can distinguish what is relevant we are able to abstract; abstraction is determined by insight.

Fifth, from this act of understanding, and because of the act of understanding, we can define. ‘Conceptualization is the self-expression of an act of understanding; such self-expression is possible only because understanding is self-possessed, conscious of itself and its own conditions as understanding.’¹⁵ In the schematic image all that is relevant for the act of understanding (and only that) will be included in the definition, along with what is grasped by the act (which will be some intelligibility—the necessity that obtains between certain relations). The definition unites

¹⁵ *CWL2*, 55.

as one the contents of these acts. Such is formative abstraction. Thus the intelligibility can be considered *apart* from the instances in which it was grasped—definitions are universal and abstract. Such definitions (the ‘verbum’) are products of understanding.¹⁶

Here the reason why common matter is so called appears. In formative abstraction the universal concept is formed by including the intelligibility of the content of insight along with the contents of the image that are relevant to insight—the schematic image, common matter, and this product is universal, that is *common* to many. The common matter is that aspect of the datum that pertains to such universality.

Here also it can be seen what Lonergan wishes to convey by the idea of the empirical residue. Within the datum presented to imagination, ‘this but not that’ is relevant to the insight. Included in the definition is the ‘common matter’ (the ‘parts of the form’); excluded is the ‘empirical residue’ (the ‘parts of the matter’). The principle governing inclusion/exclusion, for Lonergan, is the act he calls insight, which may vary from case to case, so that what is abstracted from varies accordingly. Thus, for the intellectualist the empirical residue is an analogous concept, and so it is presented in a list: instance, continuum and so on. The residue is the remainder from which insight prescind.

Lonergan sequence, insight, as a fourth step, is prior to formulation, a fifth step that arises from, and because of the fourth step, articulates the core of his intellectualism. Because he has grasped a pattern of relations in our conscious, intentional operations that he argues can be verified, Lonergan believed he had acquired an *explanatory* account of what it is to understand, an insight into insight, so to speak. This account must be understood if the claim that spirit is ‘independent in existence and operation both of matter and of the empirical residue’ is to be appreciated.

¹⁶ In general, a single act of understanding will be expressed by many concepts.

The *context* of insight, then, is this five step sequence. By the *content* of insight is meant whatever is grasped by the act, namely, the object or intelligibility. In *Insight* Lonergan never refers to the ‘object of insight’ though he had done so in *Verbum*. At some length he had teased out the various ways that we can speak of ‘object’ and he probably wished to avoid the ambiguities. There is the object of some datum of sense, the intentional object of inquiry (a known-unknown), the object of imagination, the object of insight, and well, as of concept formation, the products of intelligence. There are also the objects of judgement, and the ultimate objective, being. To understand fully the objective of the pure desire to know, one must turn to the theologian for an account of the natural desire for God and the Beatific Vision. God can be called an object in this mysterious sense.

The object of insight, or ‘intelligibility,’ is a unity, relation or necessity. In the case of an insight into a cart-wheel, it is grasped within an empirical multiplicity. Still, insights can coalesce and Lonergan speaks of higher insights grasping many insights as one. Insights need not unify an *empirical* multiplicity. Lonergan, it can be recalled, had put the idea of higher insights to use in the notion of higher systems. Again, Lonergan was interested in articulating the development of understanding and spoke of insights accumulating—for example, within science and common sense—so that they pass into the habitual texture of the mind. In this sense, insights are no longer objects, but rather, constitutive of our understanding where this word connotes a state of our minds rather than an act of which we are conscious.

To repeat, to understand the context of insight is to understand the act as the fourth of five steps; to understand the content of insight is to understand that the object of insight can be grasped as it emerges before it passes into the habitual texture of our minds.

ANTECEDENTS IN ‘VERBUM’

Whilst a thorough treatment will not be offered, a consideration of the context and content of insight in Lonergan's study of *Word and Idea in Aquinas* may help tease out some nuances in the notion of the constitution of spiritual reality and the conditioning of spiritual operations.

