

BERNARD LONERGAN'S COGNITIVE THEORY AND ARISTOTLIAN PHRONESIS:
TOWARD A CONCEPTION OF PERFORMATIVE OBJECTIVITY IN VIRTUE ETHICS

by

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Abstract

Virtue ethics bases moral decision-making, in part, in a skills-like ability to spot morally salient features in the phenomenal world. Aristotle, an exemplar of such ethics, developed a theory of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) wherein the person of moral expertise makes sound ethical judgments and decisions via direct insight into concrete circumstances. *Phronesis* involves emotive discernment and agent-relative construal of the world. But emotions and perspectives can also be linked with bias and poor judgment. How are we to think about objectivity if virtue ethics relies upon such apparently subjective factors as emotively influenced dispositions?

Bernard Lonergan developed a theory of insight-based human understanding and explores its operation in the concrete circumstances of practical living. His theory offers a process of human learning and knowing that does not avoid emotions and agent-perspectives but seeks to so operate within these factors as to produce a state we could validly call 'being objective.' Agreeing with Aristotle on a key role for emotions, Lonergan goes much further in claiming that some mode of the emotion of love should play a critical role in attaining the insights required for virtue ethics. His treatment of love, however, remains vague.

Martha Nussbaum, on the other hand, provides very rich treatment of how love, understood as compassion, can act as a control for perspectival discernment and moral insight. Her theory fills out Lonergan's, allowing us more clearly to see how love (and other emotions) could be conducive to fostering objective viewpoints within morally charged circumstances. Objectivity in virtue ethics can be understood, then, to be what we are more or less attaining to the degree that we self-consciously apprehend and deploy our innate modes of insight-induction and aim these cognitive processes toward a world construed by a background concern of care and compassion.

CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Glossary of Greek Terms	v
Dedication	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
The thesis of the dissertation	8
Outline and goal of each chapter	10
CHAPTER 1: An Exposition of Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, bks I, II, III, VI.	13
1. A Short exposition of key sections in the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	16
(i) The end of human action: happiness.....	16
(ii) The function of man.....	18
(iii) The nature of human virtue.....	21
(iv) Choice, freedom, and deliberation	24
(v) <i>Phronesis</i> (Practical wisdom)	27
Summary of the synopsis	29
2. Four cognitive operations central to Aristotle's theory of moral insight.....	31
(i) Emotions and desires as cognitive and perceptive capacities	32
(ii) <i>Phantasm</i> —the appearances with which <i>nous</i> and <i>phronesis</i> must work	35
(iii) On non-inferential thinking	44
(iv) Practical particularism	54
Chapter summary	57
CHAPTER 2: Lonergan's Theory of Insight and Cognitive Operations	60
1. The nature of insight	61
The complex cognitive process in which insight operates	68
2. The unrestricted nature of questioning and the 'pure desire to know'	74
3. Two cognitive roles for emotion.....	80
Summary of Lonergan and criticism of his theory	88
Criticism and defense of the general theory	91
Chapter summary	94

CHAPTER 3: Lonergan's "Common Sense Insight" and its Relation to <i>Phronesis</i>	96
1. Common sense: intelligence directed at concrete living	97
The method of common sense insight	100
Summary of common sense insight	103
2. Construing the world: Lonergan's theory of "patterns of experience"	104
Patterned experience must be distinguished from narrative	111
3. Emotions apprehend value and play a role in judgment; the problem of bias	114
(i) Dramatic and individual biases	115
(ii) A Kuhnian objection considered	121
Chapter summary and comparison	126
CHAPTER 4: Emotive Perception of Value and Objectivity in Virtue Ethics	128
1. Nussbaum on emotions as value judgments	131
(i) Emotions as judgments of value	133
(ii) Augmenting Nussbaum: apprehension of value versus judgment of value	141
2. Coming to grips with bias	146
3. Another look at patterns of experience and salience selection	153
The horizon of concern, emotion, and patterned experience	156
4. Love as a ground for procedural objectivity	158
(i) Love as compassion	159
(ii) Objections that love might be bias	163
(iii) Performative objectivity revisited	168
Concluding Summary of the Dissertation	171
My approach in this dissertation	171
The significance of the dissertation	173
BIBLIOGRAPHY	177

Glossary of Greek Terms

aisthesis – sensation, perception

autarkeia – self-sufficiency

empeiria – the state of having experience through acquaintance with something

eupraxia – a condition of doing well

horos - a boundary; limit, (plural: *horoi*)

kalon – the noble, beautiful, fine

nous – mind generally; but the faculty of understanding directly, intuitively

orthos logos – right, correct reason

phronesis – practical wisdom in matters of action, of human living

phronimos – one having practical wisdom (plural: *phronimoi*)

phantasm – a image appearing to the mind; mental presentation

poiesis – productive art; creative art

praxis – a doing, action

prohairesis – decision; deliberative desire

techne – skill-type knowledge, an applied science as opposed to theoretical science

telos – end; goal

**For my
Mother and Father**

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation looks at how studies in the cognitive power of emotion and the phenomenology of insight can augment Aristotelian virtue ethics and offset certain weaknesses to which such an ethics seems prone, namely, problems associated with subjectivity and bias.

The project hinges on that characteristic of virtue ethics that requires an essential role for the personal perceptions and desires of agents in deciding proximate right choices as well as the longer-term issue of how one should live one's life as a whole. Virtue ethics relies upon a learned capacity to desire rightly the genuine human good and this will necessarily invoke the agent's character-formed perceptions and judgments in determining the particular good. This is not to deny a role for utility calculation or for the notion of binding duty. These notions, however, seem to lean too heavily upon the assumption that we can apprehend pragmatic and/or universal goods from some purely rational, hence 'objective' standpoint. Virtue ethics argues that the apprehension of ethical salience and good choices will require a more holistic moral sensitivity that operates, at least in part, directly from an agent's desire, life-experience, and empathic sensitivity to concrete situations. It is here that bias and uncritical subjectivity may interfere.

Aristotle is the classic exemplar of this kind of ethics and I will interact with his thought throughout this project.¹ In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is the practically wise person—the

¹ Let me disclose at the outset that I will be drawing upon interpretations of Aristotle presented by Nancy Sherman (on particularism), David Wiggins (on moral perception and non-inferential thinking), and Martha Nussbaum (on *phantasm* and emotive judgment), and together with input from Bernard Lonergan, will develop ideas that, while not always found in the Aristotelian corpus, are still compatible with his basic theory. These respected commentators have offered reasonable resolutions to some difficulties in Aristotle and I wish to build on their work, not retrace their steps.

*phronimos*²—who is the expert at sound ethical deliberation and action. That person too is described as someone who, while knowing, say, that courage and generosity are virtues, still is only able to determine which of these might be the overriding moral concern by attending to the particular case, and considering his or her own connection to that case. Moreover, the ethical salience in any given case is only properly grasped if the agent's cognitive capacities have not been distorted by untrained emotion or a love of base things. The development of such practical intelligence (*phronesis*) and moral virtue (*arête ethike*) seemingly comes through a dialectical interaction with actual life-situations and the shape of our affective and intellectual responses.

How, then, are we to think about notions of objectivity when talking about an ethics relying upon such idiosyncratic factors as perceptual acumen, context sensitivity, and the changeable nature of emotions?

In light of this question, many scholars have had difficulties with Aristotle's ethics for the following reasons.³

First, Aristotle claims that it is the good character of the agent that somehow highlights the good choices to be made in concrete situations; and yet, good choices are the precursor to mature and discerning character. Monan, for instance, claims that the obvious interpretation of Aristotle here is that his argument is circular, for practical wisdom ultimately gets defined by reference to

² *Phronimos*, used throughout as a substantive, is an adjective of two endings with both the masculine and the feminine singular ending in *-os*. It is, therefore, a suitable gender-neutral term, and I shall freely apply it to male and female moral experts without doing injustice to principles of grammar or equity. See: Smyth's *Greek Grammar*, sec. 288-9.

³ A helpful article on this issue is Peterson (1992).

itself.⁴ Greenwood, as well as Gauthier and Jolif also think circularity is inescapable.⁵ Mackie agrees, charging that Aristotle's view on the good life and how we go about deciding what to do "is too circular to be very helpful."⁶ Grote on the other hand, calls it an *apparent* circularity, an *apparent* incongruity.⁷ Ackrill thinks key texts are obscure but that the putative account which charges circularity is probably incorrect.⁸ Dahl and Cooper also grapple with apparent circularity and offer various ways out of the problem.⁹ We can see, then, that while there are exegetical difficulties in Aristotle, the circularity problem seems to arise from the general theory itself.

Second, because the expert in practical wisdom must attend to particulars in order to 'make the call' of what would be good in the case at hand, there is the question of just what kind of perception and/or intelligence is at play in virtue ethics. Whence comes the objectivity that must be preserved for claims of moral truth?

For Engberg-Pedersen, moral insight derives its objectivity from the universals discerned in the particulars that *phronesis* confronts.¹⁰ Sorabji argues that the *phronimos* has a "general view of the good life" that, along with habituated right desires, induces insight into the particulars of moral deliberation.¹¹ Dahl thinks objectivity derives from the rationality of the deliberative process: critical reflection uncovers ends and motives that are truly what one was seeking through the discernment of moral habituation. The enquiry of ethics brings to light the

⁴ Monan (1968), pp. 83-4.

⁵ Greenwood (1909) p. 157; Gauthier and Jolif (1970), II, p. 435.

⁶ Mackie (1977), p. 186.

⁷ Grote (1890), pp. 515-17.

⁸ Ackrill (1973), p. 24; and Ackrill (1981), p. 138.

⁹ Dahl (1984), pp. 65ff; Cooper (1975).

¹⁰ Engberg-Pedersen (1983), pp. 207; 211.

¹¹ Sorabji (1980), pp. 206-7.

universals implicit in the habits of the *phronimos*.¹² Cooper disconnects syllogistic reasoning from the final ethical insight by separating the inferential aspect (the moral syllogism) from the perception of particulars. Deliberation determines inferentially the *kinds* of things to be done or sought, while direct perception picks out suitable *instances* of these kinds.¹³ Gomez-Lobo, contrary to Sorabji and Engberg-Pedersen, denies that any universal is operative in the background of practical insight at all. Rather, the final concrete insight is a direct perceptual grasp. Objectivity is saved because there really is a truth to the matter, say, that donating \$10.00 today to charity is the good thing to do.¹⁴

Williams states clearly what is needed here: a distinction between the kind of objectivity proper to the hard sciences and that proper to ethics. In the latter, it is a unique mode of intelligence that grasps what is good (*phronesis*) and its method should not have to answer to scientific criteria.¹⁵ Ontologically, in the Aristotelian framework, facts about human nature are the basis for claims of moral truth, and hence objectivity in ethics. But from the epistemic side, how do we justify a perception-based mode of gaining particularist moral insights? Syllogistically based deliberations would ground objectivity in the self-evidence of ethical first principles and the reliability of the rules of inference.¹⁶ But perceptions are notoriously fallible things, especially so if we expect them to be affected by emotions, disposition, and habits.

All these viewpoints and concerns indicate that at least two questions regarding the cognitive side of Aristotelian ethics have not been finally settled and, with the renewed interest in virtue

¹² Dahl (1984), pp. 21; 48-60.

¹³ Cooper (1975), pp. 19-21; 44.

¹⁴ Gomez-Lobo (1995), p. 28.

¹⁵ Williams (1985a), pp. 151-53.

¹⁶ This is the standard approach of natural law ethics. See Grisez (1991).

ethics, are still worth pursuing. Since practical wisdom is an acquired skill of discernment regarding what would be good relative to the agent, then,

- Viewed from the inside, from the side of the subject, what is the nature of the cognitive activity going on within the *phronimos*—the practically wise person—when one is ‘getting it right’ in moral discernment and deliberation?
- Since, according to Aristotle, practical wisdom (*phronesis*) requires some reliance upon criteria that may be interpreted as subjective, such as the agent’s situational context and emotive interaction, what do we mean when we say that a given agent is ‘being objective’ in this process?

In treating the second of these questions, my project here is not to develop a full blown theory of ethical objectivity as such, one that will compete with other such theories and yet be distinct from scientific objectivity. Rather, I am going to focus upon specific weaknesses of virtue theories like Aristotle’s, namely, the dangers of personal bias. These dangers can be addressed, I think, not by eliminating subjective factors but by properly understanding them and harnessing them. Part of the answer is intended to show that emotion can be a corrective to bias, rather than merely one of its causes.

In treating the first question, I head in a direction set by some recent studies in cognitive psychology, a direction that promises to be useful for understanding the processes of moral decision-making. These processes include an acquired deliberative expertise that gains Gestalt-

like insight directly into situational appearances.¹⁷ Such a decision-making skill does not entirely eliminate the role of calculation, deduction, and application of rules and procedures, but banks on a qualitative change that occurs when novices become experts at problem solving. This change is an ability to 'act without thinking' or to 'see what needs doing' in a way analogous to how a chess master 'sees' the right move without having mentally to exhaust the set of all possible moves.¹⁸

Much excellent work has already been done in regard to such processes of particularist discernment and practical insights.¹⁹ A relatively unknown scholar, however, and one whose work is a good entry point for a more scientifically informed moral psychology, is the late Canadian Jesuit philosopher Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984).²⁰ Among his many works are two seminal ones, the 1957 book *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, and the 1971 work *Method in Theology*. In the former, the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition of Catholic thought is modified and brought into serious encounter with empirical scientific method and the statistical method of the soft sciences and genetics. That work explicitly rejects any scholastic epistemology that concentrates upon universals and conceptualism to the neglect of empirical investigation and the historic development of ideas. Instead, Lonergan puts the tradition on a somewhat Neo-Kantian footing that relies on the foundation of certain prior mental operations

¹⁷ H. Dreyfus and S. Dreyfus (1990), pp. 247-48. See also P. DesAutels (1996).

¹⁸ D. K. Simonton (1984).

¹⁹ See for example C. E. Zsambock and G. Klein., eds. (1997); Kaplan, C. A. and Simon, H. A. (1990), pp. 374-419; M. L. Gick and S. J. McGarry (1992), pp. 623-39. .

²⁰ Lonergan was educated at Heythrop College, University of London, and Gregorian University in Rome. His career included professorships at the Gregorianum (Rome), Regis College (University of Toronto), Harvard Divinity School, and Boston College. He produced works in economics, philosophy of history, philosophical psychology, epistemology, methodology, and theology. Among other distinctions, he was made a Companion of the Order of Canada and received honorary doctorates from twelve American and Canadian Universities. Lonergan's work displays eclectic influences from Aquinas, Kant, Hegel, J. H. Newman, Max Scheler, as well as an integrated use of evolutionary theory, probability theories, and depth psychology. A short biography of Lonergan is found in Morelli and Morelli (1997), pp. 4-25.

that make knowledge possible in the first place, and that are the only recourse for justifying our beliefs and decisions. Later, in *Method in Theology*, he asserts, among other things, a cognitive role for the emotions and their inseparability from responsible action and rational thinking. For Lonergan, knowledge is an ongoing developmental structure, involving the whole person, and including the intersubjective and collaborative social world. The inception and development of knowledge proceeds through a dialectical interaction of the agent with the phenomenal world. The world does not simply impress itself upon us; neither do we project or construct the world. Rather, the subject goes back and forth between the particular data of presentation, insight, judgment and returns again to presentation, spiralling upward in a self-correcting process of learning. This dialectic is captured in Lonergan's claim that 'genuine objectivity is the achievement of authentic subjectivity.'²¹

For both Lonergan and Aristotle, determining an ethical truth will require a turning to concrete presentations and the inspection of real contexts and situations. Clearly, such inspection will engage our emotions, past experiences, hunches, memories, sudden insights, symbols, imaginary cases, and acquired rules of thumb. But these factors must be *deliberately* and *intelligently* engaged, not arbitrarily, accidentally, or nonchalantly. For we intuit this much at least: that it is not morally praiseworthy thoughtlessly to copy our peers or to let indifference characterize our choices and actions, for deliberation and choice entangle us in real responsibility.

Aristotle seems to be pointing at this requirement when he claims that a morally praiseworthy act must be done in full awareness of what we are doing, why we do it, freely choosing to do it, and

²¹ Lonergan (1971) [henceforth: *MIT*], pp. 264-65.

doing it for its own sake.²² To think and deliberate well is something we can choose to do, or at least desire to do, and hence sound cognitive functioning, insofar as we can self-consciously take hold of it, becomes an ethically charged concern. We are morally obliged not only to *act* well, but to *think* well too.

There is then a kind of sober self-appropriation wherein the subject, aware of the fact that he is in a deliberative process, takes hold to some degree of the stages of that process precisely to promote a sound and responsible outcome. This is the subject operating well as a *self-conscious* subject precisely to overcome limitation and head toward objectivity and moral truth. At least one of the most vital stages of such a self-appropriation is awareness of and compensation for personal bias, the prejudices that would deceive the very discernment one is trying to bring to excellent development.

The thesis of the dissertation

In this project I argue that Lonergan's general theory of sound cognition, and his analysis of its breakdown in bias, can contribute to the alternative type of objectivity Williams called for. I show that Lonergan's mode of particularist intelligence, called 'common sense insight,' is the mode of insight deployed by Aristotle's person of practical wisdom. Thus, if *phronesis* is a species of common sense insight, I can deploy certain aspects of Lonergan's notions of objectivity and particularist insight to bolster the weaknesses of virtue ethics pointed out above.

Even so, however useful Lonergan may be in the phenomenology of insight, he is in need of considerable enrichment when it comes to emotional cognition. I think Martha Nussbaum's

²² NE 1105a27-1105b19.

recent work can provide this. Lonergan claims that part of what happens through our emotions is the discernment of values, and furthermore, that love is somehow an architectonic emotion that may provide an overall viewpoint or commitment that actually promotes objective value-discernment. But Lonergan did not satisfactorily flesh this out. Thus, I turn to Nussbaum who unpacks in far greater detail the ways in which emotional intelligence operates as a mode of perception and of judgment. She too calls for some mode of love to play an indispensable role in sound value-perception and judgment. After critically adjusting some of her claims, I merge them with Lonergan in order to arrive at a practical notion of 'being objective' that addresses the bias concerns that may attend virtue ethics.

The upshot of my thesis then is to argue that a modified account of Nussbaum's insights on love's discernment can satisfactorily fill out gaps in Lonergan's general theory of cognition and value apprehension. In turn, Lonergan's general theory and his common sense insight go a long way to answering the two questions that guide this thesis: just what are we doing in particular moral insight; and why should doing that be considered objective?

In the process of working this out, I will be moving beyond strict Aristotelian ethics and be presenting ideas applicable to a more broadly construed virtue ethics. While many notions herein discussed, such as emotional discernment or the relation between bias/preference and the phenomenal aspect of the world, are compatible extensions of Aristotle's theory, others, such as love as controlling background emotion or healthy subjectivity as correlative to genuine objectivity, are notions clearly outside the Aristotelian framework. Still, they represent concerns that are relevant to any modern presentation of virtue ethics because they build into the

foundational concept of human nature the legitimate contemporary concerns for evolutionary process (both social and biological), cultural and historical development, and the importance of freedom and choice in the making of one's own character.

Outline and goal of each chapter

Chapter 1 presents a short exposition of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. That book establishes the basic elements and relations of an ethics grounded in the flourishing of human nature. It introduces such issues as the unique function of human kind, the ultimate goal of all human action, and the means necessary for attaining the good proper to human function and ends. It also introduces the elements of a practical wisdom and of an acquired state of right desire that orients us toward the genuine good. After presenting this exposition I take a closer look at four key themes that arise from Aristotle's treatment and to which I return throughout the project. First, the intelligent and discerning nature of our emotions and desires; second, the dialectical relationship between our desires and the way the world appears to us; third, the non-inferential mode of thinking that is at work in ethical insight; and fourth, the practical particularism that inevitably seems to result for an ethics relying upon direct insight into concrete states of affairs.

In Chapter 2, I present in condensed form aspects of Bernard Lonergan's theory of the cognitive operations that we spontaneously perform in learning and knowing. I will uncover the several interdependent yet distinct types of cognitive action that must be performed methodically if we are to learn and know anything at all. Beneath these acts is revealed the actor, the subject confronting the phenomenal world with desire, emotions, and the need to make decisions. Lonergan asserts a twofold role for emotions in the cognitive process; they are vital components

of how we apprehend value, and they inform the process of judging value. My purpose here is to set up a theoretical backdrop for a comparison of Lonergan's insight with Aristotle's *phronesis*.

Chapter 3 brings this general theory down to earth, where we see it embodied in a specialization of intelligence that Lonergan called 'common sense insight.' Common sense is the mode of intelligence that all persons and societies develop in order successfully to cope with the *ad hoc* contingencies of daily living. But it also includes the concerns of personal growth and intersubjective development. Common sense is shown to share many significant traits with *phronesis*: concern with mastering the concrete decisions and actions that impinge upon us; the construal of the world and illumination of ethical salience that increases with experience and expertise; a place for emotion in the apprehension of particular value; and the corresponding problem of bias in which unsound desires and emotions distort the phenomenal field. By identifying *phronesis* as a species of common sense insight, this chapter allows me to apply aspects of Lonergan's bias discussion to the context of virtue ethics. But I think his treatment of emotive cognition is inadequate to the task of ethical insight and thus is in need of deeper input.

Therefore, in Chapter 4, I turn to elements of Martha Nussbaum's recent study of emotional intelligence in order to fill in lacunae in Lonergan's emotive theory. I present her theory of emotion-as-identical-to-value-judgment; I offer what I think are necessary critiques and amendments of that theory, and then I explore the ways that some mode of love can be the emotion that overcomes, to a significant degree the problems of bias. Both the correction for bias and the illuminating of ethical salience through compassion pave the way for a notion of

performative objectivity, a notion that I think is adequate to the task of ‘getting it right’ in virtue ethics.

CHAPTER 1: An Exposition of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, bks I, II, III, VI.

This chapter is a synopsis and exposition of sections of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, but includes an important look at some key passages from *De Anima*. The sections I will explore focus upon the ground and structure of human ethical thinking; the schema of what would count as right or good choices for human beings is shown to arise from human physiological, cognitive, and socio-political nature. These writings are an inquiry into how we are to develop and live out the good human life, and this in turn, requires an understanding of what counts as the end-goal of human living, and the means suitable to attaining that end. That end turns out to be a carefully defined notion of happiness (*eudaimonia*) and the means turns out to be an equally well-defined notion of moral virtue plus practical wisdom.

In what follows, I present a concise exposition of topics in *NE*, books I, II, III, and VI. These sections of the *NE* form the well-trodden territory of centuries of discussion regarding virtue and the good for mankind. Book I presents the teleological theory of human action and the notion of happiness as human flourishing in accordance with our natures. I concentrate on books II, III, and VI because they lay out the two areas that will come under analysis and comparison later on: the specific kind of intelligence productive of ethical insight and the appropriate kind of emotive, desiderative disposition requisite for ethical apprehension. Books VIII and IX of Aristotle's ethics present important discussions of the role of friendship in the good life but I avoid this topic for the most part because it does not directly relate to my goal of exploring objectivity theory. Still, I touch upon the social interdependence of human community as the context from

which practical wisdom would emerge, and in that regard, friendship and other human relations will be covered as necessary. Book X offers a discussion of pleasure and its relation to the conception of the final good for man. My thesis however, is not overly concerned with conceptions of happiness, but focuses more on the aspects of cognition deployed in particularist ethical insight. Thus, while sidestepping the pleasure discussion in book X, I will cover the topic as it emerges in the first three books—as a phenomenal pleasantness associated with intentional objects deemed good or desirable by us. A further topic of book X—contemplation—introduces another mode and object of intelligence, that while fascinating in its own right, and part of a deeper study of the final good, is not directly relevant to a theory of objectivity that is grounded in emotive intelligence. Also, it is not altogether clear that book X's conception of happiness is consistent with the more earthly focus of the first part of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but such discussion is beyond to scope of this project.

Against the background of my exposition of these section of the *NE*, and working with interpretations of the text influenced by N. Sherman, M. Nussbaum, and D. Wiggins, I will examine special components of an Aristotelian theory of moral insight: namely, reliance upon perception, emotions, and non-inferential thinking.

By relying, in part, upon plausible interpretations by the above commentators, I may, from time to time, move beyond explicit Aristotelian teaching. But I suggest that these interpretations are compatible extensions of Aristotle's thought and, as such, deserve to be considered as legitimate viewpoints of the operations of virtue-based ethics in general.

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is not a speculative work that attempts to penetrate the metaphysics of 'the good' as such. It is a practical book the goal of which is to help the reader understand, and perhaps become, a good human being, living *well* his or her own life. If there were a single question guiding this whole work, it could be the one that Julia Annas thinks drove most ethical projects of the ancient world: *how should I live my life as a whole?*²³ To that kind of question Aristotle offers some answers based largely upon a theory of the nature and function of human beings.

Aristotle reminds the reader not to expect from ethical study the kind of epistemic precision that one might expect from, say, mathematics. The nature of the subject matter determines what degree of precision is possible, and ethical deliberation is not an exact science.²⁴ This cannot mean ethical relativism or skepticism because Aristotle claims to disclose objective, rational, justifiable, and motivating truths regarding the human good. Still, this kind of truth is different from scientific truth and cannot be captured in universally applicable moral maxims.

If, then, there is ethical truth, from where does the imprecision arise? Is it that the human good itself is ambiguous? Is our conception of the human good somehow imprecise? Or does it arise from the contingent particularity of each human life? Perhaps it is the method by which we are to arrive at ethical truth or, worse, from perversions of such method. My goal in the chapter is to lay bare enough of the Aristotelian ethics and cognitive psychology to show: (i) that the imprecision comes from the prior indeterminacy of the concrete good relative to each individual human who must discern it, combined with (ii) the probabilistic nature of human insight when

²³ Annas (1993), p. 27.

²⁴ *NE* 1094b12-27; 1096b30-33.

deployed in concrete problem solving. This will set the stage for my later examination of Lonergan and Nussbaum on just these issues.

1. A Short exposition of key sections in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

Following is a synopsis of portions of *Nicomachean Ethics*, books I, II, III, and VI. The focus will be on five themes that derive from the text:

- (i) The end of human action: happiness.
- (ii) The function of man.
- (iii) The nature of human virtue.
- (iv) Choice, freedom, and deliberation.
- (v) *Phronesis*.

(i) The end of human action: happiness

Aristotle opens with a study of the nature of human action.²⁵ Rational human action always aims at some end. The end of an action can be called the 'good' of that action. Just as there is a plurality of human actions, whether productive, performative, or intellectual, so too, there is a corresponding plurality of ends, of goods worth pursuing. Thus, health is the good end at which the medical arts aim; victory the good at which strategy aims; a ship the good at which shipbuilding aims.

²⁵ *NE* bk. I, ch. 1.

Also, some pursuits can be ordered to others. For example, good horseback riding can itself be pursued in order to attain the good of military combat: victory. Health is a desirable end in itself, but it is also a part of a larger good life. Human actions, therefore, can be understood as operating within a hierarchy, with some actions as subordinate means of attaining others. The question then arises: is there a *final* end at the top of this hierarchy, an end sought for its own sake *alone*, all else being desired for the sake of this one? The question can also be put non-hierarchically: considering the set of all human actions taken together precisely as a set, is there a single end toward which the set as a whole aims? To know this would be a great influence in living our lives, for “shall we not, then, like archers who have a mark at which to aim, be more likely to hit upon what is right?”²⁶ Understanding human nature and the ends of human actions seems indispensable, then, to living a humanly good life.

Aristotle's dialectical investigation shows that people generally do have a rough idea what the final good might be: it is happiness (*eudaimonia*) and they suppose that living well (*eu zen*) and doing well (*eu pratein*) are the same as happiness. But what do these terms mean when fleshed out? Some say the highest good is pleasure, wealth, health, honour, virtue, and the like. Others, namely Platonists,²⁷ say that the highest good is some self-subsisting, eternal absolute that causes

²⁶ NE 1094a24.

²⁷ Aristotle critiques the Platonic conception that the good is an eternal, unchanging Form, and all lesser, human goods are caused to be good through their participation in that ideal Form. His criticism is essentially twofold. First, this view of the good cannot account for the apparent incommensurability of the actual goods we pursue, and second, an ideal Form of the Good is simply not something attainable for humans anyway. The first criticism reduces to the problem inherent in treating the Good as belonging to a high category, when it does not; or again, of predicating the Good across all the categories as if it were an identical attribute in all of them. Clearly, this is not the case. ‘Good’ has as many senses as, say, ‘being,’ and as such, can be predicated only analogically across many distinct categories. There is a good applicable to substance, to quality, to quantity, to relation, to time and place. It cannot be present in the same way in all these categories; yet, a universal good must be predicated in the same way of all its subjects. Further, if the Good were an identical attribute predicable to all its specific sub-categories, a single

the goodness in all those lesser things in which it participates.²⁸ Pleasure could be the final end of all activity, but only for the vulgar man and for beasts. Honour, which the noble esteem, is dependent upon others for its bestowal, and consequently, is too vulnerable to loss even for good men. Virtue is certainly a great good, but it is somehow felt to be incomplete, for one could have virtue and yet be asleep or in dire poverty, and surely this could not be happiness. Money is sought for what it can buy, not as an end in itself, and so cannot constitute happiness. In this way, Aristotle goes on to remove false candidates while closing in on his own conception of the right one: unlike the partial goods or the merely apparent good, happiness must have at least these four characteristics: first, it must be the *final* good, sought for its own sake and never for the sake of some further goal. Second, it must be a complete good, self-sufficient, and leave nothing else outside itself to be desired.²⁹ Third, happiness will involve the full and proper operation of whatever specific functions are definitive of human being; and fourth, this well-functioning must not be for a mere season, but must characterize our lives as a whole.³⁰ This preliminary definition is augmented as he proceeds.

(ii) The function of man

Aristotle turns from teleological clarifications of happiness to the study of human nature, its capacities and operations. For if human operations, properly directed and performed, are

science (*episteme*) would derive from it. But medicine, gymnastic, strategy all participate in the good, yet there is no single science that comprehends them all. The 'good' is simply not some common element answering to one Form. If this is so, the goods are not commensurate upon a single scale of any kind, and we must treat the notion very differently than we would treat a generic first principle that might ground a single science.

The second criticism is terse but highly relevant. Even if the 'good' were an eternal, independently subsisting Form, it would for that very reason *not* be what we are looking for. We seek the good for *us*, for us *as* humans; human action is aimed at a good that is actually achievable for humans. Otherwise, it could not be defined as the 'human good.' *NE* bk. I, ch. 6.

²⁸ *NE*, bk. I, ch. 4.

²⁹ *NE* 1097a19-b7.

³⁰ *NE* bk. I, ch. 7.

essential to experiencing the human good, then it is necessary that we understand the most characteristic functions of human beings as such. This will mean an anthropological study of the uniquely human capacities that distinguish us from other creatures.

What is the function of the whole man as such? Nutrition, growth, and reproductive functions we share with plants and animals; perceptual awareness we share with other animals. Unique to humans, however, is the *rational* part of the soul, and thus, an expressly *human* function must be some life of activity involving that rational part.³¹

Now, this essential human function, as is the case with all capacities, may be poorly or excellently operative. The proper and full functioning of a capacity is called its excellence, its virtue (*arête*). The excellent functioning of human rational capacity would be the excellence proper to mankind. The distinctly *human* good, then, is a psychic activity in accordance with virtue, and if there is more than one virtue, in accord with the best and the most complete of them.

Aristotle goes on dialectically to deepen and clarify his account of the human good and the well-functioning activity that constitutes it: virtue. Two further opinions of what happiness must include are considered next: that there must be *some* accompanying pleasure and that there be *some* external prosperity. Regarding prosperity, he argues that we need 'enough' external goods to act as instruments, say, for enabling noble actions. Generosity, for instance, might require a certain modicum of personal wealth—what counts as the 'right amount' ought to be left

³¹ NE 1097b23-1098a3. An interesting essay on this subject that uncovers ambiguities in the intellectualist interpretation of human function is Nagel (1972), pp. 252-59.

indeterminate. Children and friends are also valuable goods external to us and without which we cannot function in complete happiness. But regarding pleasure he introduces a notion that will become very important when we investigate moral perception and deliberation. To the good and noble person, pleasure is not a goal in itself, but it does *accompany* noble actions that are such goals. Aristotle captures this phenomenological fact, for “to each man, that which he is said to be a lover of is pleasant.”³² Just as a horse lover finds the visage of horses pleasant, so too, deeds of justice are pleasant to the lover of justice; and by extension, virtuous acts in general are pleasant to the virtuous person. For certainly no one would be called just who felt repulsed inside by the thought or performance of just actions. Whatever gives someone joy and pleasure is an indicator of that person’s loves and desires; this separates virtuous characters from base ones. It also separates virtuous ones from merely continent ones. The continent person does the right thing, but in a forced and joyless manner.

A somewhat more detailed definition of the human good—happiness (*eudaimonia*)—can now be given: “[T]he happy person is the one who expresses complete virtue in his activities, with an adequate supply of external goods, not just for any time but for a complete life.”³³ This condition is a stable disposition not easily altered and never completely lost.³⁴

³² NE 1099a7-8.

³³ NE 1101a14-17.

³⁴ Clearly, no single English word satisfactorily conveys all these notions; ‘happiness’ certainly does not for it connotes the idea of a present, experiential, psychological enjoyment. But as we can see so far, *eudaimonia*, Aristotle’s term here, is a much more complex notion. For the rest of this thesis I will use the Greek term *eudaimonia* as the final good for humans. I do this to put some distance between Aristotle’s concept and our propensity to make subjective enjoyment too central a notion. As well, *eudaimonia* has become a technical term largely acceptable in its own right in the discourse of philosophical ethics.

