

Kant's Anomalous Insights
A Note on Kant and Lonergan.

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Giovanni Sala's letter together with his book, *Lonergan and Kant*,¹ hopefully will stimulate anew the question of the Kantian influence on Lonergan and, equally, the potential contribution of Lonergan to Kant studies. For it is becoming clear that Lonergan's roots in Kant run deeper than was previously suspected. Sala has drawn our attention to the well known comment about the judge in the B-Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*.² Reason must approach the study of nature in order to be taught by it, not like a pupil listening to his teacher but more like a judge "who compels the witnesses to answer questions which he has himself formulated."(B xiii) The role of the judge will be to evaluate critically the evidence supporting the truth or falsehood of the theory. There seems involved in this something more than Kant's analysis of judgment in terms of applying rules to situations. This poses the question; does the actual performance of a judge or jury sit within Kant's analysis of understanding, judgment, or reason? Or in certain respects is it an anomaly? Is it drawing our attention to a dimension of the performance of mind that is outside of the scope of the analysis in the actual text?³

In the present note I would like to draw attention to a possible second anomaly in the same B-Preface. There, and elsewhere in his works, we find a number of uses of the word, *Einsicht*, insight, by Kant which I believe deserve attention.⁴ There is a certain shyness among philosophers of mind when it comes to

¹"Note, Kant and Lonergan on Insight into the Sensible: A Letter of Giovanni B. Sala on Lonergan and Kant," *Method, Journal of Lonergan Studies*, Vol 13, No 1, Spring 1995, pps 89-97; *Lonergan and Kant, Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1994).

²*Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, (London, Macmillan 1964). All references are to this version which will be abbreviated as *CPR*.

³More specifically, is Kant's analysis of judgment, A68, B 93 ff consistent with what a judge or jury member actually does when they perform their work? See Sala, op cit., note 1, xii, 6-8, 34. On the other hand the article on judgment in Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, (Oxford, Blackwells 1995) 267, asserts that for Kant "the theoretical judgment contains an is and an is not," suggesting the need for a careful study of the focal differences between Lonergan and Kant on judgment.

⁴Despite frequent references to the B-Preface, I have not been able to find any reference to the occurrence of the word, *Einsicht*, in Sala's book. Nor is it listed in the index. This in part is the reason for the present note. The word insight does occur in a quote on page 104 from Cassirer, E, *Kant's Leben und Lehre* (Berlin: 1918) 139. The sentence reads: "However, one can hardly defend the view that 'all the fundamental insights that constitute the KRV are already expressed here.'" Only one reference to the word is to be found in *Register*, to Kant Werke in Zwölf Bänden,

using the word, insight, or even related words such as discovery. Granted that it is interesting to find as eminent a philosopher as Kant actually using the word in what seems a significant place, his second Preface to the work. The uses pose the question, to what extent did Kant acknowledge, or not, the event of insight. When he was writing the final Preface to his work had the event of insight clicked for him. If so, might his recognition of the event of insight result in a further anomaly, in that it too might stand outside the body of the work.

I

The word, *Einsicht*, which Norman Kemp Smith translated as insight, occurs to my knowledge seven times in the B Preface to the *CPR*, B,xiii; B xiv; B,xxx (twice); B, xxxi; B,xliii and B,xliv. The question arises, on the basis of his usage of the word, what is he actually talking about?

Kant's first use of the term, insight, occurs in the context of descriptions of mathematical and scientific discoveries. After describing those discoveries he refers to them as the insights of reason. Early Egyptian mathematics was at a groping stage. This groping stage was transformed due to a revolution in the mind of a man. A new light flashed upon the mind of man when Thales or whoever demonstrated the properties of an isosceles triangle for the first time in human history.(B, xi) What exactly does he mean by "a new light", the light of insight? This should be read in conjunction with the later discussion of the rule or law of the triangle, (B 744-5) which was presumably written before the Preface. A philosopher left with a triangle will not produce anything new. The geometer on the other hand draws a triangle. He extends the base line beyond the boundary knowing that the sum of angles at the point of extension along the line is two right angles. Through the point of extension he draws a line parallel to the opposite side. In the disposed image he comes to understand that the sum of the internal angles is two right angles. In his lectures, *Understanding and Being*⁵ Lonergan actually uses this as an illustration of insight into phantasm! Unlike Kant he does not freeze in front of the image. Rather he recognises that you cannot get to the definition of the triangle without starting with some inexact image or diagram and supposing it is exact. He concludes, again, unlike Kant, that experience and the imagination is the source of mathematical concepts. Images for him cause insights.