In the fourth *Verbum* article Lonergan had spoken of the object of insight as the *species quae*. Lonergan's efforts were directed to refuting the conceptualist interpretation of Aquinas who often referred to 'intelligible species.' Lonergan wished to distinguish at least three senses of the term. Prescinding from the meaning that is equivalent to the concept (the 'verbum,' the product of understanding, or the '*species expressa*' of a later tradition) there are two kinds of species that Lonergan was determined not to confuse. These are the *species qua* (species by which) and the *species quae* (species which). The former had been articulated by the tradition (it is equivalent to the '*species impressa*') but the latter had suffered neglect—for it is ignored by conceptualists.

Briefly, the *species qua* are not objects, not universals, and not known except by metaphysical reflection. They are determinations of the possible intellect (forms), for example, the idea of a horse as it is retained in the habitual texture of our minds. If John can understand 'horse' the metaphysician knows that it is because of the *species qua* in John's mind. John is then capable of dealing with thoughts about horses. On the other hand, the *species quae* are objects of thought, indeed, universals (where the universal is grasped in the particular) and can enter into ordinary knowledge, albeit with difficulty. As explained, the *species quae* represent the object of the act of insight, for example, the act of understanding whereby we grasp the necessary and sufficient conditions for circularity in a diagram (which is also presented to us as an object for imagination). John, in fact, by attaining the *species quae* can exclaim, Eureka! Lonergan notes the many ways that the pre-conceptual act of understanding is expressed, and traces its origin to Aristotle's *nous* grasping forms in images.¹⁷ *Species qua* are related to *species quae*, in the act of

¹⁷ *CWL2*, 175 n. 128.

acquiring a concept/achieving a breakthrough as first act to second, that is, as sight is to seeing, willingness to actual willing, science to the consideration of science.

When one understands, one has habitual mastery of some domain. The mind is well organized and amply stocked with '*species qua*.' This point was fully grasped by Wittgenstein.¹⁸ Indeed, Sir Anthony Kenny, commenting on the first two articles of question 85 of the *Prima Pars* makes the point that, grammatically, we sometimes employ 'that clauses.' Kenny notes that for Aquinas there are 'two different types of ideas: ideas that are mental abilities, and ideas that are mental objects.'¹⁹ The former are dispositions:

Ideas may be ideas *that*, instead of being ideas *of*: an idea *that* such and such is the case would be an instance of an idea corresponding to Aquinas' second type of acts of the intellect, just as an idea *of* something corresponds to the first type of act. An idea *that*, considered as a disposition would be a belief or opinion or something of the kind, rather than a simple concept.²⁰

Kenny regards 'ideas of' as a 'temptation',²¹ and provides references where Aquinas uses *species qua* (ideas that). But without citing instances, he admits that 'there are a number of features of his writing which tempt the reader to think that he regarded that he regarded ideas not

¹⁸ For example, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, §150, §199. By no means was Wittgenstein uninterested in the 'phenomenon of immediate insight,' but he was interested in the act from a particular perspective, namely, the role it plays in our social practices. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (MIT: Cambridge Massachusetts, 1972), III-32. Reference is to the section and paragraph.

¹⁹ Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (Routledge: London, 1993), 104.

²⁰ *Aquinas on Mind*, 104. Original emphases.

²¹ *Aquinas on Mind*, 104.

simply as abilities or dispositions to think in certain ways, but as the primary objects of thought.²² Kenny is alarmed at the impending threat of idealism that this betokens.²³

It can briefly be noted, that Lonergan's chapter on abstraction has a second section entitled 'The Immateriality of Knowing,' in which, though not yet named as such, Lonergan introduces the *species qua* (Lonergan refers to 'forms'). He will refer back to this section as dealing with 'the knowing [that] is constituted determinately by its form.'²⁴ That is to say, it touches on the *constitution* of spiritual reality. The fourth section, 'Apprehensive Abstraction' introduces the two species, noting, for example, the appearance of the *species quae*: 'This is what we mean by abstracting the universal from the particular, or the intelligible species from the phantasm; that is, by considering the nature of the species apart from its individual qualities represented by the phantasms' as well as the *species qua*: 'According to this theory, the intellect understands only its own impression, namely, the intelligible species which it has received, so that this species is what is understood.'²⁵ Here, Aquinas clearly rejects idealism, as Kenny, who cites this passage notes.

²² *Aquinas on Mind*, 105.

