

# *Postmodernism: A Lonerganian Retrieval and Critique\**

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A Lonerganian critique of postmodernism might seem appropriate now, since Lonergan certainly is an example of a kind of enthusiastic modernist who draws the critical fire of postmodernism. The methodical, systematic character of his work, its grounding in the knowing, choosing self, its orientation to universality and to metaphysics, and its unabashed commitment to modern, western rationality make Lonergan an apt target of postmodern critique. Indeed such critiques have already begun.<sup>1</sup>

A natural question that arises in this context, therefore, is whether Lonergan has any kind of response. It is my conviction that he does and, moreover, that on a Lonerganian basis one can construct a critique of postmodernism that is compelling, that, while incorporating valid aspects of its project, brings it into question.

My stance in this essay, therefore, is sympathetic and critical towards postmodernism. I believe Lonergan is basically correct on the fundamental issues that divide him from postmodernism and in relation to which there is a judgmental and volitional "either/or." But I think that postmodernism raises questions that deserve consideration, comes to insights that Lonergan and other modernists can employ and incorporate, and interprets the pathology of the modern in a way that has to be taken seriously. The Lonergan, then, that emerges from the encounter with postmodernism is different, chastened, broader, deeper, more conscious of the limits of rationality, more fallibilistic,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Ronald McKinney, "Deconstructing Lonergan," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 31 (March 1991): 81-93, and my "Reply to McKinney on Lonergan: A Deconstruction," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 31 (March 1991): 95-104.

more aware of the ways in which human reason and history can go wrong, more committed to a progressive social agenda.

### THE POSTMODERNIST CRITIQUE OF RATIONALITY

Modernism is committed to the project of self-reflective, critical rationality and freedom. From Kant's concept of the Enlightenment as the emergence from self-incurred tutelage to Husserl's return to the things themselves, modernism at its best is characterized by this orientation to reflexive, self-conscious understanding and critique. Postmodernism is a challenging, insightful, profound attempt to undermine that project. In the grip of such a *Ratio* being tends to be covered over and difference and individuality tend to be submerged. Western *Ratio*, in the eyes of postmodernists such as late Heidegger, Derrida, Adorno, and Foucault, is oriented toward an identity that excludes difference and an active, conceptualizing stance that inhibits receptivity to being.<sup>2</sup>

The motivation for such a critique of reason is, second, that modern reason itself, as defined and described by the postmoderns, is oriented to totalizing, alienating objectification. The description of rationality as such a closed, objectifying system rests upon three models or descriptions that interact and complement one another. First, rationality is equated with science and technology, either in the sense of explicit identification, generalizing the traits of dominance, prediction, objectification, and control to the whole domain of rationality, or emphasizing and thematizing scientific rationality as the dominant form of rationality and leaving other forms unthematized. Second is the model of the logical system, which Derrida criticizes in

<sup>2</sup> For representative examples of the critique of Western *Ratio*, see Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Colophon, 1977), 3-35; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975-76), 3-93.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of the equating of rationality and science and technology, see Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 3-35; and Adorno and Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 4-14. For Derrida's critique of structuralism see *Of Grammatology*, 27-73. For their critiques of Husserl and Hegel, see Adorno, *Against Epistemology*, trans. Willis Domingo (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1982); *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), 300-60; *Drei Studien zu Hegel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp verlag, 1971); and Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. D. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973); and *Glas*, trans. John Leavey and Richard Rand (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

structuralism. Third is the metaphysical or ontological system or systematic approaches, which Adorno and Derrida criticize in their treatments of Husserl and Hegel.<sup>3</sup>

These three models interact within and between each postmodernist thinker in various ways. For example, if metaphysics for Heidegger has a long history of the forgetfulness of being, science and technology are the final, most recent flowering of such a forgetfulness. If for Adorno an illegitimate identitarian thinking is present in such thinkers as Hegel and Husserl, science and technology linked to and in the service of late capitalism become the most important contemporary versions of such thinking, reducing all persons and things to versions of the same quantified, commodified logic. We could say in general that operating in all of these thinkers is a disillusioned scientism, a cynical logicism, and a metaphysics ill at ease with itself. These different models come together in each thinker to form a concept of rationality as repressively totalizing: "instrumental reason" in Adorno, "logocentrism" in Derrida, "calculative thinking" in Heidegger, "discipline" in Foucault.<sup>4</sup>

Because of such an equation of rationality with totalizing objectification and because such an equation, according to the postmodernists, necessarily covers up or obscures reality, the only alternative is an overcoming of metaphysics, a transcendence of evidential reality, a movement beyond conceptual objectification. Again, these thinkers describe this alternative differently: "negative dialectic" in Adorno, "deconstruction" in the case of Derrida, "Denken" in the thought of Heidegger, "genealogy" in the project of Foucault. This alternative is not irrationalism, but rather a form of reflection claiming to go beyond traditional western concerns with method, evidence, argument, and definition.<sup>5</sup>

We note here a similarity and difference from positivism, scientism, logicism, and technocracy, in general, with those who equate rationality with

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 116- 20. Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 4-14. For representative quotations, consider Heidegger: "Machine technology remains up to now the most visible outgrowth of the essence of modern technology, which is identical with the essence of modern metaphysics," 4; and Adorno and Horkheimer: "Knowledge, which is power, knows no obstacles: neither in the enslavement of men nor in compliance with the world's rules . . . Technology is the essence of this knowledge. It does not work by concepts and images, by the fortunate insight, but refers to the method, the exploitation of others' work, and capital," 4.