In describing scientific discoveries Kant again talks about how a new light broke on the students of nature when Galileo caused the balls to roll down an inclined plane, when Torricelli made the air carry a weight of mercury, and when Stahl changed metals into oxides and oxides back into metals. Galileo's experiment rests on the insight that the measured distance moved might stand in a fixed

Wiesbaden: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1958 (Kant, Complete Works in 12 Volumes). No references to insight are to be found in *A Kant Dictionary* referred to in n 3.

⁵*Understanding and Being*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990) 31.

correlation with the measured time taken to move that distance down the plane. The experiment is concerned with filling out the expectations of that insight. Torricelli's barometer is based on the insight that the measured weight of the atmosphere can be related to the measured weight of a column of mercury. Stahl is trying to understand combustion. He proposes that phlogiston is the property of matter that makes it combustible. It is lost in the process but may be regained through contact with coal, for instance. His insight was revised by Lavoisier and Priestley who showed that when a chemical burns it absorbs oxygen and increases in weight.

Kant's first usage of the term, insight, refers back to these accounts of a new light dawning on the human mind, accounts of new mathematical and scientific discoveries. He states that "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own, as it were, and must not allow itself to be kept in nature's leading-strings...", (B, xiv). Although in need of clarification this suggests that for him the new light of insight determines nature *a priori*, puts an interpretation into nature. Lonergan, with Aquinas and Aristotle, holds that the image causes the insight, that our understanding, rather than reading something into the situation receives its content from what we experience.⁶ So although Kant and Lonergan seem to be talking about the same kind of event when they use the word, insight, in this instance they explain what it does quite differently.

The second use of the word insight occurs in the context of metaphysics, (B, xiv). For Kant it is a speculative science of reason which soars above experience. Unlike mathematics, which applies concepts to intuition, metaphysics for him rests on conceptual analysis alone. It is still at the stage of random groping as mathematics and science were before Thales, Galileo, Toricelli and Stahl. Why has it not become a science? He explicitly asks, is such a discovery possible? It is in this context that he talks about metaphysics seeking to have an *a priori* insight. As with mathematics and science, metaphysics needs a single and sudden revolution, a changed point of view. He then goes on to propose his well known Copernican revolution for metaphysics. By assuming that the stars rotate around us as spectators Copernicus could not explain their movements. By adopting the new viewpoint that the spectator rather than the stars is revolving progress was made. A similar experiment can be tried in metaphysics as regards the intuition of objects. Rather than assuming that intuition must conform to the constitution of objects why not assume that objects must conform to the constitution of intuition. This is Kant's basic metaphysical insight, his discovery. In many ways it is like an insight into a heuristic structure. Although its content is distinctively metaphysical, as an insight or discovery it is quite similar to the discoveries or insights of mathematics and science. In the first two occurrences Kant clearly acknowledges a discovery process that is intellectual and so unlike sensible intuition. The question arises, how does this fit in with his analysis of understanding, judgment and reason?

⁶ibid.

The third and fourth uses of the term (B, xxx), dealing with the problem of God, freedom and immortality, talk about depriving reason of its pretensions to transcendent insight: "For in order to arrive at such insight it must make use of principles which, in fact, extend only to objects of possible experience.." There follows his famous remark about denying reason in order to make way for faith. Here Kant is probing the question, are there mysteries which are beyond the power of our natural insights? Are there limits to our insights? The discussion also draws to our minds the possibility of mistaken or pretentious insights such as those of Stahl. Insights are a dime a dozen. Many are false, partial, incomplete, open to revision, and need to come before the judgement of rationality. Lonergan will revise Kant's metaphysical insight, replacing intuition in it by cognitional structure.

Kant's fifth and sixth uses (B xliii, xlv), clearly designate insight as the quality of the enlightened and critical person. Critical philosophy is addressed to those persons who combine "thoroughness of insight with a talent for lucid expression," which he adds he does not possess. Finally, he talks about "men of impartiality, insight and true popularity" as necessary for the establishment of his philosophy. These are interesting uses in that they invite us to open up the human image of the person of insight, they have an anthropological ring. What must be clear is that however he interprets what an insight is, in all six instances what Kant is writing about when he writes about insight is very close to what Lonergan means by an insight.