²³ Kenny would have recalled that Lonergan had been accused of the implications of idealism, and that Lonergan had made much of *On Boethius on the Trinity* q. 5 a. 2 ad 4: 'In one way, and first and foremost, knowledge is about the universal concepts on which it is founded.' *CWL2*, 21 n. 36. This text (it is not actually about insight) is a parallel to texts beloved of Lonergan, namely, the commentary on *Metaphysics Zeta*, and *ST* 1.85.1-2. Lonergan argues that Aquinas did not abandon these early ideas, and that without an understanding of insight, it *may* be difficult to defend Aquinas against the charge of idealism, a point against the conceptualist interpretation. See *CWL2*, 166.

²⁴ *CWL2*, 187.

²⁵ *ST* 1.85.1 and 2.

Although neither Lonergan nor Kenny makes this point, another grammatical consideration is apposite in capturing the distinction between the two species. In the English language the present tense can be formed in more than one way. The present indicative ('I understand') is formed by using the verb in the infinitive form ('to understand'). However, the present tense can also be formed by a multi-word construction so as to express aspect. This expresses how an action, event or state, denoted by a verb, relates to the flow of time. In particular, the present continuous expresses a verb with progressive aspect to denote a state that has begun in the past and continues. The present participle is added to an auxiliary verb. Thus: 'I am understanding.' Whereas the present continuous captures the idea that we possess the *species qua*, the present indicative is appropriate to convey the emergence of the *species quae*.

There is some textual evidence, then, that the treatment of the context and content of insight in the second and fourth sections of Lonergan's *Verbum* article on abstraction has a bearing on his treatment of the constitution and conditioning of spiritual reality in the argument for the unity of man presented in *Insight*.

THE SPIRITUAL AS NOT INTRINSICALLY CONDITIONED BY THE EMPIRICAL RESIDUE

With these points relatively clear, the relevant paragraphs of Lonergan's text on the unity of man may be examined more carefully. This idea of 'intrinsic conditioning' emerges in the fifth paragraph in Lonergan's explanatory definition of matter, and forms the second half of that definition. Lonergan explains that the material is constituted by the empirical residue, and goes on in the next paragraph to explain that this means that the spiritual is *not* so constituted. These two principles ('constitution' and 'intrinsic conditioning') are the subject of the sixth and seventh paragraphs respectively. Lonergan's use of 'certainly' in the sixth, and his use of 'quite obviously' in the seventh make plain where Lonergan thinks that the difficulty lies. 'There is no difficulty,' an imaginary objector might advance, 'in regarding our minds as immaterial, but

nevertheless, matter is needed if they are to function. Our minds cannot function without bodies existing here and now.’ Such an objector is advancing that ‘certainly’ our minds are not constituted by matter, but that it is not ‘quite obvious’ (to say the least) that they are not ‘intrinsically conditioned’ by matter. Lonergan seeks to meet this awkward objection. How can there be any spiritual functioning without matter?

Lonergan argues that this objection can be met. However, when the text is examined to see how Lonergan he does so, we find that in both cases (constitution and intrinsic conditioning) it is *abstraction* that grounds the principle of his solution. It is as if the one idea is made to do two jobs—and they receive unequal remuneration. This suggests that we try to look closer at Lonergan’s text to see what he has in mind.

We can pull out two gobbets from the successive paragraphs as follows. Regarding non-constitution by the empirical residue:

- for inasmuch as we are understanding, we are abstracting from that residue

Regarding non-intrinsic conditioning by the empirical residue:

- insight is an act of understanding, and so far from being conditioned intrinsically by the empirical residue, understanding abstracts from it

On the face of it, these statements are very similar. Are there any significant differences between these two? A suggestion has been mooted. First, Lonergan’s distinctive use of the present tense in the sixth paragraph is not used in the seventh. Second, whilst, it is true, that ‘insight’ is used in the sixth paragraph, it is only in the seventh paragraph that the phrase ‘act of understanding’ occurs. In the sixth paragraph Lonergan is concerned with the content of insight as habitually possessed; in the seventh, he is concerned with the context of insight as it emerges. In the sixth paragraph, in which Lonergan discusses the constitution of spiritual reality, he uses the present continuous four times—that is, on all relevant occasions. In the seventh paragraph, in which

Lonerger discusses the non-intrinsic conditioning of spiritual reality, he never uses the present continuous. This is not really surprising, since the idea of ‘constitution’ suggests a state—for example, the ‘habitual texture of the mind’²⁶ that has grasped an idea and continues to understand it.

