

THE PHILOSOPHY OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION¹

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We need to look at the plan for learning that God has put within EVERY human being. When this inner need is not recognised and used, it causes tension within young people and also within teachers.

Philosopher Bernard Lonergan's favourite walk when in Rome was in the Borghese Gardens. A young child was running down a ramp ahead of his mother, when he tripped and fell. Lonergan says that he found himself beinding down as if to scoop up the young child, although he was at least twenty feet too far away. He realised that this was an involuntary action that came from a natural link that human beings have with one another. I think that this link should also be recognised within our education system.

Has education changed much since Lonergan's time?

"It is state control that brought to birth the function and the class of educationalists. To obtain money from taxpayers, politicians, the rich, foundations, to plan and construct buildings, their adjuncts and equipment, their libraries and laboratories, to devise curricula, set standards, impose tests, to select, train, organize, direct, inspect, hire and fire teachers and professors – for such tasks there were needed, not mathematicians nor scientists nor linguists nor litterateurs nor bistorians nor economists nor sociologists nor psychologists nor philosophers nor theologians nor even pedagogues. There had to be created a new caste, a new priesthood of the new philosophy, the men of universal wisdom able to consult and judge specialists in any particular field. To be able to select and judge all the specialists and pass the ultimate pronouncements on all issues, there was needed a universal wisdom; and the universal wisdom that is the justification of the educationalist is philosophy of education."²

Certainly within England it hasn't changed much except to have even more pressure imposed in the hope of raising standards.

I recently read how Jesus' great Sermon on the Mount (The Beatitudes) might be met by the students and the hierarchy today. I'm afraid I don't know the author, but it went something like this:

Simon Peter:	Will this count?
Andrew:	Will we have a test on it?
James:	When do we have to know it by?
Philip:	How many words?
Bartholomew:	Will I have to stand up in front of the others?
John:	Does everyone have to learn this?
Matthew:	How many points do we get for this?
Judas:	What is it worth?

Then one of the Pharisees asks to see Jesus' lesson plan, and asks what are his terminal objectives in the cognitive domain!

It is very amusing and yet it is also desperately sad that unwittingly we go against the way that GOD has programmed us to learn. Montessori, Newman and Lonergan understood, but have been crying in the wilderness. Here is a suggested scheme based on their understanding.

The stages for certain ways of development are universal. They are, according to Montessori, birth to six, six to twelve, twelve to eighteen, and eighteen to twenty-four.

David Fleischacker, President of The Lonergan Institute for the 'Good Under Construction,' Washington, D.C., has linked these to Lonergan's stages which he calls immediate, mediation, self-mediation, and mutual self-mediation stages.

When then is the problem? We turn to Lonergan: "[W]ith regard to the philosophy of education itself, the fundamental problem is the horizon of the educationalist.... So the genuine function of a philosophy of education is to bring the horizon of the educationalist to the point where he is not living in some private world of educationalists, but in the universe of being."³ This is for everyone. Lonergan stresses this point of 'for everyone' when he says about truth: What once is true is always true. It can be transported to make it accessible to all men, and all places, all natures and all cultures.

I realise that in all the phases, the way time plays a part is very important, as it is perceived differently at each stage. This is a way of knowing what is important for the fullest development of that age group. Pythagoras (Plutarch's *Morals*), when asked what Time was, said that it was the soul of this world.

1. Birth to Six Years

For the first stage (birth to six years), time in the PRESENT is what matters to the children. They repeat actions of interest many many times without being conscious of time passing. There is always an urgency in the present activity.

Montessori says of this stage: The child has an intense sensitivity, in consequence the things about him awaken so much interest and so much enthusiasm that they become incorporated into his very existence.⁴

Lonergan says of time perception: 'Now' is not a mathematical point. It is the psychological present. The psychological present is not a mathematical limit.

This first stage of development is so important to understand as it is the basis for all the other stages.