<sup>5</sup> Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 3-57; Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 329; Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking*, trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 3-17.

describing or affirming an actual or possible state of affairs. If we recall the positivists' triumphalistic equation of reason with science, technology, and formal logic, and come to a negative rather than a positive evaluation of the equation, then we have an essential element of the postmodern stance. In many respects the postmodernist reflects a disillusionment with positivism and technocracy; "reason" in these senses has not worked and needs to be transcended. For this reason we have the strong emphasis on negativity in most of these thinkers, strongest in Adorno and Derrida, but present in Foucault and Heidegger as well. Negative is to positive, in their eyes, as postmodern is to modern.

On another more concrete, hermeneutical level there is a similar disenchantment. If we recall Comte's triumphalistic account of the progress from religion to metaphysics to science as defining the modern and add a sign of negation, we have essentially the postmodernist hermeneutics of modernity. Modernity is essentially a development and consolidation of scientific and technological control. Development is essentially progress in domination, whether that is defined as increase in the reign of "instrumental reason," "logocentrism," "calculative thinking," or "discipline." Such movement, postmodernists powerfully argue, covers up, dominates and alienates nature, human beings and being. The final form of modernity is an iron cage, from which there is little or no exit.<sup>6</sup>

Finally at the most concrete level, the political implications that flow from such a stance are dire and pessimistic. If reason equals science and if modernity is essentially growth in the dominance of instrumental reason, then, even though in postmodernism an ethical-political will to transcendence of modernity exists, there would seem to be little possibility of transcendence, few counter-tendencies contesting the reign of one-dimensionality. The historical dominance of instrumental reason leads to a one-dimensional society in which all or most traces of transcendence are rubbed out. Again we can contrast the negative reading of this situation in such works as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with the positive reading present in such works as Luhmann's *The Differentiation of Society* or Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Depending on whether one is a technocrat or postmodernist, being a mere

<sup>6</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 3-42; Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 6-26; Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 43-57.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 1-120; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 120-67; B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Vintage, 1971); Niklaus Luhmann, *The Differentiation of Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

object for political, economic, and social technique can be either good or bad.<sup>7</sup>

I need to qualify this characterization in the following way. Any attempt to catch a group of thinkers under a conceptual rubric, here that of postmodernism, runs risks and has inevitable limits. First of all, there are real differences among these thinkers; Foucault, for example, is politically leftist in a way that Heidegger is not. Second, I do not think that all of them are consistently postmodernist. In Adorno, for example, there are strong modernist elements co-existing with postmodernism. Third, I do not mean to suggest or imply that the pessimistic political implications of postmodernist thought necessarily are manifest in the lives of those thinkers. Foucault and Derrida, for example, have been politically active in a way that may not square with their own thought. These, then, are the traits of postmodernism as I am characterizing it here: a questioning of modern, western evidential rationality, a definition of such rationality as a closed, totalizing, objectivizing system, a negative hermeneutics of history, and a generalizing of the thesis of one-dimensionality as it applies to politics and economics. Because this definition of postmodernism moves from abstract to concrete, from rationality to ethics and politics, my critique will similarly move from abstract to concrete in four different interrelated stages: logical (in a self-referential sense), descriptive, hermeneutical, and ethical-political.

#### A LONERGANIAN CRITIQUE: THE ISSUE OF SELF-REFERENTIALITY

Lonergan, along with Habermas, is perhaps the most adept contemporary practitioner of the self-referential argument, that is, the argument that anyone in attempting to deny or reject rationality inevitably ends up contradicting herself or being arbitrary. Either the critique of rationality is made rationally with evidence or it is not. If it is made rationally, then the critique of rationality is self-contradictory. If it is made without evidence, what is arbitrarily asserted can be rationally questioned or denied.<sup>8</sup>

One important place where such an argument occurs in Lonergan is in the chapter in *Insight* on the self-affirmation of the knower. Let us recall that argument briefly as Lonergan sets it up in syllogistic form. If I am an experiencing, understanding, judging subject characterized as a unity-identity whole and characterized by acts of seeing, perceiving, imagining, inquiring,

<sup>8</sup> See Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1987), 119, 136, 185-86, 277-86, 336-37, 294-95.

understanding, formulating, reflecting, and grasping the unconditioned, then I am a knower.

The unconditioned is a combination of a conditioned, a link between the conditions and the conditioned, and the fulfillment of the conditions. The conditioned is the claim, "I am a knower." The link between the conditions and the conditioned is given in the major premise. The fulfillment is given in consciousness.