(iii) The nature of human virtue

Since *eudaimonia* is an activity expressing complete virtue, we must examine the various excellences that the human soul can manifest.

The part of the soul that seems rationally improvable toward functional excellence is the desiring and emotive (orectic) part.³⁵ For, not all desires respond to training or to belief; appetites of the body, such as hunger, are not tamable in this way. But intentional desires and responsive emotions—preferences, fears, delights, and all those drives that bid us to pursue or flee some object or goal—while springing initially from a pre-critical state of our development, do respond to beliefs and can be influenced until they are predisposed to pursue proper objects in the proper way. The person whose appetite and desires are so tempered is the one we praise for having good character.³⁶

The orectic part of the soul has the capacity to be habituated, through pedagogy and practice, until it desires spontaneously the things that it ought.³⁷ Consciously or not, we build habits of preference and action by choosing and implementing activities of a certain kind; we grow through developmental stages in which some tendencies of choice and some preferences are acquired and strengthened, others discouraged or eliminated. The result is a developed set of tendencies that we call either virtue or vice, depending upon whether these tendencies become constitutive of or repugnant to *eudaimonia*. Aristotle says, therefore, that one is not born virtuous, but, by learning to *do* acts of justice we will *become* just and by learning to *feel* fear or

³⁵ NE 1102b30-1103a1.

³⁶ NE 1103a6-10.

³⁷ The term 'ought' must remain indeterminate until we discuss that 'standard' by which the practically wise person would resolve it.

confidence in the right circumstances we will *become* courageous.³⁸ Eventually we habituate the rational soul to love those pursuits that are genuinely good and noble. This shows how it is in our original natures to develop a kind of 'second nature' of learned preferences and habits.³⁹

NE book II focuses upon this trainable, emotive/desiderative part of the soul, describing what could be called the logic of right desire and correct choice attainable by the virtuously disposed soul. This turns out to be a kind of intermediate position between two opposite extremes. Here is how this works: virtuously disposed people desire in the right way the things that are genuinely worth desiring (as tending toward, or being constituents of *eudaimonia*) and are averse to those things genuinely harmful. But the right object—in order to count as genuinely good and fitting to the agent—must also be desired in the right way, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right reasons, and this implies an intermediate zone between excess and defect, between too strong or too weak a desire, between too little or too much of a particular kind of feeling or action. Courage, for instance, lies somewhere between rash foolhardiness on the one hand and fear and flight from everything on the other. Generosity lies somewhere between being too stingy and being so liberal as to, say, impoverish one's family. A healthy diet, too, must be a balanced and adequate one, where this is determined by what would be too much and too little given the actual person in question. The virtues of desiring rightly are gradually developed, then, by the practice of abstaining from too much and too little.⁴⁰ Over time, natural but untamed desires will become stabilized into a rationally informed moderate disposition, a tendency that desires the mean, doing so with full awareness of the dangers to *eudaimonia* present at the other two extremes. Finally, when one habitually and spontaneously desires the mean between

³⁸ *NE* bk. II, ch. 1.

³⁹ *NE* 1103a23-25.

⁴⁰ *NE* bk. II, ch. 2.

extremes, one has perfected (brought to maturity) the proper formation of the desiderative part of the soul: one has developed *moral* virtue (*ethike arête*).

Of course, learning to feel and desire just the right balance of options between excess and defect, and to calibrate this accordingly as each circumstance may warrant, requires some sort of standard. This standard, Aristotle calls, provisionally, 'right reason' (*orthos logos*).⁴¹ Knowing just how to feel, choose, and act in a given situation will be something determined by the principle of right reason and this is not a formula or quantity known in advance, but is a principle that, at best, can only be stated generally. For the precise account of 'right' will depend upon the context and parameters of particular cases, and in these cases, the agents themselves must perceive and/or determine what is appropriate to the occasion.⁴²

This intermediate state also includes an account of the pleasures and pains that accompany our apprehensions, desires, choices, and actions. For it is one thing to abstain from too much bodily delight and quite another to be pleased to do so. The vicious person may abstain, but inside he is pained by it; but the temperate person abstains and delights in this. A character-state can be judged by the things that give a person pleasure and pain, for someone with enough self-control can accomplish mere external action. Self-control alone, apart from taking delight in temperance itself, does not count as virtue.⁴³

What kind of a psychological entity is moral virtue then? To answer this question, Aristotle eliminates passions and the capacity to have passions; we do not praise or blame a mere capacity

⁴¹ *NE* 1103b31-33. Also, *NE* Book VI, ch. 13.

⁴² *NE* 1103b26-1104a9.

⁴³ *NE* 1104b4-13.

and passions are context-dependent for their evaluation. What is left is an acquired *state* (*hexis*) of character.⁴⁴ As above, this state of character is described as a mean, an intermediate state between those tending toward excess and/or defect. As a *virtuous* state of character, it is a disposition that makes a person good and enables that person to perform well her own proper human function. It is a *state* that finds desirable and pleasing those things that truly are good for us as humans, and which are, in fact, noble in their own right. It is, then, an acquired skill, a stabilized habit of choosing an appropriate mean, depending upon the context, of something conducive to one's own human flourishing.⁴⁵

(iv) Choice, freedom, and deliberation

Because virtue is a character state that decides and chooses, Aristotle addresses two conditions upon which such a virtue must rest: volitional freedom and the skill of sound deliberation. Both are necessary for a *eudaimonia*-promoting faculty of decision.

Therefore, merely performing a just act, even taking pleasure in it, is still not enough. For to be truly just, one must perform the just deed under at least three further conditions: first, with full knowledge of what one is doing; second, having *chosen* to do it and chosen it for its own sake, and third, having acted this way from a stable and unchangeable character.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ NE bk. II, ch. 5.

⁴⁵ Irwin's translation (1985) is interesting: "Virtue, then, is (a) a state that decides, (b) [consisting] in a mean, (c) the mean relative to us, (d) which is defined by reference to reason, (e) i.e., to the reason by reference to which the [*phronimos*] would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency." NE 1106b35-1107a4.

⁴⁶ NE 1105a27-1105b19.

Only voluntary actions are open to moral evaluation. Compulsive or ignorant actions, being motivated by principles external to the agent, are not considered praise or blame worthy. Regarding ignorance, however, not all its forms are to be excused, for an adult who is ignorant of the generally understood things that one 'ought to do' (*i.e.*, one's children ought to be cared for) is a vicious person, whereas one who is ignorant of salient particulars in a moral situation (these are in fact *my* children) is not wicked, though, perhaps, that person should be pitied.⁴⁷

Choice (*prohairesis*) is a species of voluntary action, and one's choices reveal one's character. But what is choice? Aristotle rejects certain candidates: choice is not an appetite or an emotion, neither is it an opinion nor simply a wish. These things may be related to choice but are not identical with it.⁴⁸ For us, choice must be of the humanly attainable; deliberation (*bouleusis*) must be of what is changeable through our choices.⁴⁹

Since the ends of the good life, as we have seen, are based upon our human capacities and needs, both of which are given by nature, we deliberate not about ends, but rather about the means of achieving these. The object of choice is that which is wished for in the deliberative process; once chosen, the object is desired in accordance with our deliberation. Hence, our choice or decision "will be *deliberative desire* to do an action that is up to us."⁵⁰ The definition of choice (*prohairesis*) then, is that it is a desire for some object that is now foremost among those having been deliberatively considered. Desire is for the end; deliberation and choice are of appropriate means.

⁴⁷ NE bk. III, ch. 1.

⁴⁸ NE 1111b4-1112a13.

⁴⁹ NE 1111b20-27; 1112a19ff., DA 433b27ff.

⁵⁰ NE 1113a13.

NE III, 4ff returns to an important theme, the phenomenological fact that whatever perceptual or noetic objects strike us *prima facie* as pleasant, noble, and desirable have in some way already been pre-judged to be good and worthy of our love. If one loves horses, the visage of a horse is somehow pleasant, and hence, greeted as a good thing to experience. If one loves violent crime, the visage of such things is also somehow pleasant and deemed some sort of good. Clearly, then, the state of character of a person pre-determines (to some degree, at least) what things shall appear pleasant and what shall appear painful.⁵¹

This tendency of ours, to perform what has been called an immediate 'perceptual judgment',⁵² has two important characteristics: this desiderative-perceptual capacity is trainable; this capacity does not by itself disclose the genuine good, only an *apparent* good. Consequently, moral judgment will require more than virtuous perception; it will lean on some *intellectual* excellence that co-produces, along with right desire, a correct answer to questions of deliberation. Book VI explores the intellectual virtues in search of the best candidate for the rational side of deliberative desire. This candidate turns out to be *phronesis*—Aristotle's conception of practical wisdom.

⁵¹ Character is not totally determinative of such ethical perception for even with bad habits one can wonder about and infer ends other than ones already integrated into character. And this can be going on in an *unreflective* manner—one can acquire ends unconsciously, by habit, by imitation, by emotion, by experience. "Comfortable directions" are chosen because they "represent unconscious analogues of conscious attempts to bring one's desires and dispositions [into] accord with a reflective inductive judgment about what one ought to be doing." Dahl (1984), p. 49.

⁵² This merger of perception and evaluation or judgment is worked extensively throughout Nussbaum (1986) and (2001).

(v) *Phronesis* (Practical wisdom)

NE book VI examines the type of reasoning that pertains to deliberation and human action. If the choice is to be genuinely good, and choice is 'deliberative desire,' "then the reasoning must be true and the desire correct."⁵³ The good state regarding human action is not merely to know correctly, but to know a truth "in harmony with right desire."⁵⁴ After dismissing a few inappropriate candidates for what constitutes this 'good state' and qualifying others, it is *phronesis* that stands out as the intellectual skill required to form complete virtue.⁵⁵ But Aristotle does not treat *phronesis* as some abstract capacity that is best understood theoretically. Rather he empirically investigates *phronesis* by considering the qualities of the person to whom it is attributed. We find that the *phronimos* is she who deliberates well, concerning what is good and advantageous for herself, and not just in part, but over the whole of her life. Aristotle concludes "what remains, then, is that [*phronesis*] is a truthful habit of acting rationally in matters good and bad for human beings."⁵⁶

As such, it is necessarily concerned with particulars, for all human action is concrete and particular.⁵⁷ Furthermore, practical wisdom regarding a person's choices and actions

⁵³ *NE* 1139a25.

⁵⁴ *NE* 1139a30.

⁵⁵ The practical wisdom of *phronesis* is not gained the way other intellectual virtues gain their content. While these intellectual virtues—such as scientific knowledge (*episteme*), skills knowledge (*techne*), direct understanding (*nous*), philosophic wisdom (*sophia*), and good sense (*sunesis*; *gnome*)—are acquired mainly through teaching, moral virtue results from decision and action until habituation takes hold. *Episteme* concerns the theoretical and not the practical, while *techne*, *sunesis*, *gnome* do not issue in prescription. *Poiesis* may prescribe, but its injunctions concern objects external to the us, and hence, not directly relevant to *praxis*. *Nous* is actually a more complicated issue to be dealt with a bit later.

⁵⁶ *NE* 1140b20-21. In Loudon (1997), p. 116, Robert Loudon contrasts *phronesis* with the other candidates that Aristotle surveys: *euboulia*, *sunesis*, *gnome*. (i) *Phronesis* is architectonic; concerned with universals as well as particulars, and has a much more solid grasp of proper human ends. (ii) It is thoroughly engaged in practical discourse, unlike *sunesis* and *gnome*. (iii) Its language is action guiding, prescriptive, even for the rest of the Polis while *sunesis* and *gnome* lack prescriptive force, (iv) unlike *sunesis* and *gnome*, *phronesis* does not produce judgments about past actions, so much as it is future directed.

⁵⁷ *NE* 1141b4-23.

presupposes a layer of particular experiences through which practical insight is gained. Thus, young persons, having little experience of the circumstances that life may present, find it easier to gain mathematical and geometric insights than practical ones.⁵⁸ No single, perceptual exposure to concrete particulars will produce practical wisdom, but repetitive perceptual and intellectual exposure may result in a cumulative set of exposures that, as a set, we would call, life-experience. “[F]or it is length of time that gives *empeiria*—experience.”⁵⁹

In the light of sufficient past experience, *phronesis* allows its practitioner to finalize deliberative inquiry through a kind of perception of the salient features within specific events and contexts. This is not, of course, by the intuition of any particular outer sense, but it is a kind of perceptual insight, since *phronesis* concerns concrete particulars, and these are things that are seen and experienced, unlike, say the abstract objects of mathematics.⁶⁰ There is then a direct apprehension of some kind that is essential to the deliberations of the *phronimos*.

However, the ability of *phronesis* to grasp the genuine good end of human action distinguishes *phronesis* from mere shrewdness of calculation. Shrewdness, the art of a purely pragmatic calculus of means, cannot see the appropriate ends, for such vision is acquired by training and habituation in moral virtue. Therefore, it is impossible to have *phronesis* without also being good in one's desires and disposition.⁶¹ Yet again, one could not develop right desires and an eye for the good and noble without having learned, to some degree at least, how to choose the intermediate between extremes spoken of above. It is also true, then, that no one can become

⁵⁸ NE 1142a12-19.

⁵⁹ NE 1142a15. Also, 1143a25-b14.

⁶⁰ NE 1142a20-31.

⁶¹ NE 1144a28-35.

virtuous without the deliberative savvy of *phronesis*. As Aristotle says, "it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise without moral virtue."⁶²

Summary of the synopsis

Aristotle's ethical writings help a student understand what it means to live well, to become good, to be happy in a fully human way over one's whole life. They are offered to the kind of student who has already been put on the right track of virtue from his or her earlier years, having been raised in a context of good and noble pursuits and examples (say, among family and friends), and perhaps, lived under the pedagogical benefit of good laws and a just society. If in this way a student of virtue has already acquired, by habituation, knowledge of the things that are good and noble, then that student is ready to embark on the path of the fully mature *phronimos*.⁶³

For the key to complete virtue is not simply to know "that" courage, temperance, magnanimity, even temperedness, justice are all excellences of the human soul, but to know that they are such "because" they really are good and noble in their own right, "because" they are genuinely choice-worthy for their own sakes, "because" they really are pleasant to embody as well as to behold, and "because" they really do make up vital aspects of a whole life well-lived.⁶⁴ Here we see an explicit ground of the objectivity of the human good in Aristotle's thought.

⁶² NE 1144b30-33.

⁶³ NE 1095b4-14.

⁶⁴ See further nuances on this point in McDowell (1996), pp. 31-32. Also Burnyeat's well-known work "On Learning to be Good," in A. O. Rorty (1980).

Indeed, the *phronimos* consistently chooses the good, but does so with full knowledge that X is chosen for its own intrinsic good and/or as an appropriate instrument to some intrinsic good. This is the kind of knowing not teachable in a classroom, but the kind acquired by personally experiencing the choice-worthiness of virtuous actions, by actually doing them and finding them pleasant to perform. This knowledge is, in the end, reflective. For having become virtuous, the *phronimos* experiences and understands 'from the inside,' both *that* he or she is doing well, and *why* he or she is doing well.⁶⁵ We can experience the freedom of pursuing our heart's desires because these have now become shaped such that genuinely pleasant and wholesome things appear desirable while genuinely destructive things appear repugnant. Our desires are always for 'enough,' not too much or too little, of the many things that make up a human life. Thus, the mean has become attractive and we are able empirically to determine it with ease. Where complexity or newness of situation prevents us from immediate insight into the concrete good, we have become excellent at deliberating, in the light of a conception of whole-life flourishing, until we can finally 'see' what is to be done.

Thus, our desires are right and our reasoning reliable. If we is blessed enough to live in a time and place of sufficient prosperity and to have a social standing complete with honour and political enfranchisement, and to have these until the end, we are indeed flourishing in a quintessentially human way. We have *eudaimonia*.

⁶⁵ Jaeger (1939), p. 175, after etymological study of *kalokagathia*, describes the person of virtuous disposition as "practicing his vocation with real pleasure and full understanding, [having] his heart in the right place."

2. Four cognitive operations central to Aristotle's theory of moral insight

With the above synopsis as background, my purpose in this section is to highlight some key features of the perceptual and intellectual apparatus deployed by the *phronimos*. Later, I will compare these features to those in the cognitive theory of Bernard Lonergan. Lonergan has developed a detailed theory of the nature and operation of practical particularism (his "common sense" insight) and I hope to show by comparison that Aristotle's ethical insight is a species of Lonergan's kind of particularist intelligence. It would follow then, that Lonergan's notions of objectivity would apply to any particularist virtue ethic that works generally along Aristotelian lines.⁶⁶ That being my goal, I cannot in the scope of this thesis adequately treat all the pertinent issues and textual difficulties associated with perception and insight in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, (or *De Motu*, and *De Anima* for that matter.) I will develop this chapter in large part in light of interpretations presented by Martha Nussbaum and Nancy Sherman, for their commentaries have devoted considerable discussion to phenomenological and cognitive factors in virtue-based ethics.⁶⁷

Four relevant aspects of moral cognition derive from the foregoing synopsis and will be explored next:

(i) Emotions and desires as cognitive or perceptive.

⁶⁶ Practical particularism refers to an ethics that will not decide moral issues apart from references to actual circumstances that elicit moral inquiry. Generally, particularism does not reject moral rules, but understands them to function more as guidelines than as universal maxims. Particularism allows mitigating circumstances to amend rules of thumb; as such, particularism operates and develops analogously to the common law. An excellent discussion pro and con regarding particularist theories is found in Hooker and Lee (2000).

⁶⁷ Nussbaum herself recanted some parts of her earlier view of the nature of *phantasm* and animal motion, adding enough clarifications to evacuate Wedin's criticisms of her. See her comment in Nussbaum (1986), p. xx. Wedin (1988) takes issue with Nussbaum on pp. 90-99. Richardson (1992) corrects Wedin at p. 385, note 12.

- (ii) *Phantasm*: the phenomenal world of appearances, already shaped by our desires and within which one must grasp the genuine human good.
- (iii) A non-inferential mode of intelligence deployed within or toward appearances, namely, *phronesis*.
- (iv) A decisive moment during deliberation where some kind of direct intuition or perception determines a particular good relative to the agent, (*aesthesis*, *nous*, *phronesis*).

(i) Emotions and desires as cognitive and perceptive capacities

When speaking of emotion (*pathe*), I am not referring to bodily feelings (tiredness, hunger) or general moods with no intentional content (depression, irritability), but to the emotions that accompany some object of thought or perception, such as fear, love, anger, joy, disgust. These are the emotions that Aristotle classified as embodying a quasi-critical disposition of some kind; feelings that approve or disapprove, that attract or repulse, that evoke a desire to cling or to flee. Understood this way, emotions embody a certain kind of judgment,⁶⁸ and thus, they seem able to interfere somehow with *rational* judgment, judgment *proper*. For impulsive desires and emotions may affirm illicit or inappropriate goals and objects, emotion may divert attention or distort the field to which we attend, and emotionalism is a pejorative term used to describe persons whose characters are easily swayed or unpredictable. There is little doubt that emotions can be deceptive, or at least distracting, in the project of moral inquiry.

⁶⁸ *De Anima* 431a7-9: *oion kataphasa e apophasa*, "a kind of affirmation or denial" (W. S. Hett translation (1936), Loeb Classical Library *De Anima*), "a quasi-affirmation or denial" (McKeon translation (1941), *Basic Works of Aristotle*.)

But in order to be able to deceive us, emotions must convey some cognitive content, and not merely vague, non-intentional feeling. It is precisely this partly cognitive ability to sway us that reveals a power in emotions that may be put to good use: they may be able to perceive in their own right and, hence, present something to us for consideration, namely, a *value* of some kind.⁶⁹ For instance, my seeing an automobile, and my liking it, presents aesthetic and/or utilitarian value along with the purely rational content concerning the recognition and classification of the material object I am perceiving. Along with some sort of apprehension of value, there is apparently a concomitant *prima facie* judgment that the value is good or bad.⁷⁰ Thus, if my emotive response to the car is that I would never be seen in public driving it, my feelings convey the twofold content: “that aesthetic value is embodied here”⁷¹ plus “this is bad aesthetics, *i.e.*, ugly.”

Such value-laden reactions are an ‘interpretive seeing,’ a kind of perceptual state much richer than simple registration of input, and which is already a certain way of thinking about it, though clearly a more instantaneous kind of thinking.

Much more can be said on this matter, but clearly Aristotle thinks that emotions augment our apprehension, enabling us to grasp value: aesthetic, utilitarian, or ethical (good in itself) value.

⁶⁹ I am not saying that *nous* or *phronesis* are unable to apprehend value. I am allowing emotion to apprehend the same values the intellect may apprehend, but to do so in a way unique to emotions themselves—a way they may affect our phenomenal construal of the world in a way that intellect alone cannot.

⁷⁰ NE 1139a21.

⁷¹ This is quite distinct from a Humean belief/desire combination. That account conceives emotions as conveying no cognitive content at all, but supplying the “pushy state” toward or away from a content provided by belief. See Dancy, “Intuitionism,” in Singer (1993), pp. 414-15. It is clear from Aristotle’s presentation that the trainable parts of the desires are those that share in thought to some degree. The desires always long for what appears pleasant and fine and flee from the opposite. The key to moral maturity is for the desires to begin to find attractive the *genuine* human good, and this means learning, by habituation, the actual beauty of the good. In Humean models of motivation, the desires are in principle not trainable; they are, as Nussbaum (2001) puts it, “[H]ardwired in psychology, lacking in intentionality and impervious to modification” (p. 136). In contrast, for Aristotle, they are partly-cognitive, and are justifying insofar as their unique form of cognition can be said to attain truth.

The *Rhetoric* showcases this succinctly.⁷² That book is built upon an intentional theory of emotion, for the skilled orator is one who is able to evoke images and beliefs in the hearer that he knows full well will be responded to, quite predictably, with certain emotions. This would only be possible if emotion is in some degree open to cognitive input. Thus, an orator may present a jury with scenarios of injustice, evoking anger—but not merely a nebulous annoyance—but an anger that is clearly directed toward the object it apprehends: the disvalue that is injustice. Fear and pity also take intentional objects and affect the way we perceive, as it were, the evaluative topography of some state of affairs. This gives emotion a vital part in our ability to discern good ends and appropriate means, and hence it is not surprising to find Aristotle including feelings along with the specific virtues and vices.⁷³

It is clear, then, as we proceed to examine Aristotelian moral perception and deliberation that the phenomenal world we directly encounter, prior to any critical and dialectical interaction, is coloured by the current state of our likes and dislikes. These are reflected in our feelings and the value judgments implicit in them. Because our evaluative perspective is revealed by our construal of the world and our reaction to that construal, our emotions and preferences outline an ethical state-description of our souls.⁷⁴

⁷² See *Rhetorica*, 1378a30-b9, where a situation of intense anger provides a source of pleasure—the pleasure of imagining (*phantasia*) acts of revenge; 1385b12 – 1386a3, where Aristotle describes appearance designed to evoke pity; also, all of bk II, ch. 6 on shame and shamelessness. These texts are impossible to read without our imaginations evoking scenes of complex human interactions and predicaments. Aristotle's full awareness of the emotional evaluations of these situations grounds his use of them in the art of persuasion (beliefs, affirmations, judgments). If orectic responses of pursuit or avoidance were not a mode of judgment, at least regarding values and the good, they could not play the role they do in the *Rhetoric*. Of course, it is precisely because emotional judgment is only of things 'as they appear,' that it is extremely vulnerable to the deception of unethical rhetoricians. Good additional discussion in Striker (1996).

⁷³ NE 1105b26; cf. 1105b21-1106a13; 1109a23. See Sherman (1989), pp. 165-71; Leighton (1982), pp. 144-74.

⁷⁴ NE 1114b1ff.

(ii) *Phantasm*—the appearances with which *nous* and *phronesis* must work⁷⁵

For Aristotle, the capacity that forms a kind of middle ground between perception and thought, and which is fertile ground for emotional response, is *phantasia*. This capacity performs vital functions in aid of understanding, judging, and deciding. Aristotle's terms *phantasia* and *phantasm*, etymologically derived from *phainesthai* or *phantazesthai*, convey the notion of 'appearance' in the general sense, and that notion can be related to the terms as (i) a capacity to experience appearances, (ii) the on-going appearance itself, and (iii) that which appears as such.⁷⁶

Obvious evidence for an imaging capacity that is distinct from sensation is the experience of lingering impressions of things we initially perceived through sense perception. We have an object of sense, and then later on, through *phantasia*, we see a re-presentation of that original sensation. As Brentano puts it, "Whatever occurs in imagination was previously received in sensory perception," and, "As an after-effect of sensory perception, imagination is weaker than the former."⁷⁷ But this capacity does more than retain sense data.

⁷⁵ I rely upon Frede (1992) in Nussbaum and Rorty (1992). Also Sherman (1989), pp. 59ff; and Nussbaum (1994), ch. 3; and (1978), essay 5.

⁷⁶ I am not going to discuss the aspect of this terminology that relates *phainomena* to *endoxa* (opinion). The term can be translated to mean a kind of prevalent opinion held by many. This usage is what Nussbaum refers to when analyzing Aristotle's dialectical and empirical method used in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There, Aristotle claims that the result of moral inquiry should be 'to set down the appearances' regarding what people think, attempt to solve difficulties, and yet in the end, try to provide firmer ground to what people are already saying in their own vague ways. This methodology is laid out in *NE* 1145b1ff. For detailed discussion see ch. 8 in Nussbaum (1989).

⁷⁷ Brentano (1977), p. 68-69.

If, according to Aristotle, the duration of each act of perception is limited to the presence of perceptible forms within the sense organ,⁷⁸ then some further capacity is involved in the apparent retention of sensations—a phenomenal continuance of formal impressions and their synthesis into larger wholes that form a ‘field of vision’ or a complex sense object enduring through time. For example, as we survey the details of a house, it is only discreet sections and elements that are informing our eyes at each moment as we sweep across the whole object, yet we retain somehow the appearance of the *whole house*, an ‘overall impression’ synthesized out of what we know to be discreet sensible moments. Such *phantasma*, while depending upon sense perceptions for their origins, take up a ‘life of their own,’⁷⁹ in the form of complex after-images.

Apart from such passive, synthetic usage, the terms *phantasm* and *phantasia* are sometimes more appropriately related to our capacity to deliberately evoke and creatively construct images; this is perhaps the dominant connotation of the English term ‘imagination.’ The term also, however, applies to the notion of ‘mere’ appearance (*phantom*) versus a ‘real’ appearance, (*phainomenon*), linking appearances to discernment and judgment of some kind.⁸⁰

In all cases, whether as retained sense information, synthetic and heuristic imagining, or mere appearances that temporarily bewilder the judgment, experiencing some appearance is a

⁷⁸ *DA* 424a17.

⁷⁹ See Frede (1992), pp. 284-85. Note that after-images are not ascribed to memory because they are the lingering appearance of something *as though still present*, as when I retain a sense of the bottom floor of the house I am viewing while scanning the top level. Memory, on the other hand, according to Aristotle's definition, is precisely to remember the past *as past*. *Phantasm* ‘remembers,’ as it were, the image as still present. *De Memoria*, 450a21ff.

⁸⁰ Indeed, Aristotle places *phantasia* under the rubric of *kritika*, thus identifying it with some mode of critical discernment. This is the first sense of *phantasia* described by Aristotle in the beginning of *DA* III.3, before 428a1, as “an interpretive mental act in connection with perception.” Thus, this final sense of the term *phantasia* relates to the power to interpret perceptions, to make judgments or distinctions, especially by using comparative imaging. See Hankinson (1990), pp. 41-63.

necessary condition for every type of thinking.⁸¹ *Phantasia* plays an enabling role that bridges the gap between immediate sense perception and higher order thought—including ethical thought and practical deliberations.

Thinking by means of phantasia, phantasm

Phantasia and the things it manifests, the *phantasmata*, serve functions beyond the perceptual level. They serve in discursive thinking about objects of sense.⁸² They can also present objects that are not available to the senses at all, either because they are intellectual objects, say, geometric concepts, or abstract objects such as the ‘hollowness’ of a ‘snub-nose,’ something understood through the images from which they are abstracted.⁸³

But objects requiring ‘ethical’ insight are also *phantasm*-dependent. This is clear in Aristotle’s claim that deliberation (*bouleusis*) and *phronesis* depend upon some capacity to imagine a *future* good state that is attainable by choice—future states being objects unavailable to the senses *proper*.⁸⁴ This would require an imaging capacity that links evaluation, knowledge, and appearances into some meaningful manifold, one that, while beginning in sensations, moves beyond them. As Frede puts it,

All activities...presuppose that I envisage something as good or bad for me, to be pursued or avoided. The necessary condition of my thinking that something is good or bad, according to Aristotle, is that the soul shall have certain *phantasmata*: I have to have the image of a future good or bad.⁸⁵

For deliberation and calculation.

⁸¹ DA 427b15, 25.

⁸² DA 430a31-b5; also cf. 426b22, 31; 427a9.

⁸³ DA 431b12ff.

⁸⁴ DA 433b2, 28.

⁸⁵ Frede (1992), pp. 288-89. She is referring to DA 431a14-17; 433b12-28.

An operation that is at the same time both an act of reasoning and of imaging is seen in Aristotle's 'deliberative' *phantasia* (*phantasia bouleutike*). It is distinct from the basic perceptual imagination that we share with non-reasoning animals.⁸⁶ For, it is on the level of appearances that reasoning animals consider whether to do one thing or another. This requires a calculation that is inseparable from what is presented, and to accomplish this, some type of rational comparison using images is being made. Thus, "a reasoning animal is able to make one [*phantasma*] out of many *phantasmata*."⁸⁷ H. S. Richardson says, "This...exhibits the intentionality built into *phantasia*, implying that a situation is seen in a certain way—as an appropriate time for rearing young, as a dangerous place to drink, etc...."⁸⁸ *Phantasia* itself is seen here to be discriminating and interpretive. Such deliberative imagination is the tool for resolving conflicts of desire. It allows for the combining and comparing of appearances in the deliberative process, for the measuring and comparing of relative goods and choices.⁸⁹ It seems, then, that the appearances of *phantasia* can themselves manifest a mode of deliberation.

Pictures versus descriptions

Does this mean that *phantasma* must always be representative images, that is, pictorial-type presentations? For one of Aristotle's definitions of *phantasia* claims that its images ought to be "similar" (*homoian*) to what they represent.⁹⁰ Must someone picture a snubbed-nose in order to abstract snubbedness, or can we think abstractions whose contents are extremely dissimilar to characteristics of the *phantasm*? Wedin and Nussbaum both agree that, according to Aristotle, we cannot think in pure abstractions apart from some presentations—we cannot think of pure

⁸⁶ DA 434a5-7; HA 542a30-2.

⁸⁷ DA 434a10.

⁸⁸ Richardson (1992), p. 385.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ DA 428b10-17.

propositions or numbers.⁹¹ Even if we were to think of, say, the principle of non-contradiction, we would need something like the image of a sentence or symbol that formulates the law or some instance of the law.⁹² Linguistic and other symbolic tokens must be pictured somehow in order that we may think of contents that, in themselves, cannot be pictured at all.⁹³ And this allows Aristotelian ethics to refer to non-pictureable 'goods,' such as *eudaimonia*—full flourishing over a whole life.

Furthermore, if *phantasma* must be of picture-like representations, then, to perform the reasoning function just described, *phantasia* images must immediately convey what they are about. But one can inspect an image or scenario and fail to detect any definite 'aboutness' at all. An example seems to be Aristotle's own description of the parent debasing himself before the tyrant in order to ransom a captive child.⁹⁴ In that case, the image is exactly the same when, at first, one is pained by such an 'apparently' dishonourable action, and then afterward, when one is more pleased to find out the parent is 'actually' engaging in an instrumental act of a greater good—rescue. In both cases, the 'pictorial content' of the presentation is the same, but it is additional 'descriptive content' that changes our understanding of what the scenario is actually

⁹¹ Wedin (1988), p. 249. Nussbaum (1978), p. 266.

⁹² Wedin says "To think of a proposition involves something like a sentential [re]presentation of that proposition. Indeed, if *De Anima* III.10's calculative imagination (*logistike phantasia*) can be made to cover pictorial [re]presentations, then one kind of *phantasma* might be something like a sentence token." *Ibid*, p. 249.

⁹³ This is very important for three reasons. First, it reminds us that visual *phantasms* are not at all the only form of phenomenal presentation: aural (spoken word) and tactile (the case of Helen Keller) and other sense modes may provide the presentations of abstract thought. We must be careful to avoid obsessing on visual analogies, for these strongly prejudice us in favour of pictorialism. Second, I think that allowing for a descriptionalist theory of cognition is really the only way to construct the complex *phantasms* requisite for narratives and story-like case studies used in ethical description and reflection. Third, pictorialist notions of *phantasm*, requiring a strong similarity between mental images and their content, make it very difficult to see what a 'moral' *phantasm* would look like, for the 'good' is not some discreet sensible feature supervening upon sensible objects and their representations. The 'good,' if not abstract, is a trans-categorical incommensurate predicate that would not be captured adequately by an actual aspect of some one sense mode. This is just another reason for rejecting an intuitionist model of moral insight along the lines of G. E. Moore. Good treatment of pictorialism versus descriptionalism is found in Tye (1991).

⁹⁴ *NE* bk. III, ch. 1.

‘about.’ In fact, a mere pictorial presentation is not likely to have any definite semantic function unless it is embedded in some larger descriptive context.⁹⁵

Now, combining this calculative, interpretive aspect of *phantasm* with a cognitive theory of emotion, we get what Aristotle clearly states: appearances are already partly shaped by our loves and goals. Our “discriminatory activity is not, so to speak, prior to [our] response; it is in and constituted by [our] response [to appearances].”⁹⁶ The phenomenal world that we encounter, then, is not a world of brute sense data upon which thinking capacities go to work, but is a world already affected by subjective operations prior to our critical reflections. And this world is far richer than a series of pictures, but involves objects and beliefs that, while dependent upon *phantasm*, are themselves higher-order phenomena.

