Lonergan's Theory of Knowledge and the Social Sciences

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Bernard Lonergan's theory of knowledge is not yet very well-known among social scientists. But it seems to me that it has implications of fundamental importance for the central problems with which they are concerned. In what follows, I shall try to explain why.

What is the nature of the explanation of human behaviour sought by the social scientist, and what relation does it have to the explanations which agents give of their own actions? It is characteristic of the sociological view which one might call 'positivist' that it eliminates as quite irrelevant to the scientific explanation of human behaviour the accounts given by the agents themselves. This is justified by the claim that the agent's point of view is by its very nature individual and subjective; whereas science aspires to a form of explanation which is objective and publicly verifiable. Completely opposed to the positivist view is that which takes the agent's explanation of his own behaviour as uniquely privileged. On this account, social science is pursuing a chimaera if it looks for any explanation of an action other than that which the agent gives or at least is capable of giving himself. This is a central contention, I think, of the ethnomethodologists; it has also been defended by Peter Winch.[1]

A third view is the Marxist one, which differs from that just alluded to in that it insists that what human beings are up to on the one hand, and the justifications which they give of what they are doing, are two very different things; but does not aspire to the kind of 'reductionism' which is practised by the positivist. So far as I understand them, Marxist theorists are liable to explain what the agent is really up to in terms of his class position, and the economic situation on which this depends; and the agent's own explanation, which is likely to be in very different terms, is attributed to ideology so far as it is so. Examples of ideological explanations for action are those in terms of deference to law, moral principle, or religious belief; such explanations have the function of diverting attention from the real reasons for actions.[2]

Evidently the problem of the nature of the objectivity to be aimed

[1]Cf. H. Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (New Jersey, 1967); Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (London, 1965); and *Understanding a Primitive Society* (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1964; reprinted in D. Z. Phillips (ed.), *Religion and Understanding* (Oxford, 1967)).
[2]Cf. D. MacLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx. An Introduction* (London, 1971), 45f; also T. B. Bottomore and M. Rubel (eds.), *Karl Marx. Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (London, 1963); 28, 39, 68, 74, 90.

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at by the social scientist, and of how if at all it can be achieved, is at issue in all these divergent views. You might say that the Winchians and ethnomethodologists have rejected as illusory any search for an objective explanation of actions which is such as to transcend the viewpoint of their agents; and that the positivists and Marxists have each advanced views on the nature of this objectivity and how it can be achieved, which differ fundamentally from one another. I think that the principal relevance of Lonergan's theory of knowledge to sociology is that it meets this problem head-on.

What is knowledge? What is the process of coming to know? Lonergan makes the unfashionable recommendation that, if we want to know the answer to this question, we should examine the conscious processes involved in our own achievement of knowledge.[3] According to Lonergan, there are two contrasted basic accounts of knowing, between which there exist various compromises; with these compromises, invariably unsuccessful, the history of philosophy, as we shall see, is littered. According to the first of these accounts, knowing is to be conceived on the analogy of taking a look. Suppose I have an idea that my neighbour has purchased a colour television set, but I do not know whether he has. In this case, as in very many others, once I have taken a look into his living-room and seen the set, I know; and before I have taken a look, I do not know. Thus the assimilation of knowing to taking a look, or at least the conceiving of it on the analogy of taking a look, is at any rate very natural.

But what about my knowledge of what you are thinking or feeling, or of events in the past? Plainly I cannot look at your thoughts and feelings, or at what happened yesterday, let alone three thousand or three million years ago. But, except perhaps on a very restricted conception of 'knowledge'—about which more will have to be said later—I can all the same come to know such things. For I can at least take a look, in your speech or action or facial expression, at *evidence for* what you think and feel; and at evidence for what happened in the past, in the formation of rocks for example, or in documents or on monuments But since the facts which I can come to know in these cases are plainly something over and above the evidence available to my senses for the

