

Immediacy and Mediation in Our Knowledge of Being:
Some Reflections on the Epistemologies of Emerich Coreth and Bernard Lonergan*

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Ten years ago Father Emerich Coreth, professor of philosophy at the University of Innsbruck, published a large volume on metaphysics¹ that soon was favorably received, even among those who usually are not especially interested in Neoscholastic philosophy. This work had two obvious characteristics that were particularly important. The main characteristic was the use of transcendental reflection, by which Coreth adopted a movement of thought that began with Kant and continued through German Idealism up to Husserl and Heidegger. He extended this method systematically, from the bare formulation of the problem to a treatment of the entire traditional and modern subject of metaphysics. The second characteristic was that Coreth took as the privileged starting point for metaphysical reflection the primordial human phenomenon of asking questions. Karl Rahner, in his *Geist im Welt*, had already interpreted this questioning as asking about being. What was barely a hint in Rahner was elaborated systematically and rigorously by Coreth.

In fact, the first chapter of the *Metaphysik*, which analyzes “the question and being”, seems to be the most original and important chapter in the book. In it, Coreth starts out from the question and, through a reductive-deductive procedure, gradually ascends to the ultimate condition of the possibility not only of the question, but of all human cognitive activity. This ultimate condition is the pure pre-knowledge or horizon of being.

Two years later Father Bernard Lonergan published his appraisal of the *Metaphysik* in this Journal². This was so much more than an ordinary review that it was reprinted in its entirety in the American edition of Coreth’s book. Lonergan’s assessment was clearly positive, and it brings out the importance of Coreth’s metaphysics in contemporary Scholastic thought. Lonergan regards as decisive the fact that Coreth’s transcendental analysis deals with an act (*Vollzug*, performance)—namely, the act of questioning. This has important consequences both with respect to Kantian phenomenalism and with respect to the intuitionism of some Scholastic authors. Among these Lonergan specifically considers Etienne Gilson.

Kant looks for the *a priori* conditions of the objects of knowledge—to be precise, the objects of mathematics and Newtonian physics. As a result, the *a priori* he reaches is in the formal or essentialist order: the forms of sensibility and the categories of the understanding. Our striving for the unconditioned, for being in the unqualified sense, is declared a transcendental illusion. Coreth does not seek the formal conditions that make it possible to think a universal and necessary object, but rather the conditions that make possible our activity of asking questions. He thus makes it clear that our striving for the unlimited, and therefore unconditioned, is not at all an illusion. Rather, it is the primary condition that enters into all questioning and, consequently, into all human answering and knowing. This striving for the unconditioned constitutes our *a priori* horizon of being. In this way, Coreth not only overcomes the closed inner area of Kantian phenomenalism, but also makes unnecessary the *a posteriori* perception of being in the data of

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¹ E. Coreth, S.J., *Metaphysik, Eine methodisch-systematische Grundlegung*, Innsbruck-Wien-München 1961. In 1964 a slightly revised second edition appeared. Citations in the present study are to the latter edition. [An abridged English edition has appeared as Emerich Coreth, *Metaphysics*, ed. Joseph Donceel, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968). *Geist im Welt* has been translated as Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, tr. William Dych, S.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968).]

² Lonergan, *Metaphysics as Horizon*, in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Volume 4, Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 188-204. [Originally published in *Gregorianum* 44 (1963), 307-318.]

sense that Gilson requires in order to pass from the abstract concept of being to knowledge of the concrete extramental existent.

Lonergan thus agrees with Coreth that the method and task of metaphysics is to mediate the immediate. According to Lonergan's *Insight*³, this "immediate" that must be brought to the concept is, first of all, the notion of being and the invariant structures through which it is realized; according to Coreth's *Metaphysik* it is the pure pre-knowledge or the horizon of being. The two different analyses thus come to the same conclusion.

When I myself had occasion to study the *Metaphysik*, I was particularly interested in the *a priori* character of the horizon of being, and I came to the conclusion that Coreth had not recognized the full truth about this apriority⁴. For he arrives through transcendental reduction at the horizon of being, which he characterizes as an anticipation of the totality of the knowable, a sketch (*Entwurf*) of the knowable, an outlining of the horizon of being that constitutes our pure pre-knowledge of being. But then he asks, in § 13, where we should seek the origin of this horizon. And he answers that there must be a kind of knowing that possesses the known, and possesses it precisely as being. On the basis of that knowing, we have the sense of being in general and are able to outline the horizon of the questionable as the horizon of being. This knowledge that already possesses its known as being is our knowledge of our very performance (*Vollzugswissen*) in asking the question, and it takes place in consciousness. Therefore an immediate experience of being is given in consciousness.

In my previous essay I examined this issue and tried to show that we certainly do know being in our consciousness and by means of our consciousness, which is the subject's experience of itself and presence to itself. But this kind of knowledge of being is exclusively anticipatory and heuristic, merely an intellectually and rationally conscious desire to know. To conceive the *Vollzugswissen* as [full] knowledge of oneself in the act of questioning, so that we can base our search for further knowledge on our assurance that we know this one existent, is to return to naïve realism à la Gilson. Such a naïve realism abstracts the concept of being from the sensible presentation, even though in Coreth's case the reality from which it is abstracted is internal.

In his contribution to the First International Lonergan Congress held in the spring of 1970, Coreth returned to this problematic, referring mainly to Lonergan's article "Metaphysics as Horizon"⁵. In the present essay I propose to examine whether and to what extent Coreth has accepted Lonergan's interpretation of the apriority of the horizon of being. Has he adopted for himself the opposition to every form of perceptionism or intuitionism, and thereby clarified the ambiguity I noted above? Or, rather, has he confirmed his tendency to naïve realism?

In the following pages I shall try to clarify that mediation of the immediate that both Coreth and Lonergan speak of. What is immediate in our knowledge? More exactly still, the immediate is opposed to what? It thus is defined with respect to what? This problem is relevant not only to epistemology, as is obvious, but also to metaphysics. For only on the basis of the conception of being as that which is intended by questioning, by which we go beyond what is given to us in internal or external perception, is it possible to work out an intellectual and rational conception of the real. Now, when the objective pole of the horizon of being is recognized as intrinsically intelligible, a whole series of theses receives its foundation: the unification of the real in the all-

³ *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Volume 3, Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (University of Toronto Press, 1992). Citations will be to the original pagination.

⁴ G.B. Sala, S.J., *Seinserfahrung und Seinshorizont nach E. Coreth und B. Lonergan*, in *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 89 (1967) 294-338.

⁵ E. Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being: An Attempt to Answer Bernard Lonergan*, in *Language, Truth, and Meaning: Papers from the International Lonergan Congress, 1970*, ed. Philip McShane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), pp. 33-48 and 317-319. [Previously published as E. Coreth, S.J., *Unmittelbarkeit und Vermittlung des Seins. Versuch einer Antwort an Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, in *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 92 (1970) 313-327.] On the Congress, see J. Navone, *Ongoing Collaboration: The First International Lonergan Congress*, in *Gregorianum* 51 (1970) 541-560.

embracing perspective of metaphysics, the meaning of human life, and the possibility of moving intentionally from proportionate being to the transcendent being we call God.

I. – DUALITY OF SUBJECT AND OBJECT OR UNITY OF BEING?

In Section II of his Lonergan Congress paper, Coreth examines the duality of subject and object that he believes is implied in Lonergan's approach to the metaphysical question about being. I would therefore like to clarify in what sense the subject is at the origin of the horizon of being, and so is the subjective pole of this horizon.

In order to present Lonergan's conception of the subject, Coreth refers to the first two pages of Chapter XIII of *Insight*. Now, the aim of that chapter is not at all to work out a doctrine of the subject, but to work out the notion of the objectivity of our knowledge. What does it mean to ask whether human knowledge is objective, or has objective value? As the common use of that term indicates, for many it means whether we are capable of knowing *objects* as they are, whether we are capable of knowing realities other than ourselves just as they are in themselves. Often, indeed, the problem of objectivity is posed expressly as the question about what is other than the subject, since the knowledge of the other is considered to cause the difficulty. Hence the problem of objectivity easily becomes the problem of the bridge. This metaphor indicates that what is being asked is whether knowledge, an operation immanent in the subject, is able to reach as far as the other, the object. Is it transcendent in the peculiar sense of being knowledge of a reality beyond the subject?

Now, the answer Lonergan gives to this in Chap. XIII of *Insight* consists, first of all, in correcting the formulation of the problem. The correct formulation asks whether or, rather, how we succeed in knowing *being*. Therefore it is a matter of clarifying through what process, and by virtue of what, our knowledge arrives at being.

It is evident that the usual formulation of the problem of objectivity implies a duality, the duality of subject and object. Provisionally accepting this formulation, Lonergan responds by saying that we know the object as being through rational judgment: *x* is. But then he continues by saying that the same is true for the subject: It too is known through a judgment. From this simple equivalence it already follows that the real question does not concern a problematic knowledge of the object in contrast to a non-problematic knowledge of the subject. It concerns the knowledge of being, whether it is the being that is the object or the being that is the subject. Thus, the initial duality is overcome in the higher unity of being⁶.