Thinking through narratives

Martha Nussbaum has spent considerable time studying the role of *phantasm* in human thought and action. In her discussion of the cognitive nature of emotion and the fact that desire and aversion pre-constitute the kind of appearances we face, she develops a richer conception of what ‘interpretive seeing’ will include. With the aid of this future-envisioning capacity, and the memories and habits of past moral experience and learning, the appearances can be as complex as *narratives*. This does not mean that we always need to tell ourselves little stories in which we then spot values. Rather, what we ‘see,’ though construed immediately by the expert eye of

⁹⁵ Wedin (1988), p. 249, says in this regard, “More interesting is the question whether the relation between images and objects of thought must be such that from inspection or mere awareness of an image a subject could know what it was an image of. Again the answer is apparently negative. Although images may be required as [re]presentational devices, we have seen that they do not in their own right have the required semantic property of aboutness. Only in the context of thinking about an object can it be meaningfully asked what the involved image is an image of. Aboutness is a feature of the complete intentional act, not of the [re]presentational structure involved in the act. So the requirement of similarity cannot have semantical force.”

⁹⁶ Nussbaum (1986), p. 315.

practical wisdom, still cannot be accounted for without recourse to a story-like description, and one possibly exemplifying many divergent, or even conflicting, human values. Surely some human goods cannot be pondered apart from a rather complex narrative that casts them in relief. This is presupposed by Aristotle's example just cited above, where a parent is seen groveling in self-abasement before a tyrant.⁹⁷ This is a scene that the reader greets with revulsion and disgust—until he discovers the larger context in which the parent is succumbing to blackmail in order to free a captive child. Aristotle uses a description that is designed to induce a kind of moral *gestalt*, where an apparent evil suddenly snaps into an actual good, but only after the whole story is properly understood. While Aristotle offers this example during a discussion of what constitutes voluntary actions, still, it functions successfully precisely because in the dynamics of a story one can grasp values that are invisible in a state-description alone.

Nussbaum adds,

“If a general theoretical account [of ethical insight] is just what Aristotle is trying to undermine, then it would be in the spirit of his argument to turn for further illumination to complex examples, either from life or from literary texts. Like Alcibiades, he seems to support the *claim of concrete narratives to show the truth.*”⁹⁸ [italics mine.]

If deliberation involves understanding a complex circumstance in which past, present and future actions may all become relevant, then narrative is really the only way to capture what lies beyond the scope of sensation and immediate emotive response to ‘the way things stand.’ Narrative enables us to replay a series of actions in our minds, and this certainly seems to be part of what deliberation requires. Thus, Nussbaum believes that exposure to good literature is an important part of moral pedagogy, for the good and noble among men is, perhaps, best seen in

⁹⁷ NE 1110a4ff.

⁹⁸ Nussbaum (1986), pp. 312-13.

the concrete virtuous actions of ideal role models [say, the *phronimoi*]. The poet, the novelist, the historian all may serve a vital role in offering the 'appearances' that preserve and convey the noble deeds of the past for the pedagogical uses of the present.⁹⁹

Nancy Sherman shares this view of *phantasma* as, in many cases, being as rich as narratives.¹⁰⁰ Though "the stage of construal and discrimination needs to be distinguished from the moment of decision (or choice) in the light of the alternatives,"¹⁰¹ still, both require a right construal of particular appearances. Affective responses (approval, hate, anger, disgust, horror, pity) are not to actions *per se*, but to actions as responses to specific circumstances. Hence, to judge a particular case, we need to use *imagination* to recreate the *context* of the person we are judging. Story, narrative is required here—even an imaginary case perhaps—in order rightly to judge the ethical character at hand. Thus, the outside observer must judge from a virtual 'inside' supplied by imagination and the observer's own character.¹⁰²

Phantasm as indicative of one's character

Finally, since we construe the world partly in accordance with desiderative tastes, and react orrectically to that construed world, it is possible for those very reactions themselves to become the 'appearances' by which we can gain insight into the subjective conditions of our own moral characters. Sherman points out that when I reflect upon my *phantasm*-construal, and how I respond emotionally, I discover 'that I am this sort of person,'¹⁰³ and I must manage the sort of

⁹⁹ Nussbaum (1990), *passim* and Nussbaum (2001).

¹⁰⁰ At Sherman (1989), pp. 57-60, she claims that she differs from Nussbaum and others by placing a greater emphasis on future intentions in the deliberative and decision process.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35-6.

¹⁰² Thus, a person wise in regard to her own choices is Aristotle's fine and decent judge of other's actions. See *NE* 1143a25-31.

¹⁰³ Sherman (1986), p. 42.

person I am, shape myself, under some higher schema of good (*eudaimonia*). This reflective awareness comes from the phenomenological fact that the end appears to each person in correspondence to his or her character.¹⁰⁴ There is a reflective self-revelation that may ground the possibility of ongoing moral development for it may reveal shortcomings, even shameful aspects of our character, that require our responsible attention. What we fail to see, or are too afraid to face, the insights of a friend may provide.¹⁰⁵

A full deliberation may include an assessment of one's own place within the moral narrative. The very term *boulesis* connotes inter-subjective counsel. Friendship may provide the discourse that leads to insights into the foibles of self as much as it may import an extra pair of eyes with which to scrutinize the circumstances.¹⁰⁶ There is then a collaborative element to moral perceptions, and not just during the pedagogy of one's youth, but also for the mature person seeking to live well in the *polis*.

In this section, I have only touched upon some capacities of *phantasia* in order to show its vital role in practical thinking. Three of its aspects will be compared later to Lonergan's theory. First, there is the basic empirical world that presents itself to us with more content than can come from the sense data alone. We 'see' relations, apparent size, perspectives, optical illusions, but also, we 'see' painful and pleasant objects and situations—and we see them *as* valuable (or not). The world comes to us already shaped, to some degree, by prior desires and beliefs—embodied in our emotional responses—but this is still properly spoken of as coming to us on the level of 'appearance' [Lonergan's 'level of experience.'] Second, there is the fact that our imaging

¹⁰⁴ *NE* 1114b1ff.

¹⁰⁵ A nice discussion of friendship as a moral mirror by which we gain self-knowledge is in Sherman (1986), ch. 4, especially, pp. 141-44. She distils arguments from *NE* IX. 9; *EE* VII. 12; and *MM* II. 15.

¹⁰⁶ *NE* 1169b33; *MM* 1213a12-25.

capacities are constantly in play in retaining stories that reveal or explain the ongoing phenomena of the world. Such narratives are vital aspects of moral discernment and deliberation for they present to our mind's eye more than meets the physical eye. Finally, on the basis of *phantasmic* construal and emotive reaction, we are able to gain reflective insight, at least in part, into the subjective condition of our own characters.

(iii) On non-inferential thinking

Next, we turn to the modes of intelligence that gain practical insight into the various permutations of *phantasm* just outlined above. From the short synopsis of *Nicomachean Ethics* above, we already know some basic traits of *phronesis*. I want to enrich those descriptions somewhat in the light of the ideas of several of Aristotle's interpreters. A more complete exegesis of the relevant texts would unpack more of its characteristics: (i) it is the skill of estimating (*orthos logos*) the limits within which the mean relative to us is found, (ii) it is the skill of correctly reasoning with respect to what is good and bad in human action, (iii) it operates in coordination with right desire (*orthos orexis*), (iv) it reasons about actions whose product is the flourishing of the agent's own humanness, (v) only by being unified with moral virtue does it attain an excellence in deliberation that distinguishes it from the practical acumen of mere shrewdness, (vi) it is a fully intellectual habit capable of generating real truths, albeit practical ones. The focus of this section is on the intuitive nature of the insights of *phronesis*, its reliance at some stage in deliberation upon direct perception of a concrete good. In a moment, I will look at the two difficult and related passages that speak of direct insight.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ I am following Wiggins (1978). Similar interpretations are well presented in Dunne (1993) and in Byrne (1997), pp. 63-78.

By way of reminder, we do not acquire ethical ends through deliberation, nor is there a demonstration that can deduce them. The deliberations of the *phronimos* are about *means* and not ends.¹⁰⁸ However, without an end in view, deliberation would never begin. Thus, some kind of apprehension of the final end of human action—living well; doing well—is necessary for the mature deliberations of the *phronimos*. And since living well is, in part, achieved through moral virtue, an apprehension of the elements of virtue is also required.

Initially, these must be received through sound moral teaching and the instilling of habits of acting and choosing. Thus, by repeatedly doing virtuous acts we learn experientially that courage, temperance, generosity, justice, and the like, produce actions that are intrinsically pleasant and noble. We acquire the ends of ethical action, first, by faith, as it were, through sound teaching, and then eventually by direct personal experience of the worthwhile character of virtuous action. And so, the first non-inferential mode of acquiring ethical knowledge, then, is by direct acquaintance with the intrinsic goodness of noble actions through becoming habituated to performing them, and eventually, desiring them for their own sakes.¹⁰⁹

But as we have just seen above, such acquired desires shape our perceptions of the world. We encounter a phenomenal world that is already pre-judged¹¹⁰ (to various degrees) and it is to that

¹⁰⁸ The role of *nous* in grasping ends is treated shortly.

¹⁰⁹ NE 1098b3-4.

¹¹⁰ This is not to say 'prejudiced' or falsely construed. If we allow that our moral teachers have instilled in us the right objects of desire and the right habits, then these are accepted *as right* by the docile student prior to being personally verified as right by later mature reflection and experience. The moral world is pre-judged for us by the judgment of our teachers and their experience. We receive these judgments through trust and we do this precisely so that the phenomenal world we face as ethical neophytes will start out rightly construed; moral development does not try to eliminate phenomenal construal, it tries to acquire and hone 'right construal' so that what really is good will seem so as well. Again, this is an important point better presented in Burnyeat (1980).

world that we must attend in order to grasp ethical scenarios, objects, and narratives. Repeated exposure to, and practical acquaintance (*aesthesis*) with, appearances in this construed world gives us a foundation of experience (*empeiria*) that may sharpen our vision in spotting what is fitting in matters of practical choice.¹¹¹

Before looking at the non-inferential acquisition of ethical insight, we need to look quickly at the nature and role of education and social collaboration in the development of *phronesis*.

Acquiring ethical ends by faith, as it were, does not mean simply hearing ethical facts and arguments. Argument alone will not make someone good. Moral education is about instilling habits such that in their very performance the student would come to know the intrinsic goodness and pleasantness of virtuous action. Argument and fact-knowledge cannot impart or remove habits. Still, some direct teaching of the means and ends to the good life can be taught by proposition, story, and example, provided that the student is already somewhat naturally endowed with a disposition to desire virtue, to love the good, however undeveloped this may be at the outset.¹¹²

The imparting of habits of right desire to suitable students is effectively achieved in the collaborative and social contexts of mentorship, friendship, and good civil society. For the good person (the *phronimos*) will help his or her children and friends toward virtue.¹¹³ When this is done in private life, there is the mentoring exemplified in parent-child relations and those

¹¹¹ NE 1142a14-15. Standard background on perception, memory, and experience is in *Meta.* bk. I, ch. 1; and *Post. An.* bk II, ch. 19.

¹¹² NE 1179b20-31.

¹¹³ NE 1180a31.

friendships that are based upon good character. Regarding the household, the injunctions and habits of parents shape the child's preferences and habits, "for the child starts with a natural affection and disposition to obey."¹¹⁴ By means of punishments and rewards (pains and pleasures), parents manipulate the choices of young children toward the genuine goods that will eventually be chosen and enjoyed for their own sakes when the child matures. Regarding friendship, among the benefits of good and virtuous friendship is the mutual learning and pleasure that comes when friends contemplate in each other the virtuous actions that each performs and that each would commend to the other.¹¹⁵ Thus, on a private level, as role-model or friend, moral pedagogy proceeds more by spontaneous social collaboration than by some formal or written code.

However, when moral pedagogy is to happen on a more general and public level, the good person would teach by means of *legislating*, promoting the constraints and directives of good laws (or unwritten mores and customs) that would guide fellow citizens to behave in ways that, once habitually performed, would be desirable and useful for *eudaimonic* living.¹¹⁶ Thus, the *phronimos* can be characterized as someone capable of sound legislation, both for himself and for his *polis*. Moral pedagogy is not, therefore, simply the imparting of a private intellectual skill at spotting right choices and objects. It is a social collaboration in which a taste for noble and virtuous actions is absorbed by the learner as one would learn a connoisseurship.

Let us return now to the analysis of *phronesis* itself. The practical perception of *phronesis* is not the operation of a distinct 'moral sense.' It is a discernment that operates in and through the

¹¹⁴ NE 1180b6.

¹¹⁵ NE 1169b33-1170a3. Cf. NE 1157b30-35.

¹¹⁶ Cf. NE 1179b32-35.

normal senses.¹¹⁷ This intuition should not be separated from other vital operations of the *phronimos*, viz., perception, reflection, and deliberation. These interact dialectically so that our perceptions and our deliberations mutually inform each other. For example, a situation may initially be construed, say, as requiring courage. But this, in turn, may prompt us to reflect and reconsider, perhaps in light of other important values (e.g., a conviction of pacifism), until we come to understand a more nuanced view of what courage might finally require of us.¹¹⁸ The perception-like grasp may come at the end of a far more complex process directed toward construed particulars. That is why Gomez-Lobo, for instance, says *phronesis* “is operative when we perform well a *wide variety of interconnected intellectual operations* which aim at attaining truth in the domain of action” (italics mine).¹¹⁹

Aristotle gives a terse description of the process in the following example. I start with Sherman's interpretation of this difficult passage:

Practical wisdom is obviously not scientific knowledge [*episteme*] for it is about the last term [*eschatou*]...For the thing to be done is of this sort. And it is opposed to *nous*; for *nous* is about the first terms [*ton horon*] of which there is no account [*logos*], while practical reason is of the last things [*tou eschatou*], which is an object not of science but of perception [*aesthesis*]. This is not the perception of qualities peculiar to one sense, but of the kind by which we perceive that the last figure among mathematical figures is a triangle. For perception [*aesthesis*] will come to a halt here too.¹²⁰

Practical wisdom here is seen deploying a process that terminates in a kind of perception.

¹¹⁷ NE. 1109b23; 1143b11-14; 1144b8-13.

¹¹⁸ This calls for a decision process able to account for redeployment of values and ideals in new situations, and new understandings of old ones. Such a decision process would have to involve a dialectical dynamic by which unsatisfactory options may cause the agent to refer back to the original concerns and re-evaluate them in the light of the means available. This dialectical conception is found in Wiggins (1978), p. 147.

¹¹⁹ Gomez-Lobo (1995), p. 27.

¹²⁰ NE 1142a23-30, Sherman's translation.

In Sherman's view, the problem being presented above is one of how to determine the area of an octagonal figure.¹²¹ The student may survey the whole figure trying to dissect it into manageable parts so that area calculations could more easily be applied. After eyeing the form with different strategies in mind, wondering how best to approach the problem, one suddenly realizes that the entire shape can be subdivided into triangles—and “aha!” one certainly knows how to determine *triangular* area. From here on the solution is academic. But recognizing shape is not merely categorizing what one instantly sees; it is discerning *how and/or why* the salient shape emerges from its interrelation to other shapes, and its place and role within the subsuming whole of which it is a relevant part. One sees the shape *as* a solution, and not merely as a triangle. If this is what Aristotle has in mind, then he is arguing that practical wisdom “requires seeing the salient ‘shapes’ embedded in complex scenes in a way that enables an agent to make choices relevant to action.”¹²²

In this regard, David Wiggins¹²³ thinks *phronesis* begins with the agent's subjectivity—the idiosyncratic and prior set of concerns implicit in the question ‘what shall I do?’ This question prompts a series of operations: perception, imagination, inquiry, reflection, and the concerns and passions activated by thought-experiment and high “situational appreciation.” The geometer analogy just shows that in the question ‘what should I do?’ one seeks not a causal means; rather, one seeks a clearer specification of a more general concern raised by the circumstances. One desires to be, say, courageous, but one must also know what would constitute courage in *this*

¹²¹ Another view is that the triangle is seen as the primary figure necessary for the construction of a more complex geometric one.

¹²² Sherman (1997), p. 257. She is explicitly indebted to Dancy (1993) for the notion of ‘shape’ of circumstances.

¹²³ Wiggins (1978).

particular circumstance. Only when one has grasped the best specification of courage in any given context does one have the goal toward which means-ends deliberations may apply.¹²⁴

Since the competing claims of human concerns are not weighted and prioritized in advance, the deliberating subject is genuinely autonomous and may adjust the relative concerns in differing ways under differing contexts. This calls for a decision process able to account for redeployment of values and ideals in new situations, and new understanding of old ones. Such a decision process would have to involve a dialectical dynamic by which unsatisfactory options may cause the agent to refer back to the original concerns and re-evaluate them in the light of the means available.¹²⁵

In contrast to the geometer analogy passage, where *phronesis* grasps what is being sought, another passage claims that intuition of first principles is provided by *nous*. *Nous* has received various translations: 'understanding' [Irwin], 'intelligence' [Rackham], 'intuitive reason' [Ross, Wiggins], 'comprehension' [Urmson], 'deductive reason' [Greenwood], and 'practical insight' [Miller]. It is intelligence that can directly intuit its object, and in a later passage, *nous* does just this regarding practical matters:

Now all action relates to the particular or the ultimate; for not only must the *phronimos* know particular facts, but understanding (*sunesis*) and judgment (*gnome*) are also concerned with things to be done (*ta prakta*), and these are ultimates. And *nous* is concerned with ultimates in both directions [*i.e.*, with ultimates in two senses and respects, in respect of extreme generality and in respect of extreme specificity.] For *nous* [the general faculty] is of both the most primitive and the most ultimate terms where derivation or independent justification is

¹²⁴ Wiggins (1978), p. 145.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

impossible.... In its practical variety...*nous* concerns the most particular and contingent and specific.¹²⁶

Here, it is not *phronesis* but *nous* that does the direct grasping of practical things-to-be-done. Its perceptive power is discussed by Aristotle in *NE*, bk.VI, ch.8. There, he draws a contrast from chapter 6, where *nous* is the insight of non-demonstrable starting points (first principles) of all sciences (*episteme*). In practical matters, *nous* has a perceptual capacity for “situation appreciation”¹²⁷ by which the *phronimos* is able directly to “select from the infinite features of a situation those features which bear upon the notion or ideal of human existence (*eudaimonia*).”¹²⁸ This is why each of the various translations of *nous* conveys the idea of ‘seeing’ as a metaphor for ‘direct understanding or insight,’ where ‘direct’ means: non-inferential, immediate grasp of ultimate particulars.

The geometer sees not merely ‘that’ a triangle is a primary figure here but sees the triangle *as* a figure whose contribution to area calculation will, in fact, solve the whole problem. Thus, in the practical deliberations of the *phronimos*, the recognitional moment of Nussbaum’s ‘interpretive seeing’ is accomplished by *nous* grasping an action precisely *as* a means to an end.¹²⁹

Much more can be said, of course, regarding the various interrelated operations that the practically wise person deploys, especially in analyzing the processes of deliberation (*bouleusis*), but my point is to show that *phronesis* amounts to a complex set of activities, for the one having it is good at a multitude of distinct cognitive and evaluative acts that terminate in concrete

¹²⁶ My adaptation of Wiggins’ translation of *NE* 1143a32ff.

¹²⁷ Term from Wiggins (1978).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* Brackets mine.

¹²⁹ DeMoss (1990), pp. 63-79. He presents well the case for seeing something as instrumental.

discernment, choice, and action. The cognitive operations of the *phronimos* begin, therefore, with perceptions aimed at a phenomenal world already construed in accordance with her prior character, and end with a perception of the 'last thing,' what is to be done, a grasp that X is instrumental or constitutive of the desired end.

Though the final term of moral insight is a direct perception of some concrete thing-to-be-done, still Aristotle's use of a practical syllogism prevents us from leaving aside all reference to general rules of conduct and uses of inference.¹³⁰ Wiggins argues that in practice the *phronimos* brings to bear upon the concrete situation the greatest number of pertinent concerns, and from this set of experiences, imaginings, questions, thought-experiments that reveal desires, there is grasped an answer to the question 'what should I do?'—and this answer is specific to the circumstances, and hence, would form a *minor* premise in any syllogistic model of practical reasoning. Only now, when a minor premise is born from the particular context of the *phronimos*, is a major premise induced—one that illuminates the more general concerns embodied within specific decisions.¹³¹

Were it the case that, indeed, courage demands attacking the enemy immediately, there still needs to be a calculation of the best tactics, weapons, timing, and so forth. These final logistical

¹³⁰ Standard discussion of the practical syllogism found in Allan (1955).

¹³¹ Wiggins (1978), pp. 146-47. John McDowell approaches in a more phenomenological manner the notion of practical syllogism: the major premise is a general conception of how to live but not concretely spelled out in universal terms (be noble, be just, etc.). Rather, the major premise is manifest as the very set of real concerns evoked by encountered circumstances; the minor premise is the situational appreciation that the *phronimos* brings to bear on these circumstances. Like Wiggins, then, McDowell thinks the minor premise comes first and induces the major, for simultaneous with one's becoming aware of salient features within immediate situations one also experiences one's concerns and values *vis-à-vis* that situation. Naturally, these concerns were prior insofar as they condition one's ability to perceive salience. Virtue preserves such perception; vice may destroy it. See McDowell (1979), pp. 331-50.

considerations are also tasks for *phronesis*.¹³² The fruit of *phronesis*, therefore, is its final practical judgment, made on the basis of intuitive perception (*nous*), of what the concrete circumstance requires.¹³³ For this to count as genuine *phronesis* and not mere shrewdness, however, the practical judgment must be made in the light of our general conception of the good life. This, as we have seen, is not an explicit reference to a philosophical world-view, but is a conception (of *eudaimonia*) implicit in the beliefs, emotions and desires that construe the world for us.

The dialectic activity involving value-laden, construed perception and deliberative reasoning prevents Aristotle's *phronesis* from reducing to a simplistic grasp of a good 'out there to be seen' in the naturalistic sense. But it also stays clear of any strong notion of moral syllogism where general maxims exist apart from all reference to context and agent. The *phronimos* may make use of moral principles, but these do not function as universally binding maxims that *justify* our actions. Rather, as *post facto* generalizations of what might be morally relevant in a given case, general principles are to be understood as shorthand notes that summarize what has proven to be salient in countless past similar situations, and therefore might be wise to consider in this case.¹³⁴

¹³² NE 1144a21-29.

¹³³ Robert Loudon (1986), p. 134, provides this interpretation on the role given to *nous* in this passage: "When Aristotle assert that *phronesis* is *nous*, he means two things: that the practically wise man is able non-inferentially to grasp the first principles of practical philosophy. But again, the former use is dominantly in the practical writings, since here we are concerned with action, and action concerns particulars. The epistemic drive is primarily toward particulars in the practical sciences; toward universals in the theoretical. And the intuitive capacities that Aristotle refers to when he employs *nous* in its epistemic senses are not (Engberg-Pedersen to the contrary) 'mysterious'. He is simply pointing to two well-established limits of inference, and asserting that *phronesis* must include more than knowledge by inference. This is not, of course, to say that *phronesis* is only *nous*. Practical wisdom also involves deliberation, which does entail inferential reasoning."

¹³⁴ See Sherman (1997), pp. 244ff.

We can see that Aristotle's perception analogy for *phronesis* is meant to show its partly non-inferential character. *Phronesis* is not a deductive science (*episteme*) whereby we derive correct choices from moral axioms. And it is not a *techne*, whereby direct application of general procedures of art will more or less guarantee correct outcome. *Phronesis* requires attentiveness to the actual circumstances impinging upon us, calibrating decisions as the case may demand. This is what we do in navigation, medicine, and applications of the common law (e.g., *epieikeia*.)¹³⁵

(iv) Practical particularism

Aristotle comes across, in Sherman's words, as a "qualified particularist," who has a place for general, but non-universal rules.¹³⁶ For Aristotle, choices are not subsumed under some general principle or law which itself grants the moral perspective. The 'mean' sought by *phronesis* is wise only if it hits the target in *this* case. It is not some constant moral injunction that one ought always be moderate, for the mean might be an appropriate duration of extreme action or emotion. Rather, Aristotelian deliberation involves, in Nussbaum's words, a "flexible movement back and forth between particular and general."¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Equity as relying upon the perceptions of justice is discussed in Aristotle's *NE* chapter 5. Sherman (1989) has some discussion on this starting at p. 13ff.

¹³⁶ Sherman (1987), p. 244. T. H. Irwin (2000), however, claims that Aristotle's deference to "theoretically significant generalizations" means he is not at all a particularist. But some sort of particularist claim still holds, however, as long as two conditions are met: (i) that a thing or reason for action that was salient in one case may not be salient in another case of the same general kind, and (ii) that it is the wise eye of the *phronimos* that determines this. With *eudaimonia* as a controlling general notion and wise concrete insight as part of what constitutes it, a 'qualified' particularism is a valid term for Aristotelian ethical procedure.

¹³⁷ Nussbaum (1986), p. 316.

Even if we wanted to subsume a case under a universal moral maxim, precise understanding of the nuanced salience of each particular is required to make an accurate categorization. (This already involves a kind of evaluative perception prior to the rule.) For Aristotle, “much of the achievement of moral practice is in the sorting out of the case itself.”¹³⁸ Again, we see that any schema of generalization comes after empirical expertise is accomplished.

Finally, the justification for particularism involves at least these four major points:

First, it is the particular perceptions, deliberations, and choices of the good person that set the standard. “[T]he good man (*spoudaios*) differs from others most by seeing the truth in the particulars, being as it were the norm and measure of them”.¹³⁹ *Phronimoi* and their perceptions are particulars.

Second, regarding human action, statements concerning particulars are more trustworthy than statements about universals: “For among statements about conduct, those which are general apply more widely, but those which are particular are more true, since conduct has to do with individual cases, and our statements must harmonize with the facts in these cases.”¹⁴⁰

Third, general moral principles are derived from the situational perception of particulars. For “universals are reached from individual cases; of these, therefore, we must have perception

¹³⁸ Sherman (1997), p. 245.

¹³⁹ *NE* 1113a32-33.

¹⁴⁰ *NE* 1107a29-32.

(*aesthesis*)....”¹⁴¹ This was just stated above: particularist insights are a precondition of any ethical generalizations.

Fourth, we can understand Aristotle's particularist approach by understanding his rejection of Plato's idea in *NE* bk. I, ch. 6. Rather than the Form of the Good being some unity in which all human choice and action must participate, the goods that constitute a flourishing human life are *plural*. Therefore, insight into particulars and morally salient feature of concrete circumstance are vital parts of ethical judgment, for they are the only way to tell that we are collecting that plurality and harmonizing it appropriately to the ulterior end of *eudaimonia*. What gives a morally excellent choice its intrinsic value is not that it participates in an absolute Form of the Good, but that it is, in fact, choice-worthy for its own sake. Under such circumstances, it is choice-worthy because of its relation to us, to the kind of beings we are; it is genuinely good because it fits our humanness and aids in our flourishing, whether biological, emotional, intellectual, social, and so on. But the actual choice of the ‘mean relative to us’ will always be a mean relative to ‘me’—the particular agent involved. Hence, the final choice requires a grasp of actual specifics.

¹⁴¹ *NE* 1143b4-5. In regard to this, Loudon sums up nicely ideas that are shared by Sherman and Nussbaum: “Trustworthy moral principles can generally only to be found by a dialectical process which starts from particular moral judgments and builds upwards. The practically wise man's intuition about what he should do in a particular situation is generalized in a maxim that applies to other agents in similar situation.” Loudon (1986), p. 135. The other commentators would add, ‘but they apply only as rules of thumb.’ This is echoed in Burnyeat (1980), pp. 72-73.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented important elements of *NE* books I, II, III, VI and an exposition that isolated four distinct and interconnected cognitive operations vital to moral insight: (i) The power of emotions and desires to apprehend intelligible content, especially value; (ii) the construed world of appearances that emotions and desires play a role in forming, and, that they react to in proto-evaluative response; (iii) *phronesis*—that mode of practical intelligence that (involving *nous*, *empeiria*, and *aesthesis*) seeks to cope with concrete exigencies, doing so with the ulterior goal of *eudaimonia*; (iv) the practical particularism that seems to follow from the nature of *phronesis*.

Emerging from this has been the problem of *phronimos*-as-subject; that is, how the personal experience, skill, emotion, and cognitive well-functioning of the agent has made more ambiguous our notion of 'being objective' in Aristotelian ethical insight. The problem is not one of whether Aristotle believed in objective moral truths, for he is explicit about this. There is truth in ethics and that is why we must be concerned to distinguish between the apparent and the genuine. The genuine good is that which really would be good for us according to a correct understanding of human nature and it is choice-worthy for that reason. The problem here is on the side of cognition: how is the activity of the *phronimos* said to be objective when relying upon apparently subjective or personal factors? How are we to think about the reliability of direct insight when contrasted, say, with deductive inference? Does not the developmental nature of moral expertise seem to indicate that the standard is a moving target, perhaps headed toward a convergence of moral truth, perhaps remaining socio-historically relative? Let me re-iterate

three main factors for wondering about just how the *phronimos* could be said to be objective in moral insight:

(i) The *phronimos* uses his or her own contextually and historically conditioned disposition to somehow directly 'perceive' ethical salience within concrete circumstances; whereas, within the same context the vicious agent is quite incapable of grasping the appropriate choices.¹⁴² It is the past experience and right desire of the agent that induces awareness of salience. The agent, in making excellent ethical decisions, must not only come to know what is genuinely good to choose but must also desire it rightly, 'right desire' playing a role in both cognition of the good and in justification of a 'right' decision.¹⁴³

(ii) The object with which *phronesis* must interact is the world 'as it appears' to us. There is no other starting point. If, as we have seen, the states of affairs in which the questions for deliberation emerge are as complex as narratives, then interpretation of the narrative is vital to getting it right in moral insight. Yet, narrative and its elements are already pre-interpreted by (at least partially) uncontrolled prior conditions in the subject before he or she confronts the phenomenal world. How are we to think about an objectivity that does not seek to overcome *phantasm* construal, since this is impossible, but seeks to achieve a 'right' *phantasm* construal?

(iii) Genuinely good choices are categorized as just that which is chosen by a rationale (*logos*) employed by a typical *phronimos*.¹⁴⁴ The good is just what the good man would choose. This

¹⁴² NE 1140b12-19; 1113a23-b1; 1114a3ff.

¹⁴³ NE 1139a21-27; 1105b6-9.

¹⁴⁴ NE 1107a1-3; 1176a3-29.

raises the problem of apparent circularity in determining the good, and once again, the problem of how one is to 'be objective' arises.

Since we do not seek to escape the contribution of the subject to the construal of the world and the selecting of salience, we need a notion of objectivity that does not function as some artificially external standard, but rather an internal regulating notion, something that would keep the subject on track in her quest to live well. We need a subject-friendly model of objectivity.

In the next chapter, I turn to the work of Bernard Lonergan because he has spent considerable time working out just such a notion of objectivity. Moreover, he has done so while maintaining a central role for the direct cognitive grasp provided by insight. Yet, Lonergan himself will need considerable assistance when it comes to unpacking the ways that emotions can be discerners of genuine human values. For this, I will turn in later chapters to recent ideas promoted by Martha Nussbaum.

CHAPTER 2: Lonergan's Theory of Insight and Cognitive Operations

In pursuit of a deeper understanding of just what cognitive operations are at play when the *phronimos* gains moral insight, I turn now to the general theory of human understanding developed by Bernard Lonergan. We have just seen how Aristotelian virtue ethics relies upon some mode of direct insight that grasps the human good within presented particulars and it is precisely the vital role of insight that is richly explored in Lonergan's work.

The goal of this chapter is to examine the major elements and relations of the subjective side of human cognition. If the personal question at the heart of virtue ethics is 'how should I live my life as a whole?' then the personal question behind Lonergan's phenomenology of the knowing subject is 'what am I doing when I am knowing?'

I will proceed by looking at four major aspects of Lonergan's theory. First, the nature of insight and the overall cognitive process in which it plays the key role. Second, the importance of the unlimited nature of human wonder, inquiry. Third, the nature and role of a fundamental disposition of query that drives the whole dynamic of human learning and knowing. Fourth, the cognitive nature of human emotions. This chapter's overview is in preparation for the next, where I delve into a specific mode of insight that Lonergan called 'common sense' and that I believe is the category of which *phronesis* is a special case.

1. The nature of insight

Insight, as generally understood, is simply the mental event of 'coming to comprehend' something; it is not the *content* of what is understood, but the grasping of that content. "To gain insight is to understand (something) more fully, to move from a state of relative confusion to one of comprehension...[it] is associated with the 'Aha!' experience, with the proverbial light bulb going on over one's head."¹⁴⁵

Though sometimes occurring instantly, insights can also occur in a series of unspectacular gradual accumulations. They can occur within a broader set of operations, a family of phenomena occurring in creative work: "The thesis, discovering similarities, analogies, increase in certainty, recognizing error...and so on."¹⁴⁶ Each of these stages in turn has an internal micro-genesis and occurs within a larger developmental sequence.

Insight can be triggered by memory and imagination as well as perception. The history of science showcases amazing examples of insights occurring through the presentations of daydreaming states.¹⁴⁷ Friedrich von Kekule's dream is a prime example.¹⁴⁸ These cases show the dependency of insight upon some mode of phenomenal presentation. It is not surprising then

¹⁴⁵ In Sternberg and Davidson (1995), p. 38.