[3]For a conveniently brief account, cf. B. Lonergan, *Collection* (London, 1967), 225-7. It is unfashionable, in that the use of introspection as a method in psychology is apt to be deplored both by behaviourist psychologists and by analytical philosophers. Patrick McGrath argues that Lonergan's whole account of knowledge is an example of language gone 'on holiday' (*Knowledge, understanding and reality: some questions concerning Lonergan's philosophy;* in *Looking at Lonergan's Method*, ed. Patrick Corcoran SM (Dublin, 1975), 34f.). By consistent application of the principles McGrath derives, or purports to derive, from Wittgenstein, one could rule out *a priori* most advances in science and philosophy, and any original use of language in poetry. Whether this constitutes an abuse, or a legitimate application, of the views of the master, is a matter I would prefer to leave to the exegetes. In the same volume, Elizabeth Maclaren charges Lonergan with 'staggering' circularity (*Theological Disagreement and the Functional Specialities*, 80): apparently on the grounds that he uses his method to justify his results, and his results to justify his method. The latter claim is simply false. Lonergan justifies his method not by its results, but by reference to the elements constitutive of the process of coming to know, which each person is supposed to verify as occurring within himself.

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facts, it seems to follow that there is more to knowing than just taking a look at what is there to be looked at.

What is the relation, in cases like those which I have just described, between the facts which we come to know and the evidence available to our senses for them? Consideration of this question will bring us to what is, in Lonergan's view, the correct account of what it is to come to know. Basically, one comes to know as a result of asking two kinds of *question,* first clearly related to and distinguished from one another at the beginning of the second book of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics.* The first kind of question asks for a possible description or explanation of what is present in experience : What may that be? Why may it occur? The second kind of question asks, with respect to the answer or the answers provided by the question for intelligence, Is it so? This is termed by Lonergan a 'question for reflection'. Evidently it is characteristic of questions of this second kind that they presuppose answers to questions of the first kind; also, that they may be answered 'Yes' or 'No'. What is that? Perhaps it's a raven, perhaps a hooded crow. Further observation of its behaviour or its markings give us sufficient reason for judging, 'Yes, it's a hooded crow'. Why is smoke rising profusely from the bonnet of the car? The engine is overheating, perhaps. Is it overheating? There is sufficient reason for thinking that it is, and for eliminating other possibilities as a good deal less likely.[4]

The examples just given are at once trivial and easily understood. But just the same applies to more recondite instances such as we find in the natural sciences. It is commonplace in contemporary philosophy of science, of course, that to formulate a hypothesis is one thing, to verify or falsify it another. The sciences have got to their present highly-developed state by the reiterated putting of the two sorts of question distinguished by Lonergan to the data provided by sensation. Suppose we have before us a pair of rival scientific theories, both providing an account of the same range of data—say, the phlogiston and the oxygen theories of combustion. We have then to determine what the evidence would be which would induce us to deny with good reason, what the evidence would be which would induce us to maintain with good reason, each of these theories. Next we establish what relevant evidence there is by observation or experiment—at this point we do have to 'take a look'—and so have adequate grounds for affirming, at least provisionally, the oxygen theory, and rejecting the phlogiston theory. I say 'at least provisionally', since it is conceivable that evidence might come to light in future which would lead us with good reason to abandon the oxygen theory, as our predecessors did the phlogiston theory.

It is to be noted that the entities postulated in a mature science do *not* correspond directly to what is observed or observable—to what we can take a look at. *Mass,* in Newton's theory and contemporary modifications of it, is logically related to force and acceleration; it is not exactly the same as the *weight* which you feel when you try to pick an object up; though, to be sure, one can be certain on the whole that, the greater

[4]Cf. Lonergan, *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding* (London, 1957), 82-3; 248, etc.

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the weight of a body, in the sense given, the greater its mass. A theory which *accounts for* what is observable, as Newtonian and subsequent theories containing the concept of mass obviously do, is not at all the same thing as a theory all of whose postulated entities are directly observable. Mass, electrical charge, valency, and so on, are notions thought up by scientists in the course of concocting theories; however, while they are not observable, their existence or occurrence are *verifiable by appeal to* what is observable. The impossibility of observing them, of taking a look at them, does *not* entail that they are not constituents of the real world, that they are mere 'logical constructions'[5] imposed by us in the course of trying to explain phenomena, or to anticipate future developments, in some kind of Humean flux of pure sensation; unless it is covertly assumed that we cannot know that at which we cannot take a look.