Therefore, if the correct formulation of the so-called problem of objectivity asks about our knowledge insofar as it relates to being, it is not surprising that Lonergan gives no special importance to our knowledge of that particular being that is the subject. In other words, if, in the context of the problem of objectivity, one asks whether we have objectively valid knowledge of the subject, whether we know the subject as it is in itself, Lonergan answers that this is nothing but a particular case of our knowledge of being. Here, as in every other case, we know being through rational judgment⁷. There are indeed differences, but they concern the point of departure, the

⁶ I quote here some of the most significant statements Lonergan makes on these pages: "How does the knower get beyond himself to a known? The question is, we suggest, misleading. It supposes the knower to know himself and asks how he can know anything else... We contend that, while the knower may experience himself or think about himself without judging, still he cannot know himself until he makes the correct affirmation, I am... Hence, we place transcendence, not in going beyond a known knower, but in heading for being within which there are positive differences and, among such differences, the difference between object and subject." (*Insight*, 377) Again, concerning the absolute objectivity that "pertains to single judgments as single" (*ibid.* 378) he writes "the absolute aspect of objectivity does not imply any subject-object relation; it constitutes the entry of our knowing into the realm of being..." (*ibid.*)

⁷ With regard to Coreth's assertion that Lonergan understands being as objectivity (Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 39), I would like to point out that for Lonergan everything that is known as being is known in a judgment. Now, what is known in a judgment is known *ad modum obiecti* [as an object]. But this is just another way of saying that Lonergan does not recognize an experience of oneself (knowledge *ex parte subiecti* [on the side of the subject]), an

data, not the threefold structure of knowing or its completion in the judgment⁸. Lonergan thus opposes those who deny objective knowledge of the subject (e.g., Hume with his absolute phenomenalism or Kant, for whom the subject that we know with objective validity is still only an appearance, just as external objects are). But he also opposes those who privilege our knowledge of the subject by interpreting it as a kind of immediate intuition, unlike our “mediate” knowledge of objects.

Hence, it does not seem to me that in the discussion at the beginning of Chap. XIII of *Insight* one can find a duality of subject and object that needs to be overcome by a transcendental metaphysics⁹. There is a duality in the traditional question about objectivity, which is explicitly about plurality, about knowledge of the object as *other*. But Lonergan is not at all tied to this schema, and does not at all posit this plurality as absolute¹⁰, i.e., as ultimate and irreducible. Rather, he answers the question by situating the plurality within the common realm of being. Thus the real issue becomes: By what process do we reach knowledge of being? This, I repeat, is not a matter of how a subject that starts out enclosed in its subjectivity can reach something other than itself. The movement of knowledge is from the unity of the subjective pole, constituted by our *intentio intendens* [intention as intending], to the unity of the objective pole, the universe of being. This universe is gradually disclosed when true judgments of fact are made. Both subject and object, and also the *intentio entis* [intention of being]¹¹, are within the universe of being.

It is in Coreth’s position, rather, that I seem to discern a duality. In fact, after pointing out the origin of our knowledge of being—a subject we shall return to later—he continues: “In so far as I ask about being and thus have not taken hold of being totally in the performance of my knowing, there appears a difference between performance and being. More precisely, it is the difference between the being of one’s own self-realisation and the being which transcends me and my performance, for which—in asking about ‘other’—I must therefore first reach out”¹². On the following page, though in a somewhat different context, Coreth writes, “The first fundamental distinction that is established in every performance of inquiring and knowing is the duality between me and the other, between subject and Object”¹³. And farther on he speaks of the horizon of being “in which I relate myself to other entities and distinguish myself from other existents, thereby experiencing myself, however, immediately as an existent”¹⁴. It is certainly true that the difference between subject and object is fundamental to the cognitional process. But more fundamental and primary still is the difference between the intention of being that stands at the origin of all our cognitional (intellectual) activity and the true and proper knowledge of being

awareness of the subject as subject, as providing knowledge of being. This is precisely his rejection of intuitionism, even under the form of the “already in here now” (Cf. *Insight*, 499).

⁸ Sala, *Seinserfahrung und Seinshorizont*, 328-332.

⁹ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 39. On this same page Coreth expresses Lonergan’s thought with the thesis: “Object is that which can be asserted in true judgments”. It would be more in accord with Lonergan’s position to say “being” instead of “object”, since his fundamental thesis is that “ens iudicio vero cognoscitur [being is known by true judgment]”. As a matter of fact, the scope of the two theses is the same since, as pointed out in note 7, the being that we know in the judgment is always known *ad modum obiecti*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹¹ Lonergan clearly had already reached the position of *Insight* in his earlier study of knowledge in St. Thomas. “The critical problem... is not a problem of moving from within outwards, of moving from a subject to an object outside the subject. It is a problem of moving from above downwards, of moving from an infinite potentiality commensurate with the universe towards a rational apprehension that seizes the difference of subject and object in essentially the same way that it seizes any other real distinction. Thus realism is immediate, not because it is naïve and unreasoned and blindly affirmed, but because we know the real before we know such a difference within the real as the difference between subject and object” (*Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Volume 2, Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 98f.]. But it seems that there is a nearly insuperable confusion in the minds of many between immediate realism (we know being immediately) and knowledge by intuition (in the sense of denying the cognitional structure)! Hence one must note that Lonergan explicitly maintains an immediate realism, but does not thereby resort to the immediate intuition of being that characterizes intuitionism or perceptionism.

¹² Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 41.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

that occurs in the judgment. Thus, insofar as I am only an intending intention and not the whole of being, I radically and always ask about being, but I do not always ask about the other. Even when I ask about myself, in order to know myself as something real, I ask about being. In this case too I have to pass from a simple intending intention about the data (the data of internal experience or consciousness) to knowledge of the data in terms of being, which is the knowledge of myself as an existent¹⁵.

One can understand why Coreth tends to take as the primitive duality that of subject and object. In the last of the three quotations above, when he speaks of our movement toward the other within the horizon of being, he adds: “thereby *experiencing myself immediately as an existent*”¹⁶. I cannot see how this differs from the dualistic-Cartesian position, according to which the problem of objectivity is how to pass from the “I”, known as being in some immediate experience, to the object as other. It is precisely to oppose this position that Lonergan illustrates the principal notion of objectivity by affirming that the subject is known as an existent in a true judgment, in the same way that the object and the difference between subject and object are known in two other true judgments.

In my previous essay on the origin of the horizon of being, I analyzed the knowledge of oneself as an existent. I showed that this occurs according to the same structure as our knowledge of the external world. In this sense, I was denying, and still deny, an immediate experience of oneself as an existent. For Lonergan, the belief in an immediate experience of being has no other foundation than the myth of naïve realism. From his perspective, it makes no great difference whether we are speaking of the reality of the “I” or the reality of external things. The only difference between the two is that between being conceived primarily as “already out there now” and being conceived as “already in here now”¹⁷.

The accusation that Lonergan understands being as objectivity¹⁸ probably originates in his statement, at the end of his review of Coreth’s *Metaphysik*, that while metaphysics, as about being, equates with the objective pole of the horizon, metaphysics as science does not equate with the subjective pole¹⁹. But first of all, it is obvious that metaphysics as science is not all the knowledge that man has. It is one particular science, albeit a fundamental and all-embracing one. Now, if the subjective pole of the horizon of being is the intending subject, it clearly does not exhaust itself in doing metaphysics. The wise man, the philosopher of the Aristotelian tradition, is not the mathematician, the economist, the historian, or the man of common sense.

But there is a deeper meaning in Lonergan’s distinction. To say that metaphysics embraces the entire objective pole of the horizon of being does not mean that being is conceived as objectivity, in the sense of something opposed to subjectivity²⁰. It means that metaphysics deals with the

¹⁵ If the problem of knowledge must be posed in terms of the knowledge of being, Coreth obviously is not criticizing Lonergan when he writes: “Being’ means not only the being of objects, nor only the realm of possible objectivity. It also means the being which we ourselves are, i.e., which we ourselves realise and experience as the being that sets everything that simply is or happens into its actuality” (*ibid.*, 41).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁷ Cf. *Insight*, 499. Sala, *Seinserfahrung und Seinshorizont*, 327, note 60.

¹⁸ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 39.

¹⁹ Lonergan, *Metaphysics as Horizon*, in *Collection*, 204.

²⁰ “Since according to Lonergan the concept of the existent means the ‘objective of the pure cognitional striving’ [Cf. ‘Being is the objective of the pure desire to know’, *Insight*, 348—Fr. Sala’s parenthesis], then being means pure objectivity” (Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 44). But Lonergan, with his heuristic definition of being, is not at all denying that the intentional dynamism, and therefore the sense of what it anticipates, originates in the subject. Indeed, it is that very subject, since spirit is the being that is present to itself. I attempt to bring out this radical “subjectivity” of being when I treat the notion of being, especially when I illustrate the *a priori* character of this notion. To say that being is the objective of the pure desire to know is not to conceive being as what is in front (*ob-iectum*, *Gegenstand*) of a subject that is outside or ignorant of being. It is, rather, to conceive man as radically a seeker of being, and also—or, rather, first of all—of that being that he is himself. We shall see later that the heuristic definition of being is the only one possible for us as humans who do not enjoy an insight, in the full sense, into being, and that this definition implies a rational conception of the real.

whole of that to which our intelligent and reasonable intentionality tends: being taken formally as being, as the objective of our pure desire to know. Being is “the great unknown that all our questions are about”²¹. Now, according to Lonergan there is so little opposition between being so conceived and subjectivity that he writes, “This being of the questioning questioner is the latent metaphysics from which explicit metaphysics is derived; and in explicit metaphysics it is the *primary analogate* through which other being as being is understood”²².

The subject already has and exercises in its intentional structures a latent metaphysics that makes every man a seeker and a knower of being. But this subject has more in itself than a latent metaphysics. The structures of our intentionality are indeed the subjective pole of the universe of being. And beyond being there is nothing. Coreth’s analysis rightly limits itself to these structures, since it is intended to be the systematic elaboration of metaphysics, i.e., of the universe of being. But, because of the polymorphism of its consciousness, the concrete subject is also a latent anti-metaphysician. For it is liable to personal, social, and historical biases in its own intentionality; it is the source of what Lonergan calls counterpositions. Now, “The process... to explicit metaphysics is primarily a process to self-knowledge”²³ that heads toward the genuine subject giving free rein to its intelligence and reasonableness and unhindered by any less pure desires. Reaching the basis on which to establish and correctly develop explicit metaphysics requires a critical analysis of the polymorphism of human consciousness. This is the broader consideration of the subjective pole that is not the task of metaphysics. But one sees that it is not a matter of broadening the horizon: Beyond the horizon opened by our intentionality, there is nothing. It is rather a matter of passing from a more abstract to a more concrete consideration of the subjective pole, from principle to fact. This is what Lonergan alludes to at the end of his review of the *Metaphysik*. And it is the existential aspect that is so evident in his analysis of knowledge in *Insight*.

