

A Deep Respect for Intellectual Values

1. The Tradition

Mother Janet Stuart wrote a little book *The Society of the Sacred Heart* during her voyage to Australia, as Superior General, in 1913. In this book she reflects on the education of women, and on what she regards as characteristics of education in the Society. Her reflections relate to the content of education — the significance of history and the humanities in particular, and to the process of education — openness to experience, the power of judging and acting rightly in new circumstances. I will quote a considerable section, not to provide a blue-print for today, but to indicate some of the enduring principles of Sacred Heart education, and in particular the deep respect for intellectual values.

Our times have so many points of likeness with those of the Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries, that the ideas of education for women, then in favour, are not without interest. The *Plan of Studies* was not so narrow as might be imagined.

It was based on the knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, not a superficial knowledge, but one that gave intimate familiarity with the genius of each tongue... Grammar, rhetoric, poetry, mathematics, philosophy, music, the arts of embroidery and weaving were matters of careful study for ladies of rank (Cardinal Rampolla, *Life of St Melania*, 1908).

The religious and devotional instruction in Christian families was equally well portioned; it began by committing the *Psalter* to memory; the study of *Proverbs* followed, as instruction in the art of living wisely; *Ecclesiastes*, to arm them against the vanity of vanities; *Job*, as a preparation for adversity to come; finally the *Gospels*, the *Acts of the Apostles*, the *Epistles*, which were the treasure for their whole lifetime ... The *Prophets* and the Historical Books came later ... There is a curious likeness to the main lines of Madeleine Sophie's own education; which, although she did not take it as a model, must have influenced to a large extent the scheme of studies which she drew up.

In the end, as scientific discovery advances, and communication becomes more and more rapid, it will be surely necessary to slacken the breathless efforts to keep pace with it. It will not be possible to compress within the poor compass of elementary textbooks, even in outline, the added science and sciences that are coming into view. We may hope not to fall back upon the *Compendium*, a thousand times condemned already. The alternative would seem to be, to give, as the Roman ladies had in the fourth and fifth centuries, and as Madeleine Sophie had in the end of the eighteenth, some bases that are there for all time; some of the science of first principles, so that the whole plan may have true shape, and leave room for liberal choice and liberal exclusion... What stands by us in life is, after all, discipline of mind, habits acquired, the power of steady application, and such knowledge of first principles as will enable new knowledge and experience of any kind to find its right place and true proportion in what has been already acquired.

Thus, in fact, by this adaptability of mind and habits, by readiness for what has never yet been experienced, and by the power of judging and acting rightly in new circumstances, the educated mind is distinguished from one that has been merely instructed how to move in a well-known and expected order of things... We must regret that the aim in early years of education should be to reach something accomplished, instead of well-prepared, to which the analogies of all living organisms should have directed us, as well as experience of children and their needs (Stuart, 1923 pp 79, 80).

2. The Structure of human knowledge according to Lonergan

I will not be pursuing the issue of content and the value of the humanities, in education, but will concentrate rather on the processes of education and in particular on the structure of human knowing according to the philosopher and theologian, Bernard Lonergan. The activities that are central to Lonergan's cognitional structure are central to the educational enterprise. If the process of coming to knowledge as presented by Lonergan is reflected in the various dimensions of the teaching-learning programme of the school we could be assured of a commitment to a deep respect for intellectual values.

Aristotle described wonder as the beginning of all science and philosophy. When a person thinks it is astonishing to be alive, philosophical questions arise of their own accord. 'How was the world created?' 'Is there any meaning behind what happens?' 'How ought we to live?' It is not only philosophy that has its origin in the sense of wonder. Science, too, begins here. In a recent *Quantum* programme there was a profile presented of Jenny Learmont, a woman who worked in the Blood Bank in an administrative capacity in the 1980's. She was involved in the task of tracking recipients of blood donated by those who had been infected with HIV. She wondered why one particular donor and a group of recipients had not developed AIDS even though they were HIV positive. At the time it was accepted that this variation related to the strength of the immune system of these individuals. Jenny Learmont was not convinced. She raised the possibility that the particular virus that these people had been infected with was a weak variety that could be useful in developing a vaccine. Not being a scientist by profession, scientists would not take her observations seriously. However, she persisted in collecting further evidence. The outcome is that now work is proceeding with the development of a vaccine.

The story of Jenny Learmont demonstrates the dynamic structure of human knowing. Knowing involves many distinct and irreducible activities such as seeing, hearing, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, reflecting, weighing the evidence, judging. As Bernard Lonergan explains (1957, p. 222) an act of ocular vision may be perfect as ocular vision, but if there is no understanding, it is mere gaping. Mere gaping may be stupidity, or it may be resting, but it is not knowing. On the other hand, there can be no understanding without the prior presentations of sense. Even the combination of sense and understanding does not suffice for human knowing. Judging must be added. It is only by judgment that there emerges a distinction between fact and fiction, history and legend. Nor can judgment exclude experience and understanding. It is arrogant to pass judgment on what one does not understand.