The conditioned is clear and offers no difficulty. The link between conditioned and conditions offers no difficulty because it is just a statement of meaning, a definition of what it means to be a knower. The problematic aspect is the fulfillment of the conditions in consciousness as stated in the minor premise. Consciousness for Lonergan is not an immanent look at oneself but an awareness accompanying cognitional acts. Whether I am seeing a color, hearing a symphony, understanding a proposition, or judging a truth claim, I am aware not only of the contents of these acts, but of these acts themselves and of myself as a unified subject performing these acts. One indication of this point is that I can recall later what I was thinking about or doing at a certain time when I was not explicitly adverting to my acts at the time I was performing them: "What were you thinking about when you were driving home?" Recall of what I was thinking would be impossible if I were not implicitly aware of my acts and of myself performing the acts at the time I was performing them. Explicit remembering is founded on implicit awareness of myself as a knower.<sup>9</sup>

Consciousness is, then, an awareness immanent in cognitional acts. Since such acts differ in kind, the awareness differs in kind. An empirical awareness is present in seeing or hearing, an intelligent awareness in understanding, in activities of inquiry, insight, and conceptualization asking and answering the questions "what is it?," "why is it?," and "how is it?," and reflective or rational consciousness in acts of reflection and judgment asking and answering the questions "is it so?" or "is it true?"<sup>10</sup>

Not only is consciousness diverse, but it is also unified. Contents culminate in unities; what is perceived is what is inquired about; what is inquired about is what is understood; what is understood is what is formulated; what is formulated is what is reflected upon as possibly true or false; what is reflected upon is grasped as unconditioned, as having the conditions for its truth fulfilled; what is grasped as unconditioned is affirmed. Similarly we note a unity on the side of the subject who moves from experiencing to understanding

<sup>9</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1957), 319-21.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 322-24.

to judging. I see the body fall, I formulate the law of falling bodies, and I judge that as true after I have performed certain verifying experiments. Lonergan argues that were the unity of consciousness not given, it would have to be deduced in a Kantian sense; otherwise the diverse contents could not coalesce into one known. Since such a unity is given, however, we have the basic evidence for affirming the subject as a unity-identity-whole.<sup>11</sup>

Now that we have indicated what we mean and do not mean by consciousness and the fulfillment of conditions in consciousness, we can turn to the question, "Am I knower?" Here each one has to ask the question for himself or herself, and there are two possibilities. Either I affirm that I am knower, or I do not. If I affirm that I am, the answer is coherent, for, if I am a knower, I can know that fact by having recourse to conditions present in consciousness. Do I see or not? Do I understand or not? Do I judge or not? But the answer "no" is either arbitrary or incoherent, inconsistent, self-contradictory. For the judgment that I am not a knower is either arbitrary or it is not. If it is arbitrary, what is arbitrarily asserted can be rationally questioned or denied. If the claim is made with evidence, then I have experienced the evidence, understood the proposition, "I am not a knower," and have made the judgment. I truly know that I do not know is a self-contradiction.<sup>12</sup>

How does this line of argument apply to postmodernism? The Lonerganian move here is to treat postmodernism as a self-referentially inconsistent kind of skepticism that is incoherent because of its total negation of modern, Western reason. Postmodernism falls into a contradiction between the present transcendental condition for knowing and the negative content that denies such knowing. If I criticize rationality, either I do that rationally or not. If I do it rationally, then I experience, understand, define, reflect, and judge. I am in fact affirming *in actu* what I explicitly deny. If I do not make the critique rationally, what is arbitrarily asserted can be rationally questioned or denied.

The dilemma works itself out differently in each postmodernist. If rationality is described in Adornian terms as instrumental rationality, science and technology oriented to class or group domination, then a rational critique of instrumental rationality becomes impossible. Adorno and Horkheimer posit a *mimesis*, a dialogical, reciprocal relationship with nature, as a way out of the iron cage of modernity, but they can argue this point only with a theory of *mimesis*, which they are incapable of providing because such a theory would presuppose the possibility of a non-instrumental conception of rationality. They are caught in the trap of setting instrumental reason on the path of truth and yet contesting the idea of truth itself. In Habermas' words the "critique of

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 324-28.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 328-32.

instrumental reason conceptualized as negative dialectics renounces the theoretical claim while operating with the means of theory."<sup>13</sup>

If with Heidegger we say that the kind of reason to be transcended is calculative, science-technology that eclipses being, the question arises about why we are to do that. Either such transcendence is arbitrarily asserted or it is not. If it is arbitrarily asserted, it can be rationally questioned or denied. If the claim is argued, then from Heidegger's perspective I am using a form of metaphysics, calculative thinking, to transcend calculative thinking.