II. – THE PURE PRE-KNOWLEDGE OF BEING

1. *The subject as subject and the horizon of being*

Lonergan’s conception of the subject as subject should not be sought solely or mainly in his discussion of the principal notion of objectivity, but throughout *Insight*. For this work, according to its author, is meant to be an “essay in aid of a personal appropriation of one’s own rational self-consciousness”²⁴. *Insight* is nothing but an extended effort to bring out what the subject is, rather than what the subject does, i.e., the concrete structures immanent and operative in its cognitive and volitional activities and in our whole psychic life. What the subject is, and how, precisely as subject, it contains the norms that make it open to the universe of being and of the good, is the theme of *Insight*.

The difference between knowing oneself as object (discussed in the preceding Section) and knowing oneself as subject is the difference between knowing oneself as intelligible and as being, and knowing oneself simply as given in the internal experience that is consciousness. Hence, anyone who wants to find Lonergan’s position on the knowledge of oneself as subject must go to Chap. XI of *Insight*, where consciousness is discussed²⁵. For consciousness is the only knowledge that we can have of ourselves as subjects. It is not my purpose to present Lonergan’s position on consciousness in this essay. It is so broad and rich that it requires a far more

²¹ Lonergan, *Metaphysics as Horizon*, in *Collection*, 191.

²² *Ibid.*, 192.

²³ *Insight*, 397.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 748.

²⁵ It should be noted, however, that Chap. XI discusses consciousness within the broader perspective of the affirmation of oneself as a knower, which is the knowledge of oneself as being, i.e., as an object.

extensive discussion than is possible here²⁶. It is enough if I indicate here the heading, so to speak, under which one should look for the treatment of the subject as subject in *Insight*.

Lonergan is perfectly aware of the uneliminable subjectivity, mentioned by Coreth on his pp. 39f, that is presupposed in each of our psychological activities and in every objectivization of ourselves. Indeed, he clearly distinguishes between the knowledge of oneself as subject (as consciousness), which is pure experience and always remains experience, and the knowledge of oneself that adds understanding and judgment to this experience, and thereby moves from knowledge *ex parte subiecti* [on the side of the subject] to knowledge *ex parte obiecti* [on the side of the object]. Thus he clarifies in a systematic way the type of consciousness that Coreth calls the "subject in its self-realisation".

In an article on cognitional structure, Lonergan concludes a section about the difference between consciousness and self-knowledge with these words: "I have been attempting to describe the subject's presence to himself. But the reader, if he tries to find himself as subject, to reach back and, as it were, uncover his subjectivity, cannot succeed. Any such effort is introspecting, attending to the subject; and what is found is, not the subject as subject, but only the subject as object; it is the subject as subject that does the finding. To heighten one's presence to oneself, one does not introspect; one raises the level of one's activity. If one sleeps and dreams, one is present to oneself as the frightened dreamer. If one wakes, one becomes present to oneself, not as moved but as moving, not as felt but as feeling, not as seen but as seeing. If one is puzzled and wonders and inquires, the empirical subject becomes an intellectual subject as well. If one reflects and considers the evidence, the empirical and intellectual subject becomes a rational subject, an incarnate reasonableness. If one deliberates and chooses, one has moved to the level of the rationally conscious, free, responsible subject that by his choices makes himself what he is to be and his world what it is to be... There exist subjects that are empirically, intellectually, rationally, morally conscious. Not all know themselves as such, for consciousness is not human knowing but only a potential component in the structured whole that is human knowing. But all can know themselves as such, for they have only to attend to what they are already conscious of, and understand what they attend to, and pass judgment on the correctness of their understanding"²⁷.

Now, it is precisely in consciousness operating at the intelligent and rational level that our horizon of being originates. Intelligent and rational consciousness is the operation of our pure desire to know. Because this desire is conscious, and conscious both intelligently and rationally, it is, of itself and to itself, a notion of its proper objective, which is being. Indeed, our horizon or notion of being is this very desire, in its character as an intelligent desire in search of the intelligible, and a rational desire in search of the absolute. "The notion of being is... the orientation of intelligent and rational consciousness towards an unrestricted objective"²⁸. Or again, "The pure notion of being is the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know"²⁹.

The basic function of the notion of being, as that which makes all of our knowledge knowledge of being, can be described as follows: "Spirit can pose the question about being, and thus about the absolute, because spirit, present to itself in its unrestricted openness, is already to itself a notion of the absolute. If one does not already have, entirely *a priori*, this 'sense' of being, there are no data that can make one know it, and there is no teacher, however capable, who can make one understand it. One can ask about this or that being and on the basis of data, i.e., *a posteriori*, one can manage to understand and know it. But one cannot ask about being in general, being as

²⁶ I have presented the fundamental elements of Lonergan's treatment of consciousness in *Seinserfahrung und Seinshorizont*, esp. in 300-305 and 332-337, and previously in *L'analisi della coscienza umana in B. Lonergan*, in *La Scuola Cattolica*, 92 (1964) 517-536.

²⁷ Lonergan, *Cognitional Structure*, in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Volume 4, Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 210f.

²⁸ *Insight*, 360.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 642.

the sense of being, since it is itself the primary condition that makes possible every question and all learning"³⁰.

Two questions arise concerning the notion of being or the pure pre-knowledge of being: (1) Whether it refers back to a foundation other than itself, and (2) Whether it should be called an empty knowledge.

2. *The origin of the horizon of being*

I showed at length in my preceding essay that the notion of being is the end point reached by transcendental reflection on the conditions of the possibility of knowledge. According to Coreth, the horizon of being intrinsically constitutes each of our intellectual acts of questioning and of knowing, since each such act is performed within the horizon of being. When we have arrived at this horizon, he says that "The question about the origin of the projection of the horizon remains patently valid, even required"³¹. Now, Coreth continues, "This question receives its answer only from the innermost nature of such a performance, in which an identity of being and knowing is revealed, but at the same time a distinction between being and knowing"³². This, so far as I understand it, means that our notion of being knows being, but in such a way that all this knowledge only informs us that we do not [explicitly] know being. It therefore enables and urges us to ask about being. This brings out the kind of dynamic presence to ourselves at the intellectual level that we call intelligent and rational consciousness, which persists through every differentiation due to the diversity of data, diverse patterns of experience we may be in, etc. Our intellectual presence to ourselves has a sense or meaning, which is the sense of being that is our primordial knowing of being. But this sense is only anticipatory, only a projection (*Entwurf*) or pre-knowledge (*Vorwissen*), only a sense of what it urges us to seek. Because of it, we move on to the search for being, to the effective knowledge and differentiation of beings within the realm of being.

There is a twofold function in our experience of ourselves: consciousness as the experience of oneself, and consciousness as an operative intelligible³³. Our pure pre-knowledge of being originates in consciousness; indeed, it is that consciousness operating at the intellectual level. When I say this, I am obviously referring to the second of these two aspects that are discoverable in the single reality of consciousness. But perhaps this point needs further explanation.

My thesis is that our anticipatory knowledge of being originates as the presence to ourselves that is in each of our intelligent and rational psychological acts. This presence is consciousness in its first aspect³⁴, and it is identical with our pure pre-knowledge of being. With and in these psychological acts, we experience ourselves. This is the basis of our unity and continuity as subjects in the multiplicity and variety of our acts. It is the unity of the person. This experience becomes differentiated and varied as soon as, through personal actions but no less through social and historical influences, the individual's own world comes to be constituted within the ultimate and all-embracing horizon of being. But in this presence to ourselves or self-possession, the significance of which varies from one time to another and from one person to another, a common and permanent trait is still observable. It is that consciousness is the realm in which occurs all our creating of sense (*Sinngebung*) or projecting of sense (*Sinnentwurf*). In technical terms, there is found the originary horizon that underlies and makes possible the multitude of worlds.

³⁰ Sala, *Seinserfahrung und Seinshorizont*, 314.

³¹ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 42.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ This is seen more fully in Sala, *Seinserfahrung und Seinshorizont*, 332-337.

³⁴ Coreth certainly recognizes the conscious character of cognitive acts, but he does not systematically interpret consciousness as experience. I think this is because for Coreth, structure is not the key notion in his theory of knowledge. In fact, while he does a broad analysis of the phenomenon of the question in the *Metaphysik*, he gives neither fundamental value nor systematic significance to the distinction between questions at the second level of the structure and questions at the third level.

I experience myself in my psychological acts, so that I am able to make so-called judgments of consciousness³⁵. And I experience myself according to the particular world in terms of which my personality is configured, so that, exceptional and pathological cases aside, I have a coherent style of thinking, deciding, and acting. The same is true for everyone. There is a continuity even within the considerable variations that a single personality may undergo, and there is a basis for understanding among people—at least in principle—even if they belong to the most diverse cultures or epochs. Why? Because in every case the experience of oneself is the configuration and implementation of the operative intelligible, the intelligent and rational intelligible, that is the very essence of spirit. If, in every case and for every configuration of personality, the experience we have of ourselves at a spiritual level has the character of intelligence and rationality, then in every case this experience is identical to the notion of being.

