

[THE VALUE OF PUZZLES AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR INSIGHTS]

Fr Tom Daly SJ

Edited by Fr. Robin Koning SJ (June 2021)

Editor's Introduction:

This document was written after a discussion at “the Santa Clara Symposium,”¹ to which it refers. It was attached to a letter to Terry Tekippe in which Tom offers it as a contribution to the *Loneragan Studies Newsletter*, a quarterly volume presenting an annotated bibliography of writings grounded in Lonergan’s work together with occasional news about Lonergan-related happenings around the world. from Lonergan centres and Lonergan scholars. Tom’s cover letter reads:

10-8-84

Dear Terry, Tekippe²

The mention of your name in Charles Hefling’s letter on Lonergan Centres and Computers which came this morning reminded me that I had not posted a contribution I had written some time ago for LSN. So I enclose it herewith. I suppose it is a bit late for the September issue, but might still be valuable in December. If³ you think so, and think that even more room would be available, then the page entitled “Identifying Understanding” could be put in before it. This was handed out at Santa Clara and you probably got a copy, along with the set of puzzles, though I doubt if they would be suitable for the Newsletter.

I have just added a postscript to my defence of the problems which might also interest you.

Best wishes, and thanks for all your work on the Newsletter and on the computers.

Yours in Christ,

(Tom Daly S.J.)

Tom gave no title to the document, so the title above is editorial and hence is in square brackets. Footnotes in square brackets are also editorial; others are in the original. Numbers in square brackets in the text mark the start of a new page in the original manuscript and refer to the number of that new page.

¹ [An International Lonergan Symposium on Religion and Culture was held at Santa Clara University in March 1984. It resulted in two volumes of papers: Timothy P. Fallon and Philip Boo Riley, eds., *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor Of Bernard Lonergan, S.J.* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987); *Religion in Context: Recent Studies in Lonergan* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988).

² [‘Tekippe’ is added in Tom’s handwriting.]

³ [‘if’ in original, which is clearly a typographical error.]

At the request of the group discussing education at the Santa Clara Symposium I distributed a set of puzzles that I use (“Opportunities for Insights”) and a page of hints for using them (“Identifying Understanding”), but I soon received the following friendly criticism: (a) We all remember vivid insights from our past, so there is no need for fresh instances. (b) The puzzles are too like mathematics, and lower the dignity of understanding – which is concerned with far more important things. (c) What makes that particular⁴ set of thirteen problems so special? (d) Where are the answers?

I reply briefly: (a) Hutchinson, referred to in Insight, p 4, found that only 70% of the creative people responding to his questionnaire⁵ had identified an insight. Even if we supplement Archimedes with the best accounts selected by Hutchinson, and then ask students to report on the past insight we will find a good 30% of them writing instead about a decision, a judgment, an emotion, or even a powerful sensation. I claim that this can be reduced to 5% once the students have learned to identify a recent, fresh insight of their own. (b) “The precise nature of the act of understanding is to be seen most clearly in mathematical examples” (Insight, p x), even “apparently trifling problems”, “simple things”, “remarkable for their banality” (p 3). After a good start on these, insights in more difficult and more important fields will be identified accurately and distinguished from the not uncommon state of confident confusion. (c) Nothing, except that they have been used and have worked well, some better in some classes, some in others. I am sure that other teachers could collect more suitable examples. The main requirements are (1) that some on the list are easy enough for the [2] least intelligent students in the class, while (2) some can stretch the most intelligent, imprinting on their memory the frustration and confusion of failing to understand data that are present and sufficient, and, of course, (3) that none of the students have met and solved most of the problems beforehand. (d) Your students’ attempts to give you hints during class will be an exciting part of their educational experience. But remember Charles A. Curran’s point (Counseling-Learning, N.Y., Grune & Stratton, 1972) that for that learning role you have to act as a good Rogerian counsellor.

T.V. Daly S.J.

Postscript re Tekippe, LSN V. 14-15:

A first principle is the expression of an insight directly into data without mediation by another formulated insightful stop. It is more valuable if a wider range of propositions can be derived from it. Insights which are a dime a dozen come from the same intellectual powerful. So Aquinas has no special faculty of intellectus distinct from that which is the source of every act of intelligere (or insight), and Lonergan is right in treating all insights as basically similar. James H. Leshner, Phronesis, 18, 44-68 (1973) and L.A. Kosman, Phronesis, Supp. I, 374-392 (1973) are both relevant and very helpful.

⁴ [“partiular” in the original, which is clearly a typographical error.]

⁵ [“questionnaire” in the original, which is clearly a misspelling.]