All children need to know love at this stage to be able later to give love. It is the whole of the environment which is taken in like a photograph in its entirety, so that by the end of the third year the child has become a little Indian, or American, or African, or whatever, and has the complete language and all the cultural differences of behaviour.

The frontal lobes are active and absorb all language around him easily. Later when we come to learn a language, these lobes are not available for this purpose and we have to learn with a different part of the brain and the power of easy absorption has gone!

The mind is so absorbent at this stage that the adopted child during these first six years absorbs the speech of the adoptive parents and so becomes like them, copying the intonation and also their mannerisms.

As the children at this stage take in all the traditions and

reactions around them through this absorbent mind, we can understand how important the later 'self-appropriation' of Lonergan is, to weed out from what has been absorbed whatever is inappropriate to real loving action. The will is important for this later stage. Freedom to use the will to explore the environment through the senses is a characteristic of this first stage, forming the basis for future understanding.

Lonergan speaks of the underlying flow, the practical insight, the process of reflection, the decision.⁵ This is how the mind works at this stage.

To give a description of this within a young child, here is the story of Christopher. Christopher in a Montessori class, at the age of three, liked to fit a tray of triangles into their right shapes. He loved feeling the shapes and when just four he wanted to know the name of each. He was very interested in the right-angled triangle. Some weeks later he asked me very urgently to go outside, he wanted to show me something. He showed me a ladder against a wall and said with great excitement: "Look! A right-angled triangle!"

Lonergan says: reflection has no internal term, it can expand indefinitely.⁶

I have so much to say for each stage, but here I can only just touch upon the content.

Of course at every stage the great attributes of humanity are important: dancing, singing, music, art, and the joy of movement. Through drama, physical activities and team sports, children learn to submit their own wishes to the greater good.

2. Six to Twelve Years

The next stage of development in all humans is from six to twelve years. Time in the PAST has now a fascination for this age group as well as the present. They are interested in everything to do with the earth itself; with living creatures and with past ones such as dinosaurs. They enjoy the wonder and awe of the world and show great interest, for instance, in fossils and volcanoes.

This is the green age for interest in facts and definitions,

and if they are not made to answer other people's questions, then their own questions come very fast. We tend to make children think that all they have to do is to put up their hand and answer our questions, whereas the way we acquire knowledge is to ask our own questions based on our own unique experience. Then we enjoy the chase, for our answers when found always lead us on to other questions that form within our consciousness. This is the way advances in understanding are made. They are not made by being programmed to regurgitate other people's answers by rote.

All subjects really are linked because everything comes from or goes back to the real world. Through this linking children are conscious of their Creator.

In the first stage they absorbed the religion of home and now during this stage they like to take an active part.

A very important part of education at this time are the History Time Lines with pictures, models, etc. to put beside the time lines. Through this process of putting down against the right dates pictures, objects and data, they get to know and understand the progression of humankind's understanding and quest for knowledge. For instance, through seeing the inventions throughout the ages, the child realises how understanding develops from what is already known. When he places cards showing the discoveries he realises that science is not finished, it is on the way.⁷

Through these time lines and the placing of information, pictures, objects, writing against them, the child sees the development and attributes of humankind as a whole. All these materials have their special place within the environment and by their groupings within the areas, the child is helped to understand the different types of thought. The child sees the patterns of thought for mathematics and sciences, for literature and for poetry.

The surroundings are kept in order by the students themselves, which makes for self-discipline and caring. Children are able to repeat activities and take time so that they really understand. This understanding rather than rote learning is the most valuable gift to our children. In *Topics in Education* Lonergan quotes Einstein saying that there was so much to be prepared for examinations that it was impossible to be intelligent!⁸ The thing

that saved Einstein was coming across a series of volumes that presented knowledge as a LINKED WHOLE. Newman believed that all knowledge forms an organic whole or unity. We have done education a great disservice by dividing learning up into such tight subject compartments. One piece of knowledge in one science always has connections with the others, and this should be seen and explored.