Hence, Coreth is right to say that from the experience of myself I have anticipatory knowledge of being, or project the horizon of being. The consciousness in which being is unveiled is just the experience of oneself. But he tends to interpret this experience of oneself as knowledge of oneself, i.e., as knowledge of oneself as a reality or existent. This tendency can be noticed in the *Metaphysik*, especially in § 13. “I know that the performance of my questioning ‘is’; that it is posited in itself *as an existent* (als seiend)... The performance is known *as being* (als Sein)”³⁶. “From the immediate experience of being and of the certainty of the being of the performance, I *know the being of the performance*, and thereby know being or the meaning of being in general. This is the origin of our projecting of the horizon of being in general”³⁷. The same tendency is confirmed in his recent article: “What ‘being’ means, discloses itself in fact primarily, with greater immediacy, in the actuality of one’s own self-realisation (self-performance)”³⁸. And again: In the horizon of being I “experie[n]c[e] myself immediately as an existent”³⁹.

I would like to try once again to clarify where, in my opinion, lies the difference between Coreth and Lonergan in their conception of being. Coreth writes: “How could we project the horizon of being, if we did not know ourselves *as existents* in being? The performance of asking and knowing [could] not reach being, if it were not itself—as performance—being that realises itself and in its performance knows itself”⁴⁰. Certainly, the performance of the question is being. Certainly, this is a particular performance, an operation, of that being that is spirit. And what is spirit? *Human* spirit is intentionality, a conscious dynamism toward the universe of being and of the good. Now, as conscious and operating, this intentionality knows itself. But, and here is the point, this knowing is mere presence, mere experience—the presence, I repeat, of an intelligent and rational intentionality to itself. For our intentionality, to be conscious of oneself (to know oneself experientially) as intelligent and rational, is just the same as to know being in general by anticipation. Now, Lonergan would consider it an error to call this experiential knowledge of oneself, which coincides with the pure pre-knowledge of being, the knowledge of oneself as an existent in being. I think a more careful consideration of the notion of knowledge as structure might lead Coreth to clarify the ambiguity that lies behind his knowledge of the performance (*Vollzugswissen*) and his immediate experience of oneself as being.

The notion of being does involve an identity of being and knowing, since this notion is nothing but being in its self-transparency (*das Sein in seiner Gelichtetheit*). But this does not mean that the notion knows itself as being, i.e., with human knowledge in the proper sense. It does not know itself that way simply because human knowledge occurs only in the judgment, and the notion of

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 328.

³⁶ Coreth, *Metaphysik*, 136.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

³⁸ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 41.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 42. But here the expression would suggest that the horizon of being has some precedence with respect to the experience of oneself as an existent. Thus, the “thereby” of the *Metaphysik* (“von dem her” 136; “daraus” 137) would not apply here.

⁴⁰ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 45.

being is not a judgment. But in order to operate, it does not need to be known in a judgment and thereby become objectified. The notion of being is that operative intelligible that is the spirit itself. Now, given an adequate psychic development, and given the consciousness of data—which ultimately are data of sense—this operative intelligible operates intelligently and rationally. And it operates independently of any objectivization, correct or not, that we manage to make of it.

To seek the origin of our pure anticipation of being in some reality, for example in the act of questioning *known as a reality*, is to radically undermine the *a priori* that grounds and constitutes all human knowledge. Obviously Gilson does not recognize an *a priori* when he writes that we obtain the concept of being by abstraction from the data of sense⁴¹. But neither, it seems to me, does Coreth succeed in recognizing the *a priori* when he writes in his *Metaphysik*: “From the immediate experience of being and the certainty of the being of the performance, I know the being of the performance and thereby know... the meaning of being in general”⁴².

But perhaps what Coreth immediately adds to this can help us get to the root of his position. He writes: “It is only within the origin of the projecting of the horizon of being in general that it is possible to ask about the *other* as being or to know the *other* as being”⁴³. If the problem of knowledge is posed as the problem of knowing the other (as being, of course), then one is led to accept as obvious the knowledge of oneself (again, as being). This knowledge would pose no difficulty, since it supposedly would come about through an immediate intuition. But if instead the problem is about knowing being, then one cannot simply presuppose that I know myself (though now only an entity that questions) as being and thereby have a sense of being that enables me to know everything else as being. Thus, the question returns: How do I know myself as being? Or, in the words of Coreth, how do I know that “I *am* the one who asks and that I *am* in the performance of the questioning?” How do I know that “the performance of my questioning *is*?”⁴⁴ It is no accident that, in the pages of his recent article where he returns to this matter, Coreth mentions the knowledge of the other several times. This is unexpected if one recognizes that the problem is about our pure pre-knowledge, and our knowledge, of being. Thus, for example, toward the end of Section II he speaks of the horizon of being as that “in which I relate myself to *other* entities”⁴⁵. According to my interpretation, the horizon of being is the condition of the possibility of knowing myself as being, just as much as it is the condition of the possibility of knowing the other as being.

The passage quoted earlier is significant for our problem about the origin of our pure pre-knowledge of being: “What ‘being’ means, discloses itself in fact primarily, with greater immediacy, in the actuality of one’s own self-realisation (self-performance)”⁴⁶. This “actuality” of one’s own performance recalls the ambiguity that weighs on Coreth’s whole position with regard to the pure pre-knowledge of being. Two senses of this notion still have not been clearly distinguished, though it is necessary to choose between them:

(1) Coreth may wish to say that in this self-realization we *know* ourselves as *being*, and that as a result what “being” means discloses itself to us. If so, we again have the naïve realism that I criticized earlier. It is naïve realism in the sense that our knowing ourselves as this reality supposedly precedes the knowing that is our horizon of being. *A fortiori*, then, it precedes our implementing of the cognitional structure by understanding and judging.

(2) Instead, he may wish to say that in the *experience* of ourselves (in consciousness) at the intellectual level, our intentionality is revealed to us (made present precisely as experienced) in its

⁴¹ E. Gilson, *Réalisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance*, Paris 1939, 215, 225f.

⁴² Coreth, *Metaphysik*, 137.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁵ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 42.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

intelligent and rational operativeness. And through that experience⁴⁷ we originally know what being means. If so, Coreth is speaking the truth. But in that case the qualification “with greater immediacy” seems entirely superfluous and therefore misleading. For it is *only* from this experience that we know what being means. All that comes after, all explicit knowledge of internal or external reality, does not contribute at all to our pure pre-knowledge of being. The pure pre-knowledge of being is the ultimate condition that makes human knowledge possible as knowledge in terms of being. As such, it obviously cannot depend on the knowledge that it makes possible. We must “be content” with a knowing that is entirely anticipation or projection. In other words, the *a priori* of human knowledge is nothing but the question⁴⁸, i.e., our pure desire to know.

3. *Is the notion of being an empty knowledge?*

With this, we have reached the second of the questions stated above: whether the pure pre-knowledge of being, taken in the sense of Lonergan’s notion of being, should be considered an empty knowledge. In my view, there are two fundamental conceptions of the *a priori*: an objective-content conception and a subjective-operative conception. Under the first conception, the *a priori* is itself an object. As Kant described it, it lies ready in our mind and is imposed or superposed on the *a posteriori* content, which ultimately comes from sensation. But under the second conception, the *a priori* is not an object at all, and therefore is not a part or content of what we know. It is, rather, the subject’s operativeness, its capacity to make the content of sensible representations intelligible, and then to ask about the absoluteness of this intelligible⁴⁹. Now, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* both of these conceptions are present. They are in tension, but in the end the objective-content conception prevails. Hence, Kant is left with a conception of knowledge as creatively positing reality, and with an idealist conception of the reality that is knowable to us.

Now, Lonergan’s broadly developed notion of being represents the passage from the objective-content conception of the *a priori* to the subjective-operative conception. According to Lonergan, our *a priori* is primordial meaning in search of what is intelligible, with a view to reaching what *is*. Only an *a priori* so conceived is able to resolve the *aporia* [intellectual block] that stands at the origin of Plato’s doctrine of ideas, without falling into either the innatism of Plato or the *a priori* categories of Kant. Meno, in the dialogue that bears his name, formulates the *aporia* this way: If man knows nothing before he starts to inquire, where can this inquiring begin? And even if he encounters the truth, how can he recognize that it is the truth?⁵⁰

No learning starts with nothing at all. The starting point for acquiring a specific item of knowledge at a certain stage in our intellectual development is some objective knowledge we already have: a certain scientific *habitus* [habit of mind], a mentality, or a complex of particular items of knowledge. This previous knowledge can only be a relative *a priori*. But if we mount back to the original source of every instance of knowledge in every particular field, we no longer find objective knowledge, knowledge of the objects either of nature or of the human world. We find knowledge that is entirely *ex parte subiecti* [on the side of the subject], i.e., subjective and heuristic.

There is a passage in *Insight* that well illustrates what knowledge *ex parte subiecti* means. This is not any knowledge of objects, not even of that object that is the subject in the act of questioning. From the description given there, one sees that our notion of being is indeed a knowledge that is entirely devoid of objects. But at the same time, we can see how wrong it

⁴⁷ But this is not at all a matter of deduction. The knowing in question is identical to the experience of our intentionality.

⁴⁸ Obviously, not the question as formulated, or as differentiated according to the historical, social, and personal elements by which our intentionality is implemented.

⁴⁹ I consider here only the *a priori* at the intellectual level. In what sense one should speak of an *a priori* at the empirical level does not concern us directly.