Take the tip, that knowing is not a matter of looking or of any kind of experience, but of understanding and judging as a result of questions put to experience, and several famous philosophical problems cease to be problems at all. For example, there is no longer any difficulty in principle about knowledge of other minds. Behaviourism directly follows from the truth that we can know them, together with the error that knowing, at least in the properly scientific sense, is really a matter of having experience of what is known. We *can* know other people's thoughts and feelings; all that we can have experience of which bears on these thoughts and feelings is their bodily movements and the observable effects of these; hence their thoughts and feelings are nothing over and above such observables. It will easily be seen that just the same mistaken assumptions as lead to behaviourism in psychology lead to 'operationism' in physics—the view that we do not really know about unobservable but real electrons and protons, but use these terms to talk about operations by physicists which are observable and consequently real.

However, on the correct view of knowledge as conceived by Lonergan, whereby knowledge consists in judgments reasonably made as a result of questions intelligently put to experience, no such conclusions follow. I may think up, by dint of asking 'questions for intelligence', a whole range of hypotheses as to what you may be thinking or feeling; and then determine, by 'questions for reflection', which of the hypotheses best fits the evidence provided for my senses by your speech and behaviour[6]. 'How can we know *anything* outside our own conscious-

[5]Cf., e.g., Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (London, 1918), 155ff.

[6]It is to be noted that, if the above sketch of Lonergan's basic theory of knowledge is anything like correct, Mary Hesse's account, on the basis of which she sees fit to make a number of sarcastic comments, is a gross misrepresentation (*Lonergan and method in the natural sciences,* in Corcoran, *op. cit.*). In many ways, Lonergan's view of scientific method is remarkably similar to that of Karl Popper, with whom he shares (1) a conviction that science aspires to knowledge of what is really true about the world, (2) an emphasis on the importance of the creative role of the theorist for the advance of science, and (3) an insistence on the sharp distinction between the activity of concocting theories on the one hand, and that of finding out whether they are likely to be true or false on the other. However, Lonergan does not share with Popper that particular account of the validation and invalidation of theories which has rendered him so liable to attack by Thomas Kuhn.

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ness?' The answer to this hoary problem is that we come to know ourselves in the same general kind of way as we come to know what is other than ourselves, as a result of putting questions about the relevant aspects of our experience. I have immediate experience, to be sure, of data relevant to the knowledge of my own mind; but I equally have immediate experience of data relevant to knowledge of what is other than my mind[7].

Corresponding to the critical account of knowledge and of the real world which knowledge is of, there is an account of what it is to be objective. Reality, or the concrete universe, including other people with their thoughts, feelings, understanding, failure to understand, judgments, decisions, and so on, is nothing other than what is to be grasped intelligently and affirmed reasonably on the basis of experience. On this account, the question 'How objective are you?' reduces to 'How attentive, intelligent and reasonable are you? Do you advert to the data relevant to each problem? Do you envisage a wide rather than a narrow range of possible explanations? Do you tend to settle for the explanation which best accounts for the relevant data?' It does not reduce to 'How far do you report what is there to be looked at, rather than getting distracted by anything else?' In the human sciences, not only does the inquirer aspire to be as attentive, intelligent, and reasonable as possible; but the actions and products of the objects of his study have to be explained as due to a certain mixture of attention and inattention, of intelligence and failure in intelligence, of reason and lack of reason.

