

## **Lonergan, Joe Whelan, and the Roots of the Arrupe Prayer**

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A great mystery solved! Bart Geger, S.J.,<sup>1</sup> reveals the author of the Arrupe prayer, “Fall in love, stay in love, it will decide everything,” is actually former provincial and author Joe Whelan, S.J. (1932-1994).<sup>2</sup> On hearing Joe penned the prayer, I wondered if he had been influenced by the thought of Jesuit Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), one of the great philosopher-theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

Years ago, I gave a talk for a meeting of Wisconsin province Jesuits and threw in a few ideas from Lonergan. After the talk, a friend, using my nickname, said, “Mugs. Lonergan. (pause). Life’s just too short.”

Really, Lonergan is more accessible than most realize. Ignatian disciples can benefit greatly by having some familiarity with the basic ideas and broad outline of Lonergan’s project. Lonergan’s method leads us to God, as he shows us how to understand ourselves. He wrote two major works, *Insight* (1957) a massive philosophical treatise, and *Method in Theology* (1972), which is much more manageable. Hint: start with *Method*, or even better, his eight-page essay, “Dialectic of Authority.”<sup>4</sup> Joe Flanagan’s introduction to Lonergan, *Quest for Self Knowledge*, is also a good starter.

Early in my Jesuit life I read *Insight*, and understood a little of it. But it was in the slow, deep reading of *Method in Theology*, and in writing an S.T.L. thesis on Lonergan

and Sobrino, that I began to incorporate into my life and practice of Ignatian Spirituality the basics of Lonergan.

Studying Lonergan gives us a better grasp of who and why and how we are as human persons, connected to and moving toward realization in the mystery and love of neighbor and of God. Lonergan's work provides an owner's manual for the human person. His analysis reveals how our minds and hearts actually work. He demonstrates how our living can be intelligently charted, and vastly improved, by choosing to adhere to the inherent norms of our hearts and minds.

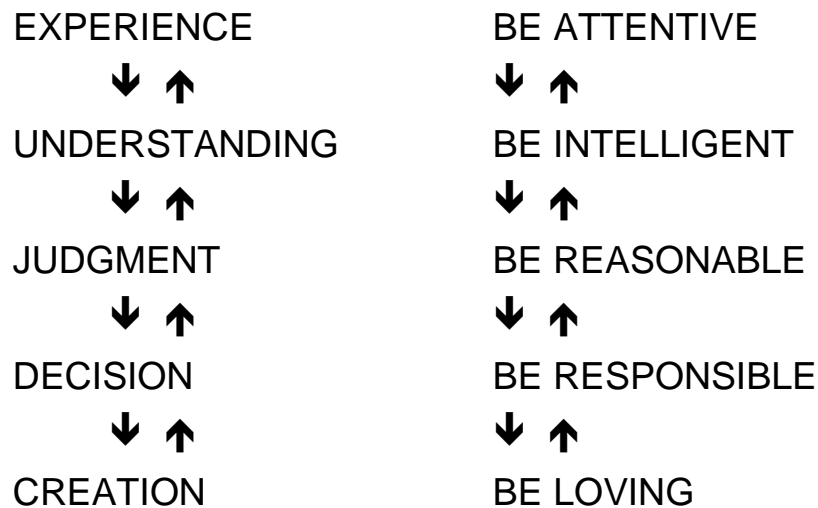
Know what it is to know, and you will know what it is you are doing when you are choosing to be the person you truly, and deeply, desire to be. As scientific method has revolutionized the world by methodically doing science, so too Lonergan hopes that human being will be revolutionized by people becoming conscious of our own conversion processes on intellectual, moral, and religious levels of our being. Such conversions move all towards self-transcendence and authenticity. Converted people and groups will make for a world of peace and progress. Lack of conversion, denial of transcendence and rejection of authenticity, on the part of individuals and groups, will make for a world of disaster and decline.