⁵⁰ Plato, *Meno*, 80d. [“And how will you enquire, Socrates, into that which you do not know? What will you put forth as the subject of enquiry? And if you find what you want, how will you ever know that this is the thing which you did not know?”—Jowett translation.]

would be to call that knowledge empty or senseless, something to which one ought to apply Hegel's famous jibe about the night in which all cows are black⁵¹. To illustrate our pure pre-knowledge of being, Lonergan turns to the metaphor of obverse and reverse. And he turns precisely to what man knows best, the products of his own labor. In those products one can discern both an intelligible design and an existence grounded in the labor that produced them. "But before the design is realized in things, it was invented by intelligence; before the sequence of productive operations was undertaken, it was affirmed as worth while for some sufficient or apparently sufficient reason. In the thing there is the intelligible design, but in the inventor there was not only the intelligibility on the side of the object but also intelligent consciousness on the side of the subject. In the thing there is the groundedness that consists in its existence being accounted for by a sequence of operations; but in the entrepreneur there was not only the groundedness of his judgment in the reasons that led to it but also the rational consciousness that required reasons to reach judgment. Intelligence and intelligibility are the obverse and reverse of the second level of knowing: intelligence looks for intelligible patterns in presentations and representations... In like manner, reasonableness and groundedness are the obverse and reverse of the third level of knowing. Reasonableness is reflection inasmuch as it seeks groundedness for objects of thought... In man's artefacts there are the reverse elements of the intelligibility and groundedness, but there are not the obverse elements of intelligence and reasonableness. The obverse elements pertain to cognitional process on its second and third levels; they do not pertain to the contents emergent on those levels, to the idea or concept, to the unconditioned or affirmed; on the contrary, they characterize the acts with which those contents are coupled and so they are specific differentiations of the awareness of consciousness. Clear and distinct conception not only reveals the intelligibility of the object but also manifests the intelligence of the subject. Exact and balanced judgment not only affirms things as they are but also testifies to the dominance of reasonableness in the subject"⁵².

To speak of a notion that is intelligent and reasonable, and thus is a notion of the objective to which it tends, is to stress the operative character of cognitional process. To speak of a primordial question in man is to affirm that human spirit is of itself meaning in search of meaning. But the meaning we men are endowed with is merely heuristic, merely anticipatory of reality. This makes genuine inquiry possible, inquiry after something really unknown and not just after something forgotten. And it makes possible the recognition of reality once we have found it. When, after a short or long inquiry, I arrive at knowledge, I am not aware that I am comparing a pure idea that I have already contemplated with some image of it that I have encountered in the spatio-temporal world. I am not aware of a recognition on the basis of a cognition that I already had. Rather, I have the invincible persuasion that I am encountering this reality for the first time. Nonetheless, there is a sense in which cognizing is recognizing. It is the cry of surprise and satisfaction that breaks forth from a man when he finally has found what he was looking for. He previously knew nothing of the truth that now has shone on his spirit. He did not know that his search was for this rather than for something else. But now he knows. How does he know? What is the criterion with which he examines everything in order to accept this in the end and reject that? The human spirit must have in itself, along with its total poverty, a total capacity to discern and judge everything by placing it on the scale of truth.

Rather than say it is in the spirit, it would be more proper to say that this *a priori* is the spirit itself. The spirit is meaning for and to itself. The spirit is what it means to itself; it is being in its luminousness, in its being meaningful to itself. It is the revelation and the constitution of the subject, according to a subjectivity that is never objectifiable but that still, because of its awareness of its radical indigence, tends toward the universe of being. The meaning that is spirit itself is therefore a normative meaning for the whole process of knowing. So conceived, the notion of being is, if one likes, much less definite than the Kantian *a priori*, which has the definiteness, i.e., the limitation, of an object. But just for that reason the notion of being is much

⁵¹ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 41f.

⁵² *Insight*, 322f.

more radical in its apriority and much more decisive in its operativeness. It is as all-embracing as our striving to know; it is as unlimited as the universe of being.

We are again at the question I indicated above. The peculiar kind of purely subjective knowledge I am trying to describe must indeed be called empty, and therefore non-knowledge in every sense, if it is true that the only content a cognitive act can have is its object. But this assumption is false. In one and the same cognitive act there is not only an object-oriented dimension, but also a subject-oriented dimension [that is consciousness itself]. The latter makes our knowledge knowledge of being. (Here I am considering knowledge above the level of sense.) Hence, what Lonergan says about the notion of being points to *what is common, uneliminable, and primordial in the conscious dimension of every intellectual act, i.e., its character of intelligence and rationality, by which it designates and knows in advance that toward which it tends*. Therefore, the notion of being is indeed devoid of objects. But it is not devoid of content, unless one erroneously assumes that the content of knowledge is coextensive with the object of knowledge. On the contrary, a consistent analysis will thoroughly work out the Aristotelian principle that knowledge is unity, which in Scholasticism is expressed by the saying “*unumquodque cognoscitur secundum quod est actu* [whatever is known is known insofar as it is in act]”. Hence, it will lead us to recognize that ultimately it is the object that is sublated (i.e., negated and preserved at the same time) into the content *ex parte subjecti* of knowledge. This subjective content is the meaning that is the intelligence and rationality of the pure desire to know. Ultimately, the whole of reality is no longer just anticipated by intelligence and rationality, but is that very intelligence and rationality, *νόησις νοήσεως* [understanding of understanding].

The conception of the pure pre-knowledge of being as nothing but our capacity to pose intelligent and reasonable questions has its parallel in *Insight* in the conception of reality as intrinsically intelligible. For if the real is nothing but that which we intend with questions for understanding and for reflection, and that which we know when we give a correct answer to these questions, then the real must be said to be intrinsically intelligible. “By intelligibility is meant what is to be known by understanding. By the intrinsic intelligibility of being is meant that being is precisely what is so known or, in negative terms, that being is neither beyond the intelligible nor apart from it nor different from it. Now if by being one means the objective of the pure desire to know, the goal of intelligent inquiry and critical reflection, the object of intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation, then one must affirm the intrinsic intelligibility of being. For one defines being by its intelligibility; one claims that being is precisely what is known by understanding correctly; one denies that being is anything apart from the intelligible or beyond it or different from it, for one’s definition implies that being is known completely when there are no further questions to be answered”⁵³.

From this we see the importance of identifying our *a priori*, our pure pre-knowledge of being, as the operative intelligible, as the intelligent and reasonable obverse of that reverse that is the universe of being. We are capable of knowing being because (1) we are endowed with a conscious dynamism toward the absolute, a dynamism that is not bound by any principle of immanence, since it is an unlimited capacity and exigence, (2) in the critical reflection that precedes judgment, we are able to reach the absolute in the form of the virtually unconditioned. If we do not manage to recognize such an obverse, the question of the Meno remains in full force: How can we start out on the road to reality—the process of knowing—if we don’t at all know what reality is? And even given that we encounter reality, how can we recognize that it is reality?

The solution to the Platonic *aporia* presented here is entirely based on the thesis that we know reality through the operations of our cognitional structure. Not, therefore, through the perceptions of the senses alone, but also through the grasp of an intelligibility in what the senses have presented and critical reflection on what we have understood, in the unity of a properly human cognition. On the other hand, it is not difficult to recognize the validity of this solution: Any opposing argument could not help using the very criterion of reality we have formulated here.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 499.

The failure to recognize the purely heuristic-subjective nature of the *a priori*, along with an irrational conception of the real⁵⁴, leads to the typically Kantian position: Man understands, he conceives, and, in some sense of the term, he judges. He performs all these operations in a way consistent with their immanent norms. But what does he thereby know of the real? Nothing. The consistent, intelligent and rational, and therefore true, implementation of our cognitive dynamism is not a means of knowing reality. And rightly so, if that reality *ex hypothesi* [by hypothesis] is neither intelligible nor rational. But one cannot admit the intrinsic intelligibility of the real if one does not recognize that the real is nothing but what is known by answering questions for intelligence and for reflection. Or if one does not therefore recognize that the pure pre-knowledge of being, which sets in motion and constitutes *ab intrinseco* [intrinsically] the whole cognitional process, is nothing but the question. The notion of being is thus the intelligent and rational desire to know that grounds every “experience” of being, even our experience of that being that is the subject itself.

III. --IMMEDIACY AND MEDIATION IN OUR KNOWLEDGE OF BEING

1. *The fundamental thesis of uncritical realism is intuitionism.*

At the beginning of his paper, Coreth describes the positions of Gilson, Lonergan, and himself concerning the knowledge of being, as follows: “For Gilson being is the immediate; for Lonergan it is what is mediated or to be mediated; whereas for me... it is at once ‘immediate and mediated’, i.e., it is mediated or self-mediating immediacy”⁵⁵. When he moves on to treat these positions in Section III, Coreth is anything but decisive in rejecting Gilson’s intuitionism. What interests him is the mediation of immediacy by transcendental analysis. “Even when being has been immediately given to us, there remains the task of mediating this immediacy transcendently”⁵⁶. After saying that he does not wish to contradict Gilson’s thesis absolutely, he continues: “There is an *intuitive* element in intellectual cognition; otherwise intellectual cognition would not even be possible”⁵⁷.

In fact, the problem is not to decide whether or not there is this intuitive element. Neither in *Metaphysics as Horizon* nor in *Insight* does Lonergan deny an intuitive element, as long as it is maintained this vaguely and generally. Rather, the problem is to say once and for all what this intuitive element is in which cognition is ultimately supposed to consist, and whether its existence can be proven by introspective analysis, since our cognitive acts are conscious.

Coreth believes he can demonstrate the existence of an intellectual intuition by arguing that “otherwise intellectual cognition would not even be possible”. This proof has force only if one presupposes what is to be proven, i.e., that ultimately the essence of cognition is intuition. Kant would say, more consistently, and showing his cards more openly: “Otherwise knowledge in general (*überhaupt*) would not be possible”. This is the direct consequence of the intuition principle (*Prinzip Anschauung*) with which the Transcendental Aesthetic⁵⁸ opens. Heidegger has formulated this principle very aptly as follows: “In order to gain an understanding of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the following must, as it were, be hammered in: Cognition is primarily intuition”⁵⁹. Lonergan uncovers the basis of Coreth’s argument for an intellectual intuition by exhibiting the

⁵⁴ It is this conception of the real as having only one dimension, the dimension of sense, that Lonergan expresses with his ever-recurring formula “already out there now”.