If this reading is near the mark it would seem that Lonergan’s thought regarding ‘constitution’ and ‘intrinsic conditioning’ have in the background the distinction between first and second act. When Lonergan speaks of abstraction in the sixth paragraph (dealing with constitution) we are put in mind, to use Thomist terms, of the possible intellect informed by an intelligible species that Lonergan refers to as the *species qua*. However, when Lonergan speaks of abstraction in the seventh paragraph (dealing with intrinsic conditions) we are put in mind of a distinct type of intelligible species that Lonergan called the *species quae*. In highlighting the *species quae* Lonergan was drawing attention to the act of ‘apprehensive’ (as opposed to ‘formative’) abstraction that Lonergan equates with insight into phantasm.

To repeat, the paragraph regarding spiritual constitution considers the content of insight, its spiritual reality as it exists in the soul; the paragraph regarding intrinsic conditioning refers to the context of insight, the emergence of the act. Lonergan’s argument was informed by his account of insight.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF CONCEPTUALISM

In the previous section, the significance of insight in Lonergan’s argument was underlined. It is insight that is not intrinsically conditioned by the empirical residue. Thus, Lonergan’s intellectualism is crucial for his conclusions. On the other hand, conceptualism does not suffice.

²⁶ *CWL3*, 27.

The reason is as follows. The definition or concept is ‘intrinsically constituted,’ as it were, of common matter and insight—but not the ‘empirical residue’ in the sense of the here and now. However, the act of understanding (insight), whilst it is extrinsically conditioned by the common matter—it adverts to the schematic image and grasps it as significant in contrast to the empirical residue—properly speaking has an object that transcends imagination (an intelligible unity, necessity or relation—the *species quae*), and so is not intrinsically conditioned by matter in any sense—whether of those aspects of the data that trigger the insight, or those aspects of the data incidentally present. The act of understanding, rather, is intrinsically conditioned by the desire to understand that Thomas ascribes to agent intellect.

The claim being advanced is, on the face of it, predictable. It is simply that the principle that does the work in Lonergan’s argument is precisely *his* intellectualist cognitional theory.

Although it is true that the products of intelligence, abstract concepts, are not constituted by the empirical residue in the sense of the here and now (for such concepts are universals), it is *insight* that is not intrinsically conditioned by matter in any sense. The point can be made inversely.

Insofar as a conceptualist considers Lonergan’s argument (or indeed, the traditional argument in Thomas) for the unity of man grounded in a spiritual soul they are bound to be unconvinced. For the conceptualist, thinking involves atomic products that the intellectualist regards as ‘compounds.’ On the other hand, the intellectualist understands that such compounds are made up of both elements that are, and elements that are not intrinsically constituted by matter (albeit that the empirical residue in the sense of the ‘here and now’ is abstracted from in the abstract concept). The conceptualist is liable to focus exclusively on the nature of such products— intrinsically constituted by matter (in the sense of common, albeit not individual, matter).²⁷ Thus

²⁷ In his commentary on the central sections of *Zeta* Aquinas explains: ‘Yet it must be noted that no kind of matter, be it common or individual, is related essentially to species insofar as

thinking will not be regarded fully as a spiritual reality. Lonergan's intellectualism, however, is able to distil our thinking into its elements, and so comprehend its spiritual nature. Apprehensive abstraction involves a more exacting abstraction than does formative abstraction. At any rate, it does in a way. True, it is in the concrete image that one shouts, 'Eureka!' but what one grasps is something beyond the reach of imagination. This is the principle that Lonergan foregrounds. It is with such a principle that he can argue as he does.

A corollary made neither by Aquinas nor by Lonergan seems to follow. Insofar as only intellectualism suffices to explain the possibility of the existence and operation of the separated soul it would seem that in such a state concept formation is not possible. Moreover, insofar as Lonergan is correct in arguing for the necessity of the *verbum* (that is, concept formation) if the second operation of the mind is possible,²⁸ (we must conceive if we are to judge), it seems that in the separated state, the soul is also incapable of judging.