Lonergan describes a normative pattern for realizing our potential as those who are being fashioned to live with God forever. He describes the interior movements of our minds, hearts, and souls. He realizes that cultural shifts from classical to historical consciousness have disoriented many. He maps the differentiation of consciousness

going on inside of us, and how we transcend, i.e., go beyond, ourselves in appropriating our polymorphic consciousness. He traces how we move from a child's world of immediacy to a world mediated by meaning.<sup>5</sup>

Fans of Lonergan call him a philosopher for the ages. He has discerned a trans-temporal, trans-cultural pattern that exists in all human persons. In all times and places, in all communities and cultures, all human persons' experience, strive to understand their experience, make judgements based on those understandings, and make choices and decide courses of action based on those judgements. Deep within this normative pattern of Experiencing – Understanding – Judging – Deciding, exist inherent norms. To experience, we must be attentive. To understand, we must be intelligent. To judge, we must be reasonable. To decide, we must be responsible. Be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible.<sup>6</sup> This is a method, a way of being human, on personal and communal levels. I would add, we are called to be creative, and to do so, we must be loving. Practicing the “Be-Attitudes” of Lonergan's system makes for progress.<sup>7</sup> Refusing to be faithful to the transcendental precepts makes for decline. For we can fool ourselves, ignore our experience, muddle our understanding with bias, both personal and social, and choose to live according to unreasonable judgments.

## LONERGAN'S TRANSCENDENTAL PRECEPTS (i.e., "BE - ATTITUDES")



Conversions lead to our becoming more and more authentic persons. Refusal or avoidance of conversion results in our becoming unauthentic. Authenticity makes us happy, healthy, holy, and free. Think of saints. Think of the ending of slavery. Think of just wages. Unauthenticity destroys us and our relationships. Think of cheating spouses or unscrupulous business persons. Think of wars and genocides. Think of global climate change. Living authentically means progress is more probable on the personal, communal, societal, and global levels of our existence. Living unauthentically makes progress stall, and moves us, our communities, our societies, our cultures, in dangerous, often deadly, directions.

Lonergan offers an analysis of communal disintegration, rehabilitation, recovery, and reintegration. Cumulative progress follows the construction of common meaning and community. Decline follows the trashing of truth, the rejection of responsibility, and the death grip of gross greed. When things fall apart, we need to recover the

promise of progress. The alternative is to descend into the abyss. Remember: Lonergan lived during World Wars I and II.

Lonergan describes the crises and the solution. He writes, “Finally, the divided community, their conflicting actions, and the messy situation are headed for disaster. For the messy situation is diagnosed differently by the divided community; action is ever more at cross purposes; and the situation becomes still messier to provoke still sharper differences in diagnosis and policy, more radical criticism of one another’s actions, and an ever deeper crisis in the situation.”<sup>8</sup> The solution, according to Lonergan, is authentic self-transcendence in knowing rightly, choosing responsibly, and living in true and loving freedom. We are invited to co-operate with “that love of God above all and in all [that] so embraces the order of the universe as to love all men (sic) with a self-sacrificing love.”<sup>9</sup> We are called to cooperate with God, and respond to the problem of evil.<sup>10</sup>

Following Lonergan’s method will form communities that improve the human condition. “Without a large measure of community, human society and sovereign states cannot function. ... There are needed, then, individuals and groups and, in the modern world, organizations that labor to persuade people to intellectual, moral and religious conversion.”<sup>11</sup> Lonergan notes, “As common meaning constitutes community, so divergent meaning divides it.”<sup>12</sup>

Lonergan’s method reveals values. The more we are faithful to the demands of values inherent in our human being, i.e., the realities of truth, justice, goodness and

love, the more we move toward fulfillment in God. The more we truncate truth with lies, undermine good with evil, and violate love with selfishness and sin, the more we rescind from our horizon as those destined to live in joy with God forever.

The way forward lies not in dictating dogmas or decimating opponents with sound bites and terrifying tweets. Reinstating progress lies in the loving call to be our deepest, truest selves: personally, communally, globally. Institutions too must respond. For example, “Religion... in an era of crisis has to think less of issuing commands and decrees and more of fostering the self-sacrificing love that alone is capable of providing the solution to the evil of decline...”<sup>13</sup> The church should be a prime mover in dialogue leading to conversion and common meaning.