The conception of objectivity in the human sciences which rules out explanation of behaviour in terms of the 'subjective' processes of attention, intelligence, and reason, makes it impossible for the social scientist to account satisfactorily for his own work. This is sometimes conveniently forgotten, sometimes rightly admitted to be a serious difficulty, and sometimes shrugged off as philosophical, insoluble, and therefore somehow unimportant[8]. But if the methods employed by a school of investigators are self-destructive, what better reason could there conceivably be for abandoning them? And all theories of knowledge, other than the one outlined, *are* ultimately self-destructive according to Lonergan. If their principles are clearly and distinctly conceived, and assented to on the grounds that there is good reason for assenting to them, then those who maintain them assent implicitly to the theory that knowledge is a matter of intelligent conception and reasonable affirmation; if not, they are arbitrary, and there is no good reason for holding them.[9]

According to Lonergan, most of the theories of knowing traditionally proposed by philosophers, together with the paradoxes to which they give rise, are due either to an assimilation of knowing to taking a look, or to a compromise between this and the fully critical theory of know-

[7]*Insight*, 377.
[8]R. Bierstedt provides a fine example of this manoeuvre, in his Introduction to Judith Willer's *The Social Determination of Knowledge* (New Jersey, 1971), 2-3.
[9]Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London, 1972), 17.

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ledge. At the first stage of the compromise is the view of Locke, which still seems to be a dominating myth in the minds of some scientists and many members of the lay public. This adverts to the reasons for supposing that the observable properties of things ('secondary qualities') are nothing more than the result of their interaction with our sense-organs; and infers that what really exist are the things stripped of 'secondary qualities' (having instead the 'primary qualities' belonging to matter in motion).[10] At the next stage, it is realised that these 'primary qualities' of things are just as much constructions of human intelligence as 'secondary qualities' are dependent on sensation; and one may conclude, in the manner of Kant or (*mutatis mutandis*) of Bertrand Russell, that the worlds of common sense and of science are both of them subjective constructions by thought out of the given raw material of sensation.[11] The final stage of this development is typified by Hegel, who recognises that Kant's shadowy 'things in themselves', the final relics of the things of naive realism, which give rise in some unexplained way to sensation,[12] have no place in a comprehensively critical account of the universe. For Hegel, the common-sense world is a construction of mind at an elementary stage of development; the world of science is a construction of mind at a more advanced stage; the world that is somehow other than or over above this construction of mind simply does not exist.[13] Hegel's position, though treated by most analytical philosophers with contempt until quite recently,[14] has been recapitulated in their own terms by contemporary sociologists. Is not our whole conception of the 'real world' a social product? And what conception of a world existing over and above our socially determined conception of the world could we possibly have?

On Lonergan's account, Hegel and the social relativists effectively demonstrate the bankruptcy of the naive theory of knowledge, but do not break through to the fully critical theory of knowledge; which gives substance and support after all to the common-sense assumption that there exists a world prior to our thoughts about it, and also to the scientific presupposition that we gain greater and greater knowledge of this extra-mental world. While naive realists and empiricists neglect the role of understanding and judgment in our knowledge of the world—verified theories state how the world probably really is, and don't just provide us with convenient means of anticipating future experiences—idealists neglect the role of judgment. The real world neither *has nothing to do with* the theoretical constructions we bring to it; nor is *nothing other than* what is constructed by our theories (as though phlogiston existed as long as chemists took it seriously); it is what we come to judge to exist and to be the case in as far as we go on

[10]Lonergan himself cites Galileo, not Locke, in this connection. Cf. *Insight*, 130-132.
[11]*Ibid.*, 413-4.
[12]This is sometimes held to be a misrepresentation of Kant's view. But cf. P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (London, 1966), 236-8.
[13]*Insight*, 372-4, 422-3.
[14]For the more respectful recent attitude to Hegel, cf. David Murray, *Hegel: Force and Understanding*, in *Reason and Reality, ed.* G. N. A. Vesey (London, 1972).

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propounding theories and testing them in relation to as wide a range of experience as possible. Thus the world as it really is is the term asymptotically approached by intelligent and reasonable inquiry into the data of experience. Our 'social constructions of reality', the worlds conceived by different communities, are each the result of more or less attention to data, more or less intelligence in thinking up possible accounts for them, more or less reasonableness in affirming as probably or certainly true the account for which the data provide sufficient reason. A study of the factors which tend to promote or to militate against the development of attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness within communities, would constitute the sociology of knowledge or (perhaps better) of belief such as is widely and confidently maintained.