¹⁴⁶ Wallace (1991), pp. 41-42.

¹⁴⁷ See the cases of Poincaré and Einstein in Gruber (1995).

¹⁴⁸ Friedrich August von Kekule had a dream of whirling snakes that revealed to him the structure of benzene—the organic chemical compound made up of a ring of carbon atoms. He reported the dream in the following words many years after it took place, in a speech at a dinner commemorating his discovery: "I turned my chair to the fire [after having worked on the problem for some time] and dozed. Again the atoms were gambolling before my eyes. This time the smaller groups kept modestly to the background. My mental eye, rendered more acute by repeated vision of this kind, could now distinguish larger structures, of manifold conformation; long rows, sometimes more closely fitted together; all twining and twisting in snakelike motion. But look! What was that? One of the snakes had seized hold of its own tail, and the form whirled mockingly before my eyes. As if by a flash of lighting I awoke.... Let us learn to dream, gentlemen."
From Weisberg (1992).

that studies of insight occurrence have shown a correlation between richness of memory, experience, imaginative ability and success in gaining insight.

There are still other strategies that foster the inception of insight. These are attitudinal changes, and even environmental ones, that may increase the probability of hitting upon success.

Schooler *et al.*¹⁴⁹ showed that the following techniques and attitudes often proved successful for overcoming an impasse:

(i) *Forgetting*. Allowing a passage of time to clear out useless routines and to de-emphasize the salience of inappropriate cues may be relevant.¹⁵⁰ The subject may, for example, decide to 'sleep on it' before making a final decision.

(ii) *Changing context*. Poincaré's flash of insight into Fuchsian functions occurred while on vacation.¹⁵¹ Archimedes had an insight into the relation of specific gravity and water displacement while sinking into a bathtub in ancient Syracuse.¹⁵²

(iii) *Recognizing that one is lost*. The subject moves back to a viewpoint where he can see the problem and his own inability to proceed. He can fail to recognize that he is in a rut; but he can also be too proud to face that possibility, thereby foreclosing the possibility of moving to more fertile problem space.

¹⁴⁹ In Sternberg and Davidson (1995), pp. 559-87.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 570.

¹⁵¹ See Poincaré (1952), pp. 52-54.

¹⁵² Recounted in Vitruvius (1914).

(iv) *Perseverance*. Despite the dangers of losing perspective or falling into a rut, there is an obvious relation between time devoted to a problem and probability of solution. This is true for experts as well as novices.

(v) *Risk taking*. Often, the big discoveries in, say, science, were long shots that required going out on a limb.¹⁵³

(vi) *Playfulness*. Einstein referred to what he called the ‘combinatory play’ of selected ideas and representations, an essential feature of productive thought contributing to the process of insightful discovery.¹⁵⁴

(vii) But most important is the ability to recognize *analogies*. As Schooler *et al.* state: “....the value of analogy is that it may enable the individual to conceptualize better the ill-defined problem space in which he or she is working by relating it to some other problem space that is better defined.”¹⁵⁵

These descriptions, based upon lab and field research, corroborate virtually all of Lonergan’s earlier phenomenology of insight. He focuses on the nature of insight itself, but just as importantly, on the set of cognitive operations in which insight, when it occurs, is embedded. Lonergan’s own description includes the following:¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Sternberg and Davidson (1995), chs. 11; 16.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 449.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 576.

¹⁵⁶ *CWL* 3, p. 28-31.

- (i) It comes as a release to the tension of inquiry.
- (ii) It often comes suddenly and unexpectedly.
- (iii) It is a function, not of outer circumstances, but of inner conditions.
- (iv) It pivots between the concrete and the abstract.
- (v) It may pass into the habitual texture of one's mind.
- (vi) Higher order insights may occur that systematize lower order insights.

The first two characteristics are self-explanatory; an insight may instantly put an end to the tension of inquiry. But in the third, by "inner condition," Lonergan means that insight is not automatic the way vision is if one only opens one's eyes, or the way hearing is if one is not deaf. To see and hear is automatic if 'outer conditions' permit, i.e., the light is good; sound waves have good amplitude. But the occurrence or induction of insights is a matter of statistical probability; and the conditions that increase the likelihood of such induction are such factors as: balanced blood sugar, a sufficient protein diet, sufficient sleep, alertness, depth and diversity of past experience, asking questions, special training and knowledge, creative visualization, living in a culture that supports and values discovery, free thinking, and so forth.¹⁵⁷ All these factors are examples of 'inner' conditions that foster insight induction.

In the fourth point, when Lonergan says that insight pivots between the concrete and the abstract, he means that insight is the link between sense and understanding; between presentation and implication; or, on a higher order, between 'knowing that' and 'knowing why.' It is by insight that we grasp, within concrete particulars and states of affairs, the characteristics on which will

¹⁵⁷ For more on conditions of insight induction see the works of Gick (1992); Kaplan and Simon (1990); and Dreyfus (1990).

hang generalizations, analogies, taxonomies, and theoretic constructs. Clearly, this is the event that occurs in Aristotle's geometer example in the last chapter.

In the fifth point, some insights may become part of our habitual knowledge. By habitual knowledge is meant a set of accumulated insights that, once acquired, become the basis for increasing ease in learning and/or operating within a particular field. For insights do not accumulate in the linear and logical order of a flow chart or a deduction, but amass themselves into clusters unified by sets of questions or concerns. Accumulated sets of insights form entire viewpoints from which we now easily grasp things that were a difficult mystery during the learning process. Accordingly, mathematics, analytic thinking, artistic style, tactics, political savvy, are all examples of clusters of insights that are habitually resident and operative in what we call expertise.¹⁵⁸

Finally, accumulated insights may be systematized by higher order insights. Algebra, for instance, involves insights that allow the intelligent manipulation of whole orders of lower arithmetic insights. Theoretical economics involves higher order insights that explain and systematize whole sets of lower order transactions. The plot of a novel systematizes what may otherwise seem inchoate actions and events in the narrative. Moving to such 'higher viewpoints' allows us to discover and integrate wholes and parts, events and recurrences, and to grasp the concrete historical development of systems of ideas and systems of techniques.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ *CWL* 3, p. 303.

¹⁵⁹ *CWL* 3, pp. 37-43, but see all the many index entries under 'Development'.

Having given this basic description of insight as the pivotal event of understanding, it is vital to stress here at the outset, that insight occurs as the key element in an overarching, dynamic set of operations, that, taken as a whole, makes up Lonergan's "general empirical method,"¹⁶⁰ and which may be referred to as our 'coming to know.'¹⁶¹ I will explore this larger set of operations within this chapter, but here it is important to understand that while an insight itself is the breakthrough we seek in our desire to know things, any particular insight is not a fully epistemic state itself; it embodies content, and may also provoke the psychological 'aha' response, but it is not yet a justified belief. The process of coming to know is an ongoing, self-criticizing and self-correcting procedure.¹⁶² It may eventually issue in truthful propositions, but these will not simply jump out as obvious to us, but will be affirmed by critical grasp of sufficient reasons for assent, whatever those may be. Thus, in the course of this dissertation, while the context will occasionally allow me to use the term 'insight' to refer to the whole process of coming to know, properly speaking, we must distinguish the two.

Human knowing, then, according to Lonergan, is discursive, involving different levels of cognitive activity: attention, perception, memory and imagination, insights, formulation of these into, say, concepts and definitions, reflection upon these, conjecture, weighing and considering evidence, judgment, and following upon all of these, decisions, choices, and actions. Insight is

¹⁶⁰ Generalized or general empirical method. This is the recognition that the hypothetico-deductive method, whose example *par excellence* is modern empirical science, is also operative in analogous forms across all other projects of enquiry. This conception of method will be further developed in the course of this thesis. See the 'canon of operations' in *CWL* 10, pp. 142-43; *MIT*, ch. 1.

¹⁶¹ I use the term 'coming to know' for its participial force—it is an ongoing process. To refer to human knowledge as an accomplished state is already to downplay somewhat the procedures that necessarily precede it and that will use one level of knowledge as the foundation for future development. Thus, throughout this thesis, I will refer to human knowing as process, something we do. This is not to deny that the process has a product—the various blocks of propositional or habitual knowledge found in, say, concept and skill, books and arts. But the product depends upon the operations, and the operations depend upon conscious subjects performing them.

¹⁶² Taken here as including learning, affirming, correcting, re-affirming, and so on.

the hinge that links the inquiring subject from one distinct kind of cognitive activity, say, perception, to the next, say, hypothesizing. As such, it makes the difference between an animal's gawk and a human's understanding. Thus, we seek insights for what they provide to the whole generalized empirical method of 'coming to know.'

With this caveat in place, I turn now to a case in point to illustrate this methodical cognitive activity at work.

*Insight through tactile data only: Helen Keller.*¹⁶³

As a child who became deaf, blind, and mute, Keller lived within a world of immediacy limited to the sensations of touch, taste, and smell. Her special-needs teacher understood that Keller could only escape the limitations of her world by shifting her focus from rudimentary sensation to the semiotic realm of mediating signs. So with her finger, she began inscribing the letter 'W' upon the palm of Keller's hand while holding it under running water in the hope that Keller would associate the tactile letter with the water. The success of this technique changed her life. Writing about this event much later on, Keller said that when she suddenly grasped that link—of W to water—it was as though the heavens had opened and she was flooded with light. She got the point! She gained insight into the curious sensible phenomenon of scribbling upon her hand, but to make absolutely sure of her discovery, or rather, her hypothesis, she grabbed a handful of

¹⁶³ I deliberately begin with the case of Helen Keller to avoid showcasing insight into *visual* data. It is too easy to confuse visual recognition with insight itself. Even the term 'insight' banks on an analogy to vision that is as potentially misleading as it might be illuminating. We learn so much of what we know through vision that we may tend to construe human cognition by analogy to vision, that is, to construe knowing as intuition, similar to sense intuitions. This is an area of one of Lonergan's most virulent critiques: knowing is not like "taking a good look" at what is out there to be known. He combats such intuitionism along with its epistemological correlates in naïve realism in *CWL* 3, pp. 410-11; 437-40. (For an important critique of Duns Scotus' view that we directly intuit a nexus of conceptual content, see *CWL* 2, p. 39, n. 126. Also, there is a relevant critique of scholastic conceptualism as well as Kant in this regard in Lonergan (1968), pp. 8-19.

dirt and offered it to her teacher. When she then felt a *different* letter, the letter 'E' (for 'earth') being inscribed, she affirmed the correlation of the sign and the signified. It was *not* an insight into water or earth; it was insight into the notion of a sign, a language—and it lifted her from a world of introversion and crude understanding to one of higher meaning and self-expression.¹⁶⁴

The complex cognitive process in which insight operates

This example showcases three interlinked cognitive operations, which, when operating without obstruction, form our process of coming to know, that is, Lonergan's general empirical method:

- (i) Inquisitively directed *attention* to the data of presentation;¹⁶⁵
- (ii) Insights of *understanding*; and
- (iii) Reflective insights of *judgment*.
- (iv) A fourth level of apprehension may follow upon these, the insight and judgments of *value*, conveying what would be genuinely worth pursuing in human action.

Below is a cursory description of these related operations.

- (i) The first level of our method of coming to know is an inquisitive *attending* to some phenomenal presentation. There is a flow of intentional data, including the presentations of memory and imagination, which impinge upon consciousness. The first act of intelligence is to direct interested attention upon some part of the flow and prescind from others; such attending

¹⁶⁴ Keller (1904).

¹⁶⁵ Lonergan includes within the category of conscious data not only the various modes of sensible presentation, but also awareness of emotions, bodily sensation, and awareness of (some) mental acts.

has a heuristic focus absent from, say, daydreaming. Attending is not itself an act of sense, but is a shift in intentional focus directed, according to Lonergan, by the subject's own concerns, wants, needs, and so on. Attention is not random, though it is often spontaneous; it is an *intelligent* dividing of the flow of consciousness into meaningful and manageable parts. For Keller, this was to focus upon the tactile experience of scribbling upon her hand, rather than, say, the coldness of the water; but there are many ways to attend. Our attending can be a very light bemusement with presentation; it can be seized and jolted in a new direction by sudden interference; it can be fascinated with a clue implying some larger mystery; it can be a plodding and deliberate concentration on the necessary task at hand. In all cases, attending is intentional and its object is some presentation, some data in conscious awareness.¹⁶⁶

(ii) By means of the objects of attention, there may be induced the second level cognitive event of *understanding*. This is experienced as the occurrence of an insight, whether climactic 'aha!' or gradual dawning. Insights of understanding grasp the intelligibility immanent within experienced data, or that may apply to these data. Merely to understand something pertaining to

¹⁶⁶ Of the many things that can be said of the psychological phenomenon of attention, the most important for this thesis is the distinction and function of two kinds of awareness best described in Polanyi (1958). There are two major kinds of attention: focal attention and subsidiary attention. For example, in playing the piano, I can focus attention upon the music and the notation while also being conscious of the fact that my hands and fingers are moving and feeling too. The awareness of hand motion is subsidiary to the focused attention of musical notation. These are not levels or degrees of one general act of attention, but two distinct kinds of awareness, for one cannot slide along an unbroken scale of focus without losing sight of what one was doing. When the pianist, for instance, shifts attention from the music being played to what his fingers are doing, he often gets confused and has to stop. This illustrates that the act of playing music is not the same as the act of finger skills, though it is built upon them. Fingering skill is the subsidiary material of the art of musicianship. Attention is not something that we merely shift from the music to the fingering. Rather, one can only focus attention at one level at one time. Another analogy is the relationship of words and sentences. One can focus either on each word and its connotations and denotations, or one can focus upon the meaning of the entire sentence, but not at the same time and in the same way. As Polanyi says, "All the particulars become meaningless if we lose sight of the pattern which they conjointly constitute" (p. 57). This two level mode of attention—to that which is in focus, and yet still with a subsidiary but weaker awareness of constitutive element of focused objects—allows one to move upward, as it were, to higher order viewpoints of focus that permit of a Gestalt like grasp of wholes that was unavailable on the lower level. Lonergan builds a considerable amount of his theory of perception and insight on this kind of hierarchy of levels of attention and the corresponding higher order insight that each level may induce. Lonergan's theory will become clearer as we proceed.

attendant data is to have an insight into *possible* meanings or links, a grasp of some coherent formal content, a grasp of the distinction between the essential and the accidental within the focused data. In Keller's case, this was the grasp of the possibility of a *relation* between the scribbling and the water. Such insights of understanding are the links that shift us from mere experience to intelligible grasp, but they are still, in fact, hypothetical until reasons for assent obtain. But affirmation and denial are themselves the result of a further insight: the reflective insight of *judgment*.

(iii) On Lonergan's third level cognition, by *judgment* we seek to discern the *actual* from the possible, the *real* from the merely apparent. This query calls for the higher order insight of critical reflection that verifies, denies, assigns a probability to, or seeks further evidence for the initial insight of understanding. The insight of judgment results in an assent; thus it is not an act of will, a decision, but an act of intelligent apprehension that fulfilled conditions compel affirmation. Keller's first insight was something like, "Aha, W *means* water!" This is what she thinks, but how could she know that such an assertion was true rather than just a 'bright idea'? Her move was to formulate the content within a conditional and then seek fulfilling conditions; an example might be: 'if other tactile objects have distinct letter-signs, then W must apply uniquely to water.' The conditions were fulfilled by a turn to *phantasm* (tactile), where she felt 'E' for earth being scribbled on her palm while holding some soil, and thus she confirmed both that such scribbles were signs, and that W meant water. The insight of judgment, then, does not grasp a further content (say, truth or being) within the first order insight; rather it reflects upon the *link* between a conditional and its conditions, and grasps the presence of fulfilled conditions sufficient for assent. It constitutes the third essential level of cognition in Lonergan's 'dynamic

process of knowing.’¹⁶⁷ It is here, on the level of judgment that the whole process attains to what we call knowledge proper. The insight of judgment completes the process by ending the query in a true epistemological state: Keller now *knows* that W means water.

Both the insight of understanding and the insight of judgment are the same kind of cognitive event, a grasping of something by turning to conscious presentation. Both may or may not be accompanied by the psychological ‘aha’ experience. What distinguishes them is their formal intentional object; understanding grasps a form, a ‘what it is?’ This can be a simple essence or definition, or it can be a complex concrete state of affairs. But judgment asserts or denies being or truth, not form. On the one hand, then, insights of understanding answer to questions that seek the *what* and *why* pertaining to conscious presentation. On the other hand, insights of judgment result from reflection upon insights of understanding. They seek to know whether some comprehended thing is indeed the case: say, whether W *really does* mean water. I will offer more discussion of this later on.

This ongoing cycle—attending to presentation, insights of understanding, and insights of judgment—forms the basic structure of Lonergan’s dynamic process of coming to know.

Since this thesis is concerned with human intelligence as it would unfold within *ethical* inquiry, however, we must consider not only the above three operations, but also whatever insights might be involved in deliberating and deciding. Such insights would result from their own line of

¹⁶⁷ Judgment is used here to denote existential judgment, or judgment of truth or falsity. Throughout, following Lonergan, I use the term judgment as assent to truth or being. I never use it here in reference to the act of composition and division, or the attribution of a predicate to a subject; these are discursive acts of the understanding by which we grasp the nature of complex objects of thought. This grasp is a first-order insight of understanding. “Judgment” is Lonergan’s second-order insight into first-order insights. See also *CWL* 2, chs. 1 and 2.

query typified in such questions as: what should I do? should I in fact do it? would doing this be genuinely worthwhile? These and similar questions will involve a third distinct kind of insight that, for Lonergan, would involve some turn to emotion and desire as well as *phantasm*. These he classified generally as ‘insights of value.’¹⁶⁸

(iv) Insights and judgments of value. The above deliberative questions involving value assume a level of self-awareness where one moves to a higher viewpoint that considers the self within the larger contexts of one’s past, one’s social embeddedness, one’s beliefs and desires, including what kind of person one desires to become precisely through one’s own deliberations and decisions. From this higher viewpoint, we may ask the questions for deliberation and decision that take into account longer-term concerns and life goals. Accordingly, deliberative insights present future possibilities; judgment affirms that striving for these possibilities is truly worthwhile. Clearly, this is the line of questioning and insight in which much of practical ethics takes place and it too will receive significant treatment in later chapters.

This whole process of attention, insight, and judgment—and in the case of practical and ethical knowledge, deliberation and decision—cycles through itself in a self-correcting spiral of learning.¹⁶⁹ It is *self-correcting* because any formulated insights and judgments always remain open to further questioning: Are there more relevant data? Are there more relevant implications? Is this really the case? These questions and their answers may lead to actions, observations, experiments, new insights, and re-formulations that in turn become the data upon which the process will begin all over again. It is *self-correcting* because the self same process will detect

¹⁶⁸ *MIT*, p. 36-41.

¹⁶⁹ On self-correcting process see *CWL* 3, pp. 197-98; 311-16; 325-29. *MIT*, pp. 159-60; 208-09.

any failures or inadequacies, for correction can only come by further attention, insight, and judgment. Thus, it is the one process, reduplicated back upon itself, that effects self-correction and spirals toward the ongoing development of our various blocks of knowledge.

Finally, this process, while *spontaneously operative* in the development of human thought, may be responsibly and methodically harnessed. The successive stages usually are not explicitly conscious to us, often awaiting some frustration of our inquiry before becoming obvious. Yet, though we experience the process as spontaneously operative, it is quite possible to appropriate it and deliberately, self-consciously operate according to its exigencies. This is what empirical science has formalized: the methodical exploitation of cognitive processes already at play. (The first three levels map onto empirical, hypothetical, verification procedures.) Moreover, we may find ourselves very deliberately appropriating the stages outlined above whenever we seek to reaffirm or question a conclusion. For we find ourselves carefully and consciously reiterating the stages of attending, comprehending, and affirming (or denying) and we seem to have an immediate sense that error is found only at one or more of these levels if something proper to each level has failed to obtain. Thus, by taking a spontaneously functioning set of operations and deliberately and self consciously deploying it, we take a native dynamism of human cognition and transform it into a method. It is a method productive of beliefs that can be justified and known to be true.¹⁷⁰

Wherever we have a method that can be deferred to at will, we also have an operation available for responsible use or thoughtless misuse. In anticipation of later chapters, let me state here that

¹⁷⁰ On self-appropriation see *CWL* 3, ch.11, esp. pp. 352-57; *CWL* 6, pp. 221-26; Lonergan (1974), pp. 213-14; *MIT*, pp. 6-7; 13-16; 83-85.

by describing human knowing as a set of mental acts that we may harness and perfect or disregard altogether, Lonergan sets up cognitive process as an issue central to any virtue ethics. For his cognitive process is open to being developed (or not) into a well-functioning habitual structure; insofar as the subject is self-aware and responsible in the deployment of cognitive method, the subject is performing an essential function of the *phronimos*, an excellence in seeking to know—one case of which is: deliberation.¹⁷¹

2. The unrestricted nature of questioning and the ‘pure desire to know’

The foregoing modes of being conscious—as attending, as understanding, as reflecting and judging, deliberating and the like—are all manifestations of a prior disposition that elicits these conscious acts in the first place: the disposition of query, of wonder, of curiosity, of personal concern. We may experience a dissatisfaction with *not* apprehending, *not* understanding, *not* knowing what is true and what is good, and this dissatisfaction motivates further inquiry (in the well-functioning, authentic subject).

For this reason, Lonergan regards the process of coming to know as fundamentally heuristic rather than intuitive. While some stages in the process involve direct apprehension of content (attention to conscious presentations), the process itself is driven by an intending aimed at a content we do *not* yet know. This intending of the unknown is exhaustive, for we can wonder about the things that we do not yet know, and we can wonder about all the rest of the things that we do not even know that we do not know. This leaves out nothing. Thus, we can add a further

¹⁷¹ NE 1113a22-23; also bk. VI, ch.5

point to Aristotle's principle that 'the kinds of things we can know are determined by the kinds of questions we can ask,'¹⁷² and that is, that there is no restriction whatsoever to the things we can ask about. The process of coming to know is driven by query, and there is no *a priori* limitation to where questions can be directed, for there is no limit to what we can wonder about.

This bears repeating. Could there exist a kind of being about which *even to wonder* is impossible? Let us call this being an 'epistemological black hole' for it provides no intelligibility at all to any observer/thinker. Now, either it will have a nature of some kind or it will not. If it has a nature, but one which is in principle cut off from my ability to discover, am I not still able to wonder about it? Am I not intending that nature as 'that which I would love to know, if only such a being were open to my cognitive capacities?' Thus, I am wondering about this kind of being—what it is, whether it is. But if the being has no nature at all, then there is no formal content to be grasped by insight and affirmed in judgment, and hence I am wondering about nothing, and nothing does not count as a mode of being about which I cannot even wonder. Thus, simply to ask this question—is there any being about which I cannot even wonder?—is already to have a negative answer, for I am wondering about it by asking this question. Clearly there are practical limits to what humans will come to know, but the unrestricted nature of query is one of the prior conditions for the possibility of attaining genuine knowledge of the universe.¹⁷³

Moreover, the intending of query cannot ultimately be satisfied until we know everything about everything. For while there are practical limits to what we will in fact wonder about, and the

¹⁷² *Posterior Analytics*, bk. II, chs. 1-2.

¹⁷³ On the unrestricted nature of query directed at being *CWL* 3, pp. 375-75; 659-62.

human life span is one of those limits, in principle, we can always keep on wondering as long as things still perplex us. Thus, human query is ordered toward its own resolution in absolute knowledge, though clearly no one attains that. This is why Lonergan describes the query-driven process of coming to know as heading toward an ideal limit of “no further questions.”¹⁷⁴

Lonergan argues that, though each level of the process intends its own formal object, the whole process itself embodies an open-ended intending of ‘all that can be known’ by questioning.¹⁷⁵

Let us turn to the *a priori* ground of questioning to study its role in the cognitive process.

The pure desire to know

Wonder, query, piqued interest, the concern to know—whatever we call it—it is a primordial thrust toward being that is immanent in human consciousness. As the eros of the mind, Lonergan called this the “pure desire to know” (henceforth: PDK).¹⁷⁶ He is not speaking of a surface curiosity that makes us look up something in a dictionary, for example. Rather, it is that thrust that would raise a question in the first place. It is revealed in the very propensity to be intrigued by pattern, salience, or change within *phantasm*. It is felt as a dissatisfied ignorance, an annoyance with error and the turn to seek correction. Lonergan describes it this way:

¹⁷⁴ *CWL* 3, p. 325.

¹⁷⁵ There is no refutation of this in claiming that query can end, say, in despair or utter apathy toward the external world. These are practical and, perhaps, factual cessations of wonder, query, or concern, but query is in principle still possible. It is only with the attainment of absolute knowledge of all being that query is no longer a possibility. God, for instance, asks no questions.

¹⁷⁶ On the pure desire to know *CWL* 3, pp. 372-75. “Transcendental intending” is a notion that was developed by the later Lonergan in *MIT*. It shares precisely the defining characteristics of the PDK found in the earlier work *CWL* 3. Both terms speak of the same *a priori* orectic orientation toward ‘what is to be known,’ and for Lonergan, this is co-extensive with being. See Lonergan (1974), p. 274.

This primordial drive, then, is the pure question. It is prior to any insights, any concepts, any words; for insight, concepts, words have to do with answers, and before we *look* for answers we *want* them; such wanting is the pure question.

On the other hand, though the pure question is prior to insights, concepts and words, it presupposes experiences and images. Just as insight is *into* the concretely given or imagined, so the pure question is *about* the concretely given or imagined. It is the wonder which Aristotle claimed to be the beginning of all science and philosophy.¹⁷⁷ (*italics mine*)

As a desire, the PDK seeks fulfillment in the satisfaction of acts of knowing. But as a desire to *know*, it does not simply seek the satisfaction that cognition may give the subject, but is a desire for the *content* of cognitive acts. Such a desire is limited only by ‘what there is to be known,’ that is, the totality of intelligible reality. As we have just seen, the PDK can only be satisfied when we know everything about everything, though in practice, in a given context, it only ceases when we know that no further relevant questions will arise. For example, it is hard to imagine any real questions that would resurrect the Ptolemaic astronomy; that system stands defeated by the answers given to a completed set of questions.

It is the pure desire to know that arranges the levels of cognitive operation into a hierarchy of functional dependence: data invite questions for understanding (what is it?) and these may yield insights (according to some statistical rate); but insights themselves raise questions of judgment or verification, (is it indeed so?) of whatever content is conveyed in the first insight. Based, in part, on what we affirm as real, we respond affectively and responsibly, with questions of deliberation and decision (what should I do; how should I live?).

¹⁷⁷ *CWL* 3, pp. 34; 372. Also, “*Insight: Preface to a Discussion*,” in *CWL* 4, p. 147, “It is a desire for ideas, for concepts, for knowledge but, of itself, it is merely discontented ignorance.... Again, it is not a postulate. Postulates are parts of hypothetical answers, but the desire to know grounds questions. Nor is there any need to postulate questions. They are facts.”

This hierarchy of dependence grounds a normative method.¹⁷⁸ Doing things in this order is the right way of going about the process of coming to know. Failure can occur in several ways. There is the failure to allow any level to reach its proper term. Thus, on the level of experiencing the data of presentation, we may fail to be attentive, daydreaming instead of concentrating, being waylaid by trivial detail and missing salience. On the level of inquiring intelligence, we can fail to let insights fully emerge, or to allow several contradictory insights to coordinate themselves *vis a vis* the same data. We can fail by refusing even to entertain certain insights because they violate a preciously held bias or dogma. On the level of reasonable and critical reflection, judgment may become rash and affirm an insight despite insufficient reason, or, it may refrain from affirming even in the face of evidence because of fear or dislike of the conclusion. In all cases, it is the prior PDK that elicits query in the first place and that is being prevented from driving the process and the natural cycling of attention, insight, and judgment is being curtailed by some unhealthy interference.

We can more easily conceive the normative aspect of the PDK through such a negative analysis. For the pure desire to know is that primordial thrust that is being stymied by inattentiveness, bias and repression, rashness and cowardice of judgment, and vice in deliberation and decision. Something has broken down when any or all of these pathologies are in play, and that something is a dynamism that was heading toward the real, the true, and good, before it was waylaid by defects in the operations of human subjects. In Lonergan's theory, the inhibition of the PDK, and hence of the cognitive operations propelled by it, is a fundamental cause of our failing to

¹⁷⁸ Lonergan's understanding of method is as "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results. There is a method, then, where there are distinct operations, where each operation is related to the others. Where the set of relations forms a pattern, where the pattern is described as the right way of doing the job, where the operations in accord with the pattern may be repeated indefinitely, and where the fruit of the such repetitions are, not repetitious, but cumulative and progressive." *MIT*, p. 4.

attain objectivity in our knowing process.¹⁷⁹ I will return to this in later chapters via analysis of the problem of bias.

Because the ordered operations are all conscious, they can be *known* to be the norms that functionally they are. This can be phrased in hypothetical imperative language: if your fundamental desire is for intelligent and reasonable grasp of reality, then pay attention to the data, gain insight, judge validly, and decide in the light of these.¹⁸⁰ The order of dependence of the operations then is normative as is the thrust to perform them; it is the 'right way' of going about knowing. Any deviation from this order results in a procedural error.

Lonergan's argument is that this pattern of linked cognitive operations is normative and foundational for all our other more specific heuristic methods, such as, for example, modern science. For, any specific project of human knowing, such as science or history or moral inquiry, will employ its own more determinate modes of attending, insight induction, and critical reflective judgment. And the general empirical method, as an immanently operative norm grounding these projects, will also ground the objectivity proper to each sub-species of human inquiry.

¹⁷⁹ *CWL* 3, pp. 404-09.

¹⁸⁰ This later develops into Lonergan's notion of the transcendental precepts. See *MIT*, pp. 231-32.

3. Two cognitive roles for emotion

In his later work *Method in Theology*, Lonergan begins to explore the cognitive role that emotions might play in our process of coming to know. His general conclusion is that emotions apprehend value.

After distinguishing somatic sensations (hunger, fatigue) and general moods (depression, irritability) from feelings as responses to intentional objects (anger, fear, joy, grief, compassion), Lonergan claims that such intentional responses are the very apprehension of things deemed valuable to us. To understand what he is getting at, we need to distinguish two basic cognitive roles played by intentional-response feelings, and then contrast those with the judgment of value *proper*. These two roles are: feelings as apprehensions of value and feelings as determiners of our horizon of concern.

First, feelings are apprehensions of value. Lonergan divides feelings into at least two categories: feelings as responses to intentional objects that are deemed satisfying or dissatisfying, and as responses to intentional objects deemed values in themselves.¹⁸¹ In the first, feelings respond to an object with pursuit or avoidance because of its relation to the current desiderative state of the subject. In the second, feelings are responses to objects for the sake of which the subject is willing to gain *new* desires, or eschew presently inappropriate ones. The first is simply the emotional response to things we happen to like or dislike, prefer or reject (apart from any real good they may embody). The second is the emotive recognition of some object or action that is seen as an intrinsic good, whether or not we have yet established a habit of preference for it. It is

¹⁸¹ In this section, I am relying upon much of the summary provided in Doorley (1994).

this second intentional response that Lonergan calls the apprehension of value, as opposed to the first, which is the apprehension of possible satisfaction. Through the apprehension of a value, emotion selects or is attracted by an object for the sake of which we are willing to transcend the self that we are, to become something we are not yet (*i.e.*, virtuous.) The apprehension of value, then, is a vital component of the possibility of moral growth.

Lonergan's treatment of satisfaction-feelings versus evaluative-feelings seems to parallel Aristotle's treatment of the merely pleasant versus the genuine good.¹⁸² We feel positive emotion toward the things we happen to prefer and that give us the pleasantness of satisfaction, but neither preference nor satisfaction are indications that the object is genuinely good for us. For Lonergan as for Aristotle, the goal of desiderative, ethical growth is to move from a fundamental orientation of satisfaction-seeking to one of genuine value-seeking, and presumably this will yield its own higher kind of satisfaction. It is an excellence in our desiring faculty as well as one in our deliberating and practical reasoning that accomplishes this.

The first role of intentional-response type emotions, then, is that through their proper orientation we may apprehend value.

Second is the cognitive contribution of emotion as it establishes our horizon of concern. What is this horizon? "Literally, a horizon is a maximum field of vision from a determinate standpoint. In a generalized sense, a horizon is specified by two poles, one objective and the other subjective, with each pole conditioning the other."¹⁸³ The horizon of concern is the maximum

¹⁸² See *NE* 1113b24-35; 1114a32-b17.

¹⁸³ *CWL* 4, p. 198.

threshold of the possibility of personal interest in some matter of fact or value. It is the limit beyond which we would not even know that we should care or inquire. And it is set, in large part, by a subject's emotions.

The analogy of three concentric epistemological circles may help us understand the concept: the innermost circle represents the things that we know, the next concentric circle represents the things we know that we do not know, and the outermost circle represents the things that we do not even know that we do not know. Within the first circle, I can wonder about and care about things; I can ask question and get answers, I can have concerns and know how to deal with them. Within the second circle, however, I may wonder and care about things that I know I do not know, and for that very reason I am driven on to learn and discover the things that are of concern to me. But regarding the outermost circle—of the unknown unknown, I do not even ask questions nor do I care at all. Yet the unknown unknown may certainly be intelligible and valuable in itself, but for me, it is beyond my world of cognition and concern.¹⁸⁴ Our personal cognitive horizon is the boundary between the second and third circle, between the known unknown and the unknown unknown. Our cognitive horizon is the limit beyond which we have absolutely no knowledge and no concern whatsoever.¹⁸⁵ Clearly, this boundary will have ramification for a theory of objectivity.