Himself a philosopher and theologian who prized and privileged the power of the intellect, Lonergan also reflected a great deal about the realities of emotion. His deepening realization of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit to convert and change us (Rom 5:5), our communities and our world, led him to preach that being-in-love with God is the point and meaning of our existence as human persons.

Ultimately, our capacity as transcending persons ushers forth in love. Lonergan lyrically writes:

That capacity becomes an actuality when one falls in love. Then one’s being becomes being-in-love. Such being-in-love has its antecedents, it causes, its conditions, its occasions. But once it has blossomed forth, and as long as it lasts, it takes over. ... From it flow one’s desires and fears, one’s joys and sorrows, one’s discernment of values, one’s decisions, and deed<sup>14</sup>

That sounds a lot like the Arrupe prayer to me. I bet Joe Whelan read Lonergan. Anyway, Joe's book, *Benjamin*, is an essay in mystical theology. And Irish Jesuit William Johnston, who also writes on prayer and mysticism, informs us that he visited Lonergan shortly before the great man's death. Johnston suggested that Lonergan's method "culminates in mystical experience. Lonergan smiled and said, 'Yes, yes!'"<sup>15</sup>

Lonergan's mysticism is grounded in our human experience and consciousness, and reaches beyond us to others, and to the reality of God. In *Insight* he writes: Our "detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know" is not satisfied with "mere answers."<sup>16</sup> Our desires make us those who "endeavor to enter into the mystical pattern of experience."<sup>17</sup> Our deep desire to know is actually a deep desire for God.

[S]o, being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality. That fulfilment brings a deep-set joy that can remain despite humiliation, failure, privation, pain, betrayal, desertion. That fulfilment brings a radical peace, the peace the world cannot give. That fulfilment bears fruit in a love of one's neighbor that strives mightily to bring about the kingdom of God on this earth.<sup>18</sup>

Alleluia!

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Bart T. Geger, S.J., "Ten Things that St. Ignatius Never Said or Did," in *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits*, 50/1, Spring 2018.
- <sup>2</sup> Joseph Whelan, S.J., *Benjamin: Essays in Prayer* (Newman Press, 1972).
- <sup>3</sup> It is quite probable the Joe Whelan read Lonergan's lines on being in love. Lonergan's "being- in-love" paragraph appears not only in *Method in Theology* (1972, p.105), but also in Lonergan's Feb. 1970 talk at St. Louis University, "The Response of the Jesuit as Priest and Apostle in the Modern World." That talk was published in *Studies in Jesuit Spirituality*, Sept 1970. Vol 2/3. cf. Bernard J.F. Lonergan, A

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*Second Collection* (Philadelphia, the Westminster Press, 1974), p. 171. It's hard to imagine Joe didn't read that issue of studies).

- <sup>4</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., "Dialectic of Authority," in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan* (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 5-12.
- <sup>5</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003 [orig. 1971]), P. 76.
- <sup>6</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003 [orig. 1971]), p. 20.
- <sup>7</sup> Tad Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards Spiritual Integration* (Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1985), pp. 115-116.
- <sup>8</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003 [orig. 1971]), p. 358.
- <sup>9</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (San Francisco, CA: Harper& Row, 1957), p. 699.
- <sup>10</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (San Francisco, CA: Harper&Row, 1957), p. 719; 721-723.
- <sup>11</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003 [orig. 1971]), p.361.
- <sup>12</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003 [orig. 1971]), p. 357.
- <sup>13</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., "Dialectic of Authority," in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 10-11.
- <sup>14</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (New York, Seabury Press, 1972), p 105.
- <sup>15</sup> William Johnston, S.J., *Mystical Theology: the Science of Love* (London: HarperCollinsReligious, 1995). p. 12.
- <sup>16</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (San Francisco, CA: Harper& Row, 1957), p. 736.
- <sup>17</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (San Francisco, CA: Harper& Row, 1957), p. 736.
- <sup>18</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (New York, Seabury Press, 1972), p 105.