The social scientist uses his own experience, intelligence and reason in order to come to know the mixture of experience and lack of experience, of understanding and misunderstanding, of judgement and failure to judge, of decision and refusal to decide, which accounts for the behaviour of men both in his own society and in other societies, in his own historical period and in historical periods other than his own. According to the fully critical theory of knowledge advanced by Lonergan, a fully objective account of human behaviour is one which examines all the relevant sensible evidence, in actions, in gestures, in speech, in documents, on monuments, and so on; which tries to envisage all the possible combinations of experience, understanding, judgements, decisions by which it might be accounted for; and judges that one is probably correct which best accounts for the available evidence..

Every society, and every group within society, has its fund of commonly accepted judgments of fact and value which constitute its common sense. At a comparatively primitive stage, observation and practice will provide criteria for the testing of judgments in a large range of cases; but there is lacking any capacity for comprehensive criticism. Thus general and overall accounts of man and the world which prevail in any community, since they are not subject to such testing, are apt to be determined by its members' emotional and imaginative needs. This is the stage of 'mythic consciousness', as Lonergan calls it, which does and must prevail before people have the leisure, the inclination, or the mental equipment necessary to embark on any comprehensive inquiry into the nature of man and his world.[15] This last begins to become possible through the tendency to ask questions about everything for which Socrates was notorious; which in turn springs from the wonder, the disposition to ask 'Why?', which Aristotle said was the basis of all science and philosophy. One begins to speculate, for example, somewhat as follows. These things are what our fathers have told us about the nature and doings of God or the gods. Is what they say really the most satisfactory way of accounting for the evidence that we have? Or does the evidence fit better with the view that some interested parties

[15] *Insight*, 533, 536-42.

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have either been deceived in good faith on these matters, or have propagated lies? So the process of asking questions, and propounding and testing theories, begins, which has culminated in the mighty achievements of the natural sciences, and which some have hoped, so far forlornly, would lead to general agreement on the central problems of philosophy. The way to move towards such agreement, according to Lonergan, is to advert to the conscious human operations of experience, understanding, and judgment, which give rise to commonsense and practical knowledge in all communities, and whose thoroughgoing and cumulative employment has issued in the natural sciences.

In accounting for societies and their institutions, there is to be taken into account not only understanding and the rest, but a more or less deliberate *flight* from understanding.[16] Our wishes may make us unwilling to envisage the possibility that certain things may be so; and we are apt to restrict or abuse attention, intelligence and reason accordingly. This phenomenon is as characteristic of groups as it is of individuals. The effect of it in the individual's life has been described in detail by Freud and his followers, both orthodox and heterdox; while Marxists have been particularly concerned with its effects at the political and social level. Lonergan in effect shows a revised Freudianism and a revised Marxism as particular applications of a comprehensively critical theory of individual development and aberration, and of social and political progress and decline. The restriction of attentiveness to experience, intelligence, and reasonableness, as a result of cowardice or sloth or whatever, can lead not only to individual neurosis. If we are a powerful group within society, we are liable to have any number of motives for restricting intelligence and reason in such a way that our group interest may appear identical with the general good of mankind, or of our society ('The interest of General Motors is the interest of the USA'); and for discrediting or persecuting those who draw attention to evidence that there may be some discrepancy. Lonergan regards his own view as playing synthesis to liberal humanism as thesis and Marxism as antithesis;[17] since liberals are apt to err by underestimating the effects of the flight from understanding, Marxists by misinterpreting its causes and offering cures for it which may even worsen the disease. Marxists argue, to put it in Lonergan's terms, that giving free play to 'group bias', and so exasperating the conflict within society, will lead ultimately to a state of affairs where there is no group-bias and so no conflict. Lonergan rejects this view as more or less superstitious; the division into 'classes' and the injustices which result from this, though they make group-bias worse than it would otherwise be, are not the only causes of it. One must envisage and work for the general good in opposition to small group-biases, even those of the most worthy groups within society.