Two further occurrences of the term, insight, within the body of the *CPR* itself are worth noting. Towards the end of A 132, B 171 Kant starts an analysis of judgment. Understanding is a faculty of rules. Judgment for him is the faculty which distinguishes whether or not something stands under a given rule. Kant has in mind a physician, judge or ruler who has at hand many rules but who may nonetheless stumble in their application. Although understanding is capable of being instructed in rules, even though examples are the go-cart of judgment, the application of rules to situations can only be practised and cannot be taught. No school can make good the lack of mother-wit it requires. He then goes on at A 133, B 172: "For although an abundance of rules borrowed from the insight of others may indeed be proffered to, and as it were grafted upon, a limited understanding, the power of rightly employing them must belong to the learner himself.." In the next paragraph suggesting that too great a study of illustrations of applying rules to situations might dull one's intellect he adds: "Correctness and precision of intellectual insight, on the other hand, they more usually somewhat impair." The phrase, intellectual insight, makes clear that for Kant insight is nothing like intuition. What Kant is clearly saying here is that between the rules and the situation there is a chasm and that chasm can only be crossed by insights. John McDowell in his "Wittgenstein on Following a Rule," comes to the same conclusion. No explanation of the use of an expression is proof against misunderstanding because of the inexhaustible variety of applications. Understanding the use of an expression involves a cottoning on, a leap or an inspired guess at the pattern of applications which a teacher is trying to get

across. In order to apply a rule to a situation there is needed the leap of insight.⁷ This seems to me an illustration of the event of insight clicking in the tradition of analytical philosophy

Our final illustrations of *Einsicht*, of insight in Kant will be taken from the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*.⁸ Part II addresses the question, how is a pure science of nature possible? Nature for Kant is related to rules. His answer runs:

"It is only possible by means of the constitution of our understanding, according to which all the above representations of the sensibility are necessarily referred to a consciousness, and by which the peculiar way in which we think (namely, by rules) and hence experience also are possible, but must be clearly distinguished from an insight into the objects themselves."⁹

He is clearly denying that our understanding of nature is like an insight into the objects themselves. Yet he seems to accept that insights are into something, have some object. Discussing the meaning of the categories he goes on:

Such an insight into the nature of the categories, which limits them at the same time to use merely in experience, never occurred either to their first author or to any of his successors; but without this insight (which immediately depends upon their derivation or deduction), they are quite useless and only a miserable list of names, without explanation or rule for their use.¹⁰

Kant is drawing attention to the distinction between an insightful use of the categories and a blind or parrot-like use. Clearly in the insightful use the insights are into something, into the meaning and use of the categories. So the question of the object of insight is on the agenda.

⁷See *Meaning and Reference*, edited by A.W. More, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992) 260. Lonergan deals with the same problem rather obscurely in his treatment of conversion to phantasm in *Verbum, Word and Idea in Aquinas*, (London, Dartman, Longman and Todd 1968) 159-62.

⁸*Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, (New York, The Library of Liberal Arts, 1950). The term, insight does not occur in the index. I am indebted to Jeanne Belair for pointing out occurrences of *Einsicht*, insight, in this text. She has located some 14 occurrences in the Lewis White Beck translation on pps 6, 7 (three occurrences), 23, 37, 65, 70, 72 (two occurrences), 79, 125, 126, and 127. I am also indebted to Paul Lennon and Patrick Riordan, both of the Milltown Institute, for help with the German texts of Kant.

⁹op. cit., n 8, p 65.

¹⁰op cit, n8, p 72.

