

Reader's Guide

Responding to articles examining decisions in educational policies in several countries, the **Editorial** *Quid est Educare?* (What is it to educate?) provides reflection on some concepts to improve the education of each child. **Viewpoint** challenges recent *decisions for education in schools in New South Wales*.

The group of articles about the international scene begins with **Greeley's** approval of the effects of *Catholic schools in America*. **Hannan** sums up *sixty years of change in Victoria* and **Sullivan** discusses the controversial policy of *Teacher Appraisal in England*. **O'Neill** lists features of *New Zealand's new arrangements* and finally **Flynn** probes many aspects of the *Culture of Catholic Schools*.

In a section on Administration **Slattery** reviews current literature on the *Catholic Principal and Administrative Theory* and **McKinnon** urges the role of *teachers in decision-making*.

Religious Education is catered for by **McNamara's** *criteria for evaluation of the authentic Catholic school*; by **Macdonald's** *expose of the dilemma of assessment in religious education*; by **Vanderwall's** *identifying with the differently able in their faith journey*; by **Ryan's** *views about the Sacraments in daily life*, and by **Mullins'** *suggestions for school retreats*.

Articles of general interest include the writings of **Doran** on *Pastoral Care*; of **Daly** on *Teaching Philosophy to eleven-year-olds*; of **Boys** on *Feminism and the Pedagogical process*; and of **Nolan** on *Ten Painless ways to improve your Language*.

Throughout the issue are quotations from *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, as well as illustrations from the pens of **Graham English, Mark Johnson, David Chapman, Charles Smith** and two reprints from **Kappan**. The cover photo, courtesy **The Age**, depicts a scene of a religious brother exercising practical pastoral care towards disadvantaged youth.

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Eleven-year-olds and Philosophy!

Teaching Philosophy through Puzzles in Year Six

• Tom V. Daly •

Father Tom Daly, S. J., of the Jesuit Theological College, Parkville, (Vic.) writes about what he achieved in a Melbourne parish school in 1987, "enjoying the fun of being faced with a live audience of Year Six youngsters." This is an abridged version of a paper he delivered at Toronto in November 1988 at the Seventh Lonergan Colloquium.

The financial success of Rubik's Cube is only one of many proofs of the astounding motivation young children have for learning, and the amount of intellectual energy they are prepared to invest in solving a problem. It leads us to ask how successful our teachers have been in harnessing that motivation in education.

Simplifying a Difficult Innovation

Bernard Lonergan at the beginning of his book *'Insight'*¹ judged it advisable to make an apology: he was starting with an example that some readers might consider too simple, that of Archimedes solving the problem of testing a goldsmith's honesty. Aristotle, on the other hand, shows no such qualms in commencing his *Metaphysics*² with the fairly obvious claim that "All men naturally desire to know." My suggestion is that this difference is symptomatic of a difference between the cultures to

which these books were addressed, but a difference which can be overcome - with great benefit to education, to philosophy and to religion.

I wonder whether Lonergan had Descartes in mind as a genius who gave us in an extremely complex and difficult form a new discovery that could well have been expressed very much more simply. At any rate, the instance is a significant one. Descartes, in expounding analytical geometry for the first time, made it look rather difficult by not starting with right-angled coordinates, by omitting the y-axis, and by giving as almost his first example, the solution of a previously unsolved geometrical problem whose very statement as a problem takes sixteen lines of text.³

Lonergan's Demand: Exercises

The key to philosophy which Lonergan offers us is self-

appropriation, which, at times, he also calls self-knowledge. At the end of the first chapter of *Insight* he reminds us that the content of the chapter is not what is important, but rather our experience of our own mind at work while discovering that content.⁴ That wealth and range of content are required when our learning is mediated by a book. But, more basically, what counts is the exercise of our mental powers, and that exercise is what is central to his instructions:

...the only way to achieve (familiarity with what is meant by insight) is, it seems, to attend very closely to a series of instances all of which are rather remarkable for their banality.⁵

Exercises in Tertiary Teaching

The book *Insight* is too difficult for the beginner in philosophy; not all have the drive or the facilities of Archimedes; nor can they afford the years of constant struggling with a single problem that is so frequently mentioned by those many other impressive discoverers to whom Lonergan refers us.⁶

First and foremost, the purpose of the exercises is to provide data in which can be gained an insight into one's own mind; evidence to support a justified affirmation that I am an experienter who is intelligent and reasonable. The exercises must give us the "concrete psychological fact" to which "every dispute in the field of metaphysical speculation" can be reduced.⁷ Empirical method must be applied "to the data of consciousness no less than to the data of sense."⁸

For more than twenty years during which I have been teaching philosophy I have considered it essential to give my students an opportunity to grapple with a set of exercises in class, or at least between classes, so that our attention to, and description of an insight is based upon a genuinely fresh sample. These puzzles have served their purpose well. Most of my students continue to enjoy them.

Children at about the ages of ten to twelve have an insatiable appetite for puzzles, riddles, and jokes.