KENNY ON AQUINAS ON MIND

Kenny is, perhaps, an example of a conceptualist struggling with the text of St. Thomas. Whilst he praises Lonergan's *Verbum* study, he appears to air-brush out the act of insight in his account

species is taken in the sense of form, but insofar as it is taken in the sense of a universal; for example, when we say that man is a species, common matter then pertains essentially to the species, but not the individual matter, in which nature of the form is included.' Lonergan refers to this text (§1473) on four occasions (*CWL2*, 29 n. 64, 36 n. 117, 133 n. 158, 187 n. 198), more than any other passage in these central sections. Presumably, Lonergan thought that clarification of variant understandings of species was crucial in combatting conceptualism.

²⁸ See *CWL2*, 199-204 and more thoroughly, *CWL12*: Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 597-601.

of *Aquinas on Mind*. A frequent complaint is that Thomas confuses abstract and concrete, which is quite understandable if the act of insight, which pivots between abstract and concrete, is ignored. Thus, in discussing *ST* 1.76.1 in which Thomas will consider the spirituality of the soul and the application of hylomorphism to soul and body, Kenny argues:

In this article, as in many others, there seems to be a tension between two different ways of understanding the notion of form. First there is what we may call the abstract notion of form. Whenever there is a true sentence on the pattern 'A is F,' we can speak of the form of F-ness; an accidental form or a substantial form as the case may be. If A is hot, there is such a thing as the hotness of A; if A is an animal, there is such a thing as the animality of A. thus the hotness of heat, of a hot body is what makes it hot, and that is an example of an accidental form. The substantial form of a human being may likewise be introduced as being, truistically, that by which a man is a man, or that which makes a man a man. In each case the 'makes' is the 'makes' of formal causality, as when we say that it is a certain shape which makes a piece of metal a key, or a certain structure which makes a molecule a DNA molecule. If the soul is a form in this sense, then it is no more a concrete object than a shape or structure is.²⁹

Kenny contrasts this notion of form with a concrete notion in which the form is an agent, indeed the agency of form is described as, not formal, but efficient. He thinks that Aquinas struggles valiantly but unsuccessfully, to combine two conceptions of form in his account of the unity of man with a spiritual soul.³⁰ The resulting notion of soul is one with 'concrete and abstract parts.'³¹ Constantly, Kenny looks askance at what he sees as 'confusion between abstract and

²⁹ *Aquinas on Mind*, 149.

³⁰ *Aquinas on Mind*, 150.

³¹ *Aquinas on Mind*, 136.

concrete,³² For example, he is at a loss to make any sense of ‘material forms’—a phrase he regards as an oxymoron.³³ Lonergan, on the other hand, can speak quite consistently here of forms that are intrinsically conditioned by matter in their operation yet not constituted by matter (animal souls) in contrast with forms that have an operation that, although extrinsically conditioned by matter, are not intrinsically conditioned, and, of course, are not constituted by matter (human souls).

Kenny seems to equate form (in the ‘abstract’ sense) with what Lonergan would call the concept (the definition, *verbum*). For Lonergan, though, form is to matter as insight (not concept!) is to image. Unsurprisingly, Kenny has difficulties with the idea of common matter. Again in the context of Thomas’ account of the soul, Kenny first cites a Thomist text on abstraction:

Some have said that only form belongs to the concept of a species, while matter is part of the individual and not of the species. But this cannot be true. For what belongs to the nature of the species is what is included in its definition. In physical things the definition includes not the form alone, but matter as well as form, so that matter is part of the species in physical things; not some designated piece of matter, which is the principle of individuation, matter in general. It is part of the concept of *this* man that he should have *this* soul and *these* bones; it is part of the concept of man that he should have a soul and flesh and bones.³⁴

Kenny finds this unintelligible. ‘Once again we have a disconcerting disdain for distinctions between abstract and concrete.’³⁵ He will urge that the ‘contrast between a chunk of matter

³² *Aquinas on Mind*, 143.

³³ *Aquinas on Mind*, 136.

³⁴ *Aquinas on Mind*, 137. The source is *ST* 1.75.4 c. Kenny’s emphases have been retained.