⁵⁵ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 34.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 43.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ I. Kant, *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* [*Critique of Pure Reason*], A 19 = B 33. [“In whatever manner and by whatever means a mode of knowledge may relate to objects, *intuition* is that through which it is in immediate relation to them, and to which all thought as a means is directed.”—Norman Kemp Smith translation.]

⁵⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Frankfurt a.M. 1965, 29. [Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. James S. Churchill (Indiana Univ. Press, 1962 and 1968), p. 28.]

fundamental thesis of naïve realism: “The analogy of ocular vision reveals what intellectual activity must be like if it is to be objective; it must be like seeing. Even if introspection discovers no intellectual activity that resembles seeing, still some such activity really must exist; for if it did not, then our intellectual activity would be merely immanent”⁶⁰.

Lonergan fully elaborates his answer to the question about an intuitive element in our cognition, which is that we do intuit being in the data (data both of sense and of consciousness). But this intuiting is nothing but our understanding the data by grasping a meaning in them, and then verifying this understanding through critical reflection that leads to rational judgment. These are two distinct acts that, together with the presentation of the data in experience, make up the threefold structure of our cognition. To demand, beyond this, a further act of intuiting being, is precisely the intuitionist myth that Lonergan battles against without quarter. I repeat: We intuit being because we are able to correctly understand the data. Now, everyone can verify the act of understanding, and everyone knows what it means to understand correctly, because everyone has experience of these acts. But I have yet to find anyone who could help me identify in my intellectual experience the mysterious act of intuiting being that the intuitionists speak of. Just this is Lonergan’s whole thesis.

According to Coreth, the task of philosophical reflection is to mediate transcendently the immediate knowledge of being that Gilson speaks of. I confess that, here and in several other passages, I find it unclear what Coreth intends by the verb “mediate”, even when it is qualified by “transcendently”. Nor do I get much help from my knowledge of Kant, to whom Coreth is evidently alluding. As I understand it, transcendental investigation is simply introspective investigation applied to cognitional (and volitional) operations. These have a transcendental import in the Scholastic sense, because they extend to all of reality. Such an investigation differs from a generic phenomenological investigation in that what it reaches is the invariant intentionality structures of the human subject, and thus what is ultimate and intrinsically *normative* in all intentional activity. Now, this kind of investigation does not mediate an immediate intuition of being. Rather, if conducted rigorously, it reveals that there is no such intuition—unless one wishes to use the word “intuition” to designate precisely the intellectual acts of the cognitional structure that I mentioned above.

In other words, the basic opposition is not, as Coreth seems to suppose, between an immediate and uncritical realism⁶¹ and a transcendently mediated knowledge of being. One might try to mediate our knowledge transcendently and end up admitting an immediate intuition of being in the sense of naïve realism. In that case, despite any transcendental mediation, one would still be in the uncritical realism that Lonergan criticizes in Gilson. This seems to be precisely Coreth’s position, as I stressed in my previous essay and have confirmed in the present study.

A position should be called naïve realism if: 1) it recognizes our capacity to know the real, 2) but it bases this capacity on a simple act of intuiting being which is conceived on the model of ocular vision and which, as ultimate, is not further specifiable or reducible. 3) This naïve realism will be sensist or not, according to whether the intuition that establishes the immediate relation of cognition to the real is an intuition of sense or of intellect. Thus, the naïve realism of Kant is sensist⁶², while that of Gilson and a number of other Neoscholastics is not.

It is easy to see that it is the second of these points that discriminates between uncritical and critical realism. In this connection, one should note Lonergan’s very illuminating discussion of the

⁶⁰ Lonergan, *Cognitional Structure*, in *Collection*, 215.

⁶¹ Such a realism claims that what establishes an intentional connection with being, and enables us finally to reach being, is some sort of intuition of being. This intuition is not identified with the performance of the *intentio intendens* [intending intention] in understanding and judgment.

⁶² Cf. Kant, *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, A 19 = B 33; note the ever-recurring affirmation: “Every intuition of ours is sensible” in A 252, B 146, 151, 165, 302 note, etc. But Kant recognizes activities superior to sense and admits the thing in itself as a true reality. Hence his naïve realism becomes, with these correctives, a realism of reality-for-us, and thus a phenomenism.

“picture thinking” characteristic of uncritical realism, in his article on cognitional structure⁶³. Now, on this second point Kant and Gilson are in agreement. Thus, Lonergan states that “Prof. Gilson is equally convinced that perception is the one manner in which cognitional activity attains objectivity. He differs from Kant, not on the question of principle, but on the question of fact”⁶⁴. If I have correctly interpreted the “knowing of the performance” (*Vollzugswissen*) in Coreth’s *Metaphysik*, and the “immediacy of spiritual insight (*Einsicht*)”⁶⁵ in his present article, then one must say that Coreth also shares this principle. The difference between Coreth and Gilson is that what Gilson asserts in general, Coreth restricts to the particular case of the reality that I am, in the act of questioning or in some other intellectual activity. But this restriction is what Lonergan calls the difference between the “already out there now” and the “already in here now”. It does not change the nature of the realism in question.

But perhaps it would be fairer to speak of a basic ambiguity in Coreth’s epistemology. For in many important passages in the *Metaphysik* he rejects intuitionism and empiricism and works out an acute critical theory of knowledge. In his review, Lonergan pointed out and explicated this aspect of Coreth’s thought. Nonetheless, the ambiguity remains. Here and there one meets with passages or lines of thought that move in the direction of intuitionism. With his recent stand, Coreth has reinforced this tendency toward intuitionism, instead of resolving the basic ambiguity. But I admit that, since my observations tend to emphasize the passages with an intuitionistic bent, they may have the effect of neglecting or misrepresenting the critically valid contribution made by the *Metaphysik*. The present study should therefore be considered as complementing Lonergan’s extremely illuminating and positive review in this Journal.

2. *The notion of being is not mediated.*

We saw above that, according to Coreth, Lonergan’s view is that being is what is mediated or to be mediated. I believe that this way of presenting Lonergan’s position is incorrect. It is therefore appropriate to re-examine what Lonergan says about the knowledge we have of being.

Is being mediated or not? First of all, I reply that the question is, more exactly, about our *knowledge* of being. Now, with regard to human knowledge of being, the fundamental distinction is between (1) the notion of being, and (2) knowledge in the true and proper sense, which is had in judgment: *ens iudicio vero (i.e. rationali) cognoscitur* [being is known in true (i.e., rational) judgment]⁶⁶. The insistence with which Lonergan distinguishes between the “concept” of being and every other concept, to the point of calling the former a notion rather than a concept⁶⁷, is meant to highlight the completely peculiar nature of this “concept”. How do we obtain every other concept? Through an act of insight into data. Thus, each of these concepts is *a posteriori*. How do we obtain the concept of being?

Negatively, “It cannot result from an insight into being, for such an insight would be an understanding of everything about everything, and such understanding we have not attained”⁶⁸. Again: “If the notion of being expressed and resulted from an insight, that insight would have to be an understanding not merely of the whole of the actual universe but also of the total range of possible universes. Such an understanding would be identical with Aquinas’ *actus totius entis* [act of all being], that is, with God (*Sum. theol.*, I, q. 79, a. 2 c). Since man possesses a notion of being yet obviously fails to satisfy Aquinas’ concept of God, man’s notion cannot result from an

⁶³ Lonergan, *Cognitional Structure*, in *Collection*, 214-219.

⁶⁴ Lonergan, *Metaphysics as Horizon*, in *Collection*, 194.

⁶⁵ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 43.

⁶⁶ Sala, *Seinserfahrung und Seinshorizont*. On pp. 300-302 I discuss human knowledge in the true and proper sense, which is had in the implementation of the threefold structure. On pp. 312-316 I discuss the notion of being. See especially note 31.

⁶⁷ *Insight*, 520f, 360, 369, and also 642.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 360.

act of understanding"⁶⁹. And again, in a paper in which Lonergan relates *Insight* to Thomist philosophy, he writes "You will agree, I believe, that there is one and only one *ens per essentiam* [being through its own essence], that it is not an immediate object of our knowledge in this life, that the only immediate objects of our present knowledge are *entia per participationem* [beings by participation]. It follows that our intellectual knowledge of being cannot result from abstraction of essence. For, if from a horse I abstract essence, what I abstract is the essence, not of being, but of horse; if from a man I abstract essence, what I abstract is the essence not of being, but of man; and the same holds for every other immediate object of our present knowledge. No being by participation can yield us knowledge of the essence of being, because no being by participation has the essence of being"⁷⁰.

Positively, Lonergan sees the origin of our intellectual knowledge of being in the intelligent and rational dynamism of our consciousness operating at the intellectual level. This intellectual consciousness is identical with our pure desire to know, which is an intelligent and rational awareness. In other words, the realm of human consciousness as intelligent and rational is the realm of intentionality. Thus, in the three passages quoted above, after his negative delimitation of the notion of being, Lonergan continues: "It is the orientation... of intelligent and rational consciousness towards an unrestricted objective"⁷¹. "Accordingly, we were led to the discovery that the notion of being has its origin and ground in an anticipative desire to understand, in a capacity to inquire and reflect"⁷². "By such reasoning I was led in *Insight* to affirm that our natural intellectual desire to know was a natural intellectual desire to know being. The desire, precisely because it is intelligent, is a notion. But the notion is not any innate idea or concept or knowledge. It is a desire for ideas, for concepts, for knowledge but, of itself, it is merely discontented ignorance without ideas, without concepts, without knowledge"⁷³. "The spontaneously operative notion of being has to be placed in the pure desire to know"⁷⁴.