A Well Known Interest

Further enquiries among teachers brought forth the information that children at about the ages of ten to twelve have an insatiable appetite for puzzles, riddles and jokes, though none could tell me how this was made use of in classes, unless indirectly as a reward or as entertainment. The books on education that I consulted did not even mention the phenomenon.⁹ While discovery was praised as an educational strategy in the books I consulted, its value seemed to be confined to a means of gaining serious content rather than as a means of securing

intrinsic motivation, and the achievement envisaged seemed to be rather rare.¹⁰

Some time later I was invited to a parish primary school. I outlined my plans at a meeting of the principal, priests, religious education coordinator, two class teachers and a teacher aide. I obtained strong support from the school staff.¹¹



Campbell

"First, you have to get their attention."

Reprinted from Phi Delta Kappa

The Teachers and the Classes

I arranged to visit the school for an hour for two days each week to take each of the two Year Six classes for thirty minutes each visit. After twenty of these visits I met with the staff for an evaluation of the experiment. As the hour was normally just before lunch I was able to consult the class teachers and meet other teachers. At social meetings during the semester I was able to meet parents, very few of whom had been born in Australia.

My aim was to teach the same philosophy as I was teaching in theological colleges. This included epistemology, metaphysics and God. However I excluded all historical matter, all use of written texts, and as far as possible all technical terms.

The students appreciated right from the start the danger that any one of them could spoil things for the others by blurting out the solution of one of the puzzles, and in general they avoided this temptation. Indeed, those who had just succeeded in solving a puzzle displayed remarkable skill in giving hints to their companions, or in presenting, even in public, just enough evidence for me to judge whether they had a genuine

insight without disclosing enough to enlighten the others.

An instruction that did, on the other hand, have to be repeated continuously, even within the context of a single puzzle, was the need, not only to attend to the data, but to adapt the data, to add to them, play with them, seek other simpler or similar cases, or attend by listening or feeling, perhaps, as well as looking.¹²

The students appreciated the danger that any one of them could spoil things for the others by blurting out the solution.

The central point in our whole exercise that had to be insisted upon above all was the key to the whole process, namely attending to oneself and one's operations as soon as possible after these had occurred. This is what Lonergan calls "interiority".¹³ So as soon as I was satisfied that someone had solved a puzzle or appreciated a joke, I had to direct attention in this way, asking "What are you?" and "What can you do?"

Right from the first day we found a simple technique for moving in the realm of interiority by seeking partial definitions of ourselves, in answer to the question "What am I?" Once the appropriate concept had occurred to them they were able to say with conviction such things as: "I am something that enjoys insights."

I referred earlier to the danger of someone stating bluntly the full answer to one of the puzzles. Any single student who had just had an insight could, nevertheless, be an Archimedes to others. He could give an account which would help others to recognise how it feels to be a discoverer - in the way that Lonergan's five points based on Archimedes were intended to help the rest of us - without lessening the joy that others would experience later on in giving a similar account of their insights when the light dawned in each of them.

These accounts of a student's recent experience of insight were the very key to the teaching process, as were, at appropriate times, accounts based on some recent striking experience of any of the other cognitional activities within Lonergan's structure of knowing.

The Extrinsic Teaching Material

The main material presented to the children consisted of simple puzzles for them to work on, and riddles and jokes. But other comparable material was required as well. Projects for invention are also aimed at insight and may be more suited to those with practical minds. They must be asked, too, to formulate their solutions, and to vary such formulations, to ask a wide range of questions and then to reflect on, and sort into categories, the questions they have just asked. At times such requests need not be stated explicitly, as ways can be found of providing cues that lead into such activities.

Simple factual questions within the range of their own familiarity can be put to them, eliciting a firm "yes" or "no", whose source can then be investigated. For instance, is there a carpet in this room? Are we in Melbourne? Are we in Sydney? Have Collingwood ever won a premiership in the Victorian Football League?

Concrete illusions can be put before the class. An attempt to show the traditional stick bent in water led to a much more striking case of a sudden break in, or varied displacement of, a vertical ruler at the surface of water in a cylindrical plastic kitchen container.

For the switch to interiority the main questions that I put before them, at the appropriate times, were: What am I? What can I do? How do I feel? How is this sort of activity related to ... (one of the other sorts of activity that we have already identified?) Can I discover some rules for ensuring that this particular activity is being done properly?¹⁴



"His school seems to be emphasizing a classical education."

Reprinted from Phi Delta Kappa

'What I Discovered about Readiness

As a result of this teaching experience I have established the following points to my own satisfaction, and I am convinced that others who follow Lonergan can do the same.

1. Children at the age of eleven have not reached self-appropriation with regard to understanding, or wonder, or judgment, but can easily be taught to do so.
2. They have, however, some quite definite self-knowledge with regard to responsibility, and this could be developed, and integrated with knowledge of themselves as knowers.
3. They were very open, and appreciative of, an approach to the fruit of the Holy Spirit through interiority.¹⁵ As they were being prepared for Confirma-

tion, I had allowed myself one day on this after we had discussed the notion of spirit as found in themselves as human beings.

4. They have an insatiable appetite for puzzles. They are proud of what ability they have to solve them, and they can learn about the nature of spirit and the characteristics of their own spiritual powers by reflection on fresh instances of such activity.