One further aspect or implication of this argument for the self-affirmation of the knower is the reality and necessity of the self as subject. If Lonergan is correct, the judgment that I am a knower implies the subject: "I am a self" or "I am a subject." Such an implication renders problematic postmodern minimizing or denying of selfhood, the "end of man" as Foucault put it. One cannot, without self-referential inconsistency, deny knowing, the value of rationality, and the reality of the self.<sup>14</sup>

#### DESCRIPTIVE ADEQUACY

From a Lonerganian perspective, the descriptive question that arises about postmodernism is whether it is too one-dimensional. Are there not different forms of the experience of reason, some pathological, some not. Lonergan, I argue, has in *Insight* and *Method in Theology* a phenomenology of the different forms of rational activity that allow him to claim against postmodernism that he is the true or truer friend of difference.

Let us briefly recall some of these different forms. a) First of all, already noted, is the distinction among experience, understanding, and judgment. When we add to these the fourth level of freedom, of choosing, committing myself, loving, then we have a four-level transcendental structure of the self as experiencing, understanding, judging, and choosing. Such transcendental structure functions as a genuine Lonerganian *a priori* which the human subject brings to different forms of activity.<sup>15</sup>

b) Lonergan distinguishes between science as a form of empirical method oriented to external data of sense, quantitative formulation of hypotheses and experimental verification; and philosophy as a form of generalized empirical

<sup>13</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, II: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 387, 389-90.

<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. unidentified (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 386-87.

<sup>15</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 3-25.



method reflecting on data of consciousness, qualitative definition and self-affirmation. Both are expressions of cognitive structure, but each is different in having a different kind of data to reflect upon, different goals, different criteria of certainty.<sup>16</sup>

c) Lonergan affirms different patterns of experience of which each is an expression of cognitional-volitional structure, but each of which is essentially different from the others in aim, criteria, and object reflected upon. Common sense is pragmatically oriented toward short range results whereas the intellectual pattern of experience is oriented to rigorous knowledge for its own sake. The aesthetic pattern of experience is oriented to perceptible patterns of experience in a way that the religious pattern is not. The religious pattern of experience, falling in love with God, has a transcendent object in a way that common sense or science or art do not.<sup>17</sup>

d) Lonergan distinguishes among different aspects or stages on different levels of cognition; for example, the movement from question to insight to definition on the level of understanding or the movement from evidence to reflective grasp of the unconditioned to assertion on the level of judgment.

e) Lonergan distinguishes among different kinds of bias, egoistic, group, dramatic, and general oriented to the short range and empirical and indifferent to the long range and speculative solution, on the one hand, and the immanent, norm-guided dynamism of inquiring intelligence and reasonableness, on the other hand.<sup>18</sup> f) There is a distinction between authentic subjectivity, in which the self's thought and behavior correspond to the transcendental structure of experience, understanding, judgment, and decision and inauthentic subjectivity, in which there is contradiction between one's behavior and the structure. g) Finally, we note the difference between a just society, that institutionalizes the imperatives of inquiring intelligence and reasonableness and one that does not, that engages in domination and exploitation. I will develop this distinction further in the last section, in which I show how instrumental rationality illegitimately dominates practical, lived moral intersubjectivity.<sup>19</sup>

The relevance of these distinctions to the postmodernist problematic is salient. In general, the tendency to identify reason with science, technology, or domination is simplistic, in that it misses the experienced, lived difference in forms of rationality. More specifically, we can say, first, that science-technology is just one form of rationality, legitimate when in its own sphere,

<sup>16</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 243-44, 271-73.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-89, 251, 268, 385.      <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-13, 271-304.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 20, 104, 265, 291.

but not equal to reason as such. Second, one reason that such an equation is invalid is that philosophy as a form of generalized empirical method is distinct from science. Third, because of the interplay between conceptual and pre-conceptual on the levels of understanding and judgment, any rejection of reason as simply logical or conceptual is invalid. Logicism and conceptualism are one-sided accounts of rationality that ignore its pre-conceptual aspects. Fourth, because of Lonergan's broad conception of reason and of rational method, he can incorporate valid postmodern insights. Heidegger's claim, for example, that questioning is the piety of thinking can enrich and be enriched by Lonergan's account, which already gives a high priority to questioning.

Derrida's critique of immediate presence and his emphasis on the structural dimensions of language can enrich Lonergan's critique of immediate realism by adding insights into language not developed by Lonergan. The insistence that one meaning or thing is not simply itself but is mediated by a play of difference is a further basis for rejecting the claim that knowing is merely immediate looking. Lonergan already has a critique of presence that can enrich and be enriched by Derrida's critique of presence. If one conceives rationality and philosophy in a sufficiently broad and deep way, the question oriented to being and the linguistic play of difference are within rationality and philosophy, not outside of them. All that the postmodern prodigal thinks he has to leave home to find is already present in modernist rationality as he is welcomed home, penitent and forgiven by his modernist father.<sup>20</sup>