In the Appendix to the *Prologomenona* Kant discusses a reviewer's judgment on the *CPR*. It is an extremely interesting case study of a philosophical judgment on a philosophical theory of mind. He describes an enlightened and critical reviewer whose understanding has gone to the heart of the argument of a text and critiqued it, possibly harshly. The author might be displeased with what is written about the work but cannot fault the understanding and criticism of the reviewer. The contrary is the case where a reviewer reviews a text which he clearly does not understand. This could be because of his narrow mindedness, impatience at the demands made by the text on his understanding, his inability to appreciate that one cannot review Euclid (or its philosophical equivalent) unless one understands geometry, or his sense of personal superiority as a result of which he keeps his superior insights or discoveries hidden from the world.¹¹ The problem as Kant sees it is that the standard for judgment on matters metaphysical has yet to be found. By this I interpret him to mean that the relevant significant questions involved in such judgments are not known by individual reviewers or by a community of philosophers. What is to be done until the standard is found in the matter of judgment on works of metaphysics? In this context there is the final use of the term, insight, in the *Prologemonena*:

If, however, they are critical in character, not indeed with reference to other works but to reason itself, so that the standard of judgment cannot be assumed but has first of all to be sought for, then, though objection and blame may indeed be permitted, yet a certain degree of leniency is indispensable, since the need is common to us all and the lack of the necessary insight makes the high-handed attitude of the judge unwarranted.¹²

Philosophers, it seems, cannot avoid the activity of making philosophical judgments with respect to their own works and the works of others. What Kant did not seem to realize is that it is in this unavoidable process that at least an element of the sought standard of judgment in matters metaphysical resides. It is through the process of true judgment that we come to know what is, what exists, what is so. Overlook this fact and you are lost when it comes to the standards for judgment in metaphysics.

It is one thing for the solution to a cross-word puzzle or problem situation suddenly to click for us, suddenly to fall into place. It is quite another for it to click with us that we have insights and what, in some primitive way, they do and are like. Lonergan has clearly stated on a number of occasions that unless the event of insight has clicked with us we will get nowhere with his work.¹³ But he does not

¹¹op. cit., n8, p 126.

¹²op. cit. n8, p 127.

¹³On a number of occasions Lonergan has stated that Kant with Aristotle and Aquinas knew all about insight. One of those occasions occurs in his lecture notes, "Intelligence and Reality," notes

go out of his way to bring about that click in his readers. In his writings he tends to presume that it has happened. The previous analysis suggests that a study of Kant's usage of the term, *Einsicht*, insight, could facilitate the clicking of the insight event in students of Lonergan. It would also have the advantage of locating Lonergan's work more firmly in the philosophical tradition.

II

Sala has stated that "there is no doubt that the *Critique of Pure Reason* was in Lonergan's mind when he wrote *Insight*."¹⁴ This I believe to be true. But it challenges us to discover as precisely as is possible the details of how Kant positively influenced Lonergan's thought.¹⁵ For what has become clear to me in recent years is a profound and positive influence of Kant on Lonergan. In the A-Preface (xi-xii) there is a clear invitation to reason to undertake the most difficult of all its tasks, namely self-knowledge. This seems quite similar to Lonergan's invitation to self-affirmation. The opening pages of that same Preface refer to the endless controversies of metaphysics, a passage that is clearly echoed in *Insight*.¹⁶ In the B-Preface we find the terms, empirical and intellectual consciousness (B, xl), and the unconditioned.

More specifically there is a need to explore how Kant might have helped Lonergan to frame, not so much his answers as his questions. Lonergan was educated in the scholastic tradition which, despite its neo-Kantians, was on the whole critical of Kant who was seen as an adversary. Whiteside introduced him to Kant in Heythrop in 1926/7, commenting that his critical remarks were only pin pricks and not to be taken as a critical refutation.¹⁷ In the scholastic tradition a main

made by Bernard Lonergan for his course at Thomas More Institute, Montreal 1950-1. These notes are available at the Lonergan Centre, Toronto. The lectures were given when he was composing *Insight*. The references to Kant in those notes are numerous and significant. On page 12, paragraph 7 his headings suggests that analytic and synthetic a priori (judgments) presuppose insights and that "...: analytic seems to be covert insights." In *Understanding and Being*, p 30 he says something similar: "Kant's synthetic a priori presupposes that the insight already exists and that the concepts are already formed." When using the word in the B-Preface and elsewhere was Kant adverting to what Lonergan suggests he had presupposed? For an illustration of the event of insight clicking in the scientific community see W.I. B Beveridge, *The Art of Scientific Inquiry*, (London, Heinemann 1974) Chapter VI. In that chapter there is given one of the best accounts of how insights are experienced in the scientific community that I have come across. Unfortunately the chapter is entitled intuition.

¹⁴op cit., n1, xiv.

¹⁵See comments in n 13 on "Intelligence and Reality."