As with knowledge, so with human concern: there is the circle of active cares, of things I am concerned to develop suitable cares about, and there is the circle of that to which I am affectively

¹⁸⁴ A case in point would be questions and concerns about gravity or radioactivity while living in the Stone Age. These things would never be wondered about nor worried about because they are beyond anyone's horizon. Nevertheless, gravity and radiation really are affecting the reality in which one's horizon is but a heuristic limitation.

¹⁸⁵ *CWL* 10, pp. 88-99.

oblivious. Now it is emotion that plays a vital role in the establishment of this horizon. The things about which I feel absolutely nothing will fall outside my horizon of concern and have no bearing upon my goals and deliberations. If there are genuine human goods beyond my horizon, they will be cut off from my consideration and to that degree my moral growth will be hindered. These things will not enter into my deliberations nor bother my conscience. (And I would not know this, nor care.) For example, if I keep the subjective suffering of non-human sentient animals in the third sphere of non-concern, this will effect the ethical decisions I am able to reach even through the most pristine deliberative process. Feelings establish the horizon within which deliberation takes place, for the things we will deliberate about will first have to be included within the horizon of things we care about.

But this raises an interesting point. Once we become aware of the third of the concentric circles, the one that preempts our possible concerns because of the limitations of horizon, we may become aware that ignorance of the real and the good is a matter for personal concern (for what I do not know *can* hurt me), and thus the pure desire to know, if left to its own exigency, should naturally push our horizon outwards toward the ideal limit of 'no further relevant concerns.' In matters of value and the good, it is the emotion of a disquieted conscience that drives this process, for a peaceful conscience is just another term for 'no further relevant questions.'¹⁸⁶ Thus, it is through feeling that I apprehend the value of a maximally expanding horizon; I am made uneasy by knowing that a horizon is not itself an end to questions, but a limit to what I know how to ask.

¹⁸⁶ Doorley (1994), p. 115.

Feelings then, in Lonergan's schema, do at least these two things. First, they are the very medium in which concrete personal value is initially apprehended. Second, they establish the limits of what we will be concerned about in the first place, and yet they may motivate us toward an unhindered expansion of horizon or toward inhibition of such openness through bias or repression.

With this twofold role for emotion in mind, we turn to the judgment of value.

Because, for Lonergan, the human good is always *in* things, the judgment of value concerns the concrete and the particular. Like judgments of fact, value judgments are assents to insights based upon the grasp of sufficient fulfilling conditions. This is a very important notion that requires a moment's careful attention.

Generally, judgment has been used to name two distinct mental acts: (i) composition and division (synthesis and analysis), and (ii) the positing or rejecting of whatever is understood in composition and division. The act of composition and division is part of the induction process of first order insights of understanding. We analyze in order to comprehend parts and relations: disassembling a motor teaches the apprentice how it works. We predicate attributes and relations of something in order to understand *what* it is: this motor is broken and belongs to Mr. Jones. But whatever we come to understand through such composition and division (whether conceptual or practical) may still be subject to acceptance or rejection. It occurred to us that, "aha—Jones' motor is broken," but we may still reflect upon that insight and ask, "wait a minute, is it *really* the case that Jones' motor is broken?" It is this second question that indicates

Lonergan's notion of judgment, the 'yes' or 'no' directed toward some proposition.¹⁸⁷ A judgment is always an answer to a question of the general form: 'is it indeed so?'

However, one cannot move directly from a question such as 'is it so?' to an answer. No matter how quickly we seem to make judgments, there is no direct intuiting of the 'yes' or the 'no.' Thus, there must be at least one stage, sometimes unconscious to us, between the question and the answer.¹⁸⁸ Lonergan claimed that this stage is the *formulation* of the insightful content into a *conditional*, a hypothetical content. This can be done in any number of ways and relies upon learning, aptitude, creativity, skill, and other inner conditions. For instance, by adverting to the sensible presentation coming from the corner of my eye, I grasp that 'aha!' my daughter is coming down the sidewalk toward me. But realizing that school is not out yet, I question whether indeed that is my daughter coming toward me. Remembering that she wore a jean skirt this morning, I formulate, either explicitly or semi-consciously, the conditional: 'if upon closer inspection, the clothes are the same, then my daughter is indeed heading this way (and, aha—a further insight—school must have ended early today.)' Now all that remains is ascertaining whether the conditions have been met. If so, I have reason for assent. And if no further relevant questions arise; my attention shifts elsewhere. Judgment, then, consists in the coming together of two things: a conditional and its fulfilled conditions.¹⁸⁹

But returning now to ethical judgments of value, rather than judgments of fact, we are concerned with *future* being, with what *should* be, not with what already is, and therefore present states of

¹⁸⁷ On Judgment, *CWL* 3, ch. 9. Lonergan is indebted to a large degree to John Henry Newman's theory of judgment found in Newman (1979). See his comments in *CWL* 6, p. 237.

¹⁸⁸ *CWL* 3, pp. 59-61; 298-301.

¹⁸⁹ A vital essay on this matter is "The Form of Inference" in *CWL* 4, pp. 3-16.

affairs cannot supply data sufficient to fulfill conditions. It seems, then, that an ethical value judgment will have to rely upon the sheer invulnerability of the insight to critical reflection. Desire, emotion, insight combine to present us with some value-laden object of choice. The process of evaluative judgment seems to be a kind of process of elimination: our verification procedure then seeks to remove doubts about our feelings and objects of desire—*viz.*, is this indeed an intrinsic value I am pursuing or a veiled special interest of mine? Have I really paid attention to all the pertinent points of view on this matter? Am I repressing important feelings that need to emerge in this case? In other words, we return to the steps of cognitive method and to the data conveyed in emotion and desire in order to come to a final judgment. We assent in a judgment of value when we no longer find reasons *not* to pursue what desire and/or emotion have presented to us in insight. I think this is the best way to interpret Lonergan's "invulnerable insight" criterion.¹⁹⁰

Clearly then, judgments of value will not have the precision of judgments of fact or deductive method. For due to the inherent limits of any individual horizon at any one time, there is no guarantee that relevant questions will be asked or be recognized as relevant. The more sensitive, more open-minded, more experienced a person is, the more likely he or she is to raise and answer the more relevant questions. Thus, the process of insight and judgment of value is amenable to development, progress, and expertise.

Once again, it is by the criterion of 'no further relevant questions' combined with feelings that apprehend values that we make judgments of value. We feel the value of nobility, generosity, courage, love, and we judge, by a competent set of past insights, that such and such a

¹⁹⁰ *CWL* 3, pp. 310; 433; *CWL* 10, p. 148.

circumstance would be an appropriate manifestation of these values. It is not merely that we turn to judgments of value to decide the best instrumental means for a desired outcome, but that the judgment of value is the recognition that a particular concrete state of affairs is desirable because it would manifest a value that we first apprehend in feeling. If our conscience throws up no questions, we decide that we *may* proceed, not that we *must*, for the judgment of value permits, it does not command.¹⁹¹

This leaves much unsaid. For now, I have attempted to distinguish the *apprehension* of value in emotions from the *judgment* of value that is still an intellectual operation, but one dependent upon emotion for some of its material. It should be kept in mind for my later critique of Nussbaum on value-judgment. I wished, however, also to show that value judgment is just as much a matter of the pure desire to know being allowed to operate without emotional baggage, so to speak. For just as emotion sets our horizon of concern, unhealthy emotion can freeze it in place or shrink it, repressing relevant feelings and questions because these threaten a cherished bias or comfortable *status quo*.

¹⁹¹ In this case, *via* what Lonergan's called the "transcendental precepts," the exigency that aims at the true and the good—the pure desire to know—commands that whatever we do, we do it circumspectly, rationally, reasonably, and responsibly. These are the general injunctions we use to combat bias. They are checks against the cognitive failures unique to each level of Lonergan's general empirical method. See *MIT*, pp. 131-32.

Summary of Lonergan and criticism of his theory

This chapter has been an introduction to some major themes in Bernard Lonergan's theory of human understanding. He presents human knowing as a process that involves empirical, conceptual, and syllogistic components.

If we chart the development of human knowing from the inception of an attitude of wonder, curiosity, interest, then the process begins when questioning begins. But questioning already presupposes some presentation, data of consciousness, toward which one has turned one's attention and about which one is asking the question. Query may stop with indifference, boredom, distraction, but these do not resolve it. Query is resolved by an insight, a possible answer to a question of the form 'what is this?' An insight presents a coherent content that is not some further act of perception, but an act of conception or understanding. But then, the spirit of inquiry only changes its level of concern and, reflecting upon the content of the insight, continues to wonder, 'is this content really the case?' Here, query seeks reasons for assent, and formulating the insight into a conditional, seeks the fulfilling conditions that would provide those reasons. This will necessitate a return to presentation (*phantasm*) for at least part of those fulfilling conditions. Thus, the process cycles from attention to the data of presentation, through insight induction, to re-formulation, critical reflection, and perchance, the grasp of an unconditioned propositional content. A bright idea has become knowledge. But the inception of a justified truth claim, whether written, spoken, or merely thought, will become the data of further questions for understanding and questions for judgment, and so, the process of coming to

know may form a self-correcting process of learning that heads toward the ideal limit of 'no further relevant question,' a state only attained by exhaustive knowledge.

How the process can be said to 'cycle through itself' bears repeating. Lonergan called it a *dynamic process* of coming to know. For the distinct levels of cognition should not be imagined as static faculties with consciousness being shunted from one to the other. Rather, the notion of discreet levels is a useful schema that emerges through a phenomenological analysis of an ever-ongoing process of human intelligence on the move. The key to understanding what is meant by the process of 'cycling' through stages is the link between the fourth and the first levels, the way that the product of the fourth level becomes the data of a new iteration, or altered manifestation, of first level *phantasm*.

Here is how this works. The first level is the stage of intelligent attention and inquiry directed toward the data of presentation. Something is present to us in consciousness toward which we may direct attention, and concerning which we may have an insight. For example, suppose these data are the sounds crackling through an old walkie-talkie. On the second cognitive level, insight posits that the irregular crackling is not mere static, but a weak and distant voice, perhaps. But is this indeed the case? We formulate a condition for assent: if, on the one hand, static can be reduced, the voice would be isolated; if, on the other, the pulsing recedes along with the static, there was no voice. Moving the antenna around will often reduce static. Therefore, in order to come to the third level of reflective judgment, we must see whether or not the voice-like crackling will remain when the static is reduced. All that is now required is a fourth level mental act: a decision, the choice to act and to begin repositioning the walkie-talkie to new angles, say.

But now the selfsame action of moving around the antenna (thereby reducing static), while fulfilling the conditions for assent is also an alteration of the data of presentation, for now the walkie-talkie and the listener are in different positions, and this observable change is on the level of things to which we may attend (level one). The new position is revealed by the new data in consciousness in which we are aware of locomotion and orientation. By attending to these new data, and comparing them with the memory of the previous position, one may conclude that, 'we changed position, reduced static, but the supposed voice disappeared as well.' Therefore, the initial insight of 'aha, this could be a voice!' has been sufficiently falsified. Thus, the process is said to cycle through itself, for in acting upon judgment (the fourth level of decision), whether by thought, word, or deed, one is changing the way *phantasm* appears, and this presents new data for attention. We return to level one, completing a cycle.

I have presented this system of dynamic cognitive action in a theoretical and formulaic manner. In reality, however, Lonergan's generalized empirical method is always the actual operations of some particular human subject, living in a historic and cultural context, within a web of inter-subjective relations. Aside from the social nature of knowing implied in this, there is the role of emotion and desire as part and parcel of being a healthy human subject. Emotions too are valid parts of the human cognitive process.

Emotions delimit our sphere of concerns and reveal to us a universe of value. While emotions will depend upon judgments of fact to interpret the presentations of *phantasm*, intentional objects are greeted with *de facto* value apprehensions embodied in our emotional responses. While emotion and desire may present us with possible objects of choice and action, the judgment of

value determines the distinction between merely apparent values (objects that merely satisfy) and genuine values (real human goods). The final determination of the good is achieved in a decision and action, for the good is always concrete and is not manifest until action chooses, and not merely when emotion and judgment affirms. Thus, there is the possibility that we may apprehend and judge the good, yet fail to perform it. True moral development is achieved in a deliberation that leads to action, and not one that merely asserts the right choice without action.

Behind all of this is an impulse—the pure desire to know—a manifestation of dissatisfied intelligence on the move. We do not turn around and see the PDK by introspection; we grasp it insightfully as the immanent operator that awakens us from indifference to attention and concern, that would pose questions and become restless until answers are proposed, and that in seeking to know, would also seek to know value and the genuine good. Thus, human intelligence is active and heuristic at its core. This is what sets in motion the dynamic of all our various discursive methods of knowing: a primordial orientation toward appearances that only rests when it attains the actual, the genuine, the true, and the good.

Criticism and defense of the general theory

At least two criticisms arise immediately. Regarding the universal nature of the method, the general empirical method is so general, it seems, that it amounts to platitudinous assertion of motherhood rules such as ‘be attentive, be insightful, reflect critically deliberate responsibly.’ These are so general as to be empty of any real guidance for just how we should proceed.

Second, regarding method itself, it is one thing to describe what we in fact do when we go about

learning and building blocks of knowledge, but what validates this as a norm, as the method of all methods?

The first criticism makes perfect sense if we were expected to take these prescriptions as they stand and directly build from them, say, macro-economic theory or Kepler's solar system. But while I have necessarily presented Lonergan's cognitive stages in theoretical form, he derived them by insight into actual successful arts and sciences. It is through wondering how it is that the mathematician, the physicist, the sociologist, and even the phenomenologist achieve what they do, that we can uncover the generically distinct kinds of cognition at work. Each of the specific disciplines is a specification of ways of attending to data found relevant to the question; of gaining and deploying insights that provide definitions, categories, and theories that define any discipline of learning; of attaining the judgments and conclusions that make up the knowledge unique to each discipline. Thus, for example, Kepler's insights required attention to the new data made available in Brahe's astronomical measurements, data that together with mathematics prompted the insight that solar-centric orbits are elliptical rather than circular. But mundane inquiries such as finding out where one left the car keys also exhibit the same pattern. For any activity in which we are learning or activating our knowledge, there will be a cycle involving attention to data, acts of understanding, acts of judging, and acts of deliberating and deciding. Thus, while being schematized in generalized terms, human cognitive process is always apparent as some more specific heuristic.

What this general schematization achieves is twofold: norms of completeness and of order. We are able, first, to see the dependency that each cognitive stage has upon the prior one, and hence,

a functional norm emerges. We cannot act responsibly without the facts, we cannot have the facts without valid judgment, we cannot judge a content that is irrational or self-contradictory, we will not have a mental content without some sensible presentation, and none of these operations will obtain or continue without some query or concern that is driving things. Thus, Lonergan's description provides the complete *set* of stages of operations. Moreover, this schema showcases the proper *order* within the set of operations for the inception of knowledge. Getting cognitive stages mixed up or skipping stages constitutes failure. We say that someone has jumped to conclusions, or been daydreaming instead of watching, or has presented an insight that is incoherent. The general empirical method imparts the norms implicit in the specific heuristics by which it is instantiated.

The second criticism can now be answered in light of my response to the first. Why should I accept the general empirical method as foundational to thinking, why not another method? Lonergan's response is that any theory that claims to explain human understanding and learning must account for its own inception and development and justification. Surely one cannot rationally promote a knowledge claim about cognitive process that is not itself a product of that same process. Therefore, the real test comes from whether the system validates itself, or can be falsified by the sound operation of a counter-method. We discover the evident nature of cognitive method by attending to the data of our own conscious activity. By having insights into how insight happens. By wondering whether all this is indeed so, and judging that indeed it is. The opponent, in order to deny that these are the normative stage of human cognition, will have to attend to the data of presented argument, to understand by means of insight just what the theory is, then to reflect upon whether it is true, and to find reasons for rejection. But these very

acts of refutation are themselves an instance of the method, and hence refutation is impossible and revision will have to work with the same tools.

In this way, Lonergan shows that we have no business thinking we can *invent* the primary way of coming to know; if we are questioners and knowers already, and this is basically self-evident, then we must consciously and responsibly appropriate what we already do naturally and spontaneously. This is to take a conscious process and turn it into a self-aware, self-critical method. Simple as Lonergan's multi-stage dynamic process sounds, all accomplished branches of human knowledge have been the result of some specification of these general operations.

The generalized empirical method is therefore the most fundamental set of intelligent activities, its order is normative, the pure desire to know that propels it is innate and is spontaneously operative (except among the mentally deficient) and the method is self-validating, attempts to refute it being self-destructive.¹⁹²

Chapter summary

I opened this project and this chapter with two questions. First, what is the *phronimos* doing when he or she 'gets it right' during the process of moral deliberation? Second, since, in virtue

¹⁹² There is an important criticism that must lie outside the scope of this thesis, but which Lonergan spent considerable time answering. For his cognitive method may tell us what we are doing when we are learning and knowing, and it may even be an incorrigible activity of human beings, but the question still remains, why should doing these things get us to the real world, get us to an objective truth outside of ourselves, as it were? Perhaps we are condemned to operate with this method, but why should this method result in attaining to being, to truth, to reality? This is a large question and one that will take us beyond this thesis. We will have to rely upon the cursory treatment of judgment that I provide as I proceed. For Lonergan's answer to the question, see *CWL* 3, part 2, chs. 11ff.

ethics, this requires reliance upon rather subjective criteria, such as the agent's feelings and desires, situational context, and deliberative skill, how can we consider any ensuing moral insights to be objective? In preparation for an answer to these questions I have presented Lonergan's theory of cognition. Thus, to know what we do in general inquiry will prepare for the more detailed investigation, in subsequent chapters, of what we are doing specifically in moral inquiry.

In answer to the first question, getting it right is a result of having allowed a dynamic and self-correcting cognitive process to complete its natural course in heading toward truth and goodness. That process was described in this chapter. The product of 'getting it right' might be a propositional truth, either a statement or mental attitude, but no product can be what it is apart from the operations that gave rise to it. In the case of human knowing, the way we attain to the real and the true is by methodically cycling through the cognitive process, and the way we verify our truth claims is by a reiteration of the same method. 'Getting it right' epistemologically, then, is not separable from 'doing it right' cognitively.

CHAPTER 3: Lonergan's "Common Sense Insight" and its Relation to *Phronesis*

Having looked at key capacities and operations involved in Aristotle's ethical perception, and having looked at basic cognitive operations in Lonergan's general theory, I wish now to narrow the focus upon Lonergan's description of a kind of insight deployed against the concrete and particular circumstances of human living. Together with his cognitive role for emotions, I think that Lonergan's 'common sense' insight can be shown to be what the *phronimos* is deploying when gaining ethical insight. Providing such a comparison of common sense and *phronesis* is my goal here and allows me, in the next chapter, to work out its ramifications for a theory of objectivity in virtue ethics.

Lonergan claims that he grounded his theory upon Aristotle's doctrine that *phantasm* is the precondition of any mode of thought, be it theoretic or practical.¹⁹³ For both Lonergan and Aristotle there is no such thing as imageless thought and this means that some mode of presentation is always attendant upon the discovery of ideas, their recall, and their transmission. Furthermore, for both philosophers, part of the way presentation appears to us is predetermined by the cares and habits of the inquiring subject.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ CWL 3, pp. 30, 33. "...insight is into the concrete world of sense and imagination." and "...the image is necessary for the insight." He does not limit *phantasm* to pictorial representations, but also to symbols and descriptions. Speaking of mathematical notation, he says, "The function of symbolism is to supply the relevant image [for insight induction]...the symbolism constitutes a heuristic technique...and the effect of apt symbolism is to reduce, if not entirely eliminate, the element of chance [in insight induction]" (pp. 42-43.) Of course, Lonergan repeats the theme that 'insight is into the data of conscious experience' throughout his work, virtually dedicating his book *Insight* [CWL 3] to this dynamic by citing on his title page the *De Anima* 431b2 passage, "the mind thinks the forms in [*en tois*, dative of means] the *phantasm*."

¹⁹⁴ See the role of representations in the consciousness of the dramatic subject, CWL 3, pp. 212ff.

The question for us then is: what are the concerns and questions that one should bring to the world in order that appearances be construed in such a way as to allow *phronesis* to operate? The rest of this chapter will attempt to show that, according to Lonergan, the concerns ought to be the very ones immanent in what he called ‘common sense’ insight, but guided by an informed and unhindered thrust to realize the human good.¹⁹⁵ In the course of this presentation, the parallels to *phronesis* should become obvious.

This section presents three major aspects of Lonergan’s conception of practical intelligence and its apprehension of ethical salience:

1. A description of common sense insight: intelligence directed at concrete living.
2. Construing the world: *phantasm* and Lonergan’s theory of ‘patterned experience.’
3. Attention to the cognitive nature of emotion.

1. Common sense: intelligence directed at concrete living

In a previous example, I presented the case of Helen Keller. Her experience of water and the inscribed “W” was that which appeared to her in consciousness, *i.e.*, the *phantasm* toward which she directed her inquiring intelligence. Hitting upon her insight, Keller too re-construed

¹⁹⁵ Lonergan’s use of the term ‘common sense’ is not to be confused with naive realism, with the ideas of the Scottish common sense school, or with the Neo-Thomist doctrine of the grasp of self-evident first principles by common sense. It is also not in any way related to Aristotle’s internal capacity for unifying the data of the external senses or grasping intentional objects common to more than one sense, such as motion, size, location, and other ‘common sensibles.’ Lonergan used the word ‘common’ because this kind of intelligence is found across human history and cultures in all times and places, before and after the higher differentiations of theoretical science and modern empirical science.

‘appearances’ from perplexing sensations to meaningful presentations. She gained a new understanding of what was going on—namely, someone was attempting to communicate with her, to teach her how to use signs.

Three more examples of insight may further elucidate Lonergan’s conception of common sense intelligence in action.

First is military tactics. Due to the uniqueness of each actual battle, excellence in tactics only comes with past experience and acute assessment of the current situation. The expert ‘sees,’ but does not deduce, what is called for; victory goes to the one who sees soonest and applies his insights most swiftly. In tactics, all planning is contingent and the tactician may be forced by events to improvise in unknown terrain.

Second is medical diagnosis. Again, discovering what disease is ailing a patient requires at some point a direct insight into appearances. Bringing her set of past experiences with similar symptoms, the various syndromes and classifications learned at medical school, and perhaps the extra eyes of her colleagues, a doctor is able to hit upon a correct diagnosis only by inspection of the case at hand.

A third type is more interesting. A businessman, perplexed by the peculiar loss of profits showing in the balance sheets and intrigued by the purchase, on company accounts, of one-way airline tickets to Mexico, suddenly reads the sly smile of his business partner for what it indicates: the partner is embezzling company funds and is about to escape the jurisdiction. It

was the subtle nuance of the smile that illuminated and linked the other clues, and—aha, insight is triggered. This is the intelligence deployed by the detective that enables him to ‘see’ X *as* evidence.

These examples all share at least these things: they involve attention to the configuration of particular things, relations, and events. They involve a query that seeks clues that would illuminate a whole network of relevant relations, thereby solving a puzzle. They are all types of knowledge that rely, for their excellent actualization, upon a bank of past experience with similar concrete particulars. They cannot be contained within the rules of a deductive science but deal with probabilities of insight induction that increase in direct proportion to the skill-level of the practitioner. These examples would all be classed under Lonergan’s general category for intelligence directed at particulars: common sense insight. Clearly, these are all elements that Aristotle showed are active in *phronesis*.

Because practically minded individuals do not arise in isolation but from within families and other social groupings, common sense insight occurs as a partly *collaborative* enterprise. Initially, the mastery of concrete exigencies is learned by observing, copying, osmosis, and teaching. It crystallizes in individual habits and skills, and within the group, as customs, traditions, and institutions. This means that, however original an individual’s own insight may be, it will also represent to some degree an incremental development of a socially constituted block of knowledge. Prime examples of this social type of practical intelligence are the manners and customs that configure human interaction. These can become very sophisticated as, for example, in the social protocol of shame cultures, or again, in the subtle but definite awareness

of what is acceptable in style and fashion. Were an outsider to enter, his obvious lack of participation in the common sense of the group would soon mark him out.

Clearly then it makes no small difference into which set of common values, assumptions, habits and traditions one is born and reared. For the first skill-set one will acquire is the skill of co-existing (and then perhaps, excelling) within the group, and whatever personal modification of the skill-set one would add, these will develop dialectically with the group. Ostracism may result otherwise. In the end, the mature person of common sense does not break free with god-like independence from social living, but becomes a paragon of virtue for his fellows. Common sense intelligence, then, does not make one a rugged survivalist, but a politically and socially viable constituent of one's group.

The method of common sense insight

The demarcating factor in expertise is just the ability for relevant past experience to come to the fore while confronting new situations, and thereby imparting a kind of perception-like direct grasp of what is called for. Such a set of past insights, insofar as it fails instantly to yield a suitable answer to the query sought, Lonergan called an *incomplete* set.¹⁹⁶ It is incomplete simply because it does not contain the precise insight needed to master *this* case. If it did contain the needed insight, there would be no inquiry, no scrutiny of the case, no deliberation; rather, there would be competent immediate action. This is the case for any skill that is being actuated, such as, for example, driving a car. We do not deliberate or wonder about what to do when we see a stop sign; we spontaneously act from an acquired habit. The needed insights are operative

¹⁹⁶ *CWL* 3, p. 200ff.

semi-consciously perhaps, and our skill-set is complete and adequate for the driving scenario we face. It is only when we come across the unexpected—an unfamiliar sign—that our skill-set is said to be incomplete with respect to that particular situation.¹⁹⁷

It is precisely by using the incomplete set to induce the needed insight, that the expert finds solutions to *ad hoc* circumstances. The methodology of common sense is to exploit, through the encounter of this incomplete set with the new concrete configuration of salient features, the *probabilistic* nature of insight occurrence. For the greater one's experience base, the higher the probability of suitable insight-induction. Understanding *why* insight occurs through the presence of an incomplete set of past similar experiences is unimportant to the functioning of common sense; that insight *can* and often *does* occur according to some degree of probability is what is being deliberately harnessed by the person of common sense.

When a practical insight does occur, that insight alone is not some permanently accessible 'right answer.' The insight is recognized to be correct because it both coheres with the prior partial set and it connects that whole set to the situation at hand. Expertise cannot be contained in a single insight, only in a *set* of past insights. It is this newly *completed set* of relevant insights that 'fits' the situation, and now what needs doing seems obvious. The set of previous similar insights are now freshly co-coordinated and rendered directly pertinent through the adjustment provided by the newest situationally induced insight.

Once such a key 'set-unifying' insight has been discovered, reconsidered, tested, affirmed—whether through deliberation, imagination, comparison, consultation, or any other method of

¹⁹⁷ Compare to Wiggins (1978), pp. 146ff.

verification or corroboration—it becomes part of the set of all insights and becomes part of the latent experience of the agent; the newly modified insight-set now reverts to a state of incompleteness *vis à vis* the next concrete exigency. Clearly, the broader one's base of experience and the greater one's access to the experience of others, the higher will be the probability of success in common sense insight induction.

Finally, with any practical insight concerning action, one can ask a question quite distinct from the question of success and utility. One can ask, 'should I, in fact, do X?' and 'would doing X really be worthwhile?'¹⁹⁸ Without this value-laden question for deliberation, common sense insight would seem more like shrewdness (*deinotes*) than *phronesis*. To differentiate the moral use of common sense insight from an inductive art such as diagnosis, there needs to be this questioning that *seeks* genuine value, along with a reliable ability to *discern* genuine value. It is here, if not before, that the subject must rely upon inner states and dispositions, such as feelings of preference, memories of shame and praise, responsibilities and obligations to family and friends, tribe, corporation, etc. One hears the voices of conflicting desires and is forced to adjudicate them within an unsettled conscience.¹⁹⁹ Lonergan argued that some emotions play a vital role in the *apprehension* and *judgment* of value. For, our emotions are often the first clue that what we value is relevant here, even before we can articulate it, and they send us into reflection and deliberation precisely to uncover that value. This receives more treatment later on.

¹⁹⁸ See *MIT*, pp. 40-41. I follow discussion in Byrne (1997), pp. 172ff.

¹⁹⁹ *MIT*, pp. 40-41.

Summary of common sense insight

Insight is always into some patterned appearance within conscious experience. The practical insights of common sense are insights gained under the exigencies of concrete living, where actions are construed by our past experience, our desired futures, and our current social relations. Because of the contingent nature of human affairs, no set of past common sense insights is complete, for each new state of affairs requires just those additional insights that would link past experience with current demands.

Common sense insight can be summarized as having these defining features:²⁰⁰

First, it is an intellectual habit, an excellence in induction that produces practical truths.

Second, it concerns itself with concrete living, not productive art and not theoretical understanding.

Third, it relies upon the insight-inducing capacity of an ever-growing block of past experience with similar particular scenarios.

Fourth, it is concerned with personal action, choice, decision. It is not primarily concerned with what others should do, or what universally is called for in human action, but asks ‘what should *I* do, how does this affect *me*?’

²⁰⁰ *CWL* 10, pp. 71ff.

Fifth, while it can generate real knowledge, common sense can do so *without* producing general theories, universal definitions, or absolute imperatives. Common sense is not concerned with schemas of explanation and prediction. Rather, it sets out to master concrete *particulars*, and hence, develops *systems* of insights only derivatively.

Sixth, when it does work with sets of insights, it produces only rules of thumb, proverbs and parables, all non-binding but worth keeping in mind.²⁰¹

2. Construing the world: Lonergan's theory of "patterns of experience"

The way things appear is determined, to some degree, by the character of the observing agent. And character is a habituated tendency of the emotions and the desires toward certain preferences and choices. As Aristotle put it: to the lover of horses, horses appear desirable and good.²⁰² Lonergan has his own version of this doctrine. Not only does the order of discovery entail that *phantasm* is a prior necessity for insight, but for him too, the most basic drives, desires, and concerns of the subject condition the way the world appears. Axiomatic for Lonergan is the idea that intelligence becomes focused and deployed methodically when there is a fundamental *desire* at play: a pure desire to know, to understand, to be rid of uncertainty and perplexity. This general desire is made determinate through more specific modes of epistemic desire: *i.e.*, desire to know the truth, desire to master a skill, desire to behold beauty, but also,

²⁰¹ *CWL* 3, pp. 198ff.

²⁰² *NE* 1099a7-11.

desire to live well in general.²⁰³ And, to every mode in which inquiring desire might be manifest there is a corresponding way in which that inquiry itself construes the world, construes the set of data we consciously experience.

Lonergan calls these most general kinds of world-construal “patterns of experience.”²⁰⁴ Such construal of the world, whatever the contribution of the subconscious, will be had within conscious experience. From the subjective side, there is a distinct aspect to modes of consciousness that allows us meaningfully to categorize one moment as, for example, practical experience, another as intellectual experience, another as mystical experience, and so on.²⁰⁵

From this phenomenological fact, Lonergan makes at least these four basic claims regarding such patterning:

- (i) Consciousness is experienced, at various times, as having several general kinds of patterning.
- (ii) What identifies a pattern is its linked network of general kinds of salience.
- (iii) Kinds of salience are the intentional correlates of the most general kinds of desire, concern, interest, goal of the subject.
- (iv) Human consciousness is experienced as constantly shifting between one or more dominant patterns of experience (Lonergan’s ‘polymorphism’ of consciousness).

²⁰³ On this provisional restriction of the PDK, *CWL* 3, p. 665.

²⁰⁴ This discussion of patterns of experience is largely derived from *CWL* 3, ch. 6, though the illustrations are mine.

²⁰⁵ I must clarify an ambiguity that arises when Aristotle and Lonergan speak of ‘experience.’ For Aristotle, *empeiria*-type experience is an acquired familiarity. On this, Lonergan and Aristotle seem to share a univocal usage. But as was plain the previous chapter, Lonergan also uses ‘experience’ to mean mental presentations of any kind whatsoever; simply being conscious is to be a subject undergoing some mode of experience. Even with this usage, experience is that which we phenomenally confront in consciousness. All forms of practical experience are also conscious experiences, but not all conscious experience is of the practical.

Consider a 'flow of consciousness' theory, such as that of William James, a flux of mental data within which we limit our focus by acts of attention.²⁰⁶ Lonergan accounted for the attention/inattention of salience-selection by linking that process to the subject's most fundamental concerns, and these will predetermine to a large degree the general patterns of our conscious experience. In providing some examples of what Lonergan has in mind, I offer only the following four basic concerns of the subject and their correlative patterns of experience.²⁰⁷ First, desire to comprehend and know the real from among the apparent or confusing yields the *intellectual* pattern of experience. Second, desire for the pleasant, enjoyable, play, spontaneity yields the *aesthetic* pattern of experience. Third, desire for the satisfaction of animal urgencies yields the *biological* pattern of experience. Fourth, concern for success and flourishing within inter-subjective, pragmatic, concrete, affairs of life yields the *dramatic* pattern of experience. As will shortly become plain, common sense insight is most likely to occur in this fourth, the *dramatic* pattern of experience. [Henceforth pattern of experience = PX.]

The Intellectual PX

Consider this illustration: Desiring to learn some philosophic truth, one enters a library to study an ancient manuscript, say, Eriugena's doctrine of divine foreknowledge. After beginning to concentrate, one is drawn into the terms and concepts of the exposition and is lifted into the

²⁰⁶ W. James (1890), pp. 146-54 posited a general manifold of consciousness in which thought "is going on" and is in constant flux. By means of attention and inattention we select and deselect parts of that stream, restricting the manifold into a manageable intentional environment. Also, we have an ability to move from 'outward' consciousness to 'inward' self-consciousness, becoming aware of our inner subjective presence and the various mental operations that we can perform and which are, at least partly, constitutive of conscious experience. Thus, the spontaneous data-stream that impinges on us becomes a more truncated flow of consciousness through attention, focus, and the deliberate choices of what stimuli we will allow past the gate, as it were.