Fifth, because of the distinctions between authentic and inauthentic subjectivity, just and unjust societies, reason does not equal domination, injustice, exploitation. Rather these can be criticized in the light of rationality as irrational, as at best incomplete, truncated manifestations of a deformed rationality. Finally, Lonergan recognizes a legitimacy in the desire present in postmodernism to transcend rationality, but Lonergan locates this transcendence in a movement to the fourth level of freedom, of commitment, of falling in love with persons or with God. Such transcendence does not reject rationality but rather builds on and presupposes it. Transcendence of rationality is not rejection of it but completion. As he puts it, the fourth level necessarily sublates the first three cognitional levels. The desire to know naturally completes itself in the desire to love. All that glitters, therefore, in postmodern transcendence is not gold. Such legitimate transcendence also allows Lonergan to make a critique of presence: mystery is rooted in the desire to know's

<sup>20</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Technology*, 35; Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 27-73. Cf. 250-54.

anticipation of a totality of correct answers contrasting with the finite set that we do have and the mystical experience proper to falling in love with God.<sup>21</sup>

### HERMENEUTICAL ADEQUACY

Loneragan's challenge to postmodernism on the level of a hermeneutics of history is similar to his challenge on the level of phenomenological description. Has the postmodernist given an account of history, modernity, and the development and/or devolution of modernist rationality that is too undifferentiated or dedifferentiated and thus does violence to these realities? Has the postmodernist, contrary to his stated intentions to respect difference, obliterated or minimized it? Is the postmodern account of modernity, rather than being that of a dialectical interplay between positive and negative, progress and decline, forward moves and regressive moves, one-sidedly bleak and negative? The Lonerganian answer to all of these questions is a resounding "yes."

As is well known, Lonergan's account of human cultural history presents it as moving through three stages of meaning. These stages progressively differentiate the patterns of experience, common sense, science, philosophy, and religious interiority, discussed in the previous section. The first stage is, in the language of *Insight*, mythic and, therefore relatively undifferentiated. Common sense, science, philosophy, and religious interiority intermingle in a confused fashion. The second stage is the discovery of mind by the Greeks, in which theory is rigorously distinguished from common sense. To adequately define something, Socrates tells Meno, is not just to give particular examples of that reality in the manner of common sense, but to understand and formulate the essence of something as universal, the essence of justice or piety or courage. Philosophical enlightenment for Plato is moving out of the undifferentiated-mythic reality of the Cave and into the sunlight of the Forms illumined by the Good.

The third stage of meaning characterizing modernity involves and implies a further distinguishing among science, philosophy as reflection on cognitive and volitional interiority, and religious interiority. Philosophy's proper function is to promote the self-appropriation that cuts to the root of and can resolve philosophical difference, and has the further function of distinguishing among the patterns of experience, grounding methods of science, and promoting their unification.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 348-50, 530-49; *Method in Theology*, 104-107, 120-21.

<sup>22</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 85-99. *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 385-430.

To the extent that differentiation and integration have occurred in history, progress has occurred. But in addition to progress, there is also decline. In addition to genetic method allowing us to account for forward moves in history, there is also dialectical method that allows one to account for decline and to criticize it. Criteria for progress and decline are in the normative exigencies of the subject giving rise to four transcendental precepts: "be attentive," "be intelligent," "be reasonable," and "be responsible" corresponding to the levels of experience, understanding, judgment, and decision respectively.<sup>23</sup>

Next, criteria for interpretation lie in the exigencies of the intelligent, rational, free subject, giving rise to the canons of hermeneutics: relevance, complete explanation, successive approximations, parsimony, and residues. Relevance is oriented to the universal viewpoint of a totality of possible interpretations potentially and/or actually manifest in a series of genetically and dialectically related texts. Complete explanation demands that we achieve as complete and nuanced an interpretation of the text as possible. Successive approximations is an ideal of ever more closely approaching an adequate account of the text. Parsimony negatively excludes the unverified and unverifiable and positively invokes critical reflection verifying or invalidating claims by having recourse to passages in the text. Residues alerts us to the possibility and actuality of contradictions and anomalies in the text. Here Derrida's practice of "deconstruction" can be taken as a version of the canon of residues; in Lonergan, however, the canon of residues is linked to the other four canons in a way that it is not in Derrida.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Lonergan can sharply distinguish between positions and counter-positions as they manifest themselves in the history of culture and philosophy. A philosophical claim will be a position if the real is being and not the immediate "already out there now," if the subject is known through intelligent and reasonable affirmation and not through some prior existential state or inward look, and if objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity expressed in intelligent inquiry and reasonable reflection and not a property of vital anticipation, extroversion, and satisfaction. On the other hand, a claim will be a counter-position if it contradicts one or more of the above positions.<sup>25</sup>

All of the preceding relates to the postmodern critique of modernity in the following ways. a) Lonergan has the advantage over postmodernism in that he can articulate precise criteria for progress and decline, whereas postmodernism's rejection of modernist normativity is so thoroughgoing that it has trouble

<sup>23</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 458-87, 484-85.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 586-94. Derrida, *Grammatology*, xliii-1.