Jenny Learmont observed the profile of the clients who received the contaminated blood. Continuing to collect data on the health status of the clients she noticed a pattern emerging and had the insight to develop a hypothesis to explain this pattern — the hypothesis that one donor and the associated group of recipients had contracted a different type of virus. She pursued the professional power-brokers who initially gave an arrogant response – judging the situation without attending to the data

and its meaning. Jenny continued to raise her hypothesis, committed to an unbiased investigation.

The cognitional process is cumulative. Jenny had covered a range of activities on the two levels of experiencing and understanding but she was dependent on the scientists before committing herself to a judgment when the requisite conditions were shown to be fulfilled.

The cognitional activities on the three levels of experiencing, understanding and judging presuppose the subjectivity of the knower. The one who is seeing, hearing, inquiring, understanding, reflecting, weighing the evidence and judging has an awareness of being involved in all these cognitional activities. The *I* that experiences, understands and judges is self-aware in such a way that these activities become instances of personal commitment to disinterested and unbiased knowledge. The fulness of knowledge requires that the knower knows that he/she knows.

In the pursuit of theoretical and practical knowledge, the educational enterprise needs to provide an environment that fosters the spirit of wonder and questioning about the universe, and about the events and phenomena that are found within it. Time is required for the activities of intellectual exploration. Above all, encouragement will help the students to articulate and personalise their knowledge. Not only is it important for them to have a sound basis of knowledge but for them to know that they know. Knowledge is not about the acquisition of information but about their recognition of when the conditions for making a judgment have been fulfilled.

3. The Multiple Intelligences Theory outlined by Howard Gardner

The extraordinary range of capabilities seen in human endeavour — ranging from chess players to violinists to athletes, etc. — suggested to Howard Gardner (1993, p. 17ff) that humankind has been endowed with multiple intelligences, and that there is no validity in attempting to assess intelligence as if it were the product of one simple faculty. Gardner proposes a consideration of seven intelligences that are relevant to the educational enterprise. At this point I will present his list and later relate it to Lonergan's cognitional theory.

Intellectual powers of deduction and observation illustrate the form of *logical-mathematical intelligence* that is often labelled '*scientific thinking*'. The story of Jenny Learmont demonstrates two essential aspects of the *logical-mathematical intelligence* — the process of problem-solving can be remarkably rapid and because of the non-verbal nature of the intelligence a solution to a problem can be constructed before it is articulated.

Yehudi Menuhin was entranced at the age of three by the sound of the violin at a concert and so manifested a *musical intelligence* even before he had received musical training.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence uses specialised body movements extended through the manipulation of tools in problem-solving situations. The ability to use one's body to express an emotion (as in a dance), to play a game (as in a sport) or to create a new product (as in devising an invention) is evidence of the cognitive features of body usage.

Language can be used in an expository way or it can be used in an aesthetic manner — metaphorically, expressively, or in such a way as to call attention to sound or structural properties. Gardner tells the story of T S Eliot (1993, p. 46) who at the age of ten created a magazine called *Fireside* to which he was the sole contributor. In a three-day period during a vacation he created eight complete issues, each including poems, adventure stories, a gossip column and humour. T S Eliot's *linguistic intelligence* was clearly demonstrated in this project.

Spatial intelligence is needed not only for finding one's way around but to recognise faces or scenes, and the noticing of fine details. I have a friend who is not the greatest navigator. She is likely to study a road map and say, '*looks like you drive ahead for one inch and then turn right*'. Her problem is with the notational system of maps.

Interpersonal intelligence builds on a core capacity to notice distinctions among others, in particular, contrasts in their moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions (Ibid, p. 23). In more advanced forms, this intelligence permits a skilled adult to read the intentions and desires of others, even when these have been hidden.

It is possible for a person to be very responsive to others but to be unaware of their own feelings. *Intrapersonal intelligence* is evident when one has access to one's own feeling life, one's range of emotions and when one can effect discriminations among these emotions, to label them and to draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one's own behaviour (Ibid, p. 25).

Although all humans partake of each intelligence to some degree certain individuals are said to be *at promise* and others are *at risk*. It may be that intensive intervention at an early age can bring a larger number of children to an *at promise* level. An exclusive focus on linguistic and logical skills in formal schooling can short-change individuals who are gifted with other intelligences. In a study of twenty four-year-olds reported in Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences* (1993, p. 94) fifteen of the twenty children demonstrated a strength in at least one domain, and twelve children demonstrated a weakness in one or more domains. Seven children revealed strengths in one or more areas and no weaknesses, and four children demonstrated a weakness in one or more areas and no strengths. One child was also identified as having no strengths and no weaknesses.

Recognition of individual differences has been part of the tradition of Sacred Heart education. As Janet Stuart wrote (1923, p. 80):

The idea in the schools of the Sacred Heart is to allow each child to be itself, and to surround it with an atmosphere of so much attentive affection that it may be unconstrained, and let out the real self with its good as well as its weak points, thus becoming known, so that it may be taken in hand to correct its defects, and taught to know and control itself.