²⁰⁷ Lonergan claimed that he did not exhaust the patterns with this list. He allowed for other maximally general ways in which we could construe the data.

abstract ether of speculative philosophy. What becomes salient here are sound premises, valid inferences, careful distinctions, grammatical nuances, theological presuppositions. Other concerns have receded to the periphery of awareness—*i.e.*, one no longer senses one's hunger or the sounds from outside the room. One's awareness is restricted and delimited to what Lonergan calls the *intellectual* pattern of experience—the intentional objects that dominate this pattern are symbols, abstractions, critical procedures, and the like. Such objects of intellectual concern, linked together and illuminated as salient, form a distinct pattern of experience.

The Aesthetic PX

Now, suppose one becomes distracted by the fine uncials in the script, the illuminated characters, the smell of the old parchment, and the gilt page edges. One is bemused by the intricacy of the work; admiration for the artistic skill emerges, as does, perhaps, a sense of privilege at being near such an ancient creation. One has now shifted, according to Lonergan, into the *aesthetic* pattern of experience. The relevant and linked items of this pattern include the concrete data of proper and common sensibles, form and accuracy of workmanship, the emotions associated with admiration and pleasure. Insight interprets our emotions as approval; there may be a desire to possess the fine object. The general field of salience is the pleasant, the surprising, and this is so even when what we find beautiful is something theoretical or abstract in itself.

Keep in mind that, within both intellectual and aesthetic PXs, as with the rest, essentially the same empirical data dominate the sensible field. Yet the *a priori* concerns of the subject, by illuminating and prioritizing different features of the phenomenal field, superimpose a network of salience that construes the same sensible data as a distinct pattern of experience.

The Biological PX

Suddenly, the librarian just attacks you. Fight or flight kicks in. Sensible acuity is heightened; fear charges the body with adrenaline and you sense agility and energy. Insight identifies threats to avoid and possible routes of escape—and all with little or no intellectual calculation. You have entered a primal *biological* PX. This pattern, being concerned with no ulterior purpose but immediate biological need, radically alters the topography of salience. Within this pattern, Eriugena's heavy tome suddenly and obviously takes on an identity as a weapon or shield, theology and artistry having been deselected from attention. Insight identifies previously unthinkable options, say, mightily tossing the book at your assailant. This radically different salience-net is determined by the dominant concern of survival. Actions are instinctive and reflexive rather than conscious and deliberate.

The Dramatic PX

You escape and make it out onto the street, gradually calming down as you feel safety return. Knowing, of course, how public transit works, you successfully manage to take the bus home, reflecting upon what to do next. You know how to use a phone so you call a friend. You discuss the case in the light of your society's notions of crime, madness, and the minds of librarians. You think about what a good citizen should do; what kind of person you would be if you failed to report the incident. You take the time to figure out that new coffeemaker, and then you brew a cup and think things over. You remember that you were a librarian once too, and, that rare manuscripts should not be handled without special permission. The situation shifts: it dawns on you that perhaps an apology on your part is more appropriate than filing a complaint. But

perhaps sleeping on it is best; you'll decide in the morning. For you have returned to the *dramatic* PX from where we work out the particular concerns of daily living and personal development.

Although dramatic living is neither simply an intellectual, aesthetic, technical, or biological activity, notice how it may utilize all these capacities, in harmony, toward some ulterior end. For in the dramatic pattern above, you utilized past experience (what a bus is for, how to use a phone), technical or intellectual knowledge (to get that coffeemaker to work), inter-subjective social attachment (relying upon friends for their emotional and experiential support), and biological needs (sleep is needed to facilitate sound judgment). The concerns of dramatic living coordinate these functions towards its own proper end: living successfully, living well.²⁰⁸

From these four examples, we can see Lonergan using the notion of a pattern to describe a network of linked salient features that characterize our most general modes of conscious experience. The type of PX one finds oneself in will determine, according to some statistical probability, the kinds of insight one is most likely to attain. Thus, within an intellectual PX, one is much more likely to grasp intellectual insights, though it is always possible that a particular formula might trigger a reminder to pick up milk on the way home. Or again, one may be daydreaming in the aesthetic PX, and yet see in the embers of the fireplace a *phantasm* that triggers the insight into a chemical compound.²⁰⁹ Within the *dramatic* pattern of experience, you live out your life by deploying what you know and what you have experienced in order

²⁰⁸ Lonergan chose the term 'drama' for its primary, non-theatrical meaning: the Greek *drama* is an action, a business, even a duty; from *drao*, to do, be doing, accomplish.

²⁰⁹ See the case of Friedrich August von Kekule above.

successfully to decide, act, live. This agenda will select its own corresponding web of salience.²¹⁰

The dramatic PX also seems to be a kind of ‘default center,’ an equilibrium we return to simply because we are biological and social creatures who must live out our lives in particular and inter-subjective situations. Failing to return to the common sense of the dramatic pattern is ultimately detrimental to the goal of successful living, for we cannot long survive in the narrow confines of strictly intellectual patterns, nor the dreams of the aesthetic pattern, nor the brute wildness dictated by biological urges. The dramatic pattern is the place from which we may best decide the times and manners in which, say, biological and intellectual pursuits can play their good and appropriate roles—as part of life as a whole.²¹¹ For the dramatic pattern is evoked by the basic concern of moment by moment living, as well as today’s concerns for future living, and thus, it will be a center from which other, more specific (or less rational) concerns, must be balanced, managed. This is what *phronesis* does, and so the dramatic PX seems to be the appropriate pattern of construed intentionality from which it would operate.

²¹⁰ Melchin (1987), p. 143, on the spontaneous emergence of common sense salience selection: “[Our initial] habitual orientations to the objects of experience are not directly the products of deliberation and choice. Rather, they are by-products or results of one’s whole life of common sense decisions and actions. While common sense intelligence has moved on to new matters the subject’s orientation to his or her experience has been constituted by previous experiences, insights and decisions.”

²¹¹ For instance, during the course of our day, we may deploy philosophic speculation, musical appreciation, physical activity, and technical skill. But these modes of intelligence are not arbitrarily activated and incoherently related, for there are intelligent reasons to stop one activity and begin another. There is, then, an overarching mode of intelligence that surreptitiously manages the activation of the others. It provides leadership, as it were; it issues orders and expects actions. This architectonic wisdom that knows what is called for in each actual circumstance is common sense insight.

Patterned experience must be distinguished from narrative

With the notion of patterns of experience in mind, we can better see the place of narratives.

First, however, we can see now that Aristotle's geometric insight analogy may be deceptive; the objects of ethical perception are just not as simple as geometric shapes. Perhaps a momentary state-description of a scenario might be analogous to a geometric shape, or to the static relations of a photograph. But as suggested earlier by Nussbaum and Sherman, ethical salience comes from insight into scenarios that are much more like stories than photographs. Getting it right in the empirical and descriptive field of ethical investigation involves following the narrative's unfolding plot in its proper direction, order, and interrelations. The narrative process itself specifies and elaborates general ends to which we are committed and builds a mutual support among them. Out of this process, salience can emerge in a way impossible for simple state descriptions.²¹² Thus, Sherman approves of Dancy's notion that the justification of one's ethical decision is not achieved by appeal to, say, a universal principle, but is a matter of persuading someone to see things in the right way.²¹³ What counts as right will be determined by a well-developed competency for discerning moral properties and the use of moral concepts.²¹⁴

Still, my critique here is that while we may discuss narratives from 'outside,' so to speak, making objects of the actors, events, settings, actions, and the like, we do not actually *live* through a narrative *per se*; we *live* through a sequence of patterns of experience. This is something overlooked in Nussbaum and Sherman's discussions. It is only when we reflect upon and/or recount our experience to others that we produce something like a narrative. Producing a

²¹² Sherman (1997), pp. 271-72.

²¹³ See Dancy (1993), p. 113.

²¹⁴ Sherman (1997), p. 263.

narrative is a second order creative and interpretive act distinct from the direct insightful understanding of our experience as we encounter and master it.

Nussbaum's "interpretive seeing" then cannot be of a narrative, but is the prior correlation of insightful perception into desideratively construed appearances. True, the intelligibility of what we immediately grasp in that way may be incommunicable without narratives, but these then are tools for reflective understanding or for communication to others. It seems, then, that mastery of the concrete requires a dialectical reference between dramatic living and narrative reflection—a process already said to be intrinsic to ongoing *phronesis*.

The distinction between reflective narratives and directly lived experience raises some interesting problems also overlooked by Nussbaum and Sherman.

For, while a narrative may adequately capture the sequence and salience of some lived event, its use will be affected by the dominant PX we are in when reflecting upon it. A common negative case is the tendency for over intellectualized responses to narratives that would demand, from a virtuous person, an emotive interaction. Without intending to be heartless, one could hear, say, descriptions of terrorist violence and instantly shunt the details into historical and political categories of analysis, failing to register outrage or other pertinent emotional judgments. Or again, in the recreational concerns of the aesthetic PX, one may take up a narrative for the sake of entertainment and fail to register the exploitation or vulgarity involved because one is caught up in the artistic merit of the work. While the intellectual and aesthetic categories are valid in themselves, presumably, ethical wisdom should at least jolt us into knowing when our PX is

hindering instead of helping us register ethical salience. To know, therefore, that we live our lives in constantly shifting PXs brings with it a responsibility to be aware of the advantages and blinders associated with each of these frames of mind.²¹⁵ If there is a responsibility to narrate accurately or well, there is an equal responsibility to listen appropriately during collaborative deliberation. *Phronesis*, it would seem, demands self-knowledge here. For the PX that dominates our 'interpretive seeing' at any given time influences the way we would 'read' a reflective narrative and this means that narratives and the patterns of experience complicate any account of 'being morally objective.'

The common sense of the dramatic PX is concerned with mastering actual living and it acts as a kind of default center from which we may adjudicate competing intellectual, biological, and aesthetic concerns. But its concern for concrete human action is personal; it is *my* actions and the concerns of *my* life that are at issue here. Deliberation and choice will remain ambiguous unless they are made in the light of the final end for *my* human life. Personal concern for what is at stake in *my* life is manifest in part, in no small part, in our emotions.

²¹⁵ The tendency for our conscious intentionality to shift sequentially, and often spontaneously, from one PX to another, controllable only minimally by self-discipline and concentration, is what Lonergan called the *polymorphic* nature of human consciousness. But PXs can also combine into compounds and dissolve again so that it is difficult to ascribe dominance to one set of concerns over another. Would the experience of high-speed downhill skiing be connected to concerns for survival (biological PX) or play (aesthetic PX)? Another common example of polymorphism of consciousness is found in our driving home while thinking deeply about some theoretical issue; stop lights and other vehicles are not salient features of our intellectual object neither is speculative thought a part of driving skill, and yet we effortlessly shift attention between practical and theoretical concerns within the one mind-state of 'driving while thinking.' The notion of the polymorphism of human consciousness refers to this continual combining and shifting of the various patterns of experience and their relative networks of salience. If such polymorphism is a condition of human cognitive operation, then the *phronimos* must perform his excellent function from within that condition.

3. Emotions apprehend value and play a role in judgment; the problem of bias

The role of emotions in judging value, and hence, playing an integral part in any theory of objectivity in a virtue ethics, will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter. What I want to present here are two points for comparison to Aristotle. First, emotions have some share in the rational faculty, that is, they perform some cognitive function and convey content. Second, emotions play a central role in the vicious malformation of cognition, the flight from insight that leads to bias, injustice, and personal and institutional blindness and decline.

First, it is significant that Lonergan's inclusion of emotional intelligence in human cognition of value is quite early in the field. Beginning in 1959 but coalescing by 1972, in *Method in Theology*, he made human feelings central to the apprehension of value and the judgment of value.²¹⁶ A feeling is always an apprehension of something that is valuable to *us*, important to *us*, salient to *us*. It is a response to intentional presentation, and whatever faculties may be involved in apprehending the intelligibility of intentional objects, it is emotion that will usually register the value of the presentation to the conscious subject. Somatic feelings, such as hunger or discomfort, and general moods, such as depression or irritability are bracketed by this definition.

²¹⁶ In Lonergan (1974), p. 222, "An Interview with Fr. Bernard Lonergan," he credits this new emphasis to his reading of Jean Piaget and Susanne Langer and then to the works of Max Scheler and Hildegard von Bingen. Nussbaum cites as among the earliest exponents of emotional value cognition Pitcher (1965) and Solomon (1976). Though an early pioneer, Lonergan is a virtual unknown because in the 60s he is working in the much-ignored Catholic university circuit.

But apprehension is not the same as affirmation.²¹⁷ We apprehend that X is valuable to ourselves through the initial emotive impact its appearance has upon us. But upon reflection, we discover that what is really good for us is actually something to which we have a strong aversion, say, dental surgery. Still, in order to decide that indeed we shall visit the dentist we will be relying upon emotion again, say directed toward the imaginary presentation (*phantasm*) of some future state in which our teeth do not hurt. Emotion will play a role in apprehension of value, but also in the reflective judgment of value as well. For Lonergan did not think that, while emotion may initially apprehend it, it is up to intellect alone to judge value, for value judgments differ in important ways from fact judgments. More on this in the next chapter.

Second, since emotion can register value, a disvaluing of emotion, or a repression of emotion may lead to serious cognitive impairment. This subject is covered in Lonergan's extensive treatment of bias.²¹⁸ For bias has a tendency to arise most easily within common sense thinking, under the limitation of utility criteria, and the limited experience base of any single human group.

(i) Dramatic and individual biases

Dramatic bias is, perhaps, the unavoidable consequence of our inter-subjective social development. For just as every group embodies a set of common sense insights that have survived the attrition of time and pragmatism, so too, each group's set of acquired and tested practical insight also inversely reflects a body of rejected concerns, unasked questions, scorned

²¹⁷ In the next chapter I will take issue with Nussbaum for losing sight of this distinction.

²¹⁸ *CWL* 3, chs. 6-7 *passim*.

sentiments, ignored presentations, and these are transmitted between members and generations. Thus, each individual never does start life with a clean slate, but with a block of pre-criticized assumptions of what is worth asking, worth feeling.

Individual bias, which can be considered a form of egoism, is defined by Lonergan as an incomplete development of intelligence, for one may really discover what is good for oneself, but stop short of considering whether this is compatible with social living.²¹⁹ Egoism is, in part, the result of an incomplete consideration of the full human good, whereby the very real goods that impinge upon the self are given a dominating place in the overall schema of goods that include other individuals as well.

But deeper even than such partial repression of questions and salience that comes from inordinate consideration of self, there may arise the total repression that comes from active “flight from insight itself.”²²⁰ Just as the general empirical method when operative embodies a drive toward being, the real, so too, the many ways that people become neurotic and bigoted embody an active principle of *aversion* to certain insights. Whether through fear, hatred, revulsion, pride, or some other pathology, there is the phenomenon called *scotosis*—a darkening—whereby the images, presentations, scenarios that would likely trigger certain insights are repressed, denied, censored, or disguised.²²¹ This can happen in neurotic repression where the dreaded object will simply not be phenomenally available to consciousness, leading to untold cases of personal suffering and destruction.

²¹⁹ *CWL* 3, p. 245.

²²⁰ See discussion on dramatic bias, *CWL* 3, pp. 314ff.

²²¹ *CWL* 3, pp. 215-27.

But such a need to repress insight-triggering *phantasm* can become a social and institutional malady as well. We see this in the sly use of euphemisms that only connote the desired slant on things, and more seriously, in the silencing of symbol and expression by totalitarian and fundamentalist fanaticisms. There may be cases where, in direct conflict with a pure desire to know, there is operative deep desire *not* to know, to flee from unwanted or threatening insights. Such bias against well-ordered cognition can exist both within the individual, the group, and the entire culture.

Group bias. This is distinct from the neurotic bias above. It is the dramatic bias as it functions within a group, rather than an individual. Group bias means, ‘the way *we* do it around *here*, mate.’ While often highly efficient, ‘the way *we* do things’ is not by itself a valid yardstick for judging new circumstances and actors. The dialectic of community is such that ‘our way’ comes into conflict with ‘their way’ and either it is survival of the fittest, or we need to seek a more comprehensive viewpoint that might integrate the various communities of common sense that develop among larger societies.

Whereas individual and neurotic bias may lead to attitudes that conflict with ordinary common sense, group bias operates in the very genesis and preservation of common sense viewpoints.²²² It is precisely the inter-subjective emergence of the ‘way we do things’ that gives it such resilience to external influence. For, to each group, their own way just seems obvious, and a potent sense of apparent validity comes with mutual support from peers.

²²² *CWL* 3, p. 247.

Problems arise when several different social groups emerge, each with a common sense that is not integrated by any higher viewpoint. Collectively, all these sub-groups contain a myriad of practical insight, but precisely because they are subdivided into groups, distinctions of class, function, and power emerge spontaneously. For by sheer size, talent, opportunity, and the like, some groups will be better positioned to impose their common sense solutions upon the whole, or at least to have an inordinate, if unintended, dominance. However insightful these viewpoints might be, they have not been made socio-politically dominant by some overall theoretical, moral, or utilitarian agreement, but by the fact of power and social opportunism. It is not the best ideas that win out, but the ones that survive inter-group pressures and come out on top. This is the logical result if nothing else is operative in a society apart from common sense and personal interest.²²³

But this very process invites its own reversal through dialectic action.²²⁴ For disgruntled groups may, by force of argument, increase in numbers, and/or threats of various kind, eventually become social facts that demand practical attention from the other groups, or the ruling group. Common sense pragmatism realizes that the disturbing groups need to be dealt with, at least for reasons of social peace, if not for the merit of their ideas.

The response of groups to each other may take any form along the spectrum from progressive to reactionary. Ideas may be repressed by the dominant group, or absorbed, adapted, sublated toward that higher viewpoint that would seek some mode of accommodating the perennial emergence of new insights.

²²³ See also *CWL* 10, pp. 60-62.

²²⁴ *CWL* 3. pp. 251ff.

The practical solution to this social exigence will be some form of systematizing both enfranchisement and principles of change such that the natural propensity for sub-grouping and diversification will not be suppressed but channeled to the benefit of all. This may be a political ideal, but it is a practical one, and therefore, presumably, were we ever to attain it, it will seem like the 'common sense' thing to do.²²⁵

General Bias is the prejudice of pragmatic intelligence against the theoretical and speculative intelligence in general. This killed Socrates; it is the practical 'realists' of the world triumphing over the dangerous dreamers and idealists. For, from the exigencies of pragmatic mastery of the concrete, what earthly good is all that speculation? But the bias that declares we must be practical at all times fails to see the ultimate practical value of theoretical knowledge. For it is through theoretic knowledge that we may gain breakthroughs in understanding more clearly our human nature, the very basis of a virtue ethics.²²⁶

In all of this, it is clear that emotions play a central role in the maintenance of each level of bias. There is an angry impatience with those who 'just don't see it our way.' There is fear of change, of the shame of being mistaken, of the short-term resistance to needed institutional change. There is the pleasure of power; the comfort of the received privilege. As many emotions as can be evoked to incite change, say by Aristotelian rhetoric, can also be used to maintain the *status quo*.

²²⁵ This theme of a universal, yet utterly practical, socio-cultural order was roughed in by Lonergan's discussion of "cosmopolis" in *CWL* 3, pp. 263ff. Lonergan's own economic theory is just such an attempt at practical solution: *CWL* 21.

²²⁶ *CWL* 3, p. 251ff.

Yet, there is also the emotional exuberance of exploration, the joy of discovery, the confidence of mastering large blocks of knowledge, and these too are feelings that foster honest inquiry and welcome new insights. The love of the truth is just as much a corrective force, if not a decisive one, in counterbalancing the tendencies of negative emotion. Thus, I must end the discussion on bias with a positive word for emotion, lest we become biased against its legitimate place in ethics.

Emotions are a vital part of apprehending and judging the world of value. And our emotions are as much a reflective indicator of our own character development for Lonergan as they are for Aristotle. Questions of attaining moral objectivity in any ethic that relies upon subjectively conditioned emotional construals and perceptions will have to deal with the problem of bias. Sherman says, "In Aristotle's account, the *phronimos* or person of practical wisdom will need to correct for biases and preferences that interfere with the deliberation at hand; but recognition of this never leads to the identification of the impartial point of view with the point of view of ethical assessment in general."²²⁷

The impartial point of view was a model of objectivity that bracketed the emotions as well as the inclination and context of the agent; it is the objectivity belonging properly to, say, the science of physics. The *phronimos*, however, works against bias, not in an effort to attain the impartial view, but precisely by seeking to line up his partiality with what would be a genuine good in itself, and choice-worthy for that reason.

²²⁷ Sherman (1989), p. 3.

In virtue ethics, then, the conception of moral objectivity must include the notion of an ongoing, healthy functioning of subjective operations. One need not seek a god's eye view of things; one need only have sufficiently corrected for bias to get the pertinent insight *this* time around.

Habituation will increasingly lead the practitioner toward moral 'expertise.' Absolute objectivity is a chimera in this model; moral objectivity must become an ideal limit toward which individuals and societies head.

(ii) A Kuhnian objection considered

An objection may arise on the very basis of Lonergan's particularist method itself. For precisely by careful deference to attention, insight, judgment, diverse blocks of common sense knowledge emerge, but do not necessarily converge. Each could claim to be objectively arrived at, or at least methodically arrived at, but may display irreconcilable conflicts with the other. If *phronesis* is a species of common sense, why would we expect the kind of convergence required for ethical objectivity? Perhaps the divergence of ethical theory and practice are the debris from some primordial unity (*e.g.*, medieval Christendom). The history of ethics, then, may turn out to be a process of evolutionary replacement of one competing system with another, but with no obvious progress toward anything like moral truth.

Thomas Kuhn presents the structure of this kind of process. While there is a generally established canon of what we would call objective scientific criteria for theory selection,²²⁸ Kuhn argues that the critical insight required for selection among competing alternatives may just as

²²⁸ For example, a sound theory should be: (i) accurate, (ii) consistent, (iii) broad in scope, (iv) simple, and (v) fruitful. Kuhn (1977) in Kourany (1987), p. 198.

often be grounded in subjective factors of the agent. For instance, personal experiences and commitments such as political and ideological beliefs may impinge upon theory choice.²²⁹ His notion of subjectivity, inherent in the logic of discovery, leads him to treat the choice-criteria in theory-selection as ‘values,’ not hard rules; and they cannot, therefore, be applied as an algorithm that determines the right or best choice.²³⁰ Ethics may show the same pattern; for science and ethics are both human enterprises and the same human foibles may attend each.

A Kuhnian objection threatens the optimism by which common sense insight might aspire to moral truth or objectivity. Thus, to deflect the threat, one must present (i) reasons for believing in the likelihood of convergence toward a correct or unitary ethics, and/or (ii) show why a Kuhnian objection is off the point and may apply to science only and not to ethics. Let me attempt both defenses.

(i) Convergence. The ontological ground of the possibility of convergence in virtue ethics is the unity of human nature. Human nature is, however, developmental—both personally and historically. In the life of each person, humanity unfolds over time biologically and psychically, and this is why the final determination of whether *eudaimonia* was attained must await the end of life. For only then will we have seen a fully lived instance of human nature. But humanity also discovers and actuates its potentials through historical, social, and cultural development. For example, the emergence of the division of labour and its specializations of thinking and acting reveal to us a far richer humanity than was obvious during, say, the Neanderthal era. One should

²²⁹ Kuhn writes, “Kepler’s early election of Copernicanism was due in part to his immersion in the Neoplatonic and Hermetic movements of his day; German Romanticism predisposed those it affected toward both recognition and acceptance of energy conservation; Nineteenth-century British social thought had a similar influence on the availability and acceptability of Darwin’s concept of struggle for existence.” From Kourany (1987), p. 199.

²³⁰ Kuhn (1977), *passim*.

expect, then, that human understanding of the good life would be something that unfolds in time as well. Still, it is the one humanity whose nature is the subject of this understanding.

Furthermore, in *phronesis*, we are talking about human action, not the selection of theory. The human action in question is the functioning of virtue as the primary means to *eudaimonia*. Since human nature is largely defined precisely by its unique function, and that function is singular, or a single set of sub functions, then we can expect human flourishing to be the same general kind of thing for all humans.²³¹ To see how each person has, in fact, parleyed their capacities and circumstances into maximal flourishing will require attention to the particular case. We should expect surprises; but the logic will remain the same: virtue ethics is embodied in each person desiring rightly the things that are really good for them, and rightly averring from what is not. No more precision is possible.

If this is so, then the emergence of the various blocks of *phronesis* we might see both within and across diverse cultures and eras, need not represent a threatening divergence into incompatible ethical phyla, but may represent rather the trail and error chunks of practical wisdom—some excelling where others fail—that we should expect from particularist methods. These need not converge eventually into a single world culture or ‘way of doing things.’ The convergence comes from an over-arching society, say, that can claim to be flourishing by means of the very differences that must remain because of concrete and particular variations among individuals and their circumstances.

²³¹ This does not, of course, mean the same *actions* for all people; it is the same *logos*, however, as nicely articulated by Aristotle, see above in chapter one.

Moreover, if the falsification of this notion of objectivity in virtue ethics is not to be found in the existing diversity of meta-theories,²³² would it perhaps be found in radically different understandings of the one human nature? Very significant differences in practical wisdom would diverge if underlying theories of human nature differ greatly. Even using the same *eudaimonistic* logic, cultures with, say, radically diverse views of the place of women, children, and birth control, will no doubt develop divergent blocks of common sense insights regarding what is a good choice. These distinct societies, and the *phronimoi* they produce, might eventually become radically incompatible, and the evolutionary model might mean survival of the fittest, not survival of the ethically most sound. However dramatic such a clash may be, it remains a clash of interpretations, not a clash between kinds of human. Still, if errors of fact regarding our nature divide humankind, it will be by unbiased application of attention to data, insight, and reflective judgment, perhaps over many centuries, that we may be able to arrive at a general acceptance of one ethics as most fitting for all humans.

(ii) Theory versus practice. We must distinguish between theory selection in metaethics and the deliberation and choices to be made by *phronesis*. We should not expect the canon for selecting explanatory frameworks to be the same as the method for detecting salience, desiring rightly, and choosing freely the elements of the good life. The former is a framework of axioms or putative laws under which data are comprehended, interpreted and by which prediction is made and further fruitful understanding achieved. But the prior framework of virtue ethics is right desire, and this turns out to be a habit, a skill of detecting a mean between extremes. The good human

²³² For *phronesis* is not interested directly with ethical theory. Good people can hold bad theory and vice versa. Therefore, the plurality of ethical theories is no counter-evidence to there being a unified way of human flourishing. Rather, diversity of theory is by now a much-celebrated part of the overall process of 'coming to know' that defines both Kuhn and Lonergan's work.

life is not a theory to be selected; for we are not looking for an explanatory framework, rather, human flourishing is a way of *doing something well*, i.e., living one's life well. Thus, scientific theory selection and ethical salience selection differ in kind: the goal of science is a form of understanding; the goal of ethics is a form of action.

Kuhnian anomalies are still a useful analogy, however, even in practical wisdom. Whatever anomalies may bring about change or new insight in practical ethics, these will also differ in kind from theory anomaly, for, they may not serve the same function of overthrowing entire paradigms as they do in Kuhn's science. Practical ethical anomaly might look like, say, a case of apparently genuine human flourishing utterly beyond anything 'our' culture could imagine.²³³ It might even lead us to alter, say, our understanding of human nature (something science does occasionally), but this will not change the operative logic of virtue ethics, only the particular character of wise choices.

The Kuhnian type objection, then, does not seem to apply to my approach to virtue ethics because it is not necessarily the case that divergence in ethics is the inevitable vector of history, neither does the existence of divergent blocks of practical intelligence prove their ultimate incompatibility. For human nature is a shared unity. If it were not, we would merely develop a notion of the good corresponding to each kind of being—the good for man and the good for some other creature need not be generic, since we are not Platonists. Finally, metaethical theory

²³³ Sexual orientation theory, for instance, proposes to broaden our understanding of human flourishing by distinguishing the subjective structures of gender identity from biological sex. Homosexual flourishing would be ruled out if gay orientation is seen as anti-human nature. On the other hand, any teleological or functional understanding of biological sex will eventually have to face up to the complementary nature of the opposite sexes and what this indicates about a full account of humanness. Whatever the case may be, the *phronimos* will be wise at 'playing the cards dealt him' in these matters. One can sense the higher order social good here of a society that tolerates the attempts of each person to make a good life for themselves.

selection and practical choices differ in kind. Kuhn is far more relevant to the former than the latter.

Chapter summary and comparison

In the thought of Aristotle and Bernard Lonergan, it can be said that the following aspects of moral insight induction are basically the same for both:

1. Emotion and desire participate in human rationality; they are cognitive of apparent goods, of things deemed important and valuable to us.
2. Emotion and our states of preference and aversion affect to some degree the features and relations of the phenomenal world such that a web of salience may be illuminated relative to each subject.
3. This raises the question of genuine good/value versus apparent good/value and this is a question of fact requiring the deployment of an intellectual habit. It also raises the question of calculating appropriate means to attaining genuine and concrete goods. Thus, insights pertaining to the good and what is conducive to it require a mode of intelligence calibrated appropriately toward mastering actual circumstances in the daily world of the subject.

4. The origin of such particularist insight, precisely because it is not deductive, relies upon past experience with similar scenarios to develop an 'eye to see,' sound past pedagogy, and a final moment of direct insight into the concrete that is, perhaps, analogous to pattern recognition (including narrative forms).
5. The intellectual and desiderative virtues that accomplish this may develop into a habituated state of character not unlike expertise. From these, perception of the good and choice of the good become increasingly automatic and pleasant.

Each of these points is generally descriptive of both *phronesis* and common sense insight. I think the primary difference is that common sense insight can include shrewdness as well, and hence *phronesis* is a species demarcated by the right desire for the genuine good, a concern absent from mere shrewdness. Still, I think it can be asserted that when the *phronimos* is 'getting it right' in ethical insight induction, she could be said to be successfully deploying the cognitive operation of Lonergan's common sense intelligence, though with an eye to what is good for her life as a whole.

But not enough has yet been said about the role of emotion and right desires in orienting the subject to the genuine good, to genuine value. Lonergan's claims that in emotions we apprehend possible values, and by them are enabled to judge real value, are still too vague to assist us in linking emotion and objectivity in virtue ethics. Which emotions help us in this? Which ones hurt us? The next chapter turns to Martha Nussbaum's insights to help unpack the operations of emotion in ethical insight.

CHAPTER 4: Emotive Perception of Value and Objectivity in Virtue Ethics

We have just seen that one type of cognitive malfunction is bias. Bias is tangled with emotion and often cuts short the open-mindedness of free inquiry. Clearly, if we can claim that there is a wrong way in which emotion affects judgments and perceptions, there must also be a right way. This chapter will turn now to Martha Nussbaum's recent work on the cognitive nature of emotion and its role in discerning value, especially ethical value.

The goal of this chapter is to fill out more satisfactorily Lonergan's contention that in emotion we apprehend personal, yet actual, value. Nussbaum far surpasses Lonergan in working out concretely just how emotions and value are connected and I will use elements of her work to augment Lonergan's theory. However, I will use Lonergan to re-insert a key distinction into Nussbaum's account, the distinction between *apprehension* of value and *judgment* of value. Finally, I will explore the contention of both Nussbaum and Lonergan that some mode of compassionate love may act as a genuine objectivity-fostering *phantasm*-construer. I will then be in a position to articulate what a fuller notion of 'being objective' would be like in the light of the foregoing.

Let me review the past chapters. This thesis has been pursuing two questions:

First, within the framework of an interpreted Aristotelian conception of virtue ethics, where the particular insights of the *phronimos* are necessary in determining the concrete good for a human

being, what are the cognitive operations that he or she is performing when successfully hitting upon sound ethical insights?

Second, since we have now seen how the emotions, desires, perceptions (including salience networks), and concerns (including biases) of the *phronimos* condition somewhat the degrees and kinds of insights that are likely to arise, how can we think about ‘being objective’ when doing virtue ethics?

In answer to these questions, the preceding chapters explored the universal operations of human cognition mapped out by Bernard Lonergan to show that, according to that model, the *phronimos* must do what every sustained effort of human intelligence must do: cycle through a set of distinct but related cognitive operations, beginning in the sensible (*phantasma* of various sorts) and terminating in a judgment of being, truth, and the real (including what is the genuine good for humankind). This dynamic set of cognitive acts is propelled by a principle of operation: an *a priori* ‘desire to know’ that is the condition of our raising questions in the first place. It is that prior disposition of wonder, skeptical reservation, annoyance at anomaly, and so forth, that would head toward an ideal limit of complete knowledge by greeting every proposed answer with a further question. In the sphere of ethical query, it is manifested in a desire to know what action to pursue, which among many is the better or the right action, and in classical terms, how one should live one’s life as a whole. It is felt in the restlessness of an uneasy conscience, for moral doubt is just another form of the desire to know. These then are the very basic elements of Lonergan’s cognitive theory: the PDK is the restlessness of human intelligence as it turns attention to presentation, experiences insights, turns to them in reflective criticism, reformulates

insights into conditionals, grasps (or does not) conditions for assent, and on the basis of such judgments of fact, is in a position to deliberate and decide.

To answer the question, then, of what the *phronimos* is doing in getting it right, she is doing the above in a more or less unhindered way. As one who is mastering the concrete, she continually deploys and augments her personally acquired set of common sense insights, working in a non-inferential manner to induce further necessary insights directly from the incomplete set of past similar ones. Therefore, her memory, experience, and habituated dispositions are more vital to her practical discernment than are the more formal tools of logic and calculation, though these too may submit to the practical demands of common sense.