This, of course, presupposes a highly 'objective' account of moral reasoning—which, indeed, Lonergan maintains can be inferred from

[16] *Ibid.*, xi-xii, xiv, 191, 199-203.
[17] *Ibid.*, 241.

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his general theory of knowledge. On that primitive account of reality and objectivity which assimilates knowing to taking a look, morality cannot be objective. The good as such cannot be heard, looked at, or felt; so, on the assumption that what is real must be a potential object of experience, good and bad and the difference between them cannot be real. Thus the way is open to subjectivism, emotivism, prescriptivism, and the justifiability in principle of any conceivable form of self-consistent moral enormity. But one can perfectly well clearly and distinctly conceive, and judge on the basis of sufficient evidence, that one overall social or political order will fulfil the needs of those subject to it more effectively than another; and such an order is by that very fact really and objectively better than the other, in accordance with the fully critical account of reality and objectivity.[18]

In his writings subsequent to *Insight,* Lonergan has written of 'intellectual conversion' and 'moral conversion'.[19] Intellectual conversion consists in opting for the fully critical theory of knowledge, and applying it to all our opinions, whether commonsense, scientific, philosophical, or religious or anti-religious. This does not entail the absurd thesis that we should hold no belief whatever on the authority of others; but one of the most important functions of intelligence and reason is to adjudicate between competing claimants to authority. Moral conversion consists in envisaging and striving for the objective good, and setting oneself against all tendencies to individual and group bias both in oneself and in one's environment. Since it is characteristic of group bias to divert attention from inconvenient matters of fact (the realities of factory life as described in *Capital* do not suit the image that the capitalist likes to put around, or even express clearly to himself, of his role in society); and since an adequate epistemological analysis shows good and evil to be matters on which one can acquire objective knowledge, and which transcend mere individual option, it can be seen that intellectual and moral conversion are apt to promote one another.

In Lonergan's terms, one has 'essential freedom' to the degree that one is attentive to experience, intelligent in understanding, reasonable in judgment, and responsible in decision; and one has 'effective freedom' so far as one is able to act accordingly.[20] One might say that the principal aim of all good political action is to maximise effective freedom. This, at least in principle, provides a basis for a comprehensive criticism of ideologies both of the right and of the left. The conservative may have something to contribute so far as some political orders are, by the criterion of effective freedom, relatively worth preserving; the revolutionary so far as there is a very large question, in relation to any society or any institution within it, whether *this* particular order is worth preserving. Among outstanding sociologists, Talcott Parsons and Durkheim have been branded as apologists for conservatism. Granted, with Durkheim, that the constraints of a social order are necessary for the basic satisfaction of individuals, one may still see social orders as good

[18] *Ibid.,* chapter xviii.
[19] *Method in Theology,* 238-40.
[20] *Insight,* 619-624.

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or bad to the extent that they frustrate or foster effective freedom in the individuals who constitute them. And even given the badness of *anomie,* except as a spur to a new and better social order, not all remedies for it are equally good. The more group bias in fact underlies the institutions of a society, the less appropriate will be sociological models of integration, the more appropriate those which rather stress inter-group conflict; the less appropriate will be a Parsons-type description of the society in question, the more appropriate the type suggested in opposition to Parsons by Wright Mills and others. On Lonergan's view, one of the basic points at issue, whether change in the institutions of any society ought to be radical or piecemeal, will depend on the amount of group-bias immanent in the structures, and on how far they are instances of what Lonergan calls 'the social surd'[21] rather than being orientated towards the general good. Lonergan's theory of knowledge, and the ethical and social theory based upon it, provides a clear criterion for decision on such matters, at least in principle; because his conception of the effective freedom to be promoted is unambiguous.