Children at this stage enjoy writing a great deal and it is useful to have perhaps a retired person for a few hours just to proof-read the writing and to direct the children to exercises for remedying constant mistakes. These should be done before more writing is done. The teachers should still mark the writing for the content.

Our present system encourages children to think of learning as being for self-aggrandisement, the end being examination honours. Although achievement is great, they must be helped to understand that learning is for the development of society and part of their education should be to give some of their interest and knowledge in return back to the places of learning and, whenever possible, to society in general.

The teaching materials for this age (from six to twelve) should be made during the last two years of the STAGE ABOVE, during the penultimate year before their present senior exams. During their craft work for a short period of time, the older students should choose their favourite subjects and make three dimensional self-corrective sensory materials and also two dimension materials with definition booklets for this younger age group. This is like a practical brain map and helps the students with their own basic revision and understanding. They should provide charts and other ways for self-correction for the younger children. They should research to find places of interest to visit and videos and films that show what their materials teach, but within the context of the child's real life.

One of the great ways to stimulate children at this six to twelve age group is to get people at the top of their fields, who are in love with their subjects, to come and give a talk. I had Buckminster Fuller, the great American scientist and geophysicist, who came and talked about 'Space Ship Earth.' We were also

privileged to meet the first spacemen who went to the moon. All types of presentations such as videos, films, computer programs, and visits of all kinds should be used to delight the children and arouse their questions.

It is easy to help a child to find the answers to its questions today with modern technology. When I knew that someone was coming to talk, I prepared materials and put within the environment things that I thought would be useful to follow their interested questions.

Children enjoy tests when they understand a piece of work. I envisage Achievement Centres where examinations may be taken at any level at any age and at any time. These should be placed if possible at Leisure Centres. The candidate knows the right time for success. Random questions can be made available at each stage of any subject. People enjoy learning at all ages and some children may have reached an advanced stage in a subject whilst an adult may be at the first stage. Ages and dates should not be involved in true understanding and testing. They should be free to try at any stage. It is so dangerous when we make someone feel no good and a failure.

The children change physically and also in character at this age. The birth parents' genes become active within their development and the child now begins to look like the birth parents. The character begins to develop and no longer is the family sufficient but the child now seeks out friends in any spare time. The family still plays a very important part in safeguarding the child but at the same time the need is to be helped towards more independence.

3. Twelve to Eighteen Years

The young people of this age are very unlike their previous years. They are changing spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally. Time for them, like for the very young child, is so very important in the present, and their great need in the present is for friendships and companions. In the West they spend hours on the phone and with their mobile messagers, going in and out of

friendships. They enjoy meeting and laughing and exchanging views and during these the time flies for them. Time at other periods goes slowly!

During this time of great transition the results of surveys show that both sexes do better when separated for a time. I would suggest separation for this first year whilst they get used to their new identity. They have changed so much and now need affirmation of their new self. Every cell in their bodies has altered and they are a mixture of both birth parents and their environment. They need to get to know and to like themselves as being of God's creation if they are to be able to love their neighbour 'as themselves.' This fundamental self-liking is essential for mental health.

In our present society adolescents rebel to make parents and others realise that they are no longer the same person as they were and that they are still altering. They need help now to know themselves and to understand how they form opinions and make choices.

By helping to prepare the nursery equipment before a term begins, they will become interested and begin to understand more the different types of meaning: meaning in symbols, non-linguistic meaning as in art; literary meaning, technical meaning. They experience communication meaning and that special intersubjective meaning during this special age for friendships and communication. As Newman says in his motto, "Heart speaks to heart." There is great sensitivity at these ages and they are very easily hurt. They feel uncertain in their new role and we have a duty to help them to know themselves.

In many countries of the East, thirteen is a marriageable age. This previous year is important for all of this age, to be sure of their own identity and for learning physically and psychologically about both sexes. Thankfully, we now have more equal opportunities, but it is vital that we begin to appreciate the very real differences of the genders.