But she is also habituated toward desiring and feeling aright. For she has learned, by repeated direct experience, the intrinsic nobility of genuinely good choices and actions and come to desire them both for their own sakes and for their contribution to the wholeness of *eudaimonia*. The *phronimos* is doing something right, then, in emotional and desiderative orientation as well as in cognitive operations.

The model of cognition we have developed so far is based upon the general discursive principle of insight into *phantasm* (understanding), and critical reflection upon insight (judgment). That whole dynamic is dependent upon *phantasm*, and *phantasm* as we have seen, is susceptible to alteration from at least three major forces: emotion, bias, patterns of experience. If we can somehow compensate for, or eliminate, the distorting effect of these we may achieve a functional dynamic that can meaningfully be called 'being objective,' for being objective will be

understood negatively: as no longer being under the distorting influence of unsound emotion, bias, or the capricious influence of shifting patterns of experience.

This chapter, then, will address the following:

1. The theory of emotions-as-judgment in the light of Nussbaum's latest research.
2. Coming to grips with bias: ways to reduce, if not eliminate, this built-in pitfall of common sense intelligence.
3. Another look at patterns of experience, horizon of concern and salience-selection.
4. Love as a ground for procedural objectivity.

1. Nussbaum on emotions as value judgments

I focus now on Martha Nussbaum's more recent ideas regarding the cognitive nature of emotions.²³⁴ I do this for several reasons. First, she has contributed largely to the interpretive framework of the Aristotelianism of this thesis and her discussion of emotions, drawing widely upon ancient sources, is quite compatible with a generally Aristotelian account.²³⁵ Second, having been a major contributor to discussions on the relation of emotion to *phantasm* and perception,²³⁶ her most recent contribution is her thesis that emotions just *are* value judgments, and this represents a significant stance for understanding an emotion-dependent virtue ethics.

²³⁴ See Nussbaum (2001).

²³⁵ For more discussion of what a more strict account would look like, see Leighton (1982), pp. 144-74; cf Fortenbaugh (1975).

²³⁶ See her *De Motu Animalium*, and sections in Nussbaum (1986; 1990; 1994).

Third, while Lonergan scholars have continually heralded his early recognition of the cognitive nature of emotion, and especially its cognition of value, Lonergan himself did so little actual fleshing out of what he meant by this that his followers have been unable to agree upon just what he was getting at in his statement that ‘between judgments of fact and judgment of value lie the apprehension of value by the emotions.’²³⁷ Thus, the third reason for concentrating on Nussbaum is an admission that any serious Lonergan scholar will now have to come to grips with the tremendous wealth of material that she has added to the philosophical exploration of emotion and value apprehension.²³⁸ Specifically, while Lonergan began to speak in his later work of love as a higher-order coordinator of all that we do in our thinking, feeling, and acting, this was fleshed out more so in the language of religious experience than of ethics (let alone political thought as does Nussbaum).²³⁹

Her project opens with argumentation against two contrasting views of the emotions: first, the non-cognitivist theory that emotion is a brute animal impulse that may respond somehow to what we think and perceive but which contains no rational or intentional content of its own; and second, the classical Stoic view that emotion is indeed cognitive—but always mistaken in each and every one of its judgments.²⁴⁰ Against these views she develops what she calls the “neo-Stoic” theory,²⁴¹ wherein the emotions are cognitive—they are in fact *value judgments*—but they are *not*, contrary to the Stoics, always wrong; in fact, they may be profoundly insightful in ways that only emotions can be. By defending the idea that emotions just are kinds of value

²³⁷ Doorley (1996), p. 147.

²³⁸ This regards Nussbaum (2001), Braman’s (1999) critique of Nussbaum notwithstanding.

²³⁹ See for instance *MIT*, pp. 240-44; 282-84.

²⁴⁰ Her own view she calls “cognitive-evaluative” or simply “cognitive” and here she just means concerned with receiving and processing information, not the presence of elaborate calculative, computational, or even reflexive self-aware mechanisms. Nussbaum (2001), p. 23.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

judgments, she opens her theory to questions of the truth or falsehood of emotion, and therefore, of defining, in part, what we could mean by 'being objective,' in our emotional judgments.

(i) Emotions as judgments of value

Nussbaum takes the same general position developed by Aristotle that emotions are intentional: they take objects; they can be 'about' things. Furthermore, she argued in the past and here too that the intentional objects of thought are already pre-interpreted by emotion to some degree before we register them intellectually. The beliefs that can be embodied in emotion may be a very complex 'way of seeing' the object.²⁴² But Nussbaum now contends that emotions are more than just interpretations; they are judgments concerned with value, especially with things valued for their close connectedness to our own personal well-being.²⁴³ She claims that emotions "are forms of evaluative judgment that ascribe to certain things and persons outside a person's own control great importance for the person's own flourishing."²⁴⁴ And, "...emotions always involve thought of an object combined with thought of the object's salience or importance; in that sense, they always involve appraisal or evaluation."²⁴⁵ Finally, emotions are, in her view, actually *identical* with personal evaluative judgment.²⁴⁶

We can see that emotions are not judgments such as, say, general ethical maxims like, 'generosity is a virtue worth cultivating.' Rather, they are concrete judgments regarding things held dear to me on account of their relation to my own personal well being. Emotions are an

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33; 41.

acknowledgement of my neediness and lack of self-sufficiency.²⁴⁷ That is why the objects that are deemed important to my own *eudaimonia* and are vulnerable to loss (in ways that, say, good character is not) are objects about which I am prone to get emotional.

Nussbaum's theory of judgment: voluntary direct assent or rejection of appearances.

According to Nussbaum's interpretation of the Stoics, a judgment is an assent to or rejection of appearances.²⁴⁸ This must involve, then, two steps. First, an initial take on the world. There is a way that things appear to me. But so far, I have not yet accepted it. This is not necessarily a representational theory of perception; we are just talking here about pre-critical presentation.

At this point Nussbaum thinks three possible roads open up: First, I can accept or embrace the way things seem; in this case the appearance has become my judgment. Second, I can repudiate appearances as false; in that case I judge the contradictory. Third, I can let appearances hang without committing myself one way or the other; in this case I have no judgment or belief.

Aristotle gave an example of the second kind of judgment of appearances.²⁴⁹ The solar disc appears to us as being roughly a foot across. Children might embrace this as the actual size of the sun. But if we hold the astronomically informed belief that it is, in fact, much larger, then we reject the appearance and embrace the contradictory. "Assenting to or embracing a way of seeing something in the world, acknowledging it as true, seems to be a job that *requires* the discriminating powers of cognition." "Yes, that's the way things really are." "...[reasoning is]

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 87; 313-19.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁴⁹ *De Anima*, III. 3.

an ability in virtue of which we commit ourselves to a view of the way things really are.”²⁵⁰

[Italics hers.]

According to this description, then, the assent of judgment is voluntary, an act of the will.²⁵¹

Yet, it is not always deliberately performed: habit, attachment, the sheer weight of events may extract assent from us. Children, who do not have the good sense yet to withhold assent, are still making a real judgment when they assent to the way things appear.²⁵² This model of judgment as assenting directly to appearances is then transposed to describe value-laden emotional judgments. An emotion, such as for example, anger, joy, or grief, *just is* a personal embracing of the object of thought in a certain way.

How does this type of emotive judgment look in action? Nussbaum presents us with a tragic personal example of evaluative judgment: the death of her own mother.²⁵³ In this scenario, hearing news from her sister that their mother is gravely ill, Nussbaum becomes filled with the anxious possibility that Betty Craven, someone of enormous personal significance, is dead. This value-laden picture keeps haunting her even though it is still the day before the actual death. As a report that evokes images and feelings, this is still considered by her to be at the stage of appearances, as in the solar disk example. Had she awoken from a nightmare, or discovered the news to be a cruel hoax, she would have had reasons to reject the appearances. But, as it happens, she eventually finds herself in the room with the body in front of her eyes and says, “I

²⁵⁰ Nussbaum (2001), p. 38.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 39ff.

embrace the appearance as the way things are.”²⁵⁴ Her emotions record her sense of vulnerability and imperfect control. The emotion of grief itself is cognitive; it contains the intentional content: that Betty Craven is dead. And it is cognition of that value-laden and lost person—*my* mother—that just *is* her grief.²⁵⁵ Her grief is identical to the judgment that this was an externally valuable person to me. No additional cognitive step apart from the feeling needs to be added to attain that value judgment.²⁵⁶

Moreover, as this scenario shows, emotions as evaluations are always anchored in some human subject—they are *my* emotions, *my* value, *my* loss, says Nussbaum. Emotions contain an ineliminable ‘me’ to which projects, schemes, whole life-goals are intrinsically connected. This is not necessarily egoistic, it is eudaimonistic.²⁵⁷

Finally, emotional value judgments are still considered voluntary at least in a weak sense. For while some feelings arise spontaneously and uninvited, it is still up to us to *acknowledge* them, to let them sink in and realign our lives. We may engage in denial of our grief, and hence, fail to face up to the value we have just lost, or the vulnerability we fear. Thus, even in the apparent spontaneity of emotion, Nussbaum finds room for the voluntary nature of judgment in our ability to accept or reject appearances.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁵⁶ Some problems, it seems, arise with Nussbaum’s view here. For instance, she clearly does claim that her neo-Stoic theory identifies grief with the judgment of personal loss, and hence, it is impossible to judge that one has experienced such loss without experiencing grief. But if our emotions were identical with judgments of things deemed to be deeply valuable, then what kind of judgment would we be making when we judge that one of our emotions is, in fact, an *overreaction* to loss? That judgement would be a more sober assessment of the degree of a thing’s personal value to us, but clearly one that need not be another emotion itself. Furthermore, she hardly accounts for the judgments whereby I know that I *should* be feeling grief because of deep personal loss, but yet I do not. Here, there is a judgment that indeed, losing X, is a personal loss, combined with the judgment that a person who loses X should be grieving. But this judgment, while pertaining to real personal value, is not an emotion.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Emotional 'error' and some important distinctions.

This theory of judgment will be critiqued shortly, but for now I turn to the issue of truth and falsity in emotive-judgment as Nussbaum presents it. Apart from the psychologically unhealthy acts of repression and denial, there are at least four further ways that emotive value judgments can err somehow:

First, there is the error of cognition, say, a *mistaken* belief that Betty Craven was dead, resulting in a grief, that while not properly called 'false,' would still be considered mistaken in terms of its propositional content: mother is dead. For the value judgment, that mother is extremely important to me, is still correct. My having as emotion depends upon *what* I believe, not *whether* the belief is true or false.²⁵⁸ Still, these are not errors of emotional feeling; what is felt would be perfectly appropriate were the content true. Emotions that go wrong because of factual error are really not mistaken, but misdirected.

Second, regarding the evaluation itself, we must value things aright. There are things that are genuinely more important than others, say, mothers over hamsters. Something has clearly gone wrong were we to grieve equally for a dead hamster. "Emotions have to do with what I, in fact, do value, however well or badly those things fit together."²⁵⁹ Error here presupposes some objective standard apart from emotion, but we will get to that later. Still, to grieve equally for a lost hamster is better called an inappropriate emotion rather than an untrue one.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Third, we must distinguish the effects of general versus specific feelings. This contrasting pair, as well as the next one, involves some subtle but important distinctions that are especially relevant to deliberation. We can have feelings regarding a person that are generally applicable to a large set of persons in contrast to very specific feelings of the same kind directed uniquely at one person. If Nussbaum was grieved because a parent-as-mere-provider is missing, a role that any number of persons may fulfill, then this is not the same emotive judgment as grieving over 'this irreplaceable one person, my mother, who is now gone.'²⁶⁰ Whether or not it is an error to evaluate a mother as a mere provider, clearly this difference in emotive judgment reveals an estimate of the mother's relative worth in one's view of flourishing, and this reveals part of one's character and will impact deliberation. Therefore, whether an emotion is aimed at the general or the more specific must be taken into any account of emotional appropriateness.

Fourth, there is the distinction between background and situational feeling. This is not the same as above. Background evaluations may persist through situations of numerous kinds, while situational evaluative judgments arise in some particular context alone. For example, suppose one has a fear of writing exams that is present in the background at all times whether or not one is facing actual examination.²⁶¹ This may become manifest in certain behaviours: procrastination, general irritability, snide remarks about the instructor, but the actual fear is background, that is, unconscious. Then, when faced with the actual situation of exam-writing, or when imaginatively thinking about it, we may experience an actual episode of such fear. Situational emotion is logically distinct from background emotion; both are ways of hating

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72-73.

exams for both are in fact the same judgment manifest in differing modes. This is in contrast to general/specific emotions where the judgments involved are *not* the same.

This raises the question of whether there exists some single background emotion, or single set of background emotions, that would orient our whole perspective in a positive—even corrective—ethically enlightening way. Lonergan clearly states that this is the case, that just as a basic emotion of fear or hate is the major factor in our biases, it is charitable love that seems most likely to foster and maintain a healthy openness to truth and goodness.²⁶² Nussbaum, too, after several hundred pages that show the limitations of emotion and that conclude that “no emotion is *per se* morally good,”²⁶³ goes on to devote the second half of *Upheavals of Thought* to a detailed analysis of love as the main instance of background emotion²⁶⁴ and how indeed it may set us on the right track in ethical and political pursuits. As this chapter proceeds we will see how both these thinkers conceptualize love as a background emotion and why it should perform the function of maximizing the probability of getting things right in ethical query.

Summary

Let me tie up this short presentation by stressing what Nussbaum did not say, and cannot have meant by what she did say.

Her position states that all emotions are intentional and so cannot be treated as non-rational animal impulses. Yet, unlike the Stoics, she does not maintain that their intentional content is

²⁶² *CWL* 3, pp. 250ff.

²⁶³ Nussbaum (2001), p. 453.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94, she writes, “We may say, in fact, that the central form of a background emotion is always love or attachment to some thing or person, seen as very important for one’s own flourishing—in combination with some general belief to the effect that the well-being of this thing or person is not fully under one’s control.”

always in error. Instead, she takes a middle ground, where emotions are, indeed, always evaluative judgments but ones that may be true or false in what they affirm or deny. We just saw general ways that emotion can go off the mark.

She also states, and implies in her background emotion theory, that they need not be consciously experienced to be *bona fide* emotive judgments of value.²⁶⁵

Now, while all emotions are evaluative judgments, her full identity theory must be rejected, for it does not follow that all evaluative judgments must be emotions. The distinguishing factor for Nussbaumian emotive evaluations seems to be this: the things we become attached to because we deem them important to our personal well-being, and yet deem them vulnerable to loss, these are the things we will emote about. For her, emotion itself just *is* the embodiment of the personal-value-vulnerability aspect of the judgment. We *feel* it first, and then put it into propositional terms, say, as part of reflecting upon what it is we feel. However, value judgments that do not impinge closely upon the subject may not exhibit the 'feeling' factor of emotion, or count as emotions at all, yet that does not make them any less judgments of value. For instance, preferences based upon aesthetic value may be personal yet need not involve emotion: my preference for symmetry in art is a value judgment that need not be connected to feelings of any kind, while the actual message-content conveyed in the art may evoke strong emotion.

But, Nussbaum does claim that emotive evaluation is a direct response to a phenomenal object or state of affairs 'seen as' having eudaimonic import. There is an appearance that strikes me as,

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61ff.

say, tragic, and therefore I judge it to be bad for me. I may be mistaken, but I have passed a judgment intrinsically in my emotive response.

(ii) Augmenting Nussbaum: apprehension of value versus judgment of value

Here we face a complication caused, I believe, by Nussbaum's confusing of perception/apprehension and judgment *proper*.

It is difficult to see much difference between Nussbaum's earlier concept of 'perceptual judgment' or 'interpretive seeing' and her recent theory of 'emotion as value judgment.' Both involve an immediate awareness of value in the very turning to *phantasm*. This value-awareness was twofold. On the one hand, prior values and concerns to some degree already pre-construe the *phantasm* we encounter. On the other hand, emotive value judgments are responses to such an affected *phantasm*, making explicit, say, the things one holds dear and vulnerable. Emotion is at play in pre-construal as an apprehender and salience selector, and in any post-construal response.

Moreover, while in the earlier work, *The Fragility of Goodness*, Nussbaum did not make clear enough distinctions between perception and judgment,²⁶⁶ in *Upheavals of Thought* she does not sufficiently clarify the distinction between emotively *recognizing a possible* value and the *judgment* of value itself.

Here, Lonergan's cognitive theory can help. As we saw, simply having a bright idea pop into one's head (insight of understanding) is not at all to have affirmed or denied that idea (*via* the

²⁶⁶ See Nussbaum (1986), pp. 312-17.

insight that conditions have been met). So too with emotion; having a feeling may be a means of apprehending a *possible* value, but the judgment of value is a very different thing. Emotions may indeed register my sense of vulnerability-connectedness, but this is just a general judgment about human neediness, not at all a reliable indicator of the value of the object presented.

Nussbaum would have done well to sharpen the difference between what we may call *prima facie* judgment and judgment *proper*. *Prima facie* judgment is not a true judgment, but is often a necessary heuristic stage in getting to a judgment. It plays a role similar to that of a supposition or a hypothesis—it supplies that content about which a judgment will be made. A *prima facie* judgment may very well be conveyed in emotion: I think of my dentist appointment and instantly shrink in revulsion. My emotion conveys the very plain content that I do not like the discomfort of dental invasion. The *prima facie* judgment here is ‘a dental visit is bad;’ that is the evaluative content of the aversion. As an initial ‘take’ of the eudaimonistic state of affairs confronting me, this is at best a tentative judgment, that is, a proposition asserted precisely as pre-critical, as still requiring further insight and verification. In fact, I am just restating the obverse of Aristotle’s *prima facie* assessment of something as good when it is found pleasant and bad when found unpleasant.²⁶⁷ These are initial takes of the world as it appears; critical reflection upon these feelings themselves may ultimately lead to the opposite judgment. Nussbaum seems to have lost sight of the distinction between pre-judgment and judgment proper.

For example, suppose my imagination or memory present certain images of teeth with cavities, or perhaps I am hearing the distant sound of a small drill, when suddenly, bingo!—into my head pops the notion of a dentist appointment. This is a first order insight of understanding, a

²⁶⁷ See *NE* III, 4ff; also 1139a21.

coherent content, and it now takes up the form of a presentation “seen as,” (i) pertaining to me, and (ii) being an aversion of mine. I recognize in a vision of pain and discomfort a possible evil. Yet, the critical turn that must yet be taken is a reflective judgment concerning the content of the initial take regarding dentist visits. Such a reflective query might be: ‘is it indeed the case that a visit to the dentist would be a bad thing?’ This is just to restate the goal of value judgment which is to discern the genuine value from the merely apparent one. In the initial take, what I recognize, with a jolt, in the emotive force is that ‘this impinges upon me!’ The reflective judgment of a value is distinct from the initial judgment that something is in personal proximity to me.

In any emotive response involving pleasantness or pain, the outreach or recoil concomitant with the experience is *similar* to judgment; we are saying no to pain, yes to pleasantness in our responses. But this is perhaps only an analogy. It is *like* judgment but *not* judgment. What it shares with judgment is a kind of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ claim; how it differs is in how the yes or no is justified. In the case of emotion, either it simply is not yet justified at all, or some recounting of the history of the cognitive training of that emotion will have to be invoked as a supra-emotional justification for it. Emotional affirmation may be analogous to real judgment,²⁶⁸ but it cannot be its own justification.

All this is just to say that Nussbaum may be quite right that emotions are immediate judgments of personal and vulnerable eudaimonic values, but only if by “judgment” is meant a kind of *tentative* assertion that still awaits a critically reflective act to become judgment *proper*.

²⁶⁸ In *De Anima* 431a7-10, where Aristotle actually makes the distinction between emotional response and judgment, he turns a phrase that McKeon translated: ‘quasi-affirmation’ (*oion kataphasa e apophasa*), which I connect here with *prima facie* judgment.

Emotion then is a kind of proto-judgment, coming before and being a necessary condition for personal concrete judgments of value, but emotion is not itself such a judgment. Rather, emotion is an immediate *apprehension* of a possible value, something that may turn out, in fact, to be a genuine good (or bad) for my flourishing.

Without this distinction, it is hard to know what she means when she speaks of emotional evaluations being mistaken concerning things that objectively have certain values, but that we are valuing inappropriately (*e.g.*, hamsters over mothers). For the criterion of evaluating one's own emotive evaluations cannot be further appeal to another emotion, for therein lies infinite regress. Neither can it be one of Nussbaum's 'background' values for these may be just as inappropriate. Neither can it be some 'general' value, for in Nussbaum's theory, I can value my Rolex watch generally as a good paper weight while failing to value it specifically as a gentleman's fine-jewel attachment, for that would be an error that is completely context relative, whereas mothers are always more valuable than hamsters. For the Rolex might one day be the perfect device for jumpstarting a failed engine during a life and death emergency, in which case, its generic value as an electric conductor becomes situationally (yet also objectively) more valuable than its social status value. Thus, the judgment of value *proper* must be distinguished from whatever is being affirmed in emotional states of any kind.

Lonergan's judgment of value allows for this.²⁶⁹ While Lonergan does distinguish between judgments of fact and judgments of value, this is not a radical fact-value dichotomy, for there is still a real unity in the form and structure of the act of judgment itself. It is the insightful grasping of *reasons for assent*, not an act of the will to embrace appearance as in Nussbaum.

²⁶⁹ A fine treatment of Lonergan in this regard is Vertin (1995), pp. 221-48.

And in judgments of value, the invulnerability criterion, as I see it, demands as a reason for assent the *absence of prohibiting conditions*, rather than the presence of sufficient conditions. Either way, judgment as a cognitive dynamic has the form of inference, not direct intuition.

A closer look at this is called for. According to Lonergan's theory, the judgment of value is a variant of the three stage cognitive method. Attention and query are directed toward appearances whose salience network is shaped in part by the character, experience, and beliefs of the subject. The question at hand might be, 'what should I do now?' and the answer may arise through common sense insight into the particulars being considered: 'do X.' Critical reflection will ask, 'should I *really* do X; would it *really* be worthwhile?' At this point there is a major difference on the third level of critical reflection between fact and value judgments. For whereas in a judgment of fact, the insight is formulated into a conditional and the condition is met by a further turn to some concrete object or state of affairs whose being will be a reason for assent to fact, in the judgment of *value*, there is no present state of affairs to which one may advert as a sufficient condition for assent. The reason for this is that fact judgments concern 'what is,' and deliberation concerns 'what is not yet, but what one wishes to be.' Thus, the insight that would indicate a possible good choice or action must be affirmed in another way: by being invulnerable to reasons *not* to so choose or act. With this move, Lonergan keeps the structure of judgment-as-critical-reflection (not as direct assent to appearance) and yet makes sound judgments of value contingent upon the knowledge, experience, memory, habituation, and tastes of the person who would raise possible objections to action. For, all of these expansions of a person's insight-set will increase the probability of raising and answering sufficient objections. This is why according to Aristotle, a more experienced person may be better at judgments of value, for he has

an 'eye to see.' In a judgment of value, a hundred reasons *not* to proceed may be refuted, and yet there is always the possibility that we missed a fatal one. This too shows why we should not expect the same degree of clarity or accuracy in value judgments than we may expect from the sciences, empirical or otherwise.

Once we allow for the distinction between apprehension of value in a *prima facie* judgment and the judgments of value *proper*, then Nussbaum's discussion of emotion can be combined with Lonergan's notions of the problem of bias and the phenomenon of patterns of experience to lead up toward a critical view of 'being objective.'

2. Coming to grips with bias

Let me return to some aspects of the conception of bias we are using here. My interest is not to solve the problem of bias, but point out what any solution would have to deal with.

I begin with a clarification. Bias is *not* a presupposition so it cannot simply be a matter of holding the wrong one. Rather than consisting in an error of fact, bias is an emotional and reactionary response to social inter-relations. There are four modes of bias explicitly dealt with in Lonergan's thought. First, there is the *dramatic bias* of personal living about which we have, initially, little control. There are then three often overlapping manifestations in which a personal bias can operate: as *individual bias* placing myself against the world, or against other parts of myself (egoistic and neurotic bias); as *group bias* where it is my group against other groups, our

ways against their ways; and finally, as *general bias* where one whole mode of being intelligent postures against other valid ways of deploying intelligence. An example is common sense pragmatism against all other modes of thinking, be they intellectual, religious, artistic, and so forth.²⁷⁰ In any of its forms—whether individual, group, general—bias can be manifest or masked in arrogance, disgust, contempt, and hate responses. In whatever way it is manifest, bias is not a one-time expression, but is a habitually conditioned state of emotive response. Thus, while biases may be reflectively understood, and even critiqued, still they may remain stubbornly present as a harmful desiderative formation of the psyche.

The dramatic bias is a maladjustment of the dramatic pattern of experience,²⁷¹ that pattern of salience through which the concerns of concrete living are met, and it is common sense insight that masters the concrete. As we saw in the last chapter, common sense emerges as a non-systematic, flexible deployment of perception, past experience, acquired coping-techniques, all directed toward appearances with the goal of meeting practical exigencies. And it is precisely this nexus of pragmatically focused operative tools that gives common sense both its parochial genius and its propensity to exhibit dramatic bias. For prior to mastering the *ad hoc* concerns of one's family, village, tribe, nation, culture, and so forth, there is already at play *pre-selection* of values, *pre-selection* of permissible questions, and the censoring of heretical doubts. Each culture rears the next generation with peculiar rewards and punishments aimed at manipulating emotive and behaviour responses, but these incentives and disincentives already embody a set of values and judgments. In other words, human understanding, by its very social emergence, will

²⁷⁰ *CWL* 3, pp. 244-69.

²⁷¹ Lonergan's analysis of dramatic bias led in two directions: as a theory for a new psychoanalytic approach and as a cognitive impairment theory with which to debate Marxist theories of social dialectic. This is discussed in *CWL* 3 and in Doran (1990). Our concern here is with neither of those directions, but with the influence of dramatic bias upon *phantasm* construal and ethical insight induction.

already be closed, more or less, to some insights that are not deemed relevant or acceptable to the group. This is not yet the deliberate manipulation of ideology, but the practical reality that we can only master a finite number of concerns, forcing us to prioritize the limited number of things we are able to cope with at any one time.²⁷² Thus, prior to its later overt and conscious manifestation in the biases of egoism, group prejudice, and anti-intellectualism, dramatic bias is already at work covertly and unconsciously skewing the agenda of our practical intelligence. Clearly, this is more or less the same point we have been following in Nussbaum's notion of pre-construed *phantasm*, though from a decidedly negative angle.

Both Lonergan and Nussbaum place the distortion in large part upon the implicit judgments, and hence salience-selection, of emotion and the truncated set of concerns surrounding personal survival. Nussbaum calls this a mild form of social constructivism.²⁷³ She claims that all societies are the embodiment of implicit and explicit values and judgments of importance. The society into which one is born, therefore, insofar as it has any ability to shape the person, will to some degree shape the person's emotional beliefs and values. There can be socially pernicious emotions. There are good, bad, and in between ways that societies promote or suppress certain emotions.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Thus, for example, in some stone-age cultures, questions regarding the division of labour will simply not arise, or be ridiculed because 'common sense' dictates that women must nurture and men hunt. The obvious advantages of each sex not only outweigh such questions, but actually mock them as silly and utterly valueless in the game of survival. A future ethics of gender equality will have to wait for the emergence of higher-order civilization that removes from the everyday concerns of each group member the exigency of sheer survival. Once the concrete good of physical survival is assured, further questions of quality of life and equity might arise in the context of a more settled and routine social order. But these too will often be raised as practical solution to practical (i.e., social, political, judicial) problems.

²⁷³ Nussbaum (2001), pp. 141-44.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

Therefore, the healthy development of emotions and their appropriate, or wise, expression, in the ethical discernment of *phronesis* must overcome the dangers of bias. How can this be done?

We must realize what is *not* being called for here. Eliminating bias is not the elimination of 'our way of doing things' or 'our point of view.' It is the elimination of the fear or hate or suppressed wonder concerning '*other* ways of doing things.' Therefore, losing bias need not entail losing the pragmatic common sense that constructs 'our ways of doing things,' lest, in removing bias we remove practical thinking altogether. We want to keep parochial ways of doing things, for these are the conditions of the possibility of innovation, of personal flourishing, and of the inception and development of art and culture. Group uniqueness is humanity's division of labour that allows for the emergence of various breakthroughs of practical wisdom. We need only look at, say, the overcoming of tribalism in the interest of civil society, an insight that had first to occur as a local area breakthrough before becoming a generally accepted political good.

Elimination of bias, then, is the removal of the common *nonsense* without losing common sense intelligence itself. Let me suggest what seem to be the three most basic ways that practical intelligence can deal with the problem of bias: (i) self-critical self-awareness; (ii) compensating for bias via rational control of 'appearances;' (iii) compensation for bias in gradual increments versus radical change.

(i) Perhaps the most basic condition for overcoming group bias is a common sense insight that would see the practically wise value of the harmonious integration of individuals, groups, and

modes of thinking.²⁷⁵ The most basic concern of any group is its own safety and well-being, and the ultimate safety and well-being would be realized in a world in which one knows that harmony, and not enmity, exists between all persons and groups. The totalitarian move of eliminating group distinctions altogether is no longer a practical option and the subjugation of all groups by the most powerful is only the recipe for sudden reversals of the same kind. Thus, real practical security is in the harmonious co-existences of various groups, and this requires some form of higher order insight that grasps the principles of integration, equity, and justice that would undergird such an ideal social order. My point here is to indicate that some higher social integration beyond 'our way of doing things' must become a *pragmatic* plank in 'our' platform. There is no reason that concrete and particular common sense insights cannot reflect upon their own logic and see the practicality of, say for instance, world federalism.

Thus, the basic tool for overcoming group bias is not self-criticism from some 'already known to be objectively true' socio-political theory (for theory is precisely what group bias can't cope with) but by the insight that one's own good is tied up ultimately with the good of all others, and that not all of my personal good can be attained in practicality itself. Moreover, insights into the similarity of our shared humanity undergird the sympathy and compassion that Nussbaum calls for in the first part of her theory of political morality.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ There was a time when the geometric thought of Pythagoras was seen to be as dangerously subversive as is spiritual thought in today's society. Eggheads think little of blue-collar intelligence; artistic thought is seen as a luxury of peace and prosperity, ever vulnerable to having its budget cut for more 'practical' needs. The prejudice of one mode of intelligence against the other accounts for huge blocks of suppressed insights that may have hampered emergent civilization in quite literally 'unknowable' ways.

²⁷⁶ Nussbaum (2001), pp. 297-456.

(ii) Whatever benefits may result from attempts to compensate for dramatic bias, these will not result in its elimination because the problem lies at a level partly inaccessible to conscious and deliberate effort. Final bias elimination is a project too great for social engineering alone. The error to avoid here is the notion that correction for bias equals elimination of bias. For the means we will choose to compensate for our biases are just as likely themselves to be alternative biases.

Nevertheless, there may be a place for wisely administered compensation. Given the cognitive principle of insight into *phantasm*, the furniture of the phenomenal field is no small contributor to insight induction. Thus, the deliberate shaping of appearances, say, in technical symbols and schematics enable insights to occur that were difficult or impossible without the new device. For instance, the insights of calculus ultimately rested upon insight into special notations, rather than, say, insight into counting pebbles. Thus, we can indirectly compensate for bias when we identify an impeding feature in appearances or when we create artificial appearances that may enable us to expand our viewpoint or experience base. This has been the purpose behind the reasonable form of affirmative action and may require more than one generation to accomplish: in the past, we would never hire a woman as a bus-driver because...well, who ever heard of such a thing! After a time of deliberate hiring of women, however, the notion of such prohibition simply ceases to arise because new appearances disallow that insight. Such incremental, yet deliberate and responsible, changes to appearances permit social progress precisely by working in congruence with the principle of our cognitive method, rather than at cross purposes through coercion or censorship.

(iii) Compensating for bias, precisely because it can enflame the emotions that are the problem here, must proceed gradually. For the very nature of practical and concrete intelligence is that it preserves successful insight and is very conservative regarding anything that might dislodge proven past success. Thus common sense has a suspicion of sudden or dramatic change and tends to greet it with fear and resistance. Also, there is always the temptation to 'leave well enough alone' and accept the *status quo*. Yet as we have seen, there is a practical way to finesse changes to a group's common sense insight set and its attached biases. Herein lies the real art of politics.

Still, we are left with the problem of the unconscious emotional commitments of dramatic bias that all of us harbor as a result of our birth into and membership in some form of human grouping. How is this problem to be dealt with?

We would not want to eliminate emotion itself, for emotion *per se* is not error and some emotion is absolutely necessary for moral and evaluative discernment. Yet, emotion is at the root of salience pre-selection and this salience-selection was deeply implanted in us before we had the critical capacity to screen and choose for ourselves. Neither is the formula we seek one of simply removing 'negative' emotion, for fear, anger, hate, and the like all have their place; one needs only to fear, hate, and be angry at the right objects, in the right way, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right duration, and so forth. The question we must answer then can take these three forms: is there an emotion that correlates all other emotions in such a way as to function primordially as a salience selector while guaranteeing the avoidance or lessening of bias distortion? Can we learn to feel aright such that appearances will be construed toward an

unhampered induction of the human good? Can such an emotion be stable enough to ground a way of life, say, a life devoted to *eudaimonia*?

3. Another look at patterns of experience and salience selection

Even if we were able somehow to eliminate bias, patterns of experience are another matter. They are not the sorts of things that can or should be eliminated, nor is there a compensation that does not end up just being a shift from one pattern to another. If consciousness is slippery, disallowing us to lock in place the desired mode of awareness, how shall we maintain something like a steady state of 'being objective' in our moral cognition?