This quotation refers to personal formation but it shows how much value was set on the individual. Janet Stuart would have resonated to the idea of multiple intelligences, and she would have been keen to strengthen both the *at promise* and *at risk* children.

4. **Relating Gardner's list of intelligences to Lonergan's cognitional theory**

Gardner does not develop the structure of the intelligences though he does emphasise the importance of experience or '*specifically designed encounters*' in the early elementary years, and the mastery of notational systems as significant for the school-age years. Lonergan's theory can highlight some further aspects of the structure of these different types of knowledge.

Lonergan's theory of the structure of human knowing involving the three levels of experiencing, understanding and judging, was worked out from his examination of mathematical and scientific discoveries. The mathematician advances from images through insights and formulations to symbols that stimulate further insights. The scientist advances from data through insights and formulations to experiments that stimulate further insights. There is an advance from things as related to our senses to things as related to one another, the relationships being universally valid.

Lonergan's cognitional theory fits Gardner's logical-mathematical intelligence. When we consider all the other intelligences that Gardner lists — musical, bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal — we find that the knowledge

characteristic of these intelligences is not validated by the proposal of a hypothesis nor by the formulation of a judgment.

Lonergan throws light on these intelligences when he broadens his study to show that the occurrence of insight is not restricted to mathematics and physics but extends to every walk of life. When the spirit of inquiry focuses on the particular and the concrete rather than the universal and abstract, there develops an accumulation of insights. In this context Lonergan speaks of patterns of experience such as the aesthetic and dramatic which call forth a different patterning of insight, a different type of knowledge.

In the aesthetic pattern of experience one is led to acknowledge that experience can occur for the sake of experiencing, that it can move beyond biological purpose to a liberation that is self-justifying joy (Lonergan 1957, p.184ff). Instead of developing hypotheses, the artist exercises intelligence in discovering novel forms that unify and relate the contents of aesthetic experience. The validation of the artistic idea is the artistic deed rather than mathematical proofs and scientific verifications. The artist establishes his/her insights by skilfully embodying them in colours and shapes, in sounds and movements, in the unfolding situations and actions of fiction. To the spontaneous joy of conscious living there is added the spontaneity of free intellectual creation.

Not only is the human being capable of aesthetic liberation and artistic creativity but the first work of art is the art of living. That living takes place in a social context and the execution of practical schemes requires the collaboration of others. Communication and interpersonal relationships are aspects of the art of living that is, the dramatic pattern of experience.

The intrapersonal intelligence as outlined by Gardner suggests an approach to questions of value through awareness of feelings. It is our feelings, not our thoughts, that give us our initial response to the worth of things. It is important that we learn to recognise our feelings in everyday life and take the time to name these feelings. It is thought that transforms the merely felt into known feelings (Dunne 1985, p. 70). Feelings are not the final judge of value but they are the initial movement within us towards that value judgment and, once a judgment is made, it is our feelings again that consolidate our judgment and give focus to our attention, intelligence, reason and responsibility (Ibid, p. 70).

5. Lonergan's fourth level of consciousness

We have already seen that the cognitive order has three levels — experience, understanding and judgment. With the moral order we come to a fourth level. Prior to a decision there are the movements of feelings, the assent of value judgments, and the voices of conscience. After a decision, come commitment and action and change.

Deciding — the fourth level of consciousness — goes beyond and completes experience, understanding and judgment. In the opposite direction, the three cognitive levels depend on the moral level to give their respective cognitive objectives a higher integration in some moral objective (Ibid, p.59). A scientist's knowledge of nuclear physics ought to have some good purpose. Radovan Karadjic, who is said to be a psychiatrist has been accused of terrible brutality in the Bosnian War. There are some very intelligent people who are also moral derelicts.

It is not the case that the moral order comes later in time than the cognitive order, as though the mind must do its job before the heart can take over. The cognitive order is in fact conditioned by feelings and desires, values and purposes. The most fundamental moral action is to obey the precepts within us — be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible. They are the principles that can lead to an authentic life, consistency between knowing and doing.

6. Lonergan's fifth level of consciousness

Just as knowledge is developed only in moral contexts so moral decisions take place only in the larger context of love. In Lonergan's view *being in love* constitutes the fifth level of consciousness. The love that he is referring to is transcendent love — the movement within us that seeks the absolutely highest value, the dynamism that moves us to wake up and be attentive, to wonder and be intelligent, to reflect and be realistic, to deliberate and be responsible (Dunne, p. 108). This *being in love* is a dynamism from which flows wonder, awe, questions, appreciation. The object of this transcendent love is God who is the source as well as the object of our loving.

Being in love leads to being reasonable; it makes us more realistic human beings. It leads also to a more effective intelligence so that we are enabled to realise more effectively the intellectual potential we have. This is because we feel less threatened to admit that we do **not** understand. Finally, being in love leads to a transformed attentiveness. Everything speaks. There is healing available for the human evil that awaits redemption.

So the goal of *deep respect for intellectual values* has its own requirements for experience, understanding, judgment and action but it is fulfilled in the context of divine love. In the words of Gerard Manly Hopkins:

The world is charged with the glory of God

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Mary Brennan 1994.
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