5. Jokes, or riddles with answers, can serve the same purpose, and are very useful for teaching purposes, especially as directed to the whole class. But puzzles should not be neglected, as their solution is a more personal triumph, and has a greater impact, and, especially when it has required a week or two of effort, provides strong evidence for the difference between understanding and not understanding, and for the unavailability of insight to direct action by the will or to ^{an} enriched sensation.

6. The simplest jokes suffice for this purpose. Those found in books of jokes for children are quite satisfactory. Dead jokes, however, must be strictly excluded, as much of the value of the exercises is destroyed if hope of gaining a genuine intellectual achievement is undermined.

7. The time available for drawing full philosophical profit from a puzzle is about ten minutes. The end of this is signalled when one of those called upon, instead of continuing with suggestions or questions regarding that issue, comes out with "Another puzzle, please." If the point being made when this limit is reached needs to be completed or reinforced, a new joke can be a way of making a fresh start with less waste of time.

8. After a few months, a puzzle may occasionally be set whose content is not merely recreational. For instance, puzzles about our souls, their relationships with our bodies, about angels, about God. Students can, when well prepared find serious depths in these. Of course, they themselves may be the ones to raise them. In this case, it is generally wise to deal with the issue immediately, even if a fuller treatment has to be postponed.

9. One example of a philosophical question that the children can raise in the appropriate context is the relation of the answer, "Maybe" to the answers "Yes" and "No". Another is the question, "Who caused God?" One of these eleven-year-olds raised it gingerly in class, and it was clear that three or four others had previously thought of it by themselves, and had treated it quite seriously. It is a point that has to be faced clearly by any theist.

10. It would probably have been possible to formulate puzzles based directly on their current school-work. As I was not familiar with this material I made no attempts at this.

11. I can report how the students can appreciate very well how the great joy that a teacher has in communicating his understanding is not due to his having learnt the idea concerned from the student but to his own active experience of that idea itself in conjunction with his success in communicating it.

12. This joy in the content of the insight is accompanied by another type of joy in his own spiritual activity, the joy of being a giver, and the joy of that deep personal union that is possible in spiritual events.

13. Right from the start the students recognised the value of personal achievement in solving a problem, and were ready to respect the right of others not to be deprived of the opportunity for such achievement. This value overrode that of proving before the whole class their own priority of achievement.

14. When called upon, most of those who had genuinely reached an insight were able to indicate clues or evidence that would be helpful to others in making the same discovery. Thus they had a natural ability to become teachers.

Teachers Can Learn and Enjoy All This

One unexpected bonus from this experiment was the personal interest many teachers showed in learning some philosophy themselves in a similar way, and their positive reaction to a few short seminars. Though they would, of course, have required much more extensive training before they could teach a similar course, they could see the possibility of their doing so, and would appreciate the value it would have for their students.

If extended and developed, this method of teaching could help ordinary children about the age of eleven to gain one of the benefits of a philosophical education — a well-based orientation to the most basic issues of life. They would then be far more open than at present to a theological education and the grounding that that can give in religion.

The method would have possibilities far beyond the primary school, indeed beyond schools of any sort. Those who work among disadvantaged classes, such as the Australian aboriginal people, the poor in the third world, and those in occupied countries, often remark on their sense of humour and the pleasure they take in inventing and relating jokes. We can see now an explanation for this: such activities are an exercise of their human spirit and so help to support their self-esteem in face of their material destitution. And the jokes themselves could be a starting point for a direct and powerful education.

A chaplain at a hospice for the dying told me that he regularly approaches his people with a simple joke, and he agreed that the brightness that this brings into their lives could be connected with a recognition of their spiritual worth as they exercise a truly human power.

Endnotes

1. Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, London: Longmans, 1957, p. 3
2. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1, 890a 22
3. Descartes, *The Geometry of Rene Descartes*, New York: Dover, 1954.
4. Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 31, 32
5. Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 3
6. Through *Insight* p. 4, footnote: Eliot Dole Hutchinson, in P. Mullahy, ed., *A Study of Interpersonal Relations*, New York: Hermitage Press, 1949, pp 386-445
7. Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 423
8. *Ibid.* p. 72; see also pp xi, 243, 882
9. I have since found that Jerome S. Bruner, in his *Beyond the Information Given: Studies in the Psychology of Knowing*, selected, edited and introduced by Jeremy M. Anglin, New York: W. W. Norton, 1971, does advise us "to keep an eye out for the

tinkers shuffle, the flying of kites, and kindred sources of surprised amusement." (p. 209)

10. Bruner is quite explicit on this, when he speaks of the "reward that is discovery itself" (*Ibid.*, p. 406)

11. For their acceptance of this project and their extremely friendly and efficient cooperation I am very grateful to the principal and staff of St Joseph the Worker School, North Reservoir, Victoria, Australia; to the parish priest and his assistant priest, and the children in the 1987 Year Six classes.

12. See the motto on the title page of *Insight*, referred to on p. 677

13. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972, pp. 83, 115, 261-2, 274-5

14. Lonergan often refers to such topics when speaking of interiority. See *Method in Theology*, p. 83

15. Gal. 5: 22-23