<sup>25</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 386-87.

specifying such criteria. It does often validly indicate and criticize decline, but, because postmodernism lacks criteria, its critique at a certain point becomes arbitrary. b) If Lonergan is correct, differentiation is preferable to lack of differentiation and mediation to immediacy. To wish to move back in a Heideggerian manner to a pre-Socratic stage of unity and immediacy is to be fundamentally mistaken. Such a move confuses legitimate objectification with alienation, and the real with the immediate. Such orientation to a pre-critical immediacy has to be rejected in whole or in part as a counter-position.<sup>26</sup>

c) Lonergan disagrees with the postmodernists over the interpretation of modern philosophy. Is it mostly or all a negative story, a gradual and progressive forgetfulness of being in favor of the calculable, a mostly triumphalistic story, or a dialectical story, a unity of truth and error, position and counter-position, light and darkness? Lonergan's argument with postmodernism is that the third alternative is the best and that his account of method can spell out why his method is preferable, whereas the postmodern critique of modern philosophy is negatively one-sided and cannot spell out criteria for its critique.

By Lonergan's criterion of complete explanation, an account must be as comprehensive and as nuanced as possible. Thus Descartes' turn to the subject is valid, but he sinks into dualism and overemphasizes apodicticity. Kant's discovery of the transcendental was valid, but in his doctrine of things in themselves he unwittingly falls prey to a pre-critical realism, claiming that knowing of the real world should be immediate. Hegel's notion of dialectic contains some acceptable insights but is overly conceptual, too much on the level of understanding and not enough on the level of judgment and of freedom.<sup>27</sup>

d) Like Heidegger in his account of the gradual eclipse of being in modern history and philosophy, Lonergan discusses a longer cycle of decline rooted in the general bias of common sense toward practical, short-range solutions linked to group domination, manifested in ever more restricted viewpoints, and culminating in totalitarianism. Unlike Heidegger, however, Lonergan does not see such decline as testifying to the bankruptcy of metaphysics, but to its necessity. One feature of the longer cycle is its rejecting of detached, disinterested intelligence and subordinating it to solutions that are ever more short-sighted. If the pathology of the longer cycle is the gradual subordination of theory to common sense, then such pathology can be overcome only by a restoration of such detached, disinterested intelligence.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 79-172.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 339-42, 385-430.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 226-38.

To put the point in Heidegger's terms, metaphysics does not need to be overcome but to be restored, chastened and fallibilistic through its encounter with postmodernism. To put the point in Lonergan's terms, Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics is part of the problem, not part of the solution: it is a cultural product of the longer cycle and mistakes rationality with one of its pathological, positivistic forms.

If rationality, however, is critical and dialectical, then the longer cycle which is the product of a contradictory relationship between narrow, commonsensical intersubjectivity and inquiring, disinterested intelligence can be reversed.

The genuine modern discoveries about the subject, critique, and dialogue can be brought to bear on the concrete social order, which itself has progressed, in spite of the longer cycle, toward greater insight into human dignity, individual rights, democracy, and welfare. Modernity and human history show themselves to be genuinely dialectical, an interplay between truth and falsity, light and darkness, progress and decline, not simply or primarily negative as postmodernists are wont to say.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, from a postmodern perspective, one can question whether Lonergan has done full justice to the pathology of the modern; his own politics seems to lead to a liberalism too comfortable with and uncritical of the capitalist status quo currently taking the form of the New World Order. One of the genuine contributions of postmodernism is here, whether one talks about Heidegger's account of *Gestell* or "enframing," Adorno's instrumental reason functioning as a lackey of late capitalist domination, Derrida's critique of logocentrism, and Foucault's critique of capitalism as a disciplinary society oriented to domination, exploitation, and normalization. My own sympathies lie with the proponents of a left-wing Lonerganianism such as Lamb and Doran who argue for full democracy transcending the injustice both of late capitalism and state socialism. Only such a radical political solution does justice both to the exigencies of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion and the depths of modernist pathology. I will develop the implications of such conversion in the next section.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See Bob Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1990), especially 355-470, for an insightful unfolding of the social-political implications of Lonergan's thought.

<sup>30</sup> See my "Praxis and Ultimate Reality: Intellectual, Moral, and Religious Conversion as Radical Political Conversion," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 13, No. 3 (September 1990): 222-40, for a further development of radical political conversion and its links to Lonergan's thought; Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity With Victims, Toward A Theology of Social Transformation* (New York: Crossroads, 1982).

## ETHICAL-POLITICAL COGENCY

When one reads *Insight* and *Method in Theology* together, it becomes apparent that Lonergan is more than just a cognitional theorist and metaphysician. What emerges in *Method in Theology* is the importance of the fourth level of freedom, commitment, and love as sublating the three cognitional levels, ethical value as a product of experience-feeling, understanding, judging, and choosing, the importance of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, and objectivity as a fruit of authentic subjectivity. Objectivity, whether on the level of knowing or of ethical choice, is not a matter of taking a value-free look at something, but is itself a result of subjectivity functioning authentically in conformity with the four transcendental precepts and as a product of the three conversions.<sup>31</sup>