In my previous example of patterns of experience I sketched the various ways that salience networks can emerge and shift depending upon the fundamental concern dominating us at any given time. But this is not a doctrine held by Lonergan alone. Here is Nussbaum on the role of emotion in this regard:

The child....[in its development] has many emotions: joy at the presence of good things and fear of their absence; anger at the sources of frustration and gratitude for aid and comfort; shame at her inability to control the sources of good; envy of competitors and guilt at her own aggression; disgust at the slimy and the decaying; wonder at the beauty of the world. By now we can see how these emotions support the child's ability to act, as they *mark off patterns of salience and urgency in her surrounding*; we also see how they may support generous and beneficial action. [Italics mine.]²⁷⁷

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

Emotions illuminate salience, and our reading of Nussbaum told us why: emotions always involve an appraisal of something's close yet vulnerable connectedness to our eudaimonic sense of well-being. We don't get emotional unless we 'take things personally.' Lonergan's contribution here is to show that the many ways we do actually experience salience networks can be grouped into a small number of categorical ways of intending. For, salience can be illuminated by emotions that themselves are guided by the most basic concerns: biological, aesthetic, intellectual, and dramatic.²⁷⁸ Each of these general patterns of experience can be the backdrop for a variety of different emotive episodes; e.g., the biological PX can incite fear, exhilaration, joy, frustration, as indeed can the aesthetic and the dramatic. Even intense intellectual concentration can involve emotions of anticipation, frustration, and the joy of discovery. Thus, we must distinguish between the salience provided by an emotional episode from the overall salience network that establishes the parameters of what one will emote about in the first place. In fact, this allows us to interpret emotions more accurately, for the fear one feels in the 'fight or flight' syndrome cannot have quite the same meaning as that which one feels while watching a Greek tragedy on stage. The PX within which emotions occur is a vital part of our interpretive and evaluative criterion for the understanding of that emotion.

While I stated in the third chapter that it is the dramatic PX, the one concerned with successful unfolding of concrete personal living, that is the default center from which life is lived, and hence, the one most suited for living out the practically wise life, still, it would be wrong to state that only that pattern can count as the right mode of ethical consciousness. For there is a human good proper to each PX: the biological pattern is ordered to physical well-being; the aesthetic to

²⁷⁸ As stated before, this is not an exhaustive list, but if we include Lonergan's category of the phenomenological pattern of experience (interiority) and the religious pattern of experience, we probably have most of them.

psychic and emotional well-being; the intellectual pattern to the attainment of the true and the real, and the dramatic pattern to the art of actually living well. All these are ways in which concerns that shape our patterns of salience can combine and differentiate in the attainment of the various aspects of the human good. The term *good* can be validly predicated across any of the patterns of experience, for each is a mode of being conscious of concerns that impinge upon the well-being of human nature.²⁷⁹

Therefore, the shifting nature of our PXs need not block our pursuit of the good. Rather, in pursuing the human good we will naturally shift patterns as we seek to collect and balance the various goods that make up *eudaimonia*. Now this is not some new insight into how *phronesis* would work. For clearly, the *phronimos* knows that when courageous combat is called for, he will shift to the biological pattern of 'fight or flight' and when contemplation is called for he will enter the intellectual or religious PX. The point is that each pattern may be rationally and responsibly allowed to obtain, and each one can be moderated in balance with other pursuits (and their salience-patterns) as governed by the overall life-view best seen from the dramatic center. Furthermore, the fruit of each pattern, say new insights into ethics, can now join other elements available for wise integration by practical wisdom.

²⁷⁹ I think this is what Lawrence Blum (2000) captures when he claims that impartialist views (Kantians and consequentialists) and particularist views (virtue ethics) of the human good are not reducible to each other or to some more fundamental ethical theory of viewpoint, for "there is no unitary 'moral point of view' that can be defined in terms of a single moral notion or procedure." He echoes Aristotle's view that there are properly basic human goods and they are not commensurable: partialist loyalty to one's family is basic, as is impartiality in judicial procedure. See Hooker and Little (2000), p. 206.

The horizon of concern, emotion, and patterned experience

The other notion we discussed in chapter three was *horizon of concern*. Now each pattern of experience, with the exception of the intellectual,²⁸⁰ has its own limitation of interest that is indeed a kind of horizon, for the concerns one has while in the act of high speed down hill skiing (biological survival; aesthetic delight) will probably utterly preclude any thought of, say, the periodic table of elements. But these salience-determining phenomenal fields are not the same as the one overall horizon of concern as Lonergan defines it.²⁸¹ For while we may slide from one PX into the next, the totality of interests across all our possible patterns is also limited to the questions and concerns we are *capable* of raising in the first place. Theoretically speaking, human intellect may have the potential for unlimited inquiry about the totality of being, but in our actual lives, each of us only ever asks the questions that our temporally and historically contextualized concerns will permit. For just as we no longer ask mythological questions regarding which god is behind today's weather, but rather ask about air pressure and moisture conditions, so we do not know how to ask whole categories of questions that may become commonplace in a thousand years from now. Our horizon of concern is limited by the fact that we do not know what we do not know, and hence, cannot care about such things.

But apart from such epistemic limitation, our horizon of concern is also delimited by an emotional operator: our fundamental cares.²⁸² 'Care' is more than mere intellectual interest. It is the personal connection of the individual to matters that impinge upon her well-being, to one

²⁸⁰ The orientation of the questions of the intellectual PX is ultimately ontological, toward being itself. If permitted to operate without bias, intellect is capable of asking every question about every thing. Thus, its horizon is being itself, an unrestricted notion. Still, ethics is more than knowing, and unrestricted questions regarding being are not yet unrestricted desires for the good, and so we are looking for some further openness that regards human objects of desire, choice, and action.

²⁸¹ *MIT*, pp. 131; 235-36.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32. A good discussion of care and its impact upon *phantasm* and the questions of value we would as is Melchin (1993), pp. 215-28.

degree or another. It seems to me that horizon-limiting cares and concerns are analogous to Nussbaum's background emotions, for both have an effect upon what we encounter phenomenally, both are not themselves necessarily conscious objects of thought, and both may open or close whole areas to our attention. A contrasting example of a background emotion that truncates our horizon is fear. One may deny that fear is impacting one's cognition and decisions, and yet dread and anxiety may arise when one is confronted with the realization that unknown vistas of reality lie beyond one's horizon, that it may be the case that all one's categories are inadequate, or worse, distorting preconceptions.²⁸³ Simply to ask such critical questions is to raise the possibility of going beyond one's limits, but the prospect is threatening, and the comfort of bias and undisturbed ignorance calls one back from the edge—deselecting from salience those *phantasma* that might raise disturbing questions. A background fear of the unknown or of change indicates that some emotional inertia is at play in fixing our horizons.

But we seek a positive case of background emotion, one that is beneficial to ethical insight induction. Is there, then, a healthy emotion that would predispose us toward an expanding horizon of concern in a way analogous to, say, the open-ended commitment of scientific enquiry? Is there an emotion that allows us to shift across various limited patterns of experience, yet without truncating our horizon of concern?

²⁸³ *CWL* 10, pp. 88-91.

4. Love as a ground for procedural objectivity

Lonergan's candidate for such a background control emotion is the open-ended altruism, the self-sacrificing love, commonly called *charity*. His claim is that charitable love keeps our horizon of concern maximized even while the subject is operating in a dramatic, practical, even biological PX.²⁸⁴ Charitable love embodies a concern for the genuine good, both for oneself and for one's fellows; it is the extension to fellow humans of the same intimate concern that is intrinsic to proper self-love.²⁸⁵ For love, according to Lonergan, recognizes both our own neediness and desire for real value and it also recognizes other persons as values in and of themselves in a thoroughgoing Kantian sense.²⁸⁶

Nevertheless, I think Lonergan's discussions of love become cryptic as they move toward religious experience. While such a move may be perfectly valid, I think Lonergan's interest in remaining historically and pragmatically connected to the world would lead him to value an articulation of ethical emotion that emerges from concrete human nature and society. In other words, while we may occasionally be blessed with the insight and examples of saints, the hope is that most of us may still do pretty sound ethics with a less than divinely implanted 'unrestricted love.'²⁸⁷ Lonergan must have recognized this in his deference to the particular insights of

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

²⁸⁵ By contrast, then, this sheds light upon how bias impacts the horizon limits of various PXs. For bias will be seen as a truncation of love, compassion, and concern, love here defined as unlimited good will and concern toward others, or the valuing of others with that same intensity that one values oneself. Bias is always a preservation of self-interest precisely at the expense of the best interest of another (person or group). Neurotic bias is an unhealthy division of self against self; group bias declares without valid proof that "our ways and interest are more important or better than anyone else's;" and general bias is the prejudice that practical concerns in general are more important than truth concerns, a self contradiction and self limitation. On proper self-love in Aristotle, see *NE* bk, IX, ch. 4, 8.

²⁸⁶ Lonergan's notion of humans as real values in themselves seems to be essentially the Kantian notion of humans as ends in themselves. See persons as values in themselves, *MIT*, pp. 31; 50-51.

²⁸⁷ *MIT*, pp. 105-6.

practical wisdom in *Method in Theology*.²⁸⁸ There, he chooses as the standard of sound ethical judgment Aristotle's *phronimos* and not the saint, for the *phronimos* is oriented to *this* world, even though he may be hoping and believing (or not) in the next one. I do not think Lonergan's phenomenology of religious experience is wrong here, though I think we can find, not a substitute for love, but a more pragmatic expression of it.

In that regard, once again we find a rich and useful discussion in Nussbaum's treatment of compassion and love as central to psychological, ethical, and political health. Most of the 750 pages of *Upheavals of Thought* pursue a study of conceptions and narratives of love as developed in the literature of Plato, Aristophanes, Augustine, Dante, Bronte, Proust, Mahler, Whitman, Joyce, and others. Her study aims at discovering the role that a rightly conceived notion of love could play in practical ethics and polity. This dissertation cannot restate Nussbaum's huge exposition; it will have to suffice to extract the essential parts of her conception of love and compassion.

(i) Love as compassion

Since according to Nussbaum, no emotion is good *per se* apart from what it affirms or denies,²⁸⁹ there must be normative criteria that determine whether love has erred or not.²⁹⁰ She develops her positive criteria in contrast to such negative characterizations of love's traits as envy, unbridled passion, unseemly neediness, or the otherworldliness of Platonic and Augustinian

²⁸⁸ "But a rounded moral judgment is ever the work of a fully developed self-transcending subject or, as Aristotle would put it, of a virtuous man." [Lonergan's note is to *NE* 1105b5-8; 1106b36ff.] *MIT*, p. 41.

²⁸⁹ Nussbaum (2001), pp. 453-54.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 474ff.

loves. The following principles emerge as the elements of a love that is 'getting it right:' (i) the recognition of the unique individuality of persons, (ii) reciprocity in human relations, (iii) and the mediating of mercy and justice through compassion.²⁹¹ Thus, regarding individuality: "Any view of love that is going to be ethically good in itself, or conduce to further social goods, should recognize and make central the fact that human beings are individuals....[with] qualitative distinctness....that each has just one life to live, that a person's own life is a very salient fact."²⁹² Reciprocity: that love "make room for and support reciprocal relationships of concern in which people treat one another not just as things, but as agents and as ends."²⁹³ Love "should make room for and support general social compassion. The compassion supported by love should be built upon reasonable accounts of the three [above] judgments...concerning seriousness of various human predicaments, our responsibility for these predicaments, and of the proper extent of concern."²⁹⁴

Nussbaum thinks that these criteria and this conception of love do no violence to Aristotle's notions of *philia* (love, friendship) and *eleos* (pity, or compassion as Nussbaum translates it.)²⁹⁵

Lonergan would concur with these inter-subjective distinctions, for a person goes beyond the limitations of emotive self-absorption "...when he is in love, when the isolation of the individual

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 479ff. The last of these—compassion—is also defined by the cognitive content that must be rightly balanced in its judgments: seriousness of circumstance, appropriate judgments of blame and responsibility, and appropriate extent and limitation of its concern. See pp. 414ff.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 480-81.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 479.

²⁹⁵ Nussbaum (2001), p. 474, says, "Aristotle in a general way accepts an account of emotion that is not unlike my own. He does, however, hold that love—or at least *philia*—is not merely an emotion. Although it involves emotion, it also has requirements that go beyond the emotional...[I]n a reciprocal relationship of Aristotle's sort, the emotions involved a conception of the object as a person who wants and actively seeks my good, and for whom I both want and actively seek the good." See also p. 498. On Aristotle and compassion, see pp. 306 and 393.

is broken and he spontaneously functions not just for himself but for others as well.”²⁹⁶

Moreover, for Lonergan it is love that can correct for biases and keep the salience of the various PXs from working against our personal and social interests. For, “it is by charity that we can move into the practical pattern of experience *without contracting our horizon*.” [Italics mine.]²⁹⁷

As a *background* emotion, what influence would love-as-compassion have upon *phantasm* and the moral perception of salience?

First, love need not be consciously felt for it to have an impact. For, compassionate love as the background concern would continually be affecting the topography of *phantasm*, it would be illuminating and prioritizing intentional objects and doing so with reference to the intrinsic value of individual persons. This will not necessarily be experienced as a deliberate assessment of worth, but as ‘interpretive seeing’ that will just forbid us to overlook the salience of another human life.

Second, this way of ‘seeing others as’ intrinsic values need not become self-effacing (a temptation common in religious tradition). Concern for one’s own well being need not differ in kind from the concern we direct toward others. Here, then, compassion would just mean ‘feeling toward others a care that one initially feels toward oneself.’ For we learn compassion by discovering that others are like ourselves, and this presupposes an unlearned self love that is the basis of healthy pursuit of genuine goods as well as analogous regard for others.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ MIT, p. 289.

²⁹⁷ CWL 10, p. 91. On the other hand, that bias blocks charity, see MIT, p. 284.

²⁹⁸ See ch. 4, ‘Emotions and Infancy,’ in Nussbaum (2001).

Thus, the logic of compassionate love is that it aims at *eudaimonia*. For compassion is just another mode of the desire for happiness; it is the aversion to *unhappiness*, both in oneself and in the other person. And it binds one's own flourishing to the flourishing of others in a more directly personal way than, say, the political interest in justice and the mutual instrumentality of peaceful economic order. Precisely by allowing the emotion of compassionate love to become our main social orientation we are making the judgment that we ought to err on the side of vulnerability if others are not flourishing along with us.

In light of this, how then are we to understand Lonergan's claim that love is the orientation that will permit us to shift into the practical, dramatic PX without contracting our horizon of concern?²⁹⁹ Certainly, he cannot mean that people in love are constantly thinking about their beloved during each shifting PX, for lovers still are able to focus upon other things, yet always with a background sense that something wonderful is in the air.³⁰⁰ Consider this example. When we go downhill skiing, we deliberately put ourselves into the biological and aesthetic PX, for we enjoy the sheer thrill and danger of it. Yet, why do we so often prefer such an experience to be shared with friends? Surely the definition of solipsism is the peak experience of slaloming to save one's life, and yet we plan to ski with friends, relishing the presence of each other's whooping and hollering. Since the peak experience is personal, we seem to be aiming at a future in which *we will have done what we did together*.³⁰¹ The actual experience of skiing is as a contracted PX but with a concern that extends out to such whole-life values as friendship and memories. So too, the practical focus of common sense and the dramatic PX may still be

²⁹⁹ *CWL* 10, p. 91.

³⁰⁰ The description of this phenomenological fact is not usually found in philosophical texts, and that is why Nussbaum herself has turned to literature and narrative to capture it.

³⁰¹ Cf. *NE* bk. IX, ch. 12.

deployed with an ulterior sense of concern for others, that is, for a future where we may have pursued our own group concerns—yet together, as a good society. Compassionate love and group loyalty, therefore, are not mutually exclusive.

I realize that this treatment of love has made some sweeping claims. They are more substantially argued for in Nussbaum and Lonergan's works. I have more or less just stated the claim that compassionate love is the background emotion most conducive to affecting *phantasm* in a way that rightly connects the value of the subject and object. But the purpose of this chapter is to see how objectivity could be understood if it were to include emotions of deep personal concern.

(ii) Objections that love might be bias

An objection could be raised here. Is it not the case that love itself is, perhaps, a very strong form of bias? Surely, love strongly predisposes my preferences toward the happiness and advantage of my close circle of family, friends and other loves. Moreover, need we think that family-love type bias is a bad thing? Do we even need objectivity here? The force of the objection seems to come from the strength of emotion we feel in intimate circles and then the sudden drop off toward indifference as we move outward toward mere fellow humans, as it were. Would this not cause serious distortion of *phantasm*? I will limit my response here to the special love within families.³⁰²

³⁰² Clearly, there are countless other dangers to the good and the right posed by the actions done in the name of love. This subject is covered throughout Nussbaum (2001) and is an endless subject in literature and poetry. Like any other passion, if not trained toward the mean between extremes, as Aristotle taught, emotions such as love may become an impediment to the human good. But this is not what is in dispute. The objection I am dealing with claims that family love will necessarily be *unobjective*, that is, it will unduly distort salience in favour of one's loved ones, and this is of the very essence of familial love and loyalty. Thus, family love may be a bias that we want to keep.

My response will require that we distinguish between the kind of felt emotion that one has toward family; and, the notion of an unfelt background love—Nussbaum's love as compassion, or Lonergan's love as maximal horizon of concern. In the end, family love may be a proper special interest nested within a background love-as-concern/care in general.

First, regarding family love. It need not follow that a focus of intense emotion must be considered a bad form of bias. Certainly, on the basis of all that has gone before, we understand that strong emotion or vested interest will affect the network of phenomenal salience. But I argued that the goal of virtue (and of the objectivity I am espousing here) was not the elimination of pockets of special salience but the acquisition of the right *kind* and *degree* of salience, relative to the agent, that would foster *eudaimonia*. Thus, a special interest is not by that fact alone an improper interest. As with all critiques of a virtue ethics model, we must consider the larger context.

Family love is certainly a form of preference, and as Nussbaum points out, its felt intensity increases with proximity of the loved person to my own *eudaimonia*. The emotion is considered good when directed toward the right person, at the right time, to the right degree, expressed in the right manner, and so forth. Given our view of human nature at this point, we would be wrong in virtue ethics to *fail* to love our children or our spouses as is fitting given their place in our lives. We would be wrong to love our hamster more than our mother, as stated above, and equally wrong to love them with the same kind of love. The rightness of the love is something apart from whether it is a preference of one person(s) over other people or groups.

Thus, bias elimination cannot mean a call for the unrealistic extension of familial love to the whole world. Being objective in virtue ethics cannot mean the elimination of preferences; it is unhindered openness to the attaining of the right preferences.

Furthermore, given the view that my *eudaimonia* relies, in part, upon living in a healthy society, and, that healthy families require special attention and devotion, then *your* proper familial love of *your* family, and *my* love of *mine*, will be necessary for a good neighbourhood, village, polis, or culture. For we all need co-workers, and friends, and playmates for our children that are not neurotic, neglected, and desperately over-dependent, and these are just three of the myriad problems arising from loveless or dysfunctional families. Our own flourishing, and that of the ones we care most deeply about, requires the general emotional health of fellow citizens. This is perhaps the ground of the state's interest in a minimal level of family decency, the violation of which invites legal intervention. Thus, my alternate concern for the general good of the many can be fulfilled, in part, by my attending to the preferences proper to familial love. The social and the personal are not mutually exclusive here. Rather, the well-functioning of personal relations may well be the basis of well-functioning societies in general.

This brings me to my second point of defense. The reason, ultimately, that background love and familial love need not clash is that they differ in kind.

Unlike the tendency of familial love, background love-as-compassion is never an overt feeling.³⁰³ That is what defines it as a background phenomenon. What we *do* experience consciously in the grips of a background emotion is a pattern of experience that illuminates, in this case for example, the salience of the flourishing of others. Simply walking down the street within a background concern of compassion puts me in a certain positive stance regarding an oncoming fellow citizen, an extremely subtle general acceptance and perhaps benevolence that is only clearly identified by the contrasting experience of its absence. For if my background emotion is 'self preservation at all cost,' viewing others defensively or purely as instruments may be the major pattern of salience, perhaps becoming so generic as to be almost impossible to detect, though it would effect all I do, and see.

Background emotion does not have a proximity to my personal *eudaimonia* the way significant people might. It is a fundamental set of concerns, usually operative unconsciously, and detected inversely, by reflection upon the things it makes salient. Family love is overtly felt, susceptible to grand variations of intensity and duration, and discernable directly, apart from the need for reflection. Therefore, because family and background loves differ categorically, we need be no less compassionate in our background-love approach to the world for being especially emotively involved in our own deeper, personal relationships.

Hence, family love need not be a negative form of bias and we do not need to choose between personal love and some general love of humanity.

³⁰³ Nussbaum argues that it was an emotion nevertheless, for though we do not feel it, the emotion explains our actions and reactions in various contexts. Her example is fear of exam writing. But another might be, say, overall levity that is not explicitly felt at the staff party, but shapes the things we allow ourselves to say and do that otherwise might be unacceptable.

Another objection can arise. To avoid bias, why rely upon any emotion at all when Lonergan claimed that a self-correcting process was already at play in sound cognitive process: the pure desire to know? As self-correcting, is not the PDK sufficient to lead toward bias elimination and therefore promote objectivity in virtue ethics?

This objection can be answered with three points. First, the PDK would perhaps be sufficient were virtue attainable through knowledge alone. But the final end for humans is an *activity* of the soul that involves right desire and emotion as well as knowledge. Knowing and acting differ in kind, not degree. There is, therefore, no continuum from knowing to doing, otherwise the problem of *akrasia* would not be so thorny. Vital as the PDK is for sound cognitive operation, at some point cognition must give way to, or be transcended by, action and the outward thrust of interpersonal relationships. Second, the PDK is the primordial push behind all *cognitive* development, but it cannot be the primordial push behind all human action in general, for this, by definition, aims at the *summum bonum* of *eudaimonia*. The human good will include knowing, but is more than knowing itself. The fullness of human living is perhaps driven by a ‘pure desire for the genuine good;’ the pure desire to know, then, would be only a constituent of this. Finally, the operation of the PDK would result in my eventually coming to know that knowledge alone is not enough. I would learn that some background emotion that rightly construes *phantasm* is also a necessary part of attaining the human good. I contend in this thesis that love-as-compassion is the best candidate for that job, but even if it were not, some other general background concern would play the part, and the PDK would not stand alone.

(iii) Performative objectivity revisited

Nussbaum has argued that no emotion makes us automatically see all the right and good choices so that we could say that that emotion is *per se* good. But just as some emotions are almost always the embodiment of wrong judgments (envy, contempt, bodily disgust, primitive shame), so some emotions are most conducive to judging things aright. I am claiming that, since emotions are only *prima facie* judgments, it is too strong a thing to say that the right emotion alone ‘gets it right’ (for then it would be a *per se* good), but that this one emotion—compassionate love—construes *phantasm* into the pattern of salience most conducive to sound moral insight. Surely, having compassion, toward self and other, will allow one just to ‘see’ hamsters as less salient than human mothers.

Being objective, then, means being in a state most conducive to maximizing the probability of sound moral insight occurrences. This involves, according to my thesis here, two aspects, both of which are activities of the soul. First, self-consciously and responsibly taking hold of the multi-leveled cognitive method so as to be involved in self correcting, self-critical openness to judgment of the real and the true. Second, to be in the grip of a background emotion of love-as-compassion, desiring the good for oneself as well as for others. For the background emotion of love-as-compassion will not make the choices of *phronesis* for us, but will affect the *phantasm* that *phronesis* must face, and affect it so that other people together with whom we must work out our *eudaimonia*, will be seen as the intrinsic values that they are.

In the light of the foregoing, what would a Nussbaumian, Lonerganian *phronimos* be doing when getting it right in moral insight induction?

To begin with, we have identified at least three potential roadblocks to performative objectivity. If we remove them, or if we progress along a vector that is continually overcoming them, both personally and socio-politically, we can say that we are 'being objective.'

First, one must be continually yielding to exigencies of the pure desire to know. This is not simply the call to avoid bias and violent emotion; that would be simplistic and too obvious. Being objective in the sense promoted by Lonergan requires an insight into how insight works, an insight into the fact that we do not just 'see' what is the case, but must arrive at this indirectly through a valid of judgment. In other words, one must become self-aware of how cognitive operations work within us and then reasonably and responsibly take hold of them and deploy them methodically.

Second, on the basis of the above critical self-awareness of the levels of our cognitive apparatus, we may become aware of the reality and danger of bias and the need to rationally alter appearances to begin to counteract its effects. Such projects of altering *phantasm* may involve everything from personal honesty to widespread reorganization of whole cultural, educational, and social arrangements. But this inevitably leads to an awareness of the emotional basis of the structures of bias, leading to the next issue.

Third, the *phronimos* must also desire and feel aright, and here we are moving beyond a strict Aristotelian model, for we are turning to compassion and love in ways that he did not do at all. Still, according to Nussbaum, this is not an addition to Aristotle that is particularly ill fitting. Rather, by becoming increasingly open to the presentations that would foster empathy leading to compassion, love can be said to aid, and not hinder, our perceptions of value around us. How one is to foster such open ended love is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Indeed, it seems that both Lonergan and Nussbaum think it is beyond the scope of philosophy itself.

In any case, if we are growing in the actuation of these three aspects of cognition and emotion, we will find ourselves in a constantly self-developing dynamic in which the probability of sound moral insights occurrence will be increasingly recognized and continually maximized. This is the definition of what I have called procedural objectivity. This has not solved the mystery of the emergence of sympathy and altruism any more than it has the mystery of induction. We may fail to understand their origin or even their inner workings, but we can advert to the reality and importance of their existence, and then intelligently, responsibly, and compassionately exploit the method that maximizes their occurrence.

Concluding Summary of the Dissertation

My approach in this dissertation

First, in the light of continuing divergence of opinion regarding the nature of *phronesis*, I introduced two questions that guided the comparative analysis of Aristotle's practical wisdom and Lonergan's common sense insight:

- Viewed from the inside, from the side of the subject, what is the nature of the cognitive activity going on within the *phronimos*—the practically wise person—when one is 'getting it right' in moral discernment and deliberation?
- Since, according to Aristotle, practical wisdom requires some reliance upon criteria that may be interpreted as subjective, such as the agent's situational context and emotive interaction, what do we mean were we to say that a given agent is 'being objective' in this process?

To answer these questions, I have integrated the work of Nussbaum and Lonergan, applying it to a broadly Aristotelian virtue ethics. This required that I correct Nussbaum's rather extreme identification of emotion with judgment *proper* and moderate that position by deferring to Lonergan's claim that emotion is an apprehender of value, and an enabler of value judgment, but is not identical with judgment. But once corrected in this area, Nussbaum provides far more useful distinctions in emotive operation than are found in Lonergan's work. Augmenting Lonergan's common sense insight and horizon of concern with Nussbaum's emotive pre-

construal of salience, I was able to treat the subject of bias correction through the operation of background emotion and an openness to our innate cognitive operations.

To work all this out, I presented in chapter one a short exposition of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* with a view to highlighting four major themes that would recur throughout my investigation: (i) the cognitive and perceptive capacities of desire and emotion; (ii) the fact that they alter the phenomenal appearance of the world and that we must gain all our insights into a world that is so affected; (iii) the nature of a special kind of non-inferential thinking active in the grasp of concrete, narrative-like situations; (iv) the practical particularism that arises from Aristotle's ethics. This set the stage for treating the worries that still seem to be intrinsic to such ethics: reliance upon subjective factors and the danger of bias.

In chapter two I turned to Lonergan's theory of cognitive method. This was to try to establish a general theory of a human discovery and understanding that is open to description from the side of conscious subjects as they engage the world. The thrust of chapter two was to show that since this is the most general method of cognition, it will be intrinsically operative in all specializations of cognition, including Aristotle's various modes, such as, for example, *nous*, *empeiria*, and *phronesis*. Whatever metaphysical ground there might be for truth and objectivity, the activity of 'being objective' would be grounded on the subjective side by the well-functioning of the cognitive method.

Chapter three turned to Lonergan's theory of practical intelligence known as 'common sense' insight, and the reason was to show by comparison that *phronesis* is a species of this form of

knowing. I used the chapter to explore (i) a phenomenology of salience illumination; (ii) the role of emotion as a value-apprehender; (iii) some various notions of bias conceived as a mode of interference with the general empirical method of insight induction. 'Patterns of experience' was Lonergan's way of dealing with subject-initiated shifts in salience networks. But this phenomenology simply provided several categorical modes of concern without exploring the ways that diverse patterns may affect the same emotion or how a single emotion, say love, might operate across several patterns.

Chapter four is where I turned to Nussbaum to fill out Lonergan's treatment in the regard, and especially the call by both philosophers for some special role for human compassion-type love. Nussbaum's treatment supplied the important concept of 'background love' as a ground of salience illumination that need not clash with personal pursuits of *eudaimonia*, but might act as a bias-restraint or, perhaps, bias-eliminator. This allowed me to assert a notion of objectivity in virtue ethics that was friendly to the efforts of the *phronimos* as he or she goes about, from his or her own viewpoints and preferences, making decisions and performing actions conducive of personal flourishing.

The significance of the dissertation

My project has been an examination of the subjective pole of the psychology of moral insight; that is, a look at practical wisdom from the driver's seat of the *phronimos*.

Since the goal of Aristotle's virtue ethics was not to expound a theory of the good *per se*, but to explain to the well-prepared student the elements that go into living the good life, it has been

worth looking at just what is going on from the point of view of the practitioner of *phronesis*. For the call is ultimately for readers of such an ethics to take what they can from it and apply it to the actual lives they are living. To that end, I presented a subject-based description of the operations and experiences the agent will go through when engaging the various levels of practical insight. This, too, is concerned to make agents familiar with their own actual cognitive psychology in an effort to make recognizable new terrain and reaffirm familiar ones. Thus, I have avoided much meta-ethics and tried to present a description and explanation of practical intelligence in action.

Lonergan's contribution to the project is a philosophical psychology that is ultimately grounded in a phenomenology of the conscious operations of the subject. Each reader of his work must confront the fact that he or she is being invited to verify the reality of the general empirical method. This will happen if readers attend to the data of their own consciousness, understand by insight the operations therein, and affirming that indeed they are operating (or not) in this manner. The act of wondering about the method ends up bringing the method into operation. Therefore, this empirical verification acts as an immanent and self-evident first principle at the foundation of both the reader's continued personal growth and of the argument in the rest of Lonergan's works.

The foundational nature of insight and the general empirical method that exploits it grounds the subjective pole of a theory of 'performative' objectivity. The objective pole is grounded in whatever is real, true, and good. Moreover, the method is normative; we know that we ought to be cycling through the various cognitive stages or risk placing ourselves at the mercy of rashness

and bad luck in our 'coming to know.' It is through awareness of the normative nature of this cognitive method that we see by contrast the characteristic dangers of the various modes of bias that infringe upon sound deployment.

Nussbaum's contribution has been in two main areas: the nature of 'appearances' and corresponding human action,³⁰⁴ and the cognitive capacities of emotion, especially love. Her latest foray into literature, poetry, and music is a worthy pursuit in its own right and will, perhaps, lead to considerable enrichment in the philosophy of love. However, I restricted myself simply to extracting what I could from the psychological aspects of her work in order to fill out the Lonergan account of emotive cognition. Her work is rich enough to deserve far more attention, but my strategy of comparing Lonergan and Aristotle has required that I use her account of love's knowledge in what amounts to a supplementary fashion.

This is because her arguments regarding emotional intelligence leave out too much of the role of an overarching set of cognitive acts. Primarily, I think that her interest in revealing the intuitive nature of emotion has led her to pack too much into them, leaving out a sufficient account of reflective critical insight. Certainly animal emotion and animal motion do not operate with such reflection. But this is a large part of why animals do not share in *eudaimonia*. Specifically human aspect of *eudaimonia* is that it invites us to become conscious and deliberate partakers, to some degree, in the restructuring of our own natures, making of ourselves a work of art, as it were.

³⁰⁴ Especially her *De Anima* studies, See Nussbaum (1978) and (1986).

My own contribution has been to use Nussbaum and Lonergan's frameworks to articulate an activity called 'being objective' (performative objectivity) that counters another activity called 'being biased.' I have not attempted to develop a complete theory of moral objectivity, nor an exhaustive justification of moral truth claims. I have identified several weaknesses in a virtue ethics such as Aristotle's and tried to show how many of the concerns associated with these weaknesses can be addressed. I have tried to stay closer to the subjective pole, describing the patterns, operations, and the emotive vectors within which and through which we must all make our practical decisions.

Aristotle's ethics remains the exemplar of a method of excellence in living life well. He presents a strong case for a holistic interaction between perception, desire, emotion, appearance, insight, judgment, deliberation and decision. These elements line up as the sequential parts of a dynamic cognitive method: *phronesis*. His treatment of *phronesis* as it stands in the texts does indeed leave some difficulties (its ultimate connection with *nous* and *aesthesis*; and whether or not there really is something like the 'practical syllogism'). But he excels in bringing together two very disparate ends of the human ethical situation: the need for an openness to the contingencies of particular circumstances of particular agents, and the need for a robust theory of truth in ethics. Analogous to his correspondence theory of truth, this turns out to be truth in correspondence with right desire. But the rightness of the desire is not the rightness of mere preference, but the rightness of a desire that longs for what is genuinely good for one's flourishing. Thus, Aristotle still presents a respectable and valid ethics, though one that will continue to evolve as our understanding of human nature and our precision of perceptive discrimination increases.

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