Lonergan confirms the instinctive assumption of most scientists, to the effect that, in the theories of physics and chemistry, we transcend the viewpoint of particular places and times, which envisage things as related to us as men of those places and times, and come to know things as they are in themselves, as intelligibly related to one another.[22] The point is not, of course, that these sciences as at present constituted represent the absolute truth; only that they are true so far as a comprehensive attentiveness, intelligence and reasonableness on the part of scientists goes on confirming them as more and more observations are made and experiments performed. Is such a viewpoint possible in the social sciences? According to Lonergan, it is, by articulation of what he has called 'the universal viewpoint'[23]. This involves the clear and distinct realisation, and the implementation in the study of societies, groups and individuals, of the following fact. Every properly human action is to be interpreted as the result of some combination of experience or failure to experience; of understanding or failure to understand on the basis of such experience; of judgment on sufficient or insufficient grounds provided by that experience and understanding; and decision or failure to decide on the basis of that experience, understanding and judgment[24].

The objection that would readily spring to the mind of many contemporary philosophers and psychologists, that experience, understanding and judgment are mere 'occult entities', or at least have no part in an objective science, is to be met by pointing out that it is based on

[21]*Ibid.,* 229-32, 628-9, 689-90.
[22]*Ibid.,* 37-8, 41, 291-6.
[23]*Ibid.,* 564-8.
[24]Nicholas Lash, in his serious and perceptive paper on *Method and Cultural Discontinuity* (*Corcoran, op. cit.,* 127-143), suggests that Lonergan underestimates the discontinuity between different cultural epochs and contexts (129). But I think that he himself overlooks the factors which appear to be constitutive of human thought and action as such—surely human action, whatever its social context, must be due to *some* kind of understanding of *some* range of experience; and that he has not sufficiently adverted to the paradoxical and indeed self-destructive consequences of the relativism with which he flirts.

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nothing better than an assimilation of knowing to looking, and the mistaken conception of objectivity which results from this. The form of explanation posited is just the opposite of occult; everyone by the very fact of being human, and *a fortiori* by the very fact of entering into intelligent, reasonable, and responsible discussion with other human subjects, is intimately acquainted with the entities which it postulates.

It will be observed that a Lonerganian social science, in explaining an alien society, its institutions, and the actions of its individual members, would neither leave the viewpoint of these agents entirely out of account, nor capitulate entirely to that viewpoint. It would agree with the positivists that an objective and theoretically rigorous social science is possible, while objecting to their conception of how this objectivity and rigour should be conceived and implemented. It would recognise that every agent has *some* understanding of what he is really up to; but, in common with the Marxists, it would point out that this is liable to be restricted and distorted by ignorance or by ideology. However, it would argue that no class is free from a tendency to group-bias, though some classes have more motives for suppressing more of the truth than others. And one does not simply have to choose between one group-bias and another, given that an objectivity based on the universal viewpoint is possible.

I conclude with a summary of Lonergan's account of knowledge, and the application of it to the human sciences:

(1) Objectivity is 'the fruit of authentic subjectivity';[25] it is not a matter of putting away one's imaginative and theoretical capacities and taking a look at reality.

(2) Authentic subjectivity consists in attentiveness to experience and feeling, intelligence in theorising, reasonableness in judgment, and responsibility in decision.

(3) Every man is conscious of these four operations, and of their more or less authentic exercise, within himself; they are not dependent simply on culture, but rather culture is dependent on them, and progresses or declines in proportion to their exercise.

(4) By the rigorous and persistent exercise of the first three, we come to know the world as it really is, and not merely a 'world for us'; by the rigorous and persistent exercise of all four, we come in addition to know and do what is objectively good.

(5) Naive realism and phenomenalism are the result of confusing knowing with taking a look; idealism and relativism the result of seeing what is wrong with this, while failing to break through to a fully critical account of knowing.

(6) History and the human sciences are a matter of applying experience, intelligence and reason as rigorously as possible to determine the nature and degree of attention, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility immanent in the actions and productions of other men and other societies. This will issue in a social science which is at once objective and normative, and can be applied by the social scientist to his own work.

[25]*Method in Theology*, 265, 292.

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