

Some Metaphysical Notions Connected with *Verba*

Father Lonergan

*This is a copy of the notes used by Father Lonergan in a lecture Feb 28/47. (It is the metaphysical framework on which to hang his psychological stuff on the verbum.)*¹

Why metaphysics?

a) Why maths in physics:

Because physics is an exact science and without maths it cannot be exact.

Without maths it cannot have exact concepts. Physicist does not mean by ‘energy’: the feeling you have after eating “wheaties” for breakfast; the feeling you have on the morning of a bright holiday.

He means: $K[enetic]E[energy] = \frac{1}{2} mv^2$

Without maths it cannot have deducible conclusions between concepts.

All physical deductions are just maths.

b) What happens to psychology without metaphysics?

Either old style, accept and deal with data of consciousness, sense, imagination, emotion, conation, understanding, but what are they? In the last analysis they are a set of ‘undefinable somethings.’²

To have definite concepts in psychology a more general science has to be invoked.

A fortiori to have system, deduction, inter-relation.

¹ [Philip Leah gave these previously unknown notes to the Lonergan Research Institute in early August 2010. These notes touch upon matters more extensively discussed in chapter 3 of *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, vol. 2 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). In light of Lonergan’s later position on the role of the data of consciousness in relation to metaphysics, they are perhaps especially significant in indicating how in the early months of 1947 Lonergan was thinking of the relationship between psychology and metaphysics.]

² [A few lines later, Lonergan switches to ‘undefinable somethings.’]

Or else new style, throw out data of consciousness; they are not public facts; deal with what is external, observable by everyone; that alone pertains to science. Hence behaviourism.

c) Psychology must be cast in metaphysical terms:

- 1) to have definite concepts;
- 2) to have a systematic structure.

Without metaphysics, psychology either deals with a set of indefinable somethings or else it becomes mere behaviourism[,] which is not psychology.

What metaphysics?

- 1) General (potency and act)
- 2) Special (applied); object and species.

In both cases deal with primitive concepts.

In a sense primitive concepts cannot be defined; i.e., they cannot be defined by genus and difference.

But in another sense they can be defined; they can be assigned definite meanings in a definite fashion; if not, they can be confused; if they are confused, there result an endless number of insoluble problems which are insoluble only because meanings of primitive concepts and basic terms are not clearly grasped.

That is the whole difficulty of the theory of intellect.

Any scientific concept is the expression of an insight into phantasms, and expresses correctly your insight.

Standard expression of an insight is the four-fold proportion: $A:B :: C:D$. One insight defines more than one term.

General type of insight relevant to potency and act, is insight that grasps a possibility: what is possible is the act, what constitutes the possibility is the potency.

We shall give four generic and ten specifically different meanings of the terms 'potency' and 'act'; if you have hitherto distinguished less than ten, you have been confusing things that are as different as cheese and chalk.

Potency and Act

A) *Form to matter type*

1 The data and the insight.

Sight in the eyes, as taste in the tongue, as smell in the nose, as science in the intellect

- Essential (blood and tears) potency to first act.

2 The Extension: from accidental to substantial order.

Soul of goat to its body as soul of cow to its body, etc.

Soul is first act of organic body.

- Extended essential potency to extended first act.

B) *Form to performance type*

3 The data and the insight.

Sight to seeing, taste to tasting, smell to smelling, science to scientific understanding, virtue to virtuous deeds, heaviness to falling, finished product to its use, etc.

- Accidental (rolling off a log potency) potency to second act.

4 Subdivision of 3.

a) Performance that endures through time, the whole of it is at any instant while it endures; seeing[,] understanding, willing. *Actus perfecti, actus existentis in actu, operatio, motus large, actio.*

b) Performance that becomes in time; whole does not exist at each instant; but part exists in part of the time of becoming. *Actus imperfecti, actus existentis in potentia inquantum huiusmodi, motus stricte, esse incompletum, ens fluens, ens viale.*

Local motion is not an *ubi* but the becoming of an *ubi*. Alteration is not a *quale* but the becoming of a *quale*. Growth and slimming are not *quanta* but the becoming of *quanta*.

c) Found only in material, quantitatively divisible subjects; impossible in a spiritual subject.

d) Above account presupposes time; *prius quoad nos*. Aristotle proceeds from *priora quoad se*; defines time by motion, hence obscure formulae such as '*actus existentis in potentia inquantum huiusmodi.*' *Motus* is an act, but an act that is not finished and so in potency.

e) Performance that is strictly motion involves distinction between process and term; going to place, being there; becoming white, being white; growing to height of six feet four, being six feet four.

f) Process is not the efficient cause of the term; process is *in fieri* what the term is *in facto esse*.

5 Extension of 3: Accidental to substantial order.

Essence to existence; or form to existence.

Soul to living; or soul and body to living.

C) *Substance to accident type*

6 Existence as potency to performance: *esse propter operari*.

7 Extension of 6.

Substance for existence according to 5; existence for performance according to 6; therefore, substance for performance.

Substance (or form) for performance: first to second act: quite different from 3.

8 Substance as potency to proper accidents: essence of man to risibility; soul to possible intellect; etc.

D) *Efficient cause to effect type*

9 Passive potency to *pati*.

a) *Potentia passiva est principium mutationis vel motus ab alio vel in quantum aliud.*

Ab alio: raw materials of house as in potency because of builder; the builder is not the raw material.

Vel in quantum aliud: the sick doctor *qua* sick as in potency because of himself, not *qua* sick but *qua* doctor.

b) Essential potency is also passive potency, but from a different viewpoint.