³⁵ *Aquinas on Mind*, 138.

and the property of being material—a contrast between something concrete and something abstract—is misleadingly understated as a contrast between designated matter and matter in general. Being material or corporeal is, in fact, like any other property, a form.³⁶

For Lonergan, however, common matter (Kenny translates *materia communis* as ‘matter in general’) is the matter proportionate to insight (the ‘parts of the form’) that will be included in the definition. Insight will govern what it is that is relevant that should be included in the definition (and so is part of common matter) and what is not. Common matter does not mean simply an abstract understanding of matter (‘matter in general,’ ‘material reality,’ ‘materiality’). Matter is called ‘common’ because it represents those aspects in the data (the schematic image, say) that are relevant to the formation of a concept, which being universal, will thus apply to many. If we understand what we see when we see these flesh and bones, we will go on to conceive the kind of thing that must and always does have flesh and bones. As Lonergan puts it, ‘the answer is simple if one grasps ... insight.’³⁷

Whilst these remarks are hardly an engagement with Kenny’s thought, they are, perhaps suggestive of a hypothesis, namely, that insofar as insight is neglected by the conceptualist, the Thomist arguments for the spirituality of the soul will find little resonance. It would seem to follow that attention to cognitional theory is a way forward in exploring this question, and perhaps, deciding between the two positions.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this commentary has been to read slowly six difficult pages of Lonergan. It has been suggested that the thirteen paragraphs on the unity of man, though short and difficult, are well organised and arguably deserving of more attention. Lonergan does not

³⁶ *Aquinas on Mind*, 138.

³⁷ *CWL2*, 155.

only argue from the spiritual nature of intellectual operation to the spiritual nature of the soul of man, but rather to the conclusion that the unity of man is grounded in a spiritual soul: although the soul performs more than one function, it is spiritual nonetheless. The principle that does the work in establishing the spiritual nature of intelligence is Lonergan's account of insight: Lonergan speaks of the spiritual as not constituted by the empirical residue and moreover, as not intrinsically conditioned by the empirical residue. He speaks generally of the spiritual: in the first place with respect to the constitution of our spiritual reality, and in the second place of our spiritual operation. On this basis he will argue that our souls, being spiritual, could conceivably exist without matter. By way of corollary it was suggested that the operation of the soul in the separate state would include neither the formation of concepts nor the affirmation of judgements.

In various ways Lonergan's thought on abstraction is cognate with his earlier articles in *Verbum*. Fine attention to the way that *Insight* employs the present tense (in the present continuous) is reminiscent of what Lonergan had said earlier regarding 'The Immateriality of Knowing.' In fact, very roughly, the sixth and seventh paragraphs shadow the second and fourth sections of *Verbum*'s fourth article, and in various ways this whole section on *The Unity of Man* alludes to all sections of *Verbum*'s anti-conceptualist account of abstraction. It was suggested that Lonergan's distinction of intelligible species, between *species qua* and *species quae* is relevant to Lonergan's text in the sixth and seventh paragraphs. The second section on the immateriality of knowing is especially concerned with the *species qua* and spiritual constitution; the fourth section, on apprehensive abstraction, is especially concerned with *species quae* and spiritual operation.

Precisely because insight is conditioned intrinsically by the operation of agent intellect (the inquiry that supervenes on what we imagine) it grasps as its object some unity or relation or necessity that is not intrinsically conditioned by matter. Intelligence, then, provides the

criterion whereby abstraction from the ‘empirical residue’ can take place. First of all, ‘common matter’ (or the schematic image) is apprehended as relevant to the insight—so that the residue given empirically is disregarded. Second, in virtue of the self-possession of intelligence, the universal concepts are formed by uniting the object of insight and the common matter and disregarding the ‘here and now.’ Abstraction is first apprehensive, and then, in virtue of this, formative (the topic of the third section of Lonergan’s *Verbum* article).

An understanding of abstract concepts, however, does not suffice to justify Lonergan’s conclusions. This is because the concept (a scientific definition, say) includes within it ‘common matter’ which insight, certainly in this life, must convert to. However, it is because the object of insight is, in fact, distinct from the schematic image in which it is grasped that Lonergan can uphold the possibility of intelligent operation that is not conditioned intrinsically by matter. For this reason it was suggested that the conceptualist is liable to find Lonergan’s (and Aquinas’) argument a stumbling block. Something akin to this might be seen in Kenny’s criticism of the traditional arguments. Kenny, it seems, has managed to resist the ‘temptation’ of insight.