¹⁶*Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol 3: Insight* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press 1992) 410f.

¹⁷*Caring About Meaning, Patterns in the Life of Bernard Lonergan*, edited by Pierrot Lambert, Charlotte Tansey, Cathleen Going, (Montreal, Thomas More Institute Papers, 1982) 129. For other remarks on Kant see 15f.

criticism seems to have been that if one takes Kant's turn one gets lost in subjectivity at the expense of objectivity. A bridge is opened up between our mental processes in here and the world out there, (*CPR*, A 89/90, B 122/3). Liddy still remembers quite vividly being told that the only answer to the bridge was dogmatically to assert that our knowledge does cross from in here to out there.¹⁸ Whether this was the basis of Whiteside's criticisms is almost impossible to know. But it is highly likely that Lonergan was educated in an environment in which Kant would have posed the difficult question of uniting the subject and object of knowledge. This, I believe, influenced his second or epistemological question which deals with the manner in which mental acts get beyond themselves to knowledge of objects in the world.¹⁹

In the light of the movement of Lonergan's thought it is my belief that during his philosophy studies and after,²⁰ Kant, among others, posed for him the question of the relation between sensibility and understanding in human knowing. He clearly disapproved of Kant's proposed answer in terms of sensible intuition and the categories of the understanding. During his philosophy studies he did not take to Aquinas. This changed when he read Hoenen's essays on the origin of the first principles of mathematics.²¹ For Hoenen those first principles are not *a priori*, but are worked out, following Aquinas, by insight into phantasm through which a nexus between terms is apprehended in the phantasm, in the image. This encouraged him to think that Aquinas might have something different to offer than Kant on the relation between the sensible and the intellectual in human knowing. He also found confirmation in Aquinas for Newman's position on assent.

A further influence of Kant on Lonergan is to be discerned in the structure of Kant's Copernican revolution for metaphysics. This I believe positively influenced the structure of the composition of both the *Verbum* articles and *Insight*. There are direct references to the Copernican revolution in *Insight* (413), and in *Method in Theology* (96, 264). There is also a covert reference to it in the *Verbum* articles, 45-6 where Lonergan explains why he began from the psychological content of Thomist theory of the intellect rather than from the metaphysics. It is a

¹⁸Richard M. Liddy, *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan*, (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press 1993) 102-3, 175.

¹⁹*Verbum*, 66f., *Insight*, Chapters 12 and 13.

²⁰For Lonergan's reading on Kant in the early thirties, see Liddy, *op. cit.*, n18, 76-84. Central at this time was his explorations of the object of insight. To this add the Kantian element of the notes, "Intelligence and Reality." On the problem of the relation between the sensible and the intellectual components in knowing see *CPR*, A 15, B 29.

²¹P Hoenen, "De origine primorum principiorum scientiae," (On the Origins of the First Principles of Science) *Gregorianum*: Volume 14; 1933, Pps 153-184; De Philosophia scholastica cognitionis geometricae," (On the scholastic philosophy of geometrical knowledge) Volume 19, 1938, Pps 498-514; De problemate necessitatis geometricae, (On the problem of necessity in geometry) Volume 20, 1939; pps 19-54.

thesis that is repeated in great detail in the conclusion to the third article where he insists that an interpretation of Aquinas on mental acts must be able to reconcile his psychological and metaphysical statements. Because of the scholastic environment which those essays were addressing Lonergan could not directly state his Kantian presuppositions. But they are nonetheless there and guiding him. From Kant Lonergan learned that our knowledge of the world must be consistent with our knowledge of ourselves as knowers, with knowledge of the processes by means of which we know the world. But unlike Kant he considers that the manner in which our minds connect with the world is through cognitional structure as a whole rather than through sensible intuition. The universe corresponds to our mental desires and powers. Our mental desires and powers correspond to the universe. Any attempt to articulate a vision of the universe that neglects the correlation of subject and object or that simply ignores or truncates the subject will result in error. The Kantian insight is almost totally neglected at the end of our century by the whole new breed of scientific metaphysicians. Dennett, Dawkins and Hawking conjure up world views in total disregard of their own cognitional powers and their relation to the structure of the world.

To conclude, the present study is of the form of notes towards a critical study of Kant's use of the word, *Einsicht*, insight and of the manner in which Kant influenced Lonergan's questions and project.