Essential potency: *principium mutationis in eodem in quo est*; while passive potency is *principium mutationis ab alio*.

c) Accidental potency is also passive potency, but from [a] different viewpoint.

Accidental potency: *principium motus vel operationis in eodem in quo est*: but passive potency is *principium motus ab alio*.

Quidquid movetur ab alio movetur.

Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur.

d) Essential and accidental potencies are instances of nature: *Natura est principium motus vel quietis in eo in quo est motus vel quies.*

Hence sight is passive potency to seeing, habit of a science is passive potency to understanding; and *sentire et intelligere sunt pati quaedam.*

e) Just as there are two types of performance, so there are two types of *pati*: *e contrario in contrarium*, black to white; and *pura receptio perfectionis*.

10 Effective potency to *agere*.

a) Effective potency: *principium mutationis vel motus in alio vel in quantum aliud.*

Builder as principle of change in raw materials of house.

Doctor *qua* doctor as principle of change in himself *qua* sick.

b) Neither accidental nor essential potency is an effective potency: *quidquid movetur ab alio movetur; quidquid efficitur ab alio efficitur*; nothing can perfect itself, add to its own perfection.

c) But effective potency is frequently named active potency; and accidental potency is also named active potency; field for equivocation. (St Thomas in earlier writings used terms in this way.)

d) This field of equivocation is reinforced by fact that performance, second act, being in second act, is named *agere, actio, operatio*.

11 Theorem of effective and passive potency. *Actio est in passo*.

One and the same act is at once the actuation of the passive potency and of the effective potency.

What the effective potency produces is what the passive potency receives.

Were this not so, then a *motor immobilis* would be a contradiction in terms: were the action in the agent, the agent *qua* agent would necessarily be moved.

Actio: actus huius ut in hoc; actus patientis eo sensu quod in patiente recipitur.

Object and Species

1 Object: either producing or produced. External sense vs imagination.

Either the act that reduced a potency to act, or else the act that a potency in act produces.

Respondeo dicendum quod potentia, secundum illud quod est potentia, ordinatur ad actum. Unde oportet rationem potentiae accipi ex actu ad quem ordinatur; et per consequens oportet quod ratio potentiae diversificetur, ut diversificatur ratio actus. Ratio autem actus diversificatur secundum diversam rationem objecti; omnis enim actio est potentiae activae, vel passivae. Objectum autem comparatur ad actum potentiae passivae sicut principium et causa movens; color enim, in quantum movet visum, est principium visionis. Ad actum autem potentiae activae comparatur objectum, ut terminus et finis; sicut augmentativae virtutis objectum est quantum perfectum, quod est finis

*augmenti. Ex his autem duobus actio speciem recipit, scilicet ex principio, vel ex fine, seu terminio. Differt enim calefactio ab infrigidatione secundum quod haec a calido, scilicet activo, ad calidum, illa autem a frigido ad frigidum procedit. Unde necesse est quod potentiae diversificentur secundum actus et objecta ...*³

[A power as such is directed to an act. Hence, we seek to know the nature of a power from the act to which it is directed, and consequently the nature of a power is diversified, as the nature of the act is diversified. Now the nature of an act is diversified according to the various natures of the objects. For every act is either of an active power or of a passive power. Now, the object is to the act of a passive power as the principle and moving cause: for color is the principle of vision, inasmuch as it moves the sight. On the other hand, to the act of an active power the object is a term and end; as the object of the power of growth is perfect quantity, which is the end of growth. Now, from these two things an act receives its species, namely, from its principle, or from the end or term; for the act of heating differs from the act of cooling, in this, that the former proceeds from something hot, which is the active principle, to heat; the latter from something cold, which is the active principle, to cold. Therefore the powers are of necessity distinguished by their acts and objects.]

2 Theorem on objects (producing).

The act of the effective potency is identical with the act of the passive potency. But the object is the effective potency, and the cognitional potency is the passive potency. Therefore the act of the object *qua* object is the act of the cognitional potency.

*Sensibile in actu est sensus in actu.*⁴

Intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu.

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 77, a. 3: ‘*Utrum potentiae distinguantur per actus et objecta.*’

⁴ Aristotle, *De anima* 3, lect. 2.

3 *Species*

Consider: the idea of the building in the mind of the architect; the specifications of the building in the architect's blueprints; the directions of the engineer and foreman in the process of erecting the building; the artificial form of the finished building.

The same specific determinant is found in a series of cases; idea in the mind; specifications in blueprint; directions to operatives, artificial form of artefact.

Specific determinant received in eyes; same specific determinant previously in medium (ether); same specific determinant in the object that is seen. Not only is it received in eye, but modifies act of seeing (makes it a seeing red and blue, in such shapes); further determines act of imagination; further determines act of understanding; further determines act of definition.

4 Dynamically: *omne agens agit sibi simile*: thing, medium, sense organ, external sense, imagination, understanding, definition.

Species sensibilis, intelligibilis impressa, intelligibilis expressa.

5 Ontologically: species is principle of specific limitation.

Actus de se est illimitatus; limitatur per potentiam in eo ordine in quo est actus.

Act is limited to being "understanding" by *intellectus possibilis*, to being a seeing by sight, to being a tasting by taste, to being a willing by will: generic limitation.

Act is limited specifically by species: understanding Pythagoras's theorem; seeing diagram of Pythagoras's theorem; deciding to believe Pythagoras's theorem, since everybody says it's so; willing to teach Pythagoras's theorem.

6 *Species intelligibilis impressa* – part of a habit – habit is *ordinata aggregatio specierum*.

General Scheme