Modern brain research identifies differences. Modern brain research has shown that in males, the area in the brain activated for fighting overlaps with that activated in intercourse. Now we know

why throughout the ages when wars are fought there is usually rape. To understand is half way to prevention.

The physical power of women is less than that of men, as is seen in the categories of the Olympics. There is so much to be discovered by the children during this year. They need to know their own body and how best to keep it healthy, but most of all they need to realise the need for integration of body mind and spirit for a fulfilled life.

We should at this stage, find out what these young people would like the world to be like, and to think for themselves what values would be needed to bring this about.

In order to help them feel good about their basic character it is helpful to let them find the character that is most like themselves, choosing from the ancient main categories used throughout the ages. When they have chosen the one they think most like themselves then they should think of the talents that go with these character traits. These talents are for their use within society. These are the talents that they are here to use rather than to bury, so that they help their ideal world to come about.

The young person is then affirmed and knows that he has a role to play. He needs to realise that there is actually no other person like him in the world and so no one can take his place.

Here are the main characteristics. They should choose the character that they think is the most like themselves. They may see themselves in more than one but should pick the one that their friends say that they most resemble. No character is better than another! These are the choices:

1. principled and orderly
2. caring and generous
3. self-assured and competitive
4. creative and intuitive
5. perceptive and analytic
6. likable and dutiful
7. accomplished and energetic
8. self-confident and strong
9. peaceful and reassuring

Again, there are certain TALENTS that go with the characters. These are the talents that must not be buried but must be used to help society. (The numbers are the same as those for the character traits.)

1. Speak out for right values. Encourage order.
2. Look after the materially and spiritually poor.
3. Give confidence and support to those in difficulty.
4. See possibilities and help bring them about.
5. Good at spotting the difficulty and solving problems.
6. Popular and dependable
7. Use active nature to help others achieve.
8. Use leadership for promoting true values.
9. Help to reconcile.

Now that they are able to feel good about themselves, they are ready to make their own interior and fascinating journey as suggested by the philosopher Bernard Lonergan.

Born within each one of us is this potency to be free. They have seen the strength of the Absorbent Mind stage when they were with the nursery age children. They have seen how the children absorb the environment and accept all the tradition and culture from their parents and surroundings. These traditional actions were sometimes suitable for the previous generation and they often came from even earlier times. These often were not applicable but were actions arising out of inherited habit. Sometimes arising from these are actions not applicable for the present new generation and sometimes actions without positive loving respect for fellow human beings.

They can now see the need to question, and they seek to know the foundations for their present actions. They are now ready to receive the truth through illumination as to the real source of their actions. Now they may begin this exciting journey of self-mediation as described by Lonergan. No one else can make this journey for them and no one else can play their part within society.

The goal is to know the operating structure of their own way of knowing. They do this by shifting their attention from the content of knowing to the actual activity of knowing itself. As they

become aware of the procedure, they will be both subject and object. They can correct their ideas and make judgments after collecting and viewing relevant data, questioning and reviewing before looking and judging the foundations of the action. They will find that they have sudden illumination, not only as to the source of their actions, but also as to links with other pieces of knowledge. Suddenly the link will be made by their minds as other synapses of the brain link up to other points of understanding and show even new applications of the knowledge.

Before any action they must learn to review their collected data and make a judgment. They must be taught always to act responsibly as a result of their findings.

They will now get to know the source of their action, where their own will arises from deep within themselves. They will understand the source of their loving actions originating from deep within their own uniqueness.

This experience meets a very deep human need within for the unbounded intimacy that results from this communication of love, and they themselves will feel part now of the fundamental universal viewpoint.

But first, they should know the common forms of escape that we all tend to use, as noted by Lonergan in *Insight*. (1) To avoid this self-consciousness, we may give the explanation of our avoidance by referring to our environment and our ancestry. (2) We may talk of 'extenuating circumstances.' (There must never be this inconsistency between knowing and doing. The two must always be in harmony.) (3) We may confess, and yet say within ourselves that there is really no hope of being able to mend our ways! We deceive ourselves by rationalising.⁹

Knowing all this they are now ready for this extraordinary ongoing journey where the roots of their actions will be illuminated. T.S. Elliot in *Little Gidding* writes:

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."

When both genders join together, when they are affirmed in themselves and so feel confident in themselves, then we have to prepare them for the society in which they live.

The age of fourteen is a wonderful one for apprenticeship to learn a skill of their choice. It has been found that at fourteen they are ready to watch before trying, whereas at sixteen they think that they know more than they do!

They can now learn useful home skills such as cooking, plumbing, sewing, carpentry, repairs, or other things needed for their society.

Sixteen is the age when they really hate 'being bored'. This is the stage when they need excitement. We can see this whenever there is trouble in the world, for this is the stone-throwing age. They enjoy the danger. Leisure activities should include thrills such as bike racing and possibly a motor bike track. Virtual reality is useful too. In early humans this was the hunting stage and this urge for danger and excitement has to be met and given a legitimate outlet. The work that they now do in all subjects should contain topics that they will need to know about, for them to be able to take a proper place within society. We tend to leave this too late and many young people miss this help because they leave school without further education. We have to make sure that before leaving school all students understand how their society works so that they will feel part of it. Many aspects of each topic should be explored, bringing the linking together of many subjects.

Here are some suggested topics:

LAW

Rules within families

Rules within schools

Traffic law

Domestic laws

Civil law

Age and the law

Criminal law

European law

International law

Appeal procedures

Possible changes.

MONEY

Earned money
Inherited money
Business and profit
Stock exchange
Poverty definitions
Historical poverty
Budgeting for imaginary incomes
Personal debt
Interest rates
Mortgages
National debt
International debt

Practical ways should also be available for earning money. Through the school shop there comes an understanding of book-keeping, stocktaking, prices and profit margins. Everyone is expected to earn through helping with the whole environment. Jobs are priced and chosen, the less popular jobs being priced higher. Money is earned in school currency; this may be used at the school shop or exchanged at the school bank where the exchange rate is fixed and where a charge is made for the exchange.

The university students near the end of their time might give to this age group a glimpse of some of their topics in their chosen discipline by bringing round to the schools a mobile classroom. It could show for instance a study with examples of different types of soil and textures. The aim is to widen the understanding of the world around to get a glimpse of advanced detailed study.

Religion for this age group has developed from the Absorbent Mind stage, through the active and understanding stage, to the personal and mystical stage where relationship is now so important.

Their self-mediation will have strengthened their knowledge of God because when they are in contact with their own uniqueness, true values become clear, and they will develop a oneness of faith and reason. The Holy Father speaking of Cardinal Newman on the bicentenary said: He came to a remarkable synthesis of faith and reason like two wings on which the human spirit

rises to the contemplation of the Truth.

Now that the development of their own religion has a personal mystical content, it is time to explore the meaning of life and death. At this age the aim should be to fit the person for their life. One of the topics explored through different ways can be death, as that is an attribute of life.

DEATH

Their own faith
 World religions
 Death and customs
 Burial customs of their own faith
 Traditions
 Taboos
 Wars and death
 Ethnic cleansing

Another popular one amongst the older students is the brain:

THE BRAIN

The human brain
 Types of intelligence
 Types of personalities
 The mystery of the mind
 The stages of development in all humans
 The characteristics of great people in history
 Disorders of the mind
 Genetics
 Evolution

During this time, outings and communal activities like bonfires and singsongs, poetry and drama, choirs and orchestras are so very valuable because within these individual has to learn to curb their individuality and relate to others for the sake of the whole.

During their penultimate year they can sum up the linking of all subjects by making Mind Maps. They can make a game by making separate labels to place at the correct places.

4. Eighteen to Twenty-four Years

As they come to the next age group and many go on to university, they come through self-mediation and jettison unwanted absorbed behavior; now they come to MUTUAL self-mediation.

Lonergan gives the example of contingent parts of a watch working together to make for smooth accurate running. Our contacts and our actions resulting from these relationships – our loves, our anger, our worries, all our contacts and actions with others – are now a means of mutual self-mediation and consequent growth. This is a natural progression. Lonergan says in “The Mediation of Christ in Prayer”: “In this process, which is universal, which can regard every act, thought, word, deed, and omission, there is a complete universality, a possibility of the complete growth of every aspect of the person.” It is self-mediation through others, and the others are we and all men.¹⁰ And again: It is NOT a matter of study of oneself or analysis. It is a living, a developing, a growing in which one element is gradually added to another, and a new whole arises and prayer develops.¹¹

This age group has sensitivity to time in the FUTURE. They have very strong ideals and great vigor and enthusiasm, which they are ready to use in the world. Throughout history many of this age group has been ready to die for what they believe. Ideals, however, without the Holy Spirit inspiring loving actions to gain the ideal, go sadly wrong and profit no one. Many great ideals have gone wrong because action for an end was perpetrated without love being with the will, the willingness, and the willing.

Montessori, Lonergan and Newman say that for each to play their part in God’s creation, the knowledge of the way of truth and love must be present. This is why it is of utmost importance that the young people at this age undergo mutual self-appropriation as well as self-transcendence, and that they discover within themselves the loving communion with God.

Lonergan linked vocational courses such as law and medicine under one roof. He envisaged exchange of ideas and theories through all the various disciplines. Newman saw this as very important because any advance in any subject, if true, will have an

effect on the knowledge within other subjects and will throw light there.

I suggest that after the first year as outlined by Newman, with a unity of exchange of learning, the student should be free for the next year to sit at the feet of an exponent of their subject but in a different country and culture. Those not at university would also gain by an exchange, living and working also in another county. It should not be difficult to arrange this. Where Newman saw the need for unity of learning we now see also the importance of unity with other cultures and nationalities.

There are many wonderful exponents of Newman's vision for the university. If we follow through much that is suggested, we shall bring through our education, students who realize what Fr. Joseph Flanagan S.J. says in *Quest for Self-Knowledge*: "Truly authentic knowers are continuously struggling knowers, always on the alert for further questions that will advance their accumulative knowledge and reverse their mistaken assumptions."¹²

As Brian Cronin says on self-appropriation: When practiced it engenders the values of truth, attentiveness, intelligence and reasonableness.¹³

And Montessori in *Functions of the University*: "Every contribution able to bring out the latent power of love and to throw light upon love itself, should be welcomed with avidity and considered of paramount importance."

Following God's own pattern placed within all humans is this UNIVERSAL WAY FORWARD.

Notes

¹ Lecture given at the First International Lonergan Workshop, Rome, 7-11 May 2001, with the theme "Lonergan & Loyola: 'I Will Be Propitious to You in Rome'."

² Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 10, ed. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 13.

³ Lonergan, *Topics in Education* 106.

⁴ Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind* (New York: Dell, 1982) 24.

⁵ Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 3, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 632-639.

⁶ Lonergan, *Insight* 634.

⁷ Lonergan, *Topics in Education* 136.

⁸ Lonergan, *Topics in Education* 17.

⁹ Lonergan, *Insight* 622-623.

¹⁰ Lonergan, "The Mediation of Christ in Prayer," *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 6, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 180.

¹¹ Lonergan, "The Mediation of Christ in Prayer" 179.

¹² Joseph Flanagan, *Quest for Self-knowledge: An Essay in Lonergan's Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 232.

¹³ Brian Cronin, *Foundations of Philosophy: Lonergan's Cognitional Theory and Epistemology* (Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy Press, 1999) 42.