Lonergan up to this point can admit to some of the claims made by Foucault about the necessary link between truth and power: all truth claims are made as a result of my own will to power and are imbedded in discursive power-knowledge regimes such as science and technology serving late capitalism. Foucault thus denies that knowledge is a value-free look at data divorced from relations of power: interest, influence, domination, and submission between groups and individuals. Truth and power, he argues, are intrinsically related. Individuals and groups tend to interpret the world from the perspective of their own will to power: their will to dominate, to control, to direct the wills of other men. Women will thus have a different "take" on the world from men, labor from capital, black from white.<sup>32</sup>

One issue that arises here is that of relativism. If the world is interpreted according to my own particular will to power, then how are objective truth claims possible? How can Foucault's own claims, putatively true and universal, about modern disciplinary societies and the reign of bio-power, his preference for the oppressed, or his claim about truth and power be justified?<sup>33</sup>

Lonergan can respond to this *aporia* in the following ways. a) He makes the distinction between authentic and inauthentic subjectivity. Thus the rejection of a naive notion of objectivity and value, which rejection he shares with Foucault, does not entail relativism: "objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity." b) Lonergan makes the distinction between cognitional structure and patterns of experience. Cognitional structure operates in each pattern of

<sup>31</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 27-55, 165.

<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 78-133.

<sup>33</sup> See Jurgen Habermas' critique of Foucault's "crypto-normativism" in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 279-86.

experience, but it operates according to different interests. The interest of the scientist in prediction and control is not the same as the aesthete's interest in beautiful works of art; the interest of common sense in a rough, pragmatic truth is not the same as the religious interest expressed in "falling in love with God." Yet these interests internal to the domains in question do not compromise their truth, objectivity, or normative rightness; they help constitute it. In a way analogous to Habermas, Lonergan can affirm knowledge-constitutive interests.<sup>34</sup>

c) Such knowledge-constitutive interests are different from externally imposed claims rooted in power or domination. Thus, a scientific claim asserted because it is a more comprehensive account of the data is internal to the domain of scientific knowledge and legitimate; a claim made or rejected because it satisfies or fails to satisfy a certain group funding the project is external and illegitimate.

Lonergan, then, can make the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate forms of power in a way that Foucault cannot. He can also make the distinction between just and unjust forms of social interaction. Foucault here remains curiously decisionistic or self-contradictory. Either the decision to resist modern forms of power is morally justified or it is not. If it is morally justified, then there seems to be tacit appeal to a moral humanism and sense of right that Foucault has already rejected. If such a decision is not justified, what is arbitrarily asserted can be rationally questioned or denied. It is hard not to agree with Habermas when he asks, quoting Nancy Fraser,

Why is struggle preferable to submission? Why ought domination to be resisted? Only with the introduction of normative notions could he begin to tell us what is wrong with the modern power/knowledge regime and why he ought to oppose it.<sup>35</sup>

A possible way out for Foucault is his preference for the marginalized and subjugated forms of knowledge and groups. Indeed there is something analogous to a "preferential option for the poor" or oppressed in his work that is exemplary and deserves attention. But here again the question arises, "Why should one prefer the oppressed?" and "Which groups of marginalized should one prefer?" An account of justice is lacking here that would allow Foucault to justify such preferences. Such an account is present in Lonergan; justice emerges when the dictates of authentic subjectivity and intersubjectivity take precedence over bias, the transcendental precepts are respected, the ethical

<sup>34</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 181-89. Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 301-17.

<sup>35</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 284.



demand for consistency between knowing and doing is fulfilled, and a society emerges that satisfies the legitimate demands of its citizens for human rights, participation, and human welfare; arbitrary exclusion for reasons of racial, sexual or class bias, different kinds of group bias, is to be rejected. A just economy will be one that interacts fruitfully in a non-reductionistic way with culture and the polity and that satisfies the material needs of all citizens, not simply or primarily the few at the top. It will ensure a fruitful dialectic between instrumental practicality and moral intersubjectivity. Foucault, however, has no way of distinguishing between the legitimately marginalized, racists, sexists, and classists whose values no longer obtain in a just society, and the illegitimately marginalized who are victims of racism, sexism and classism. Why could not Donald Trump, Hugh Hefner, and George Wallace use *Discipline and Punish* or *The Order of Things* to make a comeback? In the hell of the marginalized there are many shacks or mansions, not all of which deserve our compassion or sympathy.<sup>36</sup>

All of which is not to deny that on a concrete sociological and historical level there is much that is true and insightful in Foucault. His account of the disciplinary society as the growth of modern power/knowledge regimes that oppress and tame and normalize subjects in such a way that they become "good students," good academics," or "good workers" in thrall to an unjust New World Order needs to be incorporated into Lonergan's account of the long cycle. In this way not only is Lonergan's thought enriched but it becomes one that is more explicitly aligned with the oppressed. A marriage between Foucault and Lonergan on this level leads to a more radical Lonergan. The following seems plausible, although not fully proven in this essay: if one is genuinely and fully intellectually, morally, and religiously converted, then a radical political conversion emerges that is on the side of the oppressed. Elsewhere I have developed this line of thought more fully. If I am committed to justice and to the critique of institutions that cause injustice, then I must side with the oppressed. The proposition is analytic, an analytic principle in Lonergan's terms.<sup>37</sup>

## CONCLUSION

On the basic questions dividing Lonergan and postmodernism, self-referential consistency, descriptive adequacy, hermeneutical comprehen-

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 81-82; Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 207-44; Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 387-417.

<sup>37</sup> See the whole of *Discipline and Punish*, especially 135-94, and my "Praxis and Ultimate Reality."

siveness, and normative cogency, I have given the nod to Lonergan. Postmodernism, however, raises certain questions, comes to certain insights, questions forms of modernist, capitalist, and state socialist pathology, and takes certain political stances that can be incorporated into a Lonerganian perspective. Heideggerian questioning as the piety of thinking, for example, can be incorporated into a philosophy of the subject that is metaphysically oriented. One does not need to go beyond metaphysics to do justice to such questioning, provided that one's conception of knowing is broad enough and nuance enough. Again I have argued that Derrida's practice of deconstruction can enrich a Lonerganian use of the canon of residues, but now such practice is given a broader hermeneutical context and is linked to the other canons of interpretation.

Here I think that it is important to do full justice to the critique of presence offered by Derrida and others. Western metaphysics has certainly been guilty at times of trying to achieve illegitimate closure, excessive certainty and repression of difference. Postmodernist insights can enrich and enhance a critique of presence already going on in Lonergan: his distinction between immediate knowing as looking and knowing as mediated experiencing, understanding, and judgment, the distinction between the finite set of judgments that we have made and the totality of correct judgments anticipated by the desire to know, and the distinction between an inauthentic mythic consciousness and an authentic orientation to mystery rooted in the desire to know, anticipation of a totality of correct answers that it does not have, and the mystical experience of falling in love with God. Here postmodernism helps philosophy realize its own deepest *telos*; illegitimate presence is a betrayal of philosophy. Philosophy can, but does not necessarily have to fall into such presence.

I have also argued that postmodern accounts of the pathology of modernity can enrich Lonergan's account of the longer cycle of modern history while being incorporated into a broader, deeper, more differentiated interpretation of modernity stressing its positive as well as its negative aspects. At the same time it seems to me that the political radicalism of the French, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze-Guattari, Lyotard, and Baudrillard, brings into question a bourgeois, liberal or conservative Lonerganian reading of ethics and politics, in Lonergan himself and in some of his disciples. The question of the French to Lonergan himself is this: to the extent that rationality becomes merely bourgeois mirroring and justifying an oppressive capitalist status quo, does not rationality compromise itself and mutilate itself? Does not rationality in its full cognitive, ethical, and religious range point toward liberation from all injustice: racist, sexist, classist? The question of Lonergan to the postmodernists is this: do

you not cut the links between evidential reflective rationality and critique at your peril? Does not such critique negate itself as critique, becoming arbitrary, inconsistent, violent?

Continuing this mutual questioning, Lonergan could ask whether there is not at the root of a postmodern questioning of modern reason a hankering after an immediacy that a rigorous account of objectivity and knowledge shows that we cannot have. One thinks here of Heidegger's return to Pre-Socratic immediacy and lack of differentiation as well as Adorno's and Horkheimer's positing of *mimesis*, an immediate oneness with a reconciled nature. Similarly does not Derrida's post-structuralism betray one-sided idealistic tendencies present in a post-structural play of difference on the level of understanding and ignoring too much the complementary levels of experience and judgment? To what extent is Foucault's impatience with modern normativity and his problematizing of all mediated truth claims the result of one-sided hankering, coming to full expression in his late work, after an aesthetic immediacy and a one-sided voluntarism not doing justice to the three cognitive levels and turning reason into an instrument of the will to power? To such tendencies, Lonerganians would reply with the following dictum: positions tend to develop, counter-positions tend to reverse themselves.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 388. Michel Foucault, *A Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 76-97, 292-389. Lonergan correlates empiricism, idealism, and critical realism with the three regions of experience, understanding, and judgement respectively. Critical realism embraces all three levels in proper proportion and relation; see *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 414-23. Idealism and empiricism represent a one-sided emphasizing of either understanding or experience, and a tendency to reduce knowing to one of those levels.

When one considers transcendental method as a conscious experiencing, understanding, judging, and choosing of myself as an experiencing, understanding, judging, and choosing subject in relation to being, then a fourth possibility arises, a reduction of the levels of knowing to that of freedom, which is Foucault's tendency. Such a tendency is to be contrasted to an authentic sublation of cognition by the fourth level of freedom while maintaining cognition's distinctiveness and validity, which is Lonergan's option (see *Method in Theology*, 120-22). The differences may seem slight, but they are enormous.

For a critique of Derrida's idealism using Ricoeur's notion of discourse, see my "Ambiguity, Language, and Communicative Praxis," in *Modernity and Its Discontents*, eds. and co-authors, James L. Marsh, John Caputo, and Merold Westphal (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 105-06.