Now, I see no reason why an intellectual knowledge of being so characterized, which underpins all cognitional contents, penetrates them all, and constitutes them as cognitional⁷⁵, should be called a mediated knowledge. It is so little mediated that it excludes even that mediation that each of our concepts has, the mediation of data. This is why I have strongly underlined its *a priori* character. It is our *a priori* in an absolute sense, the end point reached in the search for the conditions of the possibility of human knowledge. To use the words of Coreth, it is "that which we always have already and which we perform in all our inquiring and knowing"⁷⁶. It is just "the immediate"⁷⁷. But this immediate is mediated, i.e., is implemented, in the threefold structure so as to arrive at human knowledge in the true and proper sense.

We have already seen that this first, this *a priori*, is not "pure objectivity"⁷⁸, as Coreth takes it to be. To say that the subject originally and ineluctably is a sense of being to itself obviously is not to conceive being originally as an object. The sense of being is indeed at the root of the possibility of all objectivization, but this does not mean that it is knowledge of any object. It is prior to the difference between subject and object *known as being*. We have likewise seen that this sense of being is not empty. Consequently, its thematization in the heuristic notion of being⁷⁹ is not at all tautological, but is the true transcendental definition of being, a definition based on the

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 521.

⁷⁰ Lonergan, *Insight, Preface to a Discussion*, in *Collection*, 145f.

⁷¹ *Insight*, 360.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 521.

⁷³ Lonergan, *Insight, Preface to a Discussion*, in *Collection*, 147.

⁷⁴ *Insight*, 353.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 356.

⁷⁶ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 45.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷⁹ "Being [is] whatever is to be grasped intelligibly and affirmed reasonably" (*Insight*, 642). "Being is whatever is to be known by intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation" (*ibid.*, 391).

operations by which we properly know proportionate beings and analogically know transcendent being⁸⁰.

The definition of being as nothing but the objective of our pure desire to know can be accepted as correct, indeed, as the only definition possible for us, if one has truly reached a rational conception of the real. Otherwise, it will seem contentless and tautological⁸¹, so that one will resort to something else to fill it in. Obviously, for Lonergan too the notion of being has to be filled in, for it is a heuristic notion. It is only by implementing the cognitional structure on which the second-order definition of being is based that we gradually pass from anticipation to effective knowledge. But it remains that the notion of being is the obverse that determines what the reverse must be like if it is to be being. What it means to be intelligible and absolute, so as to be reality, is something that only the *a priori* notion of being can tell us. Hence, we must say that Lonergan intends his operative definition as already determining the content of being, insofar as only those contents that answer to our intelligent and reasonable anticipation of the intelligible and absolute are being, and they are being to the extent that they answer to this anticipation. In this sense, which is the one that counts here, the *a priori* notion of being has a content that is not and cannot be determined *a posteriori*. Here we have the entire problem of arriving at a rational conception of the real and remaining in it.

If one does not accept that the real is completely intelligible, what will one resort to in order to fill in the heuristic definition of being? To the solid sense of reality based on the sensible integration of the data of sense⁸². One has not yet arrived at critical realism if one doubts that understanding correctly is knowing⁸³, or that “the impalpable act of rational assent is the necessary and sufficient condition for knowledge of reality”⁸⁴. In Coreth this empiricism no doubt is highly purified, so that in order to have the sense of reality originally, it is enough to have the internal experience of oneself as a questioning reality. But even thus refined and spiritualized, the position remains an empiricism that amounts to naïve realism. Only one who, through a radical intellectual purification, has arrived at what Lonergan calls intellectual conversion⁸⁵, will be able to “be content” with the definition of being as that which is known, not in solid internal or external experience, but in *moving beyond* experience by understanding what experience has merely presented and by affirming it rationally.

⁸⁰ This definition can justly be called an operative definition, as Coreth does quoting Otto Muck. Lonergan calls it a definition “of the second order” (*Ibid.*, 350) or “at a second remove” (*ibid.*, 360f). But I take exception to the clarification that Muck tries to bring to it, when he interprets this second order as the order of reflection (O. Muck, *Die transzendente Methode in der scholastischen Philosophie der Gegenwart*, Innsbruck 1964, 252. [Otto Muck, *The Transcendental Method*, tr. William D. Seidensticker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), pp. 277, 315.]) Lonergan definitely does not connect his “second order” with reflection. For him, reflection is the third constitutive moment in cognitional structure, the one that carries the process from thinking to judgment. In reflection one seeks the virtually unconditioned, on the basis of which one will posit absolutely, in the judgment, the synthesis that was merely thought in the concept. On the other hand, definitions of the second order, for Lonergan, also include the definitions of the metaphysical elements potency, form, and act (*Insight*, 432), because these definitions, like the definition of being, are based on the dynamic structure of cognitional process (*ibid.*, 502). He clearly distinguishes an ordinary definition or definition of the first order, e.g., the definition of hydrogen, from the second-order definition of form. The definition of form in the metaphysical sense “does not refer immediately to reality... its immediate reference is to a type of cognitional activity and only through the occurrence, which is usually hypothetical, of such activity does it refer to being” (*ibid.*, 503).

⁸¹ This seems to be Coreth’s opinion when he writes: “But if so functional a definition is not continually defined in terms of content—again, out of the performance of the cognition itself—then it remains a tautology”. (Coreth, *Immediacy and the mediation of being*, 44). The thesis that the real is the intelligible, the objective of our intelligent and rational operations, is anything but a tautology. It represents an achievement of capital importance in the history of western thought. With it, one recognizes that “reason is the criterion [of reality—Fr. Sala’s parenthesis] and, as well, it is reason—not the sense of reality—that gives meaning to the term ‘real’” (Lonergan, *Verbum. Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 20). Now, “The conflict between objectivity as extroversion and intelligence as knowledge has provided a fundamental theme in the unfolding of modern philosophy” (*Insight*, 413). Lonergan had previously described this same conflict as “the secular contrast between the solid sense of reality and the bloodless categories of the mind” (Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 20).

⁸² *Ibid.* See also *Insight*, 411-416.

⁸³ *Insight*, xxviii.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 538.

⁸⁵ Lonergan, *De Deo Trino. II. Pars systematica*. Romae 1964, 32. *De Constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica*, Romae 1958, 15. *Insight: Preface to a Discussion*, in *Collection*, 148, note 10. *Cognitional Structure*, *ibid.*, 218f.

With this, we go on to examine the knowledge of being in the judgment. We wish to see whether there, at least, one can accept the interpretation that for Lonergan, being is the mediated.

3. *The knowledge of being in the judgment is structured, but not necessarily mediated.*

I said above that knowledge in the true and proper sense occurs only in the judgment. Referring to the *Metaphysik*, Lonergan expresses Coreth's position this way: "For Prof. Gilson being or the concept of being is 'seen' in the data of sense. But for Fr. Coreth being is what is asked about with respect to the data of sense. So far from being seen in data, being, for Fr. Coreth, is what is intended by *going beyond* the data. For questioning goes beyond an already known to an unknown that is to be known: for Fr. Coreth the already known is the datum, and the unknown to be known is being"⁸⁶.

Coreth expresses some perplexity about recognizing his position in this passage. To him, Lonergan seems to be describing "an occurrence of mediation (*Vermittlungsgeschehen*) that can come to no conclusion because it has no beginning"⁸⁷. We saw in the last section that there *is* such a beginning: the notion of being, which is precisely the primordial knowledge of being that makes every question possible⁸⁸. There is no reason to ask for more, unless one has failed to overcome one's yearning for a knowledge based on animal extroversion. The immediacy of being that Coreth believes is missing in Lonergan's mediation⁸⁹ is the immediacy of something that would be known as being before an intelligent question and a critical question had been asked, and before they had been answered. Obviously Lonergan would not accept this kind of immediacy, even with regard to the knowledge of ourselves as realities⁹⁰.

Let us now see if the process described by Lonergan is truly a mediation. Even though Coreth does not explicitly raise this question, I consider it of capital importance for assessing in what sense being for Lonergan is mediated. The distinction to be made here is between *structure* and *mediation*. In what sense can one say that being is mediated? In the sense that all human knowledge of reality occurs through the threefold structure of experiencing, understanding, and judging. But this does not mean that all our knowledge of reality is mediated, if by mediation one means something other than the structure—for example, an inferential kind of process.

Direct or immediate knowledge of reality and structured knowledge do not exclude each other—except to naïve realists, for whom the meaning of immediacy is borrowed from the intuition principle. Properly speaking, it is knowledge as structure and knowledge as intuition that exclude each other. Now, it is obvious that mediated, or reflexive, or discursive knowledge ultimately presupposes immediate, or direct, or intuitive knowledge. But such immediate knowledge does not occur through an "immediate intuition" of reality that would be something other than our capacity to grasp a meaning in what is purely given at the experiential level, and to verify the *de facto* absolute character of that meaning. The recognition of direct knowledge must not lead to the rejection of the structure principle in favor of the intuition principle. Now, at the base of every type of intuitionist theory of knowledge lies just such reasoning.

It is difficult for me not to recognize this intuitionist confusion when Coreth writes: "The phenomenological element ... [is] the immediacy ... which must be mediated"⁹¹. Immediacy of

⁸⁶ Lonergan, *Metaphysics as Horizon*, in *Collection*, 200. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁷ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 45.

⁸⁸ In view of how fully Lonergan discusses this original anticipatory knowledge of being, I cannot see on what passages of Lonergan's work Coreth bases his statement that "For Lonergan being is *only the final*, not also the first; it is only the goal of the mediation, not also its beginning, and hence not also that which in it—in dynamic identity—mediates itself and continues to define itself" (*ibid.*, 46). With regard to the second of the difficulties Coreth advances here, see the clear response in *Insight*, 356f (AN ALL-PERVASIVE NOTION).

⁸⁹ Coreth, *Immediacy and the Mediation of Being*, 46.

⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 45, toward the end.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

what? Of the knowledge of being? But this knowledge never happens with the mere datum, which Coreth described a little earlier as “something ‘given’ and ‘appearing’—a phenomenon in the broadest sense”⁹². I certainly do not intend to support a mediation to infinity, without anything immediate to be mediated. But the required immediacy should not be sought in the datum or in sense, or in a spiritual intuition conceived along the lines of sensible intuition. The immediacy, or the contact with reality, or the bridge—choose whatever image you please—that unites us with reality consists in our intention of being. Naturally, this involves an immediate relation to reality as intended, i.e., as sought. The same relation to reality, no longer only as intended but as reached, is immediate in judgment, since judgment is the unconditioned positing that answers to our intention of being.

No doubt, there is mediated knowledge of reality. It is outside the scope of the present inquiry to examine how mediation occurs in these instances. But in general I would say that mediation occurs through a deductive process based on the principle of causality. In these cases, we have direct knowledge of some reality that mediates the knowledge of another reality that does not enter into our experience. This occurs in fact for many realities that belong to proportionate being, and it occurs in principle for our knowledge of transcendent being. But this mediated knowledge, too, occurs through the threefold structure of experiencing, understanding, and judging. In particular, at the level of understanding, mediated knowledge involves the working of the principle of causality, a fundamental law of our spirit as operative intelligible. Hence, it is indeed true that mediated knowledge, in the sense of deductive knowledge, ultimately presupposes immediate knowledge. This is why Lonergan emphasizes concrete judgments of fact, which are our entrance door to the real⁹³. These are what others call immediate judgments of existence or judgments of experience. But what is at issue is precisely judgment. Now, a judgment is always the end point of a three-step process.

There is a more direct way only if one reduces the reality proportionate to human knowing to one dimension. That is the way imagined by the naïve realist, for whom the essence of knowing is manifested in the activity of seeing. “Empiricism as a method rests on an elementary confusion. What is obvious in knowing is, indeed, looking. Compared to looking, insight is obscure, and grasp of the unconditioned is doubly obscure. But empiricism amounts to the assumption that what is obvious in knowing is what knowing obviously is. That assumption is false, for if one would learn mathematics or science or philosophy or if one sought common-sense advice, then one would go to a man that is intelligent and reasonable rather than to a man that is stupid and silly”⁹⁴.

4. Assessment of the distinction between intuitive and discursive knowing from the critical point of view.

On the basis of the epistemology of *Insight*, human knowing can be systematically divided as follows:

(1) Knowing is either *ex parte subjecti* [on the side of the subject] or *ex parte obiecti* [on the side of the object]. The former is consciousness (experience of oneself). It is constitutive of every psychological act, whether cognitive (knowing *ex parte obiecti*) or appetitive.

(2) Knowing *ex parte obiecti* is either experiencing or understanding or judging. Only in the judgment, considered not as an act detached from the preceding ones, but as bringing to completion the previous steps of experiencing and understanding, is there human knowing in the true and proper sense, i.e., knowing of reality.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Cf. *Insight*, 340.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 416.

(3) Knowing *ex parte obiecti* can occur in either the direct or the introspective mode, depending on whether the data (experience) to which the further levels of understanding and judgment relate are data of sense or data of consciousness⁹⁵.

It is clear that intuition has no place in this division, if by intuition one means a human knowing in the true and proper sense that is not triadically structured. Hence, for Lonergan the distinction between intuitive and discursive knowing is not relevant from a systematic point of view. For what is intuitive knowing? Is there an exercise of understanding in it or not? Does this understanding deal, through an inquiry that can be more or less articulated or spontaneous or undifferentiated, with something that has been presented to us, or does it not? And again, is this understanding—which substantially is the grasping of a meaning in the data—necessarily true, or does it need to be verified? If one answers yes to the second and third of these questions, and if (as must happen if one truly introspects one's own acts) one recognizes the necessity of verifying whatever is understood, then one recognizes that no intuitive (unstructured) mode of knowing reality exists that would be essentially different from discursive (triadic) knowing.

But it is necessary to be quite clear about this central thesis of *Insight*. It takes such a strong stand, in the face of 2000 years of philosophical speculation from Plato to Kant, that it has aroused scandal or perplexity in not a few readers of *Insight*. The systematic division I have traced above is only a schema. In particular, it speaks of understanding only to indicate the central act of the structure. But it does not follow that this exhausts all that can be said about understanding! In fact, we are only at the beginning. The modes in which our understanding operates are numerous. They emerge as science progresses and consciousness becomes differentiated. There are manifold patterns of consciousness or of experience, according to which both our cognitional process and our psychological life in general are concretely configured⁹⁶. Thus, there is room for the mode of knowing proper to common sense and for that of science, for the intuitive understanding of the first and for the analytic and discursive understanding of the second. There is room for the intuition of the expert and for the inquiring and learning of the lay person. There is room for the flash of genius of an understanding that grasps at once a vast field of implications, and there is room for progress in reasoning through the gradual development of insight⁹⁷, for the openness of all human understanding to further developments, integrations, and corrections. There is room for what is called knowledge by connaturality, for the role that feelings and existential decisions play in our knowing in the moral and religious fields. There is room for the historical and social elements, whether of progress or of decline, that constitute the concrete horizon within which man as "incarnate inquirer"⁹⁸ operates.

In particular, there is room for the interpersonal knowledge that is one of the most-heard themes in philosophical reflection today. Lonergan did a broad analysis of scientific knowledge and dedicated two precious chapters to common-sense knowledge, but he recognizes openly that the treatment of interpersonal relations in *Insight* is skimpy⁹⁹. But here too the precise question relevant to the epistemology of *Insight* is: How does interpersonal knowledge occur? or, equivalently, What kind of intelligence brings it about? No doubt one will have to bring out the horizon of pre-comprehension within which this type of knowing takes place, the role that feelings and existential decisions play in it. But this does not invalidate Lonergan's thesis that intuitionism is excluded from every case of true and proper human knowing. In a further chapter on interpersonal knowledge, Lonergan would again put these questions: Is the particular kind of understanding that determines interpersonal knowledge based on data or not? Does it require verification, in a way peculiar to it, or not? If one answers yes to these questions—which I do not

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 272, 274.

⁹⁶ For an illustrative, but not exhaustive, exposition see *ibid.*, 181ff.

⁹⁷ With regard to intelligence as a synthetic and discursive capacity, see the very illuminating pages in *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, 61-71.

⁹⁸ Lonergan, *Metaphysics as Horizon*, in *Collection*, 204.

⁹⁹ *Insight*, 731 note.

see can be avoided—then interpersonal knowledge does not provide any objection to Lonergan's thesis about human knowing as a structure.

Hence, the underlying schema, within which all these differentiations are located and interpreted, always remains the same: the schema of knowing as structure. When one has recognized the thesis of human knowing as structure in all its import, the myth of intuitionism falls, as well as the distinction between intuitive and discursive knowing. To repeat: When this distinction refers to something confirmed by introspective analysis, it does not reach what is essential. It does not eliminate what is essential to the thesis of knowing as structure. On the other hand, when it pretends to be an essential distinction, it is false.

Instead of the distinction between intuitive and discursive knowing, Lonergan would distinguish, at the limit, between the Aristotelian νόησις νοήσεως [understanding of understanding]¹⁰⁰ and the structure of human knowing. But how was the first member of this distinction obtained? Through a very precise process of analogy that starts from *a kind of intuition that, far from being opposed to the structure, is actually its central element*. For human νόησις [understanding] is always an understanding of data: "The faculty of understanding understands the forms in the images."¹⁰¹, or again, "The soul never understands without an image"¹⁰². For just this reason, human νόησις always needs verification, in a more or less articulated way, in the reflective stage of cognitional process. To speak of an intuitive knowing that is at once the negation and preservation (*Aufhebung*, sublation) of cognitional structure is to expand to infinity this central act of human knowing, so that it no longer needs either data or critical reflection. The νόησις νοήσεως is the intelligible that is identical with the intelligence that knows it¹⁰³, and it is therefore in an eminent manner true, and thus real. In it, reality is identified, without any residue, with meaning.

* * *

My observations can end here. Perhaps they are scattered observations, yet I imagine they have some importance for working out a theory of knowledge that is truly *critical*. By this I mean, beyond names that change with philosophical tastes, a theory that accords with the facts. Now, the cognitional facts are facts of consciousness. Lonergan proposes a criterion by which the affirmations of metaphysics can be subjected to verification¹⁰⁴. This criterion, to reduce every dispute to a question of concrete psychological facts, is all the more valid for the theory of knowledge. Certainly, the psychological facts on which I base my alternative to some defining points in Coreth's epistemology are not all the facts that would be relevant for a more complete and concrete theory of knowledge. Many of the questions debated in epistemology today are precisely at this more concrete level. One thinks of linguistic analysis, hermeneutics, or the sociology of knowledge.

But assurance about the value of a general theory of knowledge can never be dismissed as passé. This means that today the eternal question still imposes itself: What is being? How do we know being? Coreth rightly stresses from the beginning of his paper that the decisive difference between him and Lonergan lies in their respective understanding of being. Perhaps, I would like to add at the end of my study, this difference is greater than it might seem on first reading the *Metaphysik*. The method these pages would like to propose is that, in order to answer the question of being, more attention needs to be paid to the subject than it usually receives. [Translation by Donald E. Buzzelli]

¹⁰⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Λ XII, 9: 1074b 34. [Fr. Sala's translation.]

¹⁰¹ Aristotle, *De anima [On the soul]*, III, 7, 431b 2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 431a 16f.

¹⁰³ "Since, then, understanding and the object of understanding are not different in the case of things that have not matter, the divine understanding and its object will be the same." (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Λ XII, 9: 1075a 3-5 [McKeon edition as corrected by Fr. Sala]. See also Aristotle, *De anima*, III, 4: 430a 3f. ["Mind is itself understandable in exactly the same way as its objects are."])

¹⁰⁴ *Insight